

Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Ritual Revitalisation after Socialism

Community, Personhood, and Conversion among Roma in a Transylvanian Village

László Fosztó



LIT



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Cover Photo: Roma dressed in folk costumes during a Calvinist confirmation ceremony (2004) (Photo: László Fosztó).

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Contents

	List of Illustrations	vii
	Preface by Michael Stewart	ix
	Acknowledgements	xiii
1	**Introduction**	**1**
	Eastern European Communities: Peasants, Identities, and the Transition	4
	Roma: Persistence, Personhood, and the Underclass	16
2	**The Setting: Religious and Ethnic Divisions in Romania**	**43**
	A Religious History of Romania	44
	The Ethnographic Setting	59
	The Village	62
3	**Rituals in the Village: Strengthening Local Community**	**73**
	Baptism: Good *Kirve*	74
	Confirmation: Masking Ethnic Differences	88
	Burial: Rural Civility	95
	Conclusion	104
4	**Rituals of Personhood: Oath-Taking and the Maintenance of the Moral Self**	**107**
	The Weight of Words	108
	A Life-Crisis Ritual: The Oath	110
	Structures of the Oath	112
	Conclusion	119
5	**Conversions: Narratives, Sincere Hearts, and Other Signs**	**121**
	Conversion Narratives: Symbolic Transformation of the Person	122
	Reluctant Convert: Caught in Family Ties	128
	Refusal: John 3:4-7 in a Romungro Settlement	132

	Sincerity, the Heart, and Other Tangible Signs	136
	Brotherhood: A New Form of Spiritual Kinship	142
	Conclusion	144
6	**Revitalisations: Spirit in Heart, Nation in Village**	**147**
	The Holy Spirit as a Source of Mobilisation	148
	The Destiny Conference	149
	Testimony with Reference to Genesis 9:20-25	153
	Village Days	158
	Conclusion	163
7	**Media Events: Transformation of the Postsocialist Public Sphere**	**165**
	The Gypsy Kings	167
	Media Events	171
	Reflections	179
8	**Conclusion**	**183**
	Bibliography	189
	Appendix: Transcripts of Narratives	219
	Index	225

List of Illustrations

Figures

3.1 The positions of godparents projected onto a kinship diagram 86
5.1 Distribution of aid among Pentecostal converts shown on a kinship diagram 143
1 Matrix showing godparent relationships among nine families in Gánás 223
2 Graphic representation of the matrix shown in Fig. 1 223

Map

1 The research area xv

Plates

1 Hungarian godmothers lined up before leaving for baptism 82
2 Roma *kirve* (mother and godmothers) carrying a child to church for baptism 83
3 A dance with the newly baptised baby at a Roma celebration 85
4 A Roma girl in Hungarian costume before her confirmation examination 91
5 Newly confirmed girls after taking their first communion 92
6 Newly confirmed girls ready for their confirmation party, 2004 93
7 Confirmation souvenir from the mid-1980s (whole confirmation cohort) 93
8 Confirmation souvenir from the mid-1980s, Roma youths only 94
9 Group photograph for confirmation souvenir card, 2004 94
10 Roma men playing cards during a funeral wake 101
11 Roma converts and an uncoverted man debating interpretations of the Bible 133
12 Pentecostal brothers singing 141
13 Adult baptism. Reproduced from a photograph kept as a memory card by the convert 142
14 The Destiny Conference, a Pentecostal event held in Cluj in 2004 152
15 A Pentecostal religious service held in a private home 154
16 Cooking a traditional meal (Hun: *juhtokány*) for Gánási Village Days 160
17 Horses and buffalo on parade during Gánási Village Days 161

(Plates 7, 8 and 13 are reproduced memory cards kept by local Roma families; all other photographs taken by László Fosztó, 2003-2004)

Preface

Readers of this book hold in their hands a truly important historical document in the development and spread of anthropological reasoning. This is the first anthropological text on the Romany populations of eastern Europe ever produced by an eastern European anthropologist, and it is to be hoped that its publication marks the beginning of a far deeper engagement of local ethnographers and anthropologists with the most important, as well as the most oppressed, minority of this region. The Roma represent the largest single minority in this part of the world, and the cradle of the Romany peoples and the Romany language lies there as well. Yet until the publication of this book, the extraordinary social, cultural, and linguistic diversity to be found in Roma communities has failed to draw in an ethnographer committed to long-term research.

At the very moment of this book's publication there are clear political reasons to welcome Laszló Fosztó's work. In the years since 1989 the position of the Romany populations in eastern Europe has been altered profoundly. For an important and much ignored fraction of these people, the introduction of freer markets has provided an opportunity for the exercise of entrepreneurial talents that were repressed under socialism. This lucky minority has achieved significant enrichment. At the same time, a large part of the Romany people has entered long-term immiseration and radical social exclusion, rendering them either totally dependent on the local welfare state (where one exists) or hostage to the local or international labour black market. Dependency, illegality, and poverty are a heady combination, and as the first decade of the second millennium draws to a close, a radicalisation of anti-Gypsy politics is taking place across the region. In Romania, the serendipitous homonym of Român (the indigenous term for Romanians) and Rom/a, combined with the mass migration of all Romanians (Roma included), has led to a paranoid fear on the part of many Romanians that all foreigners think they are Gypsies. Hatred of the Roma is fed in part by ignorance, and mythologies of savagery easily fill the void of knowledge.

Works such as Fosztó's, which give a rich and realistic picture of daily life in just one Romany community, provide the intellectual matter for anyone who wishes to challenge the absurd stereotyping and homogenising that these basically racist discourses propagate. This powerful study of the struggles and conflicts the Gánás Roma go through as they, alongside millions of other eastern Europeans, seek to make sense of their lives in the new terms offered by millenarian Protestantism will demonstrate to anyone who takes the care to stay with Fosztó's story the profound and shared humanity of these subjects.

But there are also purely academic reasons to welcome this work. Twenty years ago the discipline of anthropology, particularly the attempt to link studies of micro-communities or micro-social processes with large-scale generalisation about the nature of humanity, was largely absent in the socialist bloc. The creation and bedding in of an ethnographic tradition focused resolutely on the present and not on the study of national traditions can only, in this part of the world, occur through and across the field of Romany studies. It is to my mind inconceivable that a truly non-nationalist, globally oriented but locally rooted anthropology could come into being while avoiding the single most challenging social and economic problem—the poverty of millions of Roma—as well as the most problematic socio-cultural differences of the region.

Fosztó is a representative of the first generation of young ethnographers who have taken the bit between their teeth and begun to heave the cart of traditional ethnography (with all its sturdy and well-built apparatus and much of its still fresh produce) around to face the modern world. Fosztó is, moreover, ideally suited to this task. His intellectual trajectory has provided him with intellectual influences from one of the few eastern European towns where an indigenous anthropological school came into being in the 1980s (Miercurea Ciuc in the eastern Carpathians, or Szeklerland), through Csilla Könczei's hands in the Hungarian section of Ethnology in Cluj, and on through Central European University to what is in some senses the Mecca of postsocialist anthropology, Chris Hann's department at the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology. It is a testament to Fosztó's faithfulness to his roots and his learning that the attentive reader will find the traces of each of these sites of scholarship in his text.

In this book you will find both a detailed, highly plausible, and convincing account of the religious experiences of a community of poor Romanian citizens in the Transylvanian hills and a novel form of ethnography of Roma. For too long anthropologists who have worked with Romany peoples have been content to provide what purport to be accounts of the 'culture in the whole'. Inspired by what now looks like a naïve Malinowskianism, authors from Judith Okely to myself struggled to present a more or less coherent socio-cultural system in and through our analyses. Inspired in part by one of his teachers at an early CEU summer school, Alaina Lemon, who was the first anthropologist of Roma to break from this holistic orientation and aim to confront and account for diversity and variation in historical terms, Fosztó has produced a work that will interest social anthropologists and sociologists who have no prior or other interest in Romany peoples.

And this, in a sense, is the true contribution of this work to intellectual history. Fosztó demonstrates that the study of a Romany community need

not produce a study of purely ethnographic interest to those interested in or working on Roma – and therefore that the study of these populations is not an intellectual dead end for the adolescent discipline of anthropology in the region. At the same time he shows how the general social processes characteristic of the region and indeed the whole postsocialist space find particular expression in this historically distinct community. I hope that in this way he demonstrates to sceptics why the study of Roma citizens of these states speaks to issues far beyond those exclusive to their own community.

Michael Stewart
University College London

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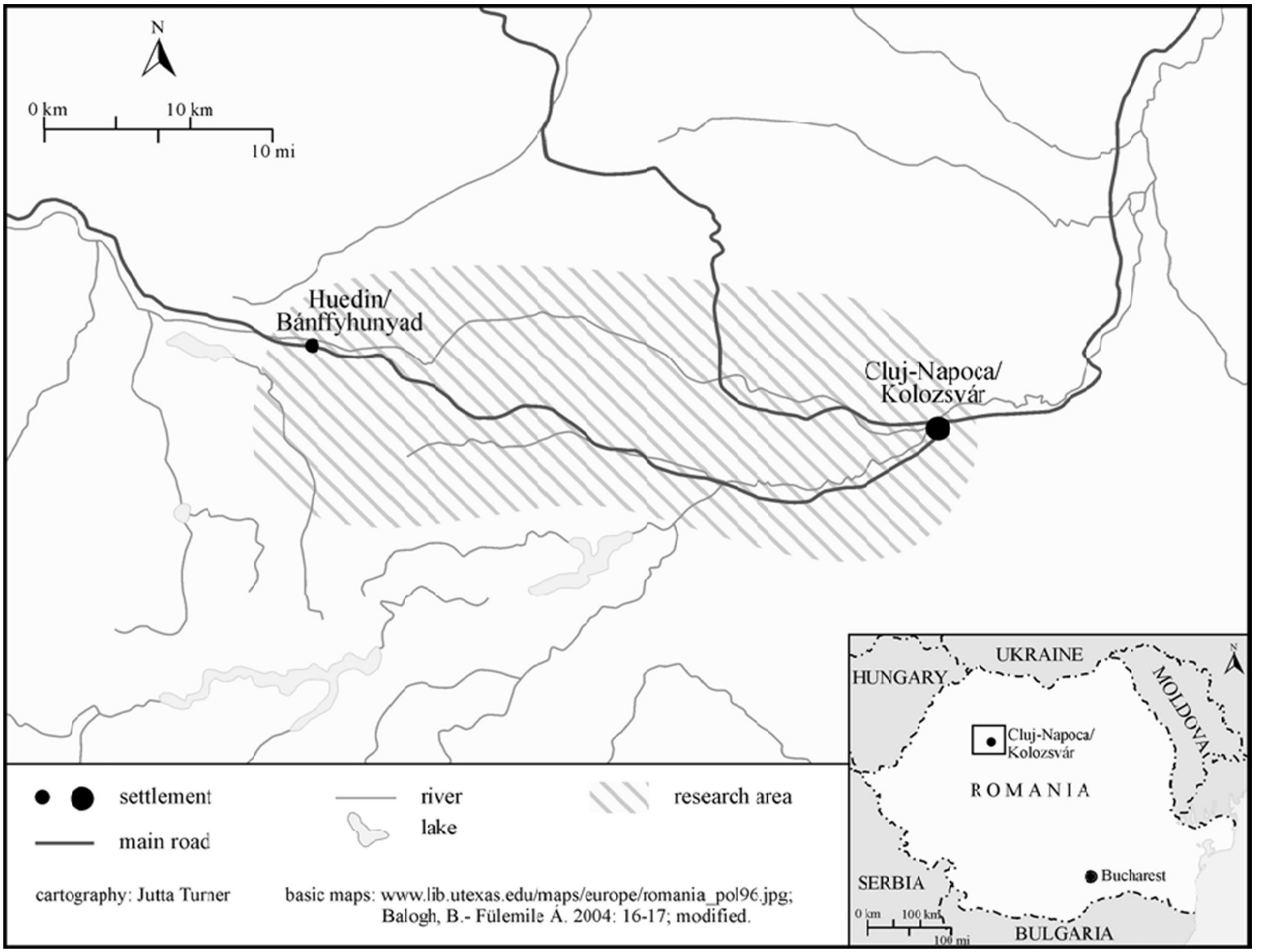
Bernard Streck, at the Institute for Ethnology at Leipzig University, invited me to make a presentation at the institute's colloquium during the winter of 2005. Other members of the Leipzig group, particularly Johannes Ries and Fabian Jacobs, exchanged ideas and references related to our common interests. Michael Stewart played a crucial role in setting me on this project and continued to keep an eye on my work even from a distance. Mihály Sárkány always gave inspiring advice and commented on a draft of the introduction. With friends such as Csilla Könczei and Viorel-Marian Anăstăsoaie, I benefited from discussions of personal as well as scientific problems, even if we sometimes disagreed.

During my fieldwork, Tekla Tötszegi provided me with important data about the village where I lived much of the time. Ileana Lăcătuş introduced

me to the Romani language and also taught me much about the Roma. I was hosted by a Roma family whom I cannot name here. They shared with me their house and their lives. Other Roma in the Cluj region were also open and joyful company in spite of their everyday hardships. I thank them all anonymously.

The list of those who contributed to the development of the ideas expressed in this book is long. Probably not everyone will agree with my interpretations. I am grateful to the professors in what were then the departments of Hungarian Language and Culture and Hungarian Literary Science at Babeş-Bolyai University: Éva Cs. Gyímesi, Klára Gazda, Vilmos Tánczos, Csilla Könczei, Vilmos Keszeg, Sándor N. Szilágyi, János Péntek, and Ferenc Pozsony. I also thank the members of the Workshop for Anthropology of Communication in Miercurea Ciuc/Csíkszereda, especially Zoltán Biró A. and Sándor Oláh, for what they taught me as an undergraduate student. My colleagues at my current workplace, the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, helped me in various ways to finalise this book during a difficult period. I am grateful to them.

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Map 1. The research area.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Anyone who travels in Romania will notice two of the most common sights of the postsocialist landscape: newly erected church buildings in cities and villages and monasteries under construction in the countryside. Between 1990 and 2004, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the largest denomination in the country, built some 2,000 new places of worship, and in 2004 an additional 1,000 were on their way to being completed (Muntean 2005: 89). A recent edition of a guide to Romanian Orthodox monasteries described 486 cloistered institutions. Many of these were founded after the fall of the communist regime (M. Vasile 2003). The monasteries across the country, offering lodging and other services, constitute a circuit for pilgrims as well as for tourists. The institutional expansion of the Orthodox Church has also been considerable. Twelve new eparchies have been created or re-established, each endowed with buildings (some of which formerly belonged to the Romanian Communist Party) and land (Andreescu 2003: 45). Thirteen new theological faculties have been opened in addition to the two existing, older institutes and the 38 existing seminaries. The number of students undergoing pastoral training in these institutions had reached 12,444 by 2003 (Andreescu 2003: 44). Other denominations have undergone parallel, although in most cases less spectacular, growth.

This institutional expansion of religion has been paralleled by a rise in religious feeling among ordinary Romanians. Religiosity is measured in sociological surveys according to declared belief and frequency of religious practices. People who are dissatisfied with traditional forms of religious practice turn to new forms of religious expression. The number of Romanians who have converted to some form of evangelical Christianity or who have joined New Age movements has increased.

Today Romania ranks as one of the most religious countries in Europe, comparable to Malta, Ireland, and Poland. This evaluation is based

on sociological indicators of religious practices and declared beliefs.[1] Church attendance is relatively high: 25.0 per cent of the total population attends church once a week or more, and 21.6 per cent attends monthly. Individual prayer outside of religious services is frequent; 54.7 per cent of the total population prays every day. The overwhelming majority considers religious services accompanying life-cycle rituals to be important. Baptism is considered important by 97.6 per cent of the total population, religious marriage by 98.3 per cent, and religious funerals by 97.9 per cent. Nearly all Romanians (96.3 per cent) declare that they believe in God, and somewhat smaller proportions say they believe in heaven (75.1 per cent) and hell (71.4 per cent) (see also Voicu and Voicu 2002; Gheorghiu 2003; Halman, Luijkx, and Zundert 2005: 60–73).

Some other aspects of this religious revival are less visible to an outsider than are new church buildings. Religious activities, particularly participation in rituals, create and maintain communities, social networks, and public spheres. Religion is a field for the construction of social relations and a shared vision of the world, as well as the delimitation of groups. My aim in this book is to contribute to an understanding of the increased religious activity in Romania from this perspective. I address the following questions: What role does religion play in people's everyday lives? How do people construct social relations through religion in Romania today? How should intensification and differentiation of religious activities be understood? What are the implications of this heightened salience of religiosity for social integration, tolerance, and civility in postsocialist Romania? How can differences in religious choices be explained with regard to the changing social positions of individuals and groups in postsocialist Romania?

At the most general level, I am concerned with the role of religion in the public sphere, particularly in the construction of social divisions in postsocialist Romania. Although religious belonging seems to be important in maintaining social boundaries, sociological indicators show a relative uniformity of religiosity across ethnic and religious groups.[2] Old and newly emerging pluralisms have increasingly been publicly acknowledged since the fall of communism, which had enforced uniformity in the public sphere and promoted an ideology of egalitarianism. Today there is growing public

[1] Religiosity was surveyed cross-nationally in European countries in the successive waves of the European Value Study. The third, most recent wave (1999–2000) covered 33 countries (see www.europeanvalues.nl/).

[2] Tomka (2000) provides a comparative analysis directed towards the similarities between attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to religion and churches among Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania. Transylvanian Hungarians differ significantly from Hungarians in Hungary in this respect (Tomka 2000: 50–52).

awareness of 'cultural' – in most cases equated with ethnic and religious – differences. Socio-economic inequalities have also widened in the postsocialist period, but these trends receive less public attention. By examining both of these dimensions through an ethnographic study, I address the challenges faced by persons who attempt to define their places in the new order and express their identities in the context of broader socio-economic and political transformations. I am concerned with the way religious ideas and rituals contribute to the creation, maintenance, and transformation of people's sense of belonging and how these practices shape people's social relationships. I inquire, on the one hand, into the ways religious ideas and practices create and maintain social solidarity and integration and, on the other, into the ways the same religious practices reproduce separation and exclusion.

The most apparent aspect of religious affiliation in Transylvania is its association with ethno-national divisions. Although this relationship has its historical roots, my main focus is on the present role of religious practices in processes of identification and social differentiation. In this book I adopt the perspective of the ethnography of communicative practices. This approach is broader than the 'ethnography of speaking' proposed by Dell Hymes and John Gumperz (Gumperz and Hymes 1964, 1972). In addition to the analysis of direct speech events, it includes analysis of practices of 'indirect communication' (Hendry and Watson 2001), communication through ritual (Rappaport 1999), and communication through other media, as well as exchanges that are not primarily or exclusively communicative.

I view ethno-national and religious categories and the practices associated with them as idioms through which persons understand, express, and enact belonging and solidarity. Religious rituals and practices are important but not exclusive resources for creating and maintaining social boundaries and images of autonomous social space. Understanding the rules of symbolic exchanges and practices that maintain connectedness is an important task of my analysis. I use the broader socio-economic process transpiring in present-day Romania not only as a stage or frame for my analysis but also as an integral part of the interpretation. Ideas and material realities interact in the social world of local communities.

The main field site for my study was a village I refer to pseudonymously as Gánás. It lies in Transylvania, a religiously plural and multi-ethnic area. I focus on a Gypsy group called the Romungre (sing. Romungro) that lives in the rural area of which Gánás is a part and in the nearby city of Cluj-Napoca.[3] The Romungre are situated at the intersection of many crosscutting

[3] By the name 'Romungre' these people distinguish themselves from other Roma groups. They also use the Hungarian term *magyarcigány* (Hungarian Gypsy) as an equivalent. In most

processes of identification and differentiation. I was hosted in the village by a Roma family that guided me through the social world of the village, which was inhabited primarily by Hungarians (Magyars). In its immediate vicinity were purely Romanian villages, whereas the centre of the area, Cluj-Napoca, has attracted attention because after the fall of the communism it became the site of strong nationalist sentiments and ethnic tensions between Romanians and Hungarians. In the rural settlements, local Romanians, Roma, and Hungarians are acutely aware of socio-cultural divisions, but peaceful coexistence is the norm. In later chapters I describe and interpret the conditions of this coexistence in the context of the postsocialist order. I also address the problem of religious change through a discussion and analysis of the recent conversion of local Roma to Pentecostalism. Although I discuss the relationship of villagers to the Romanian Orthodox Church, I aim chiefly to contribute to the anthropological analysis of the 'practical religion' of two versions of Protestantism, Calvinist and Pentecostal, in contemporary Romania.

In this study I draw on three main areas of anthropological literature. The first is the literature that has emerged since the 1970s on Eastern Europe as a region and on Romania as a part of it – especially the literature pertinent to understanding and theorising socialist society, the 'transition', and postsocialist conditions. The second is research on the various groups labelled Roma or Gypsies, and the third is concerned with anthropological work on religion, ritual, and religious change (especially conversion). Methodologically my analytical endeavour is focused on the ethnography of communicative practices, and so I explore the relationship between ritual communication and the public sphere. Ultimately, I address the broader theoretical context and ongoing debates in other social sciences from the perspective of the anthropology of the communicative practices.

Eastern European Communities: Peasants, Identities, and the Transition

Explaining the division between 'developed' and 'backward' parts of Europe in terms of cultural and civilisational differences has a long intellectual history and probably some future, too. The division of Europe into 'East' and 'West' is relatively recent, and as Larry Wolff (1994) has argued, it was not until the eighteenth century that it replaced the older division between 'South' and 'North'. Historians of ideas disagree about the origins and long-term development of 'Eastern Europe' as a concept and its proper place

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everyday contexts the simple name 'Roma' is used. I use this term both in my analysis and to indicate the people's own perspective, reserving the term 'Gypsy' to indicate the outsider's view.

among other ideas of symbolic geography such as Mitteleuropa and the Balkans. Anthropologists are more likely to concur with social historians who maintain that Eastern Europe is a region with distinctive socio-economic characteristics (see Wolf 2001). Local ethnographers and Western anthropologists share this consensus, but they diverge over how best to explain the commonalities of the region. Whereas local ethnographers tend to emphasise the traditionalism and local rootedness of the societies and cultures of the region, many scholars who have approached the region from abroad have noted the political and economic processes that have reproduced the marginality of the region as a whole and maintain its peripheral integration into the larger socio-economic system.[4] Although the relationship between these approaches is not unproblematic, I believe they are complementary rather than contradictory. Both allude to the same historical-political context, but from different angles. The macro-political marginality of the region observed from an outside perspective parallels the emphasis on the infra-politics of 'resistant' traditional cultures as seen by their local interpreters.

Western-trained anthropologists had barely initiated systematic research in the region before World War II. The inception of intensive research coincided with a period in which East European states developed distinctive forms of socialism in the 1970s. It is understandable that the anthropology of Eastern Europe became synonymous with the anthropology of socialism and, more recently, with the anthropology of 'transition' and postsocialism.[5] Although local scholars produced a valuable, older literature on the region published in Western languages (see, for example, Fél and Hofer 1969; Stahl 1980),[6] Eastern Europe was 'discovered' by Western academe when scholars came to study the different versions of socialism extant in the area. The Cold War and related difficulties of conducting fieldwork in the Soviet Union proper turned researchers' attention to satellite states in Eastern Europe.

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[4] A proper discussion of the way the concepts of rootedness and traditionalism are defined in Eastern European ethnographies would compose a separate study. There is no canonical definition of 'tradition', and the concept is essentially contested, although it remains largely under-theorised. Vaguely defined, it encompasses all areas of knowledge transmitted outside of official institutions, most typically among the rural population (peasants). Hence 'tradition' may refer to beliefs, oral traditions, customs, and traditional crafts (see Hofer 1968).

[5] My account of this growing literature is restricted mainly to Romania, with some references to the region and an outlook onto Europe. Nevertheless, it makes sense to enlarge the comparative scope of social processes triggered by socialism and postsocialism in the broader region (see Hann 1993b, 2002b).

[6] These works, although divergent in their theoretical approaches, dwell upon the concept of 'tradition'.

By the 1970s, 'individualization of the socialist regimes' (Wolfe 2000: 203) provided Western anthropologists with a number of countries relatively open to receiving scholars interested in 'actually existing socialism' (Bahro 1978). Romania in this period was an attractive and relatively open country.[7] Western, mainly American anthropologists started fieldwork in Romania during this decade: Katherine Verdery in the early seventies (see Verdery 1996c: 5–8), and John W. Cole and his students in the mid-seventies.[8] Gail Kligman first carried out fieldwork in 1975–1976. Monographs began to be published in the next decade (Kligman 1981, 1988; Verdery 1983; Sampson 1984) and continued to appear after 1990 (Verdery 1991a; Kideckel 1993). Other East European countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria also hosted Western anthropologists. Their results began to be published during the same period (Hann 1980, 1985; Nagengast 1982; Pine and Bogdanowicz 1982; Bell 1984) and continued afterwards (Nagengast 1991; Lampland 1995; Stewart 1997; Creed 1998). It would be wrong to underestimate the topical, theoretical, and methodological diversity of these works, but some degree of commonality exists in their approaches. This is particularly evident when these exogenous studies are compared with the bulk of local ethnographies and folklore research from the same period. I refer to the work of local researchers later, but first I consider some of the traits that unified the way the region was viewed from outside.

Reviews of the anthropology of Eastern Europe (Halpern and Kideckel 1983; Wolfe 2000) stress the importance of the methodology of 'community studies'. Such studies are based on year-long fieldwork, usually carried out in a single rural community, with close attention paid to peasant socio-economic organisation. These local conditions are then interpreted through the frame of the region as a whole. This focus on rural communities was understandable, because the majority of the population lived under rural conditions. The 'rurality' of Eastern Europe had been explained historically (see Chirot 1976, 1989) by the region's peripheral political and economic position, and it was also plausible to interpret the present within this frame. Halpern and Kideckel (1983: 379) observed that the post–World War II history of these states was marked by an emerging similarity of new socialist institutions. The awareness of these structural similarities formed a basis for analyses written by anthropologists who shared a relatively common theoretical background, although some of the studies also revealed considerable

[7] This openness had strict limits, however: continuous surveillance by authorities and the secret police and an official prohibition against hosting foreigners in private homes (see the introduction in Verdery 1996c).

[8] At least 20 American graduate students began work in Romania in the 1970s (see Cole 2004: 25).

variability. Commenting on the Romanian case, Vintila Mihailescu (2003: 213) criticised this 'institutional essentialist' view for its overemphasis on the socialist state as the main actor and its reduced sensitivity to existing diversity *within* Romanian society. Some comparative analyses also revealed important differences *between* socialist regimes or between socialist and non-socialist states outside Eastern Europe.[9]

John W. Cole is one influential representative of the senior generation. Members of his Romanian Research Group made significant contributions to the analysis of Romanian society over the years, and therefore I consider his approach as an example.[10] Cole's theoretical approach was very different from those of local ethnographers, but he also criticised much of pre-existing Western anthropology for its tendency to juxtapose timeless 'traditional cultures' and contemporary external influences promoting 'modernisation' (see Cole 1977: 357–358). His version of an 'Anglophone anthropology of Europe' was a critical political-economic analysis of the Old Continent.[11] Inspired by world systems theory, he held that it was misleading to suppose that 'primitive' or 'peasant' communities had survived into the present and were only then undergoing modernisation. In most cases the communities had been integrated for centuries into large-scale political and economic systems as 'subject peoples', and their social organisation bore the stamp of subjugation. Cole argued that the particularities of the regions on the margins of Europe should be understood by analyzing their incorporation into the hinterlands of industrial states, rather than by attributing underdevelopment and poverty to some aspect of their conservative traditions. He continued:

> This perspective necessarily calls into question the concept of tradition. It rejects the assumption that social and cultural patterns, once laid down, will persist tenaciously and questions research based on this assumption. Instead, it insists on knowing what produces social processes and what acts to maintain or change them. In this view the concept of tradition and the attribution of the persistence of tradition

[9] For an analysis of the differences between the socialist regimes of Hungary and Poland, see Hann (1987: 145–149). For a retrospective evaluation of the Hungarian and Turkish paths of state-driven modernisation and subsequent 'transition' to the market economy, see Hann (1995).

[10] Members of the Romanian Research Group (Sam Beck, David Kideckel, Marilyn McArthur, Steven Randall, and Steven Sampson) were PhD students at the University of Massachusetts during the 1970s.

[11] Cole referred to the whole of Europe as he carried out collaborative research in Italy together with Eric R. Wolf (Cole and Wolf 1974) and in Romania with his students (Cole 1984).

> to a peasant ethos of conservatism is a substitute for analysis (Cole 1977: 364).

Theoretical and methodological variations existed even among Cole's most immediate collaborators, but even researchers other than his students used his approach with a great degree of consistency.[12] Members of his Romanian Research Group more or less adopted this approach. They were broadly interested in socio-economic processes prompted by the socialist state, on the one hand, and ethnic relations in Transylvania, on the other.

Cole's approach proposed that social identity came about as a product of state-building. Research into this problem in a historically multi-ethnic, religiously plural region subject to rapid socio-economic change posed considerable challenges in the 1970s. Ethnic divisions and tensions created resistance to the homogenising efforts of socialism. Beyond the new institutional arrangement of planned national integration, the socialist state had to come to terms politically with the existence of pre-existing social identities. Analytically these identities needed explanation as the products either of earlier state-building endeavours or of even earlier institutional processes such as the establishment of churches (Beck and McArthur 1981: 42). In a theoretical discussion of identity formation, Cole distinguished between three periods of state-building in the region: first, the imperial age, when the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires maintained multi-ethnic states as part of their mode of surplus extraction; second, the neo-colonial period of capitalist expansion, with its increasing ethnic tensions and nation-state creation; and third, the state-building attempts of the socialist system. He concluded that although 'ethnic complexity has been reduced it has by no means been eliminated. Even today, attempts to build socialism in Southeastern Europe are hindered by ethnic complexities inherited from the imperial period further complicated by ethnic antagonisms introduced under neo-colonialism' (Cole 1981: 132). Indeed, after the turbulent changes of the early people's democracy in Romania, it was difficult to foresee how the socialist state would be able to integrate members of diverse ethnic groups into a new, common identity as national citizens. Tensions emerging from persistent social identities were highly political, and issues of ethnicity,

[12] One of Cole's students, Steven Sampson, for example, proposed a 'vertical slice approach' as opposed to the usual 'concentric circle' approach, which placed the unit of study within broadening spheres such as the household, village, region, nation, and world system. Sampson singled out one discrete social institution, socialist planning, that ran throughout these levels (see Sampson 1984: 10–13).

forced assimilation, and even 'ethnocide' were debated not only by the parties directly involved but also by academics.[13]

Katherine Verdery's research during the same period was informed by a similar theoretical stance. She proposed a longitudinal investigation of socio-economic and political conditions in order to frame ethnic relations in a Transylvanian village (Verdery 1983). In tracing three centuries of change in political, economic, and ethnic relations, she used secondary sources, statistical evidence, archival materials, and, as her study moved closer to the present, life-history interviews. The time span of the study did not encompass the changes created by socialist policies.[14] In a later book, published after the fall of the regime (Verdery 1991a), she addressed the changes caused by socialism from a different perspective. Inspired by works of dissident intellectuals from Romania and Hungary, she provided an apt theoretical analysis of the production of national ideology by intellectuals and built up a general theory of socialism as a particular socio-economic and political regime (see also Verdery 1991b).[15] Her 'synthetic model' of socialism remains influential in spite of inadequacies revealed by postsocialist developments (see her reappraisal in Verdery et al. 2005: 7).

Verdery's model of socialism was exceptional for its theoretical scope. The main focus of the community studies paradigm as used by other anthropologists was on the local effects and political implications of socio-economic transformations. The socialist transformation of agriculture – collectivisation – was among the most studied processes from the beginning of anthropological studies of socialism in the region.[16] Researchers disagreed about the harms and benefits collectivisation brought to the countryside. While some argued that collectivisation caused the atomisation of the peasantry (Rév 1987; Kideckel 1993), others emphasised its beneficial effects in improving rural living conditions and 'domesticating' the socialist regime (Hann 1980; Creed 1998). The diversity of local experiences within and between countries made generalisations suspect. More recently, Verdery, in collaboration with local historians and local and foreign anthropologists,

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[13] See the exchange in *Current Anthropology* between the Hungarian American anthropologist Michael Sozan and the group led by John Cole based at the University of Massachusetts (Sozan 1977, 1979; Romanian Research Group 1979).

[14] Referring to Romanian policies on ethnic collectivities and comparing the cases of Germans and Hungarians, Verdery argued that there was no uniformity to the effects of socialism on different ethnic groups (Verdery 1985: 80). In her subsequent model of socialism she presented emerging ethnic tensions under the conditions of economic shortage and bureaucratic competition for resources in late socialist Romania (Verdery 1993).

[15] For a critique, see Hann (1994).

[16] See the works of Peter Bell (1984), Chris Hann (1980, 1985), and Martha Lampland (1995) for Hungary, David Kideckel (1993) for Romania, and Gerald Creed (1998) for Bulgaria.

conducted a research project investigating the diverse processes of collectivisation throughout Romania (the first results were published in Dobrincu and Iordachi 2005).

Although academics have yet to reach a consensus regarding the social and political effects of collectivisation, most collective farms in Eastern Europe were dissolved after the fall of communism. Greater agreement can be seen in discussions of the implications of decollectivisation. On balance, decollectivisation has been seen as largely negative. Even writers who viewed rural modernisation projects undertaken during socialism with a degree of cautious optimism have concluded that postsocialist market reforms paved the way for a grim future in the Eastern European countryside (Kideckel 1993, 1995; Creed 1998; Hann and the Property Relations Group 2003; Hann 2006). Chris Hann has argued for a re-evaluation of the concept of property (Hann 1993a). He proposes a renewal of more traditional anthropological approaches to property over legalistic definitions of the concept (see contributions in Hann 1998b). As the contributors to a collected volume (Hann and the Property Relations Group 2003) demonstrate, apparent gains in individual property ownership might mark deeper relative losses. New owners lose their earlier social entitlements in other spheres, such as free health care and other forms of social security.

In a recent monograph on decollectivisation, Verdery (2003) argued that property transformation was extremely negative in the case of the village where she had conducted her earlier fieldwork (Verdery 1983). She noted villagers' return to values and practices known from previous times during the postsocialist economic recession in the countryside. She insisted that these postsocialist changes should be understood not as a 'return of the tradition' but rather as demodernisation: 'I write of demodernisation rather than retraditionisation. As for the seemingly traditional ideas [the villagers] used to assert status, we should rather see those as among the very few resources available to them for creating valuable new identities in the present' (2003: 357).

Some writers have interpreted similar tendencies in other parts of Romania as a 'return of the peasant' (Cartwright 2001), whereas others suggest that decollectivisation is far from 'a return of the pre-existent' (see Stewart 1998). Verdery proclaims the peasantry dead (2003: chapter 5). Villagers survive in a socio-economic context in which small-scale agriculture is infeasible. In order to better understand the identity of the 'post-socialist peasant', Pamella Leonard and Deema Kaneff (2002) propose a re-evaluation of the relationship between rural inhabitants, intellectuals, and state representatives.

Surviving postsocialist transformations was a primary concern for many if not most people in Eastern Europe and was not exclusive to villagers. Almost all social strata experienced some degree of dislocation. Explaining and influencing the transition was also a challenge to local and Western academics and policy makers. Anthropologists, perhaps more than other social scientists, questioned the teleological assumptions and unrealistic expectations of the emerging quasi-discipline of 'transitology'. As ethnographic studies revealed the high costs paid by individuals and local communities for neo-liberal 'shock therapy' (see contributions in Kideckel 1995; Pine and Anderson 1995; Pine and Bridger 1998; Burawoy and Verdery 1999b), anthropologists criticised Western-centric theoretical models and principles that were being proposed as one-size-fits-all 'solutions' for postsocialist governments (Hann 1992, 1993a; Verdery 1996a; Burawoy and Verdery 1999a).

In this context, the idea of a local tradition of civil society, which emanated from the works of dissident writers and the critical intelligentsia, established itself as an analytical concept for the social sciences. The term *civil society* became entrenched as a buzzword for policy makers both at home and abroad. The concept enjoyed, and still enjoys, some popularity among anthropologists. In the context of a widespread attempt to dismiss the legacy of institutions associated with the socialist state, the earlier legacy of an autochthonous 'third sector' seemed promising. The possibility of rebuilding a vibrant civil society under conditions of market reform and political decentralisation seemed feasible to many local and Western intellectuals. On the other hand, some writers warned against granting the concept too much analytical power and overestimating its local political appeal and normative potential under the conditions of transition to a market economy (Hann 1990).[17] Theoretical discussions surrounding the notion of civil society are far from settled,[18] but empirically based anthropological work may serve to challenge naively idealistic notions of civil society. Western notions of civil society were subjected to intense scrutiny and were reconsidered in the light of comparative ethnographic studies (Hann and Dunn 1996). The reality of civil society rhetoric in Romania (Verdery 1996c: chapter 5) and

[17] Hann was not alone in his critical view of anti-state or 'retrotopic' romanticism of civil society and second-economy theory. Local (Rév 2001) and Western social scientists came to similar conclusions (see also the reconsideration of the informal economy by Hart [1992]).

[18] For an exchange between Hann and the late Ernest Gellner, see Hall and Jarvie (1996: 57–60, 677–678).

the Balkans (Sampson 1996a, 2002) provided analysts with case material for critical evaluations of the concept 'on the ground'.[19]

Since the collapse of socialism, anthropological studies of Eastern Europe have become increasingly diversified both topically and methodologically. Most anthropologists familiar with the region followed up their earlier field studies. Others, with the 'farewell to the socialist other' (Hann 2002a), turned to analysing the wide array of emergent changes in the social fabric in the postsocialist era. Some of the phenomena studied were changing ethnic relations and the rise of nationalism (Bringa 1995; Kürti and Langman 1997; Hann 1998a; van de Port 1998; Hayden 2002; Feischmidt 2003); political ritual, memory, and commemoration (Verdery 1999; Pine, Kaneff, and Haukanes 2004; Stewart 2004); conversion to new religions and New Age movements (Lange 2003; Wanner 2003, 2004; Potrata 2004); changing patterns of consumption (Pine 2001; Czeglédy 2002; Humphrey 2002) and their connection to ritual (Creed 2002; Haukanes and Pine 2003); money and transformation of local currencies (Verdery 1996b; Lemon 1998; Pine 2002a); trade and emerging forms of exchange (Konstantinov 1996; Konstantinov, Kressel, and Thuen 1998; Humphrey 1999; Kaneff 2002a); changing gender relations (Gal and Kligman 2000; Haukanes 2001; Pine 2002b); social exclusion and the underclass (Pine 1999; Stewart 2001b, 2002); non-governmental organisations, new elites, *nouveaux riches*, and their tastes (Sampson 1996b, 2002, 2003); and material culture and 'cleanliness' (Drazin 2002). The majority of researchers continued along the established paths of previous ethnographic work, but others proposed to augment such approaches with cultural studies perspectives in order to explore 'landscapes of transition' in a search for 'an anthropology of postsocialism' (see contributions in Berdahl, Bunzl, and Lampland 2000). In addition to those who had already initiated their work during the socialist regime, a new generation of Western-trained anthropologists – both 'Westerners' and scholars of local origins – began to conduct fieldwork in the region during the 1990s.[20]

When one compares the findings of the foreign anthropologists discussed so far with the bulk of work by local ethnographers, several striking differences become visible. Although both groups focus on the same rural

[19] The idea of civil society was widely echoed among intellectuals belonging to minority groups in Romania as well. See Papp (2000) for an overview of public debates about civil society in Romania among the Hungarian minority.

[20] This new generation includes Tone Bringa, André Czeglédy, Adam Drazin, Margit Feischmidt, Haldis Haukanes, Barbara Rose Lange, Alaina Lemon, Barbara Potrata, Mattijs van de Port, and Catherine Wanner. In recent years several dissertations have been completed (Engebrigtsen 2000; Torsello 2003; Chelcea 2004; Richardson 2004; Forbess 2005; Buzalka 2007), and others are now being finalised.

groups (peasants), the interpretive frame found in works by local scholars rarely moves beyond the narrow bounds of a single language group, and the persistence of 'tradition' is central to interpretation. These mainly descriptive works reconstruct 'traditional' lifestyles, patterns of subsistence, and oral traditions at the expense of any explanation of why these ideas and practices have been reinvigorated. The idea of tradition provided a resource through which local communities could survive, and it even nurtured symbolically larger cultural communities (nations) beyond local boundaries.

Part of the explanation for this model lies in the historical development of ethnography in Eastern Europe. Autochthonous ethnography and folklore research have a relatively long history in the region, dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century. The origins of ethnographic interest in the region are intimately linked to the 'national awakening' of the Eastern European peoples. Topics most often investigated were 'peasant cultures' and 'folk traditions', which were seen as reservoirs of the putatively purest material for the creation of national cultures. Folk art, music, dance, and peasant oral traditions were considered to be expressions of national character (Hofer 1991). This does not explain, however, why these local traditions of research continued during socialist times. Factors inherent in socialist regimes were also important. As Hann, Sárkány, and Skalník (2005) observed in the introduction to a volume co-authored by local and Western anthropologists, Marxism-Leninism had little influence on the ethnographic traditions of Central Europe. Ethnographers proceeded with the traditions initiated by pre-socialist generations. The writers concluded: 'We suggest that the socialist regimes of this region allowed this continuity with the traditions of "anthropology at home" as an element in their own legitimation strategies . . . Socialists never became sufficiently cosmopolitan to dispense with local, regional, and national rootedness. This was what enabled the "native ethnographers", as Tamás Hofer calls them in his essay of 1968 . . . to regroup and continue the established disciplinary traditions' (Hann, Sárkány, and Skalník 2005: 17).

Although the 2005 volume did not deal directly with the Romanian ethnographic tradition,[21] this general observation nonetheless aptly characterises the Romanian case. Perhaps even more than other states in the region, late socialist Romania relied heavily on folkloristic elements in creating its secular rituals. The 'Song to Romania' (Rou: Cîntarea României) festival, launched in 1975, was a large-scale attempt to produce national culture through folklore performance. It encompassed all social levels: local folk assemblies competed to advance to the regional level and then further to the

[21] A volume on ethnographic traditions in south-eastern Europe has recently been published in the same series (Mihailescu et al. 2008).

national festival. These events took place in public, in many cases in large, open-air theatres, and were often televised. The final spectacle was honoured by the presence of the supreme leader.[22]

Gail Kligman (1981) showed how folk dances assumed a central place in the socialist (national) public sphere through folklore festivals. In her later work she demonstrated that other rituals remained intimately linked to local communities (Kligman 1988). Among the entirety of Anglophone anthropological work dealing with Romania, it is Kligman's later work that comes the closest to local ethnographic research practices. This is true for both her topic – traditional life-cycle rituals – and her methodology. Her sensitive ethnographic description of ritual activities and her interpretation of oral poetry resemble the work of native ethnographers more closely than the work of her Western colleagues, who have tended to focus on political economy. But unlike some local analysts, Kligman clearly distinguished the meaning of life-cycle rituals for local peasants and the politicisation of folklore by the state and other actors. She was reluctant to follow the metonymical link, created and cultivated by local researchers and cultural activists, that connected the Moroşeni – inhabitants of the northern Romanian county of Maramureş, where Kligman conducted her study – and the Romanian nation. She was also careful not to interpret these rituals as devices of political resistance.[23]

It is symptomatic that whereas some outsiders, such as John W. Cole, have been critical of the use of 'tradition' as an analytical concept purporting to explain underdevelopment and anxious about persistent ethnic divisions in the region, many local scholars have viewed peasant traditions as guarantors of social and ethnic continuity and at times even as vehicles for political resistance. Other native anthropologists, although moderately enthusiastic about peasant traditions, have criticised the instrumentalisation of folklore for political purposes. One example of this attitude during late socialism can be found in the contributions to a volume edited by Hungarian anthropologists and linguists educated in Cluj, Romania (Biró, Gagyi, and Péntek 1987). It is worth noting that their criticism was directed not at the official use of folklore by the state but at the tendency of the Hungarian minority to reproduce similar rituals from below. Influenced by the German critical

[22] Several writers have briefly analyzed this phenomenon (Giurchescu 1987; Kligman 1988: 258; Mihailescu 2003: 212; Kideckel 2004: 131), but a thorough treatment appears to be lacking.

[23] Claude Karnoouh, a French ethnologist who carried out fieldwork beginning in 1971 in the same region, used concepts such as 'surviving tradition' and 'archaic resistance' with greater ease (Karnoouh 1998: 8). He was also more straightforward in criticising the nationalist use of folklore (Karnoouh 1990), although less nuanced in his ethnography.

tradition represented by Hermann Bausinger, they emphasised the distinction between folklore and folklorism, the latter being the re-enactment of folklore or the display of artefacts in any setting outside their original context (e.g. put on stage or brought into urban homes).

László Kürti's analysis of the inception and development of the Dance House movement (Hun: *táncházmozgalom*) in Hungary and its relationship to Transylvanian villages, particularly in the predominantly Hungarian area known as Kalotaszeg, demonstrates that some of the expressive dimensions of peasant culture (mainly music and dance) provided an incipient idiom in which Hungarian youths could express political protest and solidarity with Transylvanian Hungarians. Despite its potential subversiveness, the movement was endorsed by the state and openly supported by populist intellectuals (Kürti 2001: chapter 6). A comparison with the state-initiated 'Song to Romania' would be interesting, because the Dance House movement also started as a state-sponsored festival, called Röpülj Páva (Fly Peacock), and later turned into a youth movement (Kürti 2001: 141). In Romania the state largely maintained a monopoly over folklore, but a relatively autonomous Dance House movement existed among the Hungarian minority. A general explanation of the differences between the Romanian and Hungarian cases might be sought along the lines of Verdery's interpretation (1991a). Nevertheless, in Romania there is also evidence that some performances and practices that were tolerated and even officially encouraged by the state were perceived as resistance by parts of the Transylvanian Hungarian elite (see sources in Könczei and Könczei 2004). From the perspective of some minority groups in Romania, the state-supported public sphere was less homogeneous than it might have appeared from above. I return to this point in a later discussion of the multiplicity of public spheres.

My work is connected to the work just discussed in several ways. First, it is connected to the discussion of decollectivisation and the subsequent fate (the return or the death) of the peasantry. The village in which I conducted fieldwork is situated in an area considered to be 'traditional peasant' (Hun: Kalotaszeg; Rou: Zona Călata). The villagers recently experienced demodernisation of their agriculture but adapted to market conditions relatively successfully. Another connection is with the literature on life-cycle rituals and local identity as opposed to 'revitalised traditions'. In the case I study, rituals are central to the maintenance of the local community (much as in Kligman's [1988] case), and in some of these rituals ethnic divisions are suppressed by a strong sense of common local identity. In chapter 3 I analyse the role of the Calvinist Church in the construction of ideas and practices expressing and maintaining local community. I turn to a discussion of postsocialist ritual revitalisation in chapter 6. Revitalisation of

local traditions is driven by a segment of the local elite that aims to build a new ritual called 'village days' (Hun: *falunapok*). On the other hand, the rising influence of new religious movements is observable among the local Roma population. I later review the literature on religious conversion, but first I address the anthropological literature on Roma.

