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Christianity, Stigma, and Mass Conversion among Spanish Gitanos

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Con afecto a Alfonso Pérez-Agote, espero que te mejores pronto

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

For over half a century now, a remarkable Pentecostal religious movement, known as the Gypsy Evangelical Movement (GEM), has transformed the religious landscape of Roma ethnic minorities. The GEM has grown substantially, albeit unevenly, in countries with a Roma population, and it has a strong presence in certain European countries such as France (Williams 1991; Laurent 2019), Spain (Cantón Delgado 2001; 2003; Lagunas 1996; Montañés Jiménez 2016), Portugal (Blanes 2008), or Romania (Ries 2007). Roma Pentecostalism portrays Roma groups as one people, under the rule of one God, who must follow the teaching of one sacred book, and who share a common glorious fate in both Earth and Heaven. That many pastors and believers claim Roma people to be the Lost Tribes of Israel compounds their sense of themselves as a people chosen by God and for whom God has a special plan within the history of humankind.

Roma spiritual awakening and mass conversion to Evangelical Pentecostal Christianity have proved sources of significant social change among Roma people in Europe and beyond. Analysing this religious movement, therefore, furthers our understanding of the sociocultural systems that shape the lives of Romany people and communities. Romani Studies scholars have paid growing attention to the impact of charismatic/Pentecostal movements in Romany populations across Europe and elsewhere (Acton 1979; Thurjfell and Marsh 2014) on a range of issues such gender (Gay y Blasco 1999); economy (Cantón Delgado et al. 2004); unity and circulation (Williams 1991); boundaries and schisms (Ries 2011; Montañés 2016); diaspora and transnationalism (Gay y Blasco 2000; Toyansk 2018); the awakening of Roma civil society, outreach and social engagement (Cantón Delgado 2010; Roman 2018; Voiculescu 2018); the institutionalisation of charisma (Ripka 2015) and even music (Blanes 2008).

My starting point is that Roma Pentecostalism, as represented by the Roma-led GEM churches, has overpowered Catholicism as the predominant religion among the Romani people in southern Europe and has shifted their Christian landscape here and beyond. This is particularly true in Spain, where the movement has reshaped the face of Christianity among Gitanos and gained rapid influence. Gitano pastors have been bestowed, believers hold, with the divine mission of spreading the Gospel among Roma communities across the world. Gitano evangelical churches flourish across the country, and Gitano evangelical communities are vibrant and thriving social formations with no sign of decline. By examining how Spanish Gitano communities engage with Pentecostalism, I provide a lens through which to comprehend the intertwining of religion and ethnicity (Bruce 1996) in contemporary Spain, as well as to enhance our understanding of the influence of non-Catholic forms of Christianity among social minorities in southern Europe.

In this dissertation, I aim to examine Gitano pastors' worldviews and interpretation of the Bible and Gitano culture, as well as how they spread narratives, ideas and imaginaries among believers. I focus on the emergence of the leading Gitano evangelical church in Spain—known as Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia (IEF)—whose pastors and believers are appropriating Christianity in unique and fascinating ways. I ask how and why a religious institution founded barely fifty years ago has become the leading force behind a wide-ranging and far-reaching array of social, cultural and religious changes among the Gitanos. Critically, I suggest that through conversion, Spanish Gitano groups negotiate vital aspects of their cultural identity and reframe their sense of distinction vis-à-vis nonbelieving Gitanos and non-Gitanos. Pentecostalism—as represented by the IEF—enables Gitano evangelical communities to negotiate social change on their own terms, which allows this religion to act as a vehicle of both cultural

expression and transition. Here, I explore some classic sociological and anthropological themes (religion, organisations, collective memory, gender and citizenship) as well as political debates about the persistence of Roma exclusion in contemporary capitalist societies.My dissertation contributes to several fields of social scientific inquiry, especially the Sociology of Religion, the Anthropology of Christianity, and Romani Studies. The basis of the dissertation is twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out among Gitano believers in the south of Madrid.

Gitanos and Catholicism

The word *Gitano* translates as Gypsy. Gitano people use this ethnonym to define themselves, and, unlike the word Gypsy in English, Gitano is a term which does not carry pejorative connotations, at least for Gitanos themselves. The category of Gitano opposes that of *payo*, an ethnonym through which Gitanos categorise the dominant ethnic group that surrounds—and oppresses—them. In recent years, the word 'Gypsy' has lost ground to the name 'Romani' in the English language, which carries a more positive connotation in popular speech and points to political and cultural recognition. The word Romani includes heterogeneous groups such as Roms, Manouches, Gitanos, Ashkali, Sinti, and Boyash. As such, it is often used as an all-encompassing term to describe a diaspora population—which Gitanos are said to be part of—that supposedly shares a common origin from the northern Indian subcontinent and an original language, Romani. In this dissertation, I will use the word Gitano to refer to Spanish Roma and the word Roma or Romani interchangeably to refer to that political and cultural representation.

Gitanos are one of the largest and most culturally influential Spanish ethnic groups. Some European official sources estimate that the Gitano population reaches 750,000 members in Spain (Council of Europe 2012). The Gitano distant past was shaped

by cultural traits such as nomadism and high mobility. However, the vast majority of Gitanos live a sedentary lifestyle now. Following Spanish economic development in the 1960s, Gitano people migrated from rural to urban areas, and today they live scattered among payo families in Spanish urban centres. Similarly to other Roma groups elsewhere (Fotta 2018; Saeth 2020) many Gitanos families carry out their economic activities outside capitalist relations of production and wage labour. Instead, they often survive in the margins of the Spanish socioeconomic system, circulating goods among payos. Typical urban Gitano occupations include door-to-door selling, street and flea market vending and scavenging.

As a social group, Gitanos embody notions of marginality. Spanish people hold deep-seated negative stereotypes and prejudices against Gitanos, who play a stellar role in the popular Spanish imaginary of what uncivilised people look like. While Gitanos, like any other social group, are internally diverse and inhabit a varied spectrum of socioeconomic and cultural realities, a highly significant number of them suffer from intense pressure to assimilate into the non-Gitano majority and face stigma and severe discrimination. Gitano collective experience is, indeed, shaped by their ostracised position in the ethnic and class hierarchies. The ethnographic records show that despite that they are highly stigmatised and suffer from strong pressures to assimilate, Roma groups consider their lives to be filled with extreme joy (Bloch 1997), and assert their cultural superiority over non-Roma groups by considering themselves a people inhabiting a high moral ground within a morally declining non-Roma society (Stewart 1997; Williams 1984). These notions of adequacy and pride are the key to understanding—these ethnographers assert—how Roma groups resist acculturative pressures and reproduce their sense of singularity. My interlocutors' self-image stands consonant with these portrayals. While discussing what it is that makes Gitano life so worthy of being lived,

Lucas, an eloquent 30-year-old Gitano believer that I met in the IEF, once told me: 'No offense, Antonio, but were I to have the opportunity to live a second life, I would only ask God one thing, to be born Gitano again!' My interlocutors think it is the word 'payo'––and not 'Gitano'—that carries negative connotations, and they sometimes use the word as synonymous with lack of worth. On one occasion, early on in my fieldwork, a Gitano kid tried to tease me by calling me using the term payo, to which an adult Gitano believer, who happened to be passing near us, replied with a severe rebuke. Although I took no offence, this Gitano believer took the tease very seriously and set the kid aside to ask him not to use that word any more in my presence.

The massive conversion of Gitanos to Pentecostal Christianity is a significant development in Spain, where Catholicism dominates the religious arena and is deeply embedded in historical, political, and cultural identities. Catholicism has historically been the only legitimately religious framework available in which Gitano people were able to express their religious faith from their arrival in Spain throughout the fifteenth century. The fact that Gitanos are embedded into a Christian culture, however, is key to understanding how they have rapidly transitioned from Catholicism to evangelical Christianity. Monotheism, the sacred book, the central divine figures and moral compass of Pentecostalism are resonant with Spanish Christian culture. Yet, Gitano Pentecostal churches have rekindled Gitanos' faith in the Bible through an interpretation of Christian doctrine that allows Gitano believers to assert their cultural sense of difference. The relationship between the Catholic Church and Gitanos is a complex one. On the one hand, the Catholic Church has supported Gitano people in historical times where they were persecuted by the Spanish State or faced extreme poverty and hardship (Sanchez Ortega 1986; 1987; San Román 1997). On the other hand, the Catholic Church has accused Gitanos of engaging in sinful sexual immorality and favouring marriage between people

in close consanguinity, such as first cousins. Furthermore, Gitanos are stereotypically accused of approaching the Catholic Church exclusively to exploit Catholic charity work and obtain material aid.

Most importantly, Gitanos' relationship with the Catholic Church mirrors their marginalised position in Spanish society. Gitanos show an astonishing lack of involvement in church structures, and very few Gitanos have ever held a position of authority in the church hierarchy. As opposed to being involved in the Spanish Catholic Church structures, Gitanos have gravitated towards folk Catholicism, especially in regions such as Andalucía, where they show great devotion and zeal towards virgins and saints. Also, many Gitano families regularly take part in practices such as *procesiones* (processions), *romerías* (a type of yearly and short distance Roman Catholic pilgrimage) and some even engage in international pilgrimages in southern France to worship Sarah the Black, popularly known as the patron saint of the Romani people (Bordigoni 2005; Glize 1988).

In the collective imaginary of Spanish people, Gitanos are heavily linked to witchcraft and fortune telling (notice the connection between their positions on the margins of society with the role in activities on the margins of the religious system). The representation of Gitano women as using crystal balls, cards or hand palms to predict information about a person's life has captured the imagination of Spanish society and frequently features in literature, films and other popular media productions. Turning these imaginaries to their advantage, some non-Pentecostal Gitanos read palms and sell sprigs of rosemary in urban settings, and this practice has become a means of economic survival in the face of a job market that has shut them out.

In line with these portrayals, Gitanos are said to be superstitious and to believe in a world governed by forces that act of their own accord and over which they have very little control (fatalism). San Román's account of Gitano life in the 1970s (San Román 2010:212) revealed that some Gitano people believe in *mengues* (fairies) that ruin their endeavours. According to Lagunas, some Catalan Gitanos firmly believe in the existence of whimsical spiritual forces such as *Bají*—luck—which preordain the outcome of their endeavours and explain their fate (Lagunas 2006:116; for an alternative account of the meaning of luck among Roma groups see also Stewart 1999:73). In my fieldwork, I witnessed conversations where some Gitano believers recognised the existence of these entities as forces that shape people's lives too. Also, many of my informants reckon witchery, tarot cards and palmistry to be powerful tools for forecasting the future. These evidences show that Gitano Pentecostalism does not necessarily erase previous spiritual belief systems. Instead of neglecting or dismissing the influence of ungodly spiritual forces, pastors usually recognise their power and advise those attending church to stay away from their influence. Believers classify ungodly spiritual forces as evil and integrate them into a Christian worldview. Mengues, for instance, are sometimes translated into Christian language as the spiritual host of Satan and described as part of a broader evil army known as 'the enemy', whose mission is to get between God and human beings. This pattern is by no means exclusive to Gitanos. Sociologist of religion Jose Casanova has noted that global Pentecostalism is a religion that integrates previous conceptions of magical forces and engages in spiritual warfare against them. In Casanova's words:

> Pentecostals are, for instance, everywhere leading an unabashed and uncompromising onslaught against their local cultures: against Afro-Brazilian spirit cults in Brazil; against Vodou in Haiti; against witchcraft in Africa; against shamanism in Korea. In this, they are different from both, from the traditional Catholic pattern of generous accommodation and condescending toleration of local folklore and popular magical beliefs and practices, so long as these assume their subordinate

> status within the Catholic hierarchic cosmos, and from the typical sober, matter-of-fact, rational, and disenchanting monotheistic attitude of ascetic Protestantism against magical or supernatural forces or beings, by denying their very existence. The Pentecostal attitude is neither compromise nor denial but frontal hand-to-hand combat, what they call 'spiritual warfare'. (Casanova 2000:437)

As well as engaging in spiritual warfare, Gitano believers also attack Catholic beliefs. Despite this, like the Italian Pentecostals described by Saunders (Saunders 1995:326), many believers recognise having been lax or inconstant Catholics themselves before their conversion. They also accuse Catholics of practising idolatry: the worship of false Gods and objects instead of revering the true God. In my conversations with Gitano believers, they continuously ridiculed the pantheon of Catholic saints and virgins, maintaining that they are just humans with no power to intervene in an individual's life. While talking to Catholic Gitanos about their faith, believers usually encourage them to experience the power of the Holy Spirit directly by attending IEF ceremonies.

That Gitanos engage in spiritual warfare against previous beliefs, contest popular Catholic beliefs, and lead evangelisation efforts among their people, is indicative of religious agency. Gitano Pentecostal believers are redefining their position in the Spanish religious and spiritual landscape and how they embody religious otherness. Gitano believers recurrently depict the Catholic Church as a payo institution and the IEF as the embodiment of Gitano-ness. While they inhabit a marginalised place to mainstream Catholicism, Pentecostalism enables them to reframe their difference vis-à-vis other Spaniards and to construct positive ways of thinking about themselves from the periphery. In stark contrast to payo Catholic priests, who rarely hold any sway over Gitano communities, Gitano pastors have become influential figures, impacting the everyday lives of Christian Gitano believers.

The Gypsy Evangelical Movement

Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity that emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God by the believer. As noted above, central to Pentecostal doctrine is the idea of 'spiritual warfare': combat that decides the development of human history between God and the Devil, Christians and demons, and church and the world, to which born-again Christians are recruited as warriors armed with faith, prayer, and righteousness. Pentecostals believe that faith must be powerfully experiential and biblically-oriented and stress the importance of radical personal conversion. Morally conservative and rooted in millennial views, Pentecostalism also upholds an ascetic ethic and encourages believers to refrain from engaging in practices, such as drug-using or drinking, that pollute their bodies. The importance of the body extends to rituals, where bodies are understood as vessels for receiving the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostal churches have become an influential worldwide religious and social force. Due to its high impact at a global level, Pentecostalism's expansion has been documented and studied in different geographical regions, constituting one of the most studied phenomena in recent decades (Corten 1995; Engelke 2007; Freston 1995; Griera 2012; Robbins 2004; Williame 1999).

Pentecostals consider that God bestows upon believers 'charismas' or 'gifts' so that they can spread the Gospel, persuade, and win over nonbelievers. Pentecostals trace this religious impulse back to the Day of Pentecost described in Acts, wherein the Holy Spirit was poured out on the original Apostles, bestowing them with spiritual and supernatural gifts such as healings, deliverance or speaking in tongues. A firm belief that complements their strong missionary efforts is that believers are saved only by grace and

through faith. No previous requirements, such as good deeds and material success, or ritual ceremonies, are indispensable for acquiring salvation.

The Gypsy Evangelical Movement (GEM) was born in France in the 1950s when non-Romani evangelist Clément Le Cossec, a member of the French Assemblies of God, claimed that miraculous healings infused with the Holy Spirit blessed the Manouche people (French Romanies) in Britanny. The movement widened this initially limited and local scope by including other Romani groups in France such as Catalan-speaking Gitanos or the Roms. Eventually, the GEM transformed itself into an impressive transnational religious mobilisation with the mission of spreading the Gospel to all the Romani peoples of the world. The GEM has a self-imposed divine mission to evangelise the Romani population around the globe; foster international networks and evangelical projects; support missionaries; and promote and encourage a collective sense of diaspora (Gay y Blasco 2000). Gitano believers think God leads the movement. Accordingly, Gitano believers often refer to the religious endeavours carried out by the IEF as *La Obra de Dios* (God's work). At present, the IEF is the largest evangelical church in Spain (Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso 2019) and claims to have established over 1600 places of worship and more than 6000 ministries (Cantón Delgado 2018:2). These constitute a network of economically independent local churches/congregations that follow similar doctrinal principles and are regulated and supervised by a national Presbyterian religious body.

The GEM is not the first evangelical movement that has attempted to preach the Gospel among Gitano people. In the nineteenth century, with the timid entry of Protestantism into Spain, there were some notable pioneering attempts (represented by the figure of famous international evangelist George Borrow) to convert Spanish Gitanos to the evangelical faith. Unlike Borrow's pioneering efforts, the GEM has been able to

create ecclesiastical structures and to mobilise evangelists on a large scale. The process of evangelising the Spanish Gitanos began in the late 1960s (Jiménez Ramírez 1981) and was initiated by French Gypsy evangelists who quickly handed the baton over to the first Spanish Gitano pastors and evangelists. The Spanish Gitano Pentecostal movement is primarily promoted and led by Spanish Gitano ministries, its foundational mission is to spread the Gospel among other Gitanos, and most of its believers belong to Gitano families. As such, the IEF can be defined as an ethnic church[1] (Griera 2013).

Believers refer to the pastors that lead the IEF as apostles. The concept of apostleship is a long and well-established one in Christianity. In Christianity, apostles are usually founders of movements, and the concept is synonymous with outstanding spiritual leadership and the founding of churches. The twelve original apostles are meant to have been chosen by God himself to lead the church and spread the Gospel to all nations before Christ's return. References to apostles in the Pentecostal world are also a critical component of the Pentecostal primitivist motif (Dayton 1987:41) and are closely related to their broader critique of what they think are corrupted, hegemonic institutions in modern Christianity. Gitano pastors believe that God called their Gitano apostles to lead them to Heaven. By affirming Gitano apostleship, the IEF creates ties to Christian mythology and asserts a symbolic line of continuity between biblical times and their present leadership.

The political context of the GEM's arrival in Spain was the demise of Francisco Franco's political project that reinforced Catholicism as a critical element of Spanish nationalism (Pérez-Agote 2008:121). In 1967, six years before Franco's death and the

[1] While the IEF embraces diversity and welcomes payo people to join the church, the ethnic character of the IEF is backed up by substantial empirical evidence. Former president of the IEF Claudio Salazar, also known as ‘el Palko’, for instance, defined the movement’s mission as focused on evangelising Gitano people (Salzano 1981:222).

transition to liberal democracy in Spain, restrictive and limited religious freedom laws granting certain minority religions rights to register into official records[2] were passed. The Pentecostal Gitano movement registered their first evangelical church, based in Lerida (Catalonia), into the national registry of religious associations in 1969 and become an independent and self-governing church. Spain's mainstream Catholic culture, the Franco state's mistrust of religious difference, and prevalent political imaginaries of a homogenous Spanish nation all played a critical role in shaping the movement's public profile. According to the accounts of leaders of the movement, two official proposals for registry into official records were rejected by officials because the names the movement carried were deemed too damaging to the integrity of Spanish ethnicity (Jiménez Ramírez 1981). These names were, respectively, Movimiento Evangélico Gitano Español (Spanish Gitano Evangelical Movement), and Misión Gitana (Gitano Mission) (Cantón Delgado 2004:72). Eventually, Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia (IEF*)* was registered as the name of the nascent Gitano church.

As one of the major seven Asian biblical churches mentioned in the New Testament, Filadelfia (Philadelphia) is predicted to be among the first to be divinely summoned as a prelude to the second coming of Christ (Apocalypse 1:4–11). The choice of Philadelphia as the name of the church is consistent with the eschatological vision of early Pentecostal Gitano leaders. In the Book of the Apocalypse, God sends, via the apostle John, the following messages to Philadelphia:

> To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that

[2] Here I am referring to Ley 44/1967, de 28 de junio, regulando el ejercicio del derecho civil a la libertad religiosa en materia religiosa (BOE de 1 de julio).

> you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. (Revelation 3:7–8)[3]

Critically, references to lack of strength also resonate with Gitano collective experience, that of an intensely marginalised group in Spanish society's ethnic structure. The movement's outcast self-image is also reflected in former IEF President Jiménez Ramirez's memories of the movement's religious events: 'Anyone who saw us back then would have laughed, but the Lord called us to that end' (87).

The Gitano evangelical movement has achieved an outstanding religious feat. The Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia (IEF) has established itself as the leading religious institution among Spanish Gitanos. The Gitano evangelical movement is self-funded, as it solely relies on the resources provided by believers and pastors. Given the large extent of Gitano marginalisation and the poverty of many Gitano families, this accomplishment is undoubtedly a religious achievement.

Fieldwork Site(s) and Methods

The spatial focus of the dissertation is the south of Madrid. I conducted my fieldwork (over 18 months) in a deprived neighbourhood located within the district of Villaverde, a disadvantaged quarter with a bad reputation amongst the inhabitants of the city. In the 1950s, Villaverde was an independent town on the southern outskirts of Madrid. However, following Madrid's industrial and economic development in the 1960s, the capital city absorbed Villaverde, which became an industrial hub of the capital. Villaverde's growth is substantially due to a massive influx of Spanish migrants from rural settings. Alongside payo people with a rural background, many Gitano families

[3] Here I am using Good News Bible online by the American Bible Society. https://www.biblestudytools.com/gnt/.

settled in the area throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. Now a decaying postindustrial area, Villaverde remains one of the most excluded urban settings in Madrid.

Villaverde has been the spatial focus of previous milestones in Romani studies, such as the work of Gay y Blasco (1999). I chose this area because it is densely populated with Gitano people. My decision to conduct fieldwork in this place was also influenced by my background: I was born and raised in Villaverde, and few of my childhood friends are Gitanos. Since I was a kid, I had been aware that evangelicalism has an enormous influence over Gitano people in my neighbourhood, and I undertook my PhD as an opportunity to learn more about my Gitano neighbours.

The recent arrivals of foreign migrants from regions such as Latin America, Morocco and Romania have added new layers of complexity to Villaverde's ethnic structure, yet, to this day, Gitanos remain the most rejected group in the area. This stigma is not just confined to Villaverde but is mirrored transversely in Madrid and Spain, with similar dynamics of marginalisation and exclusion reproduced across different spaces.

Qualitative studies conducted in Spain have shed light on the content of stereotypes and prejudices about Gitano people. Calvo Buezas's pioneering study in the early 1990s showed ethnic prejudices and stereotypes are ingrained into the social fabric of Spanish society. Using a qualitative approach based on spontaneous and open compositions about Gitano people's social image, Calvo Buezas revealed that Spanish school pupils held strong negative opinions against Gitano people and linked them with poverty, spatial segregation, shanty towns, dirtiness, idleness, stealing, malice, drug dealing, and backwardness, among other attributes (Calvo Buezas 1990:31–32; 275–306). Gamella and collaborators (1996) replicated the result through interviews with payo adults in Andalusia, proving also that a set of elements such as self-exclusion, free riding

and violence are interwoven with social representations of Gitano people (Gamella et al. 1996:317–23). These negative conceptions are among the main motifs payos have used to mobilise against the presence of this ethnic group in their neighbourhoods in the past (Gamella 2002).

Qualitative findings about Gitano stigma are supported by quantitative data. The leading Spanish public research institute Center for Sociological Research (known in Spanish as CIS) has included questions about Spanish people's perceptions of Gitanos in some of its social surveys during recent years. In a survey conducted by CIS, a third of the participants stated that 'they would mind being a neighbour to Gitano people', while half of the overall population would mind Gitano children sharing the classroom with their children at school (CIS 2005: Q16–17). In a social survey on discrimination in Spanish society, Gitano people topped the list of unwanted neighbours (CIS 2013: Q2) and belonging to this social group was the attribute that would 'most likely spoil the chances of being hired for a job' (CIS 2013: Q7b) or given 'any position of responsibility' (CIS 2013: Q8b). In the last social survey available regarding Gitano people to date, CIS data shows that as little as circa a third of the participants would not 'take issue on sharing neighbourhood and vicinity with Gitano people', or 'rent out a flat to people who belong to this social minority' (CIS 2017: Q25). Remarkably, sixty percent of the participants would take an issue if 'their son or daughter got married to a Gitano partner' (CIS 2017: Q25).

While it must be acknowledged that payo neighbours in Villaverde and other Spanish regions diverge in their opinions and views about Gitano people and cannot be treated as a single entity, stereotypes, and prejudices against them are, as shown by the data above, widely extended and deeply rooted in Spanish society.

Evangelicalism reached Gitano people in Villaverde in the 1970s and 1980s through the efforts of Gitano evangelists from the Gypsy Evangelical Movement (GEM). Villaverde is home now to dozens of IEF churches which have become a significant social force among Gitanos and a central component of Gitano social fabric in the area. The case of Villaverde illustrates how the concentration of Gitano population in urban areas has facilitated Gitano believers' evangelisation efforts. Urban modes of life have led to new structures of identification for Gitanos, prominent among which stand evangelical religious churches. In Villaverde, churches gather thousands of Gitano people daily, showing a capacity for mobilisation that vastly outstrips that of any other Gitano institution or organisation.

While I stuck to Villaverde as the primary spatial focus of my dissertation, I regularly visited other IEF churches in Madrid. Temporary interchurch mobility within the IEF churches is not strange to the experience of Gitano believers. Gitano believers usually know short-term visiting practices by the term *visitas* (visits). Visitas are widespread practices among Gitano people, since Gitano families frequently get involved in economic activities (animal trading, grape harvesting etc.) that require temporary cross-country travelling, and serve the purpose for believers of staying in touch with God, while one is away from home. My regular visits to other IEF churches enabled me to broaden my experience and further my first-hand knowledge about how Gitano churches organise themselves. I also briefly extended my fieldwork to Barcelona, where I had the opportunity to interview members of the upper management of the IEF (see chapter one. Finally, I complemented my research on Gitano Pentecostalism by conducting additional fieldwork at a Madrid-based Gitano church that split off from the IEF and joined a transnational Christian movement linked to the Prosperity Gospel (PG). In conducting my research thus, I aim to show that the Gitano evangelical movement is subject to

processes of reinvention that relate to the emergence of new Gitano identities and ways of interacting with the non-Gitano population.

I have made use of a set of ethnographical data-gathering methods that include participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, and analysis of documentary sources. Juxtaposing long-term ethnographical observation, interviews with leaders, and critical text analysis, my dissertation opens new questions and furthers academic knowledge regarding the ethnographic study of Roma groups by revealing the intricacies of ethnographic encounters shaped by unequal power relations, negotiations, and interests. Additionally, the reader will gain an insight into the potentials—and limits—of ethnographical methodologies applied to the study of conversion-based religions.

I rely on ethnographic methods to generate and craft evidence and use fieldwork experience as the primary tool to access and organise the production of knowledge. My materials, thus, are profoundly shaped by my experience. This approach has some shortcomings. My positionality in the fieldwork (male, young, non-Gitano) precluded my access to female informants and the female's world. In that sense, my experience in fieldwork resonates with other male ethnographers' fieldwork experience with Roma (Stewart 1997:12) and Gitano people (Jiménez Royo 2018:9; Lagunas 2005:16).

I am aware that in this dissertation, I portray evangelical Gitanos in a positive light. One reason for this is that I am friends with many of my informants. Most importantly, my empirical material was produced in my formal and informal interactions with believers. In our interactions, they strove to show me the virtues of their religion and the benefits of conversion. Separating evangelistic narratives and facts is undoubtedly a daunting task here, not least because for evangelicals they usually come together. To counterbalance this positively-biased perspective, it is essential not to lose sight of some

facts, such as that Pentecostalism is a highly conservative religion that is antagonistic to progressive political views on gender issues and discourages believers from exploring dissident LGBT+ sexual identities. Also, Gitano Pentecostalism obscures the ethnic and class structures that shape the lives of Gitanos by focusing on sinful individual behaviour inspired by the Devil, which might lead to political demobilisation.

The Rise to Prominence of Gitano Pastors

Gitanos have historically countered extreme structural marginalisation with strong ethnic closure. One characteristic that defines Gitanos is resilience: they resist the pressure from society to assimilate and lose their distinctive culture and values. Before the arrival of Pentecostalism to Spain, the social ties between Gitanos were not based on a collective image involving a high level of cohesion, or on representing themselves as being from a common descent as a people, but rather on the sharing of a series of codes and a particular form of conduct and behaviour. That is, in the performativity of a set of shared cultural features (Gay y Blasco 1999). Their sense of identity and cohesion stems from their shared value system, expressed among the Gitanos as the *Ley Gitana* (Gitano Law). The Gitano Law, an orally transmitted honour code on how to conduct oneself, is a clear example of the prominence of a will to act and behave according to cultural norms and preserve a sense of distinctiveness. Critical to the Gitano Law is the prominent role given to respected, male, older ethnic figures such as *Tíos* in tackling internal conflicts. Tíos, also known as *patriarcas*, have an enormous influence over their extended families (Gamella 1996; Lagunas 2006:149–249, San Roman 1997:92–160). Beyond kinship structures, ‘men of respect’—influential Tíos who lead strong kin communities—stand as leaders that occasionally transcend kinship differentiation. They are called in to act as ethnic mediators and to settle conflicts among nonrelated Gitano patrigroups if recognised as respectable elders by the parties involved.

Despite that Tíos and men of respect epitomise ethnic prestige and authority, some other individuals have become influential figures among Gitano communities. The production of plans and development schemes, in the backdrop of extensive rural-urban mass migration in the second half of the twentieth century, led to the emergence of a new milieu whereby new figures gained dominance. As Teresa San Román has documented (1997), chief among these Gitano figures in the early stages of urbanisation stood the *caciques* (despots), who, mistakenly acknowledged by local government officials as valid interlocutors for local Gitano families, utilised their connection to the payo world (local politicians, social workers etc.) to monopolise decisions about distribution of housing and other services in growing chaotic urban settings.

Various Gitano associations' leaders and activists are other secular Gitano figures with a certain social weight. Interestingly enough, most Gitano-led and pro-Gitano NGOs and associations were born approximately at the same time as the IEF. Pioneer organisations such Asociación Secretariado General Gitano (current Fundación Secretariado Gitano) or Unión Romaní, were founded as the outcome of social mobilisation of individuals close to progressive Catholic individuals sensitive to social justice, Gitano needs and poor living conditions (San Román 1999:38). Despite activists and organisations mobilising against payo oppression and racism, as well as demands for more political participation and sensitive policies for Gitano people, Gitanos rarely confer on them cultural recognition. Gitano political and NGO organisations are organised under non-Gitano parameters and premised on institutional supports of non-Gitano origin. In essence, associations are outward-looking structures, seeking to cement representative roles and to gain influence and resources in the payo world. Key to Gitano NGO and others' sociopolitical structures is that they covet participation in non-Roma political bodies; the creation of practical and imaginative (secular) links with Roma elsewhere; to

transcend barriers of ethnic affiliation, language, and lifestyle; the production of written material in the dominant language of law and politics; and access to educational, economic and technological resources (Gay y Blasco 2000:180). Such political, payo-like forms of organisation of Gitano associations prompt recognition gaps for Gitanos (Fresno 1991).

The rise to prominence of Pentecostal and charismatic male pastors has saliently impacted Gitano political organisation, and how Gitano prestige and hierarchies are constructed. In sharp contrast to Gitano caciques and associations/NGO representatives, Gitano church leaders are informed and inspired by traditional forms of cultural prestige and authority ideals. Drawing from his work in Latin American, sociologist of religion David Martin points out that the exercise of pastoral oversight among Pentecostal communities is bound to echo the forms of authority to which believers were used before conversion because the religious transformation is simultaneously a social transition (Martin 2002:13). Lalive Dépinay's classic study of Chilean Pentecostalism and what he calls ‘the hacendado model’ proves to be a telling example of this pattern. Traditional Chilean society was defined by the prominence of colonial figures, such as El Patron, or the landowner. With industrialisation and economic development, patrons lost their influence and became fading figures within the Chilean social structure. According to Lalive Dépinay, evangelical pastors in the 1960s built upon elements associated with this figure in order to gain fidelity and respect from Chilean believers. In other words, Pentecostalism has provided a new, vigorous legitimation for the persistence of this image in South American societies. The pastor, back in the 1960s a new personality in Chilean society, fulfilled a function which social change did not eliminate but left vacant (1969:83). Not unlike the Chilean Pentecostalism studied by Lalive d'Epinay in the 1970s, Spanish Gitano people’s migration to cities coincided with the historical arrival of

Pentecostalism in Spain and the springing up of new sources of authority based in religion. Similarly, Gitano people have moulded new religiously-based authority onto previous secular systems of distribution of power.

Gay y Blasco (1999; 2000) and, more recently, Canton Delgado (2017) have noted the prominence of a transfer of authority, from male Tíos to pastors, and from older to younger male Gitanos, among Gitano people. The principles of new religious hierarchies do not emerge in opposition to, but rather following, secular sources of masculine prestige among Gitano people. Gay y Blasco has proposed that 'knowledge' and 'respect' are the predominant sources of male prestige for elderly Tíos (Gay y Blasco 1999:159). Gitano elders acquire importance by displaying an ability to distinguish between proper and improper behaviour and to exert control over their anger in the face of conflict with unrelated men—what they call knowledge—as well as by being truthful and polite to other Gitano people, having a conscience around sexual shame, and controlling 'their' women—what they call respect. Similarly, the IEF pastors strive to demonstrate moral integrity, sexual shame, and a composed mood; they always stay calm in any situation and display great self-control in the face of any sort of potential conflict.

The IEF is male dominant both in ideology and organisation. Becoming a pastor and being involved in relevant decision making in the church is an exclusively male privilege. Male pastors acquire prestige by showcasing proper behaviour. A pastor must demonstrate his worth via good moral conduct—what believers call proof of testimony––or else lose the loyalty and admiration to which he is entitled through his position. Gay y Blasco (2000) draws attention to the fact that the IEF pastors, 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 the first to be served by women (Gay y Blasco 2000:13). Despite the youth of many pastors, they have the authority to decide on

appropriate punishment for wrongdoers and manage the church's money. Additionally, converts call on them to mediate conflicts—sometimes together with elders, sometimes on their own—marital problems, quarrels over selling locations, fights, or feuds (Gay y Blasco 2000:12). In that respect, the IEF pastors' role is similar to that of 'men of respect'. The principles of knowledge and respect continue to work as bases for the ascription of prestige and authority for pastors yet converted young Gitano cohorts also embrace them. Young pastors strive to shift away from sexual promiscuity, drinking and recklessness, and incarnate ideals associated with their elders. Thus, they dissociate knowledge and respect from their age context and emphasise their achieved rather than their ascribed aspect, which enables them to present themselves as the elite of the Gitano community (Gay y Blasco 2000:14).

Despite the similarities, the emergence of religious leaders indexes a shift of internal group hierarchies among Gitano people. Gitano evangelical structures of authority not only reflect but also challenge traditional Gitano hierarchies. The popularisation of Christian identities that cut across lines of kinship indexes the emergence of an encompassing system of authority among Gitano believers. For Gay y Blasco:

> [the IEF] have set in place the beginning of a new hierarchy of power and status, which is based on the position of authority of the Church and which transcends kinship differentiation, allowing some men—the best-known pastors, famed for their preaching or their ability to cure or cast-off demons—to have sway over hundreds or even thousands of converts. (2001:644)

Although the roles and spheres of influence of the secular ethnic figures of prestige and pastors are similar, one crucial aspect that distinguishes one from the other is that pastors gain much of their reputation in ritual contexts. Rituals become political spaces in which male Gitano pastors create distinctive sources of prestige and status.

Gitano pastors are said to be God-chosen leaders with unique qualities that legitimate their leading role in the church. Gitano believers often prefer Gitano pastors to payo ones. The reason is that Gitano pastors preach and lead congregations from a culturally informed position that enables them to generate messages resonant with Gitanos' cultural background. Crucially, ethnicity shapes the communicative ritual space too. According to widespread narratives in the IEF, God has bestowed unique abilities upon Gitano pastors to spread the Gospel. Gitano believers claim that 'Gitano pastors are the best preachers in the world', thus superior to their payo counterparts. Believers also place ethnic trust at the centre of pastors' legitimacy. While one of the most deep-seated payo stereotypes about Gitano people is that they are incorrigible con artists, who are prone to scam and lie,[4] Gitano believers—conversely—deem Gitano people to be the embodiment of honesty, at least when they are dealing with other Gitanos. For them, *palabra de Gitano* (a Gitano's word of honour) is inherently trustworthy. Therefore, many Gitano believers trust pastors not just because they have been chosen by God to lead them but also because they are one of their very own and expect them to honour Gitano values.

Beyond Kinship: the Emergence of Gitano Evangelical Communities

Kinship is a social phenomenon extensively studied among Gitano people. Academic studies in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s unanimously refer to Gitano kinship as the most significant social formation in Gitano identity (Árdevol 1986; Gamella 1996; Gay y Blasco 1999:139–153; Lagunas 20005:149–249; San Román 1997:92–160). In contrast to the Hungarian Roms described by Stewart, who stick together in the ghetto through the

[4] Stereotypical negative references to Gitanos as being of an untrustworthy nature are ubiquitous in Spanish culture. Literature and other art forms consistently portray them as the embodiment of *pillería española* (Spanish cunningness). The most influential institutional authority over the Spanish language in Spain, El Real Diccionario de la Academia Española' (Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy), still considers to this day the term *trapacero* ('those who cunningly cheat, fake and lie over particular issues') as a synonym for Gitano people.

ethics of communal life (Stewart 1997:39; 43–44), Spanish Gitanos have been described by most Spanish ethnographic scholars as a social group with a resilient common identity vis-à-vis payos but fragmented in structural terms. Gitanos have been portrayed as an ethnic group that disparages any organisational form other than kinship (San Román 1984:39), interacting predominantly with their relatives, even to the extent of restricting their contact with unrelated Gitanos (Gay y Blasco 1999). For Gitano people, their kin are a lifelong vital anchor and shelter in a social world dominated by payo people. Like other Roma groups, intergenerational mixing, and the traditional approach to learning through family and socialisation (Liegeois 1987; Okely 1983; Vanderbeck 2005) is a prominent feature of Gitano social life. The dynamics of social exclusion and endogamy, in tandem with the rejection of non-kin interactions, have encouraged what Gay y Blasco has called ethnosociability: 'the highly intense experience of spending daily life within a dense web of interactions with close bilateral kin, which make kin relations extraordinarily deep' (Gay y Blasco 2005:167). The experiential force nurtured by the prominence of kin gives shape to endogamous collective identities. Similar to the Romanian Cortorar described by Tesar (2012:131), Gitanos often place the idiom of shared blood at the core of their conception of relatedness and believe that the wider the blood distance, the more likely it is that a relationship would be infused with feelings of insecurity, suspicion and distrust (see also Gay y Blasco 2005).

The IEF churches embrace the importance of kin to Gitano social life. Local kin communities are usually the backbone of evangelical Gitano congregations, and church ceremonies function as prominent meeting spaces for relatives. In my fieldwork, I hardly ever encountered a Gitano person coming to church on their own, without close relatives present in the ceremony. Gitanos' broad and robust kin networks operate as powerful channels for evangelisation. Unremitting evangelisation efforts from Gitanos towards

their kin, predicated on a deep fear of their relatives missing out on God's blessings and facing eternal condemnation, are common currency among believers in the IEF.

This robust entanglement between kinship and church distinguishes the IEF's congregations from other Pentecostal formations elsewhere and shows the adaptability and flexibility of Pentecostal forms of organisation. Situated at the frontier between the individual and the collective, the act of conversion might generate a blurring of family referents (Tank-Storper 2013). In this regard, Joseph Tonda (2005) speaks of 'de-parentalisation' to underline the weakening of clan or lineal kinship ties in favour of new forms of sociability and relationships that are emerging within the 'community of believers'. Other authors refer to a 'realignment' of social relations (Engelke 2011) or a 'restructuring' of family ties (van Dijk 2002). Scholars working in varying regions of Africa have suggested that being born-again is perceived as a radical rupture not only from one's sinful past but also from the wider family and village of origin (Engelke 2004; Laurent 2001; Meyer 1999; Marshall-Fratani 1998; van Dijk 1998). As Birgit Meyer (2004) puts it, religious conversion and deliverance of spirits are understood as 'cutting blood ties' (thus preventing jealous family members and demanding spirits to intrude upon a person), so for many believers, the Pentecostal-charismatic practice ultimately affirms the impossibility for born-again Christians to escape from forces grounded in and emanating from the local (2004:457). In stark contrast, the IEF Church relies and builds itself upon local secular kin structures. Kinship groups and churches are not conflicting structures. Instead, the exact opposite is true: kinship provides the foundation for the Church, and many pastors build their authority over kinship networks and, due to this, they have consistent and powerful grass-roots social support (Cantón Delgado 2017:83).

However, and this is key for my argument, the church prompts opportunities for Gitano people to explore encompassing modes of sociability that not only incorporate but

also transcend kinship allegiances. As I will further explore in this dissertation (see chapter 5), this attending to the values of Christian fraternity holds special critical significance against the backdrop of Gitano life where feuds between Gitano families have negative consequences for those involved. The importance of pastors' efforts to forge community bonds ties into deep-seated fears linked to the relevance of kin in Gitano social life. In their sermons, evangelical pastors go a long way towards rejecting violence: feuds, they argue, must cease and give way to a more harmonious and cohesive realisation of Gitano-ness. The evangelical Gitano movement challenges the historical Gitano ethnic structural fragmentation by emphasising the idea of Gitano fraternity which is experienced in church structures with a singular and common goal: bringing together Gitano people to pray to God. Regularly, some travel to join other Gitano converts in massive religious assemblies called *convenciones*[5] where they get to meet Gitanos from other parts of Spain. Importantly, convenciones bring together believers regardless of the levels of their economic success, a factor which weighs heavily on Gitanos' imaginative configurations of themselves. One development that signals how Pentecostalism is creating unifying imaginaries is that some Biblical names, particularly Old Testament ones linked to Israel such as Joshua, Abraham, Moses, Sara, Deborah or Abigail, have become extremely popular among Gitano people.

At a local level, Gitano congregations use Christian idioms such as 'God's Children' to describe congregation member relationships. During ceremonies, believers address other members of the congregation—even if they happen to be relatives—by heavily laden community terms such as *hermano* (brother) or *hermana* (sister). If

[5] Congregations are the structural point of reference for believers, and central to their experience. *Convenciones* counteract this inertia and enable believers to experience their religiosity in new settings and to explore religiously-driven modes of sociability in the IEF institutional framework.

approaching someone, pastors usually add these terms before their names (e.g., brother Álvaro, sister Cristina). In religious ceremonies, pastors often ask believers to hug the person sitting next to them, encouraging them to say aloud loving phrases such as *te quiero hermano/a* (I love you, brother/sister). Church activities include picnics and barbecues and leisure activities such as watching football games or going to amusement parks. Key to this new mode of sociability is that all Gitanos must unite and converts must socialise with non-kin, preach to unrelated Gitanos (very rarely to unrelated payos), and come together at services and campaigns aimed at spreading the word of God to other Gitanos. Churches thus engender new social structures shaped by processes of accommodation between local kin and congregations, which extend the sphere of contact and significant relationships among Gitanos.

The Order of the Chapters

In the preliminary chapter, 'An Ethnography Among Gitano Evangelical Communities: Believing, Becoming, and Belonging', I provide an account of my fieldwork experience and how my positionality in the field shaped my knowledge production practices. This chapter focuses on how I built up a rapport with Gitano believers in church and gathered the information on which the rest of the dissertation is based.

Chapter one, 'Negotiating Authority: The Politics of the IEF's Organisational Form', analyses how Gitano pastors have put in place a Presbyterian system of organisation centred around values, imagery, and ideals that replicate fundamental dimensions of Gitano kin-based political structures in several vital respects. Here, I lay out the mechanisms through which Gitano pastors incorporate Gitano ways into the local churches and national leading structures and draw forth the tensions and complexities that give shape to these processes of adaptation. By examining the IEF's structure, I seek to

contribute to the study of ethnic-based religious institutions and to illustrate the variety of organisational forms inherent to evangelical movements.

Chapter two, 'Christianity, Ritual and Charismatic Pastors', examines the rise of Gitano pastors as community leaders and sheds light on the shift of internal group hierarchies. It highlights how the IEF's structure of authority not only reflects but also challenges traditional group hierarchies. I begin by arguing that the IEF church leaders rely on varying mechanisms to obtain authority. I then engage with scholarly work on rituals and political and religious legitimacy to conceptualise *charisma* as the specific source of authority characteristic of pastors. The content of the chapter also contributes to debates on subjectivity and the body as critical aspects of scholarly enquiry.

While chapters one and two engage with organisational aspects of the movement, the rest of the dissertation revolves around the dimensions of social life reshaped by the spread of Pentecostalism among Gitanos: memory and identity, gender, and the relationships of believers with payos and nonbelieving Gitanos.

Chapter three 'Christianity and Memory: Remembering the Past', is concerned with the emergence of an evangelical Gitano historical consciousness. This chapter engages with scholarly work in Romani Studies and collective memory by tracing ideas and narratives that generate a shared understanding of a Gitano past. The chapter looks at how tales about the past intertwine with IEF structures of authority to produce new frameworks in which Gitano believers redefine their identity by reimagining their role and telos in the Christian cosmology.

Chapter four, 'Masculinity, Marriage, and Kinship', delves into how churches reshape Gitano masculinity. Engaging with the literature on gender and Pentecostalism, this chapter illustrates how evangelical Gitano churches remake men's authority within

families and gender roles, ultimately transforming the notion of Gitano masculinity itself. By shedding light on how Gitano believers engage with religiously-based forms of masculinity, this chapter also contributes to the advancement of anthropological work on kinship and marriage among Gitanos in Spain.

Chapter five is entitled ‘Becoming a Good Neighbour: Gitanos, Christianity and Virtuous Citizenship’. The chapter illustrates how Gitano believers engage with evangelical Christianity to challenge ethnic stigma and reshape some critical aspects of inter and intracommunity relationships. Moreover, I engage with political debates about the persistence of Roma/Gitano exclusion in contemporary capitalist societies and discuss Christianity's role in shaping Gitano identity and sense of belonging. Through religion, I argue, believers refashion their ethnic pride and reframe their marginal position in contemporary urban spaces in Spain.

The final part of the dissertation opens a window to the study of alternative and emerging ways of engaging with Pentecostalism for Gitano people.

Chapter six, ‘Prosperity Gospel Comes to Town: The Rise of the Rebellious Gitano Pastor’, engages with the literature on the formation of new denominations, as well as broader debates about the dynamics leading to schisms in Protestant organisations (Bruce 1990). In this chapter, I explore the Gitano Pentecostal movement beyond the boundaries of the IEF, looking at how some IEF-trained Gitano pastors challenge the authority of, and the ethnoreligious institutional identity upheld by, the elite of the Gitano church. My focal point is the life story, doctrinal vision and religious teachings of Pastor Susi, a Gitano pastor whose multicultural church in Madrid split off from the IEF and joined a transnational Christian movement linked to the Prosperity Gospel (PG). I show how PG works as a locally embedded religious doctrine predicated on notions of self-

improvement and upward mobility. Within the context of Gitano evangelism, PG represents a fundamental innovation, an essential departure from previous ways of conceptualising Christianity and experiencing religiosity by Gitanos in Spain.

AN ETHNOGRAPHY AMONG GITANO EVANGELICAL COMMUNITIES: BELIEVING, BECOMING, AND BELONGING

Spickard et al. noted (2000; see also Griera 2015) that the social scientific study of religion is shifting away from previous research agendas based on the quantitative methodologies and approaches that once dominated the field. Social scientists interested in religion need not only understand patterns but also meaning, which is leading many to embrace the ethnographic way. Ethnography's second-class status in the study of religion seems fated to end (Spickard et al. 2000:3).

The statement above is one I believe profoundly accurate. Ethnography illuminates intimate and everyday critical aspects of social life otherwise inaccessible by other methodologies. Through observations, storytelling, conversations and reflection on fieldwork materials, ethnographers weave a complex picture of life for communities and individuals. Ethnographic approaches, however, come with difficulties and challenges. To illustrate some of these difficulties and challenges in the context of Gitano churches, and in how I immerse myself in a Pentecostal and ethnic Christian environment alien to my own belief system and values, I dedicate this chapter.

In the introduction, I noted that some of my attributes (payo, male) limited my access to the gendered dimension of the Gitano social world, such as women's worldviews. The fact that I primarily focus on the institutional aspects of the IEF churches is also a by-product of my experience in the field: the public male-dominated world of the church was a more welcoming environment than some other private social spaces. This chapter further looks at how positionality, as well as interactions and behaviour in the field, shape knowledge production practices. In it, I examine some key attitudes and ways of approaching church activities that enabled me to build up a rapport with Gitano

believers in church and eventually granted me the opportunity to gather the knowledge on which the rest of the dissertation is based. Despite the fact that my fieldwork was multi-sited and that I visited other Spanish regions, such as Barcelona, this chapter primarily focuses on my experience in Madrid, since it was here that I lived through most of my fieldwork experience. As part of this reflective exercise, the chapter shows how my presence in the field shaped social dynamics in Villaverde Gitano churches. Gitano believers, like other protestant Christians, engage in the politics of representation and interpret what ethnographers do in accordance with their own agendas (Coleman 2000:77). The influence of payo cultural domination, as expressed through my presence in the fieldwork, and the creative response to it by Gitano pastors—which was based on the use of my attributes to reinforce their own worldviews before congregations—is intrinsically part of this chapter.

Even though I lack a Gitano cultural and evangelical background, believers were rapidly open to accepting me as a member of the church and responded to most of my questions. The reason why, I was often told, is because they felt God had called me to convert, and they wanted to be part of my spiritual awakening. Despite the fact that I am not a Christian, and often felt a sense of uneasiness when I had to participate in long religious services where people engage with dancing and speaking in tongues enthusiastically, I blended in and performed mimetic acts (Coleman 2000:81; see also Coleman 2015). That I was continually enquiring about their beliefs, experiences and opinions, as well as participating in ceremonies—where I made an effort to learn how to pray and sing the way Gitano people do—was interpreted as a sign that I was going down the right path to convert.

The First Encounter: Finding a Place for my Fieldwork

The IEF Villaverde church[6] is a precarious barrack-like shanty infrastructure granted by Madrid City Council to the Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia (IEF) some decades ago. The place is difficult to spot, as it is located on a roadside behind a woodland area, facing a public cemetery on one side, and a muddy plain on the other. The church is home to the first Gitano evangelical congregation established in Villaverde.

The church is well known among Gitanos in the area, including nonbelievers. In fact, it was a nonbeliever Gitano friend of mine who recommended me to get in touch with this church to understand the role of the IEF churches in Villaverde. When I arrived at the church, I introduced myself to some believers that happened to be chatting outside and asked them if they would oblige me by calling the head pastor of the church to meet me. One elderly man came out instead, and informed me they did not have a head pastor leading the church at that moment, and invited me inside to listen to *la palabra de Dios* (the word of God).

Over the following days, I came to learn that the *Obreros*-—resting pastors that temporarily fulfil the roles of head pastors when the latter are absent—were struggling to find a suitable head pastor experienced enough to lead the congregation. The Obreros allowed me to visit the congregation daily for the first few days, yet they deferred the final decision about my request to conduct long-term fieldwork in the congregation until the time they had secured the appointment of a new head pastor. For me to join the congregation as a researcher, I was told, the new head pastor needed to agree. Several

[6] Public information initiative Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso has made a substantial effort to map out and pinpoint evangelical religious centres across Spain. As much praise as they deserved for the effort, I usually found that Gitano churches were wrongly allocated, and many were not even gathered on their list. Adding to the problem is that Gitano churches' locations often move following low land prices, and many are kept unregistered.

weeks elapsed before a group of Obreros came back to me and brought to my attention the existence of a nearby Gitano church named La Pequeña Villa, led by a Gitano pastor with family ties to members of the IEF Villaverde. They suggested I should conduct my fieldwork there instead as, after having talked to the pastor of La Pequeña Villa about my doctoral project, he had agreed to meet with me. The day after this conversation, I followed the suggestions of Villaverde Church's Obreros and headed out to my soon-to-be main fieldwork site.

Introducing Pastor Vaca and La Pequeña Villa

La Pequeña Villa stands in the innermost part of a dilapidated Villaverde industrial warehouse, hidden far from sight among car repair shops. Although I was born and raised in Villaverde, and the church is located quite close to my parents' home, I had never realised a Gitano church stood there. This low-cost venue is the only place the La Pequeña Villa congregation can afford to lease. Overly warm in summer and excessively cold in winter, churchgoers complain continually and wish they could afford to rent other premises. As in the Congolese Kimbanguist Church in London described by Garbin, La Pequeña Villa's spatial experience is synonymous with invisibility and precarious territoriality (Garbin 2013:682). Gitano believers' spatial marginality mirrors the social marginality suffered by the members of the congregation in their everyday lives in Villaverde. In the interior, La Pequeña Villa is an unassuming and stripped-down place, made up of some run-down backrest-less wooden benches organised in rows, which are divided in the middle by a central aisle leading to a focal overhead platform. Sticking out of the platform is a carved pulpit with the symbol of the seven golden candlesticks described in the Book of the Apocalypse, representing the Seven Churches—including the Church of Philadelphia—first called up by Jesus before the Last Judgment.

La Pequeña Villa is one of the most recently established IEF churches in Villaverde. Its official name is Iglesia Evangélica de la Pequeña Villa, though members refer to it as La Pequeña Villa. La Pequeña Villa's regular attendance ranges from one hundred to one hundred and fifty, reaching peaks of two hundred on some weekends. La Pequeña Villa is led by Villaverde born-and-raised Pastor Vaca, a Gitano man in his late thirties and father of two little girls.

Pastor Vaca is the nephew of one of the chief Obreros of Villaverde. Following a period as an apprentice (a role known by Gitano believers as *Candidato*—candidate) in Villaverde congregation, Pastor Vaca decided on opening a new church. In Spanish, Villaverde translates to '(green) village' and *pequeña villa* translates to 'small village', so the chosen name for the church is evidence of the existence of close ties to the locality and the main Villaverde church.[7] Every so often, the two congregations become virtually one as some members hold a sort of dual membership and attend both, primarily depending on the quality of guest preachers or music chorus for that day. Some Obreros demonstrate their support for the La Pequeña Villa congregation by preaching there during the weekends.

While every member of the congregation is meant to be a believer, not every believer shows the same degree of commitment to the church. The most critical divide that splits the congregation is the experience of water baptism. Water baptism is an adult experience, which marks and expresses a lifelong commitment to the church publicly and consists of a symbolic ritual that usually takes place at riversides and beaches, in which believers, following Jesus's example, come into the water to cleanse their sins. Securing

[7] Despite La Pequeña Villa's name being resonant with Pastor Vaca's religious project and agenda, most congregation's names solely reflect the locality where they are situated. Furthermore, I frequently found that pastors and believers were not clear as to the official names of a particular congregation, and on occasion, they even gave me different ones, since some names were created ad hoc to meet the requirements of payo bureaucracy.

a high number of baptised members of the congregation has been a critical step forward for La Pequeña Villa's survival. The baptised members are expected to engage and commit significantly to the church in different ways, including regularly attending, following pastors' teachings at face value, actively participating in events, supporting the work of the church through regular tithing, and even sharing the expenses for any extra costs (improvement work, shortage of tithes) that may arise.

Pastor Vaca puts in place mechanisms to prevent dropouts and secure La Pequeña Villa's survival. Often, he preaches to La Pequeña Villa believers that idleness and sloth towards attending church are by-products of the Devil's evil actions and strategy. One of the primary missions of the Devil, he preaches, is that of preventing Christians from being on the right spiritual track by keeping them away from church. The impact of Pastor Vaca's words has mixed results. Dropouts, paired with comebacks, are a typical pattern for many members of the congregations.

During my fieldwork at La Pequeña Villa's church, I came to know pastor Vaca's life story and testimony. As it is often the case with Gitanos in Villaverde, everyone knew him by his given name, and no one seemed to call him by his real name (Rafael). Vaca's nickname was given to him when he was an overweight child, and it is a direct reference to the animal cow. In Spanish, *vaca* translates as cow. In Spain, when someone is overweight, and someone else intends to mock that person, it is common to say *estás gordo como una vaca* (you are as fat as a cow). Pastor Vaca has kept his nickname to this day, even though he is no longer overweight. Pastor Vaca converted when he was fifteen years old, in a past life that he characterises as being riddled with Satan's temptations to commit crimes of theft and use drugs. In his account, just when Vaca resigned himself to follow that path in the world, God called him to amend his ways and become a leader of the IEF (see chapter 5). Vaca made a name for himself as a street evangelist in Villaverde

throughout his period of trial as a pastor. Following a typical Pentecostal trope, Pastor Vaca shared with me that he was selected by God to become a pastor. Opening a church was not his decision, but God's calling put the mission into his heart. Pastor Vaca formed La Pequeña Villa after organising private ceremonies at his home and securing some believers' attendance. Subsequently, he found the premises, borrowed some money from his family, and rented the place that currently serves as the venue for La Pequeña Villa.

Pastor Vaca's relatives—who make up a significant portion of the congregation—and other Gitano families in the neighbourhood comprise La Pequeña Villa's congregation. This reality remained obscure to me for a long time since Pastor Vaca and the congregation never disclosed to me which members are relatives or what degree of relatedness weaves together the members of the church. As noted in the introduction, believers instead use religious idioms invoking spiritual kinship, such as 'brothers and sisters' or 'God's children' to describe congregation members' relationships. My non-Gitano background and lack of relatedness to Gitano families placed me in a position where I could hardly make out, or make sense of, the underlying kin relationship that manifestly shaped congregation membership and leadership. Family ties are an implicit form of knowledge of which I hardly scratched the surface and which Gitanos seemingly wanted to keep to themselves. Gitanos never talked to me spontaneously about their relation to the other members of the church, and it was only when approaching the end of my fieldwork that I came to learn with a certain degree of consistency who was related to who in the congregation. Even to this day, my knowledge remains sketchy.

Nevertheless, La Pequeña Villa's story illustrates the transition of authority structures among Gitano believers and the role of kinship in the formation of Gitano churches. Although many members of La Pequeña Villa are Gitano elders, Pastor Vaca is the most important believer in the church. Similar to what respected elders do outside

of church, Pastor Vaca mediates conflicts between Gitanos and commands strong authority. The existence of a previous kin relationship between Pastor Vaca and some of the members of the congregation indicates the transference of sway between secular and religious spaces has taken on particular significance in La Pequeña Villa. However, Pastor Vaca has established himself as a prestigious leader who transcends kinship differentiation, exerting his influence over large numbers of Gitano believers.

Cultos and the IEF in Villaverde

The first thing I learned about the IEF churches is that Gitanos rarely use the generic word 'church' when mentioning the IEF religious services. Instead, believers know churches as *cultos*. The use of the term culto is not a simple matter of name preference. For my interlocutors, the term culto has become synonymous with a specific Gitano religious structure. As a concept, the word culto is used to define three distinctive but related areas of meaning: organised religious ritual actions; the physical space where believers gather; and the organisational unit—the congregation. Cultos are, thus, ritualistic and congregationally-based modes of invoking and organising access to the sacred in a community space within the religious authority and power structures of the IEF.

Cultos are prominent spaces for Gitano religious communities. Unlike their Catholic counterparts in Spain, Gitano evangelicals hold hardly any sway over Christian private schools, and only a few public schools offer evangelical courses in their curriculum. Therefore, cultos become the prime sites where evangelical Gitanos experience and learn about their faith.

The IEF cultos follow a typically Methodist type of congregational organisation. While it is true that there is a church in practically every area where Gitano people live (Gay y Blasco 1999:54), the goal of the IEF is not opening one church in every locality

in an orderly manner, but rather to establish as many churches as possible in each area.[8] As a result of this way of organising and expanding, finding various churches in the same locality is not unusual in Madrid.

Some significant implications stemming from these patterns of urban territorial expansion are that despite the formidable overall size of its membership, and unlike other large Pentecostal congregations elsewhere (Chaves 2006; Chin 2007; Elisha 2011; Ellingson 2010), the IEF is notorious for its lack of megachurch structures. In fact, the opposite is true: the IEF's cultos frequently spread and divide. Indeed, according to my experience, the vast majority of Gitano cultos are, in turn, by-products of the split of other previously founded congregations. The first culto put in place in a locality is known as the Mother Church (Iglesia Madre). If subsequent congregations are born from the Mother Church, the new congregations will for some time bear the name of Daughter Church (Iglesia Hija). For instance, La Pequeña Villa Church is Villaverde Church's daughter. Parentage relationship is not followed here by a hierarchical or status structure, though. The relationship between mother and daughter cultos is one of aid, as the former usually assist the latter in various ways, generally providing resources or pastors until the latter can stand on their own feet. When the daughter church is fully functional, it gains full independence, and that parentage relationship loses its significance. I often found that young pastors and believers in Madrid ignored the previous existence of a mentoring relationship between their churches and mother churches. However, mother churches usually hold social prominence in the area where they were established, and Gitano

[8] Despite Villaverde being home to many Gitano churches, I found that some Gitano believers resident in the area attended an IEF located in a wealthy Gitano enclave in the centre of Madrid dominated by their extended kin (*razas*). By posing that economic or kin relationships shape attendance in some localities, I do not deny those divisions might be occasionally subsumed into church structures. Instead, my point is that the IEF's highly decentralised forms of organisation prove to be an effective and flexible way to deal with, and accommodate, social divides in a broader and single religious organisation when those divides matter for believers.

believers show deference and acknowledge them as reference points in the evangelical Gitano landscape.

My Role as a Payo and Nonbeliever Ethnographer

Cultural identities in cultos—and this pattern can be extended to every culto I visited in the south of Madrid—are usually Gitano. La Pequeña Villa's members never devoted any significant amount of time evangelising among unrelated payo people. Other than me, a few other payo people regularly attended the religious service. However, payo people who attend La Pequeña Villa periodically are either married to or have some degree of relatedness to Gitano people. In that sense, the Gitano cultural identity of most members of the congregation acts as a centrifugal force for Gitano people and centripetal force for unrelated payo people.

Having explained my PhD project to him, Pastor Vaca permitted me to conduct my research in la Pequeña Villa. This approval was somehow a risky move on his end. At the time of my fieldwork, his culto was unlicensed, lacking the required licence from the Spanish Ministry of Justice to carry out religious activities. The fact of being a local and neighbour worked in my favour and was crucial to Pastor Vaca's acceptance. However, my presence also played out a role in Pastor Vaca's agenda. Cooperation between scholars and religious leaders is necessary and useful, but their interests in the cooperation are often radically different (Geertz 2000:235). I soon realised that, just as I utilised my ethnographical experience to gain a PhD degree and advance my academic career, Pastor Vaca used my presence to his own ends. Pastor Vaca seized any opportunity to capitalise on my attributes (payo, white, university graduate). From the time I become a regular attendee at church, I was catapulted to the centre of the community in public religious ceremonies. On the day I was introduced to the congregation, Pastor Vaca,

situated at the pulpit, asserted that my university's interest in the congregation was evidence of how well the IEF in general, and La Pequeña Villa in particular, were doing things. Throughout my stay in *el culto de La Pequeña Villa*, Pastor Vaca often looked for my public approval on historical facts he would bring up in his preaching, so I would act as an external source that validated the integrity of his statements. Some other pastors tried to capitalise on my presence in cultos too. Several times various guest preachers pointed at me during the peak of the ritual ceremony to advise me 'they had a bespoken message from God' calling on me to repent and join the church. The fact that the message was always delivered during a public ritual performance led me to conclude preachers saw in my noteworthy and somehow anomalous presence an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the power of God to congregations.

Although I made clear from the beginning that I do not hold Christian beliefs, Gitano believers never found my presence and the theme of my dissertation a threat to their faith, but rather saw it as a validation of their belief system. Pastor Vaca and La Pequeña Villa's believers rationalised and integrated my nonbeliever status into their scheme of Pentecostal thinking. Indeed, none were in doubt that, sooner or later, I would convert. However, even though he constantly checked on my spiritual growth, Pastor Vaca never pushed me to accept God, as he firmly believes in the notion of human free will. In this regard, I often heard Pastor Vaca stating *el Señor es un caballero, llama a la puerta, pero no entra sin ser aceptado* (God is a proper gentleman, who never enters your heart without a permit). Pastor Vaca often kept me back to review my spiritual progress and enquire with me about what I had done when not in the church, as well as to make sure I had prayed to God daily. Key to Pastor Vaca's pastoral care towards me was trying to talk me into opening my heart to God. While explaining to me what he meant by this, Pastor Vaca would use a repertoire of biblical imagery. As far as Pastor Vaca was

concerned, my heart was not yet in the proper place, as I suffered from *corazón endurecido* (hardness of heart), mainly because an array of evil spirits tricked me into ignoring God.

Gitano believers interpreted my interest in their church as a manifestation of God's plan for my life. As time went by, more members of the congregation joined Pastor Vaca in the pursuit of persuading me to be more spiritually open minded. My position as a university student played a critical role in congregation members' strategies toward my conversion. According to the general interpretation of the congregation, God, in his infinite wisdom, had used my academic inclination and interest in gaining a PhD degree as a decoy to lure me into what was his real plan all along, taking me to church, so that I would convert. In fact, Pastor Vaca took notice of how much of a stir my university credentials had caused in the congregation and coined for me a suitable nickname: *El Universitario* (the University boy).

On one occasion, Pedro, a member of the congregation, struck up a conversation with me outside the church before the culto got started. Pedro tried to convince me my life choices were going in the wrong direction—the time I had spent studying for my degree could have been put to better use had I spent it gaining knowledge about the most valuable topic of them all: God. On a different occasion, David, another member of the congregation, discouraged me from the effort of trying to rationally understand cultos' occurrences and foretold that the outcome of my research would be my recognition of my human incapacity to understand God's supernatural action. Therefore, my message to the university where I was pursuing my PhD should be that conversion and surrender to God's plan is the only way forward. In the same vein, Pedro's brother Pepe mentioned to me that he had had a spiritual vision one night, in which God himself revealed to him that I would become a renowned university evangelist in the future. The coexistence of

varying religious interpretations, each attempting to make sense of my presence, shows that Pentecostal imagination is inconsistent and fragmented. However, instead of being a weakness, I consider these divergences as evidence of the great flexibility and adaptability of Pentecostal spiritual worldviews. Such flexibility, however, departs from the same place. Gitano believers' interpretations differ in some points but agree upon the essential: one should devote one's life to following and pleasing God.

Learning how to be(come) a member of the congregation

Gitanos believers are driven by a strong desire to know God, and such knowing includes spiritual encounters: hearing God, receiving visions and dreams, feeling the tingle of the Holy Spirit. Similar to other charismatic churches (see Ng 2020:95–96), they tend to see religious meaning in everything and anything, finding divine significance[9] in every aspect of their lives.

Integrating into La Pequeña Villa required that I learn new ways of communicating. La Pequeña Villa's pastor and believers alike, to give an example, open and close regular conversations with other members of the church using distinctive religious terminology such as *bendiciones* (God bless you). If anything goes wrong for any believers, members of the congregation react by framing the problem in spiritual warfare language, asking God to sort it out. One typical way of responding to bad news is by declaring ¡*Dios lo reprenda!* (May God reprehend it!). Equally, any good news is received by thanking God, for instance, by saying ¡*gloria a Dios!* (glory be to God!).

[9] Emily Ng (2020) describes how some Chinese believers in charismatic churches engage in discussion as to what extent humans might mistake their own desire and rationale for divine Will and the relevance of a long-standing conversation at the church surrounding 'caution' (*jinshen*) towards the interpretation of potential spiritual encounters (2020:96). This sort of discussion is also prevalent in La Pequeña Villa, yet Gitano believers often settle their doubts by seeking help from Pastor Vaca in the debate. Church systems of authority, as embodied by Pastor Vaca, thus emerge as institutional structures that validate—and control––individual spiritual experience.

When someone agrees on a statement, one typical response is to assert ‘amen’. The list of examples goes on and on, yet the critical point is that La Pequeña Villa’s members interpret the world using an all-encompassing religious perspective, and form a particular social group that shares values, codes and language which set them apart from nonreligious people. Consequently, the existence of religious language is critical not only to assert common worldviews but also to the conformation of the religious community itself.

Throughout my ethnographic work at La Pequeña Villa, I gradually learnt ‘to speak Pentecostal’ and make use of biblical imagery and terminology to communicate with the members of the congregation. On one occasion, I teased Pepe and Pedro when they performed a popular Christian hymn poorly before the culto started, by mimicking Pastor Vaca’s Pentecostal spiritual warfare way of talking. As part of the joke, I cast demons out of them so that they could live up to what we expected from their singing. Everyone present understood that I implied that demons were to blame for such bad singing and laughed out loud. My impersonation pleased Pastor Vaca, who took my joke as an index of my growing capacity to understand core content of the Pentecostal message (demons always attempt to get in the way when one is trying to establish contact with God) and evidence of my integration in the church.

One of the most critical elements of becoming a member of the congregation is the display of learned behaviour in ritual contexts. Charismatic evangelical believers seek a personal relationship with an interactive God. They imagine God not only as supernaturally powerful but also as intimate (Luhrmann 2020). In other words, God talks back (Luhrmann 2012). Knowing God in this way is not so much a matter of belief as a matter of skill—something that someone learns to do—and the main vehicle for that learning is prayer (Luhrmann 2020:15). Praying is believed to establish a two-way

dialogue that is performed in public rituals. Belonging to the church thus requires mastery of this dialogical way of communicating, and it is an activity learned within the congregation and enacted by experience. Gitano believers in La Pequeña Villa continuously encouraged me to try to reach out to God, and only when I attempted to perform these dialogical conversations were they happy with my engagement in the service. While this religious behaviour might be seen—mistakenly—as delusional or irrational outside the church in Madrid, it fulfils a critical role in the ritual lives of believers. Furthermore, for many Gitano believers, talking in public to God is a rite of passage that confirms your commitment and identity as a Christian.

However, praying is not only a matter of speaking; it also involves the mastery of postures and actions. Learning how to pray correctly correlates with what Marcel Mauss (1936) has called 'the techniques of the body': learned bodily actions that embed certain aspects of culture and express themselves into aspects such as physical motion and skills. Critical to the Gitano Pentecostal way of praying in La Pequeña Villa is body awareness. While praying, Gitano believers must adopt a body position—arms extended, chin up—that symbolises openness to receiving the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Simultaneously, praying—especially when you are asking something from God— involves looking down at the floor as a sign of submission. Gitanos learn this Pentecostal grammar of the body by what Bourdieu (1977) calls mimesis, a powerful experience of socialisation that includes doing and watching others doing it. The mastery of positioning your body and speaking correctly is a marker of religious belonging and it was only when I had learned these that I felt like an (almost) fully-fledged member of the congregation.

Conclusion

It is out of the set of relationships forged in the field that ethnographers access the information and evidence that shape the ethnographic work. Since ethnographers are usually outsiders to the community they interact with, building up such relationships requires a significant amount of time and effort. Ethnographers typically describe experiencing a sense of disjuncture and displacement, which is slowly replaced by understanding and a feeling of belonging (Gay y Blasco and Wardle 2007:145). It is precisely in this light that ethnographers talk about their early fieldwork experiences as a 'state of becoming', marked by socialisation and acculturation into the host group, which takes place in stages (Gay y Blasco and Wardle 2007:146). My experience with Gitano believers, as described above, aligns with these typical experiences that ethnographers face in the field. My process of becoming during fieldwork, though, was felt as anticlimactic by many of my interlocutors. Hopes of conversion were placed upon me by Gitano believers, ones that I never came to realise. I did not convert, and I am still a nonbeliever, and this fact saddened many of my Gitano interlocutors. However, Gitano believers never gave up, and some found an answer for my lack of Christian faith: it was not the right timing. David, one of my closest friends in La Pequeña Villa, told me this when I left the field: *Dios ha plantado su semilla en ti, algún día te convertiras, ya lo veras!* (God has planted his seed in you, and you will convert one day, you will see!). Whether this prognosis will turn out to be true in the future is unbeknownst to me. For now, I shall confine myself to examining the ethnographic material I gathered in my fieldwork about the captivating Gitano evangelical world through the analytical lenses and tools of Sociology and Anthropology.

CHAPTER 1. NEGOTIATING AUTHORITY: THE IEF ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Scholarly approaches to Pentecostal movements emphasise the significance of personal authority in the emergence and organisational structures of large Christian churches. In his influential study of the history and growth of Chilean Pentecostalism, sociologist Lalive D`Epinay (1969) posed that Pentecostal churches are premised on authoritarian and personal systems. According to Lalive D`Epinay, Chilean Pentecostal churches organise around the figure of a founding or prominent pastor with a charismatic halo, whose individual authority is perceived by church members as originating from God and is seldom questioned (Lalive D`Epinay 1969:67–68, see also Bastian 1984:278). Likewise, in his study of the Assemblies of God in Brazil, Andrew Chesnut (1997) remarked that church decision-making concentrates in the hands of the pastor-president, who embodies the 'centralisation of ecclesiastical power' (Chesnut 1997:132–133).

The hyperbolic accumulation of individual power and influence by some pastors has also attracted media interest. In the UK, the BBC has extensively turned its attention to the flashy and lavish lifestyles of self-made millionaire pastors in the USA (BBC 2019); in African countries such as Nigeria (BBC 2011), South Africa (BBC 2014) or Ghana (BBC 2011); as well as in Africa at large (BBC 2006; 2019). In line with these popular media depictions, some scholarly analysis portrays the act of becoming a pastor as a mechanism through which certain Christian leaders climb the social ladder via social and media influence, tithing and donations. The view that some Pentecostal churches are profit oriented, and that this branch of Christianity is embedded within the modern Western capitalist system and material values, is especially relevant for some scholarly approaches, particularly regarding the Prosperity Gospel (PG). PG pastors preach that riches are an index for blessing: thus, pastors rely heavily on conspicuous consumption–

–such as luxury cars or designer suits—to demonstrate their strong connection to God (Hayness 2012; Marshall-Fratani 1998; Maxwell 1998; Meyer 2004:259). In the PG, megachurches pastors build up huge venues to accommodate thousands of believers and often become mass media celebrities (Meyer 2004). They also make extensive use of technology to organise mass sermons and appearances on TV, internet and radio (Coleman 2000).

However, all these elements (a profit-oriented ethos, mass media celebrity culture, material values, and personal leadership as the foundation on which to base ecclesiastic structures) are saliently absent in the IEF.

As noted in the introduction, despite the formidable size of its overall membership, and in stark contrast to the worldwide rise of Pentecostal megachurches across the Christian world, the IEF cultos are usually small. The vast majority of Gitano congregations are, in turn, by-products of the splitting of previously founded congregations. Unlike other sizeable Pentecostal organisations that use the system of division to reproduce, such as Brazil's Assemblies of God, the IEF's mother churches do not hold weekly services where different congregations integrate into a single church run by a president-pastor (Chesnut 1997:133); thus, they do not have individual authoritative figures of reference with the power to dictate doctrine.[10]

The economics of the church do not aim at generating profits for the organisation or for individuals. Conversely, the IEF does not own lofty buildings or invest a large amount of money on trips or mass media. As a matter of fact, most Gitano cultos I am familiar with struggle to cover the expenses of renting their place of worship. Head

[10] However, collaborative joint events are part of IEF institutional activities. The IEF periodically runs cross-culto events known as *reencuentras* that translate roughly into English as encounters. Reencuentras are religious services run jointly by various head pastors who lead cultos located in the same neighbourhood or region.

pastors sometimes receive a monthly wage from the congregation, yet this hardly ever exceeds the minimum wage in Spain. As Manuela Cantón Delgado points out, leading a church often strains pastors as they usually need to have accumulated some capital before they are entrusted with one, frequently expect economic bankruptcy at the end of their mission, and face a constant suspicion of 'sponging off others' (Cantón Delgado 2017:82). Thus, while male Gitano pastors rank among the most prestigious ethnic leaders among Gitano people, rarely do they attain any significant financial gain stemming from their role or position in the IEF that distinguishes them from the rest of the congregation or from other pastors. Hence, Gitano pastors do not climb the social ladder because of their pastoral role.

Similarly to other large Pentecostal churches, the IEF is organised vertically, and is structured through a top-down system led by a national council composed of prominent Gitano leaders that supervise local churches. As Gitano pastors frequently acknowledge, the IEF's structure mirrors that of the Gypsy Evangelical Movement (GEM) in France. In the early 1970s, the GEM's non-Roma founder Pastor Le Cossec assembled a central committee composed of French Romanies and divided France into geographical areas of evangelisation led by local pastors (Le Cossec 2003:102). Likewise, the Spanish IEF's current governing body consists of a pastor-president assisted by a national council that is also divided into several regional areas governed by regional assemblies, which in turn supervise local cultos in each geographical area. However, unlike other large Pentecostal churches, the IEF's structure is not predicated on individual leadership. Instead, the IEF has a defined authority structure based on competitive egalitarianism (Gay y Blasco 2011) among pastors, that resembles the prevalent secular political structure in the Gitano communities in Spain and among Roma people at large. The IEF thus has a radically

distinctive configuration that sets it apart from other Pentecostal churches elsewhere, and replicates in vital ways the fundamental dimensions of wider Gitano political structures.

While the IEF is organised via an un-Gitano-like vertical system of supervision, its structures rely and build themselves upon values, imagery and ideals from a political system based on commonality vis-à-vis the non-Gitano world that is specifically Gitano and Roma. Living scattered amongst non-Gitano people and following the lines of kinship as they do, Gitanos' particular sense of community relies on commonality (Gay y Blasco 1999), that is, a strong cultural demand that they uphold Gitano behaviour everywhere they go. Gitanos' sense of difference and distinction vis-à-vis non-Gitano people relies on an objectified and gendered set of moral standards that they conceptualise as the *Ley Gitana* or Gitano Law. The demand that they behave *gitanalmente* (in the Gitano way) is constant and firmly pressing and is grounded on processes of identification that aim at the assertion of an unambiguously Gitano praxis and identity (Gay y Blasco 2011:446). The corollary of this distinctive way of perceiving themselves as a group is the absence of a stable and enduring hierarchical system among Gitano people, which many scholarly works note as one crucial dimension of Gitano structures (Ardèvol 1986:106; Gay y Blasco 1999; San Román 1997). Consequently, Gitanos are a social group historically defined by its strong centrifugal tendency towards structural fragmentation and rejection of non-kinship-based forms of organisation. Similarly, pastors' self-representation feeds on and stands in consonance with Gitanos' distinctive sense of commonality, and Gitano male pastors consider themselves God-chosen leaders who stand on equal footing with other Gitano pastors.

In this context, some key questions arise. How did Gitano pastors appropriate the Gypsy Evangelical Movement's system of organisation and work around Gitano kin-

based centrifugal sociality? Moreover, why and how do the IEF's pastors stick together to this day?

In this chapter, I unpack the complex organisational forms of the IEF and explore the distinct sense of belonging that links Gitano pastors to this Christian church. My chapter builds upon and complements previous Spanish anthropologists' works on the IEF's structure, particularly that of Cantón Delgado (Cantón Delgado 2017), who focuses on the circulation of ministers as a distinctive aspect of the IEF that prevents schism and rifts (Cantón Delgado 2017:83). Conversely, I will also focus on how the circulation of pastors is a constant source of conflict. To examine the IEF's institutional dynamics, I will use two types of analysis. The first is predicated on the IEF national leaders' representation, as it was presented to me in interviews and discussions with pastors and church members. As I pose below, this construction is an ideal, harmonious, and romanticised account of what the IEF should be. The second analysis is my own, based on my empirical observation. In it, I compare the above representation with IEF church practices, stressing the existence of latent conflicts within the Gitano church structure.

I will suggest both perspectives help us conceptualise two different yet converging dimensions of the IEF, which point to the existence of tensions intrinsic to IEF forms of organisation. The IEF is not a static social organisation tending towards equilibrium. Precisely the opposite is true: the IEF is a religious structure whose survival relies on pastors' abilities to juggle cultural ideals with ad hoc solutions. By examining the IEF's structure, I seek not only to provide a lens through which to understand the Gitano church but also to contribute to the study of ethnic-based religious institutions and to illustrate the variety of organisational forms inherent to the Pentecostal movement.

1.1 The IEF and the Payo Ethnographer: Putting Together a Puzzle

Despite being one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Spain and despite its prevalence in the Gitano world, the IEF keeps a markedly low profile. Most payos ignore the IEF, and the IEF's pastors' public presence in the media—internet, radio, TV—is limited.

One significant reason why the IEF is so unfamiliar to payo people—and a difficult subject to study for researchers—is its reticence in disclosing information about internal procedures to non-Roma people. Some pastors hold a deep-seated wariness towards newspapers and the mass media since they—rightfully—feel they are often ill-portrayed and stigmatised. Not surprisingly, given I always asked many questions, I was confused for a journalist in some cultos early on in my fieldwork and looked upon with mistrust.

The second primary reason that helps to explain the small public presence of the IEF in the non-Gitano world is the church's prevalent oral culture. Unlike other large Pentecostal churches in Spain, public written information[11] about the IEF (for instance, on official websites) is scarce, and the church does not provide an easily accessible list of pastors' names, culto locations, event dates, or any contact details. Whilst the IEF produces documentation and communicates some news—such as election dates—to pastors in writing, throughout my fieldwork, I often noticed how pastors primarily transmitted information to the congregation in an oral fashion, and I never saw a poster on any wall. Moreover, I often struggled to keep up with the countless events of cultos and could not resort to any other source of public information (social media, wall posters, web pages) other than word of mouth—and occasionally believers' private WhatsApp

[11] An exception to this pattern is found in the books that account for the early history of the movement (see chapter three).

groups—to keep track. Thus, for the cultos I visited, oral information, face-to-face social interactions and informal messaging are outstandingly more relevant than other sorts of open-access platforms, which facilitates believers in comprising a closed information loop.

Exploring and thrashing out IEF organisational forms beyond the local churches was a challenging task. My first strategy was that of asking Gitano ministries to describe their religious institution for me during informal conversations I held with many pastors in Villaverde. Their accounts gave me a schematic overview of the key elements involved in the church's organisation along two lines: church personnel and territorial divisions. To conduct its daily business the church relies on so-called 'ministries'.

A minister is a believer formally authorised by the IEF to perform functions or carry out specific activities within the church. The IEF recognises five ministries, I was told: apostles, pastors, prophets, evangelists and teachers. According to IEF believers, the recognition of these five ministries premises on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:11–2),[12] the tenth book of the New Testament. As I will show below, the definition of the IEF's structure in biblical terms is in line with a master frame narrative that confers legitimacy on the IEF's power structures by linking the organisational forms of the church with the will of God.

The IEF structure divides into three substructures: *cultos*, regional councils and a Dirección Nacional (National Council), as well as a teaching body known as la Escuela Bíblica de la IEF (the IEF Biblical School) with several venues across the country. While the information I was first provided with offered an overview of the IEF structure, it is

[12] The full biblical quotation goes as follows: 'So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up' (Ephesians 4:11–12).

highly descriptive, only relates to the surface structure (i.e., the role of institutional figures and their position in the institutional ranks) and reveals little about the internal organisation of the IEF, shedding no light on the internal dynamics of the church. At first, it seemed that the information I gathered would become the only data I would be able to collect from pastors about how the IEF works. When I tried to enquire further, I would often run into a roadblock. Reaching out to the leaders of the movement proved elusive as local pastors often dragged their feet when asked to introduce me to regional and national councils' representatives.

Owing to the difficulties of contacting the higher officers of the IEF, I sought advice from some payo institutional actors, particularly agencies commissioned by the Spanish government to manage the reality of the growing religious pluralism in Spain. My numerous conversations with Madrid and Barcelona city councils' institutional actors were frustrating, as, at the time I conducted my fieldwork, these actors revealed little awareness of the IEF's operating rules. Mirroring the widespread payo ignorance towards Gitano culture, Spanish and Catalonian public bodies' agents, commissioned with the task of the management of religious pluralism, showed a similar lack of knowledge about the Gitano church. Therefore, despite the empirical evidence of growing collaboration between the IEF, NGOs and the State in some Spanish regions such as Andalucía (Cantón Delgado and Royo 2014), I found consistently and repeatedly that no interlocutors in Madrid and Barcelona seemed to know how the IEF Church works, with civil servant and non-Gitano agents often looking baffled when asked to describe how the church operates or makes decisions.

However, nearly a year into my fieldwork, I was lucky enough to elicit a former IEF president's phone number through some personal contact with a Spanish government officer based in Madrid. After introducing myself as a PhD student, I asked him for an

interview, to which he responded that he would be happy to attend to my petition as soon as it was passed and approved by the national board of the IEF currently based in Madrid. Following almost another year's wait, I decided to make a second call, and yet again, I received the same answer as before. When I was about to give up and opt out of gaining a more profound knowledge of IEF hierarchies, a payo civil servant based in Barcelona city council brought to my attention over email that one of the most respected elderly evangelical Gitanos in the Catalonian evangelical zone, and a member of the national church, had agreed to give me an in-depth personal interview. On the phone, I arranged a face-to-face meeting with this respected elder, named Tío Juanitet. Only a few days later, the interview took place, and I learnt that there might be a compelling contextual reason in my favour with regards to the awarding of the interview. Some years before my fieldwork, the Spanish State had delegated certain remits to the Catalonian government.[13] Subsequently, the Catalonian government had more firmly regulated the criteria for opening licensed religious centres and launched several economic subsidies for evangelical churches, including the IEF, to refurbish and fit out their religious cultos to new safety parameters. As the evangelical organisation with the most religious centres in Catalonia, some of which are still unlicensed at the time I am writing this chapter, the IEF has developed a new frame of collaboration with the Catalonian government and is heavily invested in maintaining relationships on good terms.[14] I do not harbour any illusion that the interviews would have taken place had it not been for this context and I suspect that the desire of keeping a good relationship with Catalonian civil servants at a

[13] I am referring here to the law Disposicion 18179 del BOE núm. 286 below, passed in 2010. http://www.observatorioreligion.es/upload/20/43/BOE-A-2010-18179_Resolucion16_noviembre_2010_ConvenioColaboracionGeneralidadCatalunaAsuntosReligiosos.pdf

[14] Pastors using me to further their interests, as well as institutional and personal agendas, became a recurring theme throughout my fieldwork (see fieldwork chapter).

critical moment for the survival of the institution contributed largely to Tío Juanitet awarding the interview.[15]

1.2 The Presbytery Self-Image

In this section of the chapter, I will approach how IEF representatives conceptualise the role of apostles and regional leaders in the church and analyse the source of their legitimacy. Additionally, I will tackle the ways in which the IEF represents itself around a set of moral principles and decision-making processes that, according to my informants, set them apart from payo churches. This construction is highly normative, and it is precisely because of its normative character that it serves as a good point of departure for discussing some of the IEF's institutional ideals and values.

1.2.1 Apostles and leadership.

Some weeks after our phone call, Tío Juanitet met me at one of the most popular and trendy Barcelona malls in the Plaza España quarter. Tío Juanitet's appearance and manners were far from payos' stereotypes and prejudices around Gitano people being dirty, tasteless, and foulmouthed. Extremely polite and smartly dressed, he was gracious in his manners and displayed a refined speaking style. After ordering a coffee—'We evangelicals do not drink alcohol', he reminded me—we began a long conversation.

Tío Juanitet's extended family was a prominent one in Hostafrancs, home to one of the largest Gitano populations in the centre of Barcelona. Hostafrancs Gitano families are Catalonian Gitanos. The adjective Catalonian does not refer here only to their birthplace. Catalonian Gitanos are composed of a set of Gitano families historically linked

[15] Notwithstanding, in a private phone call prior to our face-to-face meeting, Tío Juanitet mentioned to me that he, and some other church leaders, wished to be more open to society. Indeed, shortly after our formal interview, I learned that the IEF Catalonia council had opened a department of external affairs to facilitate more fluent communication with official organisms and the public.

to Catalonia (Marfá 2008). They are bilingual yet speak Catalan as a mother tongue, in contrast to Spanish migrant Gitanos from Andalucía, Extremadura or Castilla who usually solely speak Spanish. Catalonian Gitanos usually have a higher socioeconomic status than non-Catalonian Gitanos, and some use derogatory terms to describe non-Catalonian Gitano people living in Catalonia, such as *pelúos* (hairy) (Marfá 2014; Laguna 2006:62).

The first segment of our conversation revolved around Tío Juanitet's conversion. Proudly, he affirmed that his conversion to Pentecostalism stretched back to the early 1980s and took place in the Hostafrancs quarter. According to Tío Juanitet, the Gospel was preached to him by the late celebrity Gitano rumba singer Peret, who become a pastor for the IEF around the same time. Head of one of the best-known Catalonian Gitano families, Tío Juanitet himself soon became a pastor and led his Church for some years before ascending in the IEF hierarchy to become secretary of the IEF's Catalonia *Zona* (area).