Roma: Persistence, Personhood, and the Underclass

The development of anthropological studies of Roma in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world parallels the previously presented opposition between analyses of local traditions and of the political economy of the peasantry. The emphasis in Gypsy studies has for a long time been on the importance of their traditions and of the Romani language as a factor in the persistence of the Roma as a distinct group. More recent literature points to the ways in which socio-economic conditions and political regimes of the dominant societies shape identification among members of this minority. Similarly, socio-political change can also account for the varied ways in which Roma are perceived by outsiders. Scholars at either pole – tradition versus political economy – have positioned themselves against each other and engaged in protracted debates.[24] I find many of their arguments complementary: linguists present evidence for the unity and systematic dialect variation of the Romani language (see Matras 2002); ethnographic descriptions have shown the remarkable continuity of traditions (purity beliefs, speech forms, etc.) and different forms of economic adaptation and subsistence strategies of Roma within dominant societies. One cannot overlook the fact that Roma are often marginalised, although it has been shown that they may also adopt this position strategically (Gmelch 1986). Moreover, Roma are often stigmatised as 'Gypsies', meaning that their sense of belonging (and awareness of being excluded) is engendered as much by outsiders as it is internally.

Historically, several late-nineteenth-century studies of Gypsies in Hungary and in the Habsburg monarchy relied on information from Transylvanian Roma.[25] In the period following the unification of Romania in 1918, research continued sporadically at best. Researchers such as the historian George Potra (2001 [1939]) and the ethnographer Ion Chelcea (1944) were important figures of the interwar period, but one cannot speak of a system-

[24] It is not easy to describe and interpret these debates. Political convictions, disciplinary traditions (linguistics, sociology, social history), and personal animosities all play important roles (Fosztó 2002).

[25] Archduke Joseph, Henrik Wlislocki, and Antal Herman are considered the founding fathers of research on the Gypsies of Transylvania and Hungary (see Prónai 1998).

atic research agenda based solely on their contributions.[26] During the socialist era Roma were denied official recognition as an ethnic minority group, and so research possibilities regarding them were severely limited. Although interest in this segment of the population has increased since the fall of socialism, no contemporary anthropological monograph on Transylvanian or other Romanian Roma has been published up to this point. Animated by a recent surge of interest in the topic, George Potra's book (2001 [1939]) was republished, as was a Romanian translation of a century-old classic (Wlislocki 2000 [1890]). A new generation of Hungarian anthropologists (Bakó 2004; Berta 2004; Tesfay 2005) and German anthropologists (Jacobs 2005; Ries 2005a, 2005b) has carried out fieldwork among different Transylvanian Roma groups and begun to publish results. Essay collections on ethnic relations in Transylvania also include research on Roma (Gagyi 1996; Pozsony and Anghel 1999; Bodó 2002; Kováts 2002; Bakó 2003; Rüegg, Polenda, and Rus 2006).

This relative dearth of studies is not unique to the Romanian case; modern anthropological studies of Gypsies have a history not much longer than the previously discussed anthropology of Eastern Europe. Modern anthropological research on Gypsies in other parts of the world, typically in North America, was also initiated during the same period, the 1970s (Gropper 1975; Sutherland 1975; Salo and Salo 1977). In Western Europe, the work of the Polish émigré Ignacy-Marek Kaminski (1980), dealing with Roma in Sweden, and Judith Okely's (1983) monograph on British Traveller-Gypsies were the first modern anthropological works published on the subject. Other important contributions include Patrick Williams's work on France (2003 [1993], 2005 [1984]), Leonardo Piasere's work on Italy (2002 [1985]), and Paloma Gay y Blasco's work on the Spanish Gitanos (1999).

Almost no systematic research was initiated among any Eastern European Roma group before the 1970s.[27] The first anthropological monograph, on Hungary, was published by Michael Stewart (1997) and was followed by a few others (van de Port 1998; Lemon 2000; Lange 2003; Scheffel 2005).[28] Local research among Transylvanian Roma also began in the 1970s. Several ethnographers focused on the Romungre, who had particular appeal for

[26] In a chapter co-authored with Viorel Anăstăsoaie (Fosztó and Anăstăsoaie 2001) I discuss the history of research on Romanian Roma. Here I provide a condensed summary of this literature rather than a full review.

[27] A remarkable exception was the Hungarian Kamill Erdős, who died in 1962 at the age of 38. In the last 10 years of his life he learned two Romani dialects and carried out field trips among several Roma groups in Hungary (Erdős 1989). Besides having in-depth knowledge of the Roma, he published on Hungary's 'Gypsy question'. For a critical evaluation of his political views, see Stewart (2001a: 81–82).

[28] See also the review essay by David Z. Scheffel (2004a).

Hungarian researchers in Romania because of traditional Roma tales and ballads that were often performed in Hungarian. Some of these ballads and tales could no longer be found among Hungarians, although their former existence had been documented by earlier research. In this way, the Romungre became the 'keepers' of the earlier traditions and so were considered to be a group that 'conserved' Hungarian oral traditions into the late twentieth century.

Much of the Hungarian folklore material that had been gathered and published in Romania by Olga Nagy, Zoltán Kallós, Ernő Albert, János Ráduly, and Ferenc Pozsony was 'transmitted' by Romungre informants. These researchers credited their Roma informants, but the material collected was considered, according to the local research tradition, part of Hungarian folklore, because it was performed in Hungarian.[29] Olga Nagy, without speaking Romani herself (see her memoir [Nagy 1994]), recorded Romani language performances of these tales.[30] The tales were later transcribed and translated by József Vekerdi and published in Budapest (Nagy 2002).[31]

Language competence was not the only obstacle to communication during fieldwork. Pozsony noted the difficulty in eliciting ballads from his Hungarian-speaking Romungre informants because these epic songs were ritually performed during wakes preceding a burial. His informant objected that if she were to sing the song, it might bring about the death of a family member (Pozsony 1984: 57). His observation points to the existence of an attitude towards language and singing among the Romungre similar to that described by Michael Stewart (1989, 1997: 181–203) for the Vlach Roma. I discuss Stewart's work later, but first I consider the contributions of the scholars introduced in the previous section. Although Roma were not central to their concerns, most of them reflected upon changing attitudes towards minorities and Roma in the wake of postsocialist transformations.

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[29] For a discussion and bibliography of research among Transylvanian Roma in this period, see the review article by Pozsony (2001). See Keszeg (2002b) for the broader context of these researches. The instrumental music played by the Gypsies was usually considered part of the tradition of the ethnic group that consumed, listened, sang, and danced to it. The question of local musical traditions and the issue of Gypsy music were much more controversial in Eastern Europe beginning in the nineteenth century. Interest has recently been taken in the revitalisation and commercialisation of Romani musical traditions (see Kovalcsik 2001; Lange 2003).

[30] Hungarian and Romani are not typologically related, nor are they related to Romanian. The three languages are mutually incomprehensible, except for a limited lexicon of loan words and some aspects resulting from long contact.

[31] Vekerdi studied several dialects of Romani (e.g. Vekerdi 1971), gathered folktales in Hungary during the 1960s and 1970s, and published bilingual volumes of 'Gypsy dialect tales' (see Vekerdi 1985). He was criticised for his stigmatisation of the Gypsies and subsequently ended his research on the Roma.

Sam Beck was probably the only Western anthropologist who developed an interest in and investigated the situation of Gypsies in socialist Romania. As a member of the Romanian Research Group, he did fieldwork in Transylvania in the mid-1970s. He returned to do further work in 1979 and 1980 when, with the assistance of Nicolae Gheorghe, he initiated fieldwork among the Roma, directly addressing the problems they faced. His most concise definition of the situation was that 'Romanians treated Gypsies as a matter of class, but understood it as a matter of race' (Beck 1993: 169). Beck observed that although the socialist state offered the lower classes opportunities for social mobility, economically successful and even wholly assimilated Gypsies were nonetheless unable to escape non-Gypsies' arbitrary focus on negative traits that were seen as inherent aspects of Gypsy behaviour and attitudes.

On the basis of his experiences and interviews with Roma during the mid- to late seventies in Romania, Beck detected an intensification of anti-Gypsy sentiment. Although his informants confirmed that their living conditions had greatly improved since World War II, they also complained that they more frequently experienced insults and mistreatment by non-Gypsies. Beck explained these changes by reference to increased social mobility and a changing public sphere: the mistreatment of Gypsies intensified as they became more visible and their upward mobility became evident. They joined agricultural cooperatives and the Communist Party. Because of settlement and employment policies, they moved into nucleated villages and towns, and wage labour brought them into more intense interaction with non-Gypsies (Beck 1984: 31). Although Beck saw no easy way out of the situation, he proposed certain 'solutions available' by which the Romanian government could reduce racial hostilities. The most direct solution was the recognition of the Gypsies as a cultural group: 'Providing Tiganii [the group of Roma whom Beck studied] identity with government legitimacy will encourage the general public to see the Tiganii as having their history of development, not unlike other groups, and in this manner provide the context in which respect and understanding can flourish' (Beck 1984: 35). His recommendation was never considered, and Gypsies or Roma were never admitted among the 'co-inhabiting nationalities' in socialist Romania. Nor were they allowed to openly express their folkloristic 'cultural identity' in public.[32]

[32] Beck was not alone among the members of the Romanian Research Group in perceiving his role as a researcher to entail the offering of recommendations to socialist power holders. Steven Sampson inserted recommendations in the conclusion of his monograph (1984: 299–303). Instead of taking his advice, the regime deemed him a persona non grata in 1984 (see Sampson 1995: 161).

Roma finally received recognition as an ethnic minority after the fall of the communist regime, but this change in legal status had no major effect on popular attitudes. Katherine Verdery related the rise of anti-Gypsy sentiments to postsocialist economic reforms. She argued that the socialist regime defined productive work as a legitimate source of income and trade as an illegitimate one. During the socialist period, Gypsies held a putative monopoly over small trade. In the postsocialist years, the entire Romanian population suffered the negative consequences of market reforms. Long-standing stereotypes of Gypsies were mobilised, and anger was focused on Gypsies, who were seen as lazy, as thieves, and as traders (Rou: *bişniţari*) taking advantage of the new opportunities (see Verdery 1996c: 98–99). This argument (the same point regarding Roma entrepreneurs was made earlier by Gheorghe [1991: 836–837]) can neither explain why Gypsies became the primary scapegoats nor account for the persistence of earlier ethnic animosities and anxieties in Romania.[33]

Looking at more distant history, Beck proposed that present racism towards the Gypsies needed to be understood through an analysis of the historical dynamics of ethnic relations by tracing the interaction of class and ethnicity. In order to do so, he explored the problem of Gypsy slavery, relying on published historical sources. Beck held that Gypsies were central to the operation of the feudal economy and that their enslavement, in which monasteries played an important role, was a product of socio-economic processes of the feudal principalities. He concluded:

> I would argue that it is not so much the number of slaves, but the extent to which the elite depended on them for their wealth and status (including symbolically), which was critical. The economy as a whole was dependent on Tigani *fierari* [iron smiths] and *caldarari* [cooper kettle smiths]. Finally, as the Tigani increasingly took on an ethnic and racial character, Romanians could increasingly identify themselves in contradistinction to their low class status, a process

[33] In another work Verdery labelled Hungarians' long-lasting attitudes towards Romanians as racist: 'The most common vehicle for creating a presupposition of immutability is physical/phenotypical difference – skin colour, hair type, etcetera – but one also finds what I would call racist ideologies that do not entail physical differentiation, such as 19th century English attitudes toward the Irish or past and present Hungarian attitudes toward Romanians. In both cases, the latter groups of people were assumed to be congenitally inferior, constitutionally and irrevocably incapable of civilization, despite extensive overlap in the modal physical types of each with its "other". This point about immutability is an analyst's distinction, and it is not uniformly accepted. Many scholars (not to mention ethnic/national leaders) would use the label "ethnicity" to refer to systems of classification which my definition here would label "racist" (because they assume the immutability of group ascriptions)' (Verdery 1994: 49–50). Racism, even with this broader definition, would probably better fit the attitudes of both Hungarians and Romanians towards Gypsies in Romania.

> that helped shape the Romanian national states and Romanian ethnic identity (Beck 1989: 61).

The discussion initiated by historians about the nature and origins of slavery in the medieval Romanian principalities is still unsettled. The old theory – still widely accepted – is that the Gypsies were slaves before arriving in the territories of present-day Romania. Their appearance is explained by the invasions of Tatars, who held them in bondage, events that took place before the consolidation of the feudal economic order. An alternative hypothesis, resembling Beck's, was suggested by P. N. Panaitescu in 1939 (see Achim 1998: 34n).[34] He proposed that Gypsy slavery was not as old as was commonly believed and should be understood as a consequence of the labour demands of the feudal economy in the relatively prosperous fourteenth century. Beck's hypothesis, however, contained a new element explaining the racialisation of the Gypsies in the context of the feudal political economy. This argument is akin to that proposed by Judith Okely, who first suggested that, in seeking to explain the origins of Gypsies in the British Isles, one need not invoke their presupposed Indian origin but instead must attend to the socio-economic processes extant during the period of their initial appearance (the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), at the time of the collapse of feudalism (Okely 1983: 12).

Although Beck also pointed towards the role of elites in accounting for racialisation, Okely explicitly criticised the intellectuals who exoticised the Gypsies. She singled out researchers from various disciplines in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whom she labelled 'Gypsiologists' (Okely 1983: 3–27). On the basis of her empirical work, she questioned the main pillar of the common ancestry hypothesis, the 'linguistic argument'. For more than two centuries this argument held that the migratory groups found in different parts of Europe since the fourteenth century were of Indian origin because of their shared Indo-Aryan language. In spite of the controversies it provoked, Okely's work remains the clearest and longest-lasting paradigm for many social anthropologists.[35]

Michael Stewart, who worked among Romani speakers, argued that Okely had identified a blind spot in the prior theories developed to explain Gypsy identity. He concurred with Okely that a model of ethnic identity

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[34] Viorel Achim, author of the most recent work on the history of Romanian Roma, also sides with the old hypothesis (Achim 1998: 31–34). Regarding historical works and published sources on Roma in Romania, as well as the question of slavery, see Anăstăsoaie's review essay (Anăstăsoaie 2003).

[35] Most recently she has received harsh criticism from the Manchester-based linguist Yaron Matras, who blames Okely and others, most notably the so-called Dutch school of social historians with its members Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, for rejecting the linguistic argument without refuting it with linguistic evidence (Matras 2004: 63–68).

focused on a shared culture and past could not do justice to the ways Roma identity persisted:

> For them, identity is constructed and constantly remade in the present in relations with significant others, not something inherited from the past. For the Rom I knew in Harangos, the basis of their social cohesion lay neither in a dream of a future reunion of their people nor in a mythology of shared ancestry. By a kind of internal emigration, they created a place of their own in which they could feel at home, a social space composed according to their own ethic of relatedness. For the Rom, this was also another sort of distancing from the harsh reality of daily life on a settlement (Stewart 1997: 28).

Okely explained that the Gypsies' dislike of wage labour and their preference for self-employment was linked with their self-identity, which entailed, in part, a denigration of wage labour jobs and a valorisation of self-employment. Self-employment also had a functional element inasmuch as it maintained economic flexibility, which allowed Roma to exploit unfilled productive niches left open by advanced capitalist society (Okely 1983: 53–54).[36] Addressing similar issues under the conditions of 'existing socialism', with its full employment policy, Stewart showed how Gypsies reluctantly took up employment but rejected the idea of work as an end in itself, meanwhile developing alternative forms of income production in the 'second economy' (Stewart 1990, 1993, 1997: 97–111, 141–180). These secondary dealings became a source of pride and provided a sense of independence and even control over the outside world. In this way, although they were integrated into the socialist economy, Vlach Roma managed to maintain their autonomy in reproducing their society and identity through unique forms of celebration and a symbolic emphasis on the moral personhood of each member of the society (Stewart 1993: 181–203, 204–231).

My own work is inspired by Stewart's scholarship. First, I was influenced by his emphasis on the communicative aspects of Romani life, which enabled his analysis to overcome conventional theories of ethnic identity. Stewart paid special attention to Roma speech throughout his analyses. He described particular 'forms of talk', including 'proper' greetings, apologies, and deferential requests (Stewart 1997). Approaches that foreground the importance of speech are broadly supported by ethnographers of Gypsy

[36] The effects of Okely's work have not been confined to Anglophone anthropology. Following her interpretation, Bernard Streck (1996: 196–212) analysed the *Kulturprofil* of the Sudanese Halab, a group also known as the Gypsies of the Nile. He emphasised the way the Halab defied the morals of the dominant society and maintained a specific *Kontrastethik* (1996: 204–205). See also his discussion of *Kontrastkultur* (summarised in Ries 2005a: 561–562).

groups elsewhere. Speech acts are crucial for the maintenance of 'moral personhood' among the Roma in everyday rituals. I return to this problem in the next section when I discuss the concept of interaction rituals.

Problems related to varied ways of speaking are connected to a broader discussion of proper 'ways of being silent' with regard to persons, events, or social relations (Gay y Blasco 2001; Williams 2003 [1993]). For example, the Gitanos of Madrid avoid talking about deceased relatives and remove material reminders of them from sight if possible: 'This kind of communal obliteration of persons and past occurrences in fact masks an elaborate but essentially private form of commemoration. It is, the Gitanos say, because one loves that one should strive to forget but it is also because one loves that one *cannot* and indeed *should not* forget: a series of personalised mnemonic practices works to keep the "beloved deceased" in the minds of their relatives' (Gay y Blasco 2004: 260).

Along the same lines, focusing on memory rather than oblivion, Stewart discussed how it was possible for Roma to 'remember' the traumatic past without commemoration or inter-generational transmission through narratives. He emphasised the importance of non-verbal elements of behaviour and the role of the social environment in maintaining public representations of individual experience (Stewart 2004). The main targets of his theoretical critique were accounts that held the narrative form to be the sole channel for maintaining and transmitting memory and remembrance. This position is both challenging and inspiring: Stewart questions assumptions that narration is essential for the mediation of personal and public representation and demonstrates the importance of both non-narrative and non-verbal aspects of communication. At the same time he questions how one should best deal with verbal *but* non-narrative linguistic interactions. My analysis of oath-taking practices in chapter 4 addresses this problem in the context of personal transformation and is also central to my discussion of conversion in chapter 5.

For my analysis of conversion among the Roma, the most relevant connection is with the work of Paloma Gay y Blasco.[37] Through the case of the Gitanos of Madrid, she demonstrated how the group maintained its identity through an everyday focus on personhood. Gitanos neither subordinated the individual to the group nor linked 'Gypsyness' to communal unity

[37] Patrick Williams (1984, 1991) initiated anthropological interest in the conversion of Roma to Pentecostalism. In his seminal essays, Williams introduced many ideas that were further developed and illustrated by others through ethnographic examples. On the one hand, he connected Pentecostal conversions to urbanisation, because many of the problems emerging in this process were addressed and 'treated' by conversion. On the other hand, the community of the converted offers new social space and facilitates new forms of identification that overarch the divisions between the different subgroups (see also Prónai 2005: 45–50).

and solidarity. They emphasised, rather, a specific modality of moral personhood extant in each and every Gitano man and woman, distinct from that found in non-Gitanos (*payos*). An 'awareness of each other as moral beings' underpinned the Gitano community (Gay y Blasco 1999: 41). Gay y Blasco discussed the effects of evangelical Christian conversion on this ideal of morality and suggested that conversion reinforced some aspects of the distinctive Gitano morality. In this sense converts became 'better Gitanos' while a new sense of community emerged and extended group solidarity farther than the narrow boundaries of kinship. My primary concern in chapters 4 and 5 is with the ways personhood has been conceptualised and transformed in the case of Romanian Roma. I argue that fundamental aspects of personhood are directly linked to religion, and I demonstrate the importance of religious ideas in the transformation of personhood among the Romungre.

The last problem I address in this section is that of the 'underclass', a concept at the core of a recent sociological research project. This study was focused on poverty, ethnicity, and gender and combined a comparative survey of six Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Slovakia) with ethnographic field studies conducted between 1999 and 2000.[38] The project was led by Iván Szelényi, and his closest collaborator was János Ladányi. Earlier, beginning in 1989, the two had worked with Gábor Havas on an ethnographic study and an inquiry into the historical demography of Csenyéte, a north-eastern Hungarian village (see Ladányi and Szelényi 2003; Szelényi and Ladányi 2004: chapters 1 and 2).

The theoretical frame elaborated by Szelényi and Ladányi is similar to the previously discussed approach adopted by Sam Beck. Both focus on the relationship between ethnicity, class, and segregation under changing historical circumstances. Szelényi and Ladányi argue that the segregated and racialised Eastern European underclass is a postsocialist phenomenon. Their case study of Csenyéte exemplifies the dynamics of ethnic relations under changing historical conditions and stresses the importance of state policies. They conclude that degrees of assimilation and segregation in local communities are outcomes of macro-historical processes. The relative integration of Roma in Csenyéte by the mid-nineteenth-century and the effects of early socialist policies encouraged desegregation and assimilation. When nationalist and xenophobic sentiments increased, local segregationist practices flourished, as happened during both the late nineteenth and first half of the

[38] The results of this project are not yet fully published. Preliminary results were published in special issues of *Review of Sociology* (7, no. 2) and *Szociológiai Szemle* (4) in 2001 and in several books (Emigh and Szelényi 2001; Szelényi and Ladányi 2004, 2006). For more details see www.yale.edu/ccr/poverty.

twentieth century and after the fall of socialism. Moreover, the case study of Csenyéte demonstrates that socialist assimilation backfired as Roma abandoned their pre-existing skills and became proletarianised, thus falling into even deeper economic depression after the collapse of the Hungarian communist regime.

Szelényi and Ladányi contend that the underclass is a product of postsocialist economic restructuring. Downwardly mobile people and groups adopt a 'culture of poverty' that further diminishes their chances of escaping extreme poverty. It is at this point that the anthropological critique of the underclass concept adopted by Szelényi and Ladányi becomes most relevant (Stewart 2001b, 2002). Although they propose that macro-historical processes account for the presence of an underclass, as opposed to cultural or behavioural explanations, and although they distinguish this line of argumentation from earlier usages of 'the underclass', which tended to blame the victim, their reified concept of the culture of poverty as a causal factor will certainly provoke further critique.[39] Not all anthropologists, however, disagree with Szelényi and Ladányi's explication of the underclass and the effects of the culture of poverty. David Scheffel's recent anthropological monograph (2005) lends support to their argument.[40]

Scheffel focused on a Roma settlement in an eastern Slovakian village. The village of Svinia was sharply divided between 'white' peasants and 'black' Roma. The Roma lived in desolate conditions in a segregated slum. Scheffel argued that the present situation of the Roma was an outcome of ambivalent socialist modernisation aggravated by postsocialist transformations. He emphasised the deterioration of inter-group social relations, arguing that in pre-socialist times, although the Roma of Svinia lived separately, they were tied socially and economically to the peasantry. In the socialist economy, depersonalised labour relations supplemented by ideological propaganda 'seduced' Roma into believing that their earlier personal connections with the peasants were no longer of any value. As 'the reliance on concrete individuals gave way to a wholesale dependence on the state and its local agents, the careful cultivation of inter-ethnic bonds came to appear superfluous' (Scheffel 2005: 216). Scheffel deplored the present cultural conditions of the slum dwellers: 'Any reasonably impartial observer is bound to conclude that the majority of Svinia's Roma fail to take advantage

[39] 'If we err, we err on the side of social and economic determinism. Nevertheless a culture of poverty, once created, becomes real and consequential. The culture of poverty is an important mechanism by which extreme poverty can be reproduced and it is particularly prevalent in the case of the underclass' (Ladányi and Szelényi 2003: 17).

[40] Scheffel, although seemingly aware of the debate, neither addresses the theoretical discussion nor aligns his analysis with that of the underclass approach (see also Scheffel 2004b: 11).

even of the limited opportunities afforded by the environment in which they live' (2005: 219).

Similarities between the two studies reviewed are not superficial. Ladányi and Szelényi, backed by their comparative survey, argued that underclass formation and its connection to ethnicity were relatively similar throughout Eastern Europe, but with some important variations. Other factors besides residential segregation contributed to underclass formation. Ladányi (2001: 74) argued that in the case of Poland, where poverty was not ethnicised because of the tiny size of the Roma community, there was no underclass, despite the existence of a more intense and longer-lasting poverty than in Hungary. In Hungary the line between the poor and the not-so-poor was rigid and ethnicised, so underclass formation was solidly entrenched. The situation was similar in Slovakia, where the process was exacerbated by an absence of anti-discrimination laws (2001: 75). According to Szelényi and Ladányi, Bulgaria had a stable (rather caste-like) system of ethnic categorisation that continued in force under the conditions of postsocialism. Ethnic categories were more fluid in Hungary and Romania, but the two countries differed in terms of underclass formation. Szelényi and Ladányi argued that economic polarisation in Hungary was more advanced than in Romania and Bulgaria, and in Hungary a Roma underclass had also developed. The previous under-caste position of Romanian Roma had been dissolved with the arrival of postsocialism, it was still too early to predict whether the majority of Romanian Roma would be integrated into the lower class or be even more excluded, leading to the formation of an ethnicised underclass (Szelényi and Ladányi 2004: 158).

Szelényi and Ladányi's underclass–culture of poverty approach is laudable for its use of a comparative perspective and its emphasis on the variability of ethnic relations and classifications across the region. A number of drawbacks nonetheless exist in applying the model to Eastern European Roma.[41] There are three primary criticisms of the underclass approach: questions about its empirical validity; its theoretical shortcomings; and political considerations. Questions regarding evidence and validity are not my main concern here. The authors emphasise that the concept of the underclass cannot address the problems faced by Roma in general, so it is misleading to ask whether Roma as such constitute an underclass. 'The notion of underclass describes the Roma condition under very specific historical conditions and it does not characterise all the Roma, but captures only the experiences of the Roma ghetto poor' (Ladányi and Szelényi 2003: 12). My own ethnography offers little evidence of processes that ostracise Roma,

[41] For an in-depth discussion of the issues debated, see Stewart (2001b, 2002).

pushing them into extreme poverty. Instead, I see my case as supporting Ladányi and Szelényi's prediction of lower-class formation.[42]

I am more critical of Ladányi and Szelényi's theoretical construction, which amounts to a sort of determinism in which the culture of poverty is a causal factor leading to long-lasting deprivation. I concur with anthropologists who argue that 'culture' can hardly be understood through reduction to ecological conditions. Nor can human behaviour be explained by privileging culture as a causal factor. This has been the position taken in most anthropological studies of Roma: Roma behaviour is neither simply responsive to the dominant culture nor completely 'other' (Sutherland 1975; Okely 1983; Stewart 1997; Gay y Blasco 1999). The most sensible path lies in forging an inquiry into the way the underprivileged understand their own condition and the way their ideas are influenced by social and cultural transformations. My discussion in chapters 5, 6, and 7 is an attempt to do just this. Through an analysis of communication and the public sphere at both the local and national levels, I argue that exclusionary tendencies are on the rise in Romania. Roma perceive these trends at the local level. Conversion and Pentecostalism offer an idiom in which social exclusion may be interpreted through an opposition between the inner ('heart') and the outer ('face'). This idiom counters stigmatisation and promotes the value of public ritual action (i.e. in public display and engagement in the new religion). Pentecostalism also provides a paradigm for the discussion of skin colour, and anthropological analysis of this discussion can begin to illuminate the 'insider' view of racialisation. Although tendencies towards racialisation appear to be widespread in the region, I share Stewart's reservations about the feasibility of applying the US civil rights model to Eastern Europe at the expense of local remedies and regional responses (Stewart 2001b: 200). On the basis of my analysis of media events in chapter 7, I elucidate some consequences of the changing structure of the public sphere and point to the emerging intellectual debate over Romanian multiculturalism.

Conversion: Religion, Ritual, and the Public Sphere

Unlike the specialised bodies of literature limited to a region or a specific group that I have discussed so far, the anthropology of religion is one of the most developed subfields of anthropology. The rich history and complexity of approaches to religion have a paralyzing effect on attempts to write a

[42] Most Hungarian Roma identified as engaging in underclass formation processes are likely to be Romungre, the group with which I worked. However, there are variations within Hungary (Horváth 2002, 2005). These contrasts become even starker when Hungarian Romungre are compared with their Transylvanian counterparts.

general overview or synthesis of 'the' anthropology of religion.[43] Although an ever growing number of ethnographies provides a solid base for comparative analysis, theoretical discussions have been less cumulative, and intransigence more common than consensus.

Michael Lambek (2000) advocated an Aristotelian approach that oriented itself towards practice in order to overcome dualisms originating in the Platonic tradition. He held that questions informed by such dualisms (rationality-emotion, philosophy-poetry, mind-body, primitive-modern, etc.) failed to address religious aspects of human behaviour and thought. Lambek thus proposed an inquiry into the morality of human interaction. He argued that 'we need to rescue morality as a relatively autonomous practice, understanding that it falls into neither causality nor participation, neither philosophy nor poetry, viewed as discrete, alternate modes of orientation. Aristotle is interesting precisely because he sees morality in terms that transcend this dichotomy' (2000: 311). Although I cannot fully heed Lambek's call, my approach to religion is focused more on praxis and its moral implications for individuals and collectivities than on more rarefied conceptual constructions and imaginaries related to religion.

Edmund Leach proposed the study of 'practical religion' as an anthropological approach. Following his cue, I am preoccupied more with 'how "the life is here and now" for the ordinary people' (Leach 1968b: 1) than with the theological concerns of religious specialists about 'the life hereafter'. My ethnography reflects interest in the practical and expressive aspects of religious behaviour and praxis. I am aware that it is problematic to separate expressive practice from purposeful action, but this is not my main concern. Instead, I accept Leach's view that almost every human action can be divided into a 'technical aspect that does something' and a 'communicative aspect that says something'. Hence I propose a study of communicative practices that focuses more on the latter, the expressive side of communication, although I try not to neglect the former, the technical aspects. Leach (2000b: 154) defined practices that can be seen as 'symbolic statements' lacking material consequences as rituals. I return later to problems related to ritual, its relation to language, and the public sphere, but first I consider the way an approach towards practical religion can be adapted to suit the subject of religious conversion (both individual and collective) by focusing on communicative practices.

Although the anthropology of conversion is a burgeoning subfield of the anthropology of religion, this chapter is not the place for a comprehen-

[43] Several good theoretical guides and readers for classical texts are available: Evans-Pritchard (1965); Lambek (2002); Lehmann and Myers (1986); Lessa and Vogt (1965); Morris (1987).

sive review. The heightened interest is indicated by the growing number of collections dedicated to the topic (Hefner 1993; van der Veer 1996; Lamb and Bryant 1999; Buckser and Glazier 2003). One prevalent view in studies of religious and social change is that of the modernity of conversion. Classical modernisation theory, most notably that of Max Weber, predicted that as the rationalisation of society increased, it would do so directly at the expense of ritual over the course of a society's historical development (see Gerth and Mills 1958: 51–52). In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2001), Weber demonstrated how rationalisation in one sphere of life, religion, influenced other spheres, such as the economy. Today, awareness is growing that 'disenchantment' is not necessarily linear or continuous. In certain historical periods and in particular places, the predicted decline of rituals and rise of instrumental rationality can be observed, whereas in other periods and regions the revitalisation of rituals or the invention of new traditions and rituals is not uncommon. Late-nineteenth-century examples of the 'invention of tradition' demonstrate how secular rituals of the nation-state often re-enact earlier religious ceremonies (e.g. processions) and interpersonal rituals (e.g. greetings) (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). These particular rituals were performed by the powerful, although the relatively powerless may also invent new rituals. During the early twentieth century, natives of Melanesia responded to the social changes and subsequent economic decline caused by colonialism by adhering to millenarian rituals (Worsley 1957). In the more recent past, the revitalisation of ritual has been observable in many parts of Europe since the 1970s. This regeneration followed the post–World War II period, which was marked by growing centralisation, industrialisation, and rationalisation (Boissevain 1992).

The commencement of anthropological studies of conversion can be traced to the late 1960s and early 1970s (Peel 1968; Horton 1971; Goody 1975). In this period the debate focused on the problem of tradition versus modernity in Africa. Special attention was paid to differences in modes of thought and, particularly, to the role of rationality in different societies (see Horton 1993). More recent debates (van der Veer 1996; Lehmann 1998; Coleman 2000; Robbins 2004b) have centred on the relative similarities and divergences of social processes observed across regions where conversions were increasingly commonplace. The scope of conversion studies has been broadened to consider transformations of other 'world religions'. Some analysts have adopted the concept of 'multiple modernities' in order to explain parallel transformations observable in Christian, Islamic, and Hindu societies (Hefner 1998; Eisenstadt 2002; van der Veer 2002), and there are many recent ethnographies from nearly every region of the world. In addition to African societies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997; Meyer 1999;

Peel 2000), scholars have studied Latin America (Chesnut 1997, 2003), Europe (Coleman 2000), Papua New Guinea (Robbins 2004a), and post-Soviet societies (Wanner 2003, 2004; Pelkmans, Vaté, and Falge 2005). Comparative analyses are also available (Lehmann 2001). The problem of modernity seems to be an enduring issue in conversion studies. But interpretations of the concept of modernity and approaches to modernisation encompass a wide theoretical range.

At one end of the theoretical spectrum is work that adopts primarily individual-oriented, cultural or psychological models focused on changing ideas and practices related to the construction of personhood, self, community, and commitment. The methodology of such studies is usually grounded in linguistic aspects of social behaviour such as religious rhetoric and conversion narratives (Harding 1987, 2000; Stromberg 1993) or, more broadly, in changes in representational practices among the converted (Keane 2002). At the other end of the spectrum are explanations emphasising the importance of dynamic socio-political contexts and the political economy of conversion. These models are often supplemented by historical discussions of the changing socio-political context of religious expansion.[44] Other approaches can be placed between these poles. Reconstructions of the 'religious encounters' of natives and missionaries (Peel 2000) and inquiries into the translation of ideas (Keane 1997; Meyer 1999) are often supported by documents, procured principally from the archives of missionary societies. Writers who take such an approach provide conscientious reconstructions of the historical interactions that took place in missionary encounters while criticising socio-political accounts of conversion for their purported economic determinism and neglect of 'local voices'.[45]

My approach is closer to the first pole, although I advocate a perspective that integrates the communicative practices observable in conversion into the larger context of ritual communication emerging in the postsocialist era. Some writers contend that conversion narratives should be viewed as key components of the transformation of self that is inherent in conversion, and not simply as retrospective accounts of the phenomenon itself (Snow and Machalek 1983; Stromberg 1993). I am interested in the way alterations to individual communicative practices and relationships brought about by religious conversion lead to more general personal transformations. I proceed by analyzing both verbal and non-verbal aspects of conversion, and I describe the social contexts that support or subvert attempts at expressing

[44] For a discussion of conversion in the context of colonialism, see Comaroff and Comaroff (1991).

[45] The exchange between John Peel (1992) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1997: 42–53) exemplifies these tensions. See also Terrence Ranger's (2001) review of Peel.

converted personhood. The broader social and economic changes transpiring in postsocialist Romania are connected to practices and ideas of conversion and other religious practices. I trace the links between different levels of social organisation through an ethnography of communicative practice.

With its focus on modes of communication (technologies), the work of Jack Goody provides an early example of how conversion is caught up with modernisation. Goody and Ian Watt, in their study *The Consequences of Literacy* (1963), put forth a hypothesis that proved to be both influential and controversial. The core of their argument was that although ethnocentric views opposing the 'primitive mind' to 'rational thought' should be abandoned, the distinction between literate and non-literate societies should be maintained, because literacy, and more specifically alphabetical writing, was a causal factor in human development on which many modern achievements were predicated. Literate societies are clearly distinguishable from oral societies, which Goody and Watt described 'as a long chain of interlocking conversations between members of the group' (1963: 306). Writing breaks this chain of conversation, because once a message has been written down, it is no longer subject to the 'homeostatic process of forgetting or transforming' those parts that no longer seem necessary or relevant. In literate societies, they argue,

> members are faced with permanently recorded versions of the past and its beliefs; and because the past is thus set apart from the present, historical enquiry becomes possible. This in turn encourages scepticism; and scepticism, not only about the legendary past, but also about received ideas about the universe as a whole. From here the next step is to see how to build up and to test alternative explanations: and out of this there arose the kind of logical, specialized, and cumulative intellectual tradition (p. 344).

Goody and Watt claimed that literacy was a causal factor in the cognitive advances of ancient Greek society. This had subsequent far-reaching consequences in religion, politics, science, and other spheres of social life. Here I consider only Goody's view of the effects of literacy on religion and conversion. He assumed a strong link between literacy and monotheism in Africa:

> The relative ease with which people move from one concept of the High God to another is, I suggest, indicative of the possibility that such a shift can take place not only between religions, as in conversion, but also within religions . . . The LoDagaa did not initially think of the acceptance of Christianity as conversion, because the introduction of a new cult does not involve a displacement of other gods. It is only when a religion says, 'Thou shalt have no other Gods

> but me', when it becomes exclusive, that the problem of conversion arises, and this I suggest happens only with literate religions (Goody 1975: 103).

In *The Power of Written Tradition* (2000: 11) Goody reiterated his earlier literacy thesis while offering clarifications and responding to critics.[46] Most pertinent to my discussion is Goody's renewed emphasis that literacy cannot be seen as a substitute for orality. Instead, literacy is an addition, which implies that orality plays a major role in most spheres of life even in fully literate societies (Goody 2000: 11). Although this statement is hardly a radical reconfiguration of his original line of argumentation, its implications can be taken a step further than Goody himself went. Concerning the problem of conversion, he maintained a rather narrowly intellectualist position. His definition of conversion was linked to religious scripturalism: 'You cannot convert to an oral religion – you become a member of the political system (a 'tribe') and you subscribe, to a greater or lesser degree, to the beliefs of the group. Conversion implies a different definition of religion, commitment to a fixed text (beliefs or rituals), and it involves giving up one set of practices and beliefs in favor of another' (Goody 2000: 106).

Goody was certainly justified in defining conversion as commitment to fixed religious ideas and practices, because the standardisation of such practices is more often than not linked to the existence of literacy, at least among the religious specialists of a society. But this begs the question, How is the new religion spread among the non-literate members of the society? Goody seems to imply that commitment and conversion to a new religion should be based primarily on commitment to a sacred text. This view might accurately describe religious specialists who are the guardians of textual tradition, but empirical cases of conversion suggest that ritual is often more important than text. Therefore I argue that without denying the power of written tradition, it is nonetheless useful to reconnect conversion to ritual.

Changes in ritual communication are central aspects of religious transformation. The existence of literacy does not diminish or eliminate rituals from communicative practice. Moreover, the arrival and incorporation of novel forms of communication (such as new media) arguably favour ritual forms at the expense of intellectualism. A simple comparison can be made: a written or printed sermon can be a well-structured and standardised text 'cleaned' of ritual context. If the same text is preached and taped or broadcast over the radio, then the timbre of the preacher's voice and the sequencing and timing of speech are preserved and transmitted; essential elements of the ritual speech act are inseparable from its utterance. Audiovisual media

[46] His reformulations of the 'literacy thesis' (Goody 1968, 1977, 1986) received substantial criticism (Street 1984; Parry 1985; Bloch 1998), but I cannot address these critiques here.

can preserve even the nonverbal elements of the sermon. This example shows that media technologies can not only increase ritualistic elements in communication but also perhaps close the gap between literate and non-literate audiences.

Defining religious ritual with reference to communicative practice is not easy. In the first place, it is difficult to single out exactly which communicative acts should be seen as religious. There are several conflicting theoretical solutions to this definitional conundrum. Two prominent solutions emanate from the founding fathers of modern socio-cultural anthropology. Sir Edward Tylor suggested that religion is distinguished by belief in spiritual beings. Émile Durkheim proposed a division of the human world into the sacred and the profane.[47] In the former case, any expression is to be regarded as religious if it involves communication with the non-human world. Durkheim regarded ritual as a special form of communication between humans *representing* the sacred. My approach comes closer to Durkheim's solution. In the now canonical *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim defined religion as 'a system of ideas with which individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations which they have with it' (quoted in Lukes 1973: 466). According to the Durkheimian perspective, religion is a representation and expression of society to itself. Religious symbols then serve as vehicles of expression; 'sacred things are simply collective ideas that have fixed themselves on material objects' (quoted in Lukes 1973: 25). Religious rituals are collective events during which individuals experience collective effervescence and the force of the sacred. In a sense, Durkheim opposed the individual to the collectivity, investing the latter with the quality of the sacred. During publicly enacted rituals, individuals experience the sacred as an outside force.

In addition to his emphasis on collective rituals, Durkheim noted the ever increasing 'cult of the individual' present in societies with an advanced division of labour (Lukes 1973: 156–157). This idea lay at the root of Erving Goffman's theory of the 'interaction ritual' (1967). Goffman depicted face-to-face interactions as rituals because persons engaged in such encounters were subject to 'sacred' constraints that created and maintained notions of the humanity of the self and the other. In his view, humanity was produced during these face-to-face rituals:

> Universal human nature is not a very human thing. By acquiring it, the person becomes a kind of construct, built up not from inner psychic propensities but from moral rules that are impressed upon him

[47] For a detailed discussion, see Goody (1961).

> from without. The rules, when followed, determine the evaluation he will make of himself and of his fellow-participants in the encounter, the distribution of his feelings, and the kinds of practices he will employ to maintain a specified and obligatory kind of ritual equilibrium. The general capacity to be bound by moral rules may well belong to the individual, but the particular set of rules which transforms him into a human being derives from requirements established in the ritual organization of social encounters (1967: 45).

In this conception, the division of sacred and profane is reformulated, almost collapsed, as each human being is invested with a sacred quality. Rituals of co-presence, such as greetings, openings of conversations, turn-taking when talking, and showing respect for personal boundaries are seen as basic expressions of morality and the recognition of the other as a human. The 'ritual organization of social encounters' expresses the social order, and individuals are compelled to defer to it, under the risk of losing face or damaging the other's and, as a result, both feeling and causing embarrassment.[48] Interaction rituals provide a clue to the way everyday rituals are just as important to the maintenance of social order and religious commitment as are formal ritual events. Public morality can be seen as a product of interaction rituals observed by people engaged in social encounters. I believe it is productive to start with an analysis of the conditions of public moral behaviour. It is more useful to acknowledge the continuity between different public spaces than to oppose individual to community by separating private from public and postulating a division between the sacred and the profane. From the perspective adopted here, the distinction between sacred and profane emerges from the divergent forms of interaction rituals that institute interpersonal behaviour.

A consequence of this approach is that personhood is the basic unit of morality in the public sphere, and so all other levels of public action can be analysed with a focus on communicative practices that maintain different public spheres.[49] The purpose of this proposition is purely analytical: I consider a normative and practical division between the private and public spheres to be necessary in Western society, although such a division should not be taken for granted but explained. Further analysis may lead to a better

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[48] In his studies of asylums and stigma (1961, 1986 [1963]), Goffman documented efforts put into maintaining humanity under unfavourable circumstances. He demonstrated that institutionalised persons adjusted their rituals and continued to maintain a sense of humanity.

[49] I focus only on public and communicative aspects of personhood as discussed in the literature review on Roma. A broader review of the literature on personhood is beyond the scope of this introduction (for overviews see Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes 1985; Poole 1994).

understanding of the role of divisions among different public spheres in most societies (e.g. divisions according to gender or age, but also based on social status and class position).

When the distinction between sacred and profane is abandoned, suggesting that interpersonal encounters can be as morally compelling as public rituals, one still must grasp concrete aspects of ritual as religious behaviour. How does the moral sacredness of personhood come about? Some researchers suggest the possibility of a standardised form of communication. Many anthropologists argue that standardisation, stylisation, and repetitiveness go hand in hand with a kind of authority in ritual action (Tambiah 1968; Bloch 1975; Leach 2000b). These approaches are in most cases consistent with what I presented earlier, because they reveal how rituals gain their power as publicly acknowledged expressions of the social order. However, there is no general agreement about this matter. Some writers are unsure whether rituals convey anything meaningful for participants. Others argue that instead of revealing the nature of the social order, rituals mystify social relations. Maurice Bloch (2005: 136) provocatively argued that the central character of the ritual is deference and that a search for exegesis is always misleading. My approach comes closer to the position of those who see ritual as expressing something or communicating some meaning for both direct participants and outsiders, and not just instituting blind order. This was the view held by Roy Rappaport (1999).

Rappaport summarised ritual as 'the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (1999: 24). He elaborated by distinguishing between self-referential and canonical messages as two aspects of ritual communication. Self-referential messages are the most variable expressions of ritual and are directly linked to the psychical and social status of performers of the ritual. In some rituals there is nothing more than the expression of status by participants. However, most religious rituals also contain a canonical message, which is invariable and cannot express the status of the participants because it was not encoded by them. Rappaport used the example of the Roman Catholic liturgy, which cannot be changed by the will of the participants. He argued that canonical messages, which are not encoded by the performers but transmitted by them during a ritual, are invariable and more intimately linked to an order other than the social. 'The self-referential represents the immediate, the particular and the vital aspects of *events*; the canonical, in contrast, represents the general, enduring, or even eternal aspects of *universal orders*' (Rappaport 1999: 53). In the terms of his example, the Roman Catholic liturgy is invariable, but participants may vary from one Mass to another. With my focus on practical religion, I am more concerned with the

expressions that Rappaport labelled self-referential (e.g. how participants express their status during the Mass). Nevertheless, to some degree I address canonical aspects in a more dynamic manner. Rappaport's distinction can be reformulated in order to explain how canonical messages can become subject to manipulation.

Instead of simply accepting that some orders are eternal and universal, one can look at how they are universalised and mystified in order to appear more eternal and less social. Those in control of rituals have the power to change the borderline between the self-referential and the canonical by either enhancing or de-emphasising the canonical side of a ritual. Expansion comes about as part of the canonisation of previously non-canonical (i.e. self-referential) aspects. This process invests certain features of the social order with sacrality. For example, a certain way of dressing might become compulsory in a ritual that initially had no dressing canon, as I show in my analysis of confirmation in chapter 3. The inverse process lies in the minimisation of the canonical element by focusing on basic social constructs (e.g. ideas about the human body that take its biological basis as universal). This strategy is less demanding in terms of material and social preconditions but has direct implications for conceptions of personhood. Pentecostal conversion uses this form, and I later demonstrate how conversion influences social interaction and social structure by proposing and maintaining a new form of personhood.

The investment of the social order with sacrality is a Durkheimian idea, but if his strict division between the sacred and the profane is abandoned for a more dynamic perspective, then social processes leading either to growth or decline of ritualisation need to be described and analysed. Comparative analyses can show how the importance of rituals changes in communication practices over long historical periods. Periods in which ritual enjoys relatively high status can be followed by times when more direct forms of communication are valued. Peter Burke (1987: 235) argued that during the early modern period, rituals lost their earlier high status in a society in which a 'sincerity culture' emerged. This came about partly as a consequence of the Reformation, but other factors also contributed to this rejection of the 'emptiness of rituals' and to the valorisation of direct communication and sincerity in different spheres of life. In other periods, contrary trends can be identified, wherein moral obligations were entailed in rituals.