Something that promptly caught my eye was that Tío Juanitet held a Bible in his hand. Teresa San Román affirmed that in the 1970s—and, to lesser extent, this is also true today—nonpastor Gitano adult males frequently would carry *varas* (rods), the number of varas in a given family group being equal to the number of adult males that could be mobilised to defend themselves against attack by other Gitanos; thus, an index of their *raza's*[16] strength (San Román 1997:116). The more varas one extended family could gather, the more respected—and feared—that extended family would become in the Gitano world. In a manner revealing of the shifts in sources of authority among Gitano people, Tío Juanitet relinquished his vara for the Bible or, in other words, he replaced a cultural symbol with a religious one. While varas are a symbol of disunity and conflict

[16] *Razas* is a word that Gitanos use to describe their extended families.

among Gitano people, and an index of the significant influence of kinship in Gitano social life, the Bible held by Tío Juanitet was a symbol of Gitano togetherness, and the existence of a kind of across the board religiously-grounded authority for evangelical Gitano people.

At the time of our interview, Tío Juanitet was also acting temporarily as the IEF's *Zona de Cataluña Responsable de Zona* (Catalonia area leader), since the previous incumbent had retired from office some weeks ago, and was supervising a large number of cultos. Thus, the scope of influence of Tío Juanitet would encompass—and this is a remarkable fact if we consider that Gitanos are historically structurally fragmented along the lines of kinship—many different Catalonian and non-Catalonian Gitano razas.

During our lengthy interview, I showed Tío Juanitet my interest in learning how the IEF works from within and asked him whether I might join any regional or national meetings sometime. His answer was polite, but firmly 'no', stating that their meetings are private affairs. However, rather than his refusal, which I think was justifiable, the most revealing part of his answer was his unintended stupor-filled facial expression when I asked him that question. Some minutes after my interview with Tío Juanitet, I fully realised the inappropriateness of my question. In the aftermath of our interview Lluis, Tío Juanitet's nephew-in-law and protégée came to pick up Tío Juanitet at the café. While Tío Juanitet was having a long conversation on the phone to arrange some Church issues, I leveraged the opportunity to learn what Lluis's thoughts about the IEF higher echelons were. Casually, Lluis affirmed that everyone knows and accepts in the IEF that the national leaders have been chosen by God to lead the movement, and so would rightfully decide what is best for the institution, to which everyone else complies and obeys. Also, he shared one experience with me. Some months ago, Lluis was called up by the former Catalonia Zona chairman to join a meeting. Such was the respect and sense of hierarchy

Lluis felt for the Catalonian regional council, that he was not able to get any sleep in the days before the meeting out of fear of being chastised or disciplined. On the day of the meeting, Lluis headed out to where the meeting was taking place. Since only Apostles or Responsables de Zona can enter a high-office pastor's meeting, Lluis could not enter the room until the IEF leaders had finished the meeting agenda. Much to his surprise, *los ancianos* (the male elders), as he called them, asked him to collaborate in a new department of external affairs, to which he agreed. In the aftermath of the meeting, Lluis could finally rest easy and took pride in the fact that, as far as he knew, he was the only younger Gitano ever called to attend one of those formal gatherings. This little vignette shows the existence of a sacred aura surrounding the IEF elite, as well as the slight veil of secrecy that covers them and their activities for nonpastor believers.

When asked to describe the IEF's structure for me, Tío Juanitet gave me an account of the IEF's self-representation. His first words following his story of conversion concerned the national council. Tío Juanitet took pride in the fact that IEF structure and values have not changed in substance and will not do so in the future. This reference to an extemporal and timeless structure leaned towards depicting the movement as cohesive and bonded before external observers—like myself—as well as advancing that certain ideals and values about how to get organised in the religious realm lie at the core of the IEF leaders' concerns.

The IEF national council was referred to by Tío Juanitet as *presbiterio* (presbytery). When asked what presbytery meant for the IEF's pastors, Tío Juanitet affirmed that:

> The presbytery is made up of the pastor president, *Responsables de Zonas* (area officers) and some *ancianos* (church elders) who served formerly as area officers. These elderly Gitano are long-standing leaders whose age prevents them from leading everyday church activities. Together, they

> make up the National Council, although we call that governing body 'presbytery.' So, as you can understand, the presbytery is synonymous with people who run the church. One essential requirement [to become part of the National Council] is that the candidate needs to have prior experience as a pastor for more than twenty years. (Interview)

Presbytery is a word widely used in the New Testament (Acts 11:19–26; 15:1–29, 16:1–51) and in the Protestant world refers to a form of organisation that consists of a group of churches united by doctrine and missionary endeavours connected within a geographical region. In the IEF, the meaning is the same, and it captures the Spanish territory remit of the movement's governing body. However, Tío Juanitet used that word literally, with context-specific purposes. The etymological root of the word presbytery is the Greek word πρεσβύτερος, which translates as 'the elderly'.[17] In the interview Tío Juanitet made a clear connection between elderly male leadership and what he deemed a critical aspect of Gitano culture: ancianos' (elders') authority, pointing out that the presbytery was a Bible-based and Gitano-like form of organisation.[18]

However, the IEF's highest ministerial rank strays from ordinary and straightforward gerontocracy.[19] Discussing secular modes of authority and sources of cultural hierarchy among Gitano people, San Román specifies that age-based hierarchies do not simply mean that every Gitano elder is invested with authority (San Román 1999:147). They need to prove they have a high degree of *conocimiento* (knowledge) of

[17] Lluis also confirmed this symbolic link between elders and national religious leaders in the IEF. In his mind, there was no doubt of the link between elders (*Gitanos viejos*) and presbytery members, and he regularly used these two words interchangeably to refer to the IEF's leaders in our conversation.

[18] Elderly Gitanos' ideal leading roles are part of the movement's lore, which dates to the very beginning of the movement in France. Le Cossec himself decided on asking elderly French gypsies to collaborate with him in the build-up and supervision of the nascent Gypsy Evangelical Movement (Le Cossec 2003:31–32). According to Lisardo Cano, the Holy Spirit directed the decision.

'Le Cossec's decision of placing elderly people at the head of the church was directed by the Holy Spirit itself, for it contributed largely to Gitano evangelical revival' (Cano 1981:87).

[19] Gitanos usually start to act and be recognised as elders when they have grandchildren, especially male grandchildren. However, Gitano men marry as young adults and significantly earlier than their payo counterparts in Spain, so the word *ancianos* holds a Gitano cultural-specific meaning in this discussion.

Gitano laws, distinguishing between appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, and acting accordingly. Otherwise, they will lose the respect to which they are entitled through their age (Gay y Blasco 1999:171). Similarly, according to Tío Juanitet, not every elderly Gitano proves to be entitled to rule the IEF; the leading pastors are those whose religious reputation, the proper ways they conduct themselves (according to God's laws and proved by their testimony), and conformity to IEF values are indisputable. According to Tío Juanitet:

> [A member of the presbytery] must be an individual who holds excellent testimony and can provide sound advice for others. They must live their lives and conduct themselves among people according to Christian values and be recognised as such by others. Members of the presbytery shall show evidence of maturity and religious qualifications, and of having worked in different capacities within the organisation. (Interview)

By remarking that only elderly Gitanos are IEF leaders and asserting the need to evaluate men's prestige, Tío Juanitet put forth a model whereby Gitano principles are recreated in a new religious milieu. Hence, entrance barriers are critical for the IEF, to no small extent because longevity in the Church acts as a proof of adequacy in Gitano pastoral careers. Decades of service to the Church index not only pastors having been socialised in IEF values but also that they have been able to personify the sort of behaviours and authority expected from a Gitano evangelical leader.

1.2.2 Apostles and decision-making

The concept of presbytery carries weight and holds a definite historical meaning in the Christian world. Many Churches, other than the IEF, organise following that pattern, such as some Korean churches in the USA (Chong 1998: 272). However, from Tío Juanitet's discourse the IEF emerges as an evangelical Church that structures itself around a set of

moral principles that set it apart from other (payo) Churches that organise around Presbyterian principles.

> In our Church, we do the same as Gitano people do. Our ancient Gitano laws inform the way we conduct ourselves. Gitano laws are informed by honour, purity, respect, equality, and the protection of the weak. I do not deny that some Gitano people might resort to Spanish law courts to solve some conflict within families, but I can guarantee you that it is not something widespread. Do not get me wrong, neither Gitano people, nor I, despise Spanish law, but to be honest, protecting the weak is our main priority and we sometimes find that national and international non-Gitano laws leave a lot to be desired. (Interview)

With references to purity[20] (being independent of other non-Gitano structures/churches), respect (for those in a position of authority), equality (among men invested with authority), the protection of the weak (defence of his people), and the sense of honour stemming from complying with such principals, Tío Juanitet depicts a particular image of the Church: one that is informed by what he considers the foundation and guiding values of Gitano culture.

Even though the IEF is organised vertically, in our conversation, Tío Juanitet contested and challenged assumptions of the IEF as a hierarchical organisation. Much to my surprise, he defined—and I observed that every pastor I talked to seconded Tío Juanitet—the IEF as *una organización organizada democráticamente* (a democratically organised religious institution). The saliency of the concept of democracy for Tío Juanitet is based on the fact that presbytery members are elected through a direct vote by every IEF pastor in Spain, via direct elections.

[20] The study of body symbolism and how the ideas of purity and pollution tie into the maintenance of social boundaries and statuses has figured prominently in the discipline of Romani Studies since its inception (Sutherland 1977:375–77; Okely 1983:77–104). Tío Juanitet uses this heavily connotated concept in a Romani context to justify the reproduction of boundaries with the payo evangelical world in this passage of the interview. The reader can see chapter six for a further discussion on church boundaries.

The use of a concept alien to Christian tradition such as democracy—this religious tradition leaning as it has historically towards theocracy as a political principle—is highly significant within the discourse of the IEF. Why then did Tío Juanitet appeal to the concept of democracy?

On the one hand, Tío Juanitet's appropriation of, and sympathy with, the concept of democracy, recollects the Spanish—and more generally the Western—political landscape, where democracy is widely associated with legitimacy. Therefore, the use of the concept of democracy can be best understood as a discursive strategy directed towards framing the IEF as modern, and as equivalent to a Spanish state institution. Just as the Spanish president is elected in national consultation, so are the IEF's president and the rest of the ministries in the leading body.

On the other hand, democracy is a term that captures in non-Gitano political language, roughly but effectively, the horizontal nature of Gitano secular politics. Since Tío Juanitet perceived that I was connected to a Catalonian government institution, his use of political terminology might also be interpreted as a part of Tío Juanitet's exercise of cultural translation directed towards expressing Gitanos values in institutional payo language.

Modern Western democracies are systems of government whereby the citizens exercise power by voting, which demands the active participation of the people in politics and the rule of law, the laws and procedures thereby applying equally to all citizens. The IEF certainly meets some of those requirements. Notwithstanding the political comparison, the IEF notion of citizenship is not universal but restricted. Democracy in the IEF does not here mean that every member of the Church has the right to decide but refers instead to how decisions are made by those male pastors who have what's

considered the divine right to decide. The democracy of pastors is here resonant with secular Gitano family politics.

Similar to the state of affairs in Gitano families, within the IEF prominent male leaders hold a great deal of sway over those below them and are expected to make top-down decisions. Most importantly, egalitarianism between men of prestige is sought to be preserved. Cross-family authority is very rare among Gitano people and only permitted in exceptional cases of conflict between two families. This authority is circumscribed to this event and not extended in time. As I already noted in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the power relationship between the male heads of families is never absent, and some Gitano males—usually those who are in a position of liaising with payo politicians or local government—can extend their sway over Gitano families in each territory. However, that situation is considered not Gitano, and most Gitano people widely criticise it. On this point, Tío Juanitet implicitly pointed out that egalitarianism is incorporated into IEF religious structures through the denying of an individual´s authority through collective decision-making (consensus) and the requirement of accountability. In Tío Juanitet's words:

> The IEF's decisions are adopted by consensus at all levels of the organisation, be it national, regional, or congregation wide. Absolute authorities are nonexistent. No one in the capacity of a single individual could [long pause] ...Even the IEF president's mode of leading is participatory, not authoritarian. Every member of the council can put forward their arguments, yet they are never entitled to impose their viewpoints, do you know what I mean?
>
> The thing is we do not keep information from other members. The national board informs every Church of what has been discussed in their meeting by a written statement. We do so out of practicality since there are thousands of pastors in Spain and having them together would be chaotic. That is precisely the reason why we have a national board and regional representatives, so information can also travel bottom up.

> The national board takes decisions, but, often, decisions about a specific topic are left semi-open, so regional representatives can confirm and validate that decision. Otherwise, our decision-making could not be called democratic. Furthermore, one man never decides on his own, neither does he impose his viewpoint. Our Church is fully democratic, and decision-making relies on consensus. If there is no consensus, the decision about some issues is left untackled. (Interview)

According to Tío Juanitet, the IEF attempts to temper personalist authority, and the key to his representation of the Gitano Church is that no leader is more prominent than any other in the Gitano Church. My own ethnographical experience in Barcelona nicely exemplifies the points raised by Tío Juanitet and the denial of individual authority by collective decision-making in tandem with the requirement for accountability. As far as individual authority and collective decision-making go, the IEF's pastors seem to lack a notion of representation as payos usually understand it. Tío Juanitet, for instance, made me promise to send him a CD copy of our conversation, so the rest of the presbytery felt included and could ascertain that his words were in line with the IEF's doctrine and ideals. Another very telling example is that, to this day, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channels are restricted to individual or local cultos, and no account of any online platform represents the IEF as a whole. A third example of the lack of a notion of representation can be found in my attempts to get hold of the former IEF president. After listening to Tío Juanitet's words about 'leaving issues un-tackled', I finally understood why my previous interview petition might have been deferred for so long. If split decisions are likely to upset the balance between members of the presbytery, as Tío Juanitet asserts, it is only natural they are avoided. Some weeks after my interview with Tío Juanitet, I again phoned the retired former president of the IEF, and he confirmed to me that the current national board was indeed split on the decision for my petition, so they had postponed its resolution indefinitely.

Despite the principles that rule the IEF, the problem of how to legitimise the exercise of power by pastors, when necessary, remains. In our conversation Tío Juanitet skilfully underplayed the role of top-down orders and hierarchy, instead emphasising the idea of freedom of choice. While unclear and fuzzy, I think Tío Juanitet's statement about 'leaving things semi-open' suggests that apostles avoid explicitly giving orders, thus providing some room for manoeuvre to local pastors, which contributes to the preservation of egalitarianism among pastors as a central value of the Church.

Realising that Tío Juanitet was portraying the IEF as a conflict-free religious organisation, I attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of how conflicts were therefore resolved and asked him about potential hypothetical scenarios. I posed two different scenarios to him, one where an unruly Presbyterian pastor might refuse to accept some of the IEF's decisions and another where a challenging local pastor might refuse to act according to the guiding principles of the IEF. To this, Tío Juanitet eloquently emphasised again that unity and harmony dominate the IEF and pointed out that disagreements are always resolved by an external and sacred force that does not make a mistake. In his own words:

> In the IEF, we all stick to the Word of God. When someone does not agree or disapproves of the general agreement, we show him that our decision is Bible-based. We subordinate ourselves to what it is that the Bible says. Thus, unanimity is intrinsic to our Church decision-making. (Interview)

1.3 Cultos

The account that Tío Juanitet provided me with emphasises that the national and regional councils are God-chosen leaders; reveals how Gitano values shape the Church organisation; and portrays the IEF as a conflict-free institution. His depiction, however, leaves aside key tensions and latent conflicts that, I argue, are inherent in the IEF organisational model. It is these tensions that I explore in this second part of the chapter, where I build a dynamic and relational approach to complement the one put forward by Tío Juanitet, one that draws on observations of the workings of local cultos.

Cultos are congregational bodies led by head pastors. Next in the line of succession, we find figures known as *Candidatos* (candidates). Candidatos are believers in training to become future head pastors. *Obreros* advise head pastors. *Obreros*—which translates as workers—is etymologically associated with the idea of *La Obra* (God's work), the general term which Gitano people use to conceptualise the missionary activities of the IEF. They are usually referred to as *pastores en descanso* (resting pastors) and compose a select body within congregations whose role is that of becoming a counselling body to the head pastors. Large congregations tend to possess a wholly pastoral structure (head pastors, some Obreros, and a few pastor Candidatos to replace head pastors and Obreros in the future), while small cultos—lacking the numbers and personnel—do not necessarily have this. La Pequeña Villa, my main fieldwork site, is an example of the latter. By the time I finished my fieldwork, Pastor Vaca was the only leading figure in the ecclesiastic structure of the Church. However, not long after I left the field, I came to learn that Pastor Vaca had stepped down from his position as head pastor and a new pastor from another region of Madrid had taken over his role. Critical for the survival of the congregation, David, one of Pastor Vaca's nephews, had started his

training as Candidato under the supervision of Pastor Vaca—who become an Obrero himself soon after I left my fieldwork—and the new pastor.

1.3.1 Pastors and the Regional and National Councils: Control and Recognition of Authority

On one rare occasion that IEF apostles opened to the payo world and revealed an aspect of the IEF's structure, former president Claudio Salzano, also known as Palko, wrote a report in which he defined apostles' mission as to 'watch over doctrine orthodoxy, settle conflicts and chair the committees of the Church' (Salzano 1981:220). This report[21] was written in the 1980s. However, the role of the apostles is still the same as it was forty years ago.

While pastors are free to preach in their own style and enjoy relative religious freedom to interpret the scriptures in their own way, apostles set the limits as to what can be said, especially with regards to the Church's core values. Apostles are supported by regional leaders in control of *Zonas* (evangelisation areas). Every Zona has at least one leading figure, known as *Responsables de Zona* (area leader or chairman) and a counselling team.[22] Limits to what can be said are enforced in various ways, including by verbal rebukes; imposition of penalties known as *disciplinamientos* (disciplining), i.e., temporary suspension; or even by the expulsion of pastors who openly challenge Responsables de Zonas' authority or whose teachings are rendered heretical or contrary to the IEF's doctrine. Local pastors are aware that their preaching must comply overall with the doctrine of the IEF, and a few of them confessed to me in private conversation that they restrict themselves regarding sensitive issues (such opening the Church more

[21] The report was published in the 1980s by el Centro Ecuménico Misioneras de la Unidad, a Catholic body concerned with the lack of union between Christian churches in Spain.
[22] At the time of my fieldwork, there were fifteen evangelisation areas.

actively to non-Gitano people and leadership or offering support for women's leadership in cultos) out of fear of potential sanctions.

In addition to control over doctrine, those holding high offices in the IEF have the duty of providing every congregation in Spain with head pastors and hold the power of pastors' allocation. Head pastors are expected to serve in various congregations and meant to be available for relocation at the end of their terms, and it is the duty of the presbytery and the regional council to appoint a suitable pastor to congregations.

However, the relationship between head pastors and Obreros and the IEF is not one-way, as the higher officers' authority over local pastors is a not matter of force, but of recognition. Good terms between presbytery and local pastors are essential for the expansion of the Church since the nature of the link between cultos and the IEF is a voluntary one, and congregations are free to leave the institution at any time. The link might be broken for various reasons, chief among which stand disagreement in pastor-choosing processes. I often heard that Gitano pastors distinguish between *crecimiento spiritual alto* (high spiritual growth) and *crecimiento spiritual bajo* (low spiritual growth) congregations, the term 'growth' being an index of strength of faith, commitment to the Church, Christian lifestyle, biblical knowledge base, as well as public speaking and group management skills. Congregations ticking the boxes of that description are understood to require head pastors with a proven track record. Accordingly, experienced pastors tend to be allocated to large churches, while inexperienced pastors are sent to small or young churches. Mismatches between the prestige of pastors and the spiritual growth of churches could prove ill starred. In fact, the poor management skills of some pastors and their failure to live up to some congregations' expectations have been reported to lead to scissions (Medina 1999). Thus, apostles and regional leaders act carefully in the process

of power transition within congregations as their authority here is negotiated and sometimes contested.

1.3.2 Head Pastors and Obreros: A Shaky Power Balance.

To gain a better understanding of the congregation's internal political order, we need to distinguish between different sorts of pastors, particularly between head pastors and Obreros.

Head pastors are the leaders of the congregation and usually receive a small monthly wage from the congregation's tithes. They conduct ritual ceremonies daily, usually taking as little as one day off during the week. Head pastors represent the Church to newcomers and to institutions that might request collaboration for a variety of reasons, such as newspapers, universities, schools etc. In the event of conflicts between members of the congregations, head pastors also act as mediators and have the authority to ban believers from church temporarily. Decisions about which and when guest preachers or Candidatos might preach are also taken by head pastors, who are responsible for what has been preached in their congregations.

The head pastor's role implies a wide range of duties, including leading missionary efforts, heading worship services, and challenging Church members to follow biblical principles. Community care (visits to the sick, showing concern and praying for believers' wellbeing, moral advice, counsel, and mediating in conflicts in the community) also fall within the remit of the head pastors´ role. Gitano pastors also deal with a vast array of activities, such as ensuring church facilities are functioning and performing rites of passage (baptisms, weddings, and funerals). Since being a pastor is a time-consuming activity and dealing with community issues demands plenty of energy, pastoral life takes

a toll on head pastors. The head pastor's working hours are not fixed or well defined, yet they usually have a short term in power

Obreros are pastors who advise the head pastor, yet they do not receive any wage from the church. A typical Obrero body in a congregation would be constituted by the culto's founder pastors, along with every pastor who becomes a Candidato there without current pastoral duties. Obreros' religious careers often come full circle: when a Candidato has served several congregations as a pastor, they come back to the original church where they were first recruited. Being inactive in pastoral roles thus does not mean that Obreros are inactive in the congregation's religious life. Obreros can also go back to temporarily become head pastors during the period that elapses between the departure of one head pastor and the arrival of a new one. In this time of uncertainty, Obreros become de facto head pastors. In the meantime, they also negotiate with regional representatives in formal and informal meetings around what pastor should be chosen to lead their congregations.

In the IEF, there are Obreros of all adult ages. However, many pastors have declared to me in our conversations that *los Obreros ancianos* (the elderly Obreros) are usually more prominent, and their voice is considered more authoritative and respected. Obreros and elders are synonymous for many. The IEF vindicates the existence and presence of Obreros at a doctrinal level by referring to the biblical passage in which Paul began his first missionary journey throughout several cities to find disciples: 'Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each Church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust' (Acts 14:23). This is a pattern that may not always be enforced in every single culto, yet most pastors and Obreros I talked to during my fieldwork agreed that this state of things would be the ideal.

Whereas head pastors usually have a short term in power, Obreros are there to stay permanently. While head pastors do not necessarily belong to the same Gitano family groups that attend the church, and many times are recruited from other Spanish cities or regions, Obreros have lived long in the locality and belong to the extended family groups that form the backbone of the congregation. When brand new head pastors begin their activities in cultos, the body of Obreros acts as a community-based reception structure that welcomes and informs them of the idiosyncrasies of the congregation. While the diffusion of information and expertise continues over time, I have observed that it is often marked by an opening dinner where the brand new head pastors, Obreros, and their respective nuclear families attempt to get to know each other.

As I will show in detail in chapter 3, the role of the pastor in the religious ceremony echoes charismatic leadership common to other Pentecostal communities (Davie 2007:214; Willaime 1999:17), if personal power is counterbalanced. Head pastors are formally the head of congregations. However, Obreros have the right to report head pastors for misconduct or to request Gitano regional representatives to remove them from their Church roles. Most importantly, for the broad powers that pastors are granted in the IEF, Obreros often exert a salient social and kin influence over the congregation, since they are usually prominent members of the extended families that attend cultos.

In my fieldwork, I witnessed the arrival of a new (outsider) pastor at a large congregation in Villaverde. The whole process lasted for several months, and during that time, Obreros took the lead. During this period, Obreros often devoted culto time to guiding churchgoers in asking God for a good and suitable head pastor. Villaverde Obreros considered that the head pastor's choice, and mutual understanding between the head pastor and the congregation, were critical for the survival of the church. Moreover, Obreros understood that culto's attendance is heavily influenced by the popularity of

pastors. Disagreement or dislikes between pastors and congregation might lead to temporary withdrawals by churchgoers or migration to other neighbouring Gitano churches. The opposite was also true: alluring pastors could greatly improve attendance rates and work as a factor of attraction for newcomers. When he arrived at Villaverde culto, the new pastor was introduced before the religious ritual to the congregation by the Obreros. Subsequently, when the prayers began, Obreros sat in the back of the pulpit behind the pastor, facing toward the congregation. By offering their symbolic acceptance before the congregation, Obreros not only smoothed the integration of the new pastor into the congregation but also emphasised and paraded their prominence. As this example shows, pastors' position is often paradoxical and precarious, as they only remain as head of the congregation for a limited time, and they need to get on with Obreros to have a peaceful span.

1.3.4 Candidatos: Looking into a Leadership Transition

Candidatos are believers who wish to become a pastor and are preparing themselves to take this position shortly. My Gitano interlocutors use ubiquitously the term *levantarse* (to stand up) to describe the action of believers running for a pastoral position. Male believers who *se levantan* (stand up) are known as *Candidatos* (candidates).

Before achieving the rank of pastor, which is a male-exclusive right without age restrictions, Candidatos undergo a four-year formative period in the IEF biblical schools where they train in theological aspects of the Pentecostal faith. The IEF biblical schools are led by ministers known as *Maestros* (teachers). At the moment of writing this chapter, there are four working biblical schools spread across Spain located in different regions. The IEF's training courses are equivalent to a university degree in Spain, timewise. This fact was consistently pointed out to me by Gitano pastors and played a prominent

discursive role in the production of a sense of Church progression, since, as I mentioned in chapter one the spiritual fathers and first evangelists of the IEF were illiterate.[23] If successful, Candidatos need to undertake an extra year's probationary period in their original congregation.

Two fundamental relations define the future of pastor Candidatos: their relationship with head pastors and Obreros, and their relationship with Responsables de Zona and national leaders.

Head pastors invest a considerable amount of time selecting and training Candidatos. Candidatos often preach before their congregations and assist the head pastor in every task he requires. During this time, head pastors also monitor Candidatos' moral behaviour, biblical knowledge, and commitment to the Church. Widely celebrated by the members of congregations, Candidatos' first preaching is a biographical and familiar milestone. Candidatos' debuts usually draw to church their irregularly churchgoing relations. Along with the head pastors, Obreros also invest considerable time in training Candidatos. One compelling reason for this is that Candidatos represent overall the continuity and survival of the IEF in general, and of cultos in particular. As I mentioned in the previous section, the short duration of pastors' spells as heads of the congregation demands the production of new pastors regularly. In that sense, the existence and number of Candidatos are main indexes of religious vitality in the Church. Equally, Candidatos usually have kinship relations with the head pastor or Obreros (maybe as son, nephew, or cousin); thus, the existence of Candidatos safeguards a kinship group's sway over a culto.

[23] This fact also resonates with the extremely low numbers of university graduate Gitanos in Spain. While payo people might have diplomas and better training, Gitano believers think they possess a more robust biblical education, which is the sort of knowledge they hold in best regard.

Key to understanding the internal dynamics of cultos as well as a potential source of conflicts is that head pastors have the power to select their Candidatos and enjoy the right of veto, that is to say, they can accept or reject believers' desires to pursue a pastoral career in the IEF. In that sense, head pastors can counterbalance the kin influence of Obreros in the congregation, yet this position can also lead to conflicts should they differ with Obreros as to who should become a Candidato.

The relations of the Candidato with the IEF national and regional councils are also vital for the Candidato's future. When a Candidato is considered ready by the head pastor to reach the rank of a fully-fledged pastor, the head pastor proposes the Candidato to the IEF national and regional councils for approval. Successful Candidatos subsequently participate in an institutional ceremony in which the IEF's national and regional leaders lay their hands on them as part of their ordination as new church officers. Laying hands on the next generation of pastors is a symbolic act directly inspired by the early Church apostles (see Acts 6:5–6) and is understood as a gesture that represents the union of the new disciple with the IEF and its religious mission and values. When the ceremony is over, Candidatos become recognised as fully fledged pastors for any IEF church.

1.4 Concluding Remarks

Despite the entanglement that one might feel when confronted with the complexities of the IEF's structure, the combination of different approaches has proved to be a fruitful strategy for making sense of a convoluted institutional reality.

The first construction that I presented, put forward by Tío Juanitet, predicates on a highly reified and idealised self-image of the IEF elite. This model poses that organisational forms of the IEF are inspired, informed, and modelled into the recognisable elements that most of the Gitano pastors that I know consider central to Gitano ways. Chief among the values that stand out is male elder authority in the presbytery.

The second perspective, however, poses that IEF unity is shaky, so the Gitano Church relies on a set of mechanisms (formative school and religious socialisation, the right of recognition of qualification and aptitudes, usage of *disciplinamientos* or expulsion, and head pastor appointments) to unify the church and prevent challenges from other IEF pastors.

Even though both perspectives stand in contrast with one another, they come together in a crucial aspect: the firm rejection of individual authority as the foundation on which to base the ecclesiastical structure of the IEF pastoral system.

As I have shown above, the IEF discourages an excessive accumulation of individual authority and encourages control over personal leadership. Hence, the refusal to establish an enduring power imbalance among Gitano pastors occupies a significant share of IEF institutional life. The analysis of the triangular relationship between Candidatos, head pastors, and Obreros reveals the locally grounded organisational mechanism put into place by Gitano pastors to prevent the emergence of personal and individual leadership. As a critical part of the cultos' structure, Candidatos' emergence

guarantees the constant circulation of men, and prevents, or at least pushes against, the stagnation of pastors in their roles and any subsequent fixation of authority. In that vein, head pastor mobility is one of the more prominent ways in which congregations work around the problem of leadership transition and succession. The IEF's Gitano ways of organising coalesce into the figure of the Obrero, whose prominence and institutional role shapes the IEF´s organisation distinctively vis-à-vis other Pentecostal churches. While head pastors lead the church, Obreros hold vast sway and social power over the congregation due to their position as liaison between kin and religious structures. The IEF's higher echelons organise around the same set of principles that discourage the accumulation of personal and individual authority. The communal Presbyterian form of organisation resonates with Gitanos' sense of commonality and rejection of individual leadership, already described in the anthropological and sociological literature as I have explained above. Furthermore, while the presbytery plays a critical role in supervising pastors' behaviour and exerts significant influence on the shaping of institutional life, doctrine, and the values of the movement overall, Gitano pastors engage in democratic politics preserved by a vote-based system, and egalitarian ideals shape decision-making processes.

Despite the notion of commonality being central to IEF forms of organisation, extreme egalitarianism does not define the Gitano Church. Some ministries are better known than others for their preaching abilities, the power of their kin or the biblical knowledge they possess. The voice of these ministries is more likely to be accepted than that of others. Yet, authority is never bestowed upon one single individual in the Church structure, it must be displayed and recognised by other ministries, therefore it is always unstable, and exercised in tandem with others.

CHAPTER 2. HEAD PASTORS, RITUALS, AND CHARISMA

Head pastors are perceived as the most prominent and influential figures in Gitano churches. As a critical part of their role, head pastors become the foremost readers of the scriptures and challenge church members to follow biblical principles, steering them through far-reaching and wide-ranging individual changes. A metaphorical opposition predicated in livestock-related biblical Christian imagery widespread in the IEF best captures the leading role of Gitano head pastors. Pastors are known as 'shepherds' (pastor means shepherd in Spanish), and religious followers are known as 'sheep'. Like the relationship of mastery between humans and their livestock, the IEF pastor's role is to lead and guide believers.

In this chapter, I analyse how head pastors' religious and spiritual authority, that is to say, the legitimate moral and ideological influence they exercise over believers, is (re)produced in ritual contexts. I pose that head pastors' authority originates from two sources. The first is priestly and predicated on biblical and doctrinal knowledge. As leaders of the IEF, the Church backs up their qualifications and expertise. The second is charismatic. By charismatic individual authority, I mean an authority based on the assumption that head pastors have chosen by God to fulfil their role and have a set of special skills for organising and enhancing the ways congregations gain access to the sacred. Indeed, Gitano pastors themselves often describe their decision to become a pastor as a response to God's call,[24] and claim that the Holy Spirit guides their sermons and instructs their actions in services of worship. The strong importance of this charismatic

[24] The phenomenon of divine calling as a self-justification for religious activity is widely recognised in the relevant academic literature as a critical component in Pentecostal pastors' self-representation (Lalive d´Epinay 1969:75; Währisch-Oblau 2009).

authority is a quality that distinguishes Pentecostal leaders from other priestly figures in the Christian world. The recognition of head pastors' charismatic authority by believers, I argue, is also critical in upholding an enchanted cosmology that inspires and prompts evangelical Gitanos to attend religious services. However, and this is a highly distinctive feature of the IEF churches, head pastors' charismatic authority is heavily regulated. As noted in chapter one, a crucial characteristic of head pastors' role in the IEF is that their actions are intensely supervised. In the IEF system of governance, Gitano pastors diverge from the personal authority that often defines the role of pastors in other Pentecostal churches. Head pastors are accountable to other local and national leaders of the IEF, and Obreros monitor their religious labour.

I begin the chapter by briefly introducing some context that contributes to the understanding of broader aspects of IEF religious ceremonies. Then, I examine in detail the ritual mechanisms through which Pastor Vaca maintains his charismatic authority before his congregation in La Pequeña Villa. This section, which makes up the core of the chapter, is divided into four subsections, one for each section or act composing La Pequeña Villa's service of worship: praying, preaching, worshipping and the Lord's Supper.

2.1 Rituals

Rituals[25] are critical to La Pequeña Villa's believers' religious lives and to Pastor Vaca's leadership. In La Pequeña Villa, the congregation observes liturgies every day of the week except for one day of rest, a fact that indexes the significant embeddedness of church in the social life of believers. As many of my Gitano informants stress, the IEF liturgy stands

[25] Gitano Pentecostal rituals extend beyond the local church. Some other ritual actions outside of the church, such as baptisms of water, carry enormous weight within Gitano evangelical identity. However, the church is the most important and prime site of ritual contact between believers.

in stark contrast to the Spanish Catholic Church's liturgical practice, which most Gitano people were used to before the Pentecostal movement arrived. While my informants perceive the Catholic Church liturgy to be overly formal and dull, they portray the IEF rituals as breath-taking and cheerful.

The concept of ritual is central to the sociology and anthropology of religion, and influential authors have approached it from a myriad of vantage points (Bloch 1974; Bourdieu 1997; Csordas 1983). In his classic 'The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life', Emile Durkheim (1965) examined the significance of ritual in society and posed that religious ritual's primary function is the social and symbolic integration of the individual into the group, and the maintenance and vitalisation of solidarity, collective order, and social cohesion. Anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz (1973) and Victor Turner (1969) expanded on Durkheim's ideas by arguing that ritual not only reflects and enforces the social order but can also serve as a powerful instrument in transforming the social structure itself. More recently, some theoretical approaches have analysed the role of Christian rituals in the production of collective sacred experiences and how they relate to particular structures of authority. Meyer's work (2010) on Pentecostalism in Ghana emphasises the sensational appeal of Pentecostal/charismatic churches through different devices such as music and powerful oratory (Meyer 2010:742). According to Meyer, this sensational appeal shapes a framework through which born-again Christians are enabled to sense the Holy Spirit. In Meyer's words, 'having such sensations of divine presence does not happen unexpectedly but requires the existence of a particular shared religious aesthetic, through which the Holy Spirit becomes accessible and perceptible' (Meyer 2010:742). Meyer coined the notion of 'sensational form' (Meyer 2006), which she defines as 'relatively fixed modes for invoking and organising access to the transcendental, offering structures of repetition to create and sustain links between

believers in the context of particular religious regimes' (Meyer 2011:29). According to Meyer, these forms are transmitted and shared; they engage religious practitioners in particular practices of worship and play a central role in modulating them as religious moral subjects and communities (Meyer 2011:30). Critically, Meyer stresses that the notion of sensational form does not assume the primacy of senses as harbingers of religious experience but calls for a focus on authorised forms that organise such experience. (Meyer 2011:30). Furthermore, Meyer notes that pastors in Ghana occupy a prominent role in producing such religious aesthetics and sensational forms, and their leading positions rely on their ability to invoke the Holy Spirit's presence.

My effort to unpack the relationship between rituals, charisma and authority in Gitano churches strikes a chord with Birgit Meyer's theoretical approach to the aesthetics of persuasion of Pentecostal churches. The principal aim in observing the service of worship at La Pequeña Villa is to *sense* the Holy Spirit within the gathered congregation, enabling believers to connect with God, both in spirit and body. In La Pequeña Villa, believers engage with overwhelming feelings, powerful emotions, and compelling rhetoric and sensational forms (music, gestures, and dramatic styles of preaching). Gitano head pastors' authority heavily relies on their ability to create a ritual atmosphere that facilitates such engagement with the sacred.

Meyer's insights are premised on Weberian ideas. Max Weber notably argued that a critical element of charismatic authority is not the existence of objective magnetic qualities in the leader, but the perceived legitimacy and subjective recognition by the followers (Weber 1978:242). For Meyer, 'the consent demanded from the participants to *recognise* the pastor's power points to aesthetics of persuasion that is geared toward making the presence of the Holy Spirit felt' (2010:757, my emphasis). However, as Weber argued, charismatic authority is precarious and—potentially—contested. The

instability of the pastor's power of attraction became apparent during my fieldwork. Except for baptised believers, who usually become regular attendants, La Pequeña Villa's membership continually fluctuates, which poses a significant threat to the congregation's permanence. Believers periodically join and leave the church to such a large extent that Gitanos have a concept that defines turning away from church: *enfriarse* (to grow cold). Enfriarse symbolically opposes the metaphor of *fuego* (fire), which is ubiquitously utilised in the Bible to describe the effects of the purifying actions of the Holy Spirit. The prominence of the concept of enfriarse evidences that Gitano believers associate giving up the congregation with lack of spiritual experiences.

2.1.1 Act I: Praying

The first act of La Pequeña Villa's liturgy is known as praying. Praying is an act that seeks to activate a rapport with God through supplication. The key to praying is that although its primary purpose is thanking or praising God, it often involves requests from believers.

La Pequeña Villa's liturgy begins with an opening ceremony known as *presentación del culto* (presentation of worship). Presentation of worship is equivalent to a formal greeting to God, and it takes a highly deferential format. A typical presentation of worship entails a selected number of worshippers praising out loud, one by one, God's merits in a superlative form. Pastor Vaca becomes the leading voice of the presentation and, although often passing the floor to other believers who continue the worship presentation—usually all men—only he may initiate it.

One prominent and revealing way in which Pastor Vaca asserts his charismatic skills before his congregation is by 'speaking in tongues'. Speaking in tongues is a Bible-

based religious practice[26] comprising the repetition of seemingly meaningless syllables with variations in pitch, volume, speed and intensity. La Pequeña Villa believers perceive speaking in tongues as a Godly language that human beings are unable to understand. Being able to speak in tongues is highly regarded by Gitano believers as a spiritual gift bestowed by God.[27] since it is a practice that reenacts the biblical episode of the Pentecost described in the Book of Acts in the New Testament, wherein the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles appointed by Jesus, and they began by speaking unknown languages.

The religious practice of speaking in tongues is one pinnacle of the IEF Church. Pastor Vaca affirms that believers' speaking in tongues is physical evidence of the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit among them. More interestingly, speaking in tongues is a political practice revealing the inner structure of religious authority and prestige among Gitano people. In La Pequeña Villa solely Pastor Vaca—and occasionally some prestigious baptised believers—spoke in tongues in church. Never once in all of my fieldwork did I witness a newcomer or casual attendee speaking in tongues.

Gitano people understand speaking in tongues by believers whose religious reputation is in question as 'evil tongues' (Mena 2003). Regular members of the church can also speak in tongues, yet they rarely do so before Pastor Vaca. Only qualified religious believers are entitled to validate the arrival of the Holy Spirit before the

[26]Speaking in tongues is considered by many the most distinguishing feature of Pentecostal rituals (Hine 1969:224, Hutch 1980:256; Samarin 1972; Williams 1981).

[27]The IEF doctrine affirms that God bestows spiritual Bible-based gifts on believers such as prophecy, discernment of spirits, words of wisdom, or interpretation of tongues. Unlike the insights from other research conducted in the IEF churches (Mena 2003; 2007), I found no evidence of these gifts having a significant role in La Pequeña Villa for non-ministry believers. I attribute the lack of relevance of those gifts to Pastor Vaca's need to secure his unchallenged position as the leading force of the congregation. In one casual conversation, Pastor Vaca mentioned to me that spiritual gifts are meant to *edificar* (build up) the church, however, they also need to be closely supervised by head pastors and the rest of the ministries, since they are dangerous to the church's unity.

congregation, which proves that practice to be a significant index of religious authority among believers in La Pequeña Villa.

Believers request *favores* (aid) from God during the act of prayer. The time allocated for petitions makes up a fundamental part of this act. The Acts of Apostles in the New Testament, in which Jesus performs numerous miraculous acts, informs Gitano Pentecostal believers in their worldviews. The notion of *El Dios Vivo* (the Living God) encapsulates the core of the IEF belief system. God is alive; that is to say, he keeps actively intervening in history and in the lives of Christian people. La Pequeña Villa's members firmly believe the Bible narrates historical events in human history and that the God-like miraculous events that occurred during biblical times remain in effect today. Congregation members often write a list of things that they long for, and Pastor Vaca undertakes to read these aloud. A typical list includes petitions for healings, economic aid, or finding a job. Pastor Vaca is thoroughly inclusive while performing this task. For example, following a conversation where Pastor Vaca enquired about my personal life, he learned that my grandmother has Alzheimer's disease. From that moment on, Pastor Vaca warmly included my grandmother in his personal and daily church prayers, which not only made me feel included and appreciated, but also prompted believers to empathise with my situation and facilitated the interactions between the congregation and myself. Group prayer[28] thus makes up one of the most crucial mechanisms of social integration at La Pequeña Villa as it fosters a sense of group identity through joint participation. By sharing in a common activity especially visibly, believers affirm their belonging. They come to be treated as group members, which facilitates them in identifying themselves as such.

[28]The act of praying for someone else is known as 'intercession'.

La Pequeña Villa believers' liturgical experience is a mixture of routine and exceptionality. During the act of prayer, Pastor Vaca repeats that *el corazón de Dios se reblandece* (God's heart softens) when *Él ve a Su Iglesia unida* (He sees His church assembled). Gitano believers are unaware on what day God will bless them, yet they are all reminded continuously by Pastor Vaca that this day will come about. Indeed, chief among Pastor Vaca's opening statements after the culto presentation is *hoy alguien va a ser bendecido* (today someone will be blessed). Like other Pentecostal rituals elsewhere, Gitano liturgies have an eventful quality with people waiting to see what the Spirit will do (Corten 1999: 42–43; d'Epinay 1969:52–53, Robbins 2004b:126).

Additionally, Pastor Vaca turns to other believers to validate the supernatural power of God. Pastor Vaca usually utilise the congregation's biographical experience to 'prove' that God, indeed, is alive and performs miracles for believers. Every so often—usually when new members or visitors come to the church for the first time—Pastor Vaca turns to other believers to validate central teachings of the IEF doctrine such as the healing power of the Holy Spirit. During his sermons, Pastor Vaca asks believers who claim God has blessed them in the recent or distant past to share their stories with the congregation. The IEF's believers use the term 'testimonies' to describe the public narrative act of recalling a specific life event in which they believe God performed some miracle for their benefit. While the content of testimonies varies along a broad spectrum of believers' life experiences, during the rituals, 'miraculous healings' are often the most prominent theme. The relevance of miraculous healing is signalled by the fact that on the church's front door at La Pequeña Villa, a sign reads *Dios es el mejor medico del mundo* (God is the best doctor in the world). The key to testimonies is circulation. Pastor Vaca encourages believers to spread the news among nonbelievers to appeal to them to join the church. La Pequeña Villa regularly receives sick Gitanos who hope to be healed by God. In so doing,

they are exposed to the evangelical religious message, and some end up becoming permanent members of the church. As in other IEF churches and Romani churches in France, the promise of miraculous healing is a 'hook' that attracts Gitanos to churches (Marcos 1999; Ramírez Hita 2007:266).

Throughout my fieldwork, I heard countless testimonies from Gitano people who claimed to have been healed by God, ranging from impressive feats, such as cancer recovery, to minor exploits, such as overnight tooth filling.[29] Testimonies vary substantially from one believer to another according to individual experiences and peculiarities, yet they all follow a similar structure (Csordas 2002; Cucchiari 1988). On the one hand, the most prestigious form of health-related scientific Western knowledge, medical science, is conjured up to verify the objective existence of an illness. Doctors—as the embodiment of such scientific knowledge—regularly feature as figures who diagnose the illness. On the other hand, testimony seeks to point out the limitations of human knowledge,[30] and usually portrays doctors as unable to treat the illness. However, although testimony-givers portray doctors as powerless and baffled, they usually invoke them to certify the healing. The power of science is thus paradoxically downplayed compared to God, yet it is introduced to provide legitimacy to miracles.

One of the most celebrated testimonies I witnessed during cultos was that of Tía Mari, a respected elder woman in La Pequeña Villa who converted to Pentecostalism nearly forty years ago. Her testimony is as follows.

[29] Pastor Vaca often turns to this quotation from the Gospel of Mark to prove that miraculous healings are biblical:
'These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name, they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them, they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well (Mark: 17–18).

[30] In La Pequeña Villa's testimonies, the relationship between science and divine power is not of opposition but hierarchy. Whereas Gitano believers recognise medical science can heal, its scope and power pale in comparison to God, whom they deem omnipotent.

> Someday a while ago, I came down with arm pain. Some bug bit me, and it turns out I suffered from gangrene. My brother works for La Paz Hospital (in Madrid), so he drove me there immediately. Some surgeon diagnosed that he needed to cut off one of my legs. My leg turned increasingly green, and I had a high fever. The doctor treated my arm with some bandages and cut into the middle that left some mark on me. Later that night, my brother and his wife took me to the culto since a renowned preacher of the IEF, known as Emiliano, had been blessed with the gift of healing. My father was sceptical about the whole culto thing and would not tolerate our attendance, so we—my brother, his wife, and I—took our chance and went without his permission. I was doubtful myself too. Cultos did not yet have churches back then, they were celebrated in private homes. We entered the house where the culto was taking place, and suddenly I felt engrossed in El Emiliano's words. I fully understood the Lord's message and could not stop crying. I experienced a joy I had never felt before that filled up my whole being. El Emiliano said, 'Those in need of healing, please get up.' Despite feeling shame because of the presence of so many people around, I beat my shame and did so. I was laid hands upon, and suddenly, the Holy Spirit whispered into my ear, 'I will heal you', and I felt like a fire on my arm, so I panicked and shouted out 'I am burning, I am burning!' Much to everyone's surprise, when I removed the bandage, no pain or wound was to be found. Subsequently, I made a run for it outside the house and reached my father and woke him up to tell him 'behold the work of God. He healed me! He did!' My father looked at me with astonishment and promptly sent for the culto leaders. From that moment on, my father and subsequently, the rest of my nonconverted family members became believers and joined the church. The next day, the doctors could not believe their eyes! (Interview)

While testimonies are individual accounts of how a person became a born-again Christian, they follow specific standardised templates and structures, and by constructing them, individuals learn to situate their life course and experiences within shared religious narratives (Lindhardt 2009). La Pequeña Villa's believers celebrate Tía Mari's testimony, because it resonates with the experience of conversion—through alleged healings—of many Gitano families, and connects the past of the IEF with the present lives of believers, portraying the IEF as a church which has provided miraculous healings across

generations. The belief in miracles[31] helps to foster a strong sense of community and solidarity among the believers of La Pequeña Villa. Also, testimonies' primary functions are not only in providing hope to the sick but also in reassuring the rest of the Gitano believers that they are under divine protection.

2.1.2 Act II: Preaching

The second act of La Pequeña Villa's liturgy is known as preaching. Preaching is a Christian form of delivering a sermon addressing scriptural, theological, or moral topics before the congregation. While Pastor Vaca's leadership is ubiquitous throughout the ritual, this act is where he plays a prominent role.

Pastor Vaca often starts preaching by performing dialogues with the congregation. One of the pastor-congregation dialogues most repeated in La Pequeña Villa is as follows:

Pastor Vaca: *¿Quién Vive?* (Who is alive?)

Congregation: *¡CRISTO!* (Christ!)

Pastor Vaca: *¿Y a su nombre?* (What do we give to His name?)

Congregation: *¡¡¡GLORIA!!!* (Glory!!!)

Pastor Vaca: *¿Y a su gloria?* (And what do we give to His glory?)

Congregation: *¡¡MÁS GLORIA!!* (More glory!)

[31]However, not unlike Pentecostal churches elsewhere (see NG 2020:104), in his preaching Pastor Vaca rejects offering one's faith for the gift of God's healing. Instead, Pastor Vaca conceptualises the ideal relationship between believers and God through the notion of Christian love, a principle of unconditionality and selflessness. One reason for such rejection is that, according to Pastor Vaca himself, these contractual ways of engaging with Christianity resemble magical rituals. While magical rituals attempt to order, alter, or manipulate spiritual forces or entities to one's own benefit, cultos fulfil the role of being a platform between the individual and the divine. One significant by-product of the preeminence of the notion of Christian love and the rejection of contractual ways of engaging with God is that Pastor Vaca is not to blame for the outcome of the petition nor is the congregation entitled to hold God accountable.

Throughout the sermon's predication, the congregation constantly interrupts Pastor Vaca, showing conformity to the content by extemporaneously shouting back at the top of their voice expressions such as 'Hallelujah', 'Amen' or 'Long Live God'. Outwardly expressing individual conformity expresses the congregation's radical commitment to IEF values. Like other Pentecostal centres of worship in Spain, in La Pequeña Villa, the production of an emotionally charged environment is a collaborative effort between pastors and believers (Cazarin 2017:162). However, active group participation is combined with strong leadership. It is Pastor Vaca's role as conveyor of the religious message that gives him a monopoly on the pronouncement. The role of leadership in articulating group values in ritual settings is an essential device through which a fusion of identity and group values is accomplished.

Moreover, Pastor Vaca contributes largely to creating the congregation's engagement. For instance, in asking a question to the congregation, he always requires a passionate response from most of the church. Otherwise, Pastor Vaca will repeat the question again and again until he finds an optimal engagement. Therefore, pastors and congregations collaboratively construct an emotionally charged atmosphere, yet Pastor Vaca's role is critical in shaping that atmosphere and generating religious messages that resonate with believers' experiences.

The IEF cleaves to the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*, (by Scripture alone). Hence, while preaching, Pastor Vaca holds an open Bible in his hands to signal that the content of his sermon is Bible-based. However, according to IEF doctrine, Gitano pastors not only interpret the scripture correctly because their teachings draw on the Bible, but also because the Holy Spirit infuses and inspires them. Pastors act as a vessel for the Holy Spirit's message. To prove charismatic status, pastors thus need to show that divine forces have inspired their sermons. Thus, they often put on a dramatic performance when taking

the floor; their gestures and vocal tone become strident, and their movements escalate in abruptness, as in sped-up motion. This pastor's vocal and bodily performance is standard across IEF churches and is consistent with the idea that the Holy Spirit takes over pastors' bodies to send out God's message, hence their vitality and dynamism. Pastor Vaca's way of delivering sermons aligns with these generic performances. While preaching, the pitch of his voice fluctuates, and the general tone of his movement is electric.

Furthermore, Pastor Vaca often states before explaining the content of his sermon that the Holy Spirit has 'set a message in his heart'. I have witnessed Pastor Vaca preparing some of his speeches for days before the sermon, yet while standing at the pulpit, he behaves as though his sermon has come to him spontaneously. On one occasion, following a persuasive speech about the relevance of spreading the Gospel among family members, Pastor Vaca fell gently onto the floor and brought his sermon to a stop for some minutes. Subsequently, Pastor Vaca affirmed that he did not remember much of what he said at that stage, thus deemphasising the role of pastor agency in the production of religious messages.

His preaching style further cements the metonymic link between Pastor Vaca and divine forces. In many instances, Pastor Vaca has affirmed that *en mis prédicas intento imitar a Jesus* (he attempts to model himself on Jesus's preaching style) and, just as Jesus is portrayed as doing in the New Testament, Pastor Vaca uses parables and didactic stories to illustrate instructive lessons. In La Pequeña Villa, Gitano believers are fascinated by Pastor Vaca's biblical stories and cheer over the supernatural feats of the greatest hero of Christianity, Jesus Christ. Pastor Vaca's vibrant stories about the fight between good and evil capture the imaginations of the congregation, who see in his biblical examples a dramatisation of their struggles to uphold religious beliefs, identities and values in the secular world. Pastor Vaca's ability to strike a chord with believers' sensibility is such

that I have witnessed believers bursting into tears while listening to his interpretation of biblical stories.

Bible-based stories often involve teachings about perseverance in faith. Pastor Vaca preaches that evil spirits attack bodies and continuously warns La Pequeña Villa's members that idleness and sloth towards attending church are by-products of the Devil's evil actions and strategy to prevent them from being blessed. One of the most frequently cited stories regards Job. According to the book of Job, Job was a man who was beset by Satan with several terrible disasters—with God's permission—that take away all that he holds dear, including his offspring, health and property. Despite being tested by Satan, Job kept loyal to God and was subsequently restored to a better condition than before Satan's test. Another involves the story of Abraham's wife, Sarah. In the biblical narrative, God promised Sarah a child. Over the years, that promise went unfulfilled for a long time. However, at the incredible age of ninety years old, Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham by the name of Isaac. Both biblical stories work as discursive devices that emphasise that hope and patience are paramount to the life of a staunch believer.

2.1.3 Act III: Adoration

The third act of La Pequeña Villa's liturgy is known as adoration and is one in which music has an important place. In the IEF, Gitano musicians comprise *coritos* (choirs), a body within the congregation commissioned with providing musical support to pastors. Five believers (three male musicians plus two female singers) make up the corito of La Pequeña Villa.

The sonic experience in la Pequeña Villa is genuinely awe-inspiring. Engrossed in the overwhelming talent of Gitano musicians and singers, I often forgot I was taking part in a religious ritual and felt as though I was a privileged spectator at a musical festival.

Gitano believers appreciate coritos' musical flair, too. For many members of La Pequeña Villa, the act of adoration is the highlight of church worship. The notion of *gozar* (to revel), a common verb widely used in popular Spanish language to describe gratifying experiences, captures the relationship between joy and the experience of worship for Gitano believers. One sentence that is commonly heard when exiting the church on a typical day is *lo hemos gozado* (How we have revelled!).

Pastor Vaca plays an instrumental role in the adoration act. He demands engagement from believers and encourages singing and clapping. Every so often, Pastor Vaca joins the choir and sings praises to God compellingly. Gifted with the powerful voice that he has, Pastor Vaca delights believers when he takes the lead in prayer.

Pastor Vaca's role in ritual ceremonies is paradoxical. While he strives to incite euphoria, excitement, and to lift the mood of believers, a significant share of his role is in denying liturgies as party-like events and highlighting the gravitas of this religious practice. Echoing Durkheim's observation that religious rites cease to be religious if they only work as entertainment (Durkheim [1912] 2001:284), Pastor Vaca seeks to juggle the attractiveness of music with a broader religious purpose. The ambiguous position of flamenco music in La Pequeña Villa captures this point nicely.

Flamenco is a musical art form based on the various folkloric music traditions of southern Spain. Gitanos have played a leading role in shaping and popularising flamenco music, and flamenco holds an indisputable position in Gitano's collective identity and sense of cultural heritage (Pasqualino 2008). *Las palmas*—a style of handclapping used in Flamenco music—and *quejios* (shaking voices)—one of the most prominent singing-styles among *cantaores* (flamenco singers)—dominates La Pequeña Villa's soundscape. As with Roma churches in Portugal, music and Romani identity in evangelical religious practices are strongly tied to each other (Blanes 2007; 2008; Slavosksa 2012).

However, although flamenco's exuberant voice, tones and beats are central to the ritual, flamenco is not well regarded as such by La Pequeña Villa members. Indeed, Pastor Vaca and believers alike repudiate secular flamenco due to its strong social association with *Gitano juergas* (Gitano revelry), and the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Gitano flamenco singer Camarón de la Isla—undoubtedly the most popular Gitano artist in Spain—died in the early 1990s at the age of forty-two from heavy smoking and drug abuse and is portrayed as a cautionary tale in La Pequeña Villa. The alleged link between flamenco, juergas, and drugs is the reason Pastor Vaca—who used to sing flamenco himself—gave up the artist's life and cut off his long hair—a master symbol of flamenco singers—when he became a pastor. As opposed to Camarón, Pastor Vaca usually likened his path in life to that of the late Peret, another prominent deceased Gitano music artist. Peret was a singer, guitar player, and composer of Catalan rumba, a genre of music that developed in Barcelona's Gitano families beginning in the 1950s. Rumba's rhythms are partially derived from flamenco, and believers also associate this musical genre with drug abuse and juergas. During the 1980s, Peret temporarily gave up his musical career to become a pastor of the IEF for nearly ten years.

The religious appropriation and rejection of secular flamenco music fulfils a particular role in La Pequeña Villa. By redirecting flamenco music for sacred ends, Pastor Vaca resignifies flamenco and uses ethnomusical identity to pursue religious purposes, such as worshipping God, pursuing sanctity, and reaffirming the moral ground of the group.

For Pastor Vaca, music serves as a means to lift the believers' morale. However, he conceives of music foremost as an art form intended to please God. In other words, enjoyment is a desirable side effect of the contact between the believer and God, yet under no circumstances could enjoyment be the sole end of the religious service. This point is

highly relevant in La Pequeña Villa's context as it ties into underlying deep-seated divisive lines among congregation members. I often heard Pastor Vaca defining some of La Pequeña Villa's believers as *creyentes emocionales* (emotional believers). For him, emotional believers are those who enjoy and showcase powerful emotions during worship, yet never conduct themselves according to IEF doctrine. Pastor Vaca and the Godly members of the church often construct their identity in opposition to these individuals.

Another prominent feature during worship at La Pequeña Villa is the rapport between adoration and ecstasy. I witnessed believers going through *quebramientos* (breakdowns), spiritual experiences related to bodily acts such as uncontrolled crying, unrestrained shouting, or soft fainting. Key to understanding the role of breakdowns in the IEF's liturgy is that believers regard them as irrefutable evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit among them. As Birgit Meyer (2010) points out, the power of Pentecostal aesthetics of persuasion and their sensational forms convinces religious believers of the truthfulness of the connection between them and God and is ultimately 'responsible for the "truth effects' of religion, for instance, by authorising the body as the harbinger of ultimate truth and authenticity' (Meyer 2010:756; see also Brahinksy 2020). By locating the proof of the existence of divinity within lived experience, Pastor Vaca anchors Pentecostal beliefs in the sensorial experiences of believers. Raised voices, dramatic gesticulation, or the moving of arms to drive away demonic forces are some of the bodily actions performed by Gitano Pentecostals. Here congregants do not surrender to God; instead, they demonstrate that they are empowered by Him to confront the powers of darkness (Lindhart 2015:267).

The significance of the body in rituals gains even more prominence because of the association between the dynamics of euphoria and control that lie at the core of IEF

rituals. A prominent idea among IEF believers is that the human body is a 'sacred temple' that believers need to keep spiritually clean. For IEF believers, the human body's primary spiritual purpose is that of receiving the Holy Spirit. Like the Romani Kaale believers in Finland described by Roman, Gitanos see the body as the primary source of entrapment regarding 'worldly temptations' (Roman 2017:162). Since bodies inhabit a non-Godly world dominated by Satan, they are required to be regularly purified. Consequently, embodied discipline (giving up drinking alcohol, smoking, and so on) is a central part of religious life.

As Robbins notes, Pentecostal ecstatic rituals are, to some extent, a counterpoint to the ascetic lives converts are encouraged to live outside of religious contexts, and their structures frequently reiterate the alternation of control and release (Robbins 2004b:126). The most prominent ascetical practice that shows how dynamics of control and release are tied together in La Pequeña Villa is chain fasting. Chain fasting is a collective act of refraining from ingesting food during a fixed time-period. The obligation of fasting is carried by one or various individuals who pass the torch to the next volunteer. Fasting chains take place regularly in La Pequeña Villa, and as a result, members of the church are continually passing on to each other the commitment of fasting for many days. Fasting chains and ecstasy are tied to each other since displaying control over one's body and weakening it with a religious purpose is critical to sensing the Holy Spirit. Indeed, most breakdowns and faints I witnessed in La Pequeña Villa were suffered during the emotional peak of the ritual activity by those who were fasting.

The link between ceremonies and the body is further exemplified by the language and idioms utilised by Gitano believers to describe their experiences. Gitanos often say that *Ir a la Iglesia es su manna* (attending church is their manna). According to the Old Testament, manna is a divine edible substance provided by God for the Israelites during

the forty years following the Exodus. Manna made the Israelites spiritually healthy and prevented them from giving up on God. Equally, attending cultos is understood by many Gitanos as equivalent to consuming manna. The discursive prevalence of manna among Gitano believers (Llera Blanes 2007:33) expresses a broader symbolic perception, predicated on a radical distinction between the sacred and profane space. In opposition to the outside world, dominated by Satan and riddled with hassles and concerns, Gitano Pentecostals depict cultos as sacred and Holy Spirit-filled[32] spaces. This radical opposition to the outside world is prominent in Gitano believers' cosmology and sense of place. When exiting the culto, Gitano believers usually feel happy, smile, and thank God outwardly for touching them spiritually and protecting them from evil. The therapeutic effect of cultos is a principal component of the overall discursive framework of believers. By discursively framing cultos as spaces whereby spiritual healing experiences take place, believers generate meaningful positive representations of cultos.

2.1.4 Special Act: The Lord's Supper.

On the last Sunday of each month, Pastor Vaca carries out a special activity as part of the regular religious service known as the Lord's Supper. This act is considered a sacrament, a specific rite which possesses special spiritual significance. In this ceremony, the congregation observes a symbolic reenactment of the Last Supper, wherein Jesus, according to the Gospel accounts, shared with his apostles the last meal in Jerusalem before his crucifixion. In this passage of the Gospels, Jesus gave his disciples bread and

[32]Sacrality is not an inherent quality of cultos' physical spaces. Conversely, in the Gitano Pentecostal cosmology, it is the congregation adoring God that holds the power to invoke the Holy Spirit, thus making the space sacred. The sense of sacred spatiality of Gitano Pentecostalism is not fixed and changeable, meaning that any space might potentially become sacred. This spatial detachment is highly functional for many IEF congregations, who are often confronted with financial constraints and the necessity to change venues in a constant search for low-priced rental premises.

wine and commanded them to remember his ultimate sacrifice on the cross through this Eucharistic celebration.

IEF believers know this reenactment ceremony as *el Pacto* (the Covenant). In it, Pastor Vaca breaks the bread—symbolising Jesus's body torn apart in Jerusalem— and serves wine, which symbolises Jesus's blood making up for and cleansing humanity's sins. During the ceremony, and after having set the table and placed wine and bread on top, Pastor Vaca orders the lights to be dimmed and calls for baptised believers to stand up and take part in the Covenant. Since the table is at the front of the church by the pulpit, taking part in the Covenant requires getting up from one's seat and going all the way up the central aisle. The ceremony, thus, reveals the congregation's divisions and belonging (who is baptised and who is not).

Just as importantly, having the bread and wine is a public statement to the congregation. Those who take the wine and bread state that they are committed to sanctification. Face-to-face presence is crucial because it helps to ensure high mutual surveillance among members and gossiping here acts as a powerful control device. Mismatches between this public statement and how believers conduct themselves in personal life might lead to rumours and loss of status. Pastor Vaca seeks for the act of showcasing a public commitment to God to be genuine. While believers take part in the Lord's Supper, Pastor Vaca often states that having bread and wine in a knowing state of sin is a betrayal and severe offence to God. According to Pastor Vaca, disagreement between one's public statement (having bread and wine) and a sinful personal life shall lead to God's anger and could have potentially disastrous consequences for cheaters. The shifting representation of God, from the usual evangelical portrayal of God as a loving and caring father (more closely aligned to the compassionate God of the New Testament) to a harsher version of a raging divinity (more closely aligned to the vengeful God of the

Old Testament), evidences the normative relevance of this act for the overall ritual life of La Pequeña Villa.

Furthermore, the Lord's Supper is in line with other control mechanisms put in place by Pastor Vaca to influence Gitano people to abide by God's laws, such as the practice of sending indirect reproving remarks[33] on the behaviour of some members of the church during his preaching. The difference between the Lord's Supper and other mechanisms of control lies in its capacity to combine public and personal accountability. For La Pequeña Villa's members, the ceremony is all-encompassing and calls for a self-assessment that integrates private self-examination and public expression of virtue.

2.2 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have focused on charisma as a specific source of authority critical for the survival of congregations and for maintaining believers' commitment. Engaging with scholarly work on rituals and religious legitimacy, I have focused mainly on the set of mechanisms embedded in Christian Pentecostal ritual contexts that enable male pastors to maintain their roles as leaders in Gitano communities. Chief among pastors' charismatic skills stand their abilities to generate sacred experiences in religious ceremonies. The maintenance of a social system that imbues pastors with authority thus primarily relies on their ability to orchestrate group dynamics that produce transcendental experiences for believers.

Pastors' charismatic authority is premised on a metonymical relationship with the Holy Spirit. Pastor Vaca's ability to speak in tongues in the ritual context signals and validates before the congregation the presence of the Holy Spirit. Also, La Pequeña

[33]As with some family-driven Slovak Roma congregations in the Czech Republic studied by Ripka (2016: 152), direct or personal public rebuke by the pastor is rare and I never saw one in La Pequeña Villa.

Villa's believers deem—although sometimes they might question the fact—that Pastor Vaca is a vessel for the messages of the Holy Spirit to the congregation. Given his role in directing church prayers to God, Pastor Vaca's presence is reckoned by believers to be essential to facilitate miracles. Importantly, Pastor Vaca has become an authoritative figure who urges believers to self-examine their relationship with God and express their commitment publicly. By interpreting La Pequeña Villa as a political space, I have shown that Pastor Vaca's charisma is not permanent or fixed: it needs to be continuously earned and recognised by all believers within his flock and secured by convincing the congregation of his special connection to the Holy Spirit.

The generation of charisma is closely intertwined with the prominence of rituals in Gitano communities' religious life. Against this backdrop, I have looked at subjectivity and the role of the body as crucial aspects of anthropological thinking (Csordas 2002) and emphasised the link between ritualised religious experience and power dynamics (Bourdieu 1977; Foucault 1979; Comaroff 1985). Pastors' charisma relies on the experiential force and sensational appeal of religious ceremonies. I have shown that La Pequeña Villa church is a sensorially charged space where the manifestation of the Holy Spirit produces spiritual and bodily experiences for believers. Drawing on rituals' strong experiential force, Pastor Vaca interweaves sensorial experiences and rhetorical forms to shape believers' identities, morals and worldviews against a backdrop of highly persuasive embodied performance that takes place in daily structures of repetition.

CHAPTER 3. GITANO CHRISTIAN POLITICS OF MEMORY: REMEMBERING AND BELONGING

> Where are they from? What is their origin? Historians, gypsiologists, ethnologists, and linguists have all researched their origin. Where did they reach India from? Nobody knows. Are they descendants of the tribes of Israel? Are they descendants of the concubines of Abraham sent by his father to the land of Orient (Genesis 25:6)? Alternatively, are they the descendants of the Rechabites, thus of kin with Keturah, one of Abraham's wives (1 Chronicle 2:55)? In Hebrew, Rechab means 'those who travel'. Many hypotheses exist. The mystery remains. (Le Cossec 2003:220)

Past-oriented religious storytelling is a widespread social practice among Gitano evangelicals in Madrid. Indeed, during my visits to La Pequeña Villa and other IEF churches, I was exposed continuously to tales about the genesis of the Spanish Gitano evangelical movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Close familiarity with these stories and narratives is common among local Gitano pastors, including Pastor Vaca. Moreover, storytelling gains particular significance when newcomers arrive at Gitano churches, and pastors are often prone to engaging visitors with the past of the movement.

The existence and circulation of these stories about the past are quite significant and unique within the Gitano context. In spain, pastors and believers lack secular rituals through which to commemorate historical events involving Gitano history. Spanish society also enhances Gitanos' lack of Gitano historical references. One of the most extreme expressions of Spanish society's cultural dominance over Gitanos is the dismissive attitude and the lack of concern by non-Gitano people for the Gitano past. The history of the Gitano people, or any significant Gitano events and episodes, are not a part of the Spanish school curriculum.

By contrast, and in radical opposition, Pastor Vaca and other pastors make a strong effort to instil a historical group consciousness among evangelical Gitanos by crafting narratives and stories geared toward fostering a religious collective memory. Pentecostal Gitano tales depict the origin of the IEF as a spiritual golden age laden with supernatural healings and extraordinary acts, shaped by fantastic turns of events that miraculously led to the evangelical mission of the IEF's founder. Spanish Gitano chief evangelist Emiliano, in tandem with other highly respected and beloved evangelists—known by Gitano evangelical believers as *los padres espirituales* (the spiritual founders) of the IEF—are frequent references for Gitano storytelling. The spiritual fathers of the IEF are portrayed as infused by the Holy Spirit; as exemplary Christian heroes who laid the spiritual and institutional ground necessary for the IEF to flourish; and as appointed by God to lead the Gitano spiritual awakening. Shared knowledge regarding the names and conversion stories of the IEF's founders plays a role in shaping pastors' institutional identity and sense of belonging to the IEF by enhancing a sense of cross-generational continuity. The past, thus, becomes an essential prompt used by Gitano believers to explain their singularity vis-à-vis other Christian churches.

Gitano evangelical believers' storytelling relates to a broader Christian framework regarding the biblical origins of the Gitano people. The birth of the movement is depicted in the IEF's account of the past as a divine sign for Gitanos to care about and discover their origins as a people. Old Testament stories regarding the Israelites work as narrative devices for developing a new sense of belonging and reframe Gitano identity through a religion-based ethnogenesis. Many Gitano pastors and believers claim that Gitano people are descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel. The development of these narratives about the past has captured Gitano believers' imagination and spurs lively debates among evangelical Gitano communities. The idea that Gitanos are the Lost Tribes of Israel, thus

closely related to the Jews, is an astonishing one, given that Judaism in Spain is highly stigmatised and perceived as exotic and foreign (Martinez-Ariño 2016), and some Spanish people still associate Judaism with Masonic-communist political conspiracy theories (Arribas 2009; Rozenberg 2010:101).

This chapter is concerned with the emergence of a Pentecostal Gitano historical consciousness. I trace ideas and narratives produced by the Spanish Gitano Pentecostal movement that generate a shared understanding of a Gitano past. Particularly, I will look at the IEF's politics of memory and the diffusion of religious interpretative frameworks about the past aligned with the emergence of new Gitano modes of leadership, personified by Gitano pastors. To accomplish this, I will juxtapose ethnographical and textual analysis of oral and written material produced by the IEF.

3.1 Scholarly Approaches to Romani Temporalities

Romani Studies scholars, especially anthropologists, have paid attention to how Roma groups *perceive* the past, and the role of this understanding in their sense of distinction and difference vis-à-vis non-Roma people (Stewart 1997 and 2004; Gay y Blasco 1999 and 2002; Williams 2003).

Michael Stewart (1997) notes that the basis of Rom secular-social cohesion lay neither in a dream of a future reunion of their people nor in the mythology of shared ancestry. For them, identity is constructed and remade continuously in the present in relations with significant others, not something inherited from the past (Stewart 1997:28). Therefore, Stewart regards the talk of Indian origins as unnecessarily exoticising of Gypsies, and most importantly, ignores the view of the Gypsies about themselves.

In a subsequent work concerned with the lack of public ritual commemorating the Holocaust among Roma people in Hungary, Stewart affirms that the Roma are no more

able than anyone else to forget important events in an unproblematic or straightforward fashion. He remarks that terrible memories of the Holocaust are evoked in the form of song lyrics, nightmares, or extreme fear of the political return of violent far-right groups (Stewart 2004). At the same time, Stewart puts forth the idea that Roms lack many of the mnemonic devices which ground shared memories in European societies, such as commemorative, calendrical, and other rites of reenactment (2004:574). Stewart notes the systematic and extreme experiences of marginalisation, as well as institutional practices of repression, discrimination, and oppression that act as a constant reminder for the Rom about their identity as an outsider in the *gadje*[34] (meaning, 'non-Roma') world. Romani peoples are 'without history' because they ground their 'identity' not in a shared past but in shared activity in the present. That is, as social memory is effectively distributed along social relations, Roms tend to live without what most people consider 'history'—the more or less formal, discursive, or performative reproduction of the past in the present (Stewart 2004:566).

Discussing further implications of lack of social memory in everyday Rom life, Stewart points out that some material practices predicated on objects' impermanence are the result of the present-oriented Rom cultural identity. On the occasion of death, for instance, almost all personal possessions of Roms in Hungary are typically given away, sold, or destroyed, and even in everyday life Roms' personal objects of daily use are regularly passed on to others, almost as if with the deliberate intention of preventing them from acquiring the smell and feel of the past (2004:566).

Patrick Williams' work in France (2003) is another landmark in Romani Studies and social memory. According to Williams, the French Manouches' post-burial gestures

[34] *Gadje* is the Romani word for payo.

and practices seem aimed at ensuring the disappearance of all traces and memories that might remind the living of the deceased (Williams 2003:1). Drawing from extensive ethnographic experience, Williams argues that the Manouches' fear of the souls of deceased relatives or *mulo* (the dead that come back) lies at the centre of how Manouches see the world and their place in it (2003:4–22). The mulo is an ever-present spiritual presence susceptible to manifesting in unpredictable forms among the living: invisible, animal, or monstrous. Key to understanding the role of the mulo in Manouches' cosmology is that an endless number of causes, some of which are purely accidental, might trigger the mulo, such as when someone curses the dead, when making a mistake while narrating a story about them, when camping on a spot where the mulo died, and when taking proper care of mulos' belongings. The substantial set of prescriptions around the mulo is presented and explained by Manouches in terms of 'respect'. Respect is a concept that encapsulates the idea of immutability (Williams 2003:12). In so far as Manouches consider their closely related deceased irreplaceable, their uniqueness, as well as the uniqueness of Manouches as a social group, must be preserved. Silence about the dead is an identity-building cultural practice: Manouches seldom mention the name of the deceased or evoke their memory, especially before gadjes and nonrelated Manouches. As Williams notes, 'silence becomes the guarantor of the incorruptibility of identity, of the immutability of the group' (2003:55). Just as the dead are absent from Manouche social life, so too Manouches are absent from gadje society**,** thus, they assert and preserve their own separate culture and identity (Williams 2003:7).

Similarly, the presence of the dead among the living separates and keeps Manouches apart. Insults or disrespect from Manouches to unrelated deceased endanger the moral integrity of the entirety of the relations of the offended person. Thus, this act will automatically lead to a potential conflict of the offender and their relatives with living

relatives of the insulted dead (Williams 2003:14). Manouches, as Williams puts it, 'have chosen oblivion over memory' (2003:11), yet that is not to say they are entirely amnesiac. Instead, they approach the past 'respectfully', aiming not to explore it or accumulate knowledge about it but with the firm intention of preserving the uniqueness of the lives of the members of their social group within a hostile society that threatens their existence.

Gay y Blasco has also taken part extensively in the debate about the role of collective memory in Romani identity. Similarly to the above ethnographical accounts, she remarks (2002) that for Spanish Gitanos, the past is not easy to forget, and sometimes traces and memories remerge into the present, triggering powerful emotions. The Spanish anthropologist reports that many Gitanos cry when they talk about the past and their beloved deceased, and all appear visibly moved when doing so. Likewise, talking about a cherished kinsman who is now dead, seeing somebody using his clothes, or hearing his favourite song, might evoke the most potent and distressing of images among Gitanos, as well as overpowering sadness (Gay y Blasco 2002:637). Despite difficulties, a critical part of Gitanos' cultural activity revolves around erasing the past from the present.

Discussing Gitano social memory and nonreligious sources of Gitano distinctiveness in an impoverished urban setting in Madrid, Gay y Blasco affirms that her informants consistently downplay the past in their accounts of themselves as part of *el pueblo Gitano* (the Gitano people), and do not look to a historical or mythical past for explanations of their way of life or their difference from the dominant society (1999:13–14).

Gay y Blasco also argues that Gitanos' widespread obliviousness towards the past indexes the fundamental centrality of kin and the high significance of emotions and love within kin-based structures for Gitano people (2005:164). For Gitano people, grief is a

personal feeling that shapes collective and family life for extended periods. Gitanos do not sing, drink alcohol, participate in recreational activities or show any joy for a significant time after a close relative has passed away, and they usually wear black clothing as a sign of mourning in the following months or even years after the burial. Paradoxically, while grief and practices of mourning extended in time are prominent among Gitanos, silence about life-related events of the beloved deceased is also central to them (Gay y Blasco 2004:261, see also Lagunas 2005:231). As well as silence, a whole complex of practices of containment, which include name avoidance and the destruction of the deceased's belongings, ensure that no individuals become part of communal memory (2002:633). According to Gay y Blasco, practices of containment are not only directed towards *payos* but primarily towards other unrelated Gitanos. Love felt towards a particular beloved deceased unifies a given Gitano extended family and distinguishes them from other unrelated Gitano groups, who should never refer to them or mention their names or even know about them (Gay y Blasco 2002:639). A by-product of the heightened value of silence and the obliteration of the dead from public life and everyday collective memorialisation is that little information about past events is shared outside the immediate group of kin or passed on to the younger generations (Gay y Blasco 2004:261). The centrality of kinship as an organisational and political principle thus goes a long way to elucidate why Romani and Gitano origins are not an essential prompt used by Gitanos to explain their singularity. Gitanos' disregard for their roots is expressed in practices of containment and obliteration which remove ancestors from communal memory and goes hand in hand with a cultural identity shaped by the centripetal force of present-day and individually experienced relatedness.

The above ethnographies concur in downplaying the role of collective memory in forming Romani groups' identity, and highlight different mechanisms through which

Romani communities attempt to prevent the past from surfacing in and shaping the present. Conversely, Gitano believers I met during my fieldwork in Madrid departed in some critical aspects from how nonbelievers are portrayed as dealing with the past in the above ethnographic accounts. For evangelical Gitanos, identity is deeply grounded in the past. The life, sacrifice, and figure of Jesus are observed daily by Gitano believers in a ritual context, so celebrating the past is essential to the mechanisms through which evangelical Gitanos come to see themselves and to act as a community. Thus, public remembrance and collective commemoration is an integral part of what being a Gitano believer entails.

Since the past, at least in the religious sphere, is no longer taboo, Gitano believers do not extend practices of containment, such as silence, to beloved IEF leaders. The IEF's deceased founders are not obliterated from the public space in the way that most Gitanos' deceased relatives are. While love towards their dead unifies Gitano extended families, and silence regarding them is expected from nonrelated Gitanos, knowledge of the feats and struggles of the IEF founders spreads across Gitano families and acts as a running thread that links believers—especially pastors—in the institutional framework of the IEF.[35]

In line with other Christian fundamentalist churches, for most Gitano believers, the Bible commands a literal interpretation. Christian myth and Gitano history cannot be separated from one another, and believers firmly consider that the Bible is an account, to no small extent, of the history of the Gitano people. Stories included in the Bible are persistently considered historical events that have shaped the development of the Gitano people. The notion of a shared past, notably the idea of Gitanos being the lost tribes of

[35] Knowledge does not equal commemoration. The IEF commemorates no man's life other than Jesus's.

Israel, is becoming a new prompt for some Gitano believers to explain their singularity vis-à-vis other social groups within the framework of Christianity.

3.2 The Arrival of the Storytellers: the Evangelical Gitano Elite and Their Books

One prominent feature of the IEF's collective memory is that information about the past of the movement is transmitted primarily outside of the ritual ceremony. Since different forms of recreating the past in the present, such as ritual commemorations, are earmarked for God's worship and adoration,[36] storytelling can be considered as an effective and alternate nonritual practice geared towards shaping a new Gitano collective memory. Some weeks into my fieldwork, I decided to record some of the oral stories about the origins of the Gitano evangelical movement. However, I faced some difficulties registering these oral stories. Soon I realised that stories about the founders of the IEF flowed from indirect sources: while Pastor Vaca and other pastors were familiar with the events that led to the birth of the IEF, their knowledge was derivative of stories they had heard from their elders, most of whom had passed away. Most importantly, while local pastors consistently exposed me to tales about the past, some of them took issue with my recording, since they did not feel entitled to speak personally as an authoritative voice representing the IEF as a whole[37] before the imaginary public audience that my audio recorder implied. Fortunately, Tío Carlos, one of the most knowledgeable elder pastors of Villaverde church, disclosed to me that the oral histories that I was trying to collect could be found in some books written by prominent figures and influential high religious officials of the IEF.

[36] Pentecostal doctrine stands firmly against any kind worship of men, image, statue, or icons, all of which are considered 'idolatry', and emphasises the idea that only God deserves reverence and ritual commemoration.

[37] The reluctance shown towards the notion of representation is in line with some institutional archetypes and ideals regarding cooperative modes of authority among high-profile leaders of the movement I encountered in my fieldwork.

Furthermore, this elder depicted these books as containing *la historia definitiva del movimiento de evangelización del pueblo Gitano* (the definitive history of the Evangelical Gitano movement).

Intrigued by the content of the books referred to me by Tío Carlos, I decided to track them down. Thanks to a few pastors' guidance, as well as some visits to secluded and small Christian bookshops and religious libraries, I managed to acquire some of these books.[38]

A close examination of these books proved Tío Carlos right. There is considerable consistency between many of the stories included in these books and current pastors' repertoires of oral histories. Consistency does not mean, however, that they are replicas. Some oral stories I heard included variations of themes contained in the books, which added context-specific information or told things slightly differently. Nevertheless, core themes were broadly the same in both accounts.

The list of books I encountered amounts to nearly a dozen. All were either published by tiny editorials or self-published by the authors. I believe that the disclosure of the existence of these books came to comply with a specific purpose in the communicative space I forged with some pastors. My position as an external observer and potential link between the Gitano movement and the academic world prompted a sense of opportunity for this elder pastor, who saw in me a possible channel to spread the IEF's own version of the history of the movement, which he thought had been inadequately disclosed to payos.

These books are not theological. The IEF has never produced any written theological works available to the public. The content of the books are narratives that

[38] I want to thank Lisardo Cano and Tío Juanitet for their invaluable assistance in this regard.

parallel (and are likely inspired by) the Gypsy Evangelical Movement founder Le Cossec's book *Mon Aventure chez les Tziganes* (1991 [2003]). In his book, Le Cossec narrates how the GEM was founded and collects numerous miraculous events that inspired preachers and evangelists to spread the Gospel. Thus, Le Cossec's and the IEF's books are comparable in religious content, as both are written in the genre of testimony, ubiquitous in the evangelical world, and revolve around the goal of telling an inspiring religious history. However, the cultural backdrop of the authorship in both cases is quite different. Similar to other Romani and Traveller groups, Gitano history has been mostly documented by 'amateur folklorists' (Steward 2013:416) or gadje accounts (Okely 1983:1). While Le Cossec was a white, educated, and cosmopolitan pastor, the IEF's Gitano founders were ethnic minority, poor, uneducated and semi-literate people embedded in a primarily oral culture.

Thus, the IEF books have a special place as cultural artefacts, since, despite the vast trove of documents about Gitano history by non-Romani scholars and gypsylorists alike, records of Gitano history written by Gitanos remain scarce. As a social group, Gitanos lack a literary tradition. Moreover, most Gitano believers I met are semi-literate and only learned how to read for the intention of reading the Bible, which is, for many of them, the only book worth reading. This unusual approach to the dissemination of ideas can only be explained by the leading role of Lisardo Cano, now a popular radio and televangelist based in Sabadell (Barcelona). Cano's involvement in the movement was instrumental because he, apart from being educated in a time when most Gitano Christian leaders were illiterate, owned a small-scale publishing house, and had connections with many others.[39]

[39] Lisardo Cano also edited the Spanish version of the French official religious magazine *Vie et Lumière* of the international movement in the 1980s.

While believers are, in general, oblivious to the existence of these books, many pastors, especially the elder ones, acknowledge their existence and recognise that they contain the most authorised account of the IEF past. The content of the books has spread due to the interplay between written and oral sources. Young generations, many of them unaware of the origins of these stories, have learned them in an oral format. Thus, some Gitano believers, especially young pastors, orally reproduce the content of these books, having learned it from their elders without being aware of its written origins.

The books are not isolated pieces of literature but are subaltern texts grounded in their sociopolitical contexts. Thus, they must be examined within the particular circumstances in which they were produced. Most of these books were written at the beginning of the Pentecostal Gitano movement in Spain, roughly between the late-1970s and early 1980s, in a time in which Spain was becoming a fully-fledged Western capitalist economy with a liberal democratic political system, and in which Spanish society was opening up to religious diversity following the end of the Catholic political regime of General Franco. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Gitano evangelical movement was not particularly well established, its survival was not apparent, and its impact was not as strong as it is today. This period, thus, was a critical historical moment for the survival of the movement due to its gradual transition from a network of Gitano evangelists to a national church-like structure.

The joint publication of these books by the elite of the movement and the institutionalisation processes of the IEF lead me to suggest they played a critical role in the political agenda of the high officials of the IEF. They are the material expression of an institutional attempt to elaborate and spread narratives about the movement, which highlights the connection between God and the IEF, as well as accommodates the Romani people as an independent and central social group into the broader ideology of Christian

mythology. The singular value of these books lies in that they gather an unparalleled amount of material written by high-ranking members of the Spanish Gitano church. As well as being the single largest source of core information about the representation of the past of the movement (and of the Gitano people) circulating among Gitano believers today, the material contained in these books is an authorised and reliable source of institutional knowledge for every pastor I interviewed during my fieldwork.

In these books emerge three prominent themes: firstly, how the movement came into being; secondly, the meaning of the Romani people's suffering, stigma, and discrimination throughout history; and thirdly, who the Romani people are.

These three dimensions are internally linked in that the birth of the movement is portrayed as a divine sign for the Romani people to discover their true origins and role in God's plan for their salvation.

3.3 Telling the Pentecostal Gitano Story: Gitano Ministries and Christian Heroism

Every account available from the first generation of the IEF founders dates the first conversions of Spanish Gitanos in France to the 1960s (Bautista 1980:10; Cano 1980; Duval 2006; Emiliano 2005:25–25; Jimenez Ramírez 1980:24–25). They also agree in tracing the beginning of the movement among Gitanos to the return to Spain of seven[40] evangelist Gitano men who were converted in France: Emiliano, Enrique *El Marido*, Jaime Díaz, Joselito, Juan Castro, Lari Castro, and Ramón (Bautista 1980:11; Jiménez Ramírez 1981:25).

[40] The prominence of the number seven here is consistent with the overall effort of the IEF to mirror biblical stories. Seven is the number of disciples on whose head the original twelve apostles laid their hands to delegate the spreading of the gospel around the world (Acts 6, 1–7), and seven is also the number of communities that received God´s call in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:20).

The focus on Gitano-led Spanish evangelisation efforts is a crucial narrative device for the IEF, as it highlights the idea that the movement is self-governing, self-contained, and self-sufficient, yet related to the first evangelical movement in France.

Critical to the IEF's early leaders' accounts of their religious mission is that the acts of these seven Gitanos and other newly converted ministries led to supernatural occurrences that triggered miracles upon both Gitanos and non-Gitanos. Namely, early evangelists' accounts of their evangelising efforts draw their significance from the Pentecostal trope of healings:

> God's hand blessed us with grand miracles, healings, lives turned around, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit…Those days were indeed PENTECOST. (Jiménez Ramírez 1981:76)

The most instructive instance of the trope of healing is Alfredo Bautista's book *Milagros y sanciones por fe entre los gitanos españoles* (1980). In this book, Bautista gathers countless testimonies of spectacular Holy Spirit-prompted sickness healed by the movement ministries, including tuberculosis (1980:45), cancer (60), blindness (64), and heart conditions (94). In Madrid, I gathered a few testimonies of elderly Gitanos who claimed to be present when some early evangelists arrived in the city. An elderly Gitano widow Tía Mari describes one of the first visits of Emiliano to Madrid:

> The fire of the Holy Spirit came and illuminated Spain and the cities where Gitanos live. It was a fire coming from France brought up to us by El Emiliano. It was unbelievable; what a fire! We had never seen anything like it. People would heal their eyes, legs, and kidney disease. Every single day in which El Emiliano and his companions preached; new miracles would occur. It was something we had never experienced before. Every day we were blessed with healings, visions, revelation, and so on. (Interview)

Directly related to the significance of healing tropes is a broader narrative that revolves around a ubiquitous idea stressed by early leaders of the IEF: the Holy Spirit itself drove Gitano evangelist actions.

> These brothers did not come to us using words of human wisdom but the power of God and the Holy Spirit, prompting wonders and miracles, so our faith was predicated on God, not men. Had these brothers attempted to persuade us [Gitano people] by using words of human wisdom, they would have failed, since none of them were men of letters. However, God supported them with his Word, and everyone could see the miracles God did through them. (Bautista 1980:27)

This portrayal of the Gitano evangelist as the subject of divine volition contains a lesson for the reader: the sense of religious purpose and drive are more important than formal and religious education. Consequently, the example set by the founders of the movement shows that *any Gitano man* can become an evangelist regardless of their socioeconomic class.