The idea of ritual and sincerity in communication was central to Rappaport's model. Defining ritual as a way of overcoming the problems inherent in human language, Rappaport highlighted the reverse side of the language-ritual division. One dangerous potential inherent in human language is

'the lie' (Rappaport 1999: 11–22). He argued that rituals were communicative practices that enabled people to overcome the 'vices' of human language. Joel Robbins criticised this approach, accusing Rappaport of a sort of 'secondary ethnocentrism' that came from universalising a concern about language and sincerity that was particular to the Maring people among whom Rappaport worked in Papua New Guinea (Robbins 2000: 597). Robbins argued that concerns about sincerity were connected to particular linguistic ideologies. Linguistic ideologies consist of emic views of the nature of language and the semiotic process in general. These ideologies are therefore both culturally and historically variable. I find this proposal inspiring. Without slipping into extreme relativism, one can describe ideas about sincerity in different societies, but the concern about communication seems to be universally human. All societies are composed of individuals who, to a lesser or greater degree, at times express scepticism about the speech acts of other members, thus offering solutions to problems arising from miscommunication. Ritual solutions to the problems of communication seem to be common.

Emerging in the early modern period, religious traditions with putatively anti-ritualistic tendencies, such as Calvinism, nonetheless promoted distinct forms of interpersonal and community ritual. Webb Keane (2002: 67) observed that in the case of Calvinist conversions among the Sumba people of Indonesia, 'Protestant missions have offered some of the representational practices and ideologies by which certain features of the concept and promises of modernity, however ambivalently, have entered into non-elite discourses, everyday habits, and commonplace demeanour across the globe'. Keane pointed out that Calvinists adopted an ideal of sincerity that assumed a clear distinction between words and thoughts. The idea of sincerity presupposed a hierarchical relation between the inner self and speech, and it attributed the authority of words to their fidelity to the inner state of the speaker (Keane 2002: 74–75). My analysis, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted among Calvinists in a Transylvanian village, inquires along similar lines into the relationship between ritual, speech, and sincerity (chapters 3 and 6).

Robbins, discussing more recent developments in Christianity, argued that Pentecostalism and other charismatic revivals exhibited strong commitments to ritual. He depicted this return to ritual forms of communication as a reversal of the early modern transformation regarding language ideology (i.e. sincerity). He argued: 'If this is in fact the case, then the revival of Protestant ritual life is as intimately tied to changes in language ideology as was its original decline. This time, however, it is language that is becoming hollow and ritual that is once again full and fulfilling' (Robbins 2000: 599). Conver-

sions to Pentecostalism among Roma in the village in which I worked offer material for discussing the particularities of practical religion of this tradition (chapters 5 and 6). Pentecostals, like members of other evangelical and charismatic denominations, ritualise the autobiographies of participants into the structure of a conversion narrative or testimony. A cornerstone of this narrative is its emphasis on the rupture between the person's pre- and post-conversion lives (Snow and Machalek 1983). Pentecostal rituals focus more on the individual self and claim an intimate inner connection to the supernatural. By virtue of this relationship with the divine, the self is opened up to the influence of God, and changes subsequently become observable in the life of the convert.

My analysis extends beyond recording and interpreting conversion narratives. I also focus on non-verbal aspects of the conversion ritual, emphasising the way the social environment of converts is constructed. One aspect of both Pentecostal and charismatic conversions is the problem of continuity and rupture. Some scholars emphasise the discontinuity produced by conversion (Robbins 2003; Engelke 2004). Conversion has the potential to cause ruptures in pre-existing social relations as new ties are created. In this respect my analysis echoes Gay y Blasco's work (1999) among the Spanish Gitanos. Gay y Blasco argued that conversion influenced the construction of personhood and affected the social organisation of local groups while contributing to the continuity of Gypsy identity and the development of translocal connections and practices associated with the idea of the fraternity of the converted.

To conclude this literature review, I turn to the problem of the public sphere and its relationship to ritual communication. My general argument is that local life-cycle (chapter 3) and life-crisis (chapter 4) rituals are crucial for the creation and maintenance of the local public sphere, while the revitalisation of ritual is both an agent and an expression of changes in the public sphere. Revival rituals (chapter 6) reinforce links between Calvinism and 'village traditions'. They are focused almost exclusively on local Hungarian practices and traditions. On the other hand, Pentecostal revivals promote a transformation of moral personhood that affects a segment of the Roma population. Both of these revival rituals also rely on resources external to the community, and the effects of such rituals extend far beyond the village. Therefore it is necessary to consider the connection between revitalisation rituals and the public sphere of postsocialist Romania.

Rituals and religion played little role, if any, in Jürgen Habermas's classical account of the post-feudal public sphere (Habermas 1989 [1962]).[50]

[50] The German original was published in 1962 and the English translation 27 years later, in 1989.

Although his concept of public sphere was based on communicative practices,[51] his emphasis was on the origins of the public sphere, beginning with the initial development of bourgeois public opinion, which was formed in open political debates concerning interests of common concern. Structurally, he linked the development of the bourgeois public sphere to the culture of coffee houses and face-to-face conversations and to the existence of a space that was no longer private but did not belong to the state. With the early development of capitalism and the advent of mass media, the public sphere underwent a structural transformation. Public opinion began to be formed by dominant elites and therefore tended to represent the private interests of those elites. This excluded members of the general population from active participation in the public sphere and reduced their role to that of mere consumers. Therefore, the public sphere was no longer an arena for debate and consensus about the common good but instead a realm of political spectacle that would be passively absorbed by citizen-consumers.

Although Habermas provided a diagnosis of his own era, he was unable to offer a simple solution to the problems he identified. As one commentator argued:

> Habermas had produced an account of how the bourgeois public sphere had turned into its opposite. Recognizing that using an earlier form of social organization to criticize its later deformation was nostalgic, Habermas called for a renewed democratization of public institutions and spaces at the end of *Structural Transformation* (1989: 248ff), but this was merely a moral exhortation with no discernible institutional basis or social movements to realize the call. Hence, both to discern a new standpoint for critique, to provide new philosophical bases for critical theory, and to contribute a new force for democratization, Habermas turned to the sphere of language and communication to find norms for critique and an anthropological basis to promote his calls for democratization (Kellner 2000: 270).

In his more recent work, particularly in his two-volume *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987), Habermas grounded his critical social theory in a particular view of language and communication. Abandoning his earlier concept of the public sphere, he introduced a distinction between 'lifeworld' and 'system'. The lifeworld was the space for communicative action, whereas the political and economic system was dominated by instrumental rationality, which was resistant to attempts at democratic transformation emanating from the lifeworld. Hans Joas (1991) criticised *The Theory of Communicative Action* as 'the unhappy marriage of hermeneutics and func-

[51] '[A] portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body' (Habermas 1974: 49).

tionalism'. Other critiques, such as that of Douglas Kellner, quoted earlier, also noted problems related to Habermas's 'categorical bifurcation' of the social system: 'In his later work . . . Habermas indulges in a romanticism of the lifeworld, appealing to the "true humanity" operative within interpersonal relations, assuming face-to-face communication as his model of undistorted communication, and replacing structural transformation with the ideal of cultivation of the communicatively-rational individual and group' (Kellner 2000: 273).

It is beyond the scope of this book to follow such philosophical discussions in depth or to engage in the debates over *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[52] Despite its shortcomings, the work has certainly maintained its attraction. Habermas's insistence on the rationality inherent in human communication might be disregarded as hopelessly idealistic or inspire a moral stance, but it may also be taken as a starting point for empirical investigation. My approach to communication shares many elements with the later Habermasian perspective yet diverges from it by taking ritual as the key to gaining a proper understanding of communication. The shift I propose offers a different anthropological approach to communication and is able to account for religious dimensions of the public sphere.

For my own approach, the most relevant criticisms of Habermas come from anthropologists and sociologists who have remarked on his failure to address the role of religion in the public sphere. Peter van der Veer (2001: 27–28, 2002: 177–179) took Habermas to task for his Eurocentric, secularist bias. José Casanova echoed van der Veer's misgivings, moreover calling attention to the evolutionary and normative implications implicit in Habermas's theory. He argued:

> Religion may have a relevant past, as shown by Habermas's own counterfactual hypothesis concerning the radical ethical visions of brotherhood, which were, however, excluded historically by the institutionalized selectivity of capitalist modernity. Religion may even have a present in Habermas's theory in protecting defensively what little is left of traditional lifeworlds from state administrative penetration and from capitalist colonization. But religion has no future. In Habermas's model, conventional religion ought to be superseded by postconventional secular morality (Casanova 1994: 231).

Van der Veer credited Habermas for his focus on the sociology of the public sphere and called for comparative studies that would address its religious aspects as well. Rather than discarding religion as an anachronism or purely defensive reaction, Casanova included the religious in his analysis of the

[52] For an overview of the debated areas, see Honneth and Joas (1991).

public sphere. He took a more optimistic view of public religious expressions as vehicles of moral-practical reflection, although he was reluctant to give up 'a clear and rigid separation between science and religion' in the cognitive sphere (Casanova 1994: 233).

I believe that real-life communication offers material with which to test the strength and productivity of an ethnographic approach to the public sphere and an opportunity to connect the anthropology of communication to theoretical discussions in other social sciences. The following ethnographic chapters address the communicative dimensions of local religious rituals and practices in order to show the role of religion in the creation and maintenance of the public sphere. I also document the emergence of new actors, both secular and religious, and trace the direction of changes in the practices of communication in a local community. In chapter 7, using media analysis, I turn my attention to the national level of the public sphere, focusing on transformations triggered by the postsocialist liberation of the mass media.

Chapter 2
The Setting: Religious and Ethnic Divisions in Romania

Present-day socio-cultural divisions in Romania originated in the distinctive development of the historical regions that now compose the state. Three major historical provinces make up modern Romania: Moldova, Walachia, and Transylvania. Each was a separate polity for a long time. Not until the modern period did they come under common administration and form a political unit strong enough to promote a unified legal framework and homogenise their societies. Although considerable differences distinguished the three provinces from one another historically, they shared some similarities in both external politics (i.e. common enemies in neighbouring empires) and internal social structures and demographic patterns. I focus on the history of Transylvania more than on the others, because this was the region in which I conducted my research.

Medieval Transylvania was incorporated into the Hungarian kingdom in the eleventh century, but after the Ottomans defeated Hungary in 1526 Transylvania became a separate polity. Like Moldova and Walachia, Transylvania fell under Ottoman domination throughout the early modern period (Sugar 1977). Seeking to secure its eastern frontier, the Habsburg Empire also significantly influenced developments in Transylvania. The political history of the three principalities consisted of tactical alliances with and strategic orientations to the successive empires that attempted to control them. Within the limitations of their economic resources and military power, various elites attempted to secure their status and claim control. They built domestic alliances and attempted to manipulate external powers. The religious reforms of the sixteenth century reached Transylvania, a complex society divided internally among elite factions and status groups ('nations' or estates) in continuous strategic reorientation vis-à-vis the regional empires. I begin my historical overview with this period.

A Religious History of Romania

The population of Transylvania was Christianised under the domination of the medieval Hungarian kingdom. Western Christianity (Catholicism) became the dominant faith, but the Eastern Rite (Orthodoxy) was also present among a segment of the peasantry. The hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church in the religious sphere went basically unchallenged until the sixteenth century, when it was ruptured by the Reformation. The Reformation began in Transylvania relatively early, and segments of the population converted to divergent forms of Protestantism. The multiple divisions of the religious and secular public spheres that came about at this time were made possible because neither elites nor rulers were strong enough to achieve hegemony and thus sanction a single faith. Conversions during this period were mainly elite driven, and religious divisions followed divisions between elite factions and status groups. Religious divisions originating during this era had lasting effects on religious divisions throughout later periods.

In the early modern period the social structure of Transylvania was based on a political compromise between medieval status groups—the Hungarian nobility, Saxon towns, and the free military Szeklers. This compromise was codified in the 'Union of the Three Nations' (1437). Peasants, many of them Romanian-speaking Orthodox Christians, were excluded from political participation. Indeed, the union was agreed upon in reaction to a widespread peasant rebellion and was directed against the peasantry. As sixteenth-century religious reforms reached Transylvania, a sudden upsurge in conversions took place. These conversions more or less followed the society's existing fault lines. The religious sphere was diversified, but a large majority of the earlier status groups, the 'nations', adopted forms of Protestantism. A large portion of the Hungarian nobility and some Szekler regions converted to Calvinism and anti-Trinitarianism (known today as Unitarianism). The remaining segments of the Hungarian nobility and some Szekler regions remained Catholic. The Saxons converted primarily to Lutheranism. Coalitions between these status groups, the princes' desire for stability, and the Habsburgs' subsequent support for the Catholics during the emerging Counter-Reformation contributed to another closure of the social system.

It is beyond the possibilities of this brief historical sketch to go into details of the intricate relationships and interactions of social and religious transformations during this period.[53] The mass conversions, however, had long-lasting effects on each social group involved. From the perspective of the anthropology of communication, the most important developments of the

[53] For a good collection of essays on the social dynamics of the period, see Crăciun, Ghitta, and Murdock (2002a).

time were the introduction of printed books and catechisms and the spread of literacy. Historians are cautious in their appraisal of the degree to which literacy skills penetrated early modern societies and the effects of literacy in the religious sphere (Crăciun, Ghitta, and Murdock 2002b). I believe that rituals connected to literacy and books were certainly changed by the Reformation, and performative aspects of reading and reciting fixed texts might have been as important in the early modern period as they are today (see chapter 3).

The religious field was regulated by an edict of religious tolerance proclaimed in 1568. This legally imposed tolerance limited the number of 'received religions' to four: Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and anti-Trinitarianism. The Orthodox faith remained a 'tolerated religion' at the margins of the establishment. This edict, combined with the earlier unification of the three Transylvanian 'nations', solidified a social arrangement in which religion and status were closely intertwined. The arrangement was retrospectively labelled the 'seven deadly sins of Transylvania' by Baron Miklós Wesselényi, a liberal nobleman of the nineteenth century, because the system completely excluded the growing number of Romanian-speaking peasants, most of whom were Orthodox Christians (Sugar 1977: 153).

By the late seventeenth century, the emergence of Catholics of the Eastern Rite, also known as Greek Catholics, backed by the Habsburg Empire, challenged this arrangement of the multi-confessional society. Orthodox clergy and faithful who had 'converted' to Greek Catholicism by accepting a union with Rome were promised status equal to that of the other received religions. On the one hand, confessional belonging was an important indicator of status. On the other, religious boundaries coincided with divisions among linguistic and ethno-national groups, thus reinforcing the structures of ethno-religious monopolies. The division of the religious field that emerged from these compromises lasted until the unification of the Romanian principalities. In the early twentieth century, elites from throughout Greater Romania launched a nation-building process that sought to strengthen the Orthodox Church (Livezeanu 1995). Non-Orthodox faiths resisted such moves, and overlapping ethno-religious identities survived into present-day Romania.

Modern Romania

In Moldova and Walachia, one ideal of the 1848 revolutionaries was realised in the late nineteenth century: the two Romanian principalities were unified under the rule of a single prince. In 1866 Romania promulgated a constitu-

tion,[54] but it was not until March 1881 that Romania became an independent kingdom with the coronation of its first king. By this time several major social and economic measures had already transformed the polity: the abolition of Roma slavery in 1855–1856, the sequestration of estates belonging to the Orthodox monasteries in 1863, and an agrarian law passed in the same year. Almost all social strata welcomed the confiscation of church property, but the nobility (boyars) opposed land reform, and it proved only partially successful in alleviating Romania's striking social inequalities. Monasteries controlled approximately 25 per cent of the country's acreage. The heads of monasteries claimed that they were subject the jurisdiction not of the state but of the ecumenical patriarchate in Constantinople. The boyars perceived the sequestration of Orthodox estates as the end of foreign domination over a large part of the country, whereas peasants residing on ecclesiastical estates were worse off than those who worked on private land (Jelavich and Jelavich 1977: 119). By the end of the century the plight of the peasants had worsened. Problems related to social exclusion persisted; the constitution provided for the naturalisation only of 'foreigners belonging to the Christian faith', and so large numbers of Jewish immigrants coming from Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century were denied civil rights (e.g. landownership) and public employment (Jelavich and Jelavich 1977: 178–179).

In the 1918 unification, Transylvania, together with Bessarabia and Bukovina, became part of Romania. Problems related to regional differences and ethnic and religious diversity have been present since the inception of Greater Romania that year. In 1930, ethnic minorities made up 28 per cent of the total population, 48 per cent of the Transylvanian population, and the majority of the population in Bukovina (56.5 per cent) (Livezeanu 1995: 10). Religious diversity was even greater. State-building in Romania reinforced the hegemony of the national churches, which were given priority over minority denominations. 'Sects' were banned in a general attempt to control the public sphere. The distinction between these three categories of religious organisations—national churches (Orthodox and Greek Catholic), historical minority denominations (Rou: *cultele minoritare*), and sects—had strong ethno-national overtones. Although the two major national churches were composed mostly of ethnic Romanians, minority denominations still had some degree of legitimacy because most of their members belonged to one of the minority ethnic groups. Moreover, minority denominations had proven strategies for dealing with the state. Sects, however, were looked upon as uncontrollable movements that subverted established religious and ethnic structures. The basic opposition behind these distinctions persists into the

[54] The 1866 constitution was based on the Belgian constitution of 1831 (Jelavich and Jelavich 1977: 122).

present; minority denominations and national churches were eventually merged under the category of 'traditional' or 'historical' churches while 'new religions' and 'sects' came to form the other pole. Although these labels have been abandoned as legal categories, they continue to be influential in practice. For example, such labels shape inter-denominational alliances (Muntean 2005: 92–94).

In 1928, when a law to regulate the religious sphere was adopted, liberals formed the government. The main proponent and architect of the Law on Denominations (Rou: Regimul Cultelor) was the historian Alexandru Lapedatu, a member of the Liberal Party and minister for religious denominations and the arts. As is apparent from his contributions to the debate, Lapedatu must have found himself in a difficult position when he proposed putting all minority confessions on equal footing. The Romanian Orthodox Church had already been granted the status of 'dominant Church in the State' in 1925. Lapedatu had a hard time explaining why a law protecting other confessions was needed and how it would serve the interests of the state. After 15 legislative sessions, the proposed law still had not been adopted, and sceptics were asking whether it was needed at all. Lapedatu (1928: 22) argued:

> In the proposed law there are some matters that might seem curious for us, those who lived in the Old Kingdom. Nevertheless, these matters need to be regulated. There is the question of conversion from one denomination to another [*chestiunea trecerii dela un cult la altul*] and the problem of religious belonging of children. These problems did not exist in the Old Kingdom because there were only very rare cases of passing from one cult to another, and because the religious affiliation of children was regulated by civil law. No one was preoccupied with the problem of conversion from one denomination to another because we were living in the tradition of a single religion in the State, the Orthodox religion. We have now in our State seven to eight historical denominations that are recognized. Regulation of these matters is necessary.

One point for which Lapedatu felt he had found a good solution was the 'issue of the sects and their propaganda' (Rou: *chestiunea sectelor şi propagandei lor*). Limitation of 'sectarian activities' seemed to be common ground on which both the national and minority churches could agree and on which the state could show visible care towards the existing social order. The law, finally adopted in 1928, aimed to ban sects. But not all sects suffered the same fate. Baptists, who had been formally recognised in Transylvania by the Hungarian state in 1905, 'inherited' their legal status in the post–World War I successor states (Lapedatu 1928: 38–39). Adventists and

Evangelical Christians were registered as 'religious associations', whereas still others – Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Bible Students, and more – were 'strictly prohibited' (Rou: *interzise cu desăvârşire*) (Cuctuc 2001: 18).

Additional policies regarding minorities (e.g. regulations about language use) were even more severe during this period. Members of ethnic minorities who did not speak fluent Romanian lost their positions as offices formerly held by ethnic Hungarians (Magyars) and Germans were opened to ethnic Romanians. Agrarian reform had its greatest effect on Hungarians, because they owned a disproportionate number of estates in Transylvania (Verdery 1983: 287). Career opportunities for minorities were still open in the churches in which they maintained their dominance. In this way, churches became reservoirs of ethnic politics. This was true not only for Hungarians, Germans, Jews, and Muslims. Emerging Roma organisations, too, had strong connections to the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in this period.

Most people belonged to the church of their own group, and religious and ethnic activism on the part of Roma in majority churches was regarded with suspicion. Relations between Orthodox Christians and Greek Catholics were tense, and Roma were active in both denominations. Some Roma leaders reputedly had proselytising ambitions. The most notable case was that of Calnic I. Popp Şerboianu, an Orthodox priest of Roma origins who allegedly converted to Catholicism and intended to convert all Roma to Greek Catholicism (Klímová-Alexander 2005: 201). Other Roma leaders sought a closer relationship with the Orthodox Church in its fight against the sects. Exchanges of accusations between Roma leaders were not infrequent. Some leaders were denounced to the Orthodox patriarchy, and there were calls for their 'missionary certificates' to be revoked.[55] It is likely that the Orthodox Church hosted the embryonic Roma ethno-political organisations in the hope of recruiting new members and consolidating its influence among the Roma. But the relationship also served the interests of some Roma elites. Ilona Klímová-Alexander (2005: 276) has argued that the Roma leaders 'could have used the support and resources of the Church to further their own mobilisation goals. Religious conversion of Roma might have been just a necessary means to achieve this support'.

The use of religious arguments in politics was not confined to minorities. Secular democratic values were shared by only a minority of the Romanian political and cultural elite, and the constitutional monarchy functioned with great deficiencies. In order to explain inter-war Romanian politics and the public sphere, one should recall that the Romanian intelligentsia was

[55] See also Nastasă and Varga (2001: 151–154, documents nr 54 and 56).

divided into two camps, traditionalists and Westernisers. Traditionalists relied on religion as a key element of the Romanian 'national character' and opposed modernisation on the grounds that Romania should remain a peasant and Orthodox Christian nation. Westernisers were not particularly preoccupied with religion; they stressed rather the importance of industrialisation and democratic development.[56] Traditionalists objected to the importation of 'forms without substance', took a negative view of industrialisation and urbanisation, and displayed scepticism for and ultimately rejected democracy and the multi-party system.[57] By the third decade of the twentieth century many traditionalists had moved to the far right, participating in one way or another in the activities of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, which had strong religious overtones. The legion was one of the most prolific Eastern European fascist movements of autochthonous origin. Its military organisation, the Iron Guard, became infamous for its anti-minority actions and political assassinations during the 1930s.[58]

The Socialist Period

In November 1946, after the end of World War II, general elections were held in Romania, and the Communist Party became the dominant political force in the parliament. By December 1947 a new pro-Soviet government had been formed, led by Petru Groza. On 30 December 1947 the king was forced to abdicate and flee the country. By April of the following year Romania had a new constitution as a people's republic. On 3–4 August 1948 new laws regulating education and religious denominations were adopted. They outlawed the Greek Catholic Church and gave legitimacy to the sects that had previously been banned. Despite this, all religious organisations were subordinated directly to the state, and repressive administrative measures were applied when the government felt it needed to crack down on religious activity. In the first decade of the people's democracy, imprisonment and deportation to forced labour camps were common punishments for those charged with anti-regime activities. Members of the Greek Catholic clergy and laity, those who were reluctant to 'return' to the Romanian Orthodox Church, sectarians – mostly though not exclusively members of the Jehovah's Witness movement – and people caught engaging in 'subversive activities' (e.g. proselytising in villages) were deported together with kulaks, intellectuals, and other enemies of the regime (Vasile 2003a: 212–260).

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[56] For a discussion of the debates, see Hitchins (1995).

[57] Irina Livezeanu (1995) demonstrated how anti-pluralist ideologies gained the upper hand in the period 1918–1930.

[58] For discussion, see Volovici (1991) and Ioanid (2004).

The communist state also created an outlet for institution-building that was not previously possible. Pentecostals responded by reorganising and institutionalising their movement. A state-supported official Pentecostal bulletin was published starting in 1953, replacing earlier illegal and irregular publications. From 1929 onwards, Romanian Pentecostals had sporadically published *The Word of Truth* (Rou: *Cuvîntul Adevărului*). The official monthly bulletin was published between 1953 and 1989. The January 1990 issue of the bulletin was published under the title *The Word of Truth (New Series)*. Its editorial promised a return to 'words that could not previously be published'. The editor also apologised for items that the bulletin had been coerced into publishing, such as 'forced telegrams' of congratulations to the supreme leader, 'which probably, as we console ourselves, were not read by anybody' (Roske 1990: 1).

In September 1954 the Pentecostals moved their central administrative office from Arad to Bucharest.[59] This relocation of the administrative centre closer to the centre of the regime proved to be a mixed blessing: by the late 1950s the church was purged of leaders perceived as disloyal to the regime. Other neo-Protestant movements were subjected to similar treatment (Sandru 1994: 16). In the 1960s the Soviet Union's hold over Romania gradually weakened. In 1965 Nicolae Ceauşescu came to power, and the regime initiated a modest liberalisation of the public sphere. General administrative reforms were prepared in Romania, and the county system came into being. In 1968 Ceauşescu adopted an openly anti-Soviet stance in response to the Soviet occupation of Prague. Although his stance put him in the role of maverick communist leader, it also offered him the opportunity to build up an 'anti-Soviet Stalinism' with Western financial assistance (Câmpeanu 2002: 251). Along with forced industrialisation and labour migration policies, Ceauşescu promoted increasingly nationalist and oppressive politics and his own personal cult.

After halting the liberalisation of the public sphere and turning against the Soviet Union while adopting a more dogmatic Stalinist approach, the regime in 1975 launched its own secular ritual, the 'Song to Romania' (Rou: Cîntarea României). This ritual involved folklore competitions and a national festival, all supervised by intellectuals and party officials. Throughout Romania at the time, public discourse was increasingly taken over by variants of nationalistic discourse, and the oppression of ethnic minorities became more severe. These trends continued into the last days of the regime. Katherine Verdery has provided the best anthropological analysis of this process. She argued that 'the Party was *forced* on the terrain of national

[59] See news in the August–September 1954 issue of *The Word of Truth*, pp. 7–8.

values (not unwillingly) under pressure from others, especially intellectuals, whom it could fully engage in no other manner' (Verdery 1991a: 122). She focused on elites and intellectual discussions. The Song to Romania festival was part of the mass production of national culture. It was a ritual that aimed at national integration through the use of folklorism.

By 1962, after the period of relative liberalisation that followed the accomplishment of the socialist transformation of agriculture, the state began to invest in forced industrialisation. The new economy demanded mass migration and forced urbanisation, both of which led to a massive intermingling of populations previously confined to smaller regions. Ethnic collectivities reacted in different ways to both repressive measures and social displacement. Verdery, comparing the experiences of ethnic Germans and Hungarians, concluded that there was no uniformity to the effect of socialism on the different groups (Verdery 1985: 80). When the Roma case is compared with that of other ethnic groups, the dissimilarities become even more evident. Because the Roma were denied any official recognition, few areas of the public sphere remained open to them for displays of ethnicity. In Romania, representation of Roma in the public sphere was non-existent (Beck 1984). Roma groups were not admitted to the Cîntarea României, and Roma folklore performances were not permitted as a means of ethnic expression. This policy was perhaps one of the most repressive in Eastern Europe. To some degree, Roma were able to affirm a public identity in Bulgaria and Macedonia (Silverman 1986, 1995), the Soviet Union (Lemon 2000), Czechoslovakia (Guy 1975), and Hungary (Stewart 1990).

The only known case of public protest from this period is a letter sent by a Romani woman to Radio Free Europe in 1982. Among the many problems about which she complained was the dearth of possibilities for Roma 'cultural affirmation', because of the group's exclusion from 'cohabiting nationality' status, a privilege that had been granted to Hungarians, Germans, and even smaller minority groups such as Tatars and Armenians (even if limited to use for propaganda purposes). She denounced the official stance towards Roma as 'pseudo-ignorance', because officially Roma were denied a separate ethnic identity, although this did not prevent police from maintaining special records and statistics for 'Gypsy criminals' (Cosmin 1983: 34).

Other forms of ritual seem to have strengthened in the years between 1968 and 1988. Conversions to neo-Protestant confessions increased considerably. A table from the archive of the secret service provides data about neo-Protestant denominations during this time period (Neagoe and Plesa 2003: 64), revealing how Pentecostalism became the frontrunner in the

broader neo-Protestant movement.[60] In 1968, Baptists were the strongest denomination, with 66,670 members in 862 assemblies, followed closely by Pentecostals, registering 65,095 members in 700 assemblies. Adventists (44,850 members in 489 assemblies) and Evangelical Christians (27,585 members in 340 assemblies) had more modest membership numbers. By 1988 the number of the Pentecostal assemblies had increased to 793, and membership had reached 155,470 (among them 53,360 children). Baptists also registered significant growth, with 950 assemblies and 117,715 members by 1988. The membership of the Adventists grew to 70,870, and that of the Evangelicals to 41,885. Altogether, membership in the neo-Protestant denominations increased by almost 90 per cent (the number of Pentecostals grew by 139 per cent) over this 20-year period. The increase in the number of assemblies took place during the liberalisation that followed 1968. Growth in the number of assemblies in all churches was moderate (about 10 per cent) and slowed in the second decade. Growth in church membership accelerated during the most repressive years of the Ceauşescu period. Although state officials kept institutional expansion of all churches under strict control during the 1980s,[61] a large number of Romanians converted to some form of neo-Protestantism.

Scholars of religion consider migration and displacement to be important factors explaining the rise of religious activism in general, and specifically in explaining Pentecostal movements in many parts of the world (Robbins 2004b: 123–127). Romania is no exception. Moreover, the growth of Romanian Pentecostalism can be seen as part of the emerging worldwide Pentecostal revival in this period (1970–1990).[62] Historical churches called for international protest against state settlement plans involving the destruction of old villages and restructuring of the countryside. These plans, known as 'systematisation' (Rou: *sistematizare*), threatened to demolish centuries-old church buildings and relocate the faithful from villages to new socialist cities.[63] In the same period, neo-Protestants were relatively successful in making converts. This success stemmed in part from the movement's flexibility of association and avoidance of confrontation. Although the Inspectorate for Denominations limited the official program of churches to Sunday

[60] Unlike official statistics on socialist production, these numbers are unlikely to be inflated, because state institutions had no interest in exaggerating the growth in neo-Protestantism in Romania.

[61] See Sandru (1994) for the Pentecostals.

[62] In 1970 there were approximately 74 million Pentecostals worldwide, accounting for 6 per cent of Christendom. By 1997 the numbers of Pentecostals had reached 497 million, accounting for approximately 27 per cent of all Christians (Anderson 1999: 19).

[63] Steven Sampson's monograph (1984) is a study of this process with a special focus on Feldioara, one of the 300 planned 'new cities'.

services, clandestine, informal gatherings were often organised in private homes during the evenings. At these private celebrations Pentecostals could sing, pray, and study the Bible (Vlase 2002: 146–147). Prayer houses were built 'privately' by loyal members in order to avoid administrative obstacles such as the need for building permits for worship places. These 'owners' later donated the buildings to the assembly (Vlase 2002: 143). The lack of printed materials, especially Bibles, and educational institutions was counterbalanced by informal meetings of leaders, handwritten notebooks with songs, and smuggled Bibles that had been printed abroad.

Postsocialist Developments

After the fall of communism, Romania adopted a new constitution (1991) that proclaimed the separation of church and state, guaranteed full freedom and equality for all religious denominations, and stipulated that a special law should be passed to address the problem of denominations. This new law was not adopted, and the amended old law (1948) remains in force. After years of intransigent debate, the draft law is still contested by smaller denominations that fear that legal distinctions between churches and religious associations (denominations with fewer than 300 members) would exclude many new assemblies from being recognised as churches and that the state would retain excessive power in determining the fates of such new assemblies. Only religions recognised as 'churches' or 'denominations' have the right to provide religious education in schools, in which case the priests and pastors receive salaries from the state. The Greek Catholics, whose 'historical church' was re-emerging after having formerly been banned, also boycotted the ratification. Their consent is pending on ratification of a law on the restitution of property confiscated by the state (Rou: *naționalizare*) during the early communist period (Corley 2005).

Restitution of church property remained the dominant issue for many traditional religious organisations after the fall of state socialism. Buildings that had once belonged to churches were often used by public institutions after nationalisation. In cases in which a local church now seeks to reclaim lost property, it must bargain and litigate with the local administration in order to reoccupy the property, even after it has gained legal title to it. In this way, restitution has often been delayed de facto because of lawsuits or opposition from current possessors. The process is difficult in many cases because the claims of minority churches can be interpreted as unjustified ethnic demands at the expense of the Romanian majority, thus fomenting nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments promoted by some local politicians. One such debate was provoked by the restitution of the former Calvinist High School in Cluj (Hun: Református Kollégium). The building was re-

turned to the Calvinist Church in 1999 by a government decree. The bishop agreed to allow the use of some of the classrooms for a Hungarian school so that a Romanian secondary school (Rou: Liceul Teoretic Gheorghe Şincai) could still function in the rest of the building. The mayor of Cluj, well known for his anti-Hungarian rhetoric, initiated a series of counter lawsuits and made incendiary declarations claiming that the decision was railroaded through by ethnic Hungarian politicians (Transindex.ro 2002).

In the context of such aggressive debates, a few instances of religiously motivated violence took place in postsocialist Romania. None of these conflicts was ethnically motivated. Conversely, religious differences were not invoked in the violent conflicts that putatively were ethnically motivated. Such a conflict occurred between ethnic Romanians and Hungarians in Târgu Mures in March 1990. The altercation was connected to debates over secular institutions such as the Hungarian school in Târgu Mures. Other clashes came about as a result of dissension between local majorities (both Romanians and Hungarians) and Roma, as a result of alleged property abuses such as theft, and as exacerbated responses to scuffles between young males. These conflicts happened in all parts of the country, mainly in the first half of the 1990s (Fosztó and Anăstăsoaie 2001: 358–359). A number of religiously motivated violent conflicts were connected to the issue of property restitution and the unwillingness of the dominant church to hand over buildings to Greek Catholics. In such cases either the legal decision could not be applied because of physical resistance by the local Orthodox priest and parishioners or, as in the case of the Schimbarea la Față Cathedral in Cluj, Greek Catholics took over their property by force (Mahieu 2004: 10–12). Other conflicts arose between rural Orthodox clergy and members of sects. Instances of such conflicts have been rare in Transylvania.[64]

One such violent conflict between local clergy and 'sectarians' was labelled the 'Jihad of Niculitel' by the mass media. It took place in Tulcea County in late November 2001. One victim's account was widely circulated (Omuț 2001). Nicu Omuț was part of a group representing the Romanian Evangelical Alliance, which had rented the village house of culture in order to screen a religious film.[65] The mayor agreed to rent the room, but the local Orthodox priest prevented the distribution of posters and had the church bells tolled as is commonly done in the case of calamities. Representatives of

[64] For a list of conflicts involving Pentecostals, see Rusu and Tarnovschi (n.d.: 30–32). Some cases are also discussed on a web forum (BaptistNET.ro 2004).

[65] The Romanian Evangelical Alliance is an inter-confessional group formed by four organisations. Three of them are neo-Protestant denominations – Baptist, Evangelical Christian (Brethren), and Pentecostal – and the fourth is the Orthodox Christian 'Lord's Army' movement.

the alliance were threatened by a group of locals and left the village without being able to advertise the event. The following day a representative of the alliance returned in the company of reporters from the regional media, and the priest was invited to the mayor's office to be interviewed. He and his brother, also an Orthodox priest, attended the meeting but refused to grant an interview. When reporters attempted to interview villagers about the events, the priest brothers appeared along with a third colleague. The bells were again tolled, and a large number of locals gathered at the church. The reporters were sequestered in the churchyard and the representative of the alliance took refuge in his car, but he was eventually surrounded by a group of people and beaten by one of the priests. He was prevented from leaving the village and taken to the mayor's office. A crowd gathered in front of the office and the police were called in. The victim was escorted to the county police station, where he filled a complaint. The mayor resigned the same day.

This event might be taken as an illustration of the limited tolerance shown by some local priests and their parishioners towards religious minorities. It is also an example of how a conflict can be aggravated by direct confrontation and how, in such instances, the local majority will rally around 'their' priest. Attempts to 'go public' initiated by the religious minority with the support of the media might even fuel the antagonism. The majority church is unlikely to punish the priest for his zeal against 'sectarians and Satanists'. For these reasons, a leading Romanian human rights expert considers the Romanian Orthodox Church a repository for extremist tendencies. The church tolerates fundamentalist voices in its midst, Gabriel Andreescu (2003) has argued, and extreme right ideologies are not alien to some of its priests. Several among the highest clergy, including the patriarch and the bishop of Cluj, were involved in their youths in anti-Semitic actions by the Legion of the Archangel Michael (Andreescu 2003: 42). Other analysts have also remarked on the continuing popularity of xenophobic and fundamentalist ideologies and attitudes among members of the Association of Orthodox Christian Students of Romania (ASCOR). ASCOR maintains good relations with the xenophobic and nationalist New Right Christian Forum (Rou: Forumul Creştin 'Noua Dreapta'), which openly promotes the cult of the 'martyrs' and endorses the values of the Legion of the Archangel Michael (Mănăstire 2003).[66]

In contrast to heated debates and the exceptional violent conflict, much evidence exists of everyday civility and tolerance in local communities. Anthropologists looking closely at rural Orthodox Christianity in Ro-

[66] For a sample of the symbolism and attitudes of this organisation, see its website, www.nouadreapta.org.

mania have remarked on the relatively permissive attitudes of lower-level clergy towards practices of popular religiosity, as opposed to the more dogmatic strictures found higher in the church hierarchy (Mihailescu 2000). In line with these observations, in the following chapters I focus on the grass-roots level and discuss everyday forms of tolerance and civility in non-Orthodox denominations, as well as the limits to civility.

Before turning to my ethnographic material, I want to mention some limitations of applying the currently popular metaphor of the 'religious marketplace' to the postsocialist Romanian public sphere. One reason this metaphor applies poorly to Romania is that religious choices are rarely individual there. They are likely to be linked to a community broader than that of a person's close kin group. The group with which an individual identifies might be at the level of neighbourhood or local community, where people are subject to social control.

Another reason is that churches in Romania are far from competing freely for adherents. Romanian legislation has moved towards greater denominational freedom and equity in the postsocialist period, but at the same time, churches have reinforced their ethno-religious monopolies. All the historical churches in Romania have some connection to ethno-national ideologies and identity projects. Just as belonging to the Orthodox Church is equated with being an ethnic Romanian, so belonging to one of the so-called Hungarian churches is often directly linked to Magyar-Szekler ethnicity. The Romanian religious sphere consists of monopolistic structures with secular political alliances and as such bears little resemblance to a free market.

Religious denominations that emphasise the importance of individual conversion, as is characteristic of neo-Protestants, pursue a different strategy. Neo-Protestant denominations do not depend exclusively on congregations composed of members born into an ethno-national group and baptised by their parents. They also recruit 'born-again' adults. Although families play an important role in these denominations, ethno-national boundaries are more easily transcended in them. Their emphasis on individual salvation and on the local assembly makes national and ethnic identities less important for religious practice. Several analysts have concluded that 'in the current context, such an attitude almost inevitably leads to marginalization' (Flora, Szilagyi, and Roudemetof 2005).

Events that can be interpreted as attempts to change the perceived marginality of the new religious movements are looked upon with suspicion by historical churches. Arguably, neo-Protestant denominations encounter different problems in the public sphere than do historical churches. Because neo-Protestant denominations rarely possessed large properties before socialism, property restitution is not their primary concern, nor are they aligned to

represent the interests of a particular ethnic group. In their universalistic orientation they are perceived, rather, as threatening established divisions, and therefore they face restrictions on their ability to publicise their presence, chiefly through attempts to regulate the mass media.

One such case took place in the early years of the postsocialist period. It was reported by a well-known American Romanian Pentecostal pastor (Lascău 1998: 220–221). In the autumn of 1991, Romanian National Television (RNT) began to broadcast a cartoon series for children entitled *Super Book*. It was a Japanese-style animé film based on the Bible. After some time, the Orthodox Church pressured the network to terminate the broadcast. The problem ended up in parliament, where the director of RNT was called in to explain his rationale for broadcasting the cartoon. *Super Book* was subsequently taken off the air. The pastor concluded:

> The Orthodoxy succeeded in removing the serial from television. What were their arguments? 'The mode of presentation of the Bible is not Orthodox. The images do not reflect Byzantine iconography. The presentation of the Bible is erroneous from a dogmatic point of view. The series promotes the interests of the evangelicals in Romania, etc.' The translation, the technical production of the cartoon, and the accents of the actors who play the biblical figures were all debated. All these 'hard arguments' ended a chance to get to know the Holy Scripture from the houses of millions of Romanians (Lascău 1998: 221).

The case of *Super Book* is just one of many in which conservatives protect religious values against what they perceive as profanation in and by the mass media. In 2002, three members of the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR) proposed a law 'to prevent and punish the profanation of religious values'. The draft law, which the parliament subsequently rejected, proposed special provisions to limit the 'modern marketing' of religious values (Cherescu, Cojocaru, and Mândrea-Muraru 2002).

My own ethnographic cases show that some space exists in between segments of the religious field. Most notably, Roma often actively adopt positions seen as marginal by the majority population (Gmelch 1986). Therefore, it is not surprising that they show less interest in ethno-nationalist divisions and arguments. Some Roma might also be seen, along with other pioneers of the 'new religious market', as victims of the emerging market economy. This leads me to ask how the more or less agreed-upon 'horizontal' divide of ethnicity and religion in the postsocialist public sphere is able to cover the 'vertically' layered social reality – that is, increasing socio-economic differentiation – and promote solidarity reaching beyond ethno-religious labels. Against the monopolistic public face of ethno-religious

politics, many signs of everyday tolerance can be detected. I discuss such cases of tolerance in the following chapter.

Finally, I want to summarise the latest official data on the ethno-religious structure of minorities in Romania. These statistics, when compared with earlier data, also indicate the direction of recent changes. In the 2002 census, 324,462 persons, accounting for 1.5 per cent of the Romanian population, declared themselves to belong to the Pentecostal Church. In 1992 there were 220,824 self-identified Pentecostals, so the domination had registered growth of 50 per cent in the first postsocialist decade.[67] Ethnic Hungarians account for 6.6 per cent of the population of Romania, mostly living in Transylvania, and 92 per cent are distributed among the Calvinist (46.5 per cent), Roman Catholic (41 per cent), and Unitarian (4.5 per cent) Churches. The proportion of Pentecostals among Roma was higher: according to the 2002 census, 6.5 per cent of the 535,140 self-declared Roma belonged to the Pentecostal Church. Overall, Pentecostals were the fourth largest denomination in Romania in 2002, preceded by the Romanian Orthodox Church (86 per cent of the total population), the Roman Catholic Church (4.7 per cent of the total, of which 57 per cent are Hungarian), and the Calvinist Church (3.2 per cent of the total population, of which 95 per cent are Hungarian) (INS 2003).

Summary

The religious diversity observable in Transylvania today had its origins in the early modern period. Before the Reformation, social divisions were severe but were not underpinned by religious differences. The peasantry, both Catholic and Orthodox, was excluded from political representation. The conversions triggered by the Reformation brought about a diversification of the religious sphere. Nevertheless, conversions more or less followed divisions between the earlier status groups, the 'nations' (the Hungarian nobility and the privileged Saxons and Szeklers), and religious divisions contributed to the maintenance of pre-existing social divisions. The gradual convergence of religious and ethno-linguistic groups was catalysed by books printed in the vernacular, rituals connected to these texts, and persistent status divisions among social groups. The proclamation of religious tolerance in Transylvania in 1568 reinforced the exclusion of a large part of the peasantry, primarily those who were Orthodox. The emergence of the Greek Catholics (or Uniates, because of their union with Rome), backed by the Habsburgs, diversified the religious composition of Transylvania.

[67] See also www.oci.ro/recensament/CENSUS.htm.

In contrast to the Transylvanian developments, the Orthodox Church was the main religious actor in the old Romanian kingdom. The hegemony of national churches (Orthodox and Greek Catholic) was sealed with the unification of Transylvania and Romania. Minority denominations were legalised and sects prohibited. Following World War II, Romania became a secular people's republic in which freedom of religion was proclaimed while a single national church was abolished, thus forcing Greek Catholics to 'return' to Orthodoxy. The property of historical churches was confiscated. Denominations were subordinated to the state and controlled (if not persecuted) by authorities. Sects were seen as politically unaffiliated because of their universalistic orientation and their relative lack of interest in forming coalitions with ethno-national elites. The grass-roots politics of conversion caused sects to be viewed with suspicion as potential subversive allies of foreign 'alien powers'. The various regimes either completely banned sects or tried to control them by legalising their existence while administratively restraining their activity.

After the fall of communism, religious freedom was again proclaimed, and the law for denominations was amended. Greek Catholics re-emerged and, along with the other historical churches, sought to reclaim their nationalised properties. The new law for denominations is still only at the draft stage after more than a decade, but steps towards greater denominational freedom and equity have been taken. In practice the historical churches continue to be presented as more legitimate because of their affiliations with majority and minority ethno-national groups. Above and beyond formal equality, these churches are making renewed attempts to monopolise the loyalty of different segments of the population through mutually exclusive ethno-religious ideologies. At this level, the metaphor of the religious marketplace, when applied to the postsocialist Romanian religious public sphere, needs to be used cautiously. Although a putative monopoly over a segment of the population is pursued at the higher levels of hierarchy, crossing the dividing lines between the denominations is not uncommon at the bottom.

The Ethnographic Setting

In this section I introduce the basic characteristics of the locality where I conducted fieldwork: the city, the surrounding area, and the village. I focus primarily on the village, where I spent most of my time, and describe the local ethnic groups, aspects of social life, and the economic practices of the inhabitants. In this village the common religion of Hungarians and Roma traditionally has been Calvinism, referred as Reformed (Hun: *református*). Centuries-long coexistence and cultural adaptation hold strong influence on the present lives of the villagers, but there have been recent changes. In

religious life, a segment of the local population has converted to neo-Protestant denominations, most characteristically to Pentecostalism.

The centre of the area is Cluj-Napoca, a city of 318,000 inhabitants (INS 2003).[68] The city has accumulated a number of names during its history; before the nineteenth century it was alternatively referred as Klausenburg, Kolozsvár, Claudiopolis, Clusiu, and Klus, according to the language of a particular document and the intention of its author. The city was, and still is, considered the regional capital of Transylvania. It is inhabited by Germans (Saxons), Hungarians, Romanians, Jews, Armenians, and Gypsies. The ethnic composition of its population has shifted several times over the years. In medieval times the city was predominantly Saxon. The Hungarian population gradually increased until leadership of the city was shared between Saxons and Hungarians. By the seventeenth century Cluj had become a markedly Hungarian city. In the twentieth century the city again witnessed a demographic reconfiguration, with Romanians becoming the majority group. Since the fall of socialism the city has attracted the interest of the national and international press because of its repeatedly re-elected, fiercely nationalist mayor, Gheorghe Funar. Funar lost his office following the 2004 election.