The IEF books not only praise the founders of the IEF but also recount the challenges that these Christian heroes faced in their religious mission. One example of such challenges is Jiménez Ramírez's book *Llamamiento de Dios al pueblo gitano* [God´s call to Gitano people] (1981). Three major Christian themes related to trials ordained by God appear in Jiménez Ramírez's book.

Firstly, there is the distress and hardship experienced by Gitano evangelists. There are multiples references in the book to lack of proper transportation that enable evangelists to move around quickly such as private cars (54); to religious services conducted in deplorable conditions and facilities (55); and even to starving preachers (74).

Secondly, Jiménez Ramírez refers to the lack of religious civil rights. This theme echoes Le Cossec's accounts of his incarceration in Madrid in the 1960s after failing to

cooperate with Spanish police when three French evangelical preachers were arrested (Le Cossec 2003:123). According to Jiménez Ramírez, the spread of the movement was accompanied by abuse from the Spanish Guardia Civil, violence, and unwarranted police incarcerations during Franco's authoritarian rule in Spain (82–85).

Finally, the third major theme is resistance from Gitanos to their evangelisation. Jiménez Ramírez's book documents stories involving failed healings that resulted in persecutions from a family member (31), the ruined friendship between converts and nonconverts (37), and threats and insults by nonconverts (59, 63). This latter theme also appears in Cano's book, in which he writes of death threats and the damaging of property belonging to evangelists (Cano 1981:117), and in Bautista's book in which he writes about Gitano communities protesting against religious activity (Bautista 1980:13). In my fieldwork, I gathered several oral histories of early evangelists being thought to be jinxed and bringing *mal fario* (bad luck) to those who met them. In Andalusia, Canton Delgado has recorded an account of an early evangelist who points out that resistance to the evangelist movement by Gitanos went as far as considering evangelists to be demons and even battering them with stones (Delgado et al. 2004:167).

By collecting testimonies and personal experience of the first leaders of the movement, a pantheon of Gitano Christian heroes was forged. Bautista writes:

> When Gitano people saw and heard what these seven great men were doing in the name of Christ, they converted to Christ en masse and changed their lives and deeds as children of God. (Bautista 1980:11–12)

In the introduction to a memoir entitled *Memorias del hermano Emiliano, apóstol del Señor,* [*Brother Emiliano´s Memories: An Apostle of the Lord*] (2005), Emiliano, the

most prominent figure among the first generation of Gitano church leaders, is defined by Cano in this way:

> Our brother Emiliano meets all the requirements to be considered an apostle, as he was a pioneer and the first to preach among us, many having converted through his actions or the actions of the first, second, or even fifth generation of ministries that he founded. (Cano 2005:11)

Most importantly, the biographies of the founders of the movement are described as shaped by harshness and strife and teach the reader values that need to be preserved, such as loyalty to God, hope for the future, and fighting against demonic adversity. Central to the IEF's teachings, and virtually to every Christian church, is the idea that converts will suffer at some point in their lives from isolation, misunderstanding, and pressure to abandon their newfound religious beliefs. Starting with the crucifixion, the repression of Christians is prominent in the New Testament, beginning with the incarceration of Peter and John (Acts 4:1–21) and eventually the rest of the apostles (Acts, 5:27–40). Stories about the IEF's founders mirror biblical stories and contain a central lesson: believers must stick to their Christian beliefs regardless of circumstance. Many pastors in my fieldwork referred to the lives and deeds of the first generation of pastors with nostalgia, affirming that *el los pastores actuales se han acomodado* (ministers are getting too comfortable now). This type of nostalgia is not a melancholic remembrance of time passed but a call for action. Deceased prominent pastors are used as role models for young pastors, who are encouraged to emulate the romantic sacrifices of past generations.

However, I do not mean to imply that the stories collected in the books are fictional. My point here is that selecting specific experiences out of many years of evangelisation and, most importantly, privileging these experiences over others in the

narratives contained in these books, goes a long way towards securing the image of the movement as filled with the Holy Spirit, based on the Bible, and mandated by God.

3.4 Using the Bible to Understand the Present

Gitano believers are deeply convinced that the Gitano evangelical movement is exceptional in the eyes of God. Reflecting on how fast their movement has spread in the past and present among Gitano communities, in comparison to the rest of the Spanish population, pastors and church members alike consistently reiterate their belief that Gitanos have the closest spiritual connection to God on Earth.

The poetics of the evangelical narratives are shaped accordingly to that belief. Self-representations of early Gitano evangelists and ways of narrating the early history of the movement are informed by a sense of significance. Reflecting on the achievements of the movement, Jiménez Ramírez writes:

> The revival [among Roma] in France had deeply touched the whole world; however, our work among Gitano people has become a revival that captured the attention of the evangelical world too. (Jiménez Ramírez 1981:24)

Similarly, a high sense of accomplishment is commonly found among the founders of the IEF. For some, the Gitano evangelical movement is a unique event in Christian history. Cano captures this point eloquently:

> There has never been a revival like this one since the time of the [biblical] apostles. Indeed, God has dramatically touched crowds, and many people have accepted Christ as their savior across the world. Still, there has never been a revival so steady quite like the one happening now in our times for the Gitano people. (Cano 1981 7–8)

Imagining themselves to be maximally close to God, some IEF Gitano leaders believe that the Bible tells, to no small extent, the history of Gitano people.

Some Romani and Gitano ministries use and appropriate the Bible as a medium with which to reinterpret the Gitano past. In 1966, the French Pentecostal leader Mateo Maximoff wrote a chapter in the official magazine of the movement, *Vie et Lumière,* under the title 'Parallèles des Lois de Ancien Testament et des Lois des Rom', which proposed a similarity between the Israelites of the Old Testaments and the Romanies. Maximoff underpins this parallelism by alluding to shared cultural values and practices such as elderly authority, funerary rites, and feminine purity taboos (Maximoff 1966:25).

In one of his early books, *Un Pentecostés en el Siglo XX,* published in 1981, Spanish Gitano Lisardo Cano extends the analogy put forth by Maximoff some years earlier. Particularly, Cano states that the similarities between Romanies and the biblical Israelites extend to a wide array of cultural elements, such as the critical role of the father before a marriage proposal to a woman; revenge and retaliation in situations of conflict as a part of the cultural repertoire; elders' authority; and severe punishment of women in cases of adultery (Cano 1981:35–37).

Early Pentecostal Gitano leaders were also keen to acknowledge these parallels and agreed the Bible encloses information about the history and origins of the Romani people, which likens them to the Israelites. Jiménez Ramírez makes use of the Romani/Israelite parallel to shape his compelling narrative about the Gitano past. On the one hand, his account of Pentecostal Gitano history is informed by biblical Israelite figures. Thus, as Le Cossec is portrayed as 'a twentieth century Moses for Gitanos', the seven pioneering Gitano evangelists are depicted as Nehemiah-like characters, who led their people out of ruin and cultivated them in the name of the Lord (Ramírez 1981:24–26). On the other hand, and most importantly, Jiménez Ramírez explicitly proposes a meaningful comparison to the Israelite people.

> [We Roma] are terrified and scared people, like the people of Israel were (Lv. 26: 36–38), who flee no sooner than upon hearing leaves from a tree. I do not intend to affirm that we are identical to the people of Israel but rather to show we share great parallelisms with them. We have become a byword and a proverb and have faced similar misfortunes. We have also been scattered across nations very much like they were […] many years have passed, and we still do not know where we come from, although we now know where our destiny lies, and this is thanks to the grace of Christ having found us. (Ramírez 1981:17).

The affirmation 'We have also been scattered across nations very much like the people of Israel were' is a subtle way of proposing a diasporic mode of identity, based on the idea that Romani people are 'one people' that overcome divisions by divine intervention. Given the fact that the GEM's evangelisation target and recipient of their religious project is the Romani people, by asserting social boundaries vis-à-vis non-Romani people, and reinforcing the belief in that sense of original unity, the leaders of the movement are creating for the movement a transnational religious niche. Leading Romani Studies scholars have questioned whether the Romani people (perhaps with the exception of Roma activist groups) in fact recognise other Romani groups as belonging to a single social and moral community (Williams 1984) and have contested guesswork regarding the relevance of an international sense of imagined community for the construction of a Romani group identity (Gay y Blasco 2002:176–79). Thus, the emergence of such a diaspora-based identity constitutes a fundamental shift in understanding Romani identity.

The discursive relevance of Israelite parallelism for stigmatised social groups has been emphasised by anthropologists such as Austin-Broos (1997). In her study of the Jamaican Pentecostals, Austin-Broos discusses how a Pentecostal Jamaican female pastor uses an analogy between the ancient Israelites and Jamaicans to provide hope for the future to her church. Here a meaningful and redemptive sense of history is evoked by

drawing a parallel between the tragic history of the Israelites and Jamaica's past of slavery and the present ghetto-like conditions in which most church members live. (Austin-Broos 1997:175). As with the pastor described in Austin-Broos's account, Jiménez Ramírez uses a redemptive undertone to depict historical experiences of a collective Gitano past. Although Jiménez Ramírez produced a highly schematic and underdeveloped account of a collective Gitano past—encapsulated in the sentence 'We have become a byword and a proverb, and have faced similar misfortunes'—such an account resonates with Gitano collective experience while still being in line with the little that Gitanos usually know about their group history: their ancestors, like Gitanos today, were subject to discrimination and bigotry.

The last sentence of Jiménez Ramírez's quotation— 'We now know where our destiny lies, and this is thanks to the grace of Christ having found us'—is also vital in understanding why Romani/Israelite comparisons are a recurring theme among Pentecostal Gitano leaders.

Gitano pastors consistently preach that a glorious future in heaven lies ahead for Gitano people. *Los gitanos nos vamos al cielo* (Gitanos will ascend to heaven) is a recurring statement with which many pastors attempt to fire up their congregations at the beginning of their preaching. Gitano pastors often describe heaven as *una tierra que mana leche y miel* (a land flowing with milk and honey), a perfect spiritual realm without suffering, nor violence or poverty, and where believers will reunite with their loved ones and be forever blissful. The sequence of supernatural events recorded by some early Gitano leaders following the arrival of the Gitano church pioneers indicates that God now watches over the Romani/Gitanos. The appearance of the movement thus recalibrates Romani/Gitanos onto the right track of history and, by God's favour and the intervention of the Pentecostal movement, Gitano hardship and woes will soon end. By drawing on a

temporal duality (darkness and fall in the past, hope and redemption in the present), Gitano religious narratives reinterpret Gitano collective history and yield hope for the future for Gitano believers. The idea of a Christian paradise allows Gitano believers to imagine a utopian future that contrasts to their experience in a Spanish society in which they suffer from persecution.

Remarks on the transformative and reinterpretive approach of Gitano believers towards Christian history and the Bible align with the various ethnographical accounts that consider Romanies *bricoleurs* (Okely 1983; Gay y Blasco 1999:66; Stewart 1997:20). Okely affirms that 'Gypsies'[41] do not passively copy the beliefs and myths of the dominant society. Instead, as a result of their cultural activity, 'the ideology of the dominant society is de-totalised, and the ultimate re-synthesized cosmology takes on a new coherence with perhaps an opposing meaning, and one which accommodates the Gypsies as an independent group' (Okely 1983:77). In the same vein, the IEF's narratives detotalise biblical accounts and accommodate Romanies as an independent and central group into the broader ideology of Christian mythology.

3.5 Are Gitanos the Lost Tribes of Israel? A New Ethnogenesis

Some months into my fieldwork, I was surprised to discover that some Gitano believers not only identify with the collective journey embarked upon by the Israelites in the Bible, but that they believe that Gitanos are themselves the Israelites. Similar to other national and ethnic groups, such as the British Israelites, the Lemba people in South Africa, the Bemba of Zambia, and the Judaizers in Papua New Guinea (Weil 2016:26–27), some Gitano believers express their Christian singularity by claiming descent from the lost

[41] I have respected the terminology used initially by Okely and the word 'gypsy' because it is a historical category key to understanding her symbolic theoretical approach regarding the construction of ethnic boundaries and refusal to accept the thesis of Indian origins as relevant to the discussion about the construction of gypsy-ness.

tribes of Israel. Gitanos, thus, not only use the Bible to reinterpret the negative aspects of their past, but also to suggest new understandings of their origins as a group.

According to the Old Testament, the Lost Tribes of Israel were the Ten Tribes (Reuben, Simeon, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Dan, Asher, Naphtali, and Gad) that together with Levi and Judah composed the Twelve Tribes of Solomon's kingdom. Upon blatantly ignoring the warnings of the prophets to return to God, the kingdom was conquered, and the Ten Tribes were taken captive, exiled, and never again referred to in the Bible.

Gitano pastors and believers who believe that Gitanos are the lost tribes of Israel do not often formalise or elaborate this affirmation beyond noting some similarities between Gitanos and Israelite traditions mentioned in the Bible, or by pointing to a collective experience as outcasts shared by the two groups. Cano is an exception to this pattern, and his intellectual efforts to prove that Gitanos are the lost tribes of Israel have made him the foremost champion of this idea among Gitanos today. In his capacity as the founder and director of the evangelical radio station RTVE Amistad, Cano can spread his ideas regarding the origins of the Gitano people in several radio shows. For many Gitano believers, Cano's radio show (live and online) is a critical source of entertainment and a gateway to Christian news.

Upon assuming his role as secretary of the IEF in the late 1970s, Cano had already entertained the idea that Gitanos and the Israelites are very similar peoples (Cano 1981:35). After forty years of an evangelical ministry career in the IEF and other churches

in Catalonia, Cano[42] published a book in 2016 under the title *Gitanos, las Tribus Perdidas de Israel* (Gitanos: the Lost Tribes of Israel).

In this book, Cano portrays the birth of the Gitano evangelical movement as a divine sign for Gitanos to discover their origins and turns to the classic Christian trope of individual revelation to support his claim (Cano 2016:76). Cano writes:

> I asked God with my deepest feelings to show me the truth through his word, and that day came. It felt like a veil was removed from my eyes, and I could see what God said about Gitanos in the Bible […] However, if we, the Gitanos, are the lost tribes of Israel, why then has nobody realized this before? First, there is the question of time. God has a time for everything, and it is foretold in the Bible that the tribes of Israel will be restored only when they repent for their sins, and this has only begun to happen for the Gitanos from the 1950s onwards. (Cano 2016:26)

Cano underpins his personal experience of divine revelation by gathering an eclectic array of Bible-based as well as quasi-scientific historical, linguistic, and biological arguments. I do not intend to engage thoroughly with Cano's arguments, but I will offer a summary as they serve as a springboard for a discussion of further implications of the Gitano-Israelites theory of ethnogenesis.

Cano's main argument is that the Romani people fit the biblical depiction of the lost tribes of Israel more accurately than any other existing social group and that there are eight points in the Bible that show this. These are as follows: 1) both groups were spread across the nations; 2) lived in tents; 3) were persecuted; 4) worshipped false, non-Christian deities; 5) never found a true homeland; 6) spent time in Egypt[43] before crossing paths with God again; 7) suffered historical woes and calamities; and 8) their population

[42] Lisardo Cano was not a member of the IEF when he published this book. Nevertheless, he is still widely recognised as a voice of authority within the movement by other IEF pastors.

[43] Spanish Gitanos were first recorded as entering the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century, and some of them claimed they came from Egypt. The word 'Gitano' is a derivation of the word 'egipciano' (from Egypt).

drastically declined over the years after persecution (Cano 2016:56). Cano develops this last point in detail.

According to Cano, the prophecy contained in Verse thirty-seven of the Book of Ezekiel, known as the prophecy Valley of Dry Bones, proves the oneness between the Romani people and the Israelites. In the prophecy Valley of Dry Bones, God shows Ezekiel an apocalyptic vision of a valley filled with bones, which belong to the Israelites. For Cano, the Nazi genocide during the Second World War against both Jews and Romanies echoed the prophecy of the Valley of Dry Bones. The fact that Romanies suffered the same fate as Jews in the Holocaust proves that they belong to the Israelite people too (Cano 2016:30, see also 52–53).

Resorting to the Bible is a strategy that challenges the chain of knowledge production regarding the Romani past. The mystery about Romani origins has captured the imagination and interest of non-Romani people for centuries, leading to the publishing of innumerable books, monographs, and chapters. Scholars proposed the link between Romani and Indian languages in the eighteenth century, and these linguistic studies led to a breakthrough that remains undisputed within the scholarly community to this day (Matras 2014:108). Taking this into account, we can understand the full significance of the claims of Cano and other Gitano pastors and believers. Cano firmly rejects the Indian origin theory. While he recognises that Romani people might have lived in India at some points in history, their roots date further back (Cano 2016:114). The unfinished storyline of the tribes of Israel in the Old Testament offers Gitanos a haven for critical imagination. Cano's argument contests payo science and provides Bible-based ethnogenesis that challenges payo gypsylorists and scholarly accounts of the origins of the Romani people.

Consistent with his critical biblical imagination, Cano also attempts to prove that the power of the revelation of God exceeds and is higher than any human knowledge. He states that:

> The most relevant evidence proving Gitanos are the lost tribes of Israelites is the Word of God. The Word of God rightfully establishes who the lost tribes of Israel are, and God made it clear in a certain way. For those in disbelief and those who do not share our beliefs, the Bible's words are not relevant. For us, however, the words in the Bible are of more value than whatever scientists, linguists, or whoever may say. (2016:21)

Despite Cano's attempt to demonstrate the epistemological superiority of the Bible over science, it is revealing that he also marshals rational and empirical arguments to underpin his claims. Furthering his discussion, Cano argues that the Romani and Hebrew languages are similar (2016: 311–16) and even that Gitanos and Jews share the same DNA (2016:328). The fact that Cano is not an expert in linguistics nor in biology and the lack of robust scientific evidence to support his claims does not defeat the veracity of his arguments given that they are directed to believers, not scientists. Using science to discredit science, Cano attempt to challenge payo science on its own turf by proving to the best of his abilities that scientific knowledge is in line with the Christian truth: thus, revelation is not contrary to reason.

Lastly, central to Cano's book is that the Romani people are not solely one group, but the Ten Tribes of Israel (2016:29). Similar to Jiménez Ramírez, Cano also advocates for a diasporic mode of identity consistent with the international evangelisation scope of the movement, which is grounded in the idea that the Romani people spread across the world are 'one people' bound to reunite and, with God's intervention, overcome divisions. Nomadism, as a central historical activity of the Romani people, is thus resignified and given Christian meaning as an exodus-like pathway to Heaven. Israel, as the Promised

Land and eternal home for the Romani people, gains full import in Cano's approach. According to him, 'God will lead Roma believers to the country of Israel' (2016:227–230).

The Lost Tribes of Israel narrative situates Romani origins in a timeless and mythical realm, pinning their identity to an uncorrupted source. This narrative is resonant with Maurice Halbwachs' ideas on the intersection of collective memory and religion in his posthumous text *La Topographie Légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte; Étude de Mémoire Collective* (1941[1992]). Drawing on a Durkheimian sacred/profane distinction, Halbwachs argues that the religious object is eternal and immutable, and shows radical opposition to the secular world which is developed within the passage of time and duration' (1992:92). Gitano believers who embrace the Israelite theory thus embrace an eternal and fixed modality of Gitano identity. By likening the Romanies to the Israelites, Cano also carves out a special place for his people in Judeo-Christian history. The Israelite myth revolves around the concept of the Covenant between Abraham and the people of Israel. Even though he does not mention it explicitly, conspicuously underlying his arguments is that the Romanies are God's chosen people. According to Cano:

> The foundation of Christianity comes from Israel and through Israel, as Jesus himself said that 'salvation will come with the Jews.' They are God's tools, from which He brought the prophets, and they are the people by which commandments and scriptures from Old and New Testaments came to us. Through them, Jesus came, and through them, the primitive church was born; thus, THEY ARE THE ROOT. (48–49, capital letters not mine).

While Cano entirely subsumes Gitano identity into a religious category, by having them be part of the Israelite-God covenant, he accommodates an ethnocentric narrative that situates Gitanos at the centre of Christian cosmology, fully reversing their marginalised position in Spanish society.

While not every Gitano pastor concurs with that statement, the idea that Gitanos are the lost tribes of Israel is a long-standing part of the Gitano Christian imagination and widely spread among Gitano believers. Believing either that Gitanos are, or are not, the lost tribes of Israel is generally and consistently understood by the members of the IEF as a matter of personal choice. In the concluding section of this chapter, I will tackle the broader significance of this disagreement, as well as its downplaying as a matter of individual choice rather than as a disruptive element that divides the Gitano people.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

The idea that collective memories (knowledge and information about the past which are considered significant and associated with the group's identity by a particular social group) are not the product of a detached reflection upon the past, but a social construction shaped by the concerns and power structures of the present, has become an anthropological and sociological trope (Halbwachs (1941[1992]; Hervieu-Léger 2000; Rappaport 1999). In line with that trope, I have shown that the IEF's collective memories, as well as its account of Gitano origins and history, are shaped by political narratives aligned with new modalities of ethnic authority embodied by Gitano ministries. Ideas and tales about the past intertwine with IEF structures of authority to produce new frameworks in which Gitano believers redefine their identity and position vis-à-vis non-Gitano people by reimagining their role and telos in the Christian cosmology. Power and authority are intrinsic to, and inseparable from, the politics of memory among Gitano believers since the act of remembering weaves through the legitimising reference of an authorised version of such memory.

I have also shown that the interplay between written and oral histories, such as books and the oral circulation of their content, has played a significant role in shaping the

IEF's understanding of the Gitano past. The IEF's books collect and display a meaningful and widespread set of religious stories that attempt to explain the origin of their spiritual movement, referring to the momentum of divine forces, including Holy Spirit-infused heroic characters, supernatural events, and divine intervention. Metonymical references (between God and the movement), best captured by the narratives regarding healing acts (those that assimilate evangelistic efforts with miraculous events), are ubiquitous in the books' accounts of the origins of the Gitano evangelical movement. Aiming to unravel how personal and collective experiences are framed and become entangled with institutional narratives about the past, I have treated the personal stories of evangelists as reenactments of biblical stories and expressions of a description inclined towards reaffirming a Christian worldview, rather than as historical facts. My aim here has not been that of providing a historical account of the birth of the IEF, but rather to explore the role of elites in shaping the IEF's official memory by resorting to classic Christian tropes (martyrdom, God's trials, and repression by nonbelievers).

As well as having proved to be unique forums for the creation of Gitano Christian heroes, the IEF's books have revealed a sociopolitical agenda of the IEF leaders: namely to connect the movement to the Holy Spirit and depict the Gitano church as a divinely ordained agent in the history of the Gitano people. Equally as essential, Gitano religious elites portray the birth of the movement as a redemptive milestone and turning point in Gitano history. The movement's pioneering elite propelled two Bible-based narrative devices that connect biblical times with the contemporary emergence of the Pentecostal Gitano movement. The first device is an analogy—that the history of the Israelites is coterminous with Gitano history. The second device is a revelation, meaning that the Gitano people are the lost tribes of Israel. Both devices resignify Christian mythology and mobilise diaspora-based modes of identity that correlate in portraying generatively Gitano

history as a redemptive pathway led by the Gitano church towards a heavenly future. They are not only used by the movement elite to offer a unified depiction of their evangelisation target but also to reinterpret the Romani historical past through the Judeo-Christian religious idiom of the final redemption. The widespread belief that the Romani people are Israelites not only paves the way for the emergence of a new interpretation of the origins of the Gitano people (ethnogenesis) but also enables pastors and believers to challenge and contest the popular theory of Indian origins endorsed by secular and non-Gitano-dominated scholarship. Furthermore, identifying with a historically stigmatised group like the Jews is a powerful signifier of the marginal role in Spanish society that Gitanos feel themselves to inhabit.

Divergences as to what extent Gitano people should stretch their parallelism with the biblical Israelites prove that the Gitano Pentecostal movement is not a monolithic one. The existence of such difference signals the emergence of distinctive ways of dealing with religious identity among Gitanos. On the one hand, those who do not believe Gitanos are the Israelites refuse to fully subdue their cultural singularity into a theological framework. On the other hand, those who think that Gitanos are the Israelites embrace the dissolution between their secular and religious identities.

However, I am not suggesting that the evangelical Gitano community is highly fragmented or divided because of the existence of different ways of assembling their religious and cultural identities. Conversely, I think that both agree on one essential point, which is that the biblical narrative resonates with both the Gitano past and future. Identifying with the ethnic group par excellence of the Bible might be interpreted as an attempt to circumvent possible disruptive consequences for a kinship-oriented group such as the Spanish Gitanos following the acceptance of the new ethos that lies at the centre of Pentecostalism.

The IEF doctrine states that not everyone will be saved, including neither all members of any one ethnic group, nor close kin. However, if Gitanos were to be the Israelites, or, at least, receive a similar favour from God, the mission of the IEF pastors would be nothing more than fulfilling the divine plan by evangelising the Gitano people as a whole and precisely preventing any possible kin or social fracturing in the afterlife. Either way, both narratives allow IEF pastors to navigate more comfortably the contradictions stemming from the coexistence of a cultural system predicated on the centrality of kinship and the prevalence of emotions and love within kinship structures, and a restrictive and excluding theological belief system based on the dogma of individual salvation by faith.

CHAPTER 4. 'EVANGELICAL GITANOS ARE A GOOD CATCH': MASCULINITY, FLIRTING, AND MARRIAGE

Believers in La Pequeña Villa maintain the distinction between women and men as given, fixed and unquestionable. A man and a woman, they firmly believe, ought to engage in heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Virginity before marriage, especially for women, is a highly appreciated quality and divorce is considered a sin. Believers consider sex to be the defining attribute for roles and behaviours, and they hold dual and reified views as to what activities and attributes are appropriate for men and women. While such views are not dissimilar to how conservative Catholics in Spain as well as some Roma groups in Europe (Engebrigsten 2007; Stewarts 1997; Tesăr 2012) perceive gender and morals, an aspect that distinguishes the Gitano Pentecostal standpoint is believers' robust emphasis on reshaping models of masculinity, especially within marriage structures.

In the aftermath of religious conversion, marriage is resignified as an affective bond where spouses must demonstrate their sanctity. In his sermons, speeches and conversations with believers, Pastor Vaca focuses on instilling into Gitano men the understanding that conversion requires a commitment to becoming a new man, one defined by a resolved determination to interact with other members of their household, especially spouses, following evangelical principles. Evidence of church influence upon married lives includes that a substantial number of conversion testimonies from Gitano men revolve around significant changes in their relationships and households. Gitano women often claim that substantial changes in the way men handle relationships act as one of the key factors attracting women in significant numbers to La Pequeña Villa. A typical point evangelical women make when they try to evangelise other Gitano women

is that ‘conversion brings joy to your home’. Indeed, the benefits women obtain after their husbands convert is a recurrent theme outside and within ritual contexts, in sermons and in women's prayer meetings (Gay y Blasco 1999:120–121).

In this chapter, I explore how Evangelical Christianity and masculinity intertwine in La Pequeña Villa. Believers conceptualise the commitment to comply with ideals of evangelical masculinity as a redemptive path towards the creation of a new and better spiritual man, and those who follow them receive praise and acquire prestige in church. Gitano evangelical masculinity is explicitly defined against and constructed in opposition to ways of being a man that believers associate with nonevangelical men. Whereas nonevangelical masculinity is essentialised, homogenised and portrayed in a negative light, Gitano masculinity emerges as a positive and radically distinctive model of manhood. Importantly, here I do not analyse how Gitano believer men are, but rather how they claim or aspire to be. Distinguishing between male self-indulgence, evangelising narratives and private behaviour in the household, and thoroughly evaluating the individual impact of Pentecostalism among Gitano men, is beyond the scope of this chapter. In the evangelical narratives of male redemption, it is arduous to distinguish between the narrative effect of biographical reconstructions and a corpus of objective facts. However, critical to the believers’ undertakings in church is the showcasing of a constant commitment to changing behaviour, pursuing sanctification, and becoming a ‘good’ man, husband and father.

I start by defining the dominant position of men within IEF structures and forms of organisation. Then, I investigate how the dominant position of men in church echoes a broader evangelical understanding of the leading role of men in family and society. Adding to the scholarship on masculinity and Pentecostalism, I illustrate how the IEF

churches remake men's authority within families and redefine gender interactions. Critically, Pentecostal Gitano understanding of male headship and leadership requires a strong moral commitment and makes a claim for masculine reformation. Finally, I examine the impact of the Pentecostal Gitano conceptualisation of masculinity in marital choices and practices of flirting. In so doing, I contribute to the advancement of the work on kinship and marriage among Gitano people in urban settings.

4.1 Pentecostalism and Masculinities

The study of gender has played a significant role in the development of scholarly work concerning Pentecostal churches in regions such as Latin America (Burdick 1990; Gill 1990; Brusco 1986, 1993), Melanesia (Eriksen 2014), the Caribbean (Austin-Broos 1997), and Europe (Cucchiari 1990; Fumanti 2010; Gay y Blasco 1999).

In line with sociological patterns in Christianity overall (Walter and Davie 1998; Woodhead 2007), scholars have noticed that in Pentecostal churches in Latin America, the Pacific, and southern Europe, women outnumber men (Cucchiari 1988:420; Gill 1990:712; Lancaster 1988:103; Malogne-Fer 2013:191; Scott 1994). Woodhead argues that women's intense attraction to Pentecostalism is predicated on the shift of the centre of religion's gravity not just to the notion of emotional appeal but to that of relationships, particularly noninstrumental relationships based on love, trust and care (Woodhead 2001:78; see also Chesnut 1997). In the same vein, Martin (2001) argues that, even though Pentecostal churches rarely challenge traditional gender hierarchies, conversion to Pentecostalism paradoxically favours women. By adhering to evangelical religious principles, women are enabled to exercise considerable influence over domestic and family matters, find important arenas of religious expression, and even achieve a surprising measure of individual autonomy (2001:53).

The literature on gender and Pentecostalism has been complemented by a recent growth in attention to masculinity in Pentecostal churches. Scholarship on men and Pentecostalism has approached Pentecostal masculinity through four interrelated, yet distinct, analytical lenses.

One of the most common approaches to Pentecostal masculinities investigates hierarchies and status in the church. Pentecostalism often reflects patriarchal hierarchies and favours male headship. Most Pentecostal churches stipulate that only men can be church leaders (Van Klinken 2011:106). Ritual practices also incorporate gendered aspects of conversion. In urban Vanuatu (Melanesia), Eriksen (2014) shows that women and men engage with the Holy Spirit differently in charismatic spaces. Men receive the Spirit in ways that foster their status and individual capacities for institutional leadership, while women do so in possession episodes that embed them in relational networks (Eriksen 2014:266). In this vein, Linhardt has shown that there are 'masculine ways' of accessing the power of God among Pentecostal believers. In his research in Tanzania, he has noted that males 'take control' of the social spaces during loud collective worship. Males commonly walk around in a church room, asking God for blessings and protection while at the same time taking the opportunity to scold Satan and his servants (witches, spirits) and demand that they stay away (266).

A second analytical lens explores how Pentecostal churches reform masculinity in the private and domestic realm by limiting men's oppressive behaviour towards women (Martin 2001; Woodhead 2001) and offering a way for men to distance themselves from burdensome traditional norms of masculinity (Lindhart 2015:258). Van Klinken (2011) points out that pastors mobilise male agency by challenging hegemonic perceptions of masculinity in society and by reminding men that they can live up to an alternative ideal. In her pioneering study of Colombian Pentecostalism, Brusco (1995) notes that

Pentecostal churches benefit women by urging men to give up violence and chauvinistic patterns of consumption, such as drinking, gambling or womanising (Brusco 1995; see also Stoll 1990:319 and Van Klinken 2012).

A third analytical approach engages with how Pentecostal masculinity interacts with other masculinities in the public realm. Scholarship concerned with Pentecostalism and men in Latin America has shown that pastors' attempts to prevent believers from performing some aspects of macho masculinity—drinking, gambling, chasing girls—leads to a loss of prestige amongst converted men vis-à-vis their nonconverted male peers (Brusco 1995; Montecino 2002). Likewise, Austin-Broos noted that men who become Pentecostals in Jamaica pursue institutional leadership roles within the church to mitigate the threat to others' perceptions of their masculinity that is associated with conversion (Austin-Broos 1998:123). In contrast, Lindhart (2015; see also Burchart 2017:114) has noted that in Tanzania, men who convert gain social standing vis-à-vis nonbelieving men. This is achieved by convincing others that they are winners bound for success who possess spiritual power over the forces of darkness (Lindhart 2015:264). In the public sphere, Lindhart argues, dominant criteria of male honour, status and self-assertion continue to inform Pentecostal performances of masculinity leading to greater competition and convergence around notions of power-laden competitive masculinities.

A fourth analytical lens approaches Pentecostalism and masculinities by engaging with couple making and born-again males' appeal. Burchardt (2017) affirms that in South African Pentecostal churches the figure of the pastor is prone to eroticisation and sexualisation not only because of women's sexual desires or their identification with the pastors but because of the rise of prestige that comes with the occupation of that leading position (122). It is worth noting, Burchardt reports, that female informants state that

'transformed men' would, similarly, try to use their image as 'modern guys' to initiate relationships with women, for instance when speaking about their projects and men's support groups on public occasions, and that pastors were no exception to this (2017:121).

Scholarship on Pentecostal Gitano masculinities has developed along a similar path as the international literature on Pentecostal men. Hierarchies and status (1) have formed a central focus of this research (Gay y Blasco 2012; Cantón Delgado 2017). Gay y Blasco (2000) has analysed male headship and shown that the rise to prominence of Pentecostal and charismatic male pastors has affected Gitano political organisation, as well as how Gitanos construct male Gitano status and hierarchies.

The reformulation of masculinity in the domestic realm (2) has also drawn the attention of scholars in the field. Gay y Blasco has noted (1999; see also Montañés Jiménez 2016) that evangelical gendered codes of behaviour and the reformation of Gitano masculinity have become a hegemonic narrative in Gitano churches.

Regarding the position of Pentecostal masculinities in the public realm, scholars have indicated that Pentecostal masculinity echoes that of traditional respected Gitano men. (Gay y Blasco 2012; Cantón Delgado 2017). As noted, and discussed at length in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, the principles of religious hierarchies do not emerge in opposition to, but following, secular sources of masculine prestige among Gitano people. Therefore, Gitano male believers do not face a loss of masculine reputation when converted. Spanish anthropology has depicted kinship as the prominent source of authority within Gitano communities: males who have gained respect on the basis of age, known as *Tíos*, have enormous influence over their extended families (Gamella 1996; Gay y Blasco 1999:139–153; Lagunas 2005; 149–249, San Roman 1997:92–160). Gay y

Blasco has noted that ‘knowledge’ and ‘respect’ are the prominent sources of masculine prestige among Gitano people and are attributes associated mainly with Tíos (Gay y Blasco 1999:159). Gitano Tíos gain prominence by displaying a strong ability to distinguish between proper and improper behaviour, and by exerting control over their anger in the face of conflict with unrelated men, which gains them respect. Vitally, knowledge and respect continue to work as bases for the ascription of authority for Gitano believers, who embrace these traits as central to their hierarchy of prestige. Converted Gitanos dissociate knowledge from age and strive to shift away from unrespectable behaviours and attributes usually associated with young Gitanos, such as sexual promiscuity, recklessness, drinking and partying. Thus, converted Gitanos—even the young ones—incarnate ideals associated with Tíos, enabling them to present themselves as the elite of the Gitano community (Gay y Blasco 2000:14).

As shown above, scholarship on Gitano masculinities and Pentecostalism has analysed male Gitano believers through the first three analytical lenses described. However, less attention has been paid to the fourth analytical lens (couple making and males’ appeal). While I engage with all four analytical frameworks to illuminate the complexities of the construction of born-again Gitano masculinities, the novelty of the content of this chapter lies in exploring the fourth analytical lens among Gitanos in Villaverde.

4.2 Gitano Men and Leadership

In La Pequeña Villa, there is an explicit focus on spiritual egalitarianism: everyone is equal in the presence of God, and everyone can have a personal relationship with God. Pastor Vaca often preaches that the members of the church are undifferentiated children in the eyes of God. In the seating arrangement of La Pequeña Villa men and women are

located equidistantly from the pulpit where Pastor Vaca delivers sermons. The fact that male and female members of the church approach each other using the terms 'brother' and 'sister', with their undertones of equal position vis-à-vis shared progenitors, shows this equalising element within the religious ideology of La Pequeña Villa.

However, spiritual egalitarianism does not mean lack of hierarchies. Even though La Pequeña Villa's church attendance is strongly feminised—in a typical religious service, women outnumber men two to one[44]—La Pequeña Villa is male dominated both in ideology and organisation.

Women are largely ignored in the hegemonic narratives of the origins of the IEF. One of the main points that emerge from the early Pentecostal Gitano elite's account of history as described in chapter three is that Gitano males are portrayed as the main religious force in the evangelisation efforts. While dozens of Gitano evangelists' life events are mentioned in Jiménez Ramírez and others' accounts, not a single woman's is mentioned. As with Annelin Eriksen's account of missionaries' efforts in some French Polynesian churches, the official history inscribed within missionaries' biographies and memoirs is understood within the frameworks of the existing male agenda, hierarchy and ideology (Eriksen 2006:223).

Unlike their male counterparts, female Gitano singers are not allowed to step on to the pulpit platform that works as the stage. While male musicians face the congregation, Gitano women perform with their backs turned to the congregation. Gitano

[44] Reflection on the nature of sex, understood as a God-given and fixed attribute, and on how sex attributes impact the lives of believers is a relevant topic of conversation among believers. Pastor Vaca has his own spiritual explanation for the higher engagement of women, and embraces the idea that men tend to be more worldly and rebellious than women.
'As you have seen with your own eyes Antonio, in La Pequeña Villa we scarcely use a couple of benches to host men. Women take up the rest of the space, and I can assure you these patterns are the same in most of the IEF churches across Spain. I think women's preeminence is predicated on their greater sensitivity to spiritual things. While women are more prone to open themselves for spirituality, men tend to have a hardened heart. I do not mean to offend anyone, but I think it is true.'

order of rank is also expressed in the unequal right to talk in public to the congregation. Although women are entitled to participate in testimonies, to cheer, sing, and adore God out loud, and they do so enthusiastically, words that carry formal religious authority[45] can only be pronounced by Gitano males. Becoming a pastor and being involved in relevant decision making in the church is strictly a male privilege. Gitano females are barred from all categories of ministry recognised by the IEF and widely disenfranchised from formal leadership.

Gitano pastors understand male ministry as a cornerstone of the IEF. While women's presence in Pentecostal leadership positions is still rare, it has slowly increased over the past decades in Spain (Cazarin and Griera 2018; see also Tarducci 2005). Pastor Vaca deems those Christian churches to be compromising biblical teaching by awarding leading positions to women. The reified distinction between the gendered worldviews of Gitano churches and of others qualifies Pastor Vaca to draw a moral division, bestowing a sense of excellence upon the Gitano church as compared to the rest of the world. The endorsement of male leadership in the church resonates, for some believers, with Gitanos' cultural identity. The possibility of equality between men and women is firmly rejected by some Gitano people in Villaverde, who view it as a negative feature of the payo lifestyle (Gay y Blasco 1997:521) As Gay y Blasco (1999) points out, having *conocimiento*, the high capacity for discerning what is morally just and right according to Gitano values, is a quality associated with Tíos that lies at the core of the Gitano gendered sense of internal hierarchies. IEF teachings regarding the creation of the human world correspond with and vindicate cultural views on gender differences as framed by some

[45] Significant work in the literature has been devoted to demonstrating that some women barred from formal ministries find their way in to seize an active religious role and exercise influence over congregations regardless (Cucchiari, 1990:694; see also Lindhardt, 2012). Drawing on the ideological distinction between gift and ministry, Cucchiari shows that women take up similar yet undervalued roles of healers, preachers or prophets without formal recognition, which allows women to seize active roles without challenging the patriarchy.

Gitanos in Villaverde. According to the IEF teachings, women, as the descendants of Eve, are the first sinners, and are to be held responsible for the fall of humanity since they tempted Adam to break the sacred taboo and eat of the Tree of Knowledge. By disobeying God's orders and acting on their own without the consent of a man, women opened the door for sin and death to enter the world and triggered the events that led to humanity's ejection from the Garden of Eden. Pastor Vaca often refers to the New Testament passage 1 Timothy 2:12, traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul: 'But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence' to underpin the official church position of denying Gitano women ministry opportunities (being trained and ordained as clergy). By grounding males' source of authority on the divine Bible, Pastor Vaca blends Christian ideas with the gendered worldviews that some conservative Gitano people in Villaverde consider central to their lifestyle and morals.

Notwithstanding, barring Gitano women from ministry opportunities does not deter male pastors from capitalising on Gitano women's skills to build up their churches. Some women—known as *pastoras* (female pastors)—are expected to lead and promote the women's section of the church, as well as to listen carefully to other women's concerns in women-only gatherings which take place fortnightly. The role of pastora is not ministerial but an honorific position, only attainable when women are married to pastors. According to Pastor Vaca women are not meant to interpret the scriptures or to teach others, and he vindicates the existence of this unrecognised ministry for women in terms of practicality. This practicality is grounded, in turn, on the very fact of the gender divide. According to Pastor Vaca:

> In the capacity of *pastora*, my wife Elena gets access more easily to Gitano women's intimacy, and they feel more comfortable and open in a more significant fashion with a woman. Gitano women would not open to me as they do to my wife. I would say that my wife's workload is the same, or even greater than mine. (Interview)

Pastora Elena often remarks that she just follows Pastor Vaca's leadership. The act of downplaying her role, status and influence in the church aligns with males' domination of public spaces in church. Gitano women in La Pequeña Villa are aware that their roles include preserving males' reputation in church and showing deference to them before others. This dynamic—Pastora Elena contributing to leading the congregation in private spaces among women while Pastor Vaca achieves recognition in the public sphere—lies at the core of the gendered division of labour in La Pequeña Villa. Interestingly enough, these patterns echo Mediterranean traditional views on family and gender, where women hold strong positions in the space of family and household yet they relinquish the public sphere to men. In the next section, I will explore the connections between Mediterranean and Gitano evangelical ideals of family.

4.3 Family, Marriage and Evangelical Husbands

La Pequeña Villa's doctrine of gender relies heavily upon traditional Christian family ideals and marks these as the central component of the social and moral order. These facts are identified by Pastor Vaca as traits that distinguish the Gitano evangelical community from other Spanish people, who are becoming increasingly liberal and accepting of nontraditional forms of marriage and sexual orientation, and among whom divorce ratios are high. In opposition to broader Spanish society, which, according to Pastor Vaca, is losing its Christian roots and morals, Pastor Vaca cleaves to patriarchal, heterosexual, and monogamous principles. Moreover, Pastor Vaca preaches that the traditional family is a divine and indissoluble institution that needs to be preserved before the advancement of liberal agendas led by demonic forces in a morally decaying Spanish society.

La Pequeña Villa not only stands up for family; its very structure is reminiscent of a traditional and patriarchal Mediterranean family. Pastor Vaca often claims that

believers must take care of La Pequeña Villa's physical space as if it were their own home. For women, the metaphorical comparison has practical, real life consequences. Mimicking the division of labour in many of La Pequeña Villa's members' homes, Gitano women are expected to undertake housekeeping chores. In La Pequeña Villa, Pastor Vaca assigns upkeep and cleaning tasks to women on a rotating schedule. So that Pastor Vaca is not accused of being biased toward his wife, Pastora Elena often leads by example and volunteers herself for the cleaning rota weekly. The strong presence of children in the congregation further underpins how La Pequeña Villa is modelled on traditional family ideals. Despite the baptism of children not being practised by the IEF, children who have been socialised in the church are expected to grow into fully-fledged members someday. Pastor Vaca's teachings on how Gitano families need to be protected resonates strongly with the emphasis on monogamous and lifelong relationships of companionship, love, and affection within Gitano families (Gay y Blasco 2005; 2006).

In line with Protestant reform principles, priestly celibacy is not part of the IEF doctrine. What is more, marriage for pastors is an essential requirement. Men must first be married, preferably with children, to become pastors. Pastor Vaca got married before founding La Pequeña Villa, and this fact was widely considered as evidence of a good testimony and of him being a righteous man for his congregation.

Pastor Vaca deems marriage not only to be an expression of the spouses' love for each other but also as a sacred union whereby pastors—and believers—are required to exemplify moral righteousness, and through which one reaches a higher level of spiritual commitment. Gitano believers likewise often refer to their spouses as *compañero* and *compañera* (partners) and understand marriage as a God-appointed union with the primary function of pushing both partners towards sanctification. Pastor Vaca describes

the IEF's gender doctrine as complementarianism. Complementarianism is a theological view in Christianity advocating different but complementary roles and responsibilities for men and women in marriage, family life and religious leadership. The doctrine of complementarianism is best captured by the portrayal of God in La Pequeña Villa. As also happens in Sicilian Pentecostal churches (Cucchiari 1990:690), Pastor Vaca portrays God in complex cross-gender images. Although God is indisputable and referred to in the masculine form, His attributes are both traditionally fatherly (strong, severe, righteous, avid for respect, potentially violent if betrayed) and motherly (caring, warm, loving, forgiving, affective, consolatory). Rather than as opposing qualities, Pastor Vaca depicts traditional fatherly and motherly attributes as mutually implicating. Unlike God, whose infinite power enables Him to become one thing and its opposite, Pastor Vaca portrays human beings as naturally incomplete and unable to embody both sets of attributes. Christian marriage, as a partnership created in the image and likeness of God, brings together the best of both genders and makes for a perfect union. Believers link Christian Gitano marriages to an idea of gender integrity (Cucchiari 1990), understanding it as a partnership that enables the possibility of experiencing the gendered self as a 'good woman' and a 'good man' (Martin 2001:55).

Pastor Vaca and Pastora Elena are aware that their pastoral position places them as the most influential couple of La Pequeña Villa church and that their marriage is looked up to by the La Pequeña Villa members, so they strive to set themselves as role models. As Pastor Vaca often preaches in his sermons, the key to understanding how a happy marriage works lies in the idea of respect. Respect alludes to obedience or deference expected from an individual in their relationships with individuals of a higher status. According to Pastor Vaca, the epistle of Paul to the Colossians in the New Testament encapsulates the essence of marital and family relationships.

> Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (Colossians 3, 18–21)

As the quote above shows, Pastor Vaca romanticises female subordination to males since submitting to one's husband is equated to submitting to God's will (Mate 2002:557). Pastor Vaca often preaches that to achieve genuine happiness, both spouses should surrender to God's will and fulfil their role within the family.

Instilling ideals of mutual responsibility, interdependence, and harmonious relationship between spouses is central to Pastor Vaca's pastoral work. As well as preaching on how to build a good Christian marriage, Pastor Vaca is required to settle disputes between couples. La Pequeña Villa's doctrine seeks to reorganise gender relations and reeducate spouses so that the household becomes a haven of peace, and in-family hostilities and conflicts are prevented. In line with some developments in African Pentecostalism (Burchardt 2017), Pastor Vaca engages in the practice of counselling Gitano believers. In his work on Pentecostal marriage and sexuality counselling in Botswana, anthropologist van Dijk (2013) shows how the very practice of counselling as communication premised on dialogue, negotiation and persuasion provides a stark contrast to notions of women's obedience, submission to their husbands' commands and male headship that Pentecostals otherwise routinely endorse. Similarly, counselling equates to the reformation of masculinity in La Pequeña Villa. Men are expected to comply with various obligations linked to their position as a counterpart of their privileges as heads of the family. Pastor Vaca often describes Pentecostalist Gitano masculinity as a process through which Gitano men *se hacen dóciles* (become docile). The analogy of docility, which refers to the obedience of domesticated animals to humans, expresses how Gitano believers are held accountable to God for their behaviour towards their wives. In

line with this idea of docility, in his sermons, Pastor Vaca firmly rejects any form of domestic violence and depicts gender-related violence or spouses' unfaithfulness as characteristic of nonevangelical marriages.

Similar to some accounts of Pentecostal males in the Dominican Republic (Thornton 2016), La Pequeña Villa male believers often portray themselves as street men who had previously neglected their wives and children. Following conversion, men of the congregation are pushed to give up smoking, gambling, and drinking, and to stop spending time at parties or roaming freely from pub to pub in the late hours. As husbands, male believers are expected to stay faithful, treat their wives gently and ensure that their households remain argument free. However, the conversion is not a linear process for Gitano men. Academic scholars concerned with masculinity and Pentecostalism in Latin America have also claimed that the derogation of the principles of male enjoyment, such as hanging out in the streets, spending money at will, pursuing extramarital sexual conquests etc., which prevail in some social milieus beyond the boundaries of the Pentecostal movement, tend to be experienced by male believers as God's trial and a loss (Martin 1998:55). Lindhardt (2009) affirms that, in urban Tanzania, many born-again Christian men eventually drop out of their congregations because of the difficulty of adapting to Pentecostal-charismatic norms and ascetic standards (256). Similarly, some Gitano male believers show signs of nostalgia for their worldly life, and many acknowledge they have experienced crises and gone back temporarily to their worldly ways. However, Pastor Vaca's pastoral role is to persuade male Gitanos to follow his teachings regarding masculine moral integrity. He encourages them to give up on worldly forms of entertainment (gambling, heavy drinking, partying) and pleasure (prostitution, pornography), branding them as meaningless activities promoted by evil spiritual forces

in his sermons. To behave as a proper evangelical man is critical in proving men's commitment to God and eternal salvation.

4.4 Church and Marital Choices

Gitano people on average marry much earlier than non-Gitano people in Spain (Martin and Gamella 2005:52–55). Most Gitanos in La Pequeña Villa marry in their teens or early twenties at the latest. Despite Gitanos still holding an outdated reputation for arranging marriages for their teen sons and daughters in Spain, Gitano believers accept modern individualism and romantic love as the bedrock of marriage. In Villaverde, arranged marriage is not a widespread Gitano practice and most Gitano people I met considered it 'a thing of the past'. However, not unlike the Cortorari Roma analysed by Tesăr (2012), Gitano spouses, far from being represented as autonomous individuals, are conceived of as persons enmeshed in a web of kinship relations (Tesăr 2012:111). Unlike some other Pentecostal churches, converted women in La Pequeña Villa are not primarily abandoned wives, widows, divorcees, or single mothers (Gill 1990:709) and thus family disfranchised. The opposite is true; strong family ties surround converted Gitano women. Following traditional Gitano practice, the groom-to-be's father asks for the bride's hand at her home in a collective ceremony which members of both families attend. The success, or failure, of young Gitanos in the choosing of an adequate spouse, affects the prestige of their families.

In a private conversation, a Gitano father reflected to me on the potential loss of his family's prestige when his daughter married a non-full Gitano partner:

> Antonio, you know I think we Gitanos are very similar to the Israelites[46] of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the Bible says Israelites ought not to marry gentile people. Well, I am going to entrust you with a piece of information that under no circumstance should be shared with the rest of the congregation, is that clear?
>
> My daughter has a non-Gitano partner; he is a half-Gitano and half-payo. For they have kids, I am myself a grandfather of a couple of part-Gitano, part-payo grandchildren. Unfortunately, there is nothing I can do about it, Antonio. My girl fell in love with him, and they love each other. Please do not share this information with other Gitano people in church, for no one knows, could you do that for me? My family and I are keeping that information to ourselves, and we wish for it to remain that way for as long as we can. I do not think to avoid marrying gentiles is a strict biblical commandment, and I believe there is nothing wrong about it. However, there is some section of backward Gitano people who thinks marrying a non-Gitano partner is beneath us. I do not entirely agree with that yet had I the chance to choose myself; I would rather my daughter have a Gitano partner, so my Gitano lineage is preserved. Do not get me wrong; my preferences are not out of racism toward payos; it is just that I would like to maintain Gitano culture. (Interview).

Strong preference for partnering with Gitano people usually comes in tandem with an inclination for finding converted Gitanos as partners on the part of believers. When this is not the case, and someone from La Pequeña Villa marries a nonconverted partner, there is intense pressure for them to become a member of the IEF. La Pequeña Villa believers deem marriage between two Gitano converts to be the highest form of Gitano marriage.

As previously noted, the IEF provides a bible-based ideological doctrine that promotes gender integrity and offers religious ideals on which to build marital relationships. Gitano male believers are expected to treat their spouses well and to be

[46]References to the biblical Israelite people is tied up with the narratives analysed in chapter three and the idea that many Gitano pastors and believers claim that Gitano people are descended from the lost tribes of Israel.

devoted husbands and fathers. Gitano female believers are expected to respect men and to display modesty and sexual shame. By attending church, believers are endowed with qualities that enhance their chances of being perceived as husband or wife material and improve their marriage prospects. This is most notable in Gitano contexts, since, although it is possible to marry by elopement (*escaparse*) or with a wedding (*casarse con boda* or *bien*: to marry well), Gitanos in Villaverde link marriage to the loss of female virginity (Gay y Blasco 1997:524)

Gitano morality in Madrid puts a strong emphasis on control and on a dual moral standard: women should dominate their desires much more than should men (Gay y Blasco 1999). They should remain a virgin until marriage, and they should always be faithful to their husbands. Anthropologists have noted that the necessity for women to be virgins before marriage is a powerful ethnic marker in Gitano culture which is heavily linked to men's sense of honour (Gay y Blasco 1997; Pasqualino 1998). For Gitanos in Villaverde, women should marry the man with whom they first have intercourse and they become an object of scorn if their partner does not recognise his responsibility and cohabitation does not follow (Gay y Blasco 1997:524). Some ethnographers' accounts prove that family preservation and divorce avoidance is one of the main concerns for pastors and Christian families in Villaverde. Gay y Blasco narrates in detail the moral torment, humiliation and family pressures suffered by her friend and main informant Agata (including not being allowed to see her children and the fact that her sister called up a pastor to have her exorcised without asking her permission) when she fell in love with a Moroccan immigrant and intended to divorce her Gitano husband (Gay y Blasco 2011:457). Pastor Vaca reinforces Gitano gendered views—as understood by some conservative Gitano families in Villaverde—by preaching in favour of women's virginity before marriage. However, he introduces a more even playing field by advocating that

men should stop engaging in sexual intercourse before marriage. Gitano Pentecostal sexual morality as framed by Pastor Vaca is organised around the core values of premarital abstinence and marital fidelity, leading to an ideal of masculinity that, according to the narratives and testimonies of Gitano believers, stands in stark contrast to the double standards and lived reality of nonbelieving Gitanos in Madrid.

For believers, both the cultural and religious belief systems discourage divorce, so at a very early age, young Gitanos—especially women—face a critical life decision as they have only 'one shot' at choosing the right partner and starting a family.[47] These concomitant factors often lead young evangelical Gitanos to play it safe and seek their partners in church. Looking within the church for a potential mate is a common strategy, particularly for women, because in line with other Pentecostal believers, such as those described by Gill in Bolivia (1990), more 'domesticated' and reliable spouses can be found in church, compared to in society at large (1990:717). A popular saying in La Pequeña Villa that shows how this ideal of gender integrity links to attractiveness is 'evangelical Gitanos are a good catch'.

Pastor Vaca's nephew David's marriage story exemplifies how the church and certain religious qualities associated with believers are central to shaping marriage choices. David, sixteen years old and father of two, never attended church in his early teens. This changed when he met his future wife (Ana) at fourteen years old. Although David had liked Ana since first laying eyes on her, he was not inclined to ask her out before knowing more about her character and compatibility, which was a complicated effort as young Gitanos are not meant to speak to each other in public. When David learned that Ana attended the church of La Pequeña Villa, he joined the church and

[47] According to my interlocutors, Gitano husbands, and especially Gitano wives, are not expected to marry if widowed.

courted her discreetly. For a year, David participated in the church regularly and proved to the congregation his commitment to Christian values. Following Pastor Vaca's teachings, David behaves as a humble, cautious and chaste man. From her behaviour in church, David also knew his future wife to be modest and a virgin. This proved to be a significant factor in David's decision to ask his cousins and brother to reach out to Ana through a female relative of hers, and have her know of his interest. Her parents did not know David, yet his exemplary behaviour in church and a kind word put in by Pastor Vaca, and the knowledge that he was raised in an evangelical family, all contributed to their approval. Not long after, David's future wife agreed to *pedirse* (to get engaged to him), and subsequently, they got married in the church. David and Ana's love story is exemplary for La Pequeña Villa's believers. Paramount to the significance of their love story is that not only did church bring them together, but also that they keep their moral commitment to the church. This is critical since some believers feel that young Gitanos use churches cunningly to find their partner and never go back once that goal is achieved (see Méndez 2005:129). David himself frequently complains to me that some of his male friends never again attended the church once married, or only went back to church when rumours about their morals and behaviour had reached the ears of other Gitano families, in order to polish their images. For men, overt public exposure to drinking, partying or getting into trouble is the most go-to reason for rejoining the church. As for women, a broken engagement, for instance, can have such a negative impact on their sexual reputation that it is only by joining the church and being born again that they could expect some of their lost prestige to be restored. David considers these behaviours shame worthy and to be by-products of demonic attacks that crystallise in a lack a commitment to the church. Only by keeping oneself committed to the church, David often states, can Gitanos avoid these shameful situations.

4.5 Young Gitanos and Roneos

La Pequeña Villa church is a social space defined by the politics of manly honour. Reassured by the IEF doctrine of their rightful place as head of the church, men's sense of self-worth is protected and reinforced. Performance of masculinity and pair recognition are, thus, critical matters. The preceremonial time is one moment where masculinity becomes more clearly ritualised. Male believers devote a considerable share of their time to waving and shaking hands with 'their brothers'. Leaving someone out of this male ritual is equivalent to belittling their worth as a Gitano brother. On some occasions, I witnessed male believers becoming visibly upset when someone skipped them in the greeting round. As time went by, I realised that I was progressively being included in this male ritual. By the end of my stay in La Pequeña Villa, it took me a very long time to advance from the back row to my seat because of an impressive number of greetings to which I had to reciprocate.

The politics of manly honour extend to other spheres of interaction. Communications between men and women are kept to the bare minimum and conducted most discreetly. Within religious services themselves, the central aisle leading from the entrance to the pulpit marks a gender divide. Men invariably sit to the right and women, together with children, to the left, and this pattern is jealously guarded even in the event of full attendance. Therefore, despite equal spacing relative to the pastor, male and female Gitanos worship alongside but separately.

Pastor Vaca explains this rigid separation thus:

> Like the Israelites, Gitano men cannot talk to Gitano women freely face to face. If Gitano men spoke to women alone, it would show a lack of respect to Gitano women, and it is contrary to your testimony. According to Gitano culture, you cannot be seen talking to (unrelated) women in the

> streets or sat next to a Gitano woman. That potential scenario is not as big an outrage nowadays as it was before, yet it is better off if that situation does not arise. (Interview)

Critically, here Pastor Vaca links the ways Gitanos interact in La Pequeña Villa to the patriarchal culture of the Israelites as described in the Old Testament, implying that Gitano cultural views on gender, as he understands them, stand consonant with biblical teachings. By preventing sexual impropriety within the congregation, Gitano men and women show each other respect and abide by what they consider to be proper moral behaviour. The significance of proving sexual respectability in the church is such that only children, as not-yet fully-developed sexual beings, can cross that divide. Children's role as messengers takes great prominence in the communication between men and women in La Pequeña Villa. They are often commissioned with sending messages from the male or female section of the congregation to the opposite side. The politics of manly honour extend to every member of La Pequeña Villa, including myself. During my fieldwork, my moral qualities were assessed by Gitano churchgoers. On one occasion, I overheard Gitano women discussing my actual intentions toward the congregation, wondering whether I was looking for a 'hook-up'. Likewise, a few young and middle-aged Gitano men in the congregation would tease me by offering to act as matchmakers and pair me up with some unmarried Gitano girl. Young Gitano women, aware of my marital status, seldom approached me in public lest they tarnish their sexual reputation. Social interactions with women in La Pequeña Villa were restricted to formal greetings and small talk, and in the latter instances, women were always accompanied by male relatives. La Pequeña Villa is a space where one's adhesion to strict gender-related moral principles is not taken for granted and needs to be performed and displayed by both genders.

Paradoxically, despite the rigid moral principles that dominate the interaction between genders in La Pequeña Villa, church attendance opens the way for courting practices, especially in the period that Gitanos knows as *mocedad* (puberty), marked by the end of childhood and the awakening of sexual desire. IEF believers widely acknowledge the concomitance of church and courting. Pastor Vaca himself claims that the IEF churches are 'marriage bureaus for Gitano people'. I have often heard converts saying rather teasingly *si no casas a tu hijo/a, traelo/a la iglesia!* ('if you have trouble finding a partner for your son or daughter, have them join the church!'). Christian events that gather young Gitano people as platforms for courting are nothing new among Gitano people. Catholic pilgrimages have been reported as occasions where Gitano people's marital engagements are ordinary events (Méndez 2005:129). What is particular about the IEF events is that they congregate young Gitano people daily, so their impact upon marital choices is unparalleled.

However, flirting is never visible in the church. Gitanos cannot openly build new relationships with unrelated members of the opposite sex in church without laying themselves open to accusations of immorality. This situation correlates with what they experience outside of the church. Gitano parents in La Pequeña Villa do not allow improper gender interactions between male and female unmarried Gitanos, so when they approach their teens, young Gitanos are separated along gender lines in social life, and face-to-face contact is almost nonexistent between potential partners.

Teenage Gitanos strive to navigate the contradictions of a cultural system that encourages young Gitanos to marry in their teens and categorises face-to-face interactions between potential partners as immoral. They do so through highly formalised events known as *roneos*. *Ronear* is a verb that translates as 'to fool around with someone'. As a social practice, the word ronear defines a widespread popular practice of group flirting

among young Gitanos, in which males gather in small groups made up of their close relatives (brothers, cousins) and walk around similar girls' groups—usually made up of a girl's young relatives—exchanging glances. On roneos, Gitano men and women showcase their beauty and display their availability as potential partners. This practice operates under specific rules. The first one is that you do not play the game too openly and show excessive eagerness; otherwise, especially if you are a woman, you leave yourself open to the morally damaging accusation of being a *roneadora* (flirty). The second one is that during roneos potential couples must not talk to each other. To preserve females' sexual reputation, young close relatives from both parties usually take over and negotiate an exchange of phone numbers or arrange each other's presence for future roneos. Critical to roneo interactions are *recaditos*, messages carried by young relatives from male suitors to young Gitano women, or vice versa. Shortly after, young believers will usually take over themselves. In stark contrast to the moral gravitas of cultos, potential couples exchange private messages over WhatsApp and social networks throughout the ceremony. Interchange of messages often leads to rebukes from their families or from Pastor Vaca, if they do so visibly.

Since the church is considered a sacred space where modesty needs to be displayed by women, and in turn, roneos require looking attractive for the opposite sex, Gitano women stand at a crossroads. Roneos require young Gitanos, particularly women, to smarten up to look their best, so women are strongly encouraged to show off their bodies. Gitano aesthetics stress the sensual character of the body, and the Gitano ideal of femininity in Villaverde is quite exuberant. Unmarried women make themselves attractive by putting on very tight blouses that emphasise their breasts and skirts that are both long and very tight. They also wear a lot of makeup and curl their hair (Gay y Blasco 1997:524). That tension between roneos and the gravitas of the religious ceremonies

comprises La Pequeña Villa's social life every weekend and leads to lots of arguments between young Gitano women and some of the most conservative families in the church. La Pequeña Villa thus becomes a gender and generational battlefield where young Gitano women try to carve out some freedom of choice and attempt to respond to roneos' requirements, while parents in tandem with Pastor Vaca attempt to instil the value of shame into them.

The key to understanding the impact of roneos on young Gitano believers is to recognise that they have become prominent events that transcend church affiliation. Some squares and malls in Madrid near the largest churches have become fashionable among young Gitano believers from the IEF churches in Madrid for roneos. Much to the surprise of passersby, squares and malls can gather hundreds of young Gitano people on Fridays and Saturdays, just after church time has ended. Thus, the popularisation of roneos in Madrid shows the impact of religion on Gitano marriages and the vast influence of Christianity over Gitano people's everyday lives.

Anthropologists have long commented on the role of kinship in shaping marital choices among Gitano people. Gitanos show a strong preference for marrying within their kinship structures (Ardévol 1987; Gay y Blasco 2005; Gamella et al. 1996; Gamella 2019; Lagunas 2005) or into other Gitano families with whom they have built up local political partnerships over generations (Lagunas 2005:262; San Roman 1997:111). For instance, first cousin marriage is a prominent traditional marital option amongst Gitano people, provided both spouses have not been brought up together. Gamella and Martin report that in some Spanish regions such as Andalusia, the IEF churches reinforce the traditional consanguineous pattern of marriages. IEF pastors favour and vindicate cousin marriage

as a practice predicated on biblical teachings in the book of Leviticus of the Old Testament (Gamella and Martin 2008).

Findings from my fieldwork in Madrid enhance our understanding of how Gitano Pentecostal churches impact Gitano marriage. Church-related social events offer young Gitanos unprecedented and regular opportunities to seek out spouses within nonrelated and unknown Gitano families. Critically, such reorganisation of marriage markets in the contemporary urban spaces of Madrid indexes the emergence of encompassing ethnoreligious identities that favour the overcoming of internal differences (Williams 1991) and ultimately extends the sphere of contact and significant relationships among Gitanos. If analysed together, my findings and other empirical studies suggest that Gitano believers weave marriage choices and religious identities together, which signals the fundamental influence of Pentecostal Christianity over Gitano believers' ideas of commitment and love. They also suggest that Pentecostalism has a context-specific and ambiguous relation to traditional Gitano marital choice.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Pentecostal Gitano churches have emerged as spearheads of a reinvigorated spiritual and conservative form of Christianity in Spain.

In La Pequeña Villa, male leadership and the politics of manly honour shape churches' religious structures, spaces and interactions. Although women play a valuable role in supporting the pastoral work of men, their religious labour is consistently denied institutional recognition. Pastor Vaca gains influence over his congregations and makes himself significantly important to La Pequeña Villa believers by approaching a fundamental aspect of Gitano social life: marriage. Gitano male pastors are leading actors in the Gitano world that seek to recreate Gitano masculinity. Pastor Vaca's teachings in

La Pequeña Villa set the boundaries for producing gendered views—the natural hierarchy of men, men's right to lead the household and their demand for obedience. In return, his teachings promise a significant improvement in women's lives by domesticating men. Gitano Pentecostalism reaffirms patriarchy and male hierarchies, while also tackling head-on some of the concerns and dissatisfaction of women regarding the state of gender relationships.

In La Pequeña Villa, Pentecostalism acts as a medium that enables Gitano males to achieve the ideal of gender integrity and to safeguard male honour and prestige by redefining normative ideas of what it means to be an exemplary husband. Proof of the role of the IEF churches in Gitano evangelical males' appeal to Gitano women is the popularisation of flirting practices concomitant with religious activities and the large evangelical Gitano marriage markets across the city of Madrid.

Pastor Vaca constructs a normative and conservative image of Gitano-ness and gender that he associates with the Old Testament and biblical narratives. Significantly, Pastor Vaca's portrayal of gender relations is reminiscent of what many of the more conservative families of La Pequeña Villa's believers consider to be traits of Gitano culture. The sense of preserving traditional sex and gender values amidst their decline in mainstream society; the remarkable importance of family and marriage; the male's higher capacity for moral knowledge; the respect for male authority and the subordination of females to husbands and fathers; the honour tied to the maintenance of female's virginity until marriage; and the double gender-based yardstick used to gauge the integrity and worth of men and women: all find resonance with La Pequeña Villa's members. To a large extent, Pastor Vaca rephrases aspects of what many believers in La Pequeña Villa consider to be vital aspects of Gitano culture, using a Christian discourse. In so doing, he builds bridges between believers' conservative identification with Gitano culture and

their religious belief system. The significance of those bridges to believers' lives, I argue, is crucial for the success of the gendered Pentecostal ideology among Gitanos in Villaverde.

Pentecostal Gitano views embrace traditional and heteronormative ideas and emphasise that sex and gender are God-given attributes that define roles and behaviour within family structures. As such, the Gitano Pentecostal ideology is antagonistic to more progressive understandings of gender and Gitano culture. What I have depicted here is a particular evangelical take on the Gitano cultural system which does not necessarily align with how other nonevangelical Gitanos see their cultural identity. Pastor Vaca's claim to be actualising a mythical biblical past where men rule in the public sphere and are shown deference is just one of the competing understandings of men's role in Gitano families and society that circulates around Gitano communities.

The Gitano Pentecostal ideology also antagonises the feminist movement's values. This antagonism is significant in contemporary Spain, where progressive feminism has gained traction in mass media discourses in the aftermath of the 15-M Indignados movement in 2011 and is becoming a visible mainstream political force (Palomo 2016; Campillo 2019). While mainstream feminism and IEF doctrine converge on some relevant points, such as the rejection of gender-related and domestic violence, they drift apart on critical issues such as ideals of equality, the legitimacy of the leading position of men in society, or the nature of gender. As it is for Spanish men in general, manhood is becoming an increasingly contested concept for male Gitano believers, who navigate tensions stemming from being exposed to contrasting views on what it is to be a man. However, the formidable spread of Pentecostalism among Gitano believers shows the privileged position of Christianity over other ideological forms in the battle for redefining Gitano masculinities—and gender ideals as a whole—in contemporary Spain.

CHAPTER 5. HOLINESS, STIGMA, AND CITIZENSHIP

The Romani collective experience is one historically informed by power inequalities, racism and harassment. Accounts of Romani groups facing rejection, oppression, persecution and isolation are ubiquitous in European scholarship (Bancroft 2005; Fonseca 2006; Hancock 2000; Lancione 2019; Kende et al. 2017; Matras 2015; Stewart 2012). Anti-Roma sentiment or 'Romaphobia' defines daily life for many Romani groups whose fundamental human, political, and cultural rights are systematically denied across the continent (Van Baar 2011). Focusing on Hungary and Poland, Fox and Vermeersch (2010:352) detail how, especially after the enlargement of the EU, Roma have become the target of right-wing groups and political parties in Eastern Europe and beyond (Fox and Vermeersch 2010). Similarly, Nacu (2012) shows that, under former President Nicolas Sarkozy's term of office, Roma groups were framed as a security issue in France and scapegoating policies were put in place and utilised for political gain. Analysing the encounter between recently arrived Eastern Europeans and locals in a postindustrial urban area of Glasgow, Grill (2011) shows how established residents place the blame for the decline of the zone and their growing sense of crisis on Romani migrants. Within a short time after they arrived from Eastern Europe, the social image of Romani migrants became rapidly fixed, as they came increasingly to be portrayed as engaging in various forms of antisocial behaviour and as being disconnected from state institutions and public services (Grill 2011:43).

Here I contribute to scholarly debates about the persistence of Roma exclusion and marginality in contemporary societies and discuss their position as Europe's perennial 'outsiders' (Powell and Lever 2017). However, I do not aim to explain the mechanism by which Roma people's negative image and marginalisation are constructed.

In this chapter, I explore how Gitanos rephrase and build upon well-established notions of cultural and moral adequacy in terms of positive citizenship and civic virtue. In so doing, they draw on both Christian notions of holiness and self-control and engage dominant concerns around belonging, exclusion and compliance.

For La Pequeña Villa believers, conversion does not lead to involvement in politics as understood by secularist and liberal models. Whereas Gitano activists mobilise politically to contest racial and cultural stereotypes and misrepresentation, converted Gitanos do so within the more intimate and communitarian framework of the church. Converted Gitanos strive to reshape social perceptions by showing a salient commitment to displaying exemplary religion-oriented behaviour. Pentecostal Christianity adds new ideological elements that assist Gitanos in maintaining a sense of self-worth in a society that marginalises them. Through evangelical Christianity, I argue, Pastor Vaca and La Pequeña Villa believers create scripts for their lives and reframe their outcast position in urban spaces. What is more, the recreation of an identity in terms of positive citizenship has become a powerful evangelical tool with the help of which believers create a good image of the church and attract other Gitanos to evangelical churches in Villaverde. Importantly, Christian notions of good citizenship also empower believers to assert a sense of distinction vis-à-vis nonbelieving Gitanos, and to contest negative stereotypes against Gitanos as a whole.

The ethnographic record shows that religion—especially for groups situated at the margins of a Western European religious landscape primarily dominated by Catholicism and traditional forms of Protestantism—plays a central role in defining the civic character and sense of virtue of social minorities. In contemporary Western countries, scholars have commented on how communities have enacted and debated religion in their quest for citizenship, in ways that problematise assumptions about the modern Western nation-state

and the—secular—conditions of civil society (Astor 2012; Garnett and Hausner 2015). Against the backdrop of 9/11 and increasing attacks in Western countries staged by Islamist terrorist groups, the narrative of the 'good Muslim', one that opposes misrepresentations of Islam as violent and contrary to liberal Western democratic values, has informed debates about multiculturalism in countries such as the United States and France (Maira 2009; Mamdani 2002; Soares and Seesemann 2009; Winchester 2008). Sarró's study of Kimbanguism (2015), a messianic Christian religion born in Congo, which has developed a significant presence in Portugal since the 1980s, illustrates further how religion intertwines with notions of civic virtue. According to Sarró, Kimbanguists' good reputation as respectable neighbours and their commitment to bringing violence to an end in Lisbon shanty towns has boosted their public image as good citizens in the media and local government (Sarró 2015:236). Fumanti (2010) shows that Akan-speaking Ghanaian Methodists in London claim their right to British national belonging by being law-abiding, hardworking, and through acts of caring, charity, nurture, and human fellowship (2010:16). Ghanaian Methodists, Fumanti argues, construct their subjecthood as virtuous performance, enacting an alternative and religiously-driven ideal of citizenship to assert their right to British national belonging (2010:15). This ideal of the virtuous citizen is informed both by Protestant Christian ethics, in particular the Methodist concept of holiness and the pursuit of individual Christian perfection, and by Ghanaian cultural values, in particular the Akan concept of ɔtema, a relational and dialogical concept meaning empathy and compassion (Fumanti 2010:20).

Converted Gitanos in Villaverde, as with the Ghanaian Methodists described by Fumanti, engage with Christianity by constructing an identity that is predicated on ideals of Christian virtue. Upon conversion, believers are said to become 'ambassadors for Christ's Kingdom' and have the duty to showcase their spiritual distinctiveness and good

behaviour vis-à-vis nonbelievers. Their belief-based conduct correlates with what sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) calls ‘disidentifiers’. Disidentifiers, Goffman argues, are signs that carry social information and tend—in fact or hope—to break up an otherwise coherent picture in a positive direction desired by the actor, not so much establishing a new claim as throwing severe doubt upon the virtual one (Goffman 1963:60). Pastor Vaca and La Pequeña Villa believers do not dispute reified and negative images of Gitanos but instead shift the burden of stigma onto nonbelievers. To show how Gitanos engage with Christian notions of holiness and virtue, I begin by briefly tracing the recent history of interethnic relations in Villaverde. Then I analyse how the notion of Christian virtue guides the production of Gitano selves in key dimensions marked off as indexes of spiritual regeneration.

5.1 Gitanos, Stigma and Christianity in Villaverde

Madrid’s social hierarchies shape the capital city’s space. Affluent families and individuals reside mainly in the north, whereas the south is mostly home to working-class inhabitants. Villaverde, a former industrial hub that shelters working-class Spanish people, is one of the most excluded urban settings in the south of Madrid. The arrivals of foreign migrants from the 1990s from regions such as Latin America, Morocco, and Romania have added new layers of complexity to Villaverde’s ethnic structure, yet, to this day, Gitanos remain the most rejected group in the area. This stigma is not just confined to Villaverde but is mirrored transversely throughout the city as a whole. While it must be acknowledged that payo neighbours in Villaverde and Madrid at large diverge in their opinions and views about Gitano people and cannot be treated as a single entity, stereotypes and prejudices against them are widely extended and rooted in the social fabric of Spanish society.

Unlike some immigrant groups that are also excluded, Gitanos are native to Spanish society. Via flamenco and stereotypes that relate to honour and romantic passion, the Gitano image is deeply rooted and embedded in folk conceptions of Spanishness. However, in Villaverde, they are otherised and embody an alien status that questions their right to belong fully through the intimate association between Gitanos and antisocial behaviour in payo popular consciousness. Not unlike other Spanish people, payos in Villaverde hold deep-seated negative stereotypes against Gitanos, who play a stellar role in the popular imaginary of what poor, criminal, uncivilised and backward people looklike.

Furthermore, Gitanos are the recipients of extremely negative stereotypes as neighbours. Portraits of Gitanos as noisy, violent, and dirty are common currency among payos, who often deny the idea that Gitanos can be good neighbours. In the 1990s, the Gitano became a master symbol of drug dealing and the social decay that threatened Villaverde's neighbourhoods, which led to some anti-Gitano mobilisation (Gay y Blasco 1999:34). In 2005, ten thousand people signed a document again the relocation of local Gitanos in Villaverde, arguing that as disadvantaged as Villaverde was, adding yet more Gitano people to their population would hinder their socioeconomic development (Gay y Blasco 2016:452). Reflecting on the persistence of stereotypes and anti-Traveller sentiment in Ireland, ni Shuinéar (1997), argues that 'Gaujos hate Gypsies so much' because they 'personify their own faults and fears, thus lifting away the burden of them' (:27). Similarly, the construction of the Gitano social image in Villaverde mirrors the class stereotypes that the upper class often projects upon working-class people in Madrid. In Villaverde, thus, the burden of stigma is shifted to Gitanos, who are the final link in a social structure defined by an acute power imbalance.

A key to understanding the extent of Gitano marginalisation lies in the idea of social and spatial contagion. Gitano presence in a given area is perceived as a robust index for social decay as well as a source of pollution that extends to both neighbours and neighbourhoods. Payos in Villaverde strive to avoid being associated with Gitanos, and while ethnic intermarriage exists, it is not well regarded by many. Moreover, some payos make Gitanos scapegoats for the class-related struggles they face. In a case study of the segregation of Gitano children in state schools located in Villaverde, Gay y Blasco (2016) analysed the 'fear of contagion' that led to a chapter of interethnic conflict in Villaverde. The clash broke out when one school made up primarily of payo students become overpopulated through 'white flight', while another school, made up of Gitano students, and to a lesser extent migrants, had a high vacancy rate. When Gitano parents mobilised against the original solution proposed by government representatives of swapping schools and offered an alternative solution based on transferring the extra students from the overpopulated (mostly payo) school to their (mostly Gitano) school, payo parents flatly refused (Gay y Blasco 2016:446). Driven by a strong social perception that associates Gitanos children with high dropout rates, academic underachievement, lack of self-discipline, misbehaviour and extreme unruliness, payo parents' concerns tie in with class-based preoccupations, grounded on social representations of Gitano people as an abject group to be controlled and kept apart. In Gay y Blasco's words: 'the proclaimed unruliness and anomie of Gitano children and their parents was said to endanger the self-improvement projects of working-class children and their community' (Gay y Blasco 2016:449). As shown by Gay y Blasco's work, racist portrayals of Gitanos as vectors of infection evoke contrasting images of cultural fitness (payos) and unfitness (Gitanos) for potential upward mobility. At the same time, they also speak to current concerns and anxieties held by payos regarding the negative consequences of spatial and class

stigmatisation in the south of Madrid. Whereas Gay y Blasco focuses on the role of political mobilisation in enabling Gitanos to face and rebel against the consequences of social discrimination, I will emphasise how religion plays a critical role in this broad context of ethnic marginalisation.

A critical aspect of Gitano believers' efforts to achieve holiness is expressed in their distancing of themselves from these widespread, dominant stereotypes. In La Pequeña Villa, believers are encouraged to live 'in the world',[48] constantly proving their holiness. I often heard Pastor Vaca preaching that believers can be told apart for their commitment to honouring God. Since believers are ambassadors of Christ in the world, they should behave properly. Becoming a member of the church thus hinges on the formation of a powerful self-image grounded in a robust sense of religious virtue. Unlike Catholic believers, evangelical Gitanos never wear religious outfits, cassocks or crosses, and seldom do they carry visible religious symbols such as rosaries or religious cards. Gitano believers do not predicate their capacity to discern religious qualification on images—which are considered idolatrous—but instead, they commit to 'virtuous' practices,[49] utilising religiously-oriented behaviour, body language and self-representation as evidence of religious credentials.

Like the stigmatised Haitian Pentecostals in the French West Indies described by Browdin (Browdin 2003:91; see also Bastian 2000), Gitano believers put forward a counterimage embodied in the manners and clothing of church members. For believers,

[48] Gitano believers usually reduce this motto to the straightforward formula 'in, but not of [the world]'. This Christian motto is based on the Gospel of John. The full biblical quotation goes as follows: **'**My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.' (John:15–16).

[49] Social outreach is a crucial part of some IEF churches' public and civic identity. La Pequeña Villa, however, was not running any social outreach activities by the time of my fieldwork. While recognising that social outreach is a critical part of Christian praxis, Pastor Vaca excuses his church, arguing that Gitano believers in Villaverde face acute financial strains that prevent them from engaging in it.

an array of elements such as soft temper, manners, and gentle demeanour are the signal of religious achievement and taken as a sign of God's work in them. Pastor Vaca wears suits—a style that likens him to important payo people such as businessmen—and maintains an immaculate image. La Pequeña Villa has a dress code in church, and believers are always encouraged to look spotless. Despite the limited means available to many believers, they are encouraged to look their best. On their way to church, believers––especially during weekends, when attendance rise dramatically—are dressed in elegant finery, including expensive jewellery and dresses, showing to everyone they come across that they differ from the images of Gitano people as dodgy-looking and poorly dressed that are sustained by many payos. It is during these events that Gitano believers become visible to other believers and are recognised as distinguished and respectable members of the community (see also Fumanti 2013). Also, in La Pequeña Villa believers follow a strict and ascetic code of behaviour and refrain from engaging in practices that—according to Pastor Vaca and the rest of the believers—are prevalent among some nonevangelical Gitanos in Villaverde, such as drinking, smoking, gambling, and fighting. Aware as they are of their evaluation according to stereotypes, Gitano believers assert their commitment to notions of religious virtue by breaking the coherent picture constructed by payo expectations and removing those markers that amplify their outcast status. The church is thus one key institution through which Gitanos in Villaverde are encouraged to showcase their compliance with the norms of good citizenship, thereby contesting negative portrayals.

5.2 'We are God's Favourite Creatures': Reversing Socioeconomic Hierarchies

As noted in the introduction, La Pequeña Villa stands in the innermost part of a dilapidated Villaverde industrial warehouse, hidden far from sight among car repair shops. La Pequeña Villa's spatial experience is thus synonymous with invisibility and

precarious territoriality. Gitano believers' spatial marginality mirrors the social marginality suffered by the members of the congregation in their everyday lives in Villaverde. La Pequeña Villa's members deal with daily difficulties that question their social worth in Spanish contemporary capitalist society and the ethnic system of stratification. Unemployment is high in the congregation, and some families heavily depend on social welfare support. Those with jobs engage with the low-income informal sector of the economy, earning their livelihood through scrap dealing, street selling or selling goods at flea markets. Most of La Pequeña Villa's members have trouble making ends meet. Concerns about bank debts are also common. During my fieldwork, Pepe faced eviction threats by Madrid City Council on two occasions. Pedro, having no money to rent a house in the increasingly expensive housing market of Madrid, became a squatter, breaking into an empty house with his wife and two daughters. Hence, La Pequeña Villa's members share a biographical experience defined by economic hardship.

Pastor Vaca, who shares the same working class social standing as the members of his congregation, repeatedly preaches that believers should never fear economic deprivation since they are 'under God's protection'. Conversely, he portrays financial strain as an excellent opportunity for believers to prove to God that they are loyal through thick and thin. One of the phrases I heard Pastor Vaca repeat most frequently was *Dios aprieta, pero no ahoga* (God never gives you more than you can handle), meaning that God would never give believers a life trial they could not overcome.

La Pequeña Villa's believers are aware of social inequalities and their subordinate position in the class and ethnic structure. However, in church, the scale is reversed. As a response to their material poverty, Pastor Vaca exhorts La Pequeña Villa's members to be 'rich in spirit', and preaches that sin, human arrogance and worldly materialism are closely intertwined. The IEF doctrine is informed by a radical and straightforward

dualism between God and Satan (Droogers 2001:46), that expresses itself in a highly reified assumption across people and human activities. On the one hand, believers are portrayed as 'children of God', who have gained eternal salvation and carry out their activities according to God's principles and with the firm purpose of pleasing God in every activity they undertake.

On the other hand, *la gente del mundo* (the world's people), are portrayed as unhappy human beings who conduct themselves by the Devil's rules and inhabit an afflicted and condemned space. While unconverted people might be successful and enjoy money, properties, social standing, fame etc., Pastor Vaca preaches that without God they all are bound to feel a deep hole inside that never will be filled.[50]

Like Pentecostal churches in Brazil (Freston 1998:124), Pastor Vaca considers unassuming lower-class people more responsive to the Gospel. In one of his sermons, Pastor Vaca read the following verse from Corinthians:

> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Cor. 1:27–29)

In a very telling statement, Pastor Vaca added that this was his favourite quote in the entire Bible. The significance of this quote in the context of believers' lives cannot be emphasised enough. The above biblical quote is resonant with la Pequeña Villa's members' everyday experiences and the sense of renewed personal worth ensuing from

[50] I have never heard Pastor Vaca or any other pastor in the IEF condemn wealth as something evil. Instead, what the IEF pastor condemns is choosing materialism over God. From what I gathered in my fieldwork, this standpoint has at least two meanings. Firstly, to enjoy material belongings without thanking God—or to stop attending church when one becomes wealthy—is a sin. Secondly, expecting that God will make you rich, or conversely, thinking that someone has fallen out of God's favour because they are not becoming rich, is false teaching.

belonging to a born-again group that defines itself by its privileged relationship with God.[51] Although Gitano believers in La Pequeña Villa consider themselves to be the weak things of the world, as the Bible describes it, they also feel chosen by God, therefore spiritually more worthy.

Pastor Vaca's words contribute to shaping rituals as collective and moral healing experiences for Gitanos in Villaverde. While listening to Pastor Vaca affirm that God has chosen believers, I witnessed some believers crying and thanking God for making them the recipients of such privilege. Furthermore, Pastor Vaca undermines the hegemonic notion of worth in the outside world. In La Pequeña Villa, differences between church members and the world are framed through moralistic metaphors of holiness and sinfulness. I often heard Pastor Vaca preaching that Gitano believers are 'God's favourite creatures' and claiming that by becoming rightful children of God, believers had gained the highest distinction a human being could hope for. In so doing, Pastor Vaca anchors La Pequeña Villa's members in an immutable and untainted status of eternal superiority vis-à-vis nonbelievers.

Adding to the critique of the existing world, Pastor Vaca tackles believers' socioeconomic anxieties by recalling Christian beliefs about the existence of the hereafter. While preaching, Pastor Vaca often cries at the top of his lungs: *nos vamos pal cielo* (we will go to Heaven). Pastor Vaca reminds believers that the world's people will suffer from eternal misery in Hell, whilst they themselves will be resurrected to join Jesus Christ in Heaven. By emphasising Christian ideas that give meaning to suffering and provide believers with hope, Pastor Vaca helps La Pequeña Villa's members to face social inequalities and the hardships intrinsically associated with their position at the bottom of

[51] As noted in chapter three, this drive to assert their worth by claiming closeness to God expresses itself in a collective form through the narratives that portray Gitanos as the lost tribes of Israel.

the socioeconomic and ethnic hierarchies. La Pequeña Villa's standpoint is thus consonant with the critiques of the upper classes and of capitalist cultural models of individualism, accumulation, and desire that Pentecostalism provides elsewhere (Burdick 1993:119–23; Meyer 1995; Robbins 2004:137).

5.3 The Narrative and Inspirational Power of Testimonies

Pastor Vaca preaches that showcasing holiness to others—proving a radical change of ways—is the most effective evangelistic tool. As in the Lisbon Kimbanguist Church described by Sarró and Melice (2010), Pastor Vaca hardly ever engages in direct missionary actions. Instead, he strives to spread the Gospel by instilling into believers the need to display exemplary moral behaviour and incarnate Christian models of virtue and piety, thus proving to nonbelievers that they have been changed by some sacred force (Sarró and Melice 2010).