Rogers Brubaker and his co-authors studied nationalism and everyday ethnicity in Cluj through a 'Romanian-Hungarian optique', and so they did not focus on the Roma in their book (Brubaker et al. 2006: 18).[69] But their results are of interest to anyone who studies similar issues in the region. They took up a suggestion of Eric Hobsbawm's and approached nationhood and nationalism as a 'dual phenomenon', constructed by elites 'from above' yet not understandable if not studied 'from below' (2006: 13). They claimed that categories of nationhood and ethnicity needed to be analysed in everyday interactions in order to evaluate in which contexts and situations ethnicity mattered and how ethnicity worked in social life, organising experience and action.

One of their main findings was that ethnicity was more often 'marked' for the Hungarian population than for its Romanian neighbours. This means that the Hungarians of Cluj experience and understand situations or communicate and direct their action on the basis of ethnic categories more often than the Romanian majority does. That is, they mark and remark ethnicity

[68] This has been its name since 1974, Napoca being the Roman name of the presumed Dacian site on which the town was built. Referring to the city by other names was officially banned, and the Hungarian name, Kolozsvár, was prohibited from appearing in any written document.

[69] Several research projects were carried out in the city (see, for example, Brubaker and Feischmidt 2002; Feischmidt 2003; Fox 2004, 2006). The final collaborative product of these is Brubaker et al. (2006).

more readily than the majority. Nevertheless, the authors concluded: 'Ethnicity is in general more salient for Hungarians than for Romanians; yet the Hungarian world possesses a scaled-down version of the power that Romanian and other nation-states have to "unmark" ethnicity and nationality and to confer on the ethnonational majority the privilege of invisibility' (Brubaker et al. 2006: 359). The way the 'Hungarian world' naturalises interactions, leaving aside ethnic categories in everyday interactions, can be well documented not only in Cluj but also in the surrounding area. In the village where I did fieldwork, everyday interaction is unmarked by ethnicity most of the time. Hungarians do not address or problematise ethnicity. Ethnicity is more often marked for the Roma minority in the village, but even for them, in many situations, such as economic cooperation, ethnic categories do not inform and orient social action.

The rural area surrounding the city is diverse. Gánás (a pseudonym), the village where I spent most of my time, is a constituent of Kalotaszeg, a region defined as an ethnographic unit (Hun: *néprajzi tájegység*) by Hungarian ethnographers (Hofer and Szacsvay 1998; Keszeg and Pozsony 2000). The region is perceived as having a population composed of a Hungarian majority and Romanian and Roma minorities, although the exact boundaries of Kalotaszeg are far from undisputed.

In a recent ethnography of Kalotaszeg, Balázs Balogh and Ágnes Fülemile (2004) offered archaeological and historical evidence for the diminution of the Hungarian population in the area over the centuries. They observed that 'on the basis of both historical sources and living memories, the tendency seems to be that whereas Hungarians earlier occupied a larger territory, that territory has contracted continuously since the late Middle Ages. This creates one of the main problems in drawing the boundaries of the research area, because one has to work with borders that *changed continuously in time*, and a village that we can consider not a part of this landscape . . . today could have been part of it 100 or 200 years ago' (2004: 22–23).

Balogh and Fülemile also claim that the symbolic boundaries of the area have expanded to include villages with Hungarian populations that were not originally considered part of Kalotaszeg. The idea of symbolic expansion fits well with the process described earlier by Tamás Hofer (1991), who argued that the official Hungarian national culture was constructed, in part, from the peasant culture of the Kalotaszeg (Hofer 1991). For some visitors, Kalotaszeg today is merely an island of the living national past (I address this issue in chapter 6). Indeed, folk costumes, music and dance, and customs and traditions from the area are exhibited in museums in Hungary, and folk dance camps are organised in the summer for youths. In postsocialist

times Kalotaszeg has increasingly become a destination for heritage tourism. Revitalisation has now started in Gánás as well.

The Village

Gánás is one of seven villages that were compounded into an administrative unit (Rou: *comună,* Hun: *község*) during socialism. The total population of the *comună* is more than 8,000. A neighbouring village hosts all the administrative offices, and Gánási people often complain that they are almost forgotten by this centre. Some also claim that the *comună* was designed only in order to balance the ethnic proportions: Hungarians today form a minority of the total population, which has a slight Romanian majority.

In Gánás there is no dispute over the dominance of Hungarians in both numbers and prestige. But on my first visits to the village I was struck by its relatively harmonious ethnic relations. In comparison with my previous experiences of Roma-Hungarian relations in other parts of Transylvania (e.g. Száldobos/Doboşeni; see Fosztó 2003c), where Roma lived socially and physically segregated on the fringes of larger communities, many of the Gánási Roma were visibly well integrated in the local society. Even the less wealthy families commanded dense networks of social relations that cut across ethnic boundaries. Although residential segregation exists, it is not extreme in Gánás. The Roma-only segment of the village is 'Gypsy Hill', but Roma families also live on the main street of the village, having moved in during the 1970s. Two other streets end with almost exclusively Roma neighbourhoods, but none of the local Hungarians objects to visiting and spending time in these areas.

Everyday interactions in the village lack any sign of ethnic tension. Roma are fluent in the local Hungarian dialect, in addition to Romanian. Many Hungarians (typically males) can engage in basic conversations in Romani with their Roma neighbours. Socio-economic relations have obvious inequalities, but they do not prevent members of the two ethnic groups from engaging in amicable and frequent communication. Mixed marriages are strongly discouraged, although they occur in small numbers (I was aware of three cases).

The present situation can be attributed to several factors. Most important, I think, is the long common history of the groups, who have lived side by side for at least several centuries. The presence of Roma in Gánás has been noted since at least the early nineteenth century, but very likely they were living there even earlier. In the everyday narratives of the local people, Gánás was almost always a mixed community. Hungarians and Roma alike agree that there have always been two groups who needed and supported each other in various ways.

Today Gánás has about 1,300 inhabitants in some 500 households. A third of the population is Roma, and the remainder primarily Hungarian, although there is also a handful of Romanian families. Official data do not reveal these divisions, because most of the Roma declared Hungarian ethnicity during the last census. Historically, the numbers have fluctuated for similar reasons and because of changing categories and methods of census taking. Table 2.1 shows the history of the population as recorded by official censuses.

Table 2.1. Population History of the Village

Year[a]	**Total**	**Hungarians**	**Romanians**	**Germans**	**Other**	**Gypsies/ Roma included in "Other"**
1850, *n*	720	577	49	2	92	92
1880, *a*	1025	763	83	—	179	—
1880, *n*	1025	791	86	—	148	—
1890, *a*	1220	956	100	2	162	[190]
1900, *a*	1268	1073	91	1	103[b]	—
1910, *a*	1383	1284	98	—	1	—
1920, *n*	1435	1291	140	2	2	—
1930, *a*	1572	1394	148	—	30	30
1930, *n*	1572	1282	162	1	127	125
1941, *a*	1582	1457	121	1	3	—
1941, *n*	1582	1473	109	—	—	—
1956	1497[c]	—	—	—	—	—
1966, *a*	1496	1378	107	—	11	10
1966, *n*	1496	1377	117	—	2	—
1977, *n*	1569	1406	113	—	50	50
1992, *n*	1368	1237	69	—	62	62
2002, *n*	1419	1158	125	—	136	136

Source: http: //varga.adatbank.transindex.ro/; ISN 2003.

[a] Census categories are indicated as *a,* mother tongue, and *n,* ethnicity.
[b] The majority of the other mother tongues are Roma.
[c] Changes due to administrative reorganisation.

Before the mid-nineteenth century Gánás was a serf village (Hun: *jobbágyfalu*). Social divisions among the villagers (and obligations to the owner of the village) were based on the villagers' ownership of plots (Hun: *telek*). Accordingly, villagers were categorised socially and legally in relation to landownership or lack thereof. There were persons who owned either full or half plots (Hun: *egésztelkes/féltelkes gazda*), and those who owned no land: peasants without inheritance (Hun: *örökségtelen*), widows (Hun: *özvegy*), and Gypsies (Hun: *cigány*). These social distinctions survived the abolition of serfdom, and heads of families continued to be referred to by similar labels in local church documents well into the early twentieth century (Tötszegi 2004: 36). Even today landowning villagers are referred to as *gazda*. Similarly, landless Gypsies still form a clear-cut social and ethnic category, and they have maintained complex socio-economic relationships with wealthier villagers (see chapter 3).

The Local Economy

The area immediately surrounding Gánás is mountainous and thus unfavourable to intensive agriculture, although people practise animal husbandry with good results. In the late nineteenth century a new breed of cattle was introduced in the region: the buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*). The twentieth-century socio-economic history of the village can be best illustrated by the example of buffalo husbandry.[70] Buffalo are less demanding of fodder and winter shelter than cattle, and they can also be used as traction animals. Moreover, buffalo are cheaper to purchase and feed than cattle, and their fatty milk yields greater returns than that of cows. Cattle and oxen (Hun: *fehérmarha*) were more highly regarded, and well-off *gazda*s preferred to keep them. Buffalo were considered to be the cattle of the poor (Hun: *szegényember marhája*), but their prestige gradually changed. Correspondingly, the first buffalo in Gánás were purchased by relatively poor peasants. Gánás's proximity to Cluj offered a prime opportunity for marketing milk products, and so Gánási *gazda*s turned increasingly to breeding buffalo for their milk. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, butter, cheese, cream, and unprocessed milk derived from buffalo have been sold in the city marketplace and through networks of urban households (Hun: *helyek*).

The burgeoning population of Cluj provided a secure market for milk products during the first half of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1938, an association of milk producers (Hun: *tejszövetkezet*) began to operate in the

[70] For the earlier periods I rely on the excellent account of the history and ethnography of buffalo husbandry in Kalotaszeg written by Dr. Károly Kós (1979). My material on buffalo herding is more recent and comes from Roma, the customary herders of buffalo today.

village (Kós 1979: 251). The association was closed in 1953, and milk collection was taken over by a state firm. The buffalo population dropped to about one-third its former size – from a high of 1,500 head in 1950 to 530 in 1953 – but soon afterwards, when the state firm offered advantageous conditions for selling milk, numbers rose again (see Kós 1979; Varga 2004). In 1953 villagers purchased 360 buffalo over a period of two weeks, and by 1955 they owned a total of 1,300 (Kós 1979: 216). Individual buffalo ownership fell to as low as 150 animals as a consequence of collectivisation. The *gazda*s lost control over their land and pastures after the establishment of collective farms. Most buffalo were sold or 'collectivised', with the collective farm in charge of husbandry. Animals were kept in stables and looked after by personnel recruited mainly from among local Roma. Other Roma worked in the construction industry in the city, and still others were employed by the local street-cleaning company. Some villagers continued to keep animals at home while working at the collective farm. Others began commuting to the city in order to work in the industrial plants created during the period of rapid industrialisation. The city grew, and so did an informal market for milk products during the shortages of the 1970s and 1980s. In response, a slow return to buffalo husbandry arose that continued steadily into the late days of the regime.

Following the collapse of the socialist regime and the deindustrialisation of the city, most commuting workers lost their jobs. Many of these people returned to agriculture, although there has been no spectacular growth in the number of buffalo during the postsocialist period.[71] This trend in the buffalo economy can be seen as a continuation of late socialist tendencies. The collective farm was dissolved, and land was distributed among the villagers. Social distinctions in the village resurfaced after the fall of the regime. The old class divisions based on landownership were increasingly reasserted. The largest category, comprising more than two-thirds of all landowners (161 out of 225), is that of small landowners, who possess plots of 0.1 to 4.65 hectares. Among the remaining, relatively better-off families, about 80 per cent (52 families) own 5 to 9 hectares of land, and 20 per cent (12 families) have more than 10 hectares. This last category constitutes around 5 per cent of the total population (Diakónia 2004: 68–69). Today, the biggest *gazda* owns a little more than 40 hectares. Landowners are exclusively Hungarian. During the early 1990s a local Calvinist pastor began an initiative to procure milk-processing equipment in order to serve the needs of the community and stimulate economic growth. Some of the

[71] By 2004 the total number of cattle (cows and buffalo combined) had reached 537, and the biggest *gazda* owned 20 head. Ten of the 120 families who owned cattle had a single buffalo (Diakónia 2004: 50).

local *gazda*s opposed this modernisation project because they feared competition and saw their incomes threatened (Tötszegi 2004: 39). The equipment was never installed, and villagers continued to market their produce in the city individually. Today, only a small minority of people with reduced marketing skills and low mobility sell milk to the collection centre (Hun: *tejcsarnok*). It was beyond my research objectives to investigate whether Gánás had returned to a form of peasant economy or whether villagers were experimenting with small-scale, market-oriented production, but the local economy appeared to be a combination of the two forms.

A cursory look at time management and the gendered division of labour in *gazda* families demonstrates the social embeddedness of local economic practices. From early spring until late autumn, buffalo are kept in a herd outside the village. Each herd is composed of around 100 animals. Herders tend to their cattle day and night in the pastures near the village, sleeping in the fields with the animals. Cattle do not return to the village each evening (as is more typical in the region), because buffalo are thought to produce more milk if they do not 'waste their energy' by walking home. *Gazda*s visit their herds twice a day, in the early morning and late afternoon, to milk the animals. Most owners have horses in order to do this and spend about two hours in the morning and in the evening travelling and milking. The men parade their horses, exchange news, and occasionally share drinks during their milking trips. The milking place (Hun: *fejőhely*) is usually situated not far from the village, and the animals are driven there to meet their owners. The milk is brought back to the household, where the women prepare dairy products for the market. Women are also those who travel three or four times a week to the city to sell the products. During these expeditions they exchange news and shop for the family.

Some men, typically younger ones, take up regular employment in the city, and their families usually renounce buffalo. Some women also commute to work in the city. Traffic between the village and the city is constant, facilitated by minibuses four to six times a day during weekdays.

The local economy of Gánás is also underpinned by an ethnic division of labour, because herders for the cattle are most typically recruited from among local Roma. This secures a relatively high income for at least some Roma families. A herder and his aide can earn about 100 million lei in cash (approximately US$2,800 in 2004) from late April to late October, and even more depending on the number of the animals in the herd (the owner of 'a pair of buffalo' pays the herder between 1.5 million and 2.0 million lei in two instalments).[72] The herder and his family are also fed by the owners

[72] The average monthly income per person in the village was estimated at 1.08 million lei (approximately US$30). The main sources of regular income were pensions (in 44 per cent of

throughout this period. Other Roma find employment as day labourers during the labour-intensive spring hoeing, summer haymaking, and winter woodcutting.[73] Construction in the city also offers occasional work for even better daily wages.

In addition to these work opportunities, up until the recent past Roma dominated another occupational category. A handful of families earned their livings as musicians playing at village celebrations and rituals, particularly during the winter. They supplied music for ritual occasions, especially baptisms and weddings, and the regular dances of the local Hungarians. These musical performances are well documented by Hungarian ethnographers. The traditional music of this area is part of the repertoires of many Hungarian folk ensembles playing Transylvanian or Hungarian music. Today, local Roma have largely abandoned music as a substantial source of income. Several younger Roma men, typically the offspring of the 'musician dynasties', can play instruments, but there is no local band able to perform music for local rituals. Musicians hired for parties following baptisms and other celebrations are Roma from other villages or the city. The majority of musicians who perform popular renditions of traditional folk songs for the urban public come increasingly from ethnically Hungarian families in the village and the larger region.

Music is not the only cultural product that has been successfully marketed to national urban centres. The local folk costume is traditionally richly decorated, and many Hungarian women developed skills in preparing and maintaining these garments. Procuring the fabric and accessories (scarves, beads, etc.) required the willingness and ability to travel and negotiate. Because the folk costumes demand a great deal of labour, they are expensive and are rarely sold. But the skills needed to prepare them have recently been successfully applied to the manufacture of necklaces from glass beads and other decorative objects. These products are sold on the national market. Women also travel to Hungary to sell them directly, or they give the products to intermediaries who sell them in Budapest. The handicraft is also popular among local Roma women. Although they rarely have access to networks through which they can procure materials and sell the products, local Hungarian women who control these networks subcontract the production of objects such as necklaces, bracelets, and plastic eggs covered with beads to Roma women who offer their labour for a moderate but steady cash income. Social relations between Hungarian and Roma women also enable

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families), wages (27 per cent), occasional employment (11 per cent), and other sources (13 per cent) (Diakónia 2004: 62).

[73] There is no gas heating in the village, and wood is used almost exclusively for heating and cooking.

the Roma to obtain beads on credit and pay for them in finished products. These relations help Roma women not only to continue the handicraft but also to satisfy family needs in times of shortage.

Religion and Social Life

Most residents of the village are members of the Calvinist (Hun: Református) Church, irrespective of ethnicity. Religion is a unifying social marker of the local society and also distinguishes locals from residents of neighbouring villages, where Orthodox Romanians and Catholic Hungarians live in larger numbers. The Gánási Roma consider that being Calvinist means that they are of 'Hungarian religion' (Rom: *po ungrikon törvényi,* literally 'of Hungarian law'). They emphasise that being Calvinist, they are distinct not only from Orthodox Romanians but also from Roma groups who are of 'Romanian religion' (Rom: *po xlahitjikon törvényi*). Those Roma groups are sometimes also referred to as *mântjene* (singular *mântjean*), from the name of the southern province of Romania, Muntenia. Being called *mântjean* is considered derogatory or even an offence among the local Roma, although it is used in some cases teasingly. In any case, it denotes lower social rank, deprecation, being 'dirty' and less trustworthy, and being too eager to quarrel and fight. But the category is not homogeneous; many other Roma groups can be included in it because of differences in dialect, habits, and religion. It is not used arbitrarily. Those included in it are seen as being closer to Romanians, whereas the Gánási Roma see themselves as closer to Hungarians. They usually are perceived by outsiders as 'Hungarian Gypsies' (Hun: *magyarcigány*), and they often employ 'Romungro' or 'Roma ungrika' (Hungarian Roma) as their self-definition. Indeed, during official censuses, many of them declare Hungarian ethnicity. A teacher from the village who had served as a field operator during the 2002 national census recalled that several local Roma families, when asked about their ethnic affiliation, responded that they were 'Református'.

The main religious authority in the village is the Calvinist pastor. He preaches on regular weekends in the church, which is situated in the centre of the village. The language of the services is exclusively Hungarian. In addition to weekend services, local pastors continued even during socialism to teach classes in religious education and memorisation of the credo (Hun: *káté*) for teenagers approaching confirmation (see chapter 3). The local pastor also performs life-cycle rituals for Hungarians and Roma alike. The church is well attended on major religious holidays, but on normal Sundays attendance is low (15 to 30 persons). A religious foundation began to function in the village in the late 1990s. Its main activities are connected to public health (it subsidises a local consulting room), education (extracurricu-

lar activities), and cultural activities (e.g. co-organisation of Village Days, described in chapter 6).

In the early twentieth century a relatively strong Baptist assembly emerged among the Hungarians in the village. A Baptist chapel was built in the centre of the village. Today it is visited sporadically by the few remaining Baptists, most of whom are Roma. Pentecostals form a relatively small minority, about 10 per cent of the Roma population. They are most active on religious holidays, congregating in the houses of converts. The language of the Pentecostal rituals (sermons, testimonies, and prayers) is almost exclusively Romanian, but some singing is performed in Romani. Pentecostal services have an intimate atmosphere, and 15 to 20 persons participate on a regular Sunday. These converts are integrated into a larger network of Pentecostals composed of converts from neighbouring villages and larger assemblies in the city, who tend overwhelmingly to be Roma. None of the local Hungarians has converted to Pentecostalism, and all the Roma Pentecostals were baptised in assemblies outside the village. Gánás has no local ordained Pentecostal pastor, just several self-taught preachers. Roma pastors make occasional visits to the local assembly, but the village is not a site of strong missionary activity.

The closest Orthodox church is in the neighbouring village, some 5 kilometres away. The few local Orthodox Christians attend services there occasionally, but the Orthodox priest (Rom: *xlahitjikon rasaj,* literally 'Romanian priest') is well known among the local Roma and even among the Hungarians. The influence of Orthodox Christianity can be perceived among people of other denominations at the personal level rather than in public adherence to Orthodoxy. The people of Gánás do not attend Orthodox services or convert to Orthodoxy, but they do participate in Orthodox rituals focused on believers' personal problems, most often health and family issues. I discuss the practice of taking oaths and its connection to the transformation of moral personhood in chapter 4.

Research Methods

I carried out the fieldwork for this study between June 2003 and September 2004. I resided in Gánás continuously beginning in late August 2003 and visited the city regularly. I gathered most of my data through participant observation. My native tongue is Hungarian, but I learned to speak Romanian while growing up and receiving my education in Romania. I belong to none of the confessions I studied. I was a relative outsider to the area, because my native town is in eastern Transylvania, in the region called Szeklerland (Hun: Székelyföld; Rou: Secuime). To enable my full participation in

Roma life, from June to August 2003 in Cluj I began to learn a local Romani dialect with the help of an elderly Romni (Roma woman).

This woman had been born in Gánás but moved to the city and found employment there, first in the construction industry and then working for the street-cleaning company. In 2003 she was a pensioner. She was not only my language instructor but also had good knowledge of the village and the city and guided me in religious matters as well. She had been baptised a Calvinist, and although she had never converted, she had some experience with Pentecostals, having at one time attended an assembly for some months and having family members who had converted. My teacher introduced me to other members of her family, some of whom lived in the city and some of whom lived in the village. Most of the city dwellers were Orthodox Christians, and the villagers were primarily Calvinist. My mentor became my most important contact with the Roma in the city. She joined me on my first visit to a Pentecostal church led by a Rom. Moreover, I found a host among her relatives in Gánás, where I moved in the summer of 2003.

The Roma family that hosted me in Gánás became my main guide to village life. Their relationships enabled me to attend family celebrations and life-cycle rituals among Roma, and as time passed I found my role changing as I was invited to some of these events as a photographer and cameraman. During my stay in the village I experienced no hostility or rejection from either the Roma or the Hungarian community, although some Hungarians could not understand my continued presence among the Roma, and some Roma suspected me of hiding from my wife and our two-year-old daughter, who stayed in the city.

Both of the men in my host household, father and son, were experienced herders, so they also had an extensive network among the local Hungarians for whom they worked. My older host, Papu, age 74, had lived all his life in Gánás.[74] He had experienced the socialist transformations but 'never put his stick down' for more than a couple of years, when he experimented with working in a factory. Then he continued to herd cattle owned individually by villagers.

Papu had two sons and a daughter. Both sons herded, and the daughter had migrated from the village. Misi (a pseudonym), the younger of the brothers (age 34 in 2003), lived with Papu. Because I was around the same age and shared the family's life, we developed a friendship. I discussed most of my ideas with Misi as I formulated them, and as time passed he became increasingly open in telling me when he thought I was asking the wrong

[74] The family referred to him in his absence as *o puro*, 'the old man'. When he was present, his son called him *dad* (father), and his daughter-in-law (*bori*) addressed him as *papu* (grandfather). I refer to him as Papu.

questions or looking in the wrong direction. Misi's wife, whom I refer to as Bori (daughter-in-law), as Papu did in her absence, was born outside the village, but her parents had moved to Gánás when she was young. Her stepfather, whom I refer to as Dani, was one of the leaders of the local Pentecostals.

In order to observe Pentecostal religious practices in the area, I started attending two Pentecostal assemblies in the city while I was improving my Romani language skills. One of the churches was situated in a suburb, and its membership was composed almost exclusively of Roma. I attended services and quickly found my place as a 'friend' (Rou: *prieten*), a category consisting of unbaptised adherents. After moving into the village I attended Pentecostal services organised in private homes, and I was rarely able to visit the church. The other assembly in the city was situated in a relatively well-off neighbourhood and consisted of Romanian Pentecostals. They, too, were welcoming, and members of the church visited my family to celebrate Christmas in 2003 with carol singing and holiday greetings. What I learned from both of these assemblies helped me understand religion, and specifically Pentecostalism, but these experiences could find no place in my ethnography, which is about the village.

In addition to conducting participant observation, I collected genealogies in the village and recorded life history interviews with both converted and unconverted Roma. Interviews with converts often turned into testimonies. I revisited and recorded conversion narratives from five of the converts. I also recorded personal prayers, Pentecostal songs, and a full service conducted by the local preacher. I recorded no singing by the unconverted, because some of these people expressed their disappointment with earlier ethnographers who never returned after allegedly promising to pay their informants, despite the fact that the songs they documented were published or broadcast.

I prepared a three-part questionnaire about basic household data, language use, and social networks. My total sample consisted of 25 Roma households. Although this survey remained incomplete, it provided important information about some topics that I discuss in chapter 3 when addressing the network of parents and godparents. I also refer to general statistical data from a survey of the whole population of the village carried out by a Christian foundation from the city. I was given a copy of the report summarising this survey by a local intellectual.

Summary

The village of Gánás appears to an outsider to be rather underdeveloped. In spite of the relative proximity of the city, the village lacks modern infrastruc-

ture such as pavement on the streets, sewerage, gas heating, and a communication system. In contrast to Cluj, Gánás seems to be an island of past and tradition. Ethnic relations and social life are organised in many respects on the basis of patterns that can be better understood according to the long-term social history of the settlement than in terms of the recent past of socialism. The social life of the village seems to have followed the path from socialism into postsocialism without major ruptures. Some elements of religious life that were more hidden during socialist times have become more visible. People more readily claim religiosity and ethnic belonging in public (e.g. confirmation rituals are increasingly attended by outsiders), religious education has been introduced in school, and a church-related foundation has begun to be active. The most visible changes are perceivable in the revitalisation of rituals that create new local public spheres (chapter 6).

The 'traditional' character of the village needs to be explained in dynamic terms in the present. For example, the success of folk artefacts manufactured in the village, like the popularity of local music and dance, lies in the ideas or ideologies linking Kalotaszeg and, implicitly, the villages in the region to the Hungarian nation. Villagers were exposed to these ideas more intensely after the collapse of the socialism, but Kalotaszeg has been part of the national imagination for a long time. After socialism it simply became more public than it was before.

Although the ideological significance of local customs and folk art is rarely mentioned or enacted among the Roma, they are well aware of the practical usefulness of personal connections with their neighbours. Those neighbours might be buffalo owners in need of herders, farmers needing hired hands during haymaking, or peasant women in need of female hands to prepare necklaces for the market. The local social order is rarely challenged publicly. Nevertheless, Roma have their own perspective on the local world in which they enact their rituals and even accommodate new rituals, as the cases of Pentecostal conversions demonstrate.

Chapter 3
Rituals in the Village: Strengthening Local Community

The major life-cycle rituals among Roma in Gánás are baptism, confirmation, and burial. Each marks a person's transition from one stage of life to another – childhood, adulthood, and death – with religious rituals and celebrations involving Roma and Hungarians alike. The absence of marriage among the main rituals might at first seem startling, but during my stay in the village I witnessed no marital ceremonies among the Roma and learned that this was generally the rule. Few marriages in the Roma community are marked by religious rituals, and marriages are rarely celebrated with parties comparable to those that follow baptisms and confirmations. Marriages are not contracted formally, and the founding of a new family is most often celebrated at the baptism of the first child. The couple gains public recognition as their relationship proves lasting.

Sociological surveys of religiosity usually include questions about attendance at religious ceremonies and the respondent's willingness to request a religious service for the major life-cycle rituals of family members. In 2000 a representative survey showed that 92–94 per cent of the total population of Transylvania considered participation in religious baptisms, weddings, and funerals to be important. This positive response rate is high in comparison with those of other countries. Data on the general population of Hungary provide a clear example: 27 per cent of the population aged 18–40 and 21 per cent of the total adult population considered baptism unimportant. Twenty-nine per cent of the total population and 35 per cent of those between 18 and 40 believed that religious wedding ceremonies were unnecessary, and 17 per cent of all adults and 18 per cent of 18- to 40-year-olds would not organise a religious funeral (Tomka 2000). The greater preference for religious services in Transylvania can be taken as an indication of intense religious engagement. However, the marking of personal changes with religious significance can also be analysed from the perspective of ritual communication – that is, through an inquiry into the way ritual builds social relations and symbolic community around significant events in personal

lives. Although these rituals focus on a person (or an age group in the case of confirmation), they involve the village as a community. In the following analysis I interpret rituals as devices by which locality is constructed and enacted, and I highlight the role of religion in this process.

Baptism: Good *Kirve*

In Gánás the canonical ritual of baptism is performed by the Calvinist pastor (Hun: *református lelkész;* Rom: *rasaj*), assisted by leading members of the church, all of whom are non-Roma. Roma have their own celebration of 'second birth' (Rom: *bolipo*) and a practice of creating ritual kinship ties by selecting numerous godparents for the child. The relationship between a child's parents and godparents is called *kirve* (Hun: *komák*), and in the plural the parents and godparents are also called *kirve.* The father and godfathers are each *kirvo* (sing.) to one another, and the mother and godmothers are each *kirvi*. Basically, Roma retain control over the rules and practices of ritual kinship relations while religious authorities supervise recruitment to those relations (e.g. only religiously married couples are admitted as first godparents). Religion proposes and sanctifies social forms and practices that constitute an important part of the local public sphere. Nevertheless, under the cover of ritual kinship, socio-economic interests are in play.

As part of my attempt to grasp the structural features of ritual kinship through *kirve* in Gánás, I conducted formal, questionnaire-based interviews about godparents involved in child baptisms in 25 Roma families or households. Through the questionnaire I traced the networks created by *kirve* relationships. In one section of the interview I tried to elicit everyday practices in different spheres of life connected to these kinship structures. For instance, I tried to uncover economic connections by looking at lending and credit practices, and I explored socialising habits by asking respondents with whom they met for drinks and coffee. I asked about circuits through which news was shared, and I asked respondents which person they would go to first for assistance in the case of a birth or death in the family. In addition to the survey, I observed interactions between *kirve* and instances of baptism rituals.

Baptism in Gánás marks the social birth of a person. He or she is endowed with a name and a social identity. It is the 'second birth', social and spiritual, of a member of the community. The idea of rebirth is commonplace in the theorisation of *rites de passage*. Symbolic death and rebirth are crucial elements of baptism (and more generally, of all types of rituals) in the scholarly interpretations of analysts drawing on the tradition founded by Arnold van Gennep (1965). I use the term *second birth* in a different manner. As articulated by Bloch and Guggenheim (1981), second birth is a spiritual

birth that is thought to be superior to natural birth in symbolic systems surrounding newborn babies. Baptism among the Romungre can be interpreted as a ritual of second birth: the unbaptised child is offered social identity by being placed in a web of social relations.

The godfathers and godmothers symbolically adopt the newborn and also enter into *kirve* relations with the child's parents. The basic unit for recruiting godparents is the religious community. Ethnicity and kinship may play a role in selecting *kirve,* but ethnic boundaries are also consciously transgressed. Similar practices have been described for the Balkans. Eugen Alfred Hammel (1968: 80), studying *kumstvo* (co-godparenthood) in the region, noted that relations in which godparents were or could be economically exploited were referred to as *cigansko* (Gypsy) *kumstvo.* Tensions of economic and symbolic balance and exploitation are present in my Romanian case as well.

During my fieldwork, Anti, a Rom in his late sixties, was one of the most frequent visitors to the family with whom I lived. Anti enjoyed chatting with my elder host, Papu, about everyday topics, and the two shared many opinions about contemporary affairs. Papu called the man *munro kirvo* (Hun: *komám*), 'my *kirvo*', and my younger host, Misi, addressed him as *keresztapám* ('godfather'). The terms most often used to refer to godparents in Hungarian are *keresztapám* and *keresztanyám* ('godmother'). The same idiom is used for polite address. Several times I heard the Romanian terms *nas* and *nasă* (godfather and godmother) used by more recent arrivals who entered the community by marriage or migration from places where Hungarian was not spoken. The use of the Hungarian terms might be accounted for by the practice prevalent among many Roma families of selecting a local Hungarian couple to be the *first* godfather and godmother (Hun: *első koma*). These are the first among several other godparents, most often of Roma origin.

Church teachings regarding godparenthood are transmitted through school lessons and a preparatory course (Hun: *káté óra*) that adolescents take before confirmation. As children mature and stop receiving religious education, conceptions of the requirements and norms of godparenthood tend to be inspired instead by family members and kin. Godparents usually are adults, often with children of their own, but sometimes even teenagers can be invited to become godparents. During my fieldwork, several freshly confirmed teenage Roma girls were asked to be godmothers. This may be the exception rather than the rule, however, and girls never were made first *kirve*.

Although the religious interpretation of ritual kinship ties might place more stringent demands on the godparent (e.g. supervision of the spiritual development of the godchild), the rules of godparent-godchild relations are

rather simple from the Roma perspective. The godfather should be the protector and sponsor of the godchild; his door should be open at all times to receive the godchild; he should not forget to offer gifts on the godchild's birthday and name day; and he should be willing to meet occasional requests from the godchild for small amounts of money or trinkets. In exchange, the godchild must do nothing but show respect toward the godparent, greet him or her politely, and show gratitude for gifts. The displaying of respect is important and is reflected in the use of kinship terms. Whereas children refer to their godparents using the formal Hungarian *keresztanyám* and *keresztapám,* adult Roma refer to their godchildren not as *kersztfiam* or *keresztlányom* but as 'my son' or 'my daughter' (*munro chavo, mînri chaj*) or simply by name or nickname. If the child fails to behave respectfully and the parents are aware of it, they will warn the child in order to demonstrate their own respect for the *kirvo* or *kirvi*. An obligation for respect and an implicit assumption of hierarchical superiority on the part of the *kirve* is also present in relations between parents and godparents.

Ritual kinship ties are far from harmonious among the Roma. Tensions rarely emerge with non-Roma godparents, because non-Roma are seen as outsiders and are not subject to the same rules as Roma. In explicating tensions between Roma parents and godparents, it is worth looking for an explanation in the structure of Roma society and the ideology surrounding godparenthood. I illustrate some of the sources of conflict through an ethnographic example and discuss tensions between the ideology and the actual practice of the relationship.

My example has to do with Papu and his relation to his *kirvo,* Anti. Later in my stay in the village I found out that until two years before my arrival, the two elderly Rom had not visited each other's houses for decades. They refused to greet each other, and neither would speak in the presence of the other. Their wives observed the same rules and had severed all relations binding the two households and family. After 20 years of estrangement, the relationship was normalised again on the occasion of the death of Papu's wife. Papu explained that the long hiatus was because his *kirvo* had cheated him several times and so was undeserving of trust. Even after peace had been re-established, Papu continued to make occasional caustic comments about the character deficiencies of his *kirvo* after Anti departed following a visit. Papu particularly disliked the way his *kirvo* was accumulating wealth, and he caricatured the man's allegedly avaricious traits.

A story Papu told me illustrates the problems associated with their relationship. At some point in the past, while Papu and Anti were still on speaking terms, Papu went to the city to go shopping. There he spent all his money buying provisions for his family. As he was returning home he met a

woman who was selling a bathtub. Because Papu was planning to have a bathroom in his newly built house, he thought this was a good opportunity to make a deal, so he went with the woman to her house near the marketplace to see the tub. He negotiated a good price, and the two agreed that he would return the next day with the money and a cart to transport the tub. After returning home, Papu discussed the business with Mamo, his wife, and they agreed it would be a good opportunity. Mamo went to Anti's wife, her *kirvi,* to explain the plan and borrow the money. Mamo's *kirvi* agreed to loan the couple the money, and Anti came to ask about the details of the transaction. Papu gave him all the information, including the location of the woman's home. The next day, when he and Mamo arrived to pick up the bathtub, they discovered that it had already been bought by someone from a village for the same price Papu had negotiated. Papu became furious, realising immediately who must have bought the bathtub. Papu and Mamo went home empty-handed, and he went to see the bathtub in his *kirvo*'s house. 'The tub was there, where it still is to this day, so if I want to check I can', Papu said.

This anecdote illustrates several factors that both constitute and undermine the solidarity of *kirve* relationships. The ideal of individualism, which often involves a competitive ethos, stands in contradiction to the ideal of the *kirvo,* who is expected to be unconditionally generous and supportive in an asymmetrical way, without being reciprocated. This ideal cannot be fulfilled if the godfather feels that his godchild's father, who is expected to behave respectfully towards him, is trying to overtake him in some domain of life. Papu violated the implicit values of the godparent relationship when he unwittingly challenged Anti by attempting to acquire a prestige commodity that his *kirvo* never dreamed of owning.[75]

This story illustrates another dimension of the *kirve* relationship: Anti and his wife could have declined to lend money to Papu and Mamo if they had felt offended, but instead they demonstrated their generosity by agreeing to the arrangement and showing that the money requested was not a problem for them. Indeed, the couple even possessed the additional sum needed to buy the bathtub themselves. But they could not be unequivocally generous because Papu's intention to procure a luxury item violated the deferential, hierarchical quality of the *kirve* relationship, thus offending the couple. Hence, Anti taught his *kirvo* a lesson the next day.

Besides observing daily interactions between people in godparent relationships, such as Papu and Anti, I wanted to uncover the structure of Romungre ritual kinship relations. Through my formal survey, I attempted to map the network of *kirve* relationships in the Roma community. During data

[75] A 2004 survey of living conditions in the village indicated that 49 per cent of all households lacked bathrooms (Diakónia 2004: 42).

collection, however, when I asked about the godparents of each of the children in a family, I was given numbers instead of names. 'There were 30 *kirve* baptising my son!' Papu said. Numbers ranged from 10 to 70, the highest figure coming from a case of double baptism of two brothers. I was confused and unsure whether my question had been correctly understood.

I asked Misi, who served as my assistant on several occasions, whether the 30 godfathers he presumably had were all real *kirve* or whether the figure indicated the total number of people invited to the party following the baptism. He assured me that all 30 were in attendance during his baptism in the church. Nonetheless, I was sure he did not address all 30 of these men as godfather and that this crowd did not regularly visit his house. In addition to Anti, just one other person qualified as Misi's *kirvo*, on the basis of my observations. It took some time for me to understand the distinction between first *kirvo*, second *kirvo*, and the rest, but even then the puzzle remained: What exactly was the role of the large majority of people referred to as *kirve* during the ritual, and what kinds of relatedness were created by this form of ritual kinship?

For practical reasons I decided to ask survey respondents to name only their first and second pairs of godparents, knowing that people sometimes had difficulty recalling who had been appointed godparents for each child. As I later realised, I made a methodological error by focusing exclusively on strong ties and ignoring weak ones (Granovetter 1973). When I understood that Roma parents themselves often had difficulty recalling a full set of godparents, it became apparent that these weaker ties must be different from those I was able to grasp within the inherent limitations of my questionnaire. Extended *kirve* – those other than the first couple – seem to have little significance beyond the ritual actions of the baptism itself. They have no influence on the social positions of recipients of baptism or on the social positions of the recipients' parents.

My network analytical exercise failed because of a sampling error. Instead of using a snowball sampling strategy (Scott 2000: 61) by following an index of individuals' connections in order to progressively enlarge the network, I gathered my data in a linear manner, surveying people one after another without paying attention to the results I had already obtained. At the end of my fieldwork, my network data remained fragmented, barring the possibility of graphing the total web of *kirve* relations. I hesitated to finish the survey because of problems related to drawing boundaries around the total population, in which several godfathers had been recruited from outside the local Roma community. Several factors forced me to limit the total population surveyed. First, for families who had migrated to the village or had lived outside the community for significant periods of time, *kirve* lived

in other settlements or in the city, and so were beyond the reach of my survey. Second, some *kirve* who were highly ranked by respondents were unavailable for interviews because they worked abroad. And third, a reconstruction of the network of deceased *kirve* was difficult.[76]

This kinship structure seems to prevent, or at least to reduce, the accumulation of relationships, because central nodes, which receive more invitations to be godparents, tend not to reciprocate. Their ability to do so is limited by the number of children they have, and Roma in Gánás today typically have just one or two. Therefore, the number of *kirve* relationships can be multiplied only by increasing the number of godparents for each child.

The initial results of my network analysis led me to several structural characteristics of ritual kinship among the Romungre in Gánás. I tried to explore these initial findings further when I took part in several baptisms. Through an analysis of Romani baptism (Rom: *bolipo*), I attempt to account for the relatively large number of godparents involved in some baptisms.

According to elder Roma in the village, baptism was traditionally performed as soon as possible after an infant's first six weeks of life. People tacitly agreed that children should be baptised during the first few months. This rule was apparently observed more consistently in the past, although late baptisms did occasionally occur. At the time of my fieldwork, the time frame for infant baptism had become more flexible: both baptisms I attended in the village were of older children (one and a half and three years old). The only Hungarian baptism I took part in was for a six-month-old girl. In the city I also witnessed the baptism of an eight-month-old Roma girl whose parents were third-generation migrants from the village. According to an elderly woman with whom I spoke, the preference for early baptisms was due to a belief that the ritual protected the infant from the influence of malefic spirits. Although I heard of no concrete threats to newborns, there was a general fear that the child might be attacked by the *bizhuzho*, the 'unclean', a word generally used as a synonym for *beng*, the devil. Even mentioning the *bizhuzho* by name in a house with an unbaptised baby could endanger the child. When, at the end of my fieldwork, an old Romni (Roma woman) visited my family to see my newborn son and I persisted with questions about what dangers were posed to unbaptised children, the woman was reluctant to discuss the issue and warned me that my actions risked putting my family in peril.

On other occasions when I discussed baptism with Roma, they were more preoccupied with describing preparations for baptism parties and

[76] See Appendix for an analysis of a sample of the network data.

potential godparents than malefic threats. I found this intriguing, and when I tried to follow up on the issue, several elder women recounted mysterious infant deaths that had occurred during their youths. Such deaths are rare today. One of the women said that because of electricity, there were more lights at night in the village streets, and because of this the *beng*, or devil, showed up less frequently than he had formerly. Although I have reservations about her optimistic view of the connection between technological advances and adversity in people's lives, her remark could be relevant to one development, the decreasing infant mortality rate associated with changes wrought in socialist and postsocialist Romania, particularly in the area in which I carried out my research. Compared with the rest of the country, Cluj County fares well when it comes to infant mortality (Sandu 1999: 139). And even though the infant mortality rate is higher among Roma than the regional average, it has decreased significantly since the end of World War II. One can find reason to associate this development with the less hurried timing of baptisms.

Irrespective of the timing of the baptism, the planning of godparent relations can be initiated during pregnancy. At this point the family starts to think about potential godfathers. Customarily, a *kirvo* does not become one completely voluntarily. It is the privilege of the parents to invite someone they have decided upon to be the godfather of their child. In practice, prospective grandparents often influence the selection of *kirve* more than the parents themselves. In both situations I encountered in my fieldwork the maternal grandparents had the final word on these issues. This might have been because both children were first-born babies and the parents were relatively young, so the possibility of their separating was still relatively high. In cases of separation the baby usually remains with the mother, so maternal grandparents wish to see deference paid to their preferences for *kirve*. Parents acquire more power in such decisions if their relationship proves long-lasting. Many other factors, such as who is the main sponsor of the post-baptism party, can influence the selection, but the large number of potential positions for *kirve* seems to allow the preferences of all important family members to be accommodated.

The religiously sanctified norm that an invitation to be a godparent cannot be refused assures that each family has access to desirable *kirve*. How ritual kinship can be maintained at an optimal level is a different question. The choice must be realistic if one wishes to avoid later reluctance on the part of the *kirve* when attempting to practice godparental relations. For example, one cannot have a drink with his *kirvo* if there is a substantial difference in status, such as that between a wealthy, non-Roma *gazda* and a poor Roma family. In such cases the child will rarely be visited, and the

godfather will be reluctant to enter the house. An awareness of the social status of the parents influences the choice of relatively equal godparents. This pragmatism makes the *kirve* relationship less hierarchical than one expects in patron-client relationships (Mintz and Wolf 1977 [1950]). In some cases an intended division of labour underlies the selection of the first and second *kirve* if the first is a non-Roma and is expected to be more like a sponsor. In such instances the second *kirvo* might be a Rom who is chosen because of his enjoyable companionship.

Raising money for the baptism party is an important concern. Most of the Roma households I was familiar with had very limited resources to spend on the celebration. Therefore, the timing of a baptism was influenced by expected family income or the return of a migrant family member who might be a godfather and partly sponsor the party. Postponement of baptisms was also sometimes due to these sorts of situations. Generally speaking, Roma families in Gánás prefer to delay baptism rather than risk the humiliation of organising a lacklustre party. During a money collection ritual (Hun: *tányérozás*), godparents and invitees are expected to contribute to defraying the costs associated with the baptism, although the actual costs cannot be precisely planned. They can vary according to the amount of financial support the first *kirvo* is able to give and to what degree initial invitees honour the party and attend in large numbers. In any case, the burden of the initial investment is on the shoulders of the organisers of the baptism, and they must even take out loans to meet expectations. Expanded *kirve* relations can ensure the continuing loyalty of the invited couples, but, as some Roma commented, it would be unwise to expect financial support from *kirve* beyond the gifts and donations offered at the ritual, a fact that was borne out by my own observations.

Once desirable *kirve* have been selected, money raised, and the baptism date fixed, invitations can be made. First the *kirve* are invited, then the guests, and word is sent to relatives and friends in the city or other places that they should attend the *bolipo*. The *rasaj* (‘priest’ – the Calvinist pastor in this case) should also be notified that a baptism is being planned, and his assistance should be secured. This task is carried out by the first *kirvo*. The pastor is rarely invited to the party, although he is present at baptism parties organised by Hungarians for at least a few hours in the early evening. Hungarian baptisms share several features with the Roma baptism described here. One important difference is that during the baptism of a Hungarian child, all the godmothers dress in traditional peasant costumes, a practice I never observed among Roma.



Plate 1. Hungarian godmothers lined up before leaving for a baptism.

The scenario of the ritual is fairly consistent. The ritual is divided into three major parts (see van Gennep 1965): a preliminary phase, a liminal phase that follows in the church, and the party, the post-liminal event. All the phases are framed by an organised public procession in the streets: godmothers walk first, carrying the child, with godfathers following, carrying bottles of liquor in their hands. There is a separation of the house and church, with the house in many cases being the scene of the first and third phases, and the church being the centre of the second.

The house is the place where the *kirve* first gather before the procession. This could be the house of the parents or any other house in which the child and close family await the *kirve*. In the case I describe as an example, it was the house of the maternal grandparents. If there is live music, the musicians are already in front of the house or inside performing. If there is no live music, then speakers are placed in the windows and music is played loudly. On their way to the house, godfathers carry large, fancy cakes, uncovered. Godmothers carry sets of dresses and sandals or small suits, blue jeans, or other items of clothing, depending on the sex of the child. The cakes are deposited in the house by female helpers who are usually kin or close neighbours but have no ritual obligations. A tag with the name of the *kirvo* is

placed on top of each cake for further display. The godfathers gather outside the house and smoke, conversing and consuming beverages. The godmothers remain inside and consume soft drinks and sweets. When all the godparents have arrived, a room in the house has been filled with labelled cakes, and at least a dozen dresses (often of similar size) have been hung. The child is dressed in white christening clothes by the first and second godmothers, with the assistance of the mother or grandmother.



Plate 2. Roma *kirve* (mother and godmothers) carrying a child to church for baptism.

The baptism dress is purchased by the first godmother. I suggest that dressing the child is a symbolic act conferring social identity upon him or her. The abundance of cakes and drinks can be interpreted as an introduction to the feast, although the labelled cakes are not eaten yet. They are left untouched until the end of the ritual, which is usually the next morning, when they are cut into generous portions and given to the guests, who take them home to share with household members who were not present. A bottle of alcoholic beverage is usually given to each departing person, even if he or she will not drink it. My understanding of this gesture is that the party should be extended to everyone, at least symbolically, and not only to those able to attend the ritual. The cake is a metonym for food, as the bottle of liquor is

for drink. Such an interpretation squares well with the striking, exaggerated gestures the *kirve* make as they carry the bottles on their way to the church. The bottles are rarely opened and are left outside the church during the ritual, then retrieved after the pastor has left the church.

The church is a place of passivity and submission for most of the Roma. Few are familiar with proper church etiquette, so the administrator instructs them before they enter the church. The pastor initiates the service and then asks the father of the child if he has been confirmed. In this case he admits that he has not. The rest of the *kirve* listen silently when the pastor admonishes them for their emphasis on the party rather than on the events inside the church, although even the pastor admits that the church would not serve as a proper setting for the long afternoon. Indeed, the service is short and to the point; the small girl is baptised and the ritual proceeds. The *kirve* gather the money that will be given to the pastor before they enter the church.

The spatial arrangement of the ritual emphasises the centrality of the child. The *kirve* arrange themselves concentrically in two circles around the child, with the men in the outer circle, leaving a small opening just behind the pastor. In front of the pastor the first *kirvi* holds the child as the procession exits the church. Back on the streets the godmothers once again have an occasion to show off their nice dresses, and some guests show up in expensive cars they bought while working abroad. The next scene is the party (Hun: *mulatság*), which is held at the house or in a community building in the middle of the village – the house of culture (Hun: *kulturház*). In the case of this particular baptism, because there were so many guests, around 200, the party was held at the house of culture.

The interior of the house of culture is designed to function as a theatre: there is a large room with a stage in the front and a balcony in the back. For the baptism party, the middle of the stage is occupied by the musicians, and in a protected corner of the stage, just next to the curtain, the unmarried *kirve* start to chat, dance, and flirt with one another.[77] Older *kirve* gather and chat in the middle of the room. The small girl who has just been baptised is taken by her grandfather for a dance, and others take turns spinning the child afterwards. This dance was an element of all the Roma baptisms I attended, even when the baby was too young to enjoy it. Of course, both parents and audience enjoy the dance more if the child is old enough to interact. It is at this point that the presence of the many godparent couples seems to have the

[77] The musicians did a wonderful job of satisfying all tastes. They were highly flexible, able to play music outdoors in front of the house, while walking down the street, and indoors, and able to change instruments and shift languages, including Romani, Romanian, Hungarian, and some English.

most relevance: they animate the party and prepare the floor for the remaining guests, who will arrive several hours later.



Plate 3. A dance with the newly baptised baby at a Roma celebration.

After the first two hours of the party, when only *kirve* and close kin are present, other guests begin to arrive. The tables are arranged and people sit down for the meal. Eating, drinking, and dancing are interrupted only by the collection of gifts (Hun: *tányérozás*). This event is often timed to occur at midnight. The gift collection is a systematic request for donations from all attendees. In addition to the money offered as gifts to the newly baptised child, some payment also goes to the musicians to complement their wage. The first *kirvo* (*első koma*) is in a somewhat delicate situation: he knows he is expected to offer a proper amount of money as a gift in addition to the dresses, the cake, and other items he has already given. He might also know that the sum he offers will either stunt or stimulate the generosity shown by others. In most cases he is well aware that he is subject to a game Roma play rather cynically. The sum offered by the *kirvo* is announced over the loudspeaker by a Rom who is well known for his negotiating ability and his sense of humour; he is like a master of ceremonies for the money-collecting ritual. Two other people are also key players in the game. One of them

collects and counts the money and then throws it into a bowl. The other officiously takes down names and sums offered in a notebook. The performance is primarily for outsiders, because most *kirve* and invitees have fixed amounts they plan to offer and will not alter their predetermined donations. In many cases they could not alter the amount even if they wanted to, because even the offered money has been borrowed. The total sum barely covers the cost of the party.

Music is played until early morning, and the dancing and drinking continue. Some participants are more relaxed, whereas others leave immediately after the gift offering. When someone departs, he is offered a piece of cake and a bottle for family members back home and as remedy for the next day's hangover.

The large number of kirve I observed at Roma baptisms in Gánás can be analysed through the social organisation of the ritual just described. In Figure 3.3 I map the positions of 10 pairs of godparents out of the total 24. Although I summarise their connections briefly, I cannot provide a full account of the family politics involved. The identification of persons by numbers in the following paragraph is not intended to devalue individual agency.

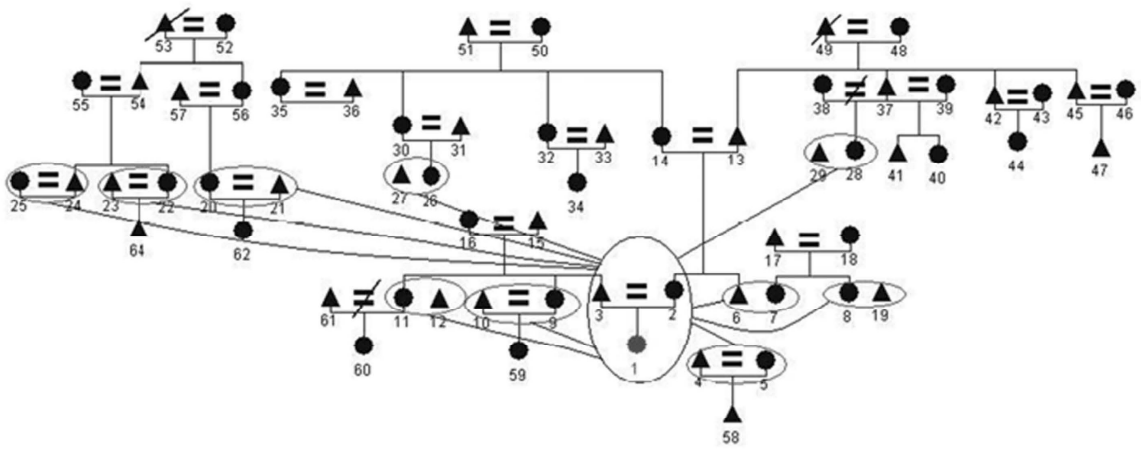


Figure 3.1. The positions of godparents projected onto a kinship diagram.

The baptised child (1) and her parents (2 and 3) are in the middle of the diagram. The first *kirve*, who come from outside the kin group and are non-Roma, are represented by nodes 4 and 5. The second *kirve*, nodes 6 and 7, are unmarried and single and were chosen because the maternal uncle (6) needed a female counterpart in order to be a *kirvo*. Number 8 was invited because her sister, 7, had been invited, and separation of the sisters would have caused tension. In addition, one of the two daughters, 7 and 8, of the 17-18 family is seen as a desirable marriage partner for 6 by the 13-14

couple, the maternal grandparents of the baptised daughter. The two sisters (9 and 11) of the child's father (3) were also invited to be *kirve*. Number 11 had recently terminated a relationship, and so a potential husband (12) was invited for her. Number 12 was a Rom from a different settlement, but he had several relatives in the village. The arrangement proved successful when 11 and 12 moved in together and left the community soon after this baptism. It might be an exaggeration to say that the ritual brought them together, but it surely provided public support for their relationship.

Two additional symmetrical ties, 26 and 28, are two recently confirmed girls who are nieces of the grandfather and grandmother. Three couples, 20-21, 22-23, and 24-25, come from a family whose ancestor (53) was a well-known musician who often played music with the great-grandfather (49), to whom he was close. The family alliance is maintained by these kinds of ties. The other 14 pairs of *kirve* have different relations that do not fit into this genealogy easily. Eight pairs are neighbours or distant relatives, and the remaining six are colleagues of the maternal grandmother and grandfather from when they worked abroad.

What becomes apparent from this diagram is that even if the maternal grandfather plays an important role in organising and sponsoring the event, he cannot and does not intend to monopolise the networks created and reinforced. The social organisation of the ritual creates a desirable arrangement of the wider social world of the community. *Kirve* relations are a key part of this arrangement, and these relations are symbolically linked to the admission of a new member into the community. The symmetrical distribution of *kirve* can also be explained by a conscious attempt to include many couples from the same generation from both families.

In his analysis of baptism among a Roma group in Hungary, Michael Stewart (1997) suggested that the ritual was segregated both along gender lines and by symbolic oppositions. Roma had their own separate baptism ritual.[78] Women were excluded from the all-male celebration that followed the religious ritual, and mention of the *rasaj* (priest) was taboo during these festivities. The person of the *rasaj* was demystified and profaned by the Roma (Stewart 1997: 217). I found such divisions less conspicuous among the Romungre, although I found several parallels with Stewart's case. At certain points in the ritual I observed gender divisions, although this segregation was not underpinned by purity symbolism. Although the organisation and interpretation of the events were to a large extent in the hands of the Roma, who indeed saw the whole ritual as their own business, I found no signs of symbolism in opposition to official religiosity. The Roma of Gánás

[78] In the dialect of Rom spoken by the Harangos whom Stewart studied, *román̓o bolimo*.

rely on the village as a religious community that offers them access to non-Roma godparents, who serve as important contacts within the economically dominant group. In addition, they invite a large number of Roma *kirve* in order to animate the celebration. These unofficial godparents are strategically recruited to maintain balance between the preferences of different family members while staying true to the local ethic of competition and individualism.

Confirmation: Masking Ethnic Differences

Whereas the preparation for baptism and the celebration that follows are largely in the hands of the Roma families, the confirmation ritual (Hun: *konfirmáció*) is organised by the local pastor and controlled directly by the church. Boys and girls aged 13 to 14 are usually expected to undergo this ritual, which is preceded by a preparatory course. Hungarian and Roma teenagers alike attend the course, with varying degrees of interest. The class culminates in a public examination and solemn confirmation of the participant's commitment to the faith. The ritual examination (Hun: *kikérdezés*) is conducted by the pastor in the presence of the congregation in the church. The youth to be confirmed (Hun: *konfirmándus*) must demonstrate his or her knowledge of the catechism (Hun: *káté*) and a mastery of canonical religious texts and songs. After the examination, teenagers are expected to utter a prayer in order to 'confirm their faith' and ask to be admitted as adult members of the church. The rest of the assembly (Hun: *gyülekezet*) replies with a ritual 'yes', accepting the young people as full members. Following the confirmation ritual, new members are offered their first communion (Hun: Úrvacsora, literally 'Lord's Supper'). In Gánás the ritual takes place on two consecutive Sundays in early spring. First the examination and confirmation are performed, and a week later the new members take their first communion. The latter occasion is usually planned to take place on Palm Sunday (Hun: *virágvasárnap*). A family celebration is usually organised for the afternoon following the second Sunday church service.

According to both canonical interpretation and popular understanding, confirmation is a coming-of-age ritual through which members assume full responsibilities in the assembly. The teenager awaiting confirmation and the entire community also endorse a non-religious meaning of confirmation: the event is a public recognition of the confirmee's having reached adulthood. This traditionally meant that boys and girls were allowed to begin courting. Among the Roma I met were several cases in which marriage was contracted as soon as the girl had confirmed her faith (Hun: *konfirmált*). Similarly, early marriages were not uncommon among Hungarians in earlier periods (Tötszegi 2004: 17). Nevertheless, many Roma in Gánás reach adulthood

without being confirmed. The most important reasons for this are that the preparations for confirmation, which include purchasing clothing and provisioning the celebration, are expensive, and confirmation places large demands on the teenager—an inadequate performance exposes the youth to public humiliation.

The risk of humiliation is even greater for Roma boys and girls, because their native tongue is not Hungarian, and many of them are illiterate. They are expected to memorise and recite passages of the catechism, a text that is in some parts incomprehensible even to adult native speakers of Hungarian.[79] The basic text of the Heidelberg Catechism (Hun: Heidelbergi Káté) was originally written in German (1563). Officially, it was introduced into the Transylvanian Calvinist Church in 1646, and it is still in use. Even updated Hungarian translations abound in archaisms and grammatical structures not commonly used in colloquial speech. During the public examination, youths need not only to prove their knowledge of the catechism and commitment to the faith but also to demonstrate their ability to publicly express their endorsement of the values shared by the local ethno-religious community.

Hungarian teenagers, too, have difficulty fulfilling the strict requirements of the ritual. Pastors are aware of the limitations of the young faithful and let them know in some form which of the questions they will be asked during the examination – for example, by repeatedly asking the same question during the preparations. Because the degree of difficulty of the answers also varies – some of them are long and complicated, others simple – the pastor is careful to adjust the questions to the abilities of the teenagers. In this way the youths are expected to memorise only a few answers, not the entirety of the catechism, which frees them to concentrate on the public performance of the answers.

Religious education was introduced in Romanian schools only after the fall of socialism, but pastors have always taught preparatory classes for confirmation in the parish house. This practice was uninterrupted even during socialism. Local girls and boys were taught the meaning of basic rituals and were introduced to the history of Calvinism in Transylvania and the lives of the Hungarian Calvinist heroes. Because the Calvinist faith in Transylvania is strongly associated with Hungarians, during confirmation preparations the pastor not only transmits religious knowledge to village youths but also socialises them as Calvinist Hungarians (Hun: *református magyarok*). Therefore, in addition to its religious and life-cycle aspects, confirmation can be understood as a symbolic expression of membership in

[79] The catechism contains 127 standard questions and responses. Ideally, a Calvinist should be able to memorise and recite any of these during the ritual.

the local community and as an assertion of ethnic belonging. I limit the following discussion to these aspects.

In the spring of 2004, six girls and six boys were confirmed in Gánás. Five of them, four girls and one boy, came from families considered by locals to be 'Gypsy'. Nevertheless, an outside observer could notice no differences in social status, class, mother tongue, or ethnicity expressed in the ritual. Individual differences were carefully controlled, and the social divisions of the community were masked throughout the ritual action. In other words, aspects of the ritual that might have revealed the social status of the participants – aspects that Roy Rappaport (1999) would have called self-referential – were minimised.

One way such differences were masked was through a reduction of the requirements for confirmation. That is, the public examination was transformed into a performance of a few sentences that were assigned and tacitly agreed upon by the pastor and his pupils. This practice is not limited to Gánás but rather is the rule in Calvinist assemblies all across Transylvania. I heard of only one instance of outcry, which occurred in a nearby village when a young pastor did not divulge beforehand which questions would be asked of examinees, as is customary. The parents of these teenagers and members of the church council pressured the pastor to 'train' the youths in the usual way in order to avoid public failure. Reduced requirements 'help the weaker' members of the cohort undergo the ritual more smoothly. These 'weaker' confirmees are not exclusively Roma; in the case I witnessed, one Roma girl's recitation of the verses was the most appreciated performance of the entire ritual.

Another element of the ritual that masks differences is the standardised dress code. In Gánás the dress code for the first Sunday, on which the examination occurs, requires folk costumes for all examinees. On the second Sunday, when first communion is taken, girls are expected to wear white dresses, and boys must wear dark suits. Typical folk dresses for the region (Hun: *kalotaszegi népviselet*) are colourful and heavily decorated. The costume for unmarried females consists of boots (often red), a colourful long skirt and apron, an embroidered shirt worn with a vest, and a heavy tiara with beads (Hun: *párta*). Boys wear embroidered short coats (Hun: *bujka*), boots, and hats decorated with maidenhair ferns (*Stipa borysthenica*; Hun: *árvalányhaj*).[80] Folk costumes can be expensive, particularly for girls; villagers estimate that some elements of a girl's clothing are 'worth the price of a buffalo'. Roma usually borrow these costumes from Hungarian families for the occasion. The white costume that the girls wear on the second Sunday is

[80] These costumes have attracted much attention from both ethnographers and tourists visiting the region since as early as the late nineteenth century.

purchased or custom tailored. A third costume is also purchased and worn by girls at the party following the ritual.



Plate 4. A Roma girl in Hungarian costume before her confirmation examination.

The dress code appears to be more elaborate and standardised today than it was some decades ago. Some elderly Roma women recall that as girls they wore only simple white dresses or custom-tailored garments and white aprons for the confirmation ritual. Customary keepsake cards prepared from photographs taken after the ritual indicate that boys did not dress in folk costumes during the late socialist period.[81] The separation of the confirmation ritual into two events is not prescribed by church canon; in other vil-

[81] Roma youths have their own separate cards made at their request; these use less expensive black-and-white photographs and do not show the pastor.

lages the ritual is performed over the course of a single Sunday. All these elements of the ritual point to a relatively recent canonisation of some of its self-referential aspects. The homogeneous appearance of the local community during the ritual is a product of this incorporation of non-canonical elements into a ritual that originally had no dress code. This ritualised masking of status differences is not ethnically neutral. The canonisation of a dress code is invested with ethnic meaning by both participants and outside observers.[82]



Plate 5. Newly confirmed girls after taking their first communion.

[82] Parallels can be found in other parts of Transylvania such as the Szeklerland, where Calvinist confirmations offer opportunities to celebrate the power of ethnic community.



Plate 6. Newly confirmed girls ready for their confirmation party, 2004.



Plate 7. Confirmation souvenir from the mid-1980s, (whole confirmation cohort).



Plate 8. Confirmation souvenir from the mid-1980s, Roma youths only.



Plate 9. Group photograph for confirmation souvenir card, 2004.

Burial: Rural Civility

If religious services accompanying life-cycle rituals are used as the only indicators of religiosity, then Gánás appears to be a highly religious place. This is particularly true in regard to funerals. I seldom heard of a funeral that took place in the absence of a priest in postsocialist times. Even under socialism, burials in villages rarely transpired without the assistance of local pastors. This is in a sharp contrast to the Bulgarian village studied by Deema Kaneff, where, beginning in the 1970s, funerals were no longer led by priests. Even after the fall of socialism, priests were only rarely asked to attend funerals (Kaneff 2002b). But although the presence of religious services marking life-cycle events is an important indicator of the connection between public, individual, and family life in Transylvania, it should not be taken as evidence of widespread everyday religiosity.

To illustrate, I recount an anecdote I was told during my fieldwork in Cluj. In a town in eastern Transylvania, in the middle of a region inhabited largely by Hungarians (Székelys), a Unitarian pastor decided to put up an announcement next to the entrance to his office: 'This parish is not a funeral director [Hun: *temetkezési vállalkozás*]!' Some parishioners were surprised to see this strange inscription. The pastor explained that he had posted the sign as a warning to people who might come to his office seeking only burial services. Because he was not asking that the bereaved make the customary yearly contribution to the church retroactively, if it had gone unpaid, such requests were numerous and were not made only by Unitarians.

Unitarians are a strong denomination in the region, and Szeklers are well known for their sense of humour. The story might be only a joke, but the problem it recounts is real, as some Unitarians confirmed. It is not enough to state that there is an important connection between participation in religious ceremonies connected to life-cycle rituals and religiosity; this connection has to be analysed in detail to show the role religiosity plays in the lives of the people under scrutiny.

Refusal of religious burial by the church can be used as punishment against people who have not satisfied their obligations to their assemblies. It has also been used by traditional churches against 'sectarians' and their families; often even cemetery lots are refused, although liberal theologians argue that such measures are inappropriate means by which to deal with converts (Fekete 1993: 135–139). The coercive potential to refuse burial rests mostly in the hands of the local priest or pastor and the church council. How such power is used indicates local conceptions of civility and tolerance. The cases I present next demonstrate traditional possibilities for dialogue across ethnic and confessional lines.

The timing of funerals, as opposed to baptisms, can never be planned, and the resources needed for burials are rarely available to Roma families. Therefore, in addition to the psychological distress that comes with the death of a close relative, the family faces a sudden financial burden. There is an important difference between the peasants Gabriela Kiliánová (2003) described in Slovakia, who saved money for their own burials as they got older, and the Roma I worked with, some of whom occasionally joked about what their adult children would do with their dead bodies if they were unable to raise the money to bury them properly. During my fieldwork I discovered that Roma attributed to Orthodox priests in Cluj a function similar to that of the Unitarian pastor in the story just recounted. Apparently the priests provided funeral services for anyone in immediate need, without asking too many questions. Some of the Roma I came to know used them to give their relatives the last sacrament, even if the dying person had not been baptised Orthodox.

I recorded the life story of an elderly Romni who had moved from the village to the city when she was young. She had had a harsh life because of her unkind husband, whom she divorced in the mid-1980s. Her ex-husband died in an asylum years later, and she felt compelled to organise his burial. She was employed by the street-cleaning company, which offered to provide her with a coffin free of charge. A car was also provided to transport the coffin to the asylum. Even so, the woman had difficulty organising a religious funeral. She visited several Orthodox parishes:

> I could not find him a priest! The priest from Horea Street did not want to come; I couldn't find a priest anywhere. The priest from Someşeni [a suburb, a former village] did not want to come. It was snowy and cold, it was so cold . . . Then I went to the priest on the Petru Groza [street] and talked to the priest, who knew him [the late husband]. This priest took his oath twenty times, that he will not drink anymore. 'Father, you know me, you also knew my man. You know my hardships. I beg you very much, I will pay'. 'Lady, I will go, but you should pay for a taxi. You should take me there in a taxi and bring me back from the cemetery'.
>
> I went and talked to a taxi driver. The morgue took him [the deceased] directly to the cemetery [on the edge of the city]. I went together with the priest by taxi. The priest said three or four words before they put him in the grave, then he returned with the taxi. So we buried him. I went home and made a big pot of food [Hun: *juhtokány*] to be the *pomana* [funeral meal]. I did not do anything else, and I did not give away anything anymore – that was it. I buried him not because I was regretting him . . . but I did not want the

girls to tell me when we have a quarrel, 'Mother, shut up, you let Father be burnt [cremated]!'

Some conditions have changed since late socialism. Only a minority of the Roma I met in Cluj were employed, mostly with the street-cleaning company. Other circumstances remain similar. Roma still prefer burial and regard cremation with horror, although that is what is done with bodies that are unclaimed for burial. Both religious funerals and the *pomana* are observed. Orthodox priests are seen as the least demanding and 'cheapest'. The luxury of individual choice over whether or not to invite a priest (even across denominations) is limited mostly to cities, which offer a wider array of denominations and religious specialists. Therefore, 'private burials' can also be explained by the indifference shown by neighbours and relatives to the bereaved's funeral-related economic difficulties and by the lack of support available in urban neighbourhoods. Burial is more likely to be seen as a private problem, and survivors of the deceased can rarely rely on support beyond their close kin.

I consider this 'privatisation' of burials in the city to be an example of the 'ritual decline' observable elsewhere in Eastern Europe (Creed 2002). Gerald Creed noted the potential for Protestant converts to redirect their religiosity towards more ascetic practices that nonetheless produced needed networks at a time when costly traditional rituals were on the decline because of economic crisis (2002: 65). This observation seems to be valid for the Roma with whom I worked in Cluj. Conversion to Pentecostalism or another neo-Protestant denomination offers an alternative support network for the individual.[83] Although motives for conversion are various, local assemblies provide much more than spiritual support. They take care of their dead, offering them a religious burial. By converting, people gain mutual support networks, ensuring them of a proper burial without too much dependence on their relatives.

Individual requests for services addressed to priests or pastors of dominant traditional churches do not lead to religious conversion. Conversion requires collective engagement in faith and ritual practice in order to maintain the social network of the assembly. This entails collective action and public expression of belonging and difference. In contrast to the preceding example, in which a priest in a dominant church dealt with an individual case that transgressed religious and ethnic boundaries, a converted assembly

[83] For Roma who have more resources, it is not uncommon to organise an expensive burial. The regional press reported that at the burial of a respected and well-off Rom (from a group called *gabor*) in Cluj, the religious service was performed by a Catholic priest, and the eulogy in his home was performed by a Jehovah's Witness pastor. The funeral feast was generous but lacking in alcohol because most of these *gabor*s were Adventists (Corăbian 2003).

publicly challenges established divisions. Although this might provoke more opposition in a rural context (all the conflicts between local clergy and sectarians referred to earlier took place in rural settlements), villages nonetheless exhibit their own forms of civility.

During my stay in Gánás I witnessed two burials among the Roma, and I heard accounts of several others. In all but one case the religious service was performed by the local Calvinist pastor, even when this meant that the relatives had to make retroactive contributions to the church covering several years. The local community considered this payment to the parish important, but at the same time the community supported the families through donations given during the ritual. The involvement of the local community, beyond the limits of family and ethnic group, was characteristic in this village and the rural region overall.

In the following sections I describe two burials, neither of which I observed personally but about which I was given a large amount of information. The first was a 'normal' burial that took place in the late 1990s. Everything went as expected, except that the pastor demanded more piety than was customary. The second case involved a Rom who was buried in the early 1990s without even the tolling of bells (Hun: *harangszó*). Both cases provoked discussion about the nature of proper burial, and their deviances from the norm are informative. In this account I rely on my own observations about the general scenario of funerals, but I have drawn important comments and descriptions from recorded narratives about the two cases. I was told that Kata's funeral followed the proper scenario. It was a 'beautiful' burial, some said to me.

Kata's Burial

Kata, a Roma woman, was about to die after lengthy suffering. She was in her early sixties and would be survived by her husband. Kata's three adult children, her sister-in-law, and her other relatives gathered and began to plan how to best approach the pastor and request his help. Because most of the local Magyars knew Kata well and appreciated her character, one of the neighbours offered to accompany Kata's husband to talk to the pastor. The pastor knew the husband and agreed to perform a religious burial. On the same evening the priest came to Kata's house along with several non-Roma women, and together they sang religious songs and prayed for the dying woman. Kata died that night. Members of the family agreed that although she had been unconscious at the time, Kata was visibly relieved after the service. The next morning her husband visited the pastor again to report her death. The pastor said he would conduct the funeral service under one condition: the husband would have to stop the Roma men from playing cards

during the wake, as was customary. 'The funeral will be either with me or with the cards', the husband recalled the pastor's saying.

Kata had no debts to the church because she regularly helped clean the church building and the parish garden, and this work was counted as a contribution. Nonetheless, the financial burden was not insignificant, the main expenses being the coffin, the wooden plank (Hun: *padmaly*) that is placed over the coffin to prevent earth from falling directly on it, the drinks that are consumed during the three-day wake, and the meal during the celebration that follows the burial. A wreath and flowers for each family member would have to be ordered from the city. Graves in the village cemetery are usually dug free of charge by male members of the community, who receive drinks in exchange for their labour. The pastor should also be offered some money. The sum is usually put together by the deceased's close family, but all the villagers contribute to cover the expenditure. A trustworthy Rom, a friend or relative, is asked to gather the money, and as people come to express their condolences to the family they give the money to this person.

In the general burial scenario, the body is prepared by female neighbours and friends and put on display in an open coffin in the middle of the family's main room. During the nights of the wake, the body ideally should not be left alone in the room. Women and some of the men usually take turns sitting next to the deceased, chatting softly or recalling events from his or her life. Musicians may appear uninvited to play slow music as a sign of mourning. Some of the men usually gather in a room next to the wake and play cards. In this case the pastor disapproved, and the husband asked his *kirvo* to stand at the gate and instruct the Roma guests not to play cards, because he was ashamed to stop them. 'I could not talk like this to these people', he argued. The *kirvo* offered drinks to the men and asked them to respect the wishes of the pastor. As some recalled, this was the first wake ever in Gánás without cards.

On the third day the church bell is tolled in the early afternoon, and the community gathers at the house of the mourning family. They wear their best dresses and suits and gather around the body. As the bells toll a second time, the pastor is expected to arrive. At his arrival, the coffin is brought to the middle of the yard, where the pastor delivers a sermon, prays, and sings religious songs with the help of the cantor. After the service the coffin is closed, relatives bid emotional farewells to the body, and the coffin is carried to the cemetery. The gathering follows the coffin in a long procession. The bell tolls continuously as they proceed through the streets of the village. Musicians again play a dirge. The coffin is carried by men who take shifts as pallbearers on their way to the cemetery. There, they rest the coffin on wooden poles across the grave. A second prayer and songs are performed by

the pastor, after which the coffin is lowered into the grave. The wooden plank is placed above the coffin, and it is covered with earth. The fresh mound is covered with wreaths and flowers.

The pastor leaves, and musicians perform again as drinks are distributed among the mourners. I was told that in former times, at this point in the ceremony a second memorial speech would be performed by an elder Rom, who would afterwards invite the mourners to take part in the feast following the funeral. This meal is served at the house of the deceased's family or at the house of culture. Everybody eats and drinks, but no one becomes inebriated, because this is considered disrespectful to the dead and his or her family. The feast usually ends before evening, and people depart.

The role of the pastor is well embedded in the ritual, although he is not the primary organiser. In fact the priest is expected to perform his part and then leave the Roma to continue according to their own wishes.[84] Usually the most important organisers in the community are respected and trustworthy Rom who, along with the male relatives, organise the preparation of the grave and tables for the feast. If the organiser is good, everything is prepared in time, people are satisfied, and nobody gets drunk.

During the wake things can get a bit out of control if some of the card players lose money, become angry, and swear—an occurrence that would be considered disrespectful. Therefore, in most cases the card players go to a neighbouring house in order not to be too close to the mourning family. Once there, they are supplied with drinks from the wake. In Gánás the pastor repeatedly tried to stop the card playing, but in my experience he was generally unsuccessful. Although Kata's husband, under the priest's threat, stopped his guests from playing cards, he told me that his dying wish was that his son, who would be in charge of his burial, should bring all the heavy card players to the wake and seat them next to his corpse. 'Because I loved the card playing, but I was the first to stop the cards, I want to be buried with the cards', he explained to me, half-seriously.

[84] Michael Stewart (1997: 219) wrote that the Vlach Roma he worked with 'hand over' most of the work during funerals to the priest and his assistants, who are seen as being polluted. In my case there was no such belief, but the pastor was viewed as an outsider who came to perform 'his work' (Rom: *lesri butji*) and was not involved in the lives of the mourners in any other way.



Plate 10. Roma men playing cards during a funeral wake.

In addition to card playing, Roma funerals in the village differ from those of Hungarians in other ways, but the pastor does not see these differences as significant. Nor are the Roma's beliefs and fears subject to much interest or suppression by local clergy. For example, the lay eulogies that were once given at the grave by elder Rom were part of traditional Roma burials in the village. This practice was widespread in Transylvanian Hungarian and Roma communities but was suppressed for religious reasons by a group of Calvinist pastors (Nagy 1992; Keszeg 2002a). I heard of no attempts by local pastors to eliminate this custom. During one of the burials I heard a lay memorial speech during the funeral meal.

Local Roma musicians rarely show up uninvited at Hungarian funerals, and they are seldom invited. Emotions are expressed more openly during Roma funerals, and Roma stay at the cemetery longer. After the departure of the pastor they continue the funeral in their own way, playing music, sharing drinks, and so forth. Personal objects and coins are placed in the coffin, or money is put in the hand of the deceased. Money for 'the price of a piglet' was placed in Kata's hand because her daughter had promised to buy her one before her death. Generally the 'normal funeral' is the recognised way for both Roma and Magyar members of the community to be buried, and this includes the active participation of the local pastor. Everyone can be buried in the same cemetery. Even migrants are 'taken home' and buried in their village.

In contrast to Kata's burial, the second funeral I present is remembered as unusual for its lack of a priest presiding over the service. Most people blamed the deceased's close relatives for having been unable to negotiate the situation with the local parish. Transylvanian Calvinist pastors are usually aided in their decisions by a lay council (Hun: *presbitérium*) consisting of several presbyters and the church administrator. Members of the lay council are elected from among the most active members of the assembly. They gather when the pastor wants to make a decision affecting the assembly (investments, rules about deviance, etc.). The council determines how much must be donated in cases in which a member who has left the assembly for a long time and thus neglected his or her duties wishes to return to the congregation. In cases where the estranged member dies and his or her family opts for a religious funeral, the same amount must be paid. It might amount to as much as three to five years' worth of expected contributions, usually not a very big sum, but it can put additional financial burdens on the family. In some cases the fee can be negotiated with the pastor. In the case I present next, it was common knowledge that the family of the deceased was reluctant to pay the sum. It was also common knowledge that the deceased had at one point been a convert. He had returned to the village from the city before his death and had dropped out of his Pentecostal assembly back in the city.

Albi's Burial

Albi, a Rom born in Gánás, moved to Cluj in the 1970s, when he was in his early thirties. First he worked in the construction industry, and later he was employed by the street-cleaning company. In the mid-1980s he began to attend a Pentecostal assembly, and after some time he was baptised, together with his wife. The cleaning company gave him a flat, and he led a decent life in a neighbourhood of the city. Albi's troubles started after his wife died. He married another Romni, but his two adult children were unsatisfied with his new spouse. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and he separated from his second wife for some time. Under the pressure of his sister, who urged Albi that it would be better for him to have someone to take care of him, he 'took back' his wife. This made Albi's children even more dissatisfied, and they became angry with Albi's sister as well. Because of his illness, Albi had been forced to quit his job and was living off a small pension. These events transpired during the last days of the socialist regime.

In the first years of postsocialism, Albi lived in the city, but he soon realised that he would be unable to maintain his flat because of rising maintenance costs. He sold the flat and bought a house in the village, where his only expense would be an electricity bill. Within a couple of years Albi died

in the village. His burial was organised by his children. His siblings did not contribute much, because they were not on good terms with Albi's children. The son decided to invite neither the Calvinist pastor nor any members of the Pentecostal assembly of which Albi had once been a member in the city. The body was prepared according to custom, but the son insisted that his father was a convert and refrained from providing drinks at the wake. Some women visited and stayed overnight with the body, but most of the men preferred to pay just a short visit to express their condolences and give the usual amount of money. After the second day Albi's brother tried to convince the son to go to the Calvinist pastor and ask for a service. The son had an argument with his uncle, who gave up.

On the day of the burial the church bells did not toll, but people began to gather for the funeral. The local Pentecostals called in an ordained pastor from the neighbouring village to conduct the service. As the pastor approached, in the company of female converts, Albi's brother, who was still angry at his nephew for not calling in the Calvinist pastor, drove the approaching pastor away, saying that the man had been a thief in his youth and was unfit to lead the service. The Pentecostals left, and only a Calvinist woman, a neighbour of Albi's, said a prayer for the body in the yard of the house. The body was brought to the cemetery and buried without further ceremony. Some commented that the grave was too shallow, and others noted the absence of the wooden plank and the meagre feast, lacking in drinks. Years later, Albi's son and his brother still avoided talking to each other, and the conspicuous absence of tolling bells continues to be remembered.

For all its discord, this case can still be interpreted as proof of a certain degree of tolerance in the village, because Albi was not denied a burial place in the cemetery. His grave was situated, as is typical, near those of his dead relatives. On the other hand, divisions within the mourning family point to different ideas about what constitutes a proper burial. Albi's son insisted on giving his father a burial in line with the dictates of the converted church, not solely because he wanted to pay respect to his dead father's faith but also because, as some commented, this was the cheapest way. But most local converts saw the dead man as having 'fallen down'. The son saved money on his father's funeral, and this attracted his uncle's ire. Albi's brother was not alone in commenting on the scanty ceremony.

The Calvinist pastor did not attend the funeral because he had not been invited. Moreover, he probably wanted to demonstrate that when someone converted, he or she should suffer the consequences. The son was criticised for not attempting to talk to the local pastor, who, according to local opinion, would have been open to reincorporating the deceased under

the usual condition: the family would have had to pay two years' worth of church contributions retroactively. Critics of the son attributed his reluctance to approach the pastor to his greed. The neighbouring Hungarian woman who volunteered to sing and pray over the body performed what she considered necessary to avoid a 'take him and carry him away' (Hun: *vegyétek és vigyétek*) sort of burial, as locals label short and unusual funeral services.

The contrast between the two funerals described can also be assessed in terms of social consequences. Kata's relatives managed to unite in their efforts to provide a proper funeral that was later remembered as having been beautiful, which reinforced the family's prestige. After Albi's burial, pre-existing family conflicts only deepened. Blame fell on Albi's son, who had failed to organise a proper burial. This shows that although there are several locally accepted ways of organising a burial, a proper ceremony is expected to be connected with a religious institution. In light of this example, it is evident that the local Calvinist pastor is the most important religious authority in this village. Local Pentecostals, dealing with the ambiguity of Albi's contested confessional affiliation, accepted the refusal of Albi's unconverted brother to hold a Pentecostal funeral. In the memory of the local community, the burial, which lacked a pastor, remained a failure: either Albi could have been reincorporated into the local parish or the incipient local Pentecostal assembly could have been allowed to play a role.

Conclusion

Life-cycle rituals in Gánás, predominately baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial, are closely connected to the local community and are supervised by the local Calvinist pastor. In the three rituals that I have discussed, the canonical aspects (the religious services) are invariable, whereas the self-referential messages (the way actors represent themselves) express extant social divisions and re-create differences between segments of the local society. The idea and practice of 'local community' is constructed differently during each of these rituals. Moreover, different segments of local society may prefer divergent forms of ritual expression and thus approach 'locality' in distinctive ways.

Baptism and its associated ritual kinship ties (*kirve*, or godparent, relations) are embedded in an individualistic and competitive social field among the Roma. The local Calvinist pastor has little control over the ritual beyond the religious service. Roma invite godparents and organise the celebration that follows the religious service. Frequently, a non-Roma couple is invited to be the first godparents. These connections cut across ethnic boundaries but are limited to the local community and have social and economic significance for the Roma families involved. An analysis of the structural charac-

teristics of the *kirve* network and of the ritual communication that transpires during religious ceremonies demonstrates how the multiplication of *kirve* relations can be understood as part of the competitive and individualist structure of local Roma society, which is nevertheless embedded in the 'locality' of the parish.

Contrary to the pronounced individualism characteristic of baptisms, in the confirmation ritual the local community is represented primarily as a homogeneous ethno-religious group. This is partly due to the church's greater direct influence. The preparations for and performance of this ritual are closely supervised by the local pastor. Yet the Calvinist Church is directly associated with ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, and so confirmation is not only a coming-of-age ritual (in both canonical and secular terms). It is also an expression of the vitality of the local community and, more generally, of the Hungarian ethnic community. The homogeneous appearance of the Hungarian community is produced through the canonisation of some aspects of the ritual that were previously informal (e.g. the incorporation of locally and ethnically marked dress codes into the ritual). Although many Roma do not undergo this ritual, there are always Roma participants at confirmations. They tacitly accept the masking of social and ethnic divisions in this ritual and contribute to the maintenance of a homogeneous appearance by the local Hungarian community in exchange for symbolic incorporation into the local society.

I have interpreted burials in Gánás as expressions of rural civility. Although the denial of a religious burial can transform the ritual into a coercive tool in the hands of the local clergy, the funeral can also serve as a site of solidarity and tolerance. The cases I described offered evidence for the latter process. Local Roma families ensure 'proper' burials for their dead relatives even if they must take on additional financial burdens to do so. Burials are events in which practical aspects of solidarity and support override social and ethnic divisions.

As a general argument, I suggest that whereas Hungarians, supported by the Calvinist Church, insist on the symbolic subordination of individuals to the community –and this subordination is clearly expressed in rituals such as confirmation that are controlled by Hungarians – Roma have other ways of maintaining their community. Among Roma, individualism and a more competitive ethos are expressed in rituals, as demonstrated in my analysis of baptism. I develop this argument further in subsequent chapters and show how the emphasis on moral personhood among Roma in Gánás maintains and constructs social relationships and community.

Chapter 4
Rituals of Personhood: Oath-Taking and the Maintenance of the Moral Self

In this chapter I take up one of the problems touched upon in chapter 3: the construction of moral personhood among Roma in Gánás. As the analysis of baptism showed, individualistic and competitive relations shape the social organisation of local Roma society. This strong competitive ethic makes hierarchical relations difficult to maintain. Nonetheless, Roma tacitly accept their symbolic subordination to non-Roma, which is underpinned by their economic marginality, in exchange for their incorporation into local society during the confirmation ritual. Here I suggest that Roma accept their role in maintaining the appearance of homogeneity because their approach to 'community' is different from that of local Hungarians. Local Roma maintain their community through a symbolic emphasis on the moral personhood of each member, while never subordinating individuals to the community as a whole.

My primary concern in this chapter is to analyse the construction and transformation of personhood through ritual. I concentrate on a life-crisis ritual, the swearing of an oath before God that one will do something such as stop drinking, that one is innocent of an accusation, or something similar. I point to similarities and contrasts between oath-taking and religious conversion, which forms the central topic of the next chapter. The practices presented here should be seen as elements of a broader set of symbolic techniques through which the social world of Roma communities is controlled and transformed.

With the opening up of the religious sphere in recent years, religious conversions have become more frequent. Roma often swear oaths and convert to Pentecostalism in order to 'cure' similar problems. Pentecostalism is an increasingly important force in transforming Roma religious practices, but I do not intend to suggest a simple transformation from oath-taking to conversion. The hardships faced by Roma communities are directly related to larger socio-economic problems that emerged in Romania during the

postsocialist period. The persistence and intensification of religious ideas and practices such as those discussed here indicate that grass-roots social relations were still far from harmonious or balanced 15 years after the fall of socialism.

The Weight of Words

In the questionnaire I designed for surveying the Roma community in Gánás, I included a section on language use. I was aware that most respondents were fluent in three languages, and I wanted to inquire into the role of language use in the construction of Roma identity. In order to grasp this I asked, 'What language do you speak in your home, on the streets with the Roma, in the village with the Gazhe, and in the city?' I standardised situations according to formal social contexts that organically distinguished language use, ending up with a variety of language settings such as 'at home', 'in the village', and 'in the city'. Misi, my host, who was my local adviser, insisted that this question made no sense. Contrary to his opinion, my expectation was that answers to this question would reveal how language was linked to social contexts and social identities. I expected to show that stigmatisation and adaptation to local norms influenced language use. As a consequence, I thought my results would show that the most intimate language for Roma was Romani, which would be spoken at home or within the Roma settlement. I hypothesised that Hungarian would be spoken primarily in the village, which was majority Hungarian. I expected that Romanian would be spoken in the city. My hypothesis was that an emphasis on speaking one's 'own' language as much as possible would contribute to the maintenance of a strong sense of Roma identity, as is the case with Hungarians living in Romania. I expected that this would be valid for Roma as well, even if the contexts in which Roma could use their own language were more narrowly circumscribed because of social inequality and stigmatisation. So against the advice of my host, I asked the question.

The most common answer I received was that people speak 'as needed' and 'properly' (Rom: *Dav duma sar kampel*). At first glance this answer might seem to confirm my hypothesis by showing that adaptation to context and social expectations determines language choice. However, I soon realised that what my respondents meant was not what my hypothesis had led me to presume. On the one hand, respondents did not attach the same importance I did to the connection between group belonging and language as a formal lexical and grammatical structure of signs (*la langue*, as Ferdinand de Saussure [1983] called this structure, as opposed to *la parole*). On the other hand, respondents believed it was important to use language properly – to speak in a manner germane to the situation. However, situations could not

be standardised as I had done in my questionnaire, because they were not 'outside' but 'inside' speech. This was why Roma occasionally spoke all three languages within the course of a single conversation *in Romanes* ('in the Roma way'). When narrating events in which they had exchanges with outsiders, respondents quoted utterances in the original language in which they had been spoken, switching to Romani only to describe and comment on the situation. This is, according to local standards, part of the proper narrative and necessary for telling a true story.[85]

Nevertheless, respondents attached importance to differences in dialect between Roma groups. They distinguished sharply between groups who 'talk like us' (Rom: *del duma sar amen*) and those whose speech is *mînt-jenitjikon* ('from the province of Muntenia'). These distinctions, above and beyond directly observable phonetic and grammatical differences, had moral aspects as well. Respondents criticised the *mântjene* Roma (those from Muntenia) because 'they change their words', in the sense that they allegedly break promises and live by cheating others. Romungre are also aware that the Vlach Roma consider the Romungre themselves to be *dille* ('fools') and ridicule their dialect for being *kashtale*, or coming from a 'wooden tongue' (from the Rom: *kasht*, 'wood').

Instead of illuminating the link I had constructed between groups and languages, these observations pointed to a specific approach taken by respondents towards speech, an approach that focused on the problematic relationship between the speaker and his words. Slowly I came to understand why my question was not working, just as Misi had predicted. After relying initially on an abstract construction of language and a set of standardised 'exterior' situations, I began to recognise where the real 'weight' of the words was for the people with whom I was working. Their attitude suggested that they perceived a strong connection between a speaker and his or her words. Words, which are 'his words', are linked to the speaker, and the only accurate way of recounting what has been said is to repeat the same words in the same way. This is the ideal, and Roma attempt to stick to it as much as possible. The actual words originally uttered act as a limiting case on the retelling of past conversations. Even when one speaks to somebody who would not understand the original Hungarian words (such as a daughter-in-law coming from a Roma group living next to a Romanian village), the imperfections implied by the realisation do not harm the existence of the ideal. The 'perfect reconstruction' of others' utterances is an important part of speakers' rhetorical ambitions.

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[85] Andrea Szalai (1998) described a similar practice found among the Romanian-speaking Boyash Gypsies of south-west Hungary.

If one attaches this importance to the words of others, the same is true for one's own words. Once uttered, words can stick, branding the speaker with a life-long nickname. A speaker can be ridiculed for his or her recurrent expressions, phrases, or mistakes. Other words can come back to haunt the person who originally spoke them. He or she may face a public challenge to repeat exactly what he or she said in a particular situation. Someone who feels accused by unjust gossip can start a 'private investigation' to reconstruct the words that were said in order to publicly challenge the gossiper, forcing the slanderer to face the consequences.

Ethnographers of Roma have described the unique forms of speech found among this ethnic group. For example, Michael Stewart (1989) discussed details of the phenomenon of 'true speech' (a particular way of singing) among Roma in north-eastern Hungary. I believe it is no exaggeration to speak of the existence of distinct 'speech genres' in the Bakhtinian sense (Bakhtin 1986) among the Roma-Gypsies. In the following section I turn to an analysis of one ritual speech form, the oath.

A Life-Crisis Ritual: The Oath

At the beginning of my fieldwork among the Roma, in a suburb of the city of Cluj, an elderly Romni named Lina told me a story about her son-in-law (Rom: *zhamutro*), Mihai, who, under pressure from his family, had tried to quit drinking some years before. Rita, Mihai's wife, was Lina's younger daughter, and Gabi was her elder daughter. Because I was aware of the details of her family relationships and the wider social context, Lina talked to me more like an insider. Following is a translation from the original transcript of a longer interview (see Appendix). Lina spoke primarily in Romani, using Romanian and Hungarian only when quoting utterances made originally in those languages or when addressing someone who spoke one of those languages in her account. During our discussion I, too, used Romani and occasionally Hungarian and Romanian, but for a different reason: at the time of the interview my fluency in Romani was insufficient for me always to express my full intentions and ask my questions clearly. Here is Lina's story:

> [Mihai] took the oath [Rom: *colaxardjas*] [to quit drinking], and on the first day of Easter he had three crises, three times, one after the other: one at eight in the morning, when the people were in the church, another at noon, and then at six in the evening. In the evening he almost jumped on Gabi. [Looking at] the window . . . he saw a door instead of the window. And as Gabi was lying in bed – the bed was there then, she was sleeping there under the window – and . . . he jumped right on the bed as he tried to jump out the window.

Gabi pushed him back. 'Oh, Mom! He jumped right on me! Oh, Mom!' She was scared to death. Rita wouldn't stay with him because she was scared of him so much. She ran from him to the ends of the earth.

One day we were going to collect rose hips. And [Mihai] had a decilitre of brandy beforehand at the Vama [a pub]. And I was asking him all the time while we were collecting the hips: 'Mihai, are you all right? Aren't you sick?' 'No!' And again, 'Aren't you sick?' 'No!' When we came back here, and we went inside to weigh the hips, at that time they were buying it next to the bridge, there the Gazho [non-Roma] took the hips from us. While we were inside I just saw him shivering, and then he fell to the ground. Boom! 'Oh, Lord!' It was just a few steps from the water. He almost fell into the Somes [a river]. I ran after the Gazhi [non-Roma woman or wife]: 'Ma'am, can you give me a bit of brandy? Mihai fell down!' She and her husband know him. 'I have no brandy', she said . . . I told her, 'He fell on the ground and I can't run to bring it for him' . . . Her Gazho also told her, 'Come on, give him a small glass of brandy [Rou: *păhărel de țuica*]. The guy fell down, give it to him, woman!' The Gazho opened his [Mihai's] mouth and gave him water. I wiped his face with my apron. He was full of blood because he had chewed his tongue. I threw away the apron; I would never wear it again. I threw it into the river. But Rita would not even touch him. 'No, God forbid' . . .

László: But wasn't it St. John's evil [Hun: *nyavalyatörés*; an epileptic seizure] and not the oath [that caused problems for Mihai]?

Lina: It happened because of the oath. After all this, Rita took him to the church and the priest absolved him of it [Rom: *desputridjas*]. He read [the Bible] over his head.

László: When the priest reads over his head, his head is covered and he kneels before the priest [during the church ritual]?

Lina: Yes, you kneel down before him, and he covers your head, then he reads the Bible over your head. Then you go around the altar three times, then you kiss the cross, of course. Laci [my nickname], the oath is big! Very, very, very big is the oath. If you know you can't keep it, don't do it . . .

László: And the baptism among the converted, is that like the oath?

Lina: That is also quite big. Haven't I told you what happened to that Romni [referring to a woman both of us knew]?

László: She was paralyzed.

> *Lina*: All her body was paralyzed. I told her then; she came out from the water, it was three hours after she was baptised, and she started to speak obscenities and curse [Rom: *charravel thaj koshel*]. She was saying things that shouldn't be said; she cursed God [Rom: *le devles koshleas*]. Oh, God! And when she came, she went directly to the pub and had a beer and she drank. I said to her, 'What are you doing, Romni, now when you have just gotten out of the water?'

By the time of this interview I had already heard of several instances of misfortune and severe illness attributed to divine punishment, often connected with oaths, so I had some familiarity with the phenomenon. I was aware that both the breaching of an oath and perjury were seen as major offences, attracting God's anger. By the end of my fieldwork it was apparent that many Roma with whom I had maintained close contact had sworn oaths at some point in their lives, driven by problems related to family relations (most frequently suspected infidelity between spouses), excessive gambling, alcohol abuse, the desire to prove one's innocence in an action seen as reprehensible, or direct accusations of involvement in such actions. Swearing an oath is considered a dangerous gesture, not only to the person who swears it but also to his or her family members. Oath-taking remains a widespread practice.

I was struck by some of the parallels between oath-taking and imagery surrounding religious conversion. In the cases of religious conversion that I came to know, the person's decision to convert was influenced by his or her desire to be healed from a severe illness, overcome alcoholism, or regain family peace. The consequences of apostasy, or 'falling down' (Rom: *telepelel*) from faith, are similar to those that follow the breaching of an oath. This observation led me to the idea that oath-taking and conversion could be interpreted as alternative means of controlling and influencing individual behaviour and social structure. I tried to test this hypothesis, discussing it directly with several people. The results of this attempt remained inconclusive, because some of my informants (typically converts) simply denied the parallel or comparison. Others agreed that the oath (Rom: *e colax*) and baptism among converts (Rom: *o bolipo maskar o pokaiti*) were comparable, concurring that both were powerful and potentially dangerous if not properly respected.

Structures of the Oath

In order to make sense of the story of Mihai, I analyse the linguistic structure and social organisation of oath-taking and then discuss features of the religious imaginary surrounding the ritual.

Linguistic Structure

In analysing the linguistic structure of oath-taking, I focus on the performative aspects of linguistic utterances rather than on language morphology. I never directly witnessed an oath-swearing ritual among Roma during my fieldwork; such acts are personal and not open to the public. However, I tried repeatedly to reconstruct the texts of oaths. On the basis of people's descriptions and mimetic utterances, it appears that an oath consists of two basic elements: a clear announcement of the purpose of the oath, and a prescribed divine punishment (a curse) to be inflicted if the purpose is not accomplished. Defined in one sentence, oaths are conditional self-curses.

A view of language and speech as an integral part of general human behaviour has existed in social anthropology since the publication of Malinowski's works.[86] According to this perspective, language cannot easily be separated from other human behaviour and social structure. Utterances are not merely statements or representations of 'the world out there' but instead create and transform the human world. J. L. Austin (1976 [1962]) argued that ritualised utterances, which he labelled 'performatives' (such as promises and marriage ceremonies), were social acts that created, reinforced, and transformed social bonds and obligations. They could be valid only under specific sets of conditions, and they became 'hollow' when not implemented in the social world. From such a perspective, oath-taking is a typical performative linguistic act. It creates a social expectation that the oath-taker will abide by the terms of his or her oath. The future orientation of oaths is evident, but there is an additional retrospective dimension: an oath can be used to assert that the oath-taker's past behaviour was congruent with the present utterance. For example, if someone claims to be innocent of a theft, he or she can strengthen the assertion by swearing an oath. In this way oaths have an affinity with gestures and exclamations of reinforcement and emphasis that are parts of everyday discourse, such as *Te marav*! 'Let me die [if it is not true]!' Nevertheless, such exclamations are less formal and less elaborated in the aspects I discuss.

That oaths are simultaneously past, present, and future oriented is a remarkable feature of the linguistic act, even if the content of any one oath need not explicitly address each of these temporal orientations. Usually the linguistic contents of oaths are explicitly past or future oriented. The invalidation of oaths is seen as either perjury or breach. Enforcement and punishment, however, can only be future oriented. Invocations of retroactive, past-

[86] For a critical discussion of Malinowski's theory of language and magic, see the Malinowski Memorial Lecture by Stanley J. Tambiah (1968). For a brief discussion of Malinowski's theory of language, see Gellner (1998).

oriented punishments are only used in jest. For example, an old man whose parents died long ago might exclaim, 'Let my father die [Rom: *Te merel munro dat*]!'

That some oaths may be revoked reveals a further temporal dimension of the ritual: future-oriented oaths can be revoked by a reverse ritual, whereas past-oriented oaths seem to be irrevocable. The temporal validity of future-oriented oaths is also more flexible: the validity of these oaths can be made contingent upon the occurrence of a certain future event or can be 'fulfilled' by performing the action prescribed by the oath. Oaths can also be intentionally limited to a certain time period. In the case of past-oriented oaths, the validity criterion (truth of the word) is not subjected to temporal limitations. A present utterance has performative power in the social world of the speaker because claims about past actions cannot be modified in the future without undermining the validity of the previous statement. Table 4.1 summarises the main features of the oath: the structure of its temporality, its validity criterion, the conditions under which it may be revoked, and the conditions of enforcement or punishment.

Table 4.1. Performative features of two types of oaths

Feature	Past-Oriented Oath	Future-Oriented Oath
Validity criterion	Truth of the word	Respect for the word
Time limit of validity	Unlimited	Can be set or fulfilled
Case of invalidity	Perjury	Breach
Possibility of revocation	Impossible	Possible
Enforcement or punishment	In the present or future	In the present or future

It is apparent from this structure that perjury is a more serious offence than the breach of the oath, because it is always possible to revoke a future-oriented oath in order to avoid future punishment, even when the conditions set forth by the oath have already been violated. There is no such possibility in the case of perjury.

Social Organisation

By being more formalised, oaths differ from everyday curses and self-curses. Although oaths often contain the same expressions as curses (wishing somebody dead, etc.) in a conditional form, they are also accompanied by gestures such as kneeling and require the involvement of an outside institution, namely, the church. The church may simply provide the setting for oath-taking. However, I was told by my Roma informants that they often request

the assistance of an Orthodox priest (Rom: *xlahitjikon rasaj*, literally 'Romanian priest'). In addition to the person swearing the oath, a third party who acts as witness also attends the ceremony. No outsiders are present. Although family members or the larger community may be aware of the event, they are not involved.

Ethnographers have described cases in which oaths were used to arbitrate social conflicts. Oaths are often used to settle tensions between rival males. Michael Herzfeld (1997) analysed oaths made by Cretan mountain shepherds. In cases of suspected animal theft, conflicts between these (non-Roma) shepherds were settled if the suspect swore his innocence in front of an icon. Shepherds called each other to swear oaths in cases when one suspected the other of being involved in the animal theft. To ask for an oath was a delicate issue, because if the accused shepherd agreed to take the oath, the accuser could have no further claim: he had to accept the oath and leave the punishment (in case of perjury) to God or the saint represented on the icon. In most cases discussed by other ethnographers, oaths were past oriented and involved what Herzfeld called a 'structural nostalgia' of reciprocity (1997: chapter 6). By this he identified an ideal of male solidarity and equity that was often contrasted with more formal structures of the state (official courts, police, etc.). Animal theft was considered a crime, so shepherds could call the police and ask for an investigation. They still preferred oaths, because of the ideas of reciprocity and equality implied by the practice. Oath-taking also provided the shepherds a way to reproduce their autonomy from the outside world by dealing with their conflicts without involving the authorities. The practice was reinforced by the belief that perjury committed under the constraint of authorities such as the police would not be followed by supernatural punishment (Herzfeld 1997: 122).

Ethnographers of Roma communities have also described the practice as connected to conflict mediation in competitive relationships between males involving economic strategies or disputes connected to marriages contracted with bride price (Gropper 1975; Sutherland 1975; Salo and Salo 1977). Among some Roma groups, willingness to swear is generally sufficient; both parties view it as providing enough credibility (Salo and Salo 1977: 60). As in the case analysed by Herzfeld, oath-taking can serve the autonomy of the group – for example, transgressions can be controlled or 'investigated' without the involvement of the authorities (see Yoors 1967: 176–179).

In contrast to these accounts, the oaths taken by Roma in Gánás were usually linked to gender relationships and family problems. In this respect the social organisation of the oath shows more similarity to situations described for Hungarian-speaking Gypsies in Transylvania (Pozsony 1993) and

Transcarpathia (Borbély 2007) and for Vlach Roma in Hungary (Rézműves 1998). In these communities, oaths are most frequently used to enforce promises to stop drinking or smoking or by couples to test accusations and suspicions of infidelity and illicit sexual contact. In other relations, suspicion of theft is the most common motive. Oaths are considered to be powerful, but perjury and breaches of oaths are not rare. Melinda Rézműves (1998: 28) argued that in the case of the Vlach Roma, even if the community might be aware of perjury (she gives examples of known adultery), the oath still serves to make peace between the couple. In addition to pacifying domestic relations, oaths provide a means through which intra-Roma conflict may be 'prosecuted' independent of official legislation. Courts are considered uncontrollable and dangerous, and their punishments are harsh (months in prison even for a petty theft).

It is important that the problems 'cured' by oaths are often linked to a male peer group. A Romni often views her husband's friends (Rom: *o barati*) with suspicion, even if she does not say so openly, because they are the company with whom the husband drinks and plays cards. Playing cards is the most common way of gambling, even though casino machines have recently been installed in many pubs in the city, and electronic gambling places have opened. Although the family budget is ideally administered by the wife, the husband may borrow additional money to spend on his friends or may hide part of his income. In addition to running up excessive expenditures on alcohol and gambling debts, a husband, under the influence of his peers, can involve himself with prostitutes (Rom: *kurve*). Romni call any other women who 'give foot' (Rom: *del punro*) to their husbands prostitutes. In cases of illicit sexual relations, women are more often blamed for not resisting the man's advances than males are blamed for persistence. Even the wife of an adulterous husband might publicly say, 'Men will be men [Rom: *o mursh hin mursh*]' in order to protect her *rom*. At home, male transgressions are tolerated less permissively than they are in public. Several cases of violence in families I knew were caused by the 'big mouth' (Rom: *vas o baro muj*) of the wife, who reproached her husband for, among other things, infidelity.

After a man has been on a long drinking binge or has racked up a large gambling debt, his wife may decide to take him to the church and ask him to swear an oath to change his behaviour. The husband usually consents, because he feels guilty and is under threat of being left. The oath ruptures the solidarity of the male peer group. Once a man swears to quit drinking, he can no longer regularly congregate with his peers. Non-attendance enforces abstinence because collective drinking is the norm, and the oath-taker would become the object of ridicule if he were to drink by himself in secret (Rom:

pel garudes). Moreover, breaching an oath risks divine punishment for both the oath-taker and his family. I heard of several instances in which a more 'realistic' approach was taken, partly because of fear of punishment and partly in order not to exclude the Rom from his male peer group. The husband swore not to drink more than a certain amount ('he swore on two beers'), and the time limit of the oath was tied to a certain coming event (e.g. 'until Christmas', Rom: *zhik Kolonda*), after which he would again be allowed to celebrate the holiday freely.

If the oath is not properly observed, both parties may decide that it is to too risky to stick to its terms. If the children were included in the formula of the oath, the wife may urge the husband to give up on his promise. In such cases the services of a priest may again be requested. In simple cases, praying over the head of the oath taker is enough to invalidate the oath. In more difficult cases the priest recommends fasting on certain days (e.g. three Tuesdays) and 'will shout into the church' (Rom: *chigardel ande khangeri*) the name of the person during three Sunday services.

Religious Imagination

The oath is unimaginable without the presence of an enforcing divine authority. The question '*Na daras de o gulo Del* [Aren't you afraid of the kind (literally 'sweet') God]?' is often heard in everyday conversation and arguments when the speaker calls for a moral stance from his interlocutor. A more explicit question can be, '*Na daras k'o Del trazonel ando tro shero* [Aren't you afraid that God will thunderbolt your head]?' This question is used in arguments when one party is convinced of the insincerity or dishonesty of the other and wishes to express this conviction publicly. In addition to the threat of lightning strikes, other explanations are often invoked for why one should fear breaking an oath. Such cautionary tales can be found in stories of misfortune, sudden horrifying death, and severe illness attributed to divine punishment.

It is important to note that chronic illnesses and simple accidents, even if fatal, are rarely attributed to divine punishment. There must be a 'meaningful' disease or some element of horror in the death for it to be connected to divine punishment. Paralysis following a stroke (Rom: *naphel balval*, literally 'bad wind') and mental disturbances are most commonly explained as consequences of perjury or breaches of oaths. In both cases, bearers of divine punishment suffer damage to their health that inhibits them from fulfilling important tasks intimately related to their personhood. The circumstances surrounding deaths attributed to divine punishment are more difficult to define. Not long before I started my fieldwork, a child died in an accident that most of the Roma I spoke with attributed directly to the child's mother's

having breached an oath. The case contained several elements of divine punishment. A Romni in her thirties had taken an oath 'on the head of' her three-year-old daughter, vowing that if she was involved in a theft, she would 'collect her daughter's brain in a newspaper'. Several months later, while she was crossing the main street of the neighbourhood holding her daughter's hand, a car hit the child. Her little head was smashed. The mother was uninjured.

This sudden, horrifying accident can be interpreted as a consequence of the oath because several elements of the imaginary surrounding divine punishment were united. Swearing 'on the head' is a regular formula implying that dangerous words such as curses and oaths can 'fall upon' somebody (Rom: *pelel pe leste/late*). The head of a person is seen as the most likely receptor of divine punishment. It is important in this case that although the oath was uttered by the mother, the person exposed to risk was the daughter. Risking one's most beloved in order to prove one's innocence is fairly common, and everyone agrees that children hold the greatest value. The implicit assumption is that the real punishment lies in the suffering brought upon the survivor for having broken the oath. This particular accident was of this sort, because the mother was unharmed.

The idea of the punishment 'falling upon' somebody contains an element of arbitrariness: an oath or a curse can fall on several members of a family, some of whom may be innocent and unaware of what is happening to them. This circumstantial insecurity is an important element of the image of divine punishment and provides a reason why one must be careful in provoking it. The circle of potential targets is limited to close family members. In most cases the oath is even more precise and will 'fall upon' only a certain person or will 'fall back' on the person who took the oath. I learned of a case of a Rom who suspected his wife of infidelity. Although his neighbours and relatives assured him that this was not the case, he was firm and requested that she take an oath. The couple had two small children, and the wife was very much afraid for their sakes, but finally she agreed to go to a church in the city. She took an oath, and in the same year her husband suffered a series of accidents – he fell from a cart and even broke a leg, in addition to other misfortunes. The explanation given by members of the community for the man's misfortunes was that, because he was a well-known adulterer, the oath had fallen upon his head.

God (Rom: *o Del*) is seen as a complex being who is both 'kind' (Rom: *gulo*, 'sweet') and cruel. If one adds the element of arbitrariness that is attributed to divine punishment, the imagery sometimes becomes even more troubling. But this is so only for the analyst or convert to Pentecostalism, both of whom seek to demonstrate some theory. For unconverted Roma,

the same religious imagery can even account for conversion or loss of faith and predicts the consequences of such actions.

A Rom who was considered to be a drunkard (Rom: *matjardo*), against the warning of several of his relatives, was baptised by the Pentecostals. Although he managed to quit drinking for a period of time, he eventually 'fell down' (Rom: *telepeleas*) and slipped back into his old ways. He continued attending the assembly, and unconverted people began to ask him if he was not afraid 'when entering the church/assembly' (Rom: *kana zhas ando khangeri*). Other converts tried to keep him sober but finally gave up. An unconverted elder Rom told me, 'It was a sin to take baptism because he does not keep the faith or repent [*Halas păcato te bolen pes, ko na njikeren o pokăinca*]'. The man now lives under the threat of impending divine punishment, an idea shared by the non-convert community.[87]

The idea that short-term gains are actually evidence of an even greater impending punishment also exists in the imagery surrounding oaths. This line of argumentation is frequent among converts who seek to explain the this-worldly success of dishonest people. One example, which I take from the published autobiography of a Romni from the same group I studied, demonstrates how the joy of being lucky in cards can be overshadowed by the threat of punishment looming over the family:

> Sorin [the husband] had been sworn not to play cards. He borrowed money from his brother, played cards and he won. We went home. He says to Kati [his wife]: 'Kati, I did something wrong'. 'What have you done?' 'Oh Kati, I don't want to tell you how much wrong I have done'. 'You, what have you done?' 'Well, I have played cards. But I won!' (Könczei and Lacatus 2002: 113).

Conclusion

Among the Romungre, swearing an oath is considered a dangerous gesture, not only for the person involved but also for his or her family members. Nonetheless, oath-taking remains widespread. Drawing on a social anthropological view of language, I consider the oath to have a strong connection to and effect on the speaker's immediate and broader social world, because oaths make strong claims about certain past actions or create future obligations. A working hypothesis is that oath-taking practices and religious conversion can be viewed in a common comparative frame.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the preceding discussion is that most problems 'cured' by oaths emerge from family conflicts, and the

[87] Converts have a different view of cases of apostasy, but this is part of my subsequent discussion of conversion.

effects of oaths are focused on the closest family bonds. In this sense, oaths protect the oath-taker from social alienation. The practice involves an emphasis on personal connections and the value of trust and solidarity inside the local community at a time when these virtues are increasingly scarce in the broader society. A Rom might say, in the heat of an argument, 'Let my small son die!' A Romni addressing her mother and wanting her words be taken seriously might say, 'Mother, let me see you dead!' Although such everyday curses might at first seem to threaten the lives of others, the main person exposed to risk is the person who uttered the curse. The same is true to a greater degree in cases of formal oaths. The person who utters the formulaic curse that endangers a family member is threatened because it is more terrible not to perish oneself but to lose a beloved because of a behaviour that diverges from one's own words. The ideal of moral personhood prescribes a unity of speech and behaviour that is saliently expressed in oaths.

Chapter 5
Conversions: Narratives, Sincere Hearts, and Other Signs

In this chapter I am concerned with the maintenance and transformation of the moral self among Roma in the context of religious conversion. I start with an analysis of the ritualised narrative that accompanies conversion. Conversion narratives are not simply accounts of past events but also contain performative features; their performance creates and maintains the act of conversion. The effect of the conversion narrative on personhood is comparable to the effect of oath-taking, but my analysis of conversion is not confined to the verbal aspects (i.e. the narrative) of the act. Although analysts of conversion stories recognise the importance of the narration in transforming the convert's personal identity and demonstrate the effects of conversion on the self (Stromberg 1993), they have paid too little attention to the ways in which narration and other verbal acts are embedded in and transform the social world of converts and how these transformative performances act as social constraints.

I approach conversion as a form of ritual that includes both verbal and non-verbal elements. I define the performance of the narrative as part of a ritual sequence, and therefore the connection between the performance and its social context must be described and analysed. If conversion narratives are seen as part of a broader domain of ritualised communication, then non-verbal ritual codes (e.g. dressing, gestures, visible aspects of consumption) must be included in the analysis, because both verbal and non-verbal aspects are integral parts of the communicative practices that undergo changes in the process of conversion. Moreover, the pragmatic aspects of this transformed communication should be analysed because they reveal the connectedness of the converted person to the immediate social structures that either undermine or support his or her attempt at self-transformation. Identifying the social limits on ritual communication reveals how, in some contexts, the willingness or unwillingness of a convert to retell his or her conversion narrative,

and, alternatively, the willingness or unwillingness of an audience to listen, is part of a dialogical construction of moral personhood.

I begin with a case study of a convert and his narrative about his encounter with God, in order to demonstrate the role of narration in the performative transformation of personhood.

Conversion Narratives: Symbolic Transformation of the Person

During my stay in Gánás, I recorded a long autobiographical narrative by 'Dani', a middle-aged male convert and Pentecostal preacher in the village. Dani had been born in Gánás to a very poor Roma family and had spent part of his life outside the village. We became acquaintances as soon as I began to visit the Pentecostal gatherings that were regularly held in a house in Dani's neighbourhood. I was already familiar with some events from his narrative because he often included personal examples and testimonies in his preaching. I asked Dani if he would tell me the 'whole story', and he agreed. He is trilingual, as are most local Roma, but before we started to record his narrative he told me that for the interview he would speak only Romanian. 'This is the language in which I can speak about my encounter with God', he said. His choice of using a single language rather than the usual composite of quotations in various languages indicated that this was to be a special narrative form, more ritualised than everyday narratives. The relatively monovocal narration also conferred more authority upon Dani in his account of the past, and his monolingual performance emphasised his transformed personhood in the present. The following narrative is a product of our interaction in a supportive environment, Dani's own house in the presence of his wife and a few other sympathetic listeners. Sometimes I intervened with short questions, but the construction of the whole of the narration was clearly under Dani's control. Here is what he told me:

> Maybe God wanted it to be like this: because if God hadn't put me to suffering I might not have turned to God, and probably I would never know him. Probably I wouldn't be a convert [Rou: *pocăit*] as I am now.[88]
>
> In my life, before I converted, I would drink one or two glasses of brandy, like every man. But I was stupid when I was drunk. If somebody insulted me, I beat him and cut him . . . the devil carried me [Rou: *dracul m-a purtat*]. And once I was in Zalău, because then I was living there at Poarta Sălajului. I was married there. I was a son-

[88] The everyday term Roma use for converted people, *o pocaiti*, is derived from this Romanian word. They sometimes also use a derivative from the Hungarian term (*hívő*), *o hivövi*. Members of these churches most often refer to themselves simply as Christians (Rou: *creştin*).

in-law there. And there were some wicked people: some tent-dwelling Gypsies [Rou: *ţigani corturari*] with big moustaches and long hair. And those Gypsies would come there when we would be drinking with my brother-in-law at my mother-in-law's house. They came and they scoffed at us . . . because they said we are Gypsies like . . . anyway . . . Then on a Saturday afternoon I started to drink there, and those Gypsies came and started to quarrel with us. We were drunk . . . the other guy owed some money to my brother-in-law, the guy who we killed, because we killed one of them . . .

I was condemned to 16 years in prison. I had been in prison several times before, but I had never gotten a big punishment. I was frightened, when I heard that I was getting 16 years, I was frightened. [How old were you?] Me? I was then 35. Then I said: Lord, if you will set me free I will change [Rou: *o să mă întorc*], I will convert, I will serve you for the rest of my life. But as I knelt down, the guard saw me through a small window and took me out to the lobby. That was a real beating I received! 'So you are praying here? Didn't you have time to pray while you were outside? You are praying here in order to show the thieves you are a believer!' He beat me. But I continued to pray day and night to God, I was asking him to help me get free.

The man who had beaten me, the same policeman . . . because I had no education, I wasn't able to read or write . . . at once God put the intention in his mind and on his heart [Rou: *a pus în minte şi i-a pus pe inima*], and he returned to me, as he saw me continuously praying and crying. I was desperate and I was not eating. He came and asked me: 'Don't you have the right to appeal?' I said to the sergeant, 'Sir, I cannot read and I cannot write'. He took me out to the lobby and put a chair next to a table because he felt pity for me, as desperate as I was, and I was crying. He said, 'Listen, I'm going to prepare an application for you. Request an appeal, but keep in mind what you now declare to me, because I take it down, and after three months when you are called for the hearing, you must say the same. If you make even a small mistake it will be bad for you. You might forget'. I told him everything. I dictated everything without a devious word because if they were to catch me lying at the appeal, I probably could even have gotten additional years. He filed the appeal, and they took the application to Bucharest. After three months I received the decision. The guard came: 'Have you filed an appeal? Prepare your pack for the trip. You will go to the hearing'. I prayed throughout these three months: 'Lord, you know that I have no edu-

cation. Lord, help me to speak there. Because there are a lot of people, I might get scared. But you, my God, you can help me. You've always helped me' . . .

Eighteen people were there for appeals. Who knows how it happened, because I was the last, from the beginning, but we had gotten there who knows how, and they took the files and I was the first. You know, how could this happen? As they took the files those that were on top came out at the bottom and mine came first. When we reached the courthouse, we were all in chains, and they called my name. I stood up, there was such a crowd there . . . there were more than 500 people. He asked me a question. The judge asked me if I admitted to all the declarations that had been recorded after my arrest. I do not want to praise myself, let the praise be for God, I was even in prison before and I was aware of all the laws . . . It is not good to be in prison, but it is good to know a bit of hardship . . . I started courageously: 'Sir, and honoured Supreme Court, I recognise only one of the declarations: the last one. Except this last declaration I can recognise none'. 'Look, they are all signed'. 'They are signed because I was obliged to sign. I was desperate; I was desperate because of the beating I received. I was obliged to sign what they told me to sign! But here in front of you, I know that you are here to interrogate, and solve our problems, I know that you are here and you will not beat me'. And then I explained this, and this . . . and then he took that book, and turned the pages, and the judges discussed something. 'Sit down!' . . . They were listening to the others. 'Wait outside in the lobby because I will give the result immediately'. Then we waited outside and a sergeant came: 'Who is S. Dani?' 'I am, at your command'. He said, 'Prisoner S. Dani, you have eight years to serve'. Reduced to half . . . Yes. They changed my punishment because I was classified anew [Rou: *mi s-a schimbat încadrarea*] . . .

But you see, I went out to work. On a Saturday when we were outside I asked the commander, 'Sir, if I were to work, from my eight years, how much would remain?' And I explained: 'I had 16 years and the Supreme Court reduced my punishment, and I was left with eight. Now I would like to go out to work in order to gain some days. If I go, how much can I reduce from these eight?' 'What is your occupation?' 'I am a mason'. 'We need masons. You are the only one'. And then they took me out to work as a mason, and he said, 'From the eight years you will remain for four. And you are free! But you must have good conduct and no reports, because if you get a report, that will be added when you are released and you will

stay six more months, or nine months, or even a year, depending on the report' . . . I had such good conduct that in four years I had no reports. God saved me, praise him, and that is why I converted. I converted because I saw the love of God. After all that I had done in the prison, how many things I had sold, how much I was fighting, how much bad I had done there . . . I had no reports, because God took care of me. I was fasting. I fasted twice a week. [When?] Tuesday and Friday . . . And God saw me: 'Look this [man] is suffering, and even in his suffering he is fasting', praise the Lord. That is why I converted . . .

When I returned from prison I forgot about God. If a brother-in-law would come, or a friend or a relative, I would start to drink, and I had forgotten God. Six months passed like this. After six months I started to drink even harder. I was beating this poor woman . . . how much she got it, God forbid. The alcohol did it, not because I was a bad man. I was not bad, but when I drank the devil worked. And listen now: because now comes the thing!

I was attending the assembly . . . [Who encouraged you to go?] . . . just me alone. [But there, while you were inside, were people coming to you to talk? To teach . . .] Yes, they came. But they came to talk about God, not to teach me. [Who were they?] Some converts came on Sundays, and they took us out, those who wanted to come . . . [Were they Pentecostals?] Pentecostals . . . but I knew before . . . I even went to congregations. And then I went to the assembly. And when I went to the assembly I liked it, but I was unable to pray. Because if you have no education, just: 'Help me God! You know me God! Help me God!' I was unable to say more . . . When I would come home from church, I would drink two to three decilitres of brandy and even put a bottle in my pocket. I came home and drank. Six months passed again. I went to the assembly and I drank. I was drinking and smoking.

But one night, after six months, because the Bible says: He for whom it is in God's plan to convert, God will convert him even from his mother's womb. Whether you want it or not, you will be a convert! The Bible says that. Because if you do not want it, he will put you on a bed of suffering [Rou: *patul de suferința*], and from the bed of suffering you will cry, 'Lord, if you help me, I will convert!' Like I was in prison: 'Lord, if you liberate me, I will convert', and since then God has not let me down. God saw that I was drinking and fighting . . . I was fighting with the Gypsies and attending the assembly!

And then, one night at two o'clock, the face of Jesus Christ appeared to me. I have a book, I can show you . . . Jesus was wearing a mantle and he was coming through the air. And I heard a voice. I heard a voice: 'How long do you want to continue like this?' I got up and woke her [his wife]. We kneeled down, and then I got scared indeed. I said then, 'Lord, starting from today' . . . It was dark, I had not turned the light on. I said, 'Lord, if I do not serve you truly, [punish me]. If I put drinks in my mouth or smoke. Whatever will be in my life, I will convert'. And thank my Heavenly Father, since I made this covenant with him . . . I would say in vain to you or to Misi . . . You do not need to know me . . . I want God to know me! Because . . . people are enemies. People say bad things about you, but I do not care what the world says, because the Bible says: If you want to be saved, do not look to the right or look to the left, look ahead . . .

After a week I felt very, very bad: I wanted to smoke, I wanted to drink. But if you take an oath in front of God [Rou: *jurământ în fața lui Dumnezeu*] you must be very ambitious . . . because I was a hard drinker. But thank God that I said, 'Lord, I feel like drinking, and I feel like smoking, but how bad these are! I know you do not like these, because when Jesus Christ came to save us, to clean sin, he did not come with drinks and cigarettes in his pockets, to distribute to the drinkers and smokers. No, he came to reject cigarettes and drinks. Because only in this way can you turn to the Word of God'.

[From whom did you learn?] I tell you that, too: While we had children around, I could not pray at home, because children are children, especially if you are a convert, you cannot hurt a child. When I was going to the forest to collect wood I knelt down and prayed: 'Lord, I have no education. Lord, I don't know. Lord, teach me! If you want me to be a convert and to serve you all my life, teach me!' And then I took the Bible in my hand, and I could not recognise the letters. I knew none of the letters. And I looked into the Bible and I was crying. I was crying and crying and my tears were flowing on the Bible. I said how good it would be to know what is written here . . . Lord, it would be very good to know what it says here. Lord, I converted in vain if you do not grant me understanding to know what your Word says. Lord, teach me, Lord! Show me that you are God, show me now, because if you show me now that you will teach me to read, I will believe in you even more. Isn't it a big thing to learn to read at fifty years old when I didn't attend school at all? Not even for a minute. I wasn't at school. It passed two months like this.

> I couldn't get anything . . . And once as I took the Bible in my hand, I opened to John 3. And I looked there and at once I read: Jesus and Nicodemus . . . And then I asked Józsi, I asked him first: 'Józsi, come tell me what it says here'. But I said nothing that I had read . . . He says, 'Jesus and Nicodemus' . . . When I heard this my hair rose on my head. I would learn to read! I didn't sleep all night. I stayed up with the light on and I read the Bible. This was on a Saturday. In the morning, the next morning, it was Sunday, and I spoke in the assembly . . . I took the Bible and I knelt down, and I prayed to God. Everyone knew that I couldn't read. But when I started to read from the Bible, everybody was amazed. 'You couldn't read!' 'I couldn't, but God is good'. And with him you can do whatever you want; if you are a believer and you say, Let this forest move, the forest will move. And God has taught me, my brother. And I thank God, because without any school, without any education, without any teaching . . . not taught by anybody . . . nothing at all! [And the pastors didn't teach you?] When I was at church he wouldn't speak to me personally, he preached to everybody, but I listened in vain, because what I would hear from him, in two or three days I would forget. But God purged me . . . he made me pure, and when God saw that I walk his paths and I want to be a real convert, God gave me understanding [Rou: *pricepere*]. Do you realise that without any education you will go among 300 or 400 people and preach the Word of God? It is a big thing, my dear Laci.

One main theme in this narrative is the recurrent demand on Dani to speak in public. He repeatedly presents situations in which he is expected and compelled to speak. This theme can be interpreted on the basis of Dani's present identity as a preacher, his self-construction as a person who has become a public speaker. Throughout the narration his personal development is connected to suffering and the intervention of God. This theme emphasises Dani's personal development through a continuous overcoming of obstacles. As he put it: 'It is good to know a bit of hardship'. He might be considered a 'self-made man', but divine support is always involved. This is particularly salient in the peak of his personal development, when Dani is able to read and begins to understand the scripture (Rou: *pricepe*). The changes he is undergoing are beyond his influence. According to his narrative, only God could teach him to read. Dani's account of this radical change disconnects his achievement from his abilities and skills and transforms the event into a miracle: achieving wisdom without learning or education. This idea is consistent with the traditional Roma form of constructing personhood in an individualist and authority-defying manner, but it also contains a

resigned acceptance that without divine intervention, his condition could not have changed.

Another feature of this narrative is the symbolic rupture that separates sinful past behaviour from the virtuous behaviour of the present person. Other researchers (Snow and Machalek 1983) have remarked on this kind of dualistic construction of conversion narratives. Throughout his narration, Dani not only rejects his pre-conversion behaviour but also asserts a continuity in his character. The tension between these implicit statements is resolved by the presence of evil influences in his life: 'Not because I was a bad man', but because 'the devil worked'. Conversely, the point of rupture and Dani's new, converted personhood is supported by the continuous presence of God. Dani attributes his initial suffering, which triggered his conversion, to God, whom he sees working in the lives of other characters mentioned in the story. The apex of Dani's relationship with God takes place when he has a vision one night. For Dani, the apparition of Jesus signals God's care for Dani's personal development: 'He for whom it is in God's plan to convert, God will convert even from his mother's womb'. This divine sign frightens Dani, and he responds by submitting himself and making a 'covenant' with God. He awakens his wife so that she can witness his covenant, which takes a form similar to that of the oaths discussed in chapter 4 – that is, it is a conditional self-curse.

In Dani's narrative, conversion is presented as having social consequences. Dani refuses to consider the opinions of others, instead focusing solely on his connection with God. He seeks to understand and enact religious ideals: 'If you want to be saved, do not look to the right or look to the left, look ahead'. Such radical decisions and personal changes need not be central to a conversion narrative. This emphasis on radical change and rupture indicates that the new personhood of the convert is still embedded in his earlier commitments. The spiritual and social process of conversion is initiated by a covenant with God, and repeated public performances of the conversion narrative are necessary (though not sufficient) for the convert to gain social acceptance as a new person.

Reluctant Convert: Caught in Family Ties

Róza, a Romni in her sixties, was one of my neighbours in Gánás. For a good part of my stay I was unaware that she was a Pentecostal convert. After I learned that she had converted in the early 1990s, I asked her about the circumstances surrounding her conversion, and she recounted her and her family's story. In addition to eliciting her conversion narrative, I spoke with other members of her family, who seemed to share Róza's view of many of the events surrounding her conversion.

The process was set in motion when Róza became severely ill. She was taken to the city hospital, where a doctor told her that she had leukaemia. Her family knew that this was a deadly disease, and her three daughters cried in desperation. She was taken home, where she was confined to her bed for months on end, losing weight and unable to move on her own. Her family resigned itself to her dying in a matter of weeks.

Róza was divinely inspired to seek the healing practices of Pentecostalism. She recounted the way the idea came to her during a long night of 'discussions with the Lord'. God told her to go to a Romanian-run Pentecostal church in the city, where, during the powerful public prayer session, she would be healed. Róza's family attributed her intentions to confusion brought on by her suffering and was unwilling to bring her to the city. One of her married daughters objected strongly to her mother's wish to abandon her old religion. Shortly after this, however, the daughter decided, under the influence of a dream, that Róza should be taken to a Pentecostal assembly.

Róza was taken to her sister's home in the city in preparation for bringing her to the church. Her brother-in-law worked in the construction industry and had Pentecostal colleagues. He invited them to come pray for Róza. Róza believed that 'the Lord was working', beginning with her first contact with the Pentecostals. She was finally able to sleep well after months of being unable to do so. After a few days she was taken to the church and healed. Her strength returned as she took part in the collective prayer. She 'received Jesus' during the same service, and after several months she was baptised.

Her career as a convert remained unfulfilled, however, because when the Holy Spirit came to give her the gift of the tongues and prophecy, she could not get the 'baptism in the Spirit'.[89] Still staying with her sister, Róza felt the presence of the Holy Spirit coming on one evening, but her husband stopped her from speaking in tongues in order to avoid frightening the sister's children. Disturbed by this, the Holy Spirit departed, and Róza received only 'the seal' (Hun: *le voltam pecsételve*).[90] She blamed her husband for not supporting her in her attempt to be baptised by the Holy Spirit, but she said (and her husband confirmed this) that he was frightened by the changes she underwent during the visitation of the Holy Spirit.

Other members of Róza's family were also adherents of Pentecostalism, although none had fully converted. Her husband had visited an assembly regularly for months. He was almost baptised, but 'there were no appli-

[89] The baptism of the Holy Spirit is considered to be the sign of true conversion in Pentecostalism. It is often accompanied by extraordinary experiences and receipt of the 'gifts of the Spirit' (e.g. glossolalia).

[90] The 'seal' is the sign of being chosen for salvation.

cation forms that day', and that day Róza's brother-in-law called him, half-seriously inviting him to 'have some more drinks together and pay some more visits to the chicks'. Thus Róza's husband remained unconverted. Soon after Róza's baptism, the daughter who had had the divinely inspired dream became ill. Her ailment, the family believed, was due to satanic influence and could not be diagnosed by medical doctors. She was taken to and healed at the same church at which her mother had been healed. She received Jesus and was to be baptised, but her husband, a musician, told her that he would divorce her if she joined the Pentecostals. Róza took her daughter's case to the Pentecostal assembly and explained to the converted brothers (Hun: *hívőtestvérek*) that her daughter could not be baptised because it would destroy her family (she and her husband had two young children at the time). The assembly agreed that it would be unwise to break apart the family. 'Nevertheless, God wouldn't leave her alone', they commented. Róza attributed the later material success of her daughter's family – a house, a car, and so forth – to divine help, but she also feared that the time for admonition (Hun: *dorgálás*) would come.

In their attempts to convert, Róza and her family members walked a path markedly different from Dani's. Physical suffering and miraculous healing play parts in many conversion narratives, and not uniquely among Roma. But Rom converts share a common experience of having a direct, intimate connection with the Lord and Jesus. When asked about their belief in God, they often mention their 'knowledge of God' (Rom: *me prinzhanav le Devles*). Therefore, prayer as a 'conversation' with God is not unusual among Roma converts. In Róza's story, she and her daughter had already had direct relations with God even before being converted. Divine signs and answers are often close at hand, and one must only open his or her eyes and heart. Therefore, in Róza's narrative the moment of conversion itself does not mark a sudden, novel encounter with the supernatural. Conversion comes along with her being healed. The difficulties of her post-conversion life begin only with her acceptance of God. Conversion burdens the convert, who must work through his or her new commitments. Among those commitments, kinship seems to be the most important.

Neighbours and friends form another category of social contacts with whom the convert must deal in his or her new personhood. Converts are often faulted for being selfish. This has partly to do with their awareness of being saved while others might be doomed. But converts are also seen as selfish in more worldly ways: as part of the renegotiation of their lives, they may have to sever pre-existing social relations and abandon social networks that stretch beyond the faith community or that might be seen as sinful. Róza and other similarly isolated converts I met, however, were not thought of as

selfish. That I had gone so long without realising that Róza was a convert, although due partially to my preoccupation with work I was conducting in a different part of the village, was also due to the fact that Róza did not conspicuously display her piety or have the physical appearance of a convert (i.e. adopting a dress code).

When Róza spoke about her incomplete baptism by the Holy Spirit, she was aware of her husband's skepticism (Hun: *ne csináld az eszed*) and her family's fear of her ecstatic display. She imagined an ideal scenario of spiritual support: upon the first signs in the convert's behaviour that the Holy Spirit was appearing, the family members would kneel down around the convert and pray for his or her baptism. She experienced the signs: she trembled, her hands rose against her will, a power like a strong wind or fire came down to her, and she began to speak loudly. But the family refused to support her. Róza's husband strategically referred to the presence of Róza's sister's young children, who should not be frightened. Dani, too, exhibited a preoccupation with the well-being of children, praying in the forest in order not to disturb the children in his household. Roma take great pleasure in playing with their children, and babies and children are sources of great joy. They also tend to believe that fright can cause serious illness, particularly in children.

Family values and the safety of babies were called upon once more when Róza's daughter was threatened with divorce by her husband. At this moment in the narrative, Róza takes responsibility for protecting her daughter's marriage, even risking violating one of the ethical tenets of Pentecostalism—that the faith should be spread as much as possible. In practice Róza was able to maintain most of her old life even as a convert, remaining low profile and doing little missionary work. She recognised the inherent tension between her religious life and her family life, and she feared that her family members would suffer for not converting. She expressed her fear in the dualistic language of the Pentecostals: God would not leave the family alone, but Satan would also approach them, and as non-converts, family members were vulnerable to his attack.

It is worth noting that Róza's son-in-law (Rom: *zhamutro*) did not oppose his wife's conversion because of any deference to the values of another religion but simply for pragmatic reasons. Being married to a pious, converted wife, he would be unable to practice his job as a musician, which involved parties and drinking. Róza's brother-in-law (Rom: *kumnato*) relied on a bias towards male superiority when he prevented Róza's husband from being baptised.

The first preliminary conclusion that can be drawn from these cases is that conversion should not be viewed as a single event and should not be

attributed solely to a personal decision. It is more useful analytically to look at conversion as a process that, although potentially triggered by individual choice, nonetheless sets in motion a succession of events that affect and are affected by the convert's position in local social networks and his or her pre-conversion values and commitments. Even in extreme cases in which the convert is cut off from his or her everyday world, it is still worth looking at the convert's shifting commitments and values. Therefore, prison conversions like Dani's can be of special interest. A second conclusion is that studying conversion can be useful for understanding more than just the particular religious movement in question. Still, individual religions may be objects of study in their own right, and studying conversion may lead to a better understanding of religious phenomena. There is a further consequence of social-anthropological approaches to conversion. For the ethnographer, individual conversion attempts offer a window into the social-cultural context surrounding the convert. The tensions and transformations experienced by converts reveal much about larger social systems.

Refusal: John 3:4–7 in a Romungro Settlement

Accompanied by my host Misi, I paid a visit to the preacher Dani, with whom I was somewhat familiar. We found him outside his house with several other converts – two men, Jani and Zoli, and several women – who were in a heated discussion with an unconverted Rom, Bandi, who had recently returned to the village from the city. Some other unconverted Roma joined the circle and listened, their curiosity piqued. As I later found out, Bandi was a relatively well-educated person; his parents were from Gánás, but he had grown up in an orphanage and finished vocational education in the city. Occasionally he visited his relatives in Gánás, and because they lived in the same neighbourhood as the preacher, Bandi dropped by for a chat that developed into a fairly intellectual discussion with the converted families. The discussion attracted more people, and when we arrived the group was discussing the idea of being 'born again'. I recorded the scene with their permission. I think it is fair to say that the discussion was not considerably influenced by my presence and the camera.



Plate 11. Roma converts and an unconverted man debating interpretations of the Bible.

The preacher assigned passages from the Bible for Bandi to read, and together they then interpreted the passages. In some cases Bandi reluctantly accepted the scriptural interpretation offered by the converts, but often he claimed that the text was inconsistent and because of this refused to admit that the scripture could provide a basis for any normative framework. He loudly declared that he had been 'educated by the communists', and so his knowledge was based on material existence. In some cases he was surprisingly well informed; he referred to the Dead Sea scrolls when talking about the non-canonical texts of the Bible and to DNA when the discussion turned to reproduction. On the issue of being born again, as described in John 3:4–7,[91] Bandi proved to be a tough opponent for the preacher. He refused to accept that Jesus had been thoroughly honest in his talk with Nicodemus, who asked the simple question, 'How can a man be born when he is old?' In

[91] «'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again"'» (New International Version).

order to show how unfairly Jesus had treated his interlocutor, Bandi recounted the following story. During the course of his narration, Dani tried several times to interrupt, dismissing the whole story as having nothing to do with heavenly matters. But the audience remained puzzled by the situation, and some refused to believe that Bandi was entirely wrong. Their growing sympathy for Bandi's challenge was based on the text's built-in ambivalence: Jesus's metaphorical answer to Nicodemus was, 'Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again"'. Bandi was quick to point out that Jesus offered no direct answer to the question and that written texts often have more than one meaning. Bandi also argued that literate people can interpret scripture to suit their own tastes and agendas. As a result of the discussion, the unconverted audience became increasingly sympathetic to Bandi's line of argumentation. His story went as follows:

> *Bandi*: A great fortune-teller was living before the Second World War . . . What he said would come true, remember: before the war it came true! A man came to him and asked: 'Look, my son is going to the war, is he going to live or not?' Look what he did! [Bandi takes a piece of wood and draws lines on the ground, to imitate the way the fortune-teller writes]. You all know Romanian, right? . . . [He fails to complete his writing because the stick breaks. He throws it away]. Dammit! . . .
> *Dani*: Look, take this! [Dani throws a sharp stone to Bandi's feet. Bandi takes the stone and continues to write in the dirt].
> *Bandi*: Look here! What does he reply? 'NU; VA TRAI'. [This is a pun that can be interpreted as 'He will live' or 'He will not live'].
> *Zoli*: He will not . . . [He reads the signs].
> *Bandi*: So: NU; VA TRAI. Keep it in mind! The boy goes to the war and he is killed. 'Didn't you say to me that he would live?' He replies: 'Me? What have I written to you? Nu; va trai'. Whatever you might do, he will get the upper hand!
> *Dani*: Fine, so what?
> *Bandi*: Wait, wait, wait . . . let me . . .
> *Jani*: Let him, let him . . .
> *Bandi*: So if he lives: 'I said to you that he would live!' . . . if he dies, 'I told you he is going to die! He will not live!' You know why this is? Because of this: a point and a comma [the semicolon]. So look at what I am unable to understand . . .
> *Dani*: Just a moment . . .
> *Jani*: Let him, let him . . .
> *Zoli*: Wait a moment . . .

Dani: Do you know what this means? . . . Compared to the works of Jesus Christ? It is like heaven to earth . . . Exactly nothing! That is all you've said!
Bandi: OK. So look, what I am unable to understand is: 'Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter . . .'
Dani: Are you done?
Jani: Let him, let him . . . He should say when he is finished!
Bandi: So this is what Jesus says: If one is not born out of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. This is 5 . . . Let's start at 4. Nicodemus says the following . . . So this is what Nicodemus asks, and what I've just read is how Jesus replies. The question is: 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' So that is what a countryman asked.
Dani: Right . . .
Jani: It is true! Right . . .
Bandi: It is exactly like how the father asked, 'Will my son survive?' And you reply 'NU; VA TRAI'. You put in a point and a comma. So you cheat me!
Dani: But . . .

In order to interpret this scene it is important to point out that even if some of the participants had received primary education, most were at least functionally illiterate and would have been unable to appreciate the subtleties of Romanian orthography such as the use of the semicolon. They easily accepted that a semicolon could be turned into a tool of deception. This generalised skepticism can be seen as a protective strategy by people who feel powerless in face of written documents. The credibility of the story is enhanced by its reference to fortune-telling, which can be practiced with success by using creative invention and manipulation of signs.[92]

As soon as Bandi felt he had gained the sympathy of his audience, he pushed his challenge further:

Bandi: But keep in mind that I cannot understand this part 5 at all. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. The only one who is born of Spirit is Jesus, I am sorry.
Zoli: Praise him!
Jani: That is why he says . . .
Bandi: So he is the one! He is the only one.
Dani: Right . . .

[92] Apart from one attempt by a Rom during the initial period of my fieldwork, nobody tried to tell my fortune, nor did I see anyone practising fortune-telling with the villagers.

Bandi: So we can't give examples that you or somebody else was born of the Spirit. He is the one, so he should not be considered here.
Dani: . . . [He is puzzled].
Bandi: So now . . . 'You must be born again'. This is beyond my understanding, again . . . I am born again if . . . I swap my faith . . .
Dani: Some light is coming . . .
Jani: You see that you will . . .
Bandi: But wait a second, man!
Dani: Don't you see I am sitting here!
Jani: Take it more gently!
Bandi: But this is not what Nicodemus asked. He is asking if he, as an old man in flesh and bones, can enter his mother's womb again. This is what he asks! And he [Jesus] does not reply!

Bandi's purportedly down-to-earth arguments and his refusal of the subtler or more metaphorical interpretations of the biblical passage are backed by a moral claim to respect for the everyday rules of discussion. Although Dani made several attempts to turn the discussion to more spiritual concerns, the debate slipped into a discussion of problems related to being born in a biological sense. The conversation took an even more frivolous twist, forcing Dani onto the defensive, so he changed the topic. He opened the Bible to a different passage and handed it back to Bandi. 'He does not need to look. He knows it by heart, because he has recited it so many times', Dani's wife commented supportively.

Sincerity, the Heart, and Other Tangible Signs

Na dikh tu, na dikh tu ke hom kalo,
numa o Del, numa o Del prinzhanel munro jilo.
Do not look, do not look that I am black,
God alone, God alone knows my heart.[93]

These two lines are taken from a Pentecostal song popular among Roma converts. The opposition it expresses between the outer appearance of the person, which others see as *kalo* (black), and his or her inner quality, which can be recognised only through the divine relationship, is a major distinction that builds the converted self. The statement that God knows (Rom: *prinzhanel*) the heart of the convert is seen as reciprocal, because the verb

[93] This song circulates in a wider context than the local Roma group or the assembly in the city with which I am most familiar. The dialect found in the song is different from local Romani. Romungre call the heart *vodji*, not *jilo*. They readily point out that the song comes from other Roma assemblies.

prinzhanel is used to express a relatively intimate acquaintance between two people, as opposed to the more distant relationship between a person and an object known from the 'outside' (Rom: *zhanel*). Therefore, once God recognises the heart of the convert, the convert also comes to know the personal God. I often heard this expression when I asked people if they 'knew' God. People rarely responded in the negative, even among unconverted Roma.

One can come to know God through either fortuitous or inauspicious events, through divinely inspired dreams, and through hearing voices. All these paths to God are available for converts, but the main difference between converts and non-converts is that converts claim to have a more intimate connection with God, using their open hearts to communicate. Escaping from a difficult situation (as in Dani's case) or being miraculously healed (like Róza) does not necessarily lead to conversion. If Dani had not made a 'covenant' with God and if the Holy Spirit had not 'sealed' Róza, both would have continued with their pre-conversion lives. But Róza and Dani felt that because they fostered special connections with God, they began to become different people. Such new personhood, however, is not always easily validated in the social contexts of converts.

Even if outsiders accept a special connection between converts and God, a puzzle persists: What can secret relationships with God, which are encapsulated in the hearts of converts, reveal to and validate for the outside world? The unconverted may refuse to accept these relationships or not recognise them as real. An outsider, even if he or she accepts the existence of God, may doubt the veracity of the convert's claimed connection to God. Converts have their own way of dealing with outsiders: they insist on the truth of their special relationship with God and express this connection in ritual forms. A convert can distinguish between 'real believers' and those who 'think of themselves as being Christians' on the basis of the verifiable existence (or lack thereof) of a strong relationship with God.

The construction of this relationship is contingent on a definition of inner self engendered by an opposition between outside and inside. The oft-repeated sentence 'God does not look at the face of a person, but at his heart' (Rou: *Dumnezeu nu se uită la fața omului, se uită la inimă*) is a clear example of this opposition, which places the heart at the centre of the inner self. It is important that the heart be 'open', because the only path to self-transformation is that of inviting and accepting Jesus into one's heart. The main cause of failed conversion is a refusal on the part of the would-be convert to accept the word of God into his or her heart (Rou: *Nu primeşti cuvintele lui Dumnezeu la inimă*).

Once the centre of the self is established and opened to the influence of God, changes become observable in the life of the convert. Ideally, the

main consequence is an inner-driven unity of self and behaviour that can be recognised in the convert's everyday practices. Adopting a term used by Webb Keane (2002), I refer to this unity of self and behaviour as *sincerity*. There is no exact equivalent in the everyday speech of Roma converts; the closest term Roma use is *patjivalo* ('honest'), which refers to reliability in social interactions. *Patjivalo* is opposed to *ravasz* ('cunning', a loan word from Hungarian), which describes people who hide their true intentions. The ideal of converted selfhood requires honesty and complete transparency. Keane points out that the ideal of sincerity assumes a clear distinction between words and thoughts, presupposes a hierarchical relationship between inner self and speech, and seeks the authority of words as accurate reflections of inner states. Moreover, the ideal of sincerity demands effort from speakers to match their words to their inner states. Therefore, sincerity connects ideas about language to moral questions (Keane 2002: 75). When the sincerity of words uttered by a convert is contested by non-converts, as often happens, the morality of the convert is called into question.

While I was recording conversion narratives in Gánás, my host's daughter-in-law, who was in her early twenties and whose parents had converted to Pentecostalism when she was a teenager, warned me against accepting these narratives as 'true'. 'Converts lie a lot [Rom: *O pokaiti but xoxavel*]', she told me. Her view was shared by others, who expressed their reservations not only behind the backs of converts but also directly to some of them. One middle-aged male convert who was trying to publicly recount his conversion narrative was interrupted and ridiculed by some youngsters. These observations point to the variable success of self-transformation attempts: successful conversions depend largely upon converts being socially accepted and their choices reinforced by forces beyond their control.

An audience must accept verbal utterances as valid in order for them to attain their performative force. Therefore, the importance of the Pentecostal assembly and ritual gatherings in providing a sympathetic audience as the convert undergoes self-transformation cannot be overestimated, although accounts do exist in which the process is initiated outside of a ritual setting. Such was the case with Dani. After being beaten, he kneeled in front of the guard, who mocked him for what the guard believed to be Dani's excessively conspicuous display of piety in front of the other prisoners. But because Dani persevered in his prayers, day in and day out, crying and asking God to help him escape, the officer had a change of heart and helped Dani file an appeal some days later. Dani attributed the change in the guard's attitude to God's having 'put an intention in his mind and in his heart' to help him. Dani mentioned this event as one of the catalysts of his conversion, which took place after he was released. In this story the perseverance

and sincerity of the prisoner changed his fate. The way Dani interpreted the change in the guard's attitude illustrates that even a cruel jailer is able to experience the beneficial effects of God in his heart and to change his attitude for the better.

Although a prayer uttered by a kneeling, crying man was enough to provoke a prison guard to beat a prisoner, this form of worship is much the norm in Pentecostal assemblies. During services, emotional individual prayers are encouraged during long prayer sessions that alternate with singing, individual testimonies, and preaching. Church services provide ideal settings for developing and practicing connections with the divine in the presence of fellow converts. The prayers uttered are improvised; the emphasis is on affective expression and immediate communication with the Holy Spirit and Jesus. These occasions also provide a setting in which congregants speak in tongues, a practice believed to signal that the speaker is has been overcome by the Holy Spirit and is in immediate communication with God. Such an atmosphere can impress even a non-believer. Nico, an elder Romni, described to me her first experience at a Pentecostal service, which she attended with her adult daughter. During the collective prayer the two exchanged sceptical looks and suppressed smiles. On the way home they joked about the people who had been crying during the prayer. But as they continued attending services, they, too, started to cry during the prayer sessions. 'First I thought they were crazy [Rom: *dinjile*], but then we started to cry also'.

'Opening the heart' is not necessarily an intentional act; it can occur spontaneously during the ritual, beyond the control or will of the affected person. The further step of 'filling the heart' with God (i.e. making a commitment) requires more conscious activity and social control. A ritual in which the convert raises his or her hand, goes to the front of the congregation, and verbalises some variant of a prayer marks the initiation of this process (I discuss this ritual in the next chapter). Following this commitment, the active contribution of the assembly is of paramount importance. Most assemblies in Cluj have special structures for incorporating and educating future members. 'Groups for growth' (Rou: *grupuri de creştere*) are small study groups that gather at the house of a member for this purpose, although few of the Roma converts I met had been incorporated into their congregations through such structures. My informants usually participated in less systematic and less formal gatherings in village homes, or they went through a short preparatory course in a church before their baptism. Baptism may take place as soon as the course has been completed, and people drop out of the church fairly frequently. When discussing his experience with Roma converts, a Romanian Pentecostal pastor in the city expressed his view

that Roma converts might accept Jesus more easily than members of other ethnic groups, but they were not consistent enough in repenting. He gave the example of a young Roma who, in the assembly, cried loudly, 'Oh, how nice it is along with you, my Lord! [Rou: *Oh, ce mişto e cu tine Doamne*]'[94], but the pastor found the man's commitment superficial.

There is one aspect of assembly life in which the sincerity of church members is continuously tested. Pentecostal churches rely heavily on contributions from members, who are expected to tithe (Rou: *zeciuială*) regularly. But because most Roma live on irregular and often very small incomes, the pastor and other members cannot directly determine how much each member should be expected to contribute. If church members do not pay their tithes for some time, their economic survival can be seen as proof of insincerity in the domain of the material world, because they are thought to be hiding their income and failing to support the church financially. Therefore, the financial obligations of church members constitute a recurring sermon topic. The pastor of the Roma church in Cluj spent a considerable proportion of his sermons reminding congregants that their donations would be multiplied and returned to them by God.

Converts find support and encouragement inside the assembly, but they sometimes find themselves the targets of suspicious looks in their broader community. In Gánás, unconverted Roma and the Hungarian majority look from 'outside' upon Pentecostals' observance of ascetic rules. This is particularly true in the case of male converts who were once known as drinkers. In a community in which drinking is a common form of male sociability, men who quit drinking rupture connections with their peer groups. This is compensated for by the alternative community with which converts are connected through conversion, but they may still be tempted to join their former buddies for drinks.[95] Discussing alcohol consumption with two converted Roma in the village, I was told that it would be wrong for a converted person to drink even an alcohol-free beer. They explained that if one is a known convert and is seen by non-converts drinking beer, it would encourage the non-converts to continue drinking and so would damage the image of Pentecostals in the larger community.

In this way converts in Gánás exclude themselves from many settings of male Roma sociability. On Sundays one can see these people dressed in elegant suits, carrying Bibles or hymnals, and even donning eyeglasses that

[94] *Mişto* [Rom: *mistho*, 'good'] is a loan word from Romani in Romanian meaning 'good' or 'nice'. It is used in informal contexts and often has an ironic connotation (Leschber 1995: 167).

[95] Michael Kearney (2004) described a similar problem in the case of a peasant community in Mexico.

they do not normally wear on weekdays. Greetings of 'Peace!' (Rou: *pace*) are exchanged, and converts shake hands. Even when the gathering is at a local home, a visible attempt is made to celebrate the day. For a larger event such as a visitation by an outside pastor, a group of converts from the city or from neighbouring villages may gather for a bigger service in the local Baptist prayer house on the main square of the village. Pentecostals and the few Baptists in Gánás (also local Roma) celebrate such occasions together.

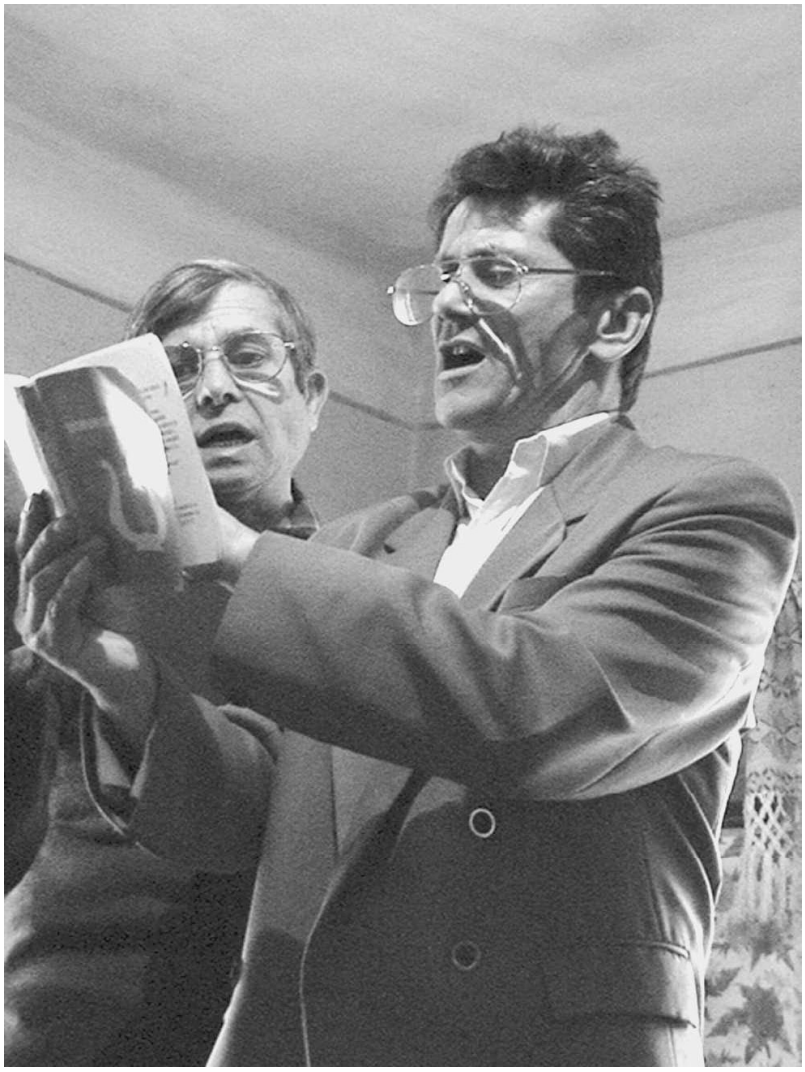


Plate 12. Pentecostal brothers singing.

Dani was married to a Romni from another village, and she usually joined the Pentecostals in their services. She had been baptised along with another young Roma by a Baptist pastor from the city during a missionary event in her village. The priest brought a large plastic container, which he filled with water. The converts were submerged in the water, much to the astonishment of the onlookers, among whom was the local Orthodox priest. The services of a photographer were enlisted to immortalise the event for the newly

baptised members (as was the case in the confirmation ceremony discussed in chapter 3). The photograph, which Dani's wife displayed in their house, was tangible evidence of her conversion. She showed me the picture, proudly stating that the event had been organised solely to baptise the two converts and show the villagers a 'real baptism'.



Plate 13. Adult baptism. Reproduced from a photograph kept as a memory card by the convert.

Brotherhood: A New Form of Spiritual Kinship

The refrain of the song quoted earlier is the following:

Oh che shukar, oh che shukar o Isus si amaro phral,
Oh che shukar, oh che shukar vas amenge vo muleas!
Oh, how wonderful [it is]; oh, how wonderful, Jesus is our brother,
Oh, how wonderful [it is]; oh, how wonderful, he died for us!

The idea of brotherhood (and sisterhood, in the case of women) expressed in these lines is composed of several elements. On the one hand, fraternity with Jesus is a privilege of those who join Pentecostal assemblies. On the other, the option of joining an assembly is open to the wider community. This ideal of spiritual kinship is therefore simultaneously encompassing and elitist. The

encompassing element of such brotherhood and sisterhood can be demonstrated through its translocal character. 'Brothers' (*phrala*) are everywhere in Romania and abroad, and this spiritual kinship network can be further extended through the incorporation and conversion of 'outsiders' from congregants' immediate social surroundings.

My survey of Gánás included both converted and unconverted families. All the converted families retained *kirve* relations from pre-conversion times and had no difficulty imagining how they would extend their traditional spiritual kinship network when a new baby was born. Some converts were quick to point out that this was not how Pentecostals should deal with newborn babies and would-be members.[96] But the idea of spiritual brotherhood was not opposed to godfatherhood, because spiritual brotherhood relied on different ideas of belonging and community from those of *kirve* relations. Ideally, Pentecostal spiritual fraternisation was not embedded in the local community, and the pool of potential recruits was not pre-defined.

The practice of brotherhood in Gánás was neither disembedded from nor totally encompassed by existing local and kinship ties. If one takes the creation of mutual aid networks as an example of the fraternity's local function, then the relations of converted *phrala* are similar to kinship-driven *kirve* relations, as shown in Figure 5.1.

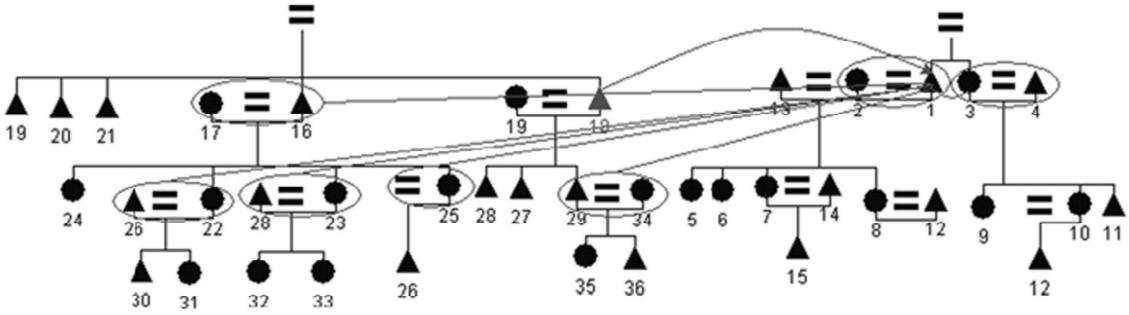


Figure 5.1. Distribution of aid among Pentecostal converts shown on a kinship diagram.

Figure 5.1 is based on my observation of a situation in which aid was distributed among Pentecostal brothers. A pastor (number 18 in the diagram) who lived in another village but had familial connections in Gánás (e.g. 16) sent word to Dani (1) that Dani was to be entrusted with managing the distribution of clothing donations from abroad. The pastor did not drive all the way into Gánás, so Dani waited for the aid truck at the main road and

[96] There are separate rituals blessing babies and recruiting new members.

hired a local cart to carry the cargo to the village. He received 17 large bags filled with clothes, loaded them on the cart, and brought them to the Roma neighbourhood in which he lived. The clothing was distributed according to lines of kinship. Dani kept six bags each for himself and his brother-in-law and distributed the remaining five to the most active converts in the assembly, who each received one bag. The recipients further distributed, exchanged, or sold the clothing among the local Roma.

In its ideal form, the brotherhood is both a voluntary association and an elite organisation, but these ideas must be contextualised within the local social structure. When one considers socio-economic stratification in the village, it becomes apparent that the transformation of the self and construction of the converted community offers an opportunity for upward social mobility for people from lower status positions. The desire for upward mobility does not directly challenge extant ethnic and status divisions. Everyday practices and signs of conversion create a sense of belonging for the self-styled religious elite without relying on or opposing pre-existing local social structures. People whom the local majority have otherwise seen as marginal acquire access to symbolic resources that promise to change their position through recourse to resources external to local structures. The practice of brotherhood relies on existing local ties and reinforces the boundary of the converted 'elite community'.

Conclusion

Although advocacy of inner-directed conversion is hardly a novelty for missionaries, and although 'the heart' is thought to be the centre of the self in other contexts as well,[97] Pentecostalism diverges from most other forms of Protestantism not only in its emphasis on the transparent and inner-governed self but also in its acceptance of a wide spectrum of emotional expressions as being spiritual. Unity of the self is grounded in emotional experiences, and these experiences can be validated as divinely inspired. I suggest that this aspect of Pentecostalism can best be understood with an enhanced concept of sincerity that incorporates these experiences and credits them as authentic. An implication of Pentecostals' experience-centred orientation is that their potential target group is humanity as a whole. Converts insist that everyone is capable of opening his or her heart to emotional-spiritual experiences.

The concept of sincerity offers an answer to the question of why the universalistically oriented Pentecostal church has been most successful among socially segregated groups. The social life of a convert depends on

[97] On the basis of archival research, John Peel (2000: 250–255) described nineteenth-century evangelicalism as 'a religion of the heart'.

communal recognition of the convert's sincerity. Pentecostal assemblies provide a space for the expression of emotions and verbal utterances that are repudiated by outsiders. Boundary maintenance in these groups is realised through a small number of ascetic elements such as non-smoking and anti-alcoholism and to a certain degree through tangible representations of religious elitism. Apparently these groups rely more on the micro-dynamics of the local societies in which they are embedded than on any form of centralised structure.

Chapter 6
Revitalisations: Spirit in Heart, Nation in Village

In this chapter I address postsocialist transformations of rituals in the regional and local public spheres of Romania. I am concerned with revitalisations of existing rituals and the invention of new celebrations. My primary argument is that although ritual practices have become intensified and diversified since the fall of the socialist regime, not all local groups have been equally affected by this revitalisation. In line with the analysis developed in previous chapters, I argue that Roma are more receptive to rituals focused on personhood, whereas ethnic Hungarians tend to be more involved in revitalisations focused on village traditions and folklore celebrations connected symbolically to their broader ethno-national community. Religion plays an important role in revitalisation rituals in both cases. Here I develop an analysis of transformations observable in the local public sphere; I turn to the national level in the following chapter.

Recent sociological research on the relationship between religion and ethno-national identities in Eastern and Central Europe confirms the continuation of well-known pre-existing historical connections between churches, states, and identities in the region. This continuation has been well documented in the case of Hungarians living outside of Hungary in neighbouring countries.[98] One Hungarian anthropologist (Papp 2003) has argued similarly that historical churches confess 'ethnic religions' in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, in areas where the possibility of institutional support for ethnic mobilisation has been more limited, historical churches have sometimes been the most important actors involved in constructing ethnic identity.[99] It is understandable that these churches excel at mobilising 'national' identities among ethnic minorities in areas neighbouring the 'external homeland'. In such situations one often finds 'triangular' historical connections (Brubaker 1996) between the minority group, its institutions (e.g. churches), and the neighbouring homeland (e.g. Hungary).

[98] For the case of Transylvania, see Gereben (2000).
[99] For a case study of Subcarpathia, see Fejős (1996).

Roma nationalism, however, seems to have limited appeal in postsocialist Romania. The handful of attempts at ethnic mobilisation based on conventional ethno-politics, which in Eastern and Central Europe usually involve the politicisation of a narrow slice of an ethnic group's expressive culture (e.g. folklore), have remained fragmented and restricted to particular Roma groups, failing to engender a wider base of support. These observations have led political scientists to conclude that Roma have low potential for ethnic mobilisation (Barany 1998, 2002: 49–80). But even if one accepts that this claim accurately reflects Roma involvement in conventional forms of mobilisation, it must also be pointed out that alternative forms of mobilisation (e.g. religious revitalisation) have emerged rapidly among Roma since the fall of the socialist regime. Various patterns of group identification exist on the ground, and it is important to analyse the emerging forms of identity and the resources they draw upon, whether these new identifications be religious or secular, civic or ethnic.

In this chapter I deal with two forms of revitalisation. First, I consider Pentecostal missionary rituals, which have intensified in the region and can be seen as a distinctive form of revitalisation. Pentecostal assemblies mobilise the support of church members, attract adherents, and contribute to the expansion of the religious movement by incorporating new recruits. The second form I address is the revitalisation of 'village traditions'. These rituals and celebrations are organised in rural communities, and their focus is on local traditions, although they also reinforce the metonymical link between local traditions and the nation. In the postsocialist period, many instances of such rituals have appeared in villages inhabited by Hungarians throughout Transylvania. 'Gánási Village Days' is a relatively recent development.

The Holy Spirit as a Source of Mobilisation

If conversion were limited to the transformation of individual personhood, and if the practices of born-again selves remained narrowly contained within the Pentecostal assembly, then little expansion of the religious movement would take place. But Pentecostalism is a growing movement in Romania and the rest of the world. The role of missionary work in this expansion cannot be underestimated, nor should the involvement of material resources be ignored. Institutional and logistical aspects of missionary activities influence the growth of the Pentecostal Church. However, I limit myself here to discussing the preconditions and outcomes of the Pentecostal mission and conversion in terms of ideas and identities. In order to understand this dimension, it is useful to look at conversion as an example of religious mobilisation – that is, the politicisation of identities. The relative success of such

politicisation is largely dependent on the way identities can be practised and displayed in public. Religious movements create networks and public rituals that provide alternative spaces in which identities may be constructed. But the Pentecostal movement also encourages members to participate in outreach activities and requires them to do missionary work. Pentecostal assemblies are endowed with resources and religious ideas that create and maintain member loyalty.

The Bible, the written word, provides the primary inspiration for Pentecostal revitalisation, as is the case for most Protestant denominations. The Holy Spirit and 'spiritual gifts' are other sources of revitalising power unique to Pentecostals. Strictly speaking, Pentecostal views on the manifestation of the Holy Spirit are scripturally based, deriving from, among other passages, Acts 2, Hebrews 2:4, Mark 16:17–18, and Matthew 3:16. Therefore one could argue that there is a strong connection between the Word and the Spirit, but the distinction I rely on here is not alien to Pentecostal conceptions of conversion and mobilisation inside the church. A well-known American-Romanian pastor has argued:

> If the Holy Spirit and the Word of God realize the act of conversion and make us born again, an emphasis on one or the other will separate us, sometimes antagonistically. The best way to illustrate this is the example of the 'Christian steam engine'. In order to run the engine you need two elements: the rails and the steam. There are some Christians who value only the rails, which in this analogy would be the guidelines offered by God for the lives of the faithful . . . But although the rails might be admirably polished, the engine is not running. The other extreme faction values only the steam. The engine is under pressure, under power, but making a lot of noise, because most often the steam engine is running off the tracks. Both the rails and the steam are needed: Word and Spirit (Lascău 1998: 179).

Harvey Cox (1995) has labelled the extreme poles of this opposition the 'fundamentalist' versus the 'experientialist' approaches in Pentecostalism. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into the details of the opposition, but the term *experientialist* points in the right direction, towards a practical religious attitude oriented towards direct religious experiences and the main source of those experiences, the Holy Spirit.

The Destiny Conference

I attended many services among Roma Pentecostals in which 'spiritual gifts' were practised. Glossolalia, prophecy, and healing were usually attributed to the Holy Spirit. In this section I analyse an exceptional event – a large conference organised by a local Pentecostal assembly in Cluj in June 2004 –

because it displayed many aspects and problems connected to Pentecostal revitalisation.

The so-called Destiny Conference was organised in a large house of culture in the centre of the city. It was well advertised in public spaces as a faith-healing event. I learned about the conference through Roma converts from the city. The gathering lasted three days, and it had two sections, as a pastor told me. Morning sessions were designed for training church workers, pastors, deacons, and presbyters, and evenings were reserved for public meetings. A large banner advertising the evening services and declaring 'God is healing today!' was placed over the entrance to the building. In several other parts of the city, posters were put up and flyers distributed. I attended two of the evening events.

As I passed through the main hall of the building on the first evening, it was evident that this was a well-organised event. New arrivals were guided to the main room and offered seats by young hosts. Entrances and access paths were kept open, and the main stage was carefully arranged. A band was stationed at one side of the stage, a pulpit stood in the middle, and in the background were hung banners bearing the names of the pastors and promises that 'God will heal you everywhere you hurt'. Beyond the pulpit were placed two large flags, one Romanian and the other American. As the service started, the main orators, two pastors from the United States, alternated preaching in English, and their speeches were translated into Romanian. Musicians and vocalists led the singing, and the song lyrics, all in Romanian, were projected onto a large screen next to the stage.

Towards the end of the evening, one of the pastors announced that all those who needed help from God and who were ready to open their hearts and receive Jesus should raise their hands and come to the front. The organisers walked among the chairs and encouraged volunteers to approach the main stage. After a few minutes around 30 of the more than 200 people in attendance had lined up in front of the preacher. He asked them to repeat a short prayer after him. He spoke the prayer slowly, pausing at the ends of the lines, allowing his interpreter to translate from English to Romanian. The people repeated the words of the prayer, which started with a confession of being a sinner, then expressed repentance, and ended with a ritual invitation addressed to Jesus asking him to enter the heart and life of and save the person reciting the prayer.[100] After this prayer, participants were invited to recite a common prayer for the newly converted, and the congregation began singing. The names of the newly converted were written down. This list of names was later used to distribute the newcomers among 'groups for growth'

[100] 'Jesus, I invite you to come into my heart and my life. Please, be my Lord, and be my Saviour. I thank you Jesus for saving me. I am born again; I am a child of God'.

at assemblies that would best suit each person in terms of place of residence and age.

This scene may be familiar to anyone who has attended a missionary event in another context. These sorts of events are not unique to Pentecostalism; they are also practised by evangelical and other born-again Christian movements. The ritual summarises the main themes of conversion, but it is only the beginning of the process. The person who opens his or her heart to God must go through a long transformation in order to become a full member of an assembly. I witnessed similar rituals many times during my fieldwork among Pentecostals, mainly during services, conferences, and other performances addressed to the larger public. These events provided people with opportunities to take their first steps from being non-believers to being believers. Further personal development was aided by the network of assemblies, which were sensitive to social differences – unlike the ritual described here, which symbolically diminished social categories.

Converts' motivations and the background channels for recruitment were of course diverse. Organisers usually drew on kinship, friendship, and other networks of insiders, but the events were also widely advertised. Social relations and group memberships that were meaningful for the new converts outside of the ritual context became insignificant within the revitalisation ritual, which emphasised a single real link: that created between the individual and God, between Jesus and the open heart of the person. The salience of this direct connection made the ritual capable of penetrating 'intermediate' social structures, downplaying status, ethnic, racial, and language differences. The main requirement for initiating conversion was the idea of an open heart, which was equally achievable by every person. The second requirement, the presence of the Holy Spirit, was produced in the ritual context.

After almost two hours of preaching and singing, one of the pastors began to speak in tongues. He pronounced foreign words slowly and with a rhetorical tone. I had the impression that some words resembled Spanish, but it was not a language I had ever heard. After several sentences spoken in tongues, the speaker reverted to English in order to interpret the glossolalia. It was a prophecy. The English sentences were then translated into Romanian. I rephrase some of his words as follows:

> In this place tonight, says the Lord, there is a spark of new beginning in the lives of many of the people here, and the spark and fire of my Spirit descend upon you, and I come to infuse your life, says the Lord, with my presence and my anointing. I come to change you for the good, I come to change this region for the good, I come to change your churches for the good, I come to invade this city and the

> surrounding regions, because in days gone by this was a place of oppression, but the future is brighter than the past, and my plans will be realised in this place. The doors open wider and wider. For these emanations of the Spirit that have transpired in many third-world nations shall soon be seen in the capitals of the world.

The other pastor later took up a similar line when he spoke of how 'spiritual walls are coming down' and how the Spirit had spread to nearly every corner of the Earth. 'Third-world nations' and 'developing countries' were mentioned again, and examples were given of how people's lives had changed for the better following conversion in these places. The image of the Spirit 'invading' the city and the region was a radical promise of renewal formulated in the language of dominance and liberation.



Plate 14. The Destiny Conference, a Pentecostal event held in Cluj in 2004.

The event continued with an offering of anointment for those who wished to receive it. The anointment ritual was performed onstage. The first round was offered to pastors and other church workers, followed by the general congregation. The two American pastors joined forces to offer a blessing of the Spirit to the volunteers. One touched the foreheads of the people and placed his hands on their necks just below the ears. The other

pastor stayed close by, placing one of his arms on the shoulders of his colleague and holding the microphone with the other in order to let the entire audience hear the blessings. Some people collapsed after being touched. Helpers stood ready to support them, and they were laid on the ground and covered with blankets. After a few minutes of silent rest, they recovered and left the stage.

When I later asked a Rom I knew from an assembly in the city what it was like to receive the Spirit, he simply said, 'He is powerful' (Rom: *zoralo*). The prophecy and the blessing were inspired by the same idea, that of the empowering divinity. Although considerable social and cultural distance usually separates American pastors like these and the local people who receive the Spirit, during this event the gap was bridged by the ritual. As I attended other services, most of them more modest and less spectacular, I could still recognise the relative uniformity of this ritual for mobilising religious and social action in diverse contexts. It reflects an ideal unity of discourse that is connected to experiences inspired by the Spirit. The ritual is universalistic: its mobilising power is seen as unique, and ideally everyone can have access. The discourse that emerges from this experience is built on ideas of inequality and liberation.

Testimony with Reference to Genesis 9:20–25

The ritual just described is so widespread that it can be viewed as clear evidence of a global charismatic Christian culture (Robbins 2004b). The ways in which this global form meets and intertwines with local elements and conditions can be shown through comparative studies. In this section I consider one such local context in the case of Roma who convert to Pentecostalism. The conference I have described was attended by many Roma. There I met members of assemblies I knew from the city, and during the performance a pastor from Bucharest was also called onstage. No convert from Gánás was present.

I attended many rituals in the village that displayed similar underlying ideas and comparable practices. Although the well-funded Destiny Conference contrasted sharply with village gatherings in the houses of poor Roma, similarities in the preachers' discourses and the involvement of participants were striking. I interpret these similarities as evidence of the capacity for Pentecostalist revitalisation to reproduce its rituals under disparate conditions and in disparate contexts. In spite of the hardships and scarcity of material resources in their everyday lives, some Gánási Roma nonetheless preached and experienced the empowering effects of the Spirit.

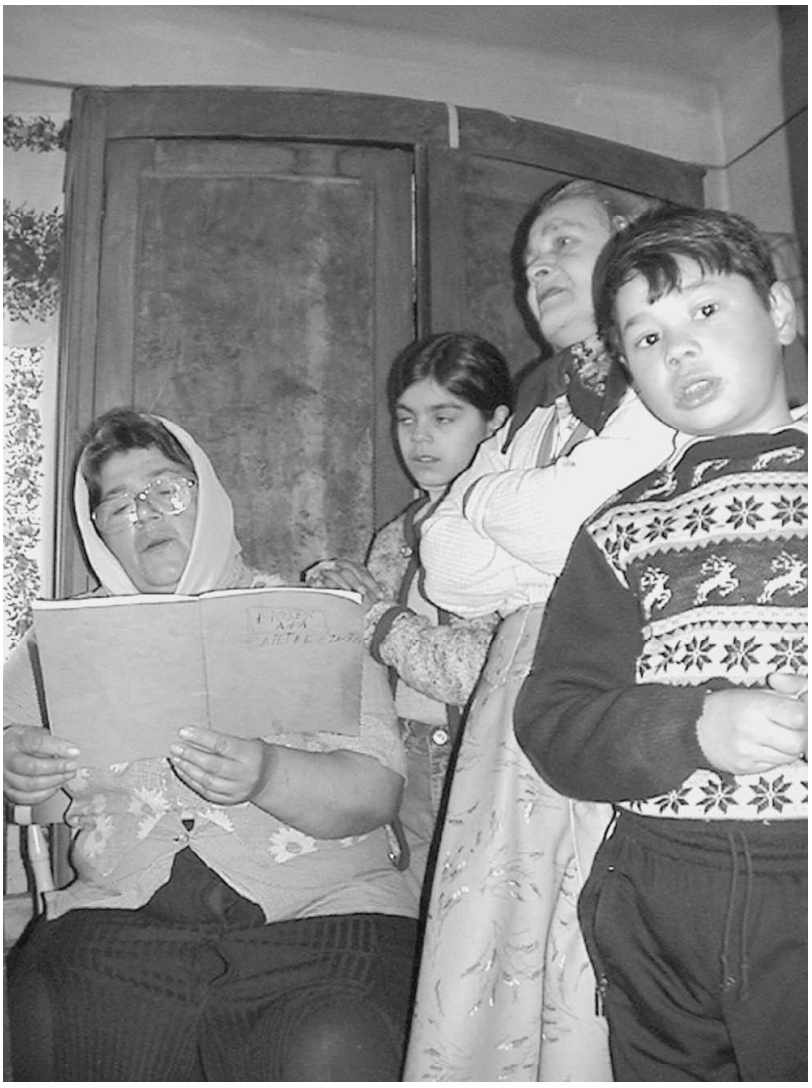


Plate 15. A Pentecostal religious service held in a private home.

On a Sunday in early February 2004 I attended a Pentecostal assembly in the village. One members of the assembly hosted the gathering in his home. Twenty Roma participants crowded into the small room. The men took turns testifying and preaching, whereas the women dominated the singing. Intense collective prayer connected the different stages of the event, and Dani led the service. The dominant language was Romanian, although some of the songs were in Romani and some exchanges in Hungarian also took place. With the consent of the preacher I recorded the event, and I later gave a copy of the tape to the assembly. The following testimony is from a transcript of the tape. The testimony was performed by Jani, a middle-aged Roma convert whom I introduced in the previous chapter. He said:

> I want to say a few words, and then we will come to a conclusion. Brother Dani said a word that is spoken by the whole country. And not only in this country, but all the nations say this word. But this

word is not true. They say: 'Look at the Gypsy [Rou: *ţigan*], he is converted and he is going to . . . he will reach the kingdom of God'. But this is not right, it is not true. There are no Gypsies in this world. The Holy Scripture does not say this. It does not mention that there are Gypsies. There are no Gypsies, my dears, we are not Gypsies, and on this earth wherever there are Gypsies, they are not Gypsies. This people that is called by all the nations in this way is named this way as a mockery.

But why is it mocked in this way, this people, that they are Gypsies? Because it is the lowest nation and people [Rou: *neam şi popor*] of all the nations and peoples. Because wherever a Gypsy goes he cannot say that this is my country. If he goes to Hungary, when he returns he cannot say, I am going home to my country, because Romania is not his country. And this is the same in all countries. But if a Hungarian goes, or a Romanian, or a German, or a Slovakian . . . all the nations can say, I am going home to my country, except the Gypsies. He cannot say, 'I am going to my country', because he has none.

But the basis is this: in the times of Noah, Noah got drunk and he completely disrobed. He showed his nakedness. And his brother . . . his eldest son reproved him: 'Aren't you ashamed to stand in front of the peoples and nations, letting them see your nakedness?' Because of this reproach Noah became furious and cursed his son. But the curses he spoke did not fall onto his children, because God blessed his children. [Praise Him!] So his grandchild was hit by the curses. He said: 'Cursed be the children of your nation [Rou: *neam*], and the children they beget . . . Let them be the lowest nation and people of all in this world . . .' And the Gypsies came from them for sure, those who are called Gypsies, as a nation of the lowest of all.

But the Scripture later says that God will return and will take and he will raise . . . therefore, the Scripture says: 'I raise you from the dirt and I will put you among the great men . . .' [So the scripture says.] Today we already see how many Gypsies have converted. Before there were no Gypsies to be converted, you rarely saw them in the church, because 'He is a Gypsy, part of the lowest nation . . .' Even today they are not looked on favourably . . . but the Scripture says: 'I raise you from the dirt and I will put you among the great men . . . and I will put the nations and people in your hand . . .' And now we are coming close to this, that the Gypsies in this country have risen and are supported. They attend schools, go to church, receive a university education, and so on . . . God is showing that he

> will raise his people from the dirt, and he will place them among the great men.[101]

Jani spoke freely, without looking at the Biblical texts, encouraged by the preacher that he was quoting correctly. Later, when I visited Jani in his home to discuss other issues and asked about the exact reference, he had difficulty finding it in the book. He insisted that he had read the story in the Bible and had not heard it from someone else. Because I was unsure about the verse myself, I later checked and discovered that Jani had quoted it rather inaccurately (Gen. 9:20–25). The other quotation, about God's promise to raise his people, can be found in Exodus 3:17. Some minor differences, though, are important for interpreting the biblical story as a Roma origin myth and as an evocation of scriptural authority to reject stigmatisation.

I interpret the refusal of Roma to accept the label 'Gypsies' as a rejection of the perspective of outsiders and a contestation of their social stigmatisation. Even though Jani's rhetorical performance was at one point logically self-contradictory ('On this earth wherever there are Gypsies, they are not Gypsies'), the moral element of the claim stands undamaged: 'The Holy Scripture does not say this'; it is 'a mockery'. This rejection of social stigmatisation marks the first step in clearing the ground in order to lay a basis for a more positive social identification. The explanation for the mockery provided in the second paragraph of the testimony focuses on the fact that Gypsies lack a state. This interpretation supports a claim that people labelled and stigmatised as Gypsies are, in principle, on equal footing with other nations. This should not be read exaggeratedly as a sign of nascent ethnonational mobilisation among these Roma. It would be farfetched to link the story of the Canaanites to the history of Roma slavery if the social actors do not take this step themselves.

The third paragraph offers a narrative explanation of the origins of the population labelled Gypsies and attributes the group's present subjugated social position to a past injustice. It also asserts the common origins of the Roma and all other nations (and therefore their equal rights) through the genealogical relatedness of humanity – that is, other nations came into being as descendants of Noah's other children. It is important from the perspective of the construction of collective identity that this scriptural interpretation bases its explanation of present inequalities and the low status of Gypsies not on the divine order but instead on the curse brought on by the original patriarch, Noah. The cause of this curse is unclear in the original scripture, but Jani's interpretation attributes the Gypsies' plight to the fury of a drunken father who felt his son had defied his authority, even though Noah himself

[101] See the Appendix for the original Romanian text.

had been behaving improperly.[102] Jani's divergence from the original text in this regard is significant: in the Biblical version, a drunken Noah is asleep in his tent when his youngest (not eldest) son sees him unclothed. Jani's version permits the insertion of another important deviation from the original text, namely, Noah's attempt to punish a morally superior person who, according to kinship relations, is socially inferior but who is nonetheless protected by God's blessing. The biblical version is not without ambiguities: it is unclear why Noah curses his innocent grandson rather than the son who is guilty of seeing him naked. In Jani's testimony this problem is solved by God's supposed blessing of the son and by Jani's changing the scene to introduce a public gaze that legitimates the son's actions. In this way the origin of inequality is shown to be deeply unjust in religious terms.

The presentation of the story is consistent with the moral world of the Romungro community: a person usually considered inferior because of age, sex, or prestige can gain moral superiority if he or she can attract public notice of someone else's misbehaviour. The hierarchical ideas embedded in kinship, gender, and other social relations can be either ignored or reversed by this practice. This strategy can be used only inside existing local relations calling for public judgement. One cannot criticise someone if the accuser can claim no common personal or communal obligations between the two parties. It is a resource of the relatively powerless. One can find examples of this strategy in the loud quarrels that happen between women, in some cases even between *kirve*. Sometimes wives use this forum as a source of authority in family arguments. I observed teenagers teasingly training each other in this practice while sitting outside on summer afternoons. When the strategy is successful, the targeted party feels ashamed and thus stripped of his or her power. Hence, Noah's fury is understandable in local moral terms. The divergence from the canonical text introduced in this interpretation indicates the way Roma rework scripture in order to adjust the message to their own needs in constructing a social identity. Theological authorities might consider Jani's interpretation heretical, and some social analysts would expect 'ethnicity' to emerge from this discourse. I take a more reserved view in which this reading of scripture is a creative attempt to make the narrative comprehensible and credible through a shared sense of humanity and morality.

The closing part of Jani's testimony provides a strategy for collective liberation from Noah's curse, and the day of reckoning seems to be imminent. The redemption of the Gypsies is based on a divine promise of libera-

[102] At first I found Edmund Leach's interpretation of the story as homosexual incest committed by the son rather farfetched (Leach 2000a: 38), but reading Bergsma and Hahn (2005), I learned that this interpretation is not unknown in the exegetical scholarship.

tion and the second coming of Christ: 'God will return'. The signs foreshadowing the fulfilment of this prophecy are by no means apocalyptic: Gypsies have converted and attend churches, schools, and universities. From a secular perspective, these advancements could be read as signs of social emancipation. God's promises to place the Gypsies among great men and to deliver peoples and nations into their hands are more like the sort of visionary mobilisation present in the example of the Destiny Conference. What is remarkable about the power of this form of ritual revitalisation is that although it is rather simple, promising a reversal of social positions, it is nonetheless exceedingly efficient in deeply penetrating social structures without relying on additional resources or preconditions (e.g. hierarchical social structure, common cultural features). The cultural requirements for this form of ritual revitalisation are basic: ideas of an open human heart and the Spirit that can fill this heart.

> To what degree may identities forged in such new religious movements be performed outside the boundaries of the revitalised religious establishment? In other words, is there space in Romania for newly emerging ('born again') public identities? This question provokes no simple, concise answer. It seems likely that such religious identities will be squeezed into the local and national public spheres as soon as those who participate in their construction are able to ameliorate their social position and decide to claim the identities publicly. In Gánás I saw no sign that the rituals of new religious movements were being incorporated into representative local public rituals. Nor were converts assertive in claiming their share of the village public sphere beyond their own rituals. Pentecostal rituals were marginal, when not totally ignored by local Hungarians.

Village Days

A celebration called 'village days' (Hun: *falunapok*) is one form of local revitalisation of traditions in Transylvania. It involves village fairs, folk dance performances, and competitions accompanied by feasting, folk dancing, and attending discos. This form of local celebration appeared throughout Transylvania after the fall of socialism. It is more common in some regions, such as Szeklerland, but several villages in Kalotaszeg have also initiated village days over the last decade. Village days involve ritual forms that have not been invented completely anew. Various community festivals continued in rural areas throughout the socialist period. The most common form of local celebration was the patron saint's day (Hun: *búcsú*), held on religious holidays in villages or in regions where Catholic Hungarians lived. Orthodox

Romanians continued to celebrate the holidays of the patron saints of local churches (Rou: *hramul bisericii*).

In Gánás, whose inhabitants belong mainly to the Calvinist Church, there are no such religious festivals, but there is a traditional ritual connected to sheep-herding. In this ritual the local Calvinist pastor plays no role. The celebration is connected to an annual measurement of the quantity of sheep's milk before the sheep are taken to the summer pasture (Hun: *juhmérés*). The ritual is organised each year in late April on Saint George's day and is followed by a popular celebration with music and dance. Like the confirmation rituals described in chapter 3, this event was discovered and attended by members of the urban intellectual public in Transylvania and even by people from Hungary during the late socialist period. The ritual was perceived as an expression of ethnic and local identities. The main organisers and sponsors were local sheep owners (Hun: *juhosgazdák*) who hired shepherds for the whole summer and paid musicians for the celebration. Although the number of sheep in Gánás has decreased to fewer than 300 nowadays, the ritual continues to be organised and remains an important attraction for locals and visitors alike. In 2004 an American tourist group arrived in the village on the day of the celebration, guided by two ethnographers from Budapest.

Gánási Village Days are tied to a particular point in the agricultural cycle in early summer. In 2004, Gánási Village Days took place on a weekend in late May. The organisers, a group of local intellectuals and a church-related foundation, have built on some features of the traditional spring sheep-herding ritual, incorporating an animal exhibition, local economic activities, and other traditions, all connected to a community celebration and folklore performance. The programme also includes a local crafts fair, traditional local food, a walk in the village to visit the local museum (Hun: *tájház*), and a traditional 'clean room' (Hun: *tisztaszoba*)—a room reserved for depositing and exhibiting folk textiles, costumes, and furniture in the traditional houses of Kalotaszeg. During the festival in 2004, several competitions were held for children, and a coach race for the men. Farm women competed in a cookie contest, and the programme also featured a farmers' contest in which animals were paraded. Village Days that year attracted locals and a large number of visitors in spite of rainy weather.



Plate 16. Cooking a traditional meal (Hun: *juhtokány*) for Gánási Village Days.

The farmers' contest is usually well attended by *gazda*s. Traditionally, no milk-measuring ritual was organised around the spring departure of the buffalo for their pastures, because buffalo are milked individually by their owners, and households process the milk separately. Nevertheless, buffalo are a source of pride for Hungarians, and owners are attentive to their buffalo's body shapes and appearance (Kós 1979: 265–267). Before I attended Gánási Village Days, Misi, who had been herding buffalo with Papu outside Gánás in the summer of 2003, told me that most of the local 'stars' (Hun: *sztárok*) came from his herd. Seeing my incomprehension, he pointed out some of the buffalo, explaining that these animals were appreciated by the villagers and received awards in the 'buffalo beauty contest' held on previous Village Days. The differences between the buffalo are hardly discernible to an outsider, but villagers and good herders know each animal by its name and character.[103]

[103] Papu ridiculed some of his fellow herders who were unable to recognise buffalo by their 'faces' and particular ways of moving. Knowing the buffalo is a basic skill of a good herder, and he can easily distinguish between the animals.



Plate 17. Horses and buffalo on parade during Gánási Village Days.

The public exhibition of animals and presentation of local food connect the ritual firmly to material aspects of village life. It is also intended to attract outsiders, who can touch and taste bits of local life. The second element of Village Days in Gánás is the presentation of local costumes and a folklore performance. In 2004 the presentation of costumes was held on the stage of the local house of culture; it was directed and commented upon by a local expert on regional folk costumes. The local group of revitalisers of folk traditions (Hun: *hagyományőrzők*, literally 'those who retain/preserve traditions') prepared a staged dance performance, which was held on Saturday evening, followed by a ball with local music.[104]

Some years before I started my fieldwork, a similar celebration had signalled the opening of the local museum. One commentator on that event remarked on the way the local folklore attained national significance:

> The dancing group is not only representative of the national tradition, but sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the locals dance in this group. They, together with the local museum, become part of the

[104] *Hagyományőrzők* groups in Transylvanian villages are often organised by local intellectuals such as schoolteachers and priests. Their role is to revitalise and 'retain' local folksongs, folk dances, and other folklore traditions.

> production of tradition, a process that is organised locally but represents elements for construction of the cultural nation. Thus, in this case the national and subnational levels complement and reinforce each other: the identity performed locally integrates the national and the local; moreover it seems that local content is organised as part of the ritual practice in a way that elevates it to the national level (Szabó 2006: 68).

Religious rituals also frame these celebrations. The opening of Village Days is preceded by a religious service on Saturday morning. This is followed by an official opening speech given by the director of the Christian foundation that co-organises Village Days. The regular Sunday church service is also integrated into the programme. During this service the Calvinist church hosts and features a guest choir from Hungary. In this way, religion is intertwined with local traditions and the celebration is linked to the broader national community, emphasising the national significance of local practices. The interweaving of local folklore and religion creates a context for celebrating the nation in the village.

Local Hungarians and Roma attend Village Days and engage in conversation with visitors over beer. There are no public signs of tension or frustration from the side of the Roma, who are barely represented in the public rituals of Village Days. In 2004, some disgruntled Roma voices could be heard, particularly among those who felt that their talents or abilities could have contributed to the celebration or who believed they could have provided a better performance than the people who had been chosen to dance. One young Roma man commented to me that he 'could cut down' all the male solo dancers (Hun: *levágnám őket a táncban*) if only he wanted to do so. But he was not in the mood for dancing, he rationalised. Another Rom, less self-assured, murmured to me that the famous old Roma dancers and musicians had taught all their skills to non-Roma (Hun: *a gázsókra hagyták a tudást*), leaving the present generation of Roma without those skills. There is an element of truth to this claim. After the well-known Roma musicians died, Hungarian youths from the village and neighbouring localities increasingly took over the instrumental music. The *hagyományőrző* dance ensemble in 2004 was composed exclusively of Hungarians.

Preparations for the farmers' contest were disturbed that year by a minor altercation: an elder Rom drove his horse and cart down the main street of Gánás into the middle of the preparations. After arguments were exchanged between the man and one of his relatives, he turned his horse around and disappeared. Another Rom noted that the man had been trying to show off his coach-driving skills. Such incidents were exceptional; most

Roma accepted that Hungarian villagers would dominate the event, and they remained passively in the background.

Conclusion

Because ethnic and religious identities overlap in Transylvania, as in other parts of Eastern and Central Europe, one might expect the revitalisation of rituals to result in an intensification of intertwined ethno-religious sentiments and social tensions. Although this may be the case under certain conditions, ritual revitalisation in Transylvania has no uniform effect on all groups. Segments or strata of a local society can opt for divergent forms of rituals. Some groups are more receptive to communitarian rituals, which focus on the revitalisation of local traditions and symbolically connect the local to the national. For Hungarians in Gánás, Village Days provides an instance for such revitalisation. Pentecostal rituals, on the other hand, symbolically separate the individual from his or her previous social identity and relationships and diminish the significance of ethnicity and social status. Pentecostal revitalisation creates and emphasises a direct and intimate connection between the open heart of the person and God. Roma Pentecostal assemblies can, however, create spaces for affirming new identities that can be ethnically marked, as the case of Jani demonstrates.

The religious ideas and communicative practices involved in revitalisation rituals are important resources for the construction and mobilisation of collective identity. The boundary between canonical messages (those connected to eternal orders) and self-referential messages (those connected to the social order and expressing the social status of the participants) in rituals can be shifted or modified in order to (1) either canonise previously non-canonical elements of a ritual or institute new rituals relying on existing patterns or (2) 'cleanse' rituals of most self-referential content. Village Days can be interpreted as an example of the first process, the canonising of the local social order, whereas Pentecostal revitalisation rituals are of the second type.

The effects of these divergent forms of revitalisation on collective identity are opposite but not necessarily in conflict. Revitalisations that canonise features of the local social order arguably contribute to a consolidation and reinforcement of particularistic identifications. The case of Village Days demonstrates that these identities are not encapsulated in the 'village traditions' they mobilise but rather are connected to broader, collective ideals and ideologies, most notably to the ideal of the nation. Rituals 'of the Spirit and of the open heart' such as those found in Pentecostal revivals appeal to people for whom direct access to ritual empowerment and a symbolic bracketing of the social order can produce and reinforce a universalistic

orientation of the self. Universalistic symbolism promises a radical reversal of status hierarchies and immediate access to resources and social mobility.

These different forms of revitalisation appear not to produce open social conflict in Gánás, but I would not want to imply that revitalisations in general cannot or do not generate conflict. Rather, I believe that in this particular case no such tensions emerge because the rituals are separated by the divisions of the local public sphere. In other Transylvanian villages not far from my field site, Hungarian rituals, which canonise dress and musical codes (i.e. folk dresses and folksongs), clashed with the universalistic orientation of the converted segment of the same group. Adventist parents refused to dress their children in folk dresses or to allow them to sing folksongs, thus scandalising the local Hungarian community, which saw the gesture as disloyalty to the ethnic group (Kiss 2005). In Gánás, social divisions are tacitly agreed upon and masked by a homogeneous appearance of 'local community'. The local public sphere is not disturbed when different identifications are created and practised in the alternative public forum of an assembly of relatively lower status. In Gánás the two forms of ritual reinforce extant status and ethnic divisions in local society. These divergent revitalisations would challenge local 'homogeneity' only if the different rituals were performed in a unified local public sphere or if high-status members of the community were to refuse to take part in revitalisation rituals that created and maintained the appearance of local homogeneity.

Chapter 7
Media Events: Transformation of the Postsocialist Public Sphere

Two events unfolded in the Romanian media in the autumn of 2003: the coronation of a Romanian Roma leader as 'International King of the Gypsies of the World' (Rou: *rege internațional al țiganilor de pretutindeni*) and the wedding of the young daughter of Florin Cioabă, another Roma 'king'. To broaden the context of the analysis offered in previous chapters, I look at media representations of these events, which reveal much about the transformation of the postsocialist public sphere in Romania and the place of 'Gypsies' within it. Recent changes in ritual communication are not unique to the village in which I conducted my fieldwork, and the postsocialist rise in exclusionary tendencies in the public sphere is not an isolated phenomenon unique to a few localities. Processes observable at the local level are connected to changes in the public sphere at the national level. The mass media foster exclusion, not only in Romania but also in the emerging European public sphere.

I witnessed firsthand some of the events described in previous chapters, but I was not a direct observer of the events described here. Instead, I rely on print media and records of television debates that I gathered with the help of assistants.[105] These materials were published and broadcast immediately as events unfolded, and their role as feedback to the participants was important in the story I relate. The mediated nature of the data does not hinder my interpretation, however, because my main argument is not based on the factual accuracy of individual media reports. I consider public representations of events as social facts in and of themselves. Still, a minimum of trust in these sources is necessary. In reconstructing the events, I quote from declarations by the actors involved, in order to show the multiplicity of

[105] Tibor Schneider and Gyula Kozák helped me in acquiring and indexing the material. I also thank Vasile Ionescu for permission to use the data of the electronic media monitoring bulletin *Inforrom*.

voices involved, although it is not my intention to construct the 'true story' underlying these media representations.

My purpose is to offer an anthropological perspective on media representations of Romanian Roma and to analyse some problems involved in the production of these images. Looking at public Roma personas such as the Gypsy kings who are emerging on the national stage, I focus on a series of media events, which have been the primary vehicles for such images. The actual persons involved can of course be distinguished from their mediated images, but it is the public representations with which I am concerned. I show that the production of public representations is linked to individual attempts to circumscribe an autonomous political space. Moreover, the Gypsy kings are, through their public actions, in continuous interaction with other social actors and ideologies, producing an ambiguous political position for the not-unwilling persons involved. More important for my overall argument is that the Gypsy kings stand for a broader social and ethnic category; they themselves claim as much. Therefore, their public appearances and actions attract the attention of the media, and their reception by the majority society and by other, non-Roma minority groups influences the way the social category 'Romanian Roma' is constructed in the national public sphere.

Rather than offering an overview of postsocialist media representations of Romanian Roma, I focus on a particular sequence of events that attracted broad media coverage. The protagonists were two Roma businessmen, Ilie Badea Stănescu and Florin Cioabă, both of whom claimed to be Gypsy kings.[106] Two churches were involved: the Romanian Orthodox Church, which hosted Stănescu's coronation, and a Pentecostal church in which Cioabă serves as a pastor.[107] Several secular institutions helped shaped the events in which the kings and their families were caught up: the local, national, and international media, the Romanian National Child Protection Agency, a number of Roma and non-Roma non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the police, and a national media 'watchdog' agency, the CNA (Consiliul Național a Audiovizualului). Prominently involved was Baroness Emma Nicholson, a British Liberal Democrat member of Parliament and the rapporteur for Romania at the European Union Parliament in Brussels. I begin with some background information on the 'office' of the Gypsy kings.

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[106] Both are members of a Roma group called Căldărari (Kalderash) that traditionally lives in Romania but is scattered elsewhere in the world.

[107] Cioabă's assembly is part of an independent stream of Pentecostalism that is not directly affiliated with the Church of God, the legally recognised Pentecostal Church of Romania. Florin Cioabă also presides over a religious nongovernmental organisation, the Christian Centre of the Roma (Centrul Creştin a Rromilor).

The Gypsy Kings

Much confusion surrounds public discussion of the Romanian Gypsy kings. The kings' grandiose declarations and their pompous appearance impress some of their audience, Roma and non-Roma alike, although they are criticised and ridiculed by the majority Romanian population. The negative attitude can be explained in part by the persistence of anti-Romani prejudices. However, a puzzle remains: Why did the Gypsy kings emerge in Romania after the fall of communism?[108] How should their popularity in the media and their mass appeal be understood? Although they undeniably fill a need for Romani political representation in the postsocialist period, their implicit hierarchical position seems to contradict the notoriously egalitarian and anti-authoritarian ethic of most Roma groups. Still, the kings seem to offer something that makes them different from the elected ethnic representatives who emerged from democratic politics – something that fascinates the majority – and their position and title are acknowledged by some of the Roma population.

It is not easy to define the role of Roma 'kings' across historical epochs and societies. Historians note the early existence of the title 'king of the Gypsies'. This office, established in the Polish Commonwealth in the mid-seventeenth century, apparently served the interests of the majority society rather than the interests of Romanies.[109] A recent review of institutions for political representation and administration of Roma (Klímová-Alexander 2004) distinguishes between internal institutional arrangements of Roma society and external institutionalisation of 'Gypsies'. Ilona Klímová-Alexander lists the early 'king of the Gypsies' title as within the latter category (2004: 602). She also notes that some Gypsy leaders created a 'façade of hierarchical representation', adopting titles such as count, duke, and *voivode* in an attempt to imitate the social organisation of surrounding societies (2004: 607).

Self-designated Gypsy kings emerged among the Polish Roma after the First World War. These leaders garnered the recognition of non-Roma power structures, thus gaining authority over the Gypsies, whom the majority population perceived as a more or less homogeneous group. Ignacy-

[108] The existence of local Gypsy kings throughout south-eastern Europe and Russia during the socialist period has been noted, but these figures have attracted only limited attention, and their public image is not a subject of political debate as in the case of postsocialist Romania (see Barany 2002: 141, 184–185).

[109] The Polish monarch established the office of king of the Gypsies sometime between 1636 and 1652. Although the first two appointees were likely Gypsies, later kings were non-Gypsy gentry. The exact functions of the office are unclear, but these noblemen were entitled to collect taxes (Kaminski 1980: 134–135).

Marek Kaminski (1980) labelled these kings 'external leaders'. They were either completely ignored or merely tolerated by Roma groups, which had 'internal leaders' whose authority was focused more on community matters than on external relations with non-Roma. External leaders were accepted if they facilitated dealings with non-Gypsies, and such leaders helped to conceal from outsiders the internal power structure of Roma society (Kaminski 1980: 134). Several Roma kings competed against one another for control in Poland during the 1920s and 1930s. Some gained recognition solely by publicising themselves in the press; others negotiated their legitimacy with internal leaders and gained recognition from other, non-Roma groups (Kaminski 1980: 172–192). Kaminski concluded: 'The more an external leader was supported by, and subordinated to, his own people, the less support he had from non-Gypsy authorities, and vice-versa' (1980: 189).

In the more recent past, some leaders of the Canadian Roma were addressed as 'boss', 'fixer', 'chief', and even 'king' (Salo and Salo 1977). These leaders held territorial power; for example, they dealt with municipal authorities and eventually collected fees from Roma constituents for services provided and for the right to do business in their territory. The authorities treated these Canadian kings as the 'representatives' of the Gypsies, but from the perspective of the Roma, these leaders ideally enjoyed no greater privileges or special authority than any other Rom. Salo and Salo (1977: 57) argued that 'the attitude of the Rom toward the boss is ambivalent and conditional. Pretensions of superiority are often controlled through ridicule. The story is told of one boss who arrived at a celebration wearing a crown, symbolic of his "kingship". The scorn of the other Rom soon forced him to doff the crown'. Carol Silverman (1982) noted that North American Roma were eager to display their subordination to 'their king' when non-Gypsies were around. They enacted the appearance of a hierarchical social structure 'for the benefit' of the majority society. Moreover, they invoked the respect of the majority for persons of higher social rank in order to procure privileges for the king's family. If a Rom was hospitalised, he might be declared 'king' in order to secure a room and ensure that he received better treatment (Silverman 1982: 385).

Romanian Gypsy kings share some similarities with these parallel cases. Romanian kings seem to be external leaders surrounded by pretenders. Internal leaders of various Roma groups and elected ethnic representatives also contest their authority.[110] A king's power depends largely on his suc-

[110] There are several ethnic parties among the Romanian Roma. Many local or county councils have Roma members. At the national level, the Roma Party (Rou: Partida Romilor) usually receives most Roma votes. This party appoints the legally stipulated minority member of Parliament for the Roma (Fosztó and Anăstăsoaie 2001: 364–366).

cessful public performances and his ability to evoke the appearance of a hierarchical social structure for a non-Roma audience. Some continuity in the 'office' is ensured by a display of material wealth, but a king's authority is always open to contestation. Public performances provide a forum in which the authority of the king can be symbolically asserted, and rival leaders can use these public rituals to contest the king's power or propose an alternative authority. Such public celebrations are often linked to customary rituals (e.g. annual pilgrimages, life-cycle rituals); more rarely they are dedicated ceremonies (e.g. coronation). The success of the king depends on his willingness to display and publicly expend his wealth and on his capacity to attract the attention of non-Roma mass media outlets.

The public emergence of Gypsy kings seems to be a recent development in Romania. No historical data indicate the presence of an office comparable to 'king of the Gypsies' in the Romanian principalities. Before the abolishment of slavery in 1855–1856, a large portion of the Gypsies in Moldova and Walachia was subjected to servitude (Rou: *robie*) and 'owned' by monasteries and individual nobles (*boiars*). Following the unification of the principalities and during the interwar period, no written sources mention Gypsy kings. If there were in fact leaders who called themselves kings, they could have done so only as internal leaders and could not have extended their claims into the broader Romanian public sphere. Interwar Roma organisations used the vocabulary of civil society, forming 'alliances' and 'associations', with 'presidents' and 'members'. The most successful organisation was the General Alliance of Romanian Roma (Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România), which was backed by the Romanian Orthodox Church. The alliance was a civic organisation, and some of its leaders referred to themselves as *voievod* (Nastasă 2001: 16).[111] After World War II, the socialist state suppressed all forms of Romani public representation. It was only after the fall of communism that the public appearance of Gypsy kings became possible.

Romanian Gypsy kings in the postsocialist period have tended to be charismatic ethno-political actors. The appearance of the kings and their activities seems to satisfy needs for public representation of the Romani population and to materialise dreams for an autonomous political space for a segment of that population. The kings' charismatic personas and picturesque ideas of Gypsy royalty have a certain appeal among the majority audience, and the kings are acknowledged to some degree among other Roma groups

[111] *Voievod* (spelled vaivode or voivode in English) is a historical title for a traditional administrative and military office throughout Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Romungre often mentioned the existence of the *vajda* (the Hungarian equivalent of *voievod*) among some Roma groups. The Roma of Gánás have no *vajda*.

in Romania and even abroad. My field experience leads me to believe that Gypsy kings are admired more for their ostentatious displays of wealth during public appearances than for any real or putative political power they might hold. Most Roma are aware that the kings' extravagance is unlikely to improve the material conditions of the their 'subjects'. The Romungre I know tend to be realistic about the limited political advantages they might enjoy from having 'a king of their own' and sometimes are even cynical about their self-appointed leaders, who are said to be followed only by their own kin groups. Divisions between Roma groups are strong from the perspective of the Romungre, who express solidarity with 'their kind' of Roma (Rom: *amare felo, Roma sar amen*). Romungre experience moral distance from and social tensions with 'tent dwellers' (Rom: *korturarjia*) from southern Romania (Rom: *mântjene* [derogatory]), speak a different dialect, and usually belong to the Orthodox Church (see chapter 2).

Ion Cioabă (b. 1935), the first Romanian Gypsy king, came from southern Romania and settled with his family in the Transylvanian city of Sibiu (Ger: Hermannstadt; Hun: Nagyszeben). As a wealthy copper dealer he was persecuted, repeatedly imprisoned on various charges by the socialist authorities, and released in exchange for his gold coins (Kovacheva 2000: 53). Cioabă was elected leader (Rou: *bulibaşa*) of a Kalderash group in 1978 during the group's traditional pilgrimage to the Bistriţa cloister in Vâlcea County, southern Romania. This pilgrimage is held annually on 8 September on the occasion of an Orthodox Christian holiday (Sfânta Maria Mică), an important gathering for this group. In 1984 the pilgrimage offered a pretext for the only known Roma festival held in socialist times (Gheorghe 1985). In 1985 the public folklore performance was prohibited and the festival abolished (Pons 1995: 32). Pilgrimages on 8 September continue even today.

In September 1992, after the collapse of the socialist regime, Ion Cioabă was crowned 'International King of the Gypsies'. The origin of the title is unclear, and although Cioabă enjoyed widespread support from his own group, his office was soon contested by a rival Rom from Sibiu, Iulian Rădulescu, who declared himself 'Emperor of the Gypsies', claiming that his office was higher than that of king. Cioabă, in addition to his role as king of the Roma, was involved in international organisations advocating the political representation of Roma, most notably the International Romani Union. He was also an 'elected Templar Knight'. He appeared in public wearing his massive crown of gold and the white mantle of the Knights Templar, decorated with a red cross. These symbols emphasised his intimate connection to Christianity but also surrounded his persona with an aura of exoticism and mystery. He converted to Pentecostalism and founded a church in Sibiu. Florin, his son, is a Pentecostal pastor continuing his father's work. Ion

Cioabă died in 1997. Florin Cioabă succeeded him as king and inherited the crown.

Following his father's death, Florin Cioabă tried to build political coalitions among the Roma of Sibiu in order to obtain an office in the local council, but the rivalry between the families of the king and the self-styled emperor re-emerged (Reed 1997). Florin continued to perform his roles as pastor and king, combining elements of internal and external leadership. His sister, Luminița Cioabă, a writer and poet, created a foundation dedicated to the memory of the International King of the Gypsies.[112] Its main aim is to promote Roma cultural identity worldwide, relying on a dual strategy of cultivating the tradition of the Cioabă royal family and promoting a more encompassing ethnic identity based primarily on folkloristic elements.

Media Events

In the following sections I describe two media events, the coronation of Ilie Badea Stănescu and the wedding of Ana Maria Cioabă, as they were reported in the national and local press of Romania. The newspapers from which the data were gathered form part of the mainstream press, in spite of the tabloid-like style of some of the reports. This style was not peculiar to the period analysed; several reports have demonstrated the ways in which the Romanian media discriminate against Roma.[113] What is unique about the period I discuss – from late August to early October 2003 – is the large number of Roma-related articles that appeared and the intensity of arguments about Roma topics in the mass media. It is tempting to see these reports as part of a coherent narrative. I present the events chronologically but suggest no causal links between them, although such links are sometimes evident in the dialogical or polemical nature of the exchanges. But even if one cannot infer a continuous story from the recurring actors and similarities in their reported behaviour, one can nonetheless question the logic of the reporting.

[112] See the foundation's website at www.icfoundation.ro.

[113] These reports were issued by several NGOs concerned with human rights and democratisation in Romania. In 1994 the Academia Cațavencu set up its Media Monitoring Agency (MMA), an NGO focused on monitoring public representations and human rights abuses. The MMA published reports and databases on media images of Roma (see www.mma.ro). The Project on Ethnic Relations (1996, 1997) organised seminars and published reports on the media coverage of Roma (see www.per-usa.org). The European Roma Rights Centre (www.errc.org) regularly reports on the discriminatory treatment of Roma (for a report on Roma in the Romanian media, see Hanganu 1999).

The Coronation of an Orthodox King

In mid-August 2003, newspapers reported that Ilie Badea Stănescu, nicknamed Tortică, a Roma leader from Costeşti, a town in Argeş County, southern Romania, had announced that he was to be crowned 'International King of the Gypsies of the World' (Rou: *rege internațional al țiganilor de pretutindeni*). The reports emphasised that the event was planned for 8 September and that the Orthodox Church would host the coronation. Stănescu claimed 40 million Roma worldwide as his 'subjects', a constituency almost twice the total population of Romania (Anonymous 2003d).[114] This comparison between the size of Romania and that of the Roma kingdom of the world seems to have been no coincidence. It was rooted in the title 'International King' itself, but it also referred to the broadening context of the European Union, to which access was being opened, at least hypothetically, for increasing numbers of Romanians. Because free circulation was expected to work both ways, as one report cynically claimed, after the coronation Romania would probably have to open its borders to admit the Gypsies of the world to attend to their new king (Fercu 2003).

Another report was more explicit in expressing the tensions of the imaginary link between the Roma kings, Romania, and Europe ('the West'):

> If you travel to the West and a foreigner who finds out that you are a Romanian says, 'Oh, you are from that country that has two kings and an emperor', you might wish to deny this and say that it must be confusion, must it not? But it is not. The guy would be right, only we can hardly believe that beginning from the eighth of September this year we will be fellow citizens with three highnesses, majesties, and who knows what other appellations will be used in the court (Chifu 2003a).

The writer presupposes a metonymical link between the kings and Romania. The Roma kings stand for something broader – not only for Romanian Roma but also for Romania as a state before an imagined Western audience. The author obviously overestimates or intentionally exaggerates the publicity the king might achieve abroad. This can be interpreted as part of a widespread and almost obsessive worry about the 'image of Romania abroad' on the eve of European integration. A further tension appears in this short passage; it points to a need expressed in the everyday discourse of many Romanians to dissociate themselves from their 'fellow citizens', the Gypsies of Romania. This sort of distancing seems to be felt as particularly urgent when the hypothetical interlocutor is an uniformed outsider.

[114] According to scholarly estimates, the total population of Roma is around 10 million.

Contrary to the previously divulged plans, the coronation took place on 31 August, before the announced date. It took place at the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, and four Orthodox priests assisted Stănescu. One of them pronounced an 'imperial decree' that appointed Stănescu king of the 78 million 'Roma in Romania and in diaspora'. A gold crown was placed on Stănescu's head (Popa 2003a). Iulian Rădulescu, Ion Cioabă's rival, signed the imperial decree. National television reported the event, mentioning that the cathedral hosting it was the same one in which Carol I and Ferdinand had been crowned kings of Romania (MR/YCL/LS 2003). Immediately after the coronation, the Orthodox Church was admonished in the press for permitting and assisting in the ceremony. One accusation concerned priestly assistance in exchange for a 'royal honorarium' (Ghilezan 2003), or 'shovels of greenies [dollars]' (Bejan and Rachita 2003). The most scandalous aspect of the ritual was the close association between the Romanian royal family and the monastery that hosted the coronation (Cârstea 2003a; Chifu 2003b; Popa 2003a).

Even non-religious journalists tended to see the event as a profanation of Romanian national history by the clergy of the Orthodox Church, which was otherwise considered to be the national religious body. From the extreme right of the political spectrum, the xenophobic New Right Christian Forum (Noua Dreapta) issued a declaration quoted in the local Sibiu newspaper: 'The unfortunate association between the former legitimate monarchs of Romania and these "royal caricatures" will increase confusion beyond our borders between the Romanian people as a whole and the Gypsies of Romania. In conditions in which the "ambassadors" of this ethnic group are renowned for their antisocial and criminal activities abroad, the image of our country will only worsen' (Uidilescu 2003).

The immediate reaction of the responsible eparchy (the Episcopia Argeşului şi Muscelului) was a declaration stating that there was nothing unusual about the ritual: 'These kinds of blessings [*slujbe de binecuvîntare*] are common and can be performed for any kind of thing that serves Christian usage [*întrebuințare creştinească*]: houses, plots for houses, clothing, diverse objects, etc.' (quoted in Popa 2003b). This declaration is consistent with the traditional practices of the Orthodox clergy, and canonical guides for the faithful recommend the blessing of diverse objects (Răducă 1988). The more problematic aspects remained the historical significance of the site and the active involvement of one of the priests in the act of coronation.

The church initiated an investigation in order to clarify the role played by the local bishop and clerics involved (Anonymous 2003c). The eparchy issued another communiqué three days after the coronation, stating that Orthodox priests were expected 'to bless only the specific ornaments of

Roma customs' (Rou: *a sfinți podoabele specifice cutumei (obiceiurilor) rromilor*) and that any additional involvement by clergy was a 'regrettable deviation' (*abatere regretabilă*). The bishop involved apologised publicly and promised a full investigation. He also found it expedient to explain why it was acceptable for the church to be involved in the ritual:

> We believe that Roma organise themselves in 'institutions'. No matter what the titles of these institutions are, they aim to move towards the moral principles of Orthodox Christianity and integration into the structures of the European Union. The fact that Roma refer to these institutions and the members of these institutions with titles (king, emperor, royal house, etc.), which, in the perception of Romanians, have a different meaning, is not a concern of the Romanian Orthodox Church. We believe that anyone from Romania is aware what a king of Romania was and what a king or emperor of the Roma is, and no confusion can be made (Quoted in Popa 2003c).

The first sentences of the passage encourage 'institutions' that 'aim to move towards' (Rou: *au ca scop apropierea*) Orthodox Christianity. Bearing in mind the existence of a non-Orthodox Gypsy king, Florin Cioabă, this encouragement is hardly surprising. The invocation of the political priority of integrating Roma into European structures, on equal footing with their incorporation into the Christian moral universe, avoids addressing the problem of the ideological significance of the site of coronation, which was the most scandalous aspect of the event. The bishop's appeal to his readers' common sense in distinguishing between Roma kings and the 'real' kings of Romania withdraws the support of the church from the recognised 'institutions'. Discerning exactly what a Roma king might be, a matter of ordinary 'common sense' in a society in which Roma are publicly stigmatised, would only reinforce prejudices against Roma. The communiqué did not elucidate the reasons the church recognised a king of the Roma, nor did it disprove accusations that the priests were bribed to perform the ceremony.

Roma organisations, too, expressed their views on the coronation. Some organisations perceived the ritual as a signal of competition between Kalderash elites, and others saw it as a crisis of traditional leadership roles (Coste 2003). Others refused altogether to acknowledge the kings (Pădurean 2003; Prundea 2003). Florin Cioabă, the other king, also made his voice heard. He blamed the church for recognising the ceremony: 'I even warned the patriarch about the scandal during the preparation, but it seems that the Orthodox Church can be corrupted for money. Stănescu gave money. Couldn't he even be made an archangel? I consider the Orthodox Church to be compromised; two pagans [i.e. Stănescu and Rădulescu] were admitted to usurp the footsteps of the great kings of Romania' (Cârstea 2003b). Cioabă

also accused Rădulescu of composing the decree recognising the new king in exchange for a ridiculously small payment: 10 million lei (approximately US$280) and two chickens. This accusation was caricatured and circulated by virtually all Romanian newspapers.

It is unclear why the coronation took place earlier than originally announced, but the new king took advantage of the 8 September pilgrimage to organise his first public appearance, attracting the attention of most pilgrimage participants and the media (Anonymous 2003e; Popa and Rouă 2003). Rădulescu shared a table with Stănescu during the open-air celebration closing the pilgrimage (Gongu 2003b). Local non-Roma politicians, among them the prefect of Vâlcea County, visited the two (Kallai 2003). Cioabă, who was also present, set up his table at a distance and attracted less attention, according to some reports (Gongu 2003b), although he had invited important guests from the French embassy (Popa and Rouă 2003). The two camps communicated through the media, which carried messages, accusations, and insults.

The Wedding of Ana Maria Cioabă

Less than a month after the coronation, an event involving the Cioabă family made headlines in the national and international press. Florin Cioabă married off his daughter on 27 September 2003. A week before the planned event, information was leaked that the wedding was to be luxurious and that a former minister of the interior, Doru Viorel Ursu, was to be the *naş* (Rou), the person who led the bride to the ceremony (Anonymous 2003f). It was announced that the wedding would follow Gypsy law (Rou: *legea ţigănească*) and the reception would be more abundant than 'even the new "king" from Costeşti could have dreamed [Rou: *recentul 'rege' de la Costeşti nici n-a visat*]' (Gadea 2003). The first reports also dwelled on the amount of money spent for food, beverages, the dress, and the dowry of the bride. They also emphasised that the marriage was arranged and that the bride was 12 or 14 years old, the groom 17. The wedding ceremony was performed by the father of the bride in his own church in Sibiu.

One episode from the wedding was presented in most reports: the bride left the groom alone in the church before the ritual began. Most commentators interpreted the scene as an attempt by the girl to escape an undesired marriage. Her family led her back to the church. The tone of reporting and interpretations of the event diverged considerably in the domestic and international press. Early reports in the Romanian press commented on the scene cynically as a 'domestication of the scorpion' (Rou: *înblânzirea scorpiei*), ridiculing the bride's rebellious behaviour (Tomozei 2003a). The international press stressed the troubling persistence of arranged child mar-

riages among Romanian Roma. International press reports also noted that although local police had escorted the marriage procession, they failed to take any action against the purported violation of the rights of the children being married (summarised in K. J. 2003b).

Three days after the ceremony most local newspapers took a similar stance, echoing a public declaration by Baroness Emma Nicholson, rapporteur for Romania in the European Parliament, that the bride had been raped and that the wedding constituted child abuse. Nicholson called for state intervention in order to set a precedent of rejecting such practices (Anonymous 2003a; Deac 2003; K. J. 2003a; Tudorean 2003). It was suggested that if the accusations proved true, the bride should be put under institutional care and Cioabă should lose his parental rights (Stan 2003). Cioabă defended himself by saying that this was his people's tradition and that Nicholson was misinformed; the children had agreed to marriage. He was supported by a few Roma activists who called for respect of traditions (Vasile Ionescu, quoted in Deac 2003) and recognition of early marriage as a cultural right (Delia Grigore, quoted in Anonymous 2003b). Cioabă's opponents were more numerous, not only among non-Roma. The two Roma members of the Romanian Parliament, Nicolae Păun and Mădălin Voicu, seized the opportunity to comment on the wedding as a 'barbarism' and a 'crime' committed by Coiabă against his own daughter (quoted in Anonymous 2003b; Deac 2003).

The local branch of the National Child Protection Agency started an investigation and quickly concluded that the newlyweds should live separately and cease having marital relations. The police also charged the groom with committing sexual acts with a minor, but the charges were later dropped for lack of evidence and the bride's refusal to undergo a medical examination (Bechir and Cîrjă 2003; Bejan and Rachita 2003; Gârnod and Turturea-Pătra 2003b; Tomozei 2003b). The baroness soon declared that she was pleased by the authorities' response (Doboş 2003). A discussion ensued about whether or not Ana Maria should return to the school she had left a year earlier, before finishing sixth grade (Chelemen 2003). The two families saw separating the young couple as a complicated problem because of the dowry and gifts exchanged, the return of which could disrupt social relations (Gârnod and Turturea-Pătra 2003a). Florin Cioabă, the father of the bride, and the newlyweds appeared on several television shows. Florin's sister, Luminița, explained the meaning of Roma traditions in order to illustrate the changing lives of Roma to the larger public. On two consecutive nights the topic was discussed on the 'Tuca Show', one of the most popular talk shows on Romanian commercial television (Tucă 2003a, 2003b). The case continued to make waves on national television as late as 29 October, when Emma

Nicholson made an appearance (Tănase 2003). The CNA, the national media watchdog agency, recognised its failure to intervene to protect the children and stop them from being exposed to additional emotional and moral stress (Mediafax 2003a, 2003b). It also criticised the attitude of most journalists, who voluntarily addressed the self-declared kings as 'majesty' or 'highness'.

Cioabă issued an open letter to Nicholson reproaching her for obtaining her information from the press rather than personally visiting his family (Cioabă 2003). He agreed to comply with the decision of the child protection agency and let the children separate, but he insisted that according to his people's tradition the marriage was valid. Moreover, he announced that as soon it was legally possible for the couple to resume their marriage, and after his daughter eventually gave birth, he would invite the baroness to be the godmother of his grandchild (Cristea and Petru 2003; Gh. I. 2003).

The press repeatedly pressured the Pentecostal Church to take a position on the issue of child marriage (B. M. 2003). According to the media reports, the marriage ceremony was only a religious ceremony because the couple was not old enough to obtain a civil marriage. Cioabă argued that there had not been a religious marriage ritual but instead a blessing of the young couple (quoted in Tucă 2003c). The Pentecostal Church published a statement saying, 'Although Florin Cioabă declared that he is a Pentecostal pastor, he is not part of the legally recognised Pentecostal Denomination in Romania [Cultul Penticostal, *legal recunoscut în România*]. Regarding the religious marriage of his daughter, an event that was widely reported, we specify that in our church religious marriages can only be performed following a civil marriage at City Hall with legal proof'.

The Pentecostal response was reproduced in one newspaper under the headline 'Cioabă is not a Pentecostal pastor', alongside an article about the 'first royal decree' by Stănescu forbidding underage marriage among his subjects (L. K. and G. T. 2003). Apart from the obviously manipulative display of the letters side by side as equally official documents, the paper misread the Pentecostals' position, because their letter had stated only that Cioabă was not part of their own denomination, not that he could not be a pastor in an independent Pentecostal church.

Although Stănescu's 'decree' (Gongu 2003a) aligned him with those who blamed Cioabă personally for the marriage, a more realistic position was not rare even among non-Roma. One newspaper organised a telephone survey of readers' positions on the marriage, and three-quarters of the 85 respondents advocated 'letting the children live together' and allowing 'the Gypsies to continue their ways'. A selection from readers' statements revealed that between anti-EU rhetoric and blatant ignorance, some readers sincerely supported the newlyweds. A traditional tolerance towards the

practice was also expressed (Voicu 2003), but issues connected to the persistent disadvantages of the Roma went unnoticed.

The Romungre of Gánás are aware that other Roma groups (particularly those whom they derogatorily call *mântjene*) follow customs in which marriages are arranged and money is given in exchange for the bride (Rom: *Del love po chaja*), but these are not part of their everyday concerns. Few Romungre marriages incorporate these traditional ceremonies and gift exchanges.[115] The traditional ritual recognition of the couple takes place at the baptism of their first child (see chapter 3). During my stay in the village there was little discussion of the wedding of Ana Maria Cioabă. After questioning my hosts following television reports about the official decision to separate the young couple, the only response I received was that 'the law does not allow them' (Rom: *Na mikel les o törvényi*) to marry.

The scandal surrounding the wedding of Ana Maria Cioabă died down, and although news reports on Roma child marriage continue to appear sporadically (E. T. 2003), there have been no public signals of sustained official interest in the issue. In most cases the practice is interpreted as yet another barrier needing to be removed as part of European integration. One set of commentators concluded:

> We must either transform the few honourable Gypsy families into wrongdoers or we will encourage paedophilia. The solution to the Cioabă case is a dilemma for the Romanian state. We must choose one of two wrongs, and there is no easy answer . . . The information received by the honourable baroness was incomplete and untruthful, but the essence of arranged child marriages is true. Foreign websites demonstrate that there is an interest among ordinary citizens in the European Community in this issue. It will be hard for us to leave this chess game in which we were involved against our own wishes (Popeanga and Racoviceanu 2003).

Although the authors of this passage recognise that Romania is engaged in the European 'chess game', they deny that this involvement is voluntary and say they would prefer to abandon the game. They seem to be aware of the specificity of the practice of arranged marriage and consider Roma families engaged in this practice to be 'honourable', but they blur the distinction between arranged marriages and paedophilia, which leads them to a misleading 'dilemma'. The real issue for the Romanian state is not whether it should either criminalise the families involved in arranged marriages or encourage

[115] The customs of dowry and bride price practised by some Romanian Roma groups (especially the Kalderash) is still little researched. There are classic studies of the practices in other parts of the world (see Williams 2005 [1984]), but the practices remain obscure even for the scholarly community (see Berta 2004 for a Transylvanian case).

paedophilia, but how it might best enable the reproduction of cultural differences without encouraging segregation or exclusion. A balance between these processes cannot be achieved without negotiations that reassert the legitimate order and promote the inclusion of the disadvantaged.

Reflections

What one can learn about the postsocialist public sphere in Romania using the case of the Gypsy kings? The willingness of the kings to attract public attention, supplemented by the failure of the mass media to represent nuanced Roma lives in a non-scandalising way, is more than a bad dream for Romanians and their Roma fellow citizens. It is a product of the postsocialist public sphere. That sphere has been undergoing structural transformation since the fall of the socialist regime. A new, previously unimaginable freedom of speech (which is all too often understood to be a freedom to verbally insult), increased access to modern media technologies, the emergence of novel public actors (e.g. revitalising churches, Gypsy kings, and EU institutions), and the ideological and moral pluralisms that have emerged are the main elements of this transformation. My reflections on the media events just described are intended to define some of the consequences of this transformation. My conviction is that communication and social dialogue are possible and indispensable in Romania today. The mass media have the potential to play a positive role in promoting such a dialogue, even if one can easily interpret the cases I have described as counter evidence. I concur that the mass media appear to have been the source of many problems, but I believe there can be no alleviation of social tensions without better communication between members of the majority society and the diverse Roma groups, involving a transformed public sphere and using new media.

Maintaining my misgivings about his secularist bias, I nonetheless accept Habermas's main diagnosis of the structural transformation of the public sphere (Habermas 1989 [1964]). The mass media possess great potential to turn the public sphere, which in its bourgeois stage was described by Habermas as a place for dialogue and consensus, into its opposite under the conditions of modern capitalism and the welfare state. The transformed public sphere can become a terrain of oppressive cultural consumption administered by corporations and dominant elites. But even if the path of this transformation has been trodden, one should not resign oneself merely to questioning the processes involved; instead one should look for alternative developments based on empirical cases. Postsocialist transformations offer new opportunities for analysis, and the case of media coverage of the Romanian Roma provides fertile ground for such scholarship.

The transformation of the public sphere began immediately after the fall of the regime in 1989. With the disappearance of an overregulated and oppressive public sphere, the Romanian mass media boomed, and freedom of speech was one of the primary ways in which Romanians experienced liberation from communism. But this liberation had its dark side as well. Xenophobic and exclusionary tendencies that under socialism had remained at the level of rumour and gossip have taken centre stage and play an increasing role in public life in Romania, at times inspiring national politics. The negative effect of this liberation on public representations of Gypsies became visible soon after the transition. Media often fostered the social exclusion of Roma, also stigmatising people who associated with Roma (see Fosztó 2003b). Rereading newspaper articles from the early 1990s, one sees many instances of exclusionary, xenophobic, and openly racist attitudes. Some of these tendencies are present even today, but the example of the Roma kings requires additional contextualisation.

Fredrik Barth observed an intriguing aspect of the communicative competence of nomadic populations who live by exploiting the resources of their sedentary neighbours or by offering specialised services to them. He argued that

> in some of the South Asian cases, they seem often to specialise particularly in services to the host population in which they are involved in articulating key cultural values and themes of the sedentary majority cultures: as genealogists, theatre troupes, musicians, fortune-tellers, etc. How is it that persons of so distinctive experience can serve as interpreters and evokers of understandings, longings, and dreams of ordinary villagers and townsmen? How can their cultural products so successfully enter the mainstream of another culture and another life experience (Barth 1987: xi)?

Similarities between Gypsies and these peripatetic groups extend past mere surface resemblances; some Roma groups are discussed in the volume prefaced by Barth (Rao 1987). Many Eastern European Roma traditionally provided services for the majority society as musicians and other entertainers, fortune-tellers, and traders, which required good knowledge of the people's values and aspirations. Romantic images of the Gypsies – often idealised and exoticised – have long fascinated the imaginations of host populations (van de Port 1998; Lemon 2000).

In Romania today, many Roma continue to perform for and fascinate their host society through face-to-face relations or as public entertainers. Moreover, the postsocialist media offer an unprecedented space and vehicle for representations and abstractions. But some of the most creative efforts are not without their dangers. Although some Roma manage to take advan-

tage of these new possibilities and create public personas, others experience a sense of alienation and even oppression at seeing their detached images appear in the media. The possibility of images attaining autonomous lives has increased enormously with the availability of new media technologies; images of Roma develop lives independent of the real conditions of the people they putatively represent. These images are turned into emblems of an alternative social world. The editors of a collected volume take the argument a step farther: 'These people appear literally to provide emblems, for they remain quite dispensable as human beings' (Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1999: 22). Their discussion demonstrates how emblems abstracted from alternative modes of social organisation become vulnerable to appropriation by others, including powerful elites who build ideologies of society and nation. My interpretation of the media events I have presented follows the same lines: media images of 'Romanian Gypsies' and 'Gypsy kings' are important emblems of alternative social worlds and play a role in the all-too-often xenophobic and nationalist imagination of the majority.

The transformation of the postsocialist