In La Pequeña Villa, *testimonios* (testimonies) mediate the production of the born-again Gitano's self. Believers use this term to describe the public act of recalling a specific life event in which God changed their lives. Importantly, the preconverted lives of Gitano believers as described in their testimonies are consonant with the negative stereotypes payos hold against them. Testimonies often have a similar structure, involving a radical change from a sinful past to a holy present. Testimonies—especially those of pastors—are powerful narrative elements in the IEF because they are meant to be an example to all believers. By showing believers—and nonbelievers—that one can dramatically shift from being a sinner to being on the leading edge of God's spiritual forces, pastors incarnate the ultimate story of religious transformation. As many members of La Pequeña Villa admitted, stories and tales of dramatic changes in Gitano people's lives are a substantial factor in persuading Gitanos to join the church.

The most widely shared history of conversion at La Pequeña Villa is that of the late Emiliano, a founder and critical evangelist figure for the IEF, who is said to have brought evangelicalism to Villaverde. Emiliano's conversion testimony was collected in an autobiographical book (2005) entitled *Memorias del hermano Emiliano, apóstol del Señor* (Brother Emiliano's Memories: An Apostle of the Lord):

> I was 15- or 16-years-old when I first swindled people, making tons of money. I got married at 18 in the city of Leon, and soon began a life of excess, having juergas,[52] and drinking. My juergas would go on for two or three days, and in the afterparty, I sometimes fell asleep in the streets as if I were a vagrant. I loved flamenco much and considered it to be a critical part of my life. When going out on my juergas, I would spend much money, neglecting my kids and family. I was a man possessed by evil spirits that tricked me into seeing things in a distorted way…
>
> My Lord, however, allowed nothing terrible to happen to me (I only know that now, because I have been given the spiritual gift of knowledge). He revealed to me personally that the only reason I am alive is because of his protection. I was a man who could easily trigger 'ruinas'[53]. When I was walking down the streets, people would hide from me…
>
> Before I met our Lord, I used to sell clothing. In one instance, my fellow swindlers and I conned one unfortunate family, who reported me to the police. I was easy to identify because of a scar on my face that I got because of a bus accident. Since the Spanish police wanted me for this and some other scams, I left the country. A friend of mine offered me a job as a grape harvester in a vineyard in France, so I took my family and moved out to France for nearly three and a half years. It was then that God sent a French Gitano who told me in broken Spanish: 'Primo, this is the New Testament of God's word'. (Emiliano 2005:20)

The story of former offenders changing their ways, and turning into evangelists of the Gitano Pentecostal movement, has become a recurrent trope of the IEF's self-image.

[52] In Spanish *juergas* means a long *night* of revelry.
[53] The exact quotation in Spanish goes: *era un hombre que iba buscando la ruina a cualquiera*. Here, the word *ruina*, that translates as 'downfall', is a direct reference to *quimeras* (a Gitano social practice that will be explored in the next section). Gitanos use the word *ruinas* to indicate the disastrous consequences of *quimeras* that often include violence and a subsequent change of residence to avoid facing new violent episodes.

Many IEF pastors, including Pastor Vaca, have modelled their testimonies similarly, which shows the strong generational influence of the conversion stories of the founders of the IEF on the second and third cohorts of pastors and believers. Pastor Vaca usually characterises his own past as riddled with Satan's temptations to commit crimes of theft and taking drugs. His testimony accounts how once he had resigned himself to following that path of misery and perishing in the world, God called him to amend his ways and become a leader of the IEF. Similarly to Emiliano, Pastor Vaca only understood temptations to commit crimes as being the work of the Devil in hindsight. However, Pastor Vaca's testimony is not only a discursive account; it is grounded in praxis. Much of his religious standing was gained by showing exemplary behaviour and by street preaching before nonbelievers in Villaverde. This inspirational story, from a religious perspective, is even more compelling because the preaching sites Pastor Vaca chose are places where some Gitanos sell drugs, drink heavily, and get involved in violent brawls.

Men in La Pequeña Villa have similar testimonies to that of Pastor Vaca. Throughout my fieldwork, I heard countless dramatic stories of conversion from believers. Mariano felt the voice of God in the middle of a shop holdup instructing him to end the robbery, to which he reacted by making a run for it, never to go back to delinquency. Jonás used to deceive payo people in the flea market by selling inferior quality goods for the price of regular ones until Christ showed up in his dreams, asking him to stop doing so. Jonás's cousin Andrés used to use cocaine and get drunk and go up and down the streets of Villaverde picking fights with payo people, and only changed his ways once converted.

Testimonies are not artefacts that enable Gitanos to elaborate on their experiences and make visible the systemic oppression they encounter. Instead, converted Gitanos' views here show an alignment with the idea of internalised oppression, that is to say, they

think of themselves through the negative prejudices and biases of the dominant ethnic group. Converted Gitanos are not alone in embracing stereotypes, though. Ethnographers have long commented on how Roma people sometimes deploy the dominant society's stereotypes for their own ends. Stewart (1997) argues that during communist rule in Hungary, Roms—who have historically provided cheap labour for Hungarian peasants in economic activities such as horse trading—often reaffirmed stereotypes of Gypsies being deceitful and cunning thieves. Roms, Stewart argues, held to an image of their dignity by celebrating economic cunning and creating legends of those activities (Stewart 1997:17). By portraying economic interchange with non-Roma as events where Roms tricked Hungarian peasants, Roms created narratives where their superiority was affirmed, and financial exploitation was reversed. Similarly, evangelical Gitanos endorse culturally negative stereotypes and prejudices but—and this is a highly distinctive feature that sets evangelical Gitanos apart from other Roma people—they attribute antisocial behaviour to demonic influences and their sinful past.

Critically, and this is crucial to understanding the power of testimonies among believers, Gitanos lack the power and political resources to change the objective fact that payos have deep-seated negative stereotypes and prejudices about Gitano people. Testimonies like the ones above are shaped to shift the burden of stigma to nonbelievers and show that following their conversion, Gitano believers no longer conform to the stereotypes that payos hold about them. By drawing a reified dualistic distinction between Gitano believers versus Gitanos of the world, believers affirm payo stereotypes about Gitano people and use them to build a positive counterimage. As with the Manouches described by Williams, testimonies have a cross-cultural dimension and are geared towards creating a public image according to payo values and expectations (Williams 1987:4–5; see also Glize 1989; Wang 1989:43; Ries 2010:277). By tying their past

behaviour into payo stereotypes of Gitano people, believers redefine themselves according to payo models of good behaviour, and portray the IEF as a public-spirited institution with a social function—thus integrating Gitano people into models of good citizenship and integrity.[54] By framing conversion as beneficial to Gitano people, the circulation of testimonies also contributes to enhancing the IEF's image among Gitano people. Testimonies thus become artefacts that mediate the production of personal and public representations and enable Gitanos to work against a payo-dominated political imaginary that reifies their extremely negative social image.

5.4 Urban Risk: Street Life and Drugs

Testimonies not only reflect payo stereotypes about Gitano people, but they also speak to deep-seated fears entrenched in La Pequeña Villa's believers' consciousnesses. As shown above, testimonies are resonant with an urban experience shaped by risk and danger. Indeed, La Pequeña Villa is populated with stories of the misadventures of sons, husbands and nephews who unwisely ventured off into the dangerous world outside of the church.

La Pequeña Villa's believers encompass the risks and dangers of urban life under the notion of *la vida de la calle* (street life). Street life occupies a prominent place in the fears of Gitano believers. From a religious perspective, 'street life' is a concept that encompasses the potential urban parish of 'the world'. Paramount to understanding this concept is to recognise the spatial, symbolic, spiritual and moral oppositions between church (in) and streets (out). More than any other place in the locality, street life in La Pequeña Villa is represented by a cut-off park standing behind the church that captures the congregation's imagination as the embodiment of the evil that dominates the world.

[54] Testimonies are beneficial for the creation of positive images of converted Gitanos for some key payo people. Plenty of social workers, civil servants, and NGOs that I met during my fieldwork have a high opinion of the beneficial impact of the IEF churches in reforming Gitano behaviour.

Believers perceive dwellers of that green park—some of whom are Gitanos—as people who drink themselves unconscious, regularly get into trouble with the police, sell stolen items for a living and commit petty crimes.

In his work on Kimbanguism and African Christianity in London, Garbin (2012; 2013) shows that the temptation of crime, and other behaviour that is seen as sinful (drinking alcohol, drugs, and promiscuity), is a constant concern for Kimbanguist parents. By involving them in the brass band, parents seek to restrict the possibility for youth to 'hang out' in a morally dangerous city such as London. According to Garbin, it is often the youth themselves who reflect on this central social function of the brass band. (Garbin 2012:432). For Gitanos, the antagonism between street life and church coalesces in some church-sponsored activities known as *vigilias* (night vigils). Every weekend Pastor Vaca celebrates preaching-free religious rituals where Gitano believers worship, play music, and sing to the glory of God. Vigilias are considered by church members as safe spaces that prevent Gitanos—especially youngsters—from engaging in sinful behaviour and risky situations. Similar to Garbin's insights, I also heard male believers reflecting on the impact of vigilias on their own lives and how they prevented them from hanging out with *malas compañías* (lousy company). Believers who attend vigilias show great relief when describing their born-again lives and are happy they can escape street life. Pastor Vaca relates this increasing awareness of the dangers of the world to the Holy Spirit in action, which provides believers with born-again capacities such as the spiritual 'gift of discernment', which enables them to see dangers lurking that are invisible to the naked eye (Meyer 2010:752). Critically, vigilias take up the time slot that young unconverted Gitano males spend in Villaverde's park, going clubbing or chasing after payo girls. The success of vigilias shows that, like other non-Gitano Pentecostal churches elsewhere, La

Pequeña Villa's members erase boundaries between worship and leisure (Maxwell 1998:353; Burdick 1993:87).

For converted Gitanos in Villaverde, street life's most evil expression is drugs.[1] Like other neighbourhoods in the south of Madrid, Villaverde has suffered the impact of the spread of drugs. The drug epidemic that affected Villaverde in the 1980s and 1990s crippled the entire young generation growing up, and most adults over fifty years old recall losing friends and acquaintances to drug abuse. Owing to their more vulnerable ethnic and class position, however, Gitano people are one of the most severely affected social groups. Key to gaining a fuller understanding of the significance of drugs in Villaverde is that a few Gitano families entered the business of drug dealing some decades ago. In contrast, some others, including evangelical families, have tried to keep their neighbourhoods as drug free spaces. Hence, evangelicalism plays a critical part in intracommunity politics (Gay y Blasco 2000:12).

According to both Pastor Vaca and believers, drugs not only boost AIDS-related diseases, petty crime, and create urban degradation but also erode the very core of Gitano morality as drug addicts lack self-control, rarely hesitate to steal from other Gitanos, even including family, and are always ready to engage in fights (Gay y Blasco 1999:160). The opposition of evangelical families to the presence of drugs in Villaverde is thus critical to understanding how converted Gitanos commit to notions of Christian virtue. According to Gay y Blasco, in the 1990s converted Gitanos in Villaverde placed *la droga* (drugs) at the centre of their accounts of conversion to Pentecostalism—whether for giving up drugs after converting or for having relatives and acquaintances that did so—and their fight against drug addiction become a master symbol within the (converted) Gitanos' descriptions of themselves (Gay y Blasco 2000:3; see also Ramírez Hita 2007:291). Tying evangelicalism in with drugs, Villaverde's converts are prone to present evangelical

churches as the *only* force capable of keeping in check the spread of *la droga* among Gitanos, praising the multiple campaigns and detoxification programmes organised by the IEF every year across Madrid and the rest of Spain (Gay y Blasco 2000:3; see also Cantón Delgado 2004:238).

Drugs are central to Pastor Vaca's and La Pequeña Villa believers' concerns. For believers, the human body is a vessel for receiving the Holy Spirit; thus, the violation of the sacrality of the body by consuming drugs is seen as a spiritual as much as a moral problem. Often in a low voice, believers refer to drugs as 'evil substances', spread by demonic forces. Stories about miraculous divine interventions that prompt drug users to overcome their addictions circulate among believers. Exorcisms are often featured in stories as examples of the power of the IEF to deal with drug abuse. In a conversation, Pastor Vaca told me a story about a Gitano drug user in La Pequeña Villa being exorcised. In the IEF, exorcism—also known as deliverance—is the practice of casting out demons from someone's body. Within the IEF belief system, exorcists exercise the authority given to them by God in the form of a gift, and only pastors with a recognised gift of casting out demons can perform an exorcism on behalf of the IEF. On one occasion, according to Pastor Vaca, a famous exorcist came to La Pequeña Villa to cast a demon out of Ricardo, an unconverted drug user. According to Pastor Vaca's account, the drug user's strength had been staggeringly enhanced by an evil spirit and it took five Gitano men to overcome him. Following the exorcism, the drug user vomited and lost consciousness. According to Pastor Vaca, the drug user was healed, never to fall into drug use again.

While Villaverde is still a drug-dealing location, over the years a significant number of dealers have moved to other sites in Madrid, and access to drugs has become more limited. Hence, the consumption of drugs has been markedly reduced. As shown above, Pastor Vaca occasionally deals with Gitanos addicted to drugs. However, far more

usually, his pastoral duties involve members who are the surviving former drug users of previous generations. One celebrated ex–drug addict believer in La Pequeña Villa is Ramon. Ramon is Pastor Vaca's distant cousin and one of the most beloved characters of La Pequeña Villa. Now in his early forties, Ramon suffered from drug addiction for nearly two decades, only recovering a few years ago. His unkempt appearance, slim physique and punctured arms give away his past. Yet he has won believers' sympathy by his miraculous recovery from drugs and his strong faith. Evidence of Pastor Vaca's belief in the redemptive power of the Holy Spirit—and the public use of Ramon's story to showcase that power—can be seen in the way in which Pastor Vaca has granted Ramon a symbolic position in the congregation, that of *ofrendero* (offering-basket carrier), and entrusted him with the role of collecting tithes from the congregation. I often heard Ramon himself thanking God for breaking his bond with drugs, and one can quickly note that he is genuinely grateful to Pastor Vaca and the La Pequeña Villa community for providing him with a second chance to recover the self-esteem he lost to drugs.

Ramon's testimony revolves around the overcoming of his addiction through conversion. Despite that his recovery involved the interventions of doctors, family and social workers, he credits his will, perseverance and the drive to overcome addiction to God's action. During my time at La Pequeña Villa, we often walked home together, and he amused me with incredible stories of thefts, police getaways and quarrels. The very fact that he is alive after regularly experiencing such risky situations is, for Ramon, indisputable proof that God was protecting him all along and had a higher purpose for him in life. In hindsight, Ramon understood that God had saved him from troubles and life-threatening situations even before he 'knew' God, implying that divine interventions existed as constant signals from God to convert.

Ramon's story is far from just being an account of memories. Memories and religious beliefs are intertwined in such a manner that his past life has become a story of redemption and an evangelistic tool. La Pequeña Villa's members frame Ramon's story as proof of the miraculous restorative power of the Holy Spirit, all the more compelling because he has reenacted in his own life the biblical drama of humankind's creation, fall, and redemption (Dayton 1987:23). Equally, Ramon's story works as a cautionary tale in La Pequeña Villa and as a constant reminder for Gitano people of the perils of the world.

5.5 Quimeras, Violence, and Redemption

In tandem with street life, *quimeras* are a prominent aspect of Gitano urban life that La Pequeña Villa believers dread. *Quimera* can be translated as vendetta or vengeful feud, and my interlocutors use this word to describe a situation in which a violent conflict between unrelated Gitano people escalates out of control, reaching and mobilising each party's *raza* (extended family). In the event of a quimera, families will usually extend their role as sources of mutual support to join their kin in physical retaliation, if bodily harm has been done to family members.

The dangerous consequences of a quimera breaking out in a neighbourhood are unpredictable and often include high tension situations, threats, physical attacks, and, occasionally, even murders. A quimera is usually brought to an end by the mediation of respected, influential, and unrelated Gitano men from other Gitano razas who play no part in the conflict, and whose prestige and authority must be recognised by both conflicting parties (Gay y Blasco 1999:148–151; San Román 1997). Upon completion of negotiations, the offending party—the offender and their kin—would usually need to flee the location, never to return. From that time on, both razas would become *contrarios*

(lifelong enemies). Should contrarios be found trespassing in the locality of another raza, this raza would retaliate in defence of its honour.

Discussing the role of quimeras and violence in Gitano social life, San Román pointed out that quimeras are a devastating cultural feature in urban settings where unrelated families share permanent residence in the same neighbourhoods (San Román 1997:213; see also Fotta 2018:2). In the south of Madrid, rampant growth in the 1980s and 1990s of marginalised, impoverished, and severely underfunded urban areas densely populated by unrelated Gitano people led to frequent occurrences of quimeras.[55] San Román and Gay y Blasco alike have linked the preference for socialising with kin, and therefore the lack of contact between unrelated Gitano families, with the fear of quimeras (Gay y Blasco 1999:44; San Román 1997).

Although none of La Pequeña Villa's members were involved in any quimeras during the time I was conducting my fieldwork, most refuse to speak about this painful collective experience. Whenever someone uses the term, believers in Villaverde promptly reply *Dios las reprenda* (May God rebuke them) and change the conversation quickly. One morning, while reading the Spanish national news, I learnt that some Gitano families in the metropolitan area of Barcelona had engaged in a quimera. The quimera was staged by a powerful—and allegedly drug-dealing—Gitano clan known as the Baltasares, who threatened to retaliate after a Baltasar was murdered by another Gitano man during a brawl in a nightclub in Barcelona. Fearing retaliation, many Gitanos related to the offender, including believers, fled their homes (*El Periódico* 3 Feb. 2016), and some were

[55] State resettlement schemes reallocated unrelated Gitano families without any consideration for Gitano cultural background. Such resettlement schemes in the 1980s and 1990s were not only evidence of government representatives' lack of knowledge of Gitano people's values and practices, but primarily a reckless policy that forced Gitano people to promptly face and adapt to realities they were not culturally prepared for (San Roman 1997).

forced to leave the neighbourhood permanently (*El Periódico* 27 Mar. 2016). This drastic measure resulted from the agreement reached by respected Gitano men who mediated in the conflict (*El País* 10 Mar. 2016).

Scholars have noted the role of the media in promoting negative views of Roma and Travellers. Richardson (2006) shows how negative discourses and 'othering' are more prominent throughout society in application to Roma and Travellers than to other marginal groups. In a case study of the media portrayal of the events that followed 'The Martin affair'—which involved a farmer who reportedly grew tired of repeatedly being the subject of burglary from Irish Travellers in his home in England and shot one of them dead—Vanderbeck (2003) showed how the media encouraged views that the presence of Travellers was incompatible with life in rural communities (2003:369). Similarly, Spanish media regularly report extensively on events that surround quimeras, encouraging moral panic (Cohen 1972) and a sense of threat among the general public. Spanish media's extensive coverage overemphasises the frequency of these events and plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the image of Gitanos as violent and backward people. Critically, the media systematically fail to provide information about positive aspects of Gitano culture, which leads to a recurrent negatively biased depiction of Gitanos.

When I broke the news regarding the quimera to Pastor Vaca, he did not complain about biased representation or the role of the media in reinforcing stereotypes about Gitanos. Instead, he reinterpreted the existence of quimeras from a biblical standpoint, likening quimeras to the *lex talionis* (Latin for 'law of retaliation')—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—referred to in the Old Testament as a central part of the Hebrew Law (Exod. 21:23–25; Lev. 24:18–20; Deut. 19:21). As noted in chapter three, Pastor Vaca's reference to the People of Israel is entirely meaningful here, as the idea that Gitano people are descendants of the lost tribes has captured some Gitano believers' imaginations.

Drawing from the book of Matthew (Matthew 5:38, 39), Pastor Vaca stated that Jesus upgraded the 'eye for an eye' rule to the new evangelical law, predicated on the 'turning the other cheek' approach. According to Pastor Vaca, since the words of Jesus are the path to Heaven, Gitano people are bound to lose the backward and ungodly cultural practice of retaliatory action.

When engaging in conversation about quimeras, Pastor Vaca's habit is to continuously shift the focus of the discussion from violence to the sacred power of redemption of God. In Pastor Vaca's mind, quimeras and evangelicalism are mutually exclusive. In one of our conversations, Pastor Vaca proudly told me that IEF pastors—including pastors from neighbouring Villaverde's congregation—usually act as mediators in tandem with respected Gitano men, when two families are in conflict, therefore contributing to the establishment of a more harmonious relationship among Gitano people. Besides, Pastor Vaca also depicts evangelical families as ones that under no circumstances engage in quimeras.[56] Once Pastor Vaca mentioned that he witnessed how members of *familias contrarias* (enemies) made peace with each other in ritual ceremonies through the work of the Holy Spirit. Pastor Vaca's statement seems to share ground with fieldwork experiences of anthropologists. Drawing from extensive fieldwork in the 1970s and 1980s, San Román, for instance, remarked on the role of evangelical Gitano churches in bringing peace to Gitano people (San Román 1997:214). Gay y Blasco witnessed in her fieldwork in the early 1990s how two extended families in Villaverde publically forgave one another following heightened tension between them as a result of a street fight involving two of their members (Gay y Blasco 1999:167). Despite Pastor

[56] There are some empirical shreds of evidence pointing to the fact that support from the converted is still requested in the event of physical conflict with other nonrelated Gitano families (Cantón Delgado 2001:68; Gay y Blasco 1999:155).

Vaca framing the public reconciliation in the church as a by-product of the action of a sacred force that no one has control over, thus dehumanising agency, it is clear he forges a metonymical relationship between evangelical Christianity and the end of Gitano violence. When sixteen-year-old David and I were discussing the effect of churches on Gitano people he stated that 'the greatest miracle which God has bestowed upon Gitano people is the possibility of coming together in peace', to which other members overhearing the conversation chipped in by energetically responding 'amen'. Echoing a general sentiment among Gitano believers, in this statement David portrayed the IEF churches as the driving force of a new religion-based understanding of Gitanos as a people, one based in togetherness and harmony, rather than in division and conflict.[57]

5.6 Concluding remarks

Insights gained from my fieldwork, as described in this chapter, further the debate on how Christian practices and beliefs entangle with ethnic stigma. Pastors become influential role models and play an essential part in enhancing the believer's commitment to living up to Christian notions of virtue. Pastor Vaca's teachings about religious virtue resonate with one of the most determining and persistent dimensions of Gitano collective experiences: their oppression, marginality and outcast status. Believers deal with stigma by relying on religious artefacts such as testimonies that enable them to create positive images of themselves. Critically, La Pequeña Villa's believers' collective and individual self-images are defined by their opposition to the highly reified and stereotypical images of Gitano people held by payos. Through religion, Gitanos think about themselves through Christian notions of redemption. However, Pentecostal Christianity does not necessarily enable Gitano believers in Villaverde to attempt to destigmatise themselves

[57] Cantón Delgado has pointed out that Gitano families reallocated by the action of the State to a location distant from their extended family often find in evangelical churches spaces where they find opportunities to establish contact with nonrelated Gitanos in a non-hostile environment (Cantón Delgado 2001:68).

vis-à-vis their neighbours in a uniform manner. For some believers, it is virtually impossible to meet payo ideals and reform their speech, dress, and remove the marks of a life lived in exclusion. The case of ex-drug addict Ramon is a painfully clear example of these inescapable barriers.

As suggested by some French anthropologists such as Williams (Williams 1997; see also Baubérot 1988:124 and Glize 1989:438), Romani Pentecostalism might be conceptualised as a new modality of invisibility, one that symbolically reverses their outcast status, yet discourages political mobilisation and accommodates Roma groups to their subordinated position in European societies. Pentecostalism shifts the attention from the ethnic and class structures that powerfully shape Gitanos' living conditions by focusing on sinful individual behaviour inspired by the Devil. However, converted Gitanos refashion their sense of worth, and confront—via religiously-oriented narratives, behaviour, and presentation of the self—their marginal position in contemporary Spain in the private and intimate space of church. The relevance of these elements challenges the construction of the Gitano condition as one of passive marginality and hopelessness. Therefore, the analysis of religious conversions within Pentecostal Christianity contributes to deepening our understanding of how marginalised religious groups navigate social hierarchies and cultural power structures in highly restrictive and hostile contexts.

In recent work, Cantón Delgado et al. (2019) criticise how scholarly work on Roma/Gypsy evangelicalism often points to the Roma evangelical movement as a vehicle of integration or social inclusion of Roma groups in society, tacitly implying that this is a movement in the service of the state's social control (:462). In so doing, Cantón Delgado and collaborators argue, scholars of Roma/Gypsy evangelicalism speak the language of Romani NGOs—who are highly dependent on state funding and are accused by

independent Roma activists of political patronage—and replicate a vision of the Romani world that oscillates between victimism, welfare dependency, integrationism and exoticisation (Cantón Delgado et al. 2019:464). This standpoint resonates with broader debates about the politics of knowledge production that shape Romani Studies as a discipline, and with what Marushiakova and Popov have identified as the main problem concerning research on the Roma: 'approaching the Gypsies only as a marginal group or only as an exotic community' (Marushiakova and Popov 2011:102; see also Engebrigtsen 2007).

While I agree that Roma groups should be represented through more varied and complex lenses that stress diversity as a central aspect of their reality, it is necessary to emphasise that Gitano people in Villaverde cannot easily escape the stigmatising effects of social categorisations. Much to their despair, marginality, stereotypes, and prejudices shape their everyday lives. Similar to Cantón Delgado, I also consider that conceptualising Romani evangelical churches as proxies for the state obscures some crucial elements.

On the one hand, the link between the extensive range of pressures on Gitanos to assimilate from the Spanish state apparatus (such as social workers, teachers, and educators) and the role of the IEF churches in intertwining notions of the religious with ideals of good citizenship as defined by payos is hard to overlook. In La Pequeña Villa, the individual's capacity for autonomous self-mastery and self-discipline constitutes a signal of spiritual regeneration. Conforming to conduct and practices that overlap with payo expectations and definitions of how a good neighbour and citizen look and act is viewed as crucial to asserting their worthiness for inclusion in the congregational body and becoming a fully-fledged member of the community. By shifting the burden of

responsibility from the shoulders of state workers to those of sinful individuals, it can be argued that IEF churches work inadvertently as an extension of the state apparatus.

On the other hand, however, evangelical Gitanos' religious ideas do not quite fit into the integration/assimilation paradigms that shape liberal states' ideologies. Payos in Villaverde often lack the knowledge to comprehend the implication of religious conversion, and the stigma of being Gitano outweighs the potential sign of regeneration that believers showcase. Moreover, conversion rarely leads to sustained or significant upward mobility among Gitanos in Villaverde. Gitano congregations—and this is critical to understanding why churches must not be reduced to being conceptualised as proxies for the Spanish State—comprise imagined communities of chosen ones. By honouring this social representation—and conducting themselves in a way that honours it—believers build an alternative and self-contained sense of holiness, moral superiority and spiritual distinctiveness. While payos might not be able to decipher the signs of regeneration, due to the influence of the IEF in the Gitano world, both Gitano believers and Gitano nonbelievers have become familiar with such expectations and codes of behaviour. In other words, neither the State nor payo people necessarily become the focal point of Gitano conversions. Gitanos are as concerned with the image that they project to each other as they are with the image they project to payos. In this vein, believers portray themselves as the driving force of a new way of being Gitano based in spiritual and civic distinction vis-à-vis nonbelievers, and they aim to convince other Gitanos to follow suit. Irrespective of payo recognition, the resolute religious labour of Gitano evangelical pastors in enhancing believers' commitment to high civic standards has a moral force that makes a claim for ethnic appreciation and develops a positive image of the IEF among Gitano communities.

CHAPTER 6. PROSPERITY GOSPEL COMES TO TOWN: THE RISE OF THE REBELLIOUS GITANO PASTOR

> In our early conventions, we were blessed sometimes and suffered from internal strife other times. One of the primary sources of disagreement was due to contact with visiting foreign evangelists who would spread false teachings.[58] We were back then virgin soil so that any seed could have been grown in us. These visitors were attracted by the fact that we were Gitanos, and that we had been touched by God in a unique way, and some of them were successful in luring Gitano preachers away from the doctrine we received from the outset. Our brother Emiliano and other leaders (the presbyterate) were forced to remain vigilant and watchful over the development of our movement ('La Obra'), so we would remain loyal to the purity of our doctrine. Some Gitano brothers would not understand this and accused others of jealously guarding the ministry. However, the truth is that it was not jealousy but fidelity to the truth. Although this generated some divisions early on, God never allowed us to fall apart because we are Gitanos, and God wants us to stick together (Jiménez Ramírez 1981:88).

This quote from former president Jiménez Ramírez, extracted from the book *Llamamiento de Dios al pueblo gitano* [God's call to the Gitano people] (1981) dates back to the 1980s. It states that Gitano church unity was achieved despite disputes about how to organise the nascent movement, and asserts that from the very beginning, there were salient internal divisions regarding the relationship of the IEF to other non-Gitano churches and ministries. According to the extract, the unity and autonomy of the IEF is the result of divine providence.

The IEF elite has been able to instil successfully into the next generations of Gitano church leaders the duty of preserving the unity and foundational values of the

[58] 'False teachings' is most likely a reference to The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy in the New Testament, a concept which is a widely used in the Christian world to discredit any teachings deviating from what a given doctrine considers as God's revealed truth.

movement. The Gitano pastors I met in my fieldwork believe they must remain faithful to the IEF's sense of autonomy concerning the non-Gitano world and they perceive boundaries with non-Roma churches as an essential value to be conserved by the IEF now and in the future. However, is that sense of loyalty to the ethnic-based organisational principles of the church attributable to every single pastor of the IEF? Are there any dissidents? If so, how do the tensions described by Jiménez Ramírez above resurface in contemporary urban settings and among new generations of Gitano pastors?

In this chapter, I examine the Gitano Pentecostal movement beyond the boundaries of the IEF. To do so, I look at how some dissident Gitano pastors challenge the authority of, and the ethnoreligious institutional identity upheld by, the IEF. Particularly, I focus on the life story, doctrinal vision and religious teachings of Pastor Susi, a Gitano pastor whose multicultural church located in Madrid split off from the IEF and joined a transnational Christian movement linked to the Prosperity Gospel (PG). In so doing, I aim to show that currently, the Gitano Pentecostal movement is subject to processes of reinvention that relate to the emergence of new non-Gitano-centred Christian identities.

The life and religious journey of Pastor Susi, who transitioned from being one of the most promising young leaders of the IEF in Madrid to becoming the ambassador of one of the most successful Latino churches in the USA and champion of the prosperity theology in Spain, is indicative of a broader shift in evangelical politics in the country. The rise of Pastor Susi's church, I shall suggest, indexes a rearrangement of the Pentecostal movement in Spain, which has been reshaped in the last twenty years by the substantial arrival of a considerable influx of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants and the influence of internationally-operating churches with an interest in expanding the scope of their evangelisation projects to Spain.

6.1 Vino Nuevo Church: 'La Iglesia Peligrosa'

The first time I heard the names of Vino Nuevo (New Wine) Church and Pastor Susi,[59] I was still conducting fieldwork at the Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia. Pastor Vaca and several other visibly concerned pastors and believers grouped in a circle were discussing the growth of *una iglesia peligrosa* (a dangerous church), as they branded it, in an evangelical Gitano gathering in the outskirts of Madrid. One of the pastors—who will remain unnamed—referred to Susi as *el pastor gitano del dinero* (the Gitano pastor of money) and depicted him as an ambitious and deceitful person possessed by demons who takes advantage of other Gitano people to get rich. Further, he stated that in this church they hold *rituales raros donde te lavan el cerebro* (bizarre brainwashing rituals) where believers are made to believe they are possessed by demons and forced to vomit them out. As time went on, I discovered that criticisms of Pastor Susi are found across many of the IEF churches of the south of Madrid.

After finishing my fieldwork at the IEF, moved by curiosity, I decided first to visit, and subsequently to extend my ethnographic account to, Vino Nuevo church.

Vino Nuevo was founded by Pastor Susi around the year 2000 and has been single-handedly led by him ever since. The church—and this is a highly distinctive feature in the context of Gitano evangelism in Madrid—is a Prosperity Gospel (PG) church. The PG is not a well-established branch of Christianity in Madrid and lacks any major historical or social grounding in the Spanish religious landscape, which makes the case of Vino Nuevo truly unique.

[59] Pastor Susi's real name is Jesús Losa. Acquaintances, Vino Nuevo Church's believers, and Susi's family always refer to him by the name of Susi, which is a variation of Suso, a widely used short name for Jesús in Spain.

The PG is a Pentecostal Christian movement akin to Calvinism. In his famous and highly influential work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber stressed the existence of an affinity between the Calvinist faith and a predisposition towards productive work and wealth, due to the Calvinist predestination notion that the believer's success is a reliable indicator of possession of divine grace and future eternal salvation. The PG reintegrates the Protestant ethic upheld by the Calvinists into an evangelical worldview strongly linked to everyday spiritual beliefs. The PG broadly poses that God blesses Christians with financial improvement and physical as well as mental wellbeing, in exchange for radical and unswerving faith and devotion. In other words, its message is that it is God's will for Christians to be wealthy, healthy, and successful (Coleman 2000; Ukah 2005).

Like other IEF churches in Madrid, Vino Nuevo is located in the south of the city, an area where many Gitanos were relocated following the economic, population, and spatial growth of Madrid in the 1980s and 1990s. The church stands in the district of Carabanchel, a neighbour to my main fieldwork site in Villaverde. Within this already underprivileged zone, the church is located in Caño Roto, an extremely spatially marginalised area made up of social housing and high unemployment rates, inhabited primarily by Gitanos, immigrants and working-class people with minimal economic resources. Like La Pequeña Villa, Gitano people and their extended families comprise the core of the Vino Nuevo congregation. However, in sharp contrast to La Pequeña Villa, the believers of this church are not only Gitano or non-Gitano neighbours linked by marriage or friendship with Gitano families, but also some Spanish-speaking immigrant residents of the neighbourhood from different countries in Latin America.[60]

[60] Studying the impact of the PG among migrants in Madrid is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that in Europe, some scholars have noted a strong attraction for PG among middle-class or aspiring middle-class migrants. In his study of a Nigerian church based in London, Hunt stresses that a large

Paradoxically, while Gitano people are numerically prominent in Vino Nuevo and, as shown below, Pastor Susi is usually perceived by his congregation as a Gitano leader fated to shape the future of Gitano people, Pastor Susi does not define Vino Nuevo as an ethnic church. Instead, Pastor Susi regards his church as a multicultural congregation. Unlike Pastor Vaca, Pastor Susi makes a strong effort to reach out to non-Gitano people. In addition to carrying on regular street evangelism, many Vino Nuevo believers' homes are part of an extensive network of *Casas de paz* (Houses of Prayer). These are announced on the internet and social media as spaces where believers, regardless of their cultural background, are warmly invited to pray and subsequently to join the main congregation.

On the first day I visited Vino Nuevo, Pastor Susi was preparing to preach before a congregation of some three hundred people. In stark opposition to the poorly lighted and dodgy-looking street where Vino Nuevo stands, the interior of the church was garnished with flashy curtains and powerful lighting. Pastor Susi wore an impeccable suit and an expensive gold watch, clearly visible on his wrist. His first words referred to the concept of 'blessing', an idea he expanded upon by declaring that the result of the blessing is prosperity: God wants to bless Christians to be happier, have better health, have more money, and have access to better jobs. However, how to achieve that prosperity? With the Bible open on the lectern located in the centre of the church pulpit, Pastor Susi read a passage from the Book of Matthew in the New Testament. The passage is known among Vino Nuevo believers as 'the Parable of the Reaper':

> That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did

proportion of the members of the church were upper-middle-class with aspirations to send their children to Western universities, during a period of economic crisis in Nigerian society (2002:155–161).

> not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. Nevertheless, when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seeds fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear. (Matthew, 13:1–9)

Pastor Susi noted that the agricultural metaphors in this biblical passage—precisely, the term 'seed'—contained one of Jesus's most critical teachings about the power of faith for Christians. According to Pastor Susi, the parable reveals a universal rule that governs the destiny of human lives: 'The Law of Sowing and Harvesting'. The Law of Sowing and Harvesting dictates that should the believer plant a 'seed', God will provide material and spiritual goods with exponential returns in the form of a blessing: money, happiness, wellbeing, and miracles. In order to facilitate the understanding of his message, Pastor Susi gave several examples of seed-faith actions—those which God rewards with prosperity—including time spent promoting, organising, assisting, and participating in congregational activities, as well as financial investment, donations and tithes in and for the church.

Afterwards, Pastor Susi stated that Christians *tienen la misión divina de gobernar el 'Mundo'* (are commissioned with the divine mission of ruling over 'the world'). Thus, Christians with a strong spiritual rapport with God are likely to be comprehensively blessed in every aspect (financial, health, happiness) of their lives. Significant growth or improvement in various areas of Christians' everyday reality signals God's approval. Conversely, Pastor Susi affirmed, the lack of improvement or growth in one aspect of Christians' lives indicates the presence of evil spirits ruling over areas of their minds and bodies.

After many months of fieldwork involved with the IEF's Gitano pastors, hearing Pastor Susi speak in this way was truly astonishing. Pastor Vaca and the IEF's pastors I met throughout my fieldwork in Madrid never equated 'blessing' with financial gain and upward mobility, and they had a radically different take on how prosperity related to spiritual strength. While the IEF's pastors encourage believers to request divine assistance in every aspect of their lives, they criticise, and even shame, the act of continually praying to God for selfish reasons in their sermons, as it is considered a harmful sin of (self-) idolatry.

6.2 The Contentious Economic Ethos of Pentecostalism

In the first ethnographies and academic works on Pentecostalism and charismatic religions, there is a strong tendency to relate the expansion of Pentecostalism with deprivation and social disorganisation (Robbins 2004:123). The symbolic, ascetic, millenarian and communitarian responses of Pentecostalism to social anomie, poverty, and the stressful migrations from rural to urban areas are often used as explanatory factors for religious conversions, especially in studies grounded in Marxist perspectives on Latin America (Anderson 1979; Lalive d'Epinay 1969; Freston 1998:347; Willems 1967).

Some other authors have shifted away from analyses grounded in Marxism and instead look to Weber's ideas as a means of conceptualising the economic ethos of Pentecostalism. Informed by Weber's ideas on the strong linkage between Protestantism and capitalism, social scientists have associated Pentecostalism with economic modernisation and socioeconomic improvement in Latin America and Spain (Brusco 1995:123–125; Cantón Delgado et al., 2004:127–128; Grier 2013:244; Martin 2002:85). From a similar point of view, Birgit Meyer argues that urban Pentecostal churches in Ghana, especially those which are internationally oriented, strongly appeal to young and

middle-aged people of both sexes for whom success in life is not a mere dream and who have started to prosper, often by being involved in international trade (Meyer 1998:320). Furthermore, scholars have linked Pentecostalism with the forms and structures of contemporary capitalism (Barker 2007; Burchardt 2017 Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Meyer 2007). Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) note that Pentecostal churches, such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa, reform the classic Weberian-Protestant ethic with enterprise and urbanity, fulsomely embracing the material world**.** Their storefronts and prayer meetings visibly respond to frankly mercenary desires, offering everything from cures for depression through financial advice to remedies for unemployment; casual passersby are treated like clients and encouraged to select the services they require (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000:314). According to Comaroff and Comaroff their doctrine of the Second Coming evokes not a Jesus who saves, but one who pays dividends, or, more accurately, one who promises a miraculous return on a limited spiritual investment (2000:315). Similarly, Barker (2007) has posed that in developing countries, Pentecostalism exists in a harmonising, even symbiotic, relation to neoliberal capitalism as Pentecostal churches have come to function as non-state sites addressing social needs that have gone unmet by the state. According to Barker, 'Pentecostal communities meet social reproductive needs in a neoliberal era by providing services along with moral frameworks regarding how social needs should be met, by recasting individual values and practices, and by reconfiguring community and social identity (2007:417).

Within the Pentecostal religious movement, the branch whose economic ethos has attracted the most attention, along with social, media, and academic controversy, is the Prosperity Gospel (PG) (Bowler 2013). PG is often depicted in an unflattering fashion as a deceptive and money-oriented American version of Christianity.

Scholars agree on the link between the genesis of PG and the North American Christian media culture,[61] and note that ideas, funding, and preachers flow primarily from the United States (Bowler 2016; Coleman 2000; Cox 1995). The global influence of PG has also aroused criticism within the Pentecostal Christian world, and several scholars have criticised its ethnocentric and imperialistic character as well as its alliance with hegemonic capitalist powers (Anderson 1999:209; Gifford 1990; Machado 2010).

Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose (1996) have pointed out that the appeal of the prosperity gospel for underprivileged groups lies in its ability to 'enchant' people with 'the prospect of a miracle cure for their own and their societies' economic maladies.' (1996:198). Some authors have also argued that in PG, money is incontestably the most significant object in the creation of a common language, seen both as the mode of organising churches and as the means of entering into contact with God (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001:8). This allegedly money-oriented way of experiencing the Christian faith has often been the explaining factor used in extensive media coverage to account for collective deceitful and criminal accusations—some of which led to convictions for financial fraud—against some PG leaders and popular televangelists (Baker 2019).

Most of my informants at Vino Nuevo would certainly contest and feel misrepresented by some of the above ethnographical and scholarly work on PG. Despite Vino Nuevo placing a strong emphasis on the concept of seed-faith actions, and references to tithing being ubiquitous in Pastor Susi's sermons, believers in this church define prosperity in an open-ended way, and many significant improvements in one's life

[61] During the 1980s, the movement gained a substantial following using radio and television and became firmly entrenched with the rise of 'televangelism'. Prosperity Gospel champions such as Oral Roberts embraced televangelism and came to dominate Christian media programming in the United States, and utilised this platform to make a global impact.

fit into that loose category. Obtaining a degree, improving one's health, or reaching small weekly goals that believers have set—such as taking up doing exercise, working in their marriage, becoming better parents—are all examples of prosperity given to me by believers. Although Pastor Susi always encourages Christians to reach new heights, a blessing is broadly understood by Gitano believers as a specifically individual reward, which allows them to experience and understand their faith beyond materialism. Also, Gitano believers amongst Vino Nuevo's members firmly refute that PG is deceitful or alien to their local setting, as well as that their church is a money-oriented one. Their claims strike a chord with Coleman's influential work about PG (2011; 2017), in which he refuses to conceptualise PG as an expression of a selfish desire for consumption (2017:43) and invites scholars to reflect on 'how' practices relating to the PG interact with broader aspects of believers' lives and self-understanding (2011:41). In the same vein, Eriksen, Llera Blanes, and MacCarthy (2019) extensively criticise what they consider to be an excessive emphasis on the economic dimension of Pentecostalism and prosperity theology in academic literature. For these authors, the most critical features of PG are the cosmological transformations related to the rupture with the past (the ancestors, their kinship, the influence of tradition) and the substitution of a cyclical time by a linear one (Eriksen, Llera Blanes, and MacCarthy 2019:139). In line with the theoretical push for broadening the scope of the anthropological gaze on Pentecostalism, Vino Nuevo Gitanos' understanding of their conversion goes beyond the economic sphere and is deeply linked to their religious ideals.

6.3 Pastor Susi: the Blessed Gitano

Susi grew up in a well-known evangelical Gitano family in Carabanchel and converted to Pentecostalism at the age of seventeen. Both his conversion and that of his relatives took place within the Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia of Caño Roto, located only a few streets away from the original venue of the church he founded. Shortly after his conversion, Susi ran as a candidate for pastor (Candidato) in the church of the IEF in Caño Roto. Subsequently, Susi became part of the leading council of the church, made up of a head pastor, a group of senior elders (Obreros), and several Candidatos.

Susi, father of three and recently grandfather of a boy born to his son, is an elder by Gitano standards now that his progeny has reached two successive male generations. However, his social standing as a young Gitano in the 1990s was quite different from today, and his challenge to the head and elder pastors was unheard of among Gitano people in Carabanchel. Pastor Susi is usually highly reluctant to reveal the details leading to his separation from the church that he had converted to as a young man. However, several of his relatives gathered in the church—old enough to remember the events—recalled for me their version of the story. The critical moment of rupture between Pastor Susi and the IEF took place, according to my informants, when the Holy Spirit brought him a message. One Sunday night, Pastor Susi received an order from God during worship at IEF Caño Roto. While the head pastor of the congregation was preaching, Susi rose from his seat in front of the entire congregation and publicly reproached the head pastor along with the rest of the council of elder pastors who led the church of Caño Roto. The content of his critique was based on PG's ideas: while standing up on his feet before the whole congregation, Susi stated that the IEF doctrine was not correct and failed to comply

with God's laws on prosperity. The next day, Susi left the IEF.[62] I believe that the power of this story lies not in its potential correspondence with the facts, but in the content of the story itself. The story presents a local pastor in transformation who breaks with his past, fights against adversity, and rebels against the religious status quo, moved by a message from God. As a reward for following the divine command, he obtains a greater individual reward, going on to lead a church of his own with a strong international presence and with more members than the previous congregation. As I will show in the following sections, the story's composition is in line with the messages of progress and social mobility that are part of the doctrinal core of the Vino Nuevo Church.

I never disclosed to Pastor Susi what other Gitano pastors said to me about him; however, he is fully aware of his bad image among the Gitanos of the IEF. Much to my initial surprise, during the time I spent with him, I never sensed any hint of concern regarding this issue on his part. On the contrary, this negative image seemed to confer strength and unity to his congregation. The way Pastor Susi is perceived by other Gitano believers fits with the biblical narratives about martyrdom, persecution, and the difficulties Jesus and the apostles had in evangelising, compiled in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament. On one occasion, during an informal conversation about Pastor Susi's image among the IEF's Gitanos, Isaac, one of Pastor Susi's cousins, compared the relationship Susi has with the Gitano people with that of Jesus and the Jewish people, arguing that both have been misunderstood and rejected by *su gente* (their people). Isaac brought the conversation to an end by remarking that the IEF's Gitano believers' dismissive attitude toward Pastor Susi was not in their interest,

[62] My position as a regular visitor to Pastor Susi's church prevented me from the possibility of cross-checking the story with the members of the IEF of Caño Roto. The animosity between both congregations is such that many Vino Nuevo members asked me explicitly not to contact the IEF of Caño Roto.

oblivious as they are to the understanding that Pastor Susi's teachings are the pathway to a better life for Gitano people.

The outcast narrative within the stories populating the imaginaries of Vino Nuevo Gitanos ties into broader dominant narratives of fate and destiny for Pastor Susi. In the Vino Nuevo congregation, Pastor Susi often presents himself as the spearhead of a new generation of Christian Gitano leaders whose mission and Christian purpose is to change the mentality of Gitanos and Spanish believers. Preaching at his church, for example, it is common to hear Susi proclaiming that *Dios quiere que los Gitanos suban de nivel* (God wants Gitano people to raise their game) or that *es la hora de que los Gitanos recojan los Frutos de Dios* (the time for Gitano people to harvest the fruits of God has finally come).

6.4 Developing Non-Gitano Organisational Forms

If compared to the IEF churches, the organisational forms of Vino Nuevo are quite simple: Pastor Susi stands at the top and, assisted primarily by his wife,[63] runs the church. The development of the teaching doctrine is exclusively Pastor Susi's responsibility, and he is the unique and ultimate source of decision making in the church. He appoints assistant pastors at will—at the moment of my fieldwork he had just one assistant pastor whose remit was leading the young section of the church—and holds the exclusive right to create ministries in the church.

Echoing Lalive D'Epinay's ideas (1969) about 'corporate personality' among Chilean Pentecostal leaders, Pastor Susi fulfils the three functions of authoritative roles: he represents the movement, he legitimates his authority because he knows himself to be

[63] Pastor Susi's wife María Jesús holds the title of *pastora*. However, unlike the Gitano *pastora*s of the IEF, she has an active role on the front stage of the church. She also stands sometimes next to Pastor Susi during his preaching and makes herself visible throughout the ceremony. Pastora María Jesús also leads a mixed praying ministry and trains male and female believers from this group.

called, and he constitutes the chief source of decision-making (D'Epinay 1969:67–69). Pastor Susi fits within the model of the 'pastorpreneurs', a mode of religious leadership based on individual charisma whose legitimacy does not depend on denominational traditions (Klaver 2015:150).

Unlike in the IEF, where Gitano head pastors usually rotate periodically, and church advisory committees are composed of obreros, thus serving as a counterbalance to pastors' authority (see chapter one), Pastor Susi is the alpha and omega of Vino Nuevo's structure of power. Pastor Susi rejects the IEF's forms of Presbyterian governance including that head pastors should be accountable to elders or other pastors, as he stands as the highest authority in his church, only accountable to God**.**

In the capacity of head pastor at Vino Nuevo, Susi exercises strong personal leadership in his church. Furthermore—and this point makes Vino Nuevo's structure all the more different from the IEF's—no young Candidatos are in line to succeed him as future leaders of Vino Nuevo. Believers are aware, and accept, this individual authority governing the functioning of the church. On one occasion, when several church believers reflected on the future of the congregation while organising an evangelisation campaign in the neighbourhood of Caño Roto, one of them mentioned that the future of the church without Pastor Susi was inconceivable, an affirmation with which all who were present agreed. By exercising strong individual leadership in his church, Pastor Susi not only departs from the Presbyterian-style governance of the IEF but also integrates Christian Gitanos into radically new structures and novel social relationships that come together through his authority. Unlike the IEF Gitano believers, Vino Nuevo members do not enrol in a religious structure which echoes egalitarian cultural values such as male horizontalism among pastors. The social context of Vino Nuevo is highly different. In it, a self-proclaimed God-chosen Gitano leader seeks to extend his sway across Gitano

families and other believers, claiming that he is not accountable to other Gitanos and that his spiritual rapport with God qualifies him to lead them all.

Despite lacking school education, Pastor Susi is an avid learner. He considers himself *un estudiante* (a student) and takes personal pride in furthering his learning about the human condition. His interests encompass not only Christian theology but also psychology and marketing. Convinced as he is that training is indispensable to improving his communicational and evangelistic skills, Pastor Susi combines his biblical reading with reading of scientific magazines and handbooks of different kinds. Frequently, Pastor Susi even requested suggestions from me for readings in sociology. To date—and this is highly remarkable for someone without schooling or education— Pastor Susi has published two doctrinal books in Spain.[64] Not surprisingly, given his self-representation as a 'student', Pastor Susi has a mentor: Dr. Guillermo Maldonado. In my conversations with Pastor Susi, he always referred to Maldonado as his spiritual mentor and considered himself his disciple.

Dr. Guillermo Maldonado is an international leader of the worldwide Gospel of Prosperity and is settled in the USA. Maldonado, of Honduran origin, is the founder of the King Jesus Ministry megachurch, one of the largest Hispanic churches in the US, based in Miami.

Maldonados' sermons are broadcast globally in one of the most watched programmes of Christian television in the world: *The Supernatural in the Now*. According to the church's data, the Maldonado TV programme broadcasts on sixty-one TV channels, in thirty-two countries and eleven languages (King Jesus 2019b). Furthermore, according

[64] *Cultura, Tradición Vs. Principios del Reino Sobrenatural* [Culture, Tradition vs. Principles of the Supernatural Kingdom] (2014) and *La Transición del Vino Viejo al Vino Nuevo* [The Transition from Old Wine to New Wine] (2018).

to some Christian newspapers, Maldonado's church reached twenty thousand members by 2010 (Byle 2013), and to date, he has written more than fifty books (in English and Spanish). Maldonado considers himself a new Christian apostle, destined to lead a new generation of evangelical pastors, which God has given him the power to train and model (USMNow 2018). Maldonado recruits, trains, and inspires new leaders to become independent and self-sustained diffusers of his ideas across the world. Pastor Susi feels he is a fully-fledged member of that new groundbreaking Christian generation.

The first time I asked Pastor Susi about his relationship with Maldonado, he dated his first contact with the doctrine of the Church of King Jesus to the 1990s, when the future pastor of Vino Nuevo—back then a pastor Candidato at the IEF—came into contact with the written work of the popular televangelist. The few times Pastor Susi opened up to me and talked about the past and his scission from the IEF, he consistently referred to his readings of Maldonado's work as cathartic experiences that led him to separate from the leading Gitano church in Spain.

The content of Pastor Susi's sermons models itself on the religious vision of Maldonado, and the books for sale on the stand of the Vino Nuevo church have been written, mostly, by the latter. Equally, Pastor Susi's social media networks are riddled with pictures of him sharing activities with Maldonado, and motivational quotes extracted from the books. Guillermo Maldonado, in turn, has exercised active spiritual patronage over Pastor Susi, as reflected in his writing the prologue to Pastor Susi's first book, where he calls Susi *un Hijo spiritual* (a spiritual son) (Maldonado 2014:9). Vino Nuevo requested formal entry into the Maldonado international church network in 2014. From that moment on, Pastor Susi has travelled to Miami at least once a year to participate in the King Jesus Church annual conference—the *Conferencia apostólica y profética* (the Apostolic and Prophetic Conference)—to renew his doctrinal ideas and evangelical

methodologies. Every so often, guest preachers from the Maldonado network preach at Vino Nuevo, making the church a hub for those believers that follow Maldonado's TV show in Madrid.

The pastor's link with the movement led by Maldonado has increased public visibility and Vino Nuevo Church's religious weight in the city of Madrid. The relationship between the two pastors is part of Vino Nuevo's public profile and is underlined in all the printed brochures and biographical profiles of Pastor Susi. During fieldwork, I found that many of the new members outside the pastor's family claimed to have come to the Vino Nuevo church in the first place as its link to Maldonado attracted them.

'6.5 The Culture of the Kingdom of God', or How Christian Believers Can Prosper on Earth

Pastor Susi is convinced he has discovered a set of Bible-based methodologies and practices which honour God and lead to prosperity. *La cultura de Reino de Dios* (The culture of the Kingdom of God) is the concept Susi has coined to capture the specificity of his approach. Should Christians want to be blessed, Pastor Susi often affirms, they need first to master the principles of that 'culture'. In this section, I will summarise the culture of the Kingdom of God in four principles.

The first principle is transmission. At the end of each religious ceremony, Susi asks the believers to go up to the pulpit to receive the blessing of God. Pastor Susi then places his hands on the heads of the members of the congregation, intending to spread God's blessings. This practice is known in Vino Nuevo as the *imposición de manos* (laying on of hands). Pastor Susi considers himself *un canalizador espiritual* (a spiritual channel), who can transmit vertically, through physical and spiritual contact in the ritual

context, gifts of blessing, healing, and progress to believers. Using a metonymic logic, Pastor Susi thus makes himself indispensable to believers for obtaining blessing and prosperity in the future and continues to gain believers' fidelity.

The second principle is *liberación de espíritus* (deliverance of spirits). When a believer joins the church, it is a common practice in Vino Nuevo to present to the newcomer a questionnaire in which they value their state of blessing in different areas of their life: finances, work, health, love, family, and friendships. Subsequently, they are asked to indicate in what specific area they wish to prosper. If, after a time, the believer is unable to improve in the areas of their lives where they need a blessing, Pastor Susi practices 'deliverance of spirits'. Deliverance of spirits consists of material and symbolic practices embedded into a ritual ceremony in which the pastor tries to free the believer from spiritual evil and curses. Deliverance of spirits is based on the notion of personal evils, which may be defined as negative spiritual and demonic influences. Deliverance of spirits ceremonies are deemed highly private and intimate experiences for believers and are not carried out before the congregation. Nevertheless, I was able to witness this ritual practice on a spiritual retreat Pastor Susi invited me to. On this day, Pastor Susi asked participants to fill out a questionnaire and identify publically in what area we wish to prosper. Assisted by a colleague, Pastor Susi took them one by one to a side room where, after being subjected to a ceremony of spiritual cleansing, they ended up vomiting, sometimes using their hand to facilitate the process. As Pastor Susi explained to the group after the ceremonies, vomiting is perceived as the physical manifestation of demonic possession, and its expulsion is an indicator of the liberation of the believer's body. The next day, those who went through the deliverance wore full white clothing before the whole congregation, symbolising their spiritual cleansing.

Among the Gitanos of Vino Nuevo, the notion of personal evils ties into groups' presumptions and prejudices. I often heard Pastor Susi linking generic aspects he deems characteristics of Gitano culture, such as the tendency to stick together vis-à-vis non-Gitano people, to the influence of evil forces. Pastor Susi also agrees with some deep-seated stereotypes about Gitano people held by non-Gitano people, such as that Gitanos lack a work ethic, squander money, and care not about socioeconomic advancement or social integration. Often, Pastor Susi states that these negative personal attitudes that he attributes to some Gitano people are the result of generational evils which possessed their ancestors and have been passed down to a new generation, and have prevented his people from progressing in their lives for centuries. By tying up a homogeneous representation of Gitano people with Pentecostal idioms, Pastor Susi provides a meaningful interpretation of Gitanos' collective past and identifies patterns of behaviour inconsistent with upward mobility that believers need to change should they aspire to socioeconomic improvement.

The third principle is visualisation and positive confession. During the religious service, Pastor Susi habitually invites believers to visualise their dreams and goals in life and to declare them aloud. According to Pastor Susi, God wants to bless Christians, and by publicly affirming their will and individual desires, Christians go a long way towards pleasing God and making these desires happen. Furthermore, Vino Nuevo teaches that the Bible has promised prosperity for believers, so positive confession means that believers are speaking in faith what God has already spoken about them; so, as it were, positive confession is practised to bring about what is already believed in; faith itself is a confession, and speaking it brings it into reality. By granting the faith-oriented will a performative role, Pastor Susi tries to inculcate positive moods and mentalities towards the future in believers.

The fourth principle is harvesting. As the quote below shows, the principles of the Kingdom of God are related to a work ethic based on personal effort and sacrifice to achieve the goals established by each believer. Pastor Susi describes it as follows:

> The success of a good harvest is not on the day of harvest; it is during the hard and cold days of sowing; of care and perseverance... It is absurd to want to have everything in life; you dream of wealth, but you are not able to initiate and finish any work with excellence. You are not able to properly manage what you produce; that is, you spend more than what you make and do not take God into account in your finances. Religious people[65] usually seek miracles in times of crisis, expecting that God will take care of them without them having to make any effort. They are lazy; they want to get everything they need, as well as solve the problematic situation they are going through, as if by magic. They hope to reap without sowing, to learn without studying, to arrive at their destination without preparing, to have anointing without consecration and a Kingdom without principles. (Losa 2014:155)

Pastor Susi's definition of harvesting stands against what some authors have considered the main factor accounting for the success of PG in the current global and neoliberal economy. Comaroff and Comaroff have strived to link PG to the rise of what they call 'occult economies'. In a nutshell, occult economies are systems that ideologically mirror a form of post-Fordist neoliberalism characterised by the vast concentrations of new wealth derived from financial investment and management, from intellectual property and other rights, from cyberspace, and from transport and its cognate operations. For Comaroff and Comaroff, neoliberal economic accumulation is enigmatic because it emerges from the separation between physical work and value. In that sense, and as part of broader global social trends, the PG connects with an effort to conjure

[65] In this passage, Pastor Susi assimilates the word 'religion' to idolatry and false doctrines. In his sermons, he usually declares that Vino Nuevo does not teach religion, but *como establecer una relación personal con Dios* (how to build up a personal relationship with God).

wealth—and account for its accumulation—by appeal to techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000:310).

Conversely, as the excerpt above proves, Pastor Susi's teachings do not separate work from value; thus, they do not fit into the category of occult economies. Further, in a recent post on his Christian blog that mirrors one of the most repeated teachings in his sermons, Pastor Susi addresses the issue of productive time in detail. The post is titled 'El Valor del Tiempo' (The Value of Time) and goes as follows:

> Success in life is related to the use we make of time. Each of us is the total of the way we use our time, and the way we consume our time determines the quality of our Life. Time is not designed to be lost, but to be taken advantage of. Every second of the day is an opportunity to invest in your life that never comes back. Make time your ally and not your enemy. Time usually gives or detracts from things; which case applies to you? Start investing in your time NOW, so that tomorrow you have more value than today! In terms of purpose and destiny, it is what makes the difference between the places where you are and where God wants to take you; or between what you have done and what God can bring you to do. (Jesús Losa 2018)

Thus, the perception of secular time in Vino Nuevo draws on the idea of finitude and utility. In the human lives of Christians, time is a resource that must be invested to achieve goals (see also Haynees 2012).

6.6 The Teachings of Pastor Susi and the Christian Telos: Faith, Growth, and Transition

Pastor Susi considers that the Christian *telos* is to rule over society. Accordingly, he usually describes his teaching as a *doctrina de poder* (doctrine of power). In his sermons, Pastor Susi ubiquitously uses the term *desatar* (untie) to conceptualise his vision of the Christian future. According to Pastor Susi, God's blessings are tied, waiting to be

unlocked and enjoyed by Christians. By praying for prosperity, Christians are not forcing God to give us a blessing.

On the contrary, God is keen to provide for Christians as they are entitled to wellbeing. Pastor Susi maintains that Christians have been given power over creation because they are made in the image of God, so they shall exercise dominion over the material objects around them. The idea of *crecimiento* (growth) encapsulates Vino Nuevo's doctrine. On its website, the church defines its Christian ideology, quoting one of Pastor Susi's most recurrent sermon openings:

> God desires that we prosper in all things. That is why prosperity represents one of our values; to promote constant *growth*, maturing, progressing, moving up to higher levels of faith, vision, glory, blessing, and education. Jesus died and paid a high price to redeem us from poverty and ignorance. (El Rey Jesús 2019b, emphasis mine)

Susi calls this process of continuous access to material and spiritual goods *transición* (transition). In his last book, Pastor Susi defines the idea of transiting in the following way:

> A transition will always take you from one level to another level**.** In terms of personal growth, the transition is what makes the difference between what you produce and what you can potentially produce. So, we see how the transition has a lot to do with movement, but more than mere movement, with advancement from one place to the place that we are supposed to reach. Please bear in mind that there is a big difference between movement and transition, and I will now explain what it is. The movement takes you from one place to another, but it does not guarantee a transformation - metamorphosis - or growth. The Bible says that we go from glory to glory, that is, from one level of glory to another level of greater glory. This is the actual transition, the one that moves you, but with a purpose of progress, conquest, and growth. (Jesús Losa 2018)

The idea of transition is similar to other idioms, such as the spirit of poverty or the sin of poverty, that populate the Prosperity Gospel world. Scholarly work in Africa and

on African immigrants in Europe has coupled PG with a search for upward mobility. In his study of the Assemblies of God in Zimbabwe, Maxwell remarks that PG encourages upward social mobility and provides a code of conduct that safeguards believers from falling into poverty (1998:351). Maxwell's main argument is that the Assemblies of God encourage the idea that poverty in Africa is not the product of structural social injustice, but the spirit of poverty and the perverse effect of ancestral male spirits (Maxwell 1998:358). Believers have inherited a lifestyle based on violence, vagrancy, alcoholism, polygamy, worship of ancestors, and witchcraft. Therefore, poverty passes down from generation to generation, and with it, bad luck, diseases, and the inability to generate wealth (Maxwell 1998:358). In similar terms, Meyer states that for the prosperity churches in Ghana, poverty is the result of sin, and the blessing of Jesus Christ materialises in prosperity (1998:323).

In line with these ethnographies, the concept of transition in Pastor Susi's doctrine relates to a sinful collective past. In stark opposition to how Gitanos usually refrain from mentioning—and indeed confer utter respect upon—their beloved, deceased close kin (see chapter one), Pastor Susi resorts to the rhetoric of the ancestral spiritual sinner to explain to believers why they are poor or suffer calamities. In a very un-Gitano-like fashion, Susi often preaches that former Gitano generations carry the weight of sin and hinder new generations' happiness and progress. This indicates that kinship ties in Vino Nuevo, thus, take second place in favour of the born-again Christian identity.

Pastor Susi's sense of worldly time is linear and progressive as he weaves his rejection of the past through an unwavering hope in the future. Pastor Susi considers himself an envoy of God and part of a Christian army led by a new generation of apostles and anointed individuals whose mission is to transform the world and lead believers to social and financial prominence. According to Pastor Susi, at present there is a

cosmological struggle of positions, and a spiritual war is being waged. The future of humanity is dependent on the triumph of Christians: a Christian's ascending social mobility accelerates the arrival of Christ and contributes to the spiritual forces of good triumphing over evil. Consequently, social ascension and increasing access to positions of power and influence are a divine mandate, and the success of a Christian is a clear sign of being blessed. As opposed to a deceitful Christian leader who becomes rich at believers' expense—as many IEF Christian Gitanos represent him—at Vino Nuevo Pastor Susi is perceived as a role model, someone who has climbed the social ladder from deprived origins, because he and his family have been blessed by God. Consequently, and as a result of this blessing, Pastor Susi is entitled to teach believers how God can improve their lives as much as it has improved his.

Before becoming a pastor, Susi was a salesman at a street market. In this respect, Susi was a typical Spanish Gitano man with a typical Spanish Gitano profession, as many Gitanos work within the informal or semiformal economy, such as street vending, scrap collection and, especially, selling at street markets (Ardévol 1986:92; Cantón Delgado et al. 2004; Gamella 1996, Gay y Blasco 1999:27–28; San Román 1997:189). Currently, Pastor Susi is a well-off pastor dedicated full time to leading the church, and earns his income from the congregation's donations and the tithing of three weekly religious services. Similar to the IEF Gitano pastors, Pastor Susi mimics the aesthetics—darks suit, ties, and white shirts—of formality proper to the Spanish entrepreneurial upper classes. However, he furthers the metonymic relation between himself and material success by making subtle use of selected material objects, such as expensive shoes and watches, to signal conspicuous consumption. On the street where the church stands, it is common to see the pastor and his family's high-end cars. Shortly after completing my fieldwork, Pastor Susi acquired a new headquarters larger than any of the IEF churches located in

Madrid and with much higher seating capacity (between eight hundred and one thousand people) than the old one. The new venue has come to constitute itself as a sign of prestige, pride, and distinction for the believers of the church.

The story of Manuel, the eldest son of Pastor Susi, is another critical component that shapes the narratives about Pastor Susi's blessings. Manuel moved recently with his wife and baby to Miami (USA), where he is expanding his business. Meanwhile, his wife has become one of the most prominent voices in the main choir of Maldonado's King Jesus Church. The relocation of Susi's eldest son to Miami is unusual amongst Gitano people. While Gitanos are well known for their history of spatial mobility, and some Gitano families did move to Latin America in the early years of the twentieth century, especially following the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), migrating to the USA is rare for them. In the context of an extremely deprived area such as Caño Roto, Manuel's migration story is truly unique. Before his move, Manuel tried to explain to me the meaning of his father's sermons and how God works in the Christians' lives at Vino Nuevo Church. According to Manuel's story, his life dream had been to open a pawnshop. Before converting to his father's church, Manuel worked as a waiter for three years and saved enough to rent a small shop and start his business. However, the business failed, leaving Manuel bankrupt. Soon after, Manuel converted to evangelicalism, and at that moment, God whispered a promise into his ear: *tu negocia prosperará* (your business will prosper). According to his story, Manuel returned to work as a waiter, this time working overtime for five years. With the money saved during this period, Manuel reopened his business, periodically donated money to the church, and became involved in its weekly activities. This time around, his business venture was successful, so much so that now he owns two pawnshops. All the people I spoke with in the church knew the details of Manuel's conversion testimony and associated his success with the special blessing that

God had brought to Pastor Susi's family. Thus, material abundance, the new headquarters, Manuel's life story, and Susi's continuing trips to Miami uphold the perception among believers that Pastor Susi is in God's favour.

One of the most recurrent points in Pastor Susi's sermons is that there is only one correct way to achieve worldly success for Christians: with the help of God. This point became especially apparent to me when I was invited[66] by Pastor Susi to participate as a student in the Escuela de Nuevos Creyentes (School of New Believers) in the church. In one of his classes, entitled 'Fundamentals of the Doctrine of Christ: Faith towards God', Pastor Susi presented the Christians as forgers of their own destinies, and encouraged the believers to undertake their personal projects—but always with a religious motivation. The passage that Susi read aloud to us was the following:

> Faith is the basis or the confidence that we will receive what we expect, the persuasion or absolute conviction to reach what is not yet seen. Faith is a firm persuasion; it is absolute trust; it is an unquestionable belief in the word of God, and in the things that we do not see. Why did God choose faith as one of the means to please Him? The reason is that faith is the only means that leads us to total dependence on Him. Faith leads us to be dependent on a God whom we do not physically see. The word of God teaches us that everything that is not done with faith is sin. (Escuela de Nuevos Creyentes Vino Nuevo 2004:81–82)

This reading includes two teachings that are strongly linked to the core of Vino Nuevo and Pastor Susi's doctrine. On the one hand, the idea of 'total dependence on God' was resonant with the collective experience of believers in Caño Roto, where some families are dependent on social benefits to make ends meet. On many occasions, I heard Pastor Susi affirming that one of his mains goals is that of empowering Christians by releasing them from a 'welfare' or 'victim' mentality: believers must achieve success on

[66] Every new member of the church is invited during the first year of membership to participate in some weekly lectures given by Pastor Susi.

their own, only with the help of God, as opposed to the complacency of those who depend on human help. In his sermons, Pastor Susi often states—pointing to social benefits—that the interference of human agents in the lives of Christian believers is illegitimate, and destined to create more evils than it can solve. By substituting the entity believers should be dependent on (a God predicated on the notion of prosperity, and not the state), Pastor Susi encourages his followers not to rely on state welfare but to acquire financial independence through religious drive.

On the other hand, the reading refers to the rightful motivations which legitimate acquisition of wealth. By using this sentence: 'The word of God teaches us that everything that is not done with faith is sin', Pastor Susi was tying the idea of individual progress into a more comprehensive doctrinal vision. After reading this passage, Pastor Susi cautioned that although many human beings can reach positions of wealth, influence, or fame, these successes are fruitless and sinful because they have not been achieved with the goal of pleasing God. This idea is highly relevant for a powerful reason: believers' progression needs to align with a higher spiritual purpose. According to Pastor Susi, acquisition of riches is only valid should it be motivated by faith in God and—this is very important—reverts to the church's benefit, for example, in the form of donations and tithes. Thus, Pastor Susi's promotion of exalted individuality is not predicated on fulfilling worldly selfish and self-centred desires but grounded more broadly in religious devotion and a collective mission: the advancement of Christian churches.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Pastor Susi is a Gitano local pastor leading a church located in a highly deprived and marginalised neighbourhood, who single-handedly gained a global religious following with no previous grounding in the Spanish religious landscape. Despite that Vino Nuevo is doctrinally linked to a USA-based megachurch led by a world-famous pastor, Pastor Susi has reinterpreted and accommodated PG to Gitanos' local context in Carabanchel. In this context, the PG works as a locally embedded religious doctrine predicated on notions of self-improvement and upward mobility. Pastor Susi's self-image as a Gitano apostle comes with a message for his people: the time has come for the Gitanos to reap the secular fruits that God has for them and to reverse their historical misfortune.

Ethnic and class structural inequalities are treated at Vino Nuevo Church as spiritual evils, and therefore can be overcome with spiritual methods. At the Vino Nuevo church, the social and symbolic positions of the secular world are reversed: the Gitanos are not in a subordinate position but constitute the driving force in a congregation where believers are promised they will be blessed with socioeconomic improvement and upward mobility. In so doing, Pastor Susi and his followers attempt to reverse the ethnic and socioeconomic orders that give shape to life in the city.

Vino Nuevo's doctrine resonates strongly—due to its radical opposition—with the broad cultural and collective experiences of marginalisation and disadvantage of Gitano people and other social minorities in Madrid's less-favoured areas. The basis of this religious project led by Pastor Susi lies in the creation of a new symbolic world, a belief system with which to interpret the world, and a collective ritual that incites the transformation of the self. Vino Nuevo's doctrine also emphasises the importance of achieving and sustaining that state of blessing through different faith-based and bodily

practices. Pastor Susi's role in this project is crucial, not only because of his ability to inseminate teachings and ways of seeing the world but also because he and his family have become a close and relatable example that proves to believers that their goals can be achieved. With his continuous trips abroad, perfect outfits, and possession of high-end cars, Pastor Susi and his family embody the aspirations of the middle classes and cosmopolitan elites who are taken as models of success in the imaginaries of the PG.

However, while members of Vino Nuevo Church acknowledge the prominent role of the word 'prosperity' in their religious frameworks, they do not identify with accounts that portray them as believers eager to improve their social standing. For Vino Nuevo, believers' prosperity is primarily conceptualised as a religious mission linked to a broader framework that is predicated on Christians' social leadership and the return of Jesus Christ. At Vino Nuevo, Pastor Susi encourages believers to engage with prosperity ideas by reaching prominent roles in every sphere of society—companies, universities, organisations. Only when Christians rule over the world, Pastor Susi often states, shall Jesus Christ descend to lead them to Heaven. The broader framework of their religious thinking allows Vino Nuevo's believers to portray themselves not as people keen to climb up the social ladder, but as devoted Christians willing to enjoy what God holds for them and eager to contribute to the advancement of the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Within the context of Gitano evangelism, PG represents a fundamental innovation, an essential departure from previous ways of conceptualising Christianity and experiencing religiosity by Gitanos in Spain. Much closer to some Latin American Pentecostal sensibilities, the PG is perceived as a challenge by—and a source of concern for—most Gitano pastors and their congregations. Amongst Spanish Gitanos, the PG is an extremely new phenomenon, for a long time entirely dependent on the energy, determination, and activities of one pastor preaching, in a small church, to some of the

most marginal people in the country: not just Gitanos but also Spanish-speaking immigrants. However, Maldonado Church's model of expansion, based on the creation of disciples, has been reproduced in Spain by Pastor Susi. Since joining the movement, Pastor Susi has given spiritual coverage to three new churches across Spain (El Rey Jesús 2017). While still not a threat to the monopoly of the IEF within the Gitano Pentecostal movement in Madrid and Spain, the rise of the Vino Nuevo churches proves PG is a strong contender in the Spanish evangelical landscape.

CONCLUSION

The spread of Pentecostalism among Gitanos has been part of a more extensive process of Christian religious diversification in Spain and challenges assumptions about the country's Catholic Christian homogeneity (Astor et al. 2017; Griera et al. 2016; Montañés 2015; Pérez-Agote 2010; Pérez-Agote and Santiago 2013). The emergence of the Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia is an historical landmark indicative of the revitalisation of the role of Christianity in the social life of ethnic minorities and marginalised groups in Spain. In today's contemporary Spanish cities, the Gitanos are forming, through their churches and religious practices, particular spaces of alterity where they reshape cultural ideas and embrace new worldviews.

Gitano churches enable groups to integrate key social structures, such as kinship, into new organisational forms that give shape to their collective spiritual experience in urban settings. The dynamic ways in which kinship and church structures are interwoven distinguish the IEF's congregations from other non-Gitano Pentecostal congregations elsewhere. Nevertheless, the prominence of communal religion-based identities and the coalescence of kinship groups in cultos also indicate the emergence of novel and encompassing modes of sociability. Pastors strive to forge an across-the-board sense of community among believers, regardless of kin, class or regional identities. The flourishing of Christian values of fraternity and religiously-based communal patterns of sociability holds important significance within the context of Madrid Gitano life experience, which is historically defined by the importance of kinship.

In this dissertation, I have shown that Gitano pastors occupy a central position as religious and ethnic leaders in the lives and hopes of Spanish Gitano believers in Madrid. Pastors' ways of behaving models itself on the attributes of prestigious Gitano men of

respect, which facilitates the transfer of authority from secular to religious leaders. Yet while older Gitano males receive their authority from (profane) Gitano culture, which therefore confines it to their own kin, elderly Gitano pastors garner their authority from an all-encompassing divine source located in the sacred realm, thus entitling them to rule over pastors from diverse Gitano evangelical families, across the board.

A Distinctively Gitano Way of Organising a Christian Movement

Pentecostal ways of organising have drawn the attention of many scholars (Ripka 2016; Wignall 2016). Robbins (2004) argues that Pentecostalism provides efficient tools to break free from international foreign missions and missionaries and empower locally operated religious institutions. Drawing from numerous international case studies, Robbins concludes that the success of Pentecostalism's institution-building capacity lies in its ability to get across religious ideas strongly related to 'spiritual empowerment, institutional commitment, and religious generosity, which distinguish Pentecostalism from other globalising cultural forms' (Robbins 2004:131). More specifically, Robbins points outs that the emphasis on spiritual inspiration over formal religious education, the extensive use of the lay to serve as voluntary labour and lead evangelisation efforts, and independent self-funding (tithes), go a long way to explaining why Pentecostal religious institutions are created in an effective fashion around the world (Robbins 2004:130–31).

This dissertation has paid particular attention to how the leaders of the Gitano evangelical movement have successfully organised themselves. The IEF has benefited from the institutional ethos characteristic of Pentecostal churches as described above. However, the IEF presents some distinctive elements. By emphasising the institutional aspect of the movement, I aimed to show that Gitanos are appropriating Christianity on their own terms. Gitano values and ideals play an important role as defining elements that set the IEF apart from other Pentecostal churches.

The IEF structure of organisation is a game of keeping the balance. The radical commitment of Gitano leaders to fit cultural ideals—horizontality among men of prestige, rejection of individual authority—into a vertical bureaucratic system of evangelisation inherited from the GEM and Pastor Le Cossec shapes the IEF organisational system. The complexity of the IEF leaders' achievement in this task cannot be emphasised enough.

The key to understanding the logics of the IEF system of governance is in their efforts to counterbalance personal accumulation of power and authority by pastors. Head pastors perceive themselves to have been chosen by God to lead. However, they owe obedience to Responsables de Zona and national leaders, who constitute the upper management structures of the IEF. Responsables de Zona and national leaders put in place schools to train future pastors, decide which head pastor to allocate to cultos, and grant permits to open new churches. Also, they supervise and ensure that the religious message spread by head pastors keeps in line with the IEF's overall doctrine. Pastors and congregation are free to exit the IEF, so the authority of the directive of regional councils is a matter of recognition and thus an ever-precarious source of legitimacy. Furthermore, local Gitano head pastors engage—or at least imagine themselves as engaging—in democratic politics such as voting regarding decision-making processes. As such, the upper management of the IEF must instruct and command authority without alienating head pastors. As a result, the micromanagement of relationships between different leaders of the movement becomes fundamental for the survival of the institution. At a congregation level, the vigilant presence of obreros and the constant rotation of head pastors are the primary mechanisms that prevent accumulation of authority in one individual. Critically, as I have shown in chapter one, these mechanisms place strong pressure on the relationship between religious leaders too.

In chapter two, I showed how Gitano Pentecostal rituals have become a critical medium through which male pastors establish novel ways of structuring the Gitano internal system of hierarchies and status. Pentecostal rituals have an impact on social structures and contribute to blending cultural and religiously-based ways of attributing status among Gitanos. Scholarship on the Gitano Pentecostal movement has emphasised that male Gitano pastors' source of authority replicates and builds upon a secular source of prestige associated with Gitano elders, such as the display of ethnic ideals of knowledge and respect (Gay y Blasco 1999). However, cultos are spaces where a specific form of religious authority predicated on charismatic skills emerges. Charismatic authority ensuing from the leading position of pastors in the religious ritual distinguishes Gitano pastors from other ethnic figures of prestige. However, this charisma is not a form of individual power: against the backdrop of the IEF institutional supervision described above, charisma here is a highly regulated form of religious authority.

Critical Aspects of Life Influenced by the IEF Churches

The impact of Gitano churches on Gitanos' lives cannot be emphasised enough. Gitano pastors have created institutional, ritual and ideological forms that enable Gitano evangelical communities to reconstruct their subjectivity. They provide believers with answers—by refashioning old cultural concepts and ideas, or by introducing radically new ones—to a constellation of urban conditions of existence that have come to define Gitano lives for the last half a century in Spain. These urban conditions include strong assimilation pressures from the state and society at large; unrelated Gitano families living together and interacting daily in the same area; postindustrial socioeconomic decline; generational change; erosion of old traditions and identities; the threats of 'street life' and loss of influence of secular and ethnic figures of authority. By striving to bring all Gitanos together under the umbrella of a transformative Christian religious project, Gitano pastors

have turned evangelical Pentecostal Christianity into a powerful force for change among the Gitanos.

Gitano congregations assemble for ritualised Christian worship daily to celebrate and commemorate the life of Jesus Christ. The persuasive power of La Pequeña Villa's cultos does not only rely on pastors' oratory: its experiential force is a powerful tool that structures and changes the congregation's behaviour. Cultos can be interpreted as spaces in which pastors shape believers' mindsets, worldviews and identities in an attempt to place evangelical beliefs, values and ideals at the centre of believers' lives. This unparalleled influence of Gitano head pastors over the everyday lives of Gitano believers impacts varying life dimensions, such as collective memory and identity, gender and masculinity, and stigma and citizenship.

In chapter three, I showed that collective memory is a salient aspect impacted by the IEF. From a Pentecostal doctrinal standpoint, that Gitano Pentecostal narratives gaze backwards into history is hardly a surprise. Broadly speaking, Pentecostal religious identities across the world are oriented towards the past, given that the movement's self-image is one of leading a Christian restoration that is at once powerful, irrepressible, and unstoppable. Pentecostal believers consider themselves to be modern incarnations of the primitive church described in the New Testament, and to be carriers of that apostolic movement's mission (Hollenwenger 1972; 1997). I looked at the creation of foundational myths of the Gitano evangelical moment, and at how ideas about the past––such as that the Romanies and Gitanos are the Lost Tribes of Israel—are transmitted between generations of pastors. I also broke down the role of the intellectual/elite class of the IEF in advancing these narratives among Gitano believers and examined how these narratives are enacted by a set of nonritual past-oriented remembering practices, such as storytelling. Overall, I argued that the Tribes of Israel narrative is one of the narrative

devices which offer accounts of the past of Gitano people in line with new modalities of ethnic authority embodied by Gitano pastors.

The concept of memory is a salient one in social theory. In sociology and anthropology, the concept is strongly associated with the Durkheimian school of thought (see Halbwachs 1992) and his well-known thesis that societies require continuity and connection with the past to preserve social unity and cohesion. Chief among social theorists for the study of religion and memory stands French sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger. Hervieu-Léger (2000) gives an account and definition of religion as a particular mode of believing or chain of memory, that is, a form of collective memory and imagination based on the sanctity of tradition.

Hervieu-Léger points out that assembly of religion and ethnicity is one modern dimension where the chain is reinvented and rampant secularisation is challenged. This positions ethnic religions and revivals against a backdrop of secularisation, which is understood by Hervieu-Léger as the breakdown of the chain of religious collective memory. In other words, the convergence of the ethnic and the religious is a dual movement that fosters both elements and involves both a process of disintegration and one of reintegrating through reference to the continuity of a line of belief (Hervieu-Léger 2000:162). These processes of reinvention of the chain of continuity in new frameworks is critical to Gitano Pentecostal imagination. The IEF uses the Bible to engender a new understanding of their past, which relates to the idea of a collective reunion for Gitano and Roma believers in the future. In so doing they reshape the consciousness of Roma people and advance panethnic views. Some believers pose that such a reunion will happen in an earthly place (claiming for themselves a new fatherland in Israel), and they all firmly believe the reunion will eventually happen in Heaven.

In chapter four, I showed that gender is another influential everyday phenomenon shaped by religious beliefs among Gitano believers. The IEF churches are male dominated both in ideology and organisation, and cultos become a place where Pastors teach a doctrine of gender that relies heavily upon traditional values. Pastors generate action-oriented religious messages, by means of which they instil ideological conceptions and emphasise gendered aspects of conversion, which play a significant role in securing male dominance in the congregation and the household, as well as in reshaping men's authority within families.

Gitano women are encouraged to support their husband's endeavours, to provide extensive care for him and the whole family unit, and to submit to his decisions in and out of the church, for men are gifted by God with more excellent moral and decision-making capacities. Since complying with the IEF's doctrine is a way to achieve sanctity, following pastors' teachings is also understood as a way to honour God. Accordingly, failing to comply with these ideals means disobeying God. Maintaining family unity and cohesion is portrayed as women's God-given role on the earth, and preserving the family against demonic attack that attempts to break that sacred union between man and wife is a religious duty.

Instilling ideals of mutual responsibility, interdependence and harmonious relationships between spouses is central to pastoral work. Gitano pastors seek to organise gender relationships and to reeducate spouses in such a way that the household becomes a haven of peace, and in-family hostilities and conflicts are prevented. By regulating gender interactions within marital structures and keeping believers on the narrow path to salvation and happiness through the fulfilment of gender roles within Gitano households, family is portrayed as a godly route to happiness. Within marriage, believers argue, men

and women complement each other, as their roles fit together and create a balance that is critical to the happiness of every member of the family.

Believers draw a meaningful opposition between Gitano believers' masculinity (caring, loving, homely, family-oriented and committed to evangelical high moral standards) and the negative cultural models of manhood that they claim nonbelievers embody and embrace. In their sermons pastors often depict gender-related violence or men's unfaithfulness as characteristic of nonevangelical marriages, portraying these behaviours as direct consequences of people's inability to follow biblical principles and build up proper Christian households. Gitano manhood's redemptive makeover, in tandem with miraculous healings, is the most cited theme of radical God-prompted transformation in born-again conversion narratives. The masculine ideals put forth by evangelicals are very appealing to Gitano women who often look within church congregations to find husbands. As a result, young Gitano men go to church in large numbers, which increases the size of Gitano congregations.

Failure to live up to expectations of sainthood is also coterminous with Gitano Christian life, and not even pastors are expected to fully reach the status of saints. However, it is critical to showcase constant commitment to mending one's ways. The religious idioms of sin and redemption capture well these coextensive falls and efforts to pursue sanctification that comprise the core of the politics of Gitano marriages and gender.

In chapter five, I showed that Gitano believers face stigma and reclaim citizenship through religious conversion. Challenging social and academic assumptions about the victimhood and lack of agency among Roma people, I have shown how Gitanos use Christianity to reconstruct their subjectivity, face the consequences of discrimination, and

refashion their sense of worth in contemporary Spanish society. In so doing, I have placed agency at the core of sociological and anthropological thinking.

Becoming a member of the church hinges on the formation of a powerful self-image grounded in a robust sense of religious virtue. Believers are encouraged to live 'in the world' and to distance themselves from the negative behaviours, symbols, and practices that payos associate with Gitanos. Conforming to conduct and practices that overlap with payo expectations and definitions of what a good neighbour and citizen looks and acts like is viewed as crucial to asserting their worthiness for inclusion in the congregational body and becoming a fully-fledged member of the community. Converted Gitanos distinguish themselves from stereotypical images of Gitanos by showcasing and making a strong effort to perform 'virtuous' practices on the basis of which they create a positive image of converted Gitanos as being good neighbours. The recreation of an identity in terms of positive citizenship has become a powerful evangelical tool with the help of which believers create a good image of the church and attract other Gitanos to evangelical churches in Villaverde. Christian-oriented notions of good citizenship also encourage believers to assert a sense of distinction vis-à-vis nonbelieving Gitanos and to contest negative stereotypes against Gitanos within the intimate and communitarian framework of the church.

Growing Competition: a Peek into the Diversity of Pentecostalism Among Gitanos

One of the cornerstones of the IEF is its commitment to instilling into Gitano church leaders the duty of preserving foundational values of their movement, such as Gitano autonomy and unity vis-à-vis non-Gitano churches. As the first generation of leaders write in their collection of memories about the birth of the movement, the IEF's unity was achieved despite disputes about how to organise the movement and the existence of open internal divisions. The movement faced several crises as inner divisions and schisms

threatened to split the Gitano churches. Thus, Gitano religious unity was the product of a contingent balance of power within the church.

Driven by the surge in Latin American Christian immigrants to Spain, in cities such as Madrid these in-house church tensions are rearranging the current Gitano religious landscape. The case of Vino Nuevo Church is paradigmatic in this regard. Vino Nuevo believers follow the Prosperity Gospel teachings and feel part of a larger global Christian movement fated to change Gitano self-perception and socioeconomic aspirations. They understand the PG doctrine as a relevant message for Gitano people and the spread of this belief-system among some Gitano pastors as indicative of a process of generational change. Also, Vino Nuevo leader and believers take issue with the IEF Presbyterian polity (or governance) and the idea that a pastor should be accountable to the IEF national leaders and elders of the movement.

Vino Nuevo believers embrace certain elements of the American Dream (freedom, financial improvement, self-made individuals) and shy away from the ethnoreligious identities that shape the organisation and ideals of the IEF. This development posed several problems for my initial approach to the Gitano Pentecostal movement, which took the Gitano social group and its boundaries as a starting point for analysis. However, it seems that, within the context of Spanish multiculturalism, some Gitano believers are turning away from essences and focusing instead on how identities might be used and negotiated. In such conditions, the Christian project among Gitanos has become less about stable, static, and bounded people, and more about ethnic openness and upward mobility. Likewise the emergence of Vino Nuevo forces us to rethink ethnicity itself as a categorical approach focused on relatively static, bounded, and discrete cultures, and to consider instead more dynamic approaches that recognise and theorise the processes of cultural diversification in religious denominations and traditions.

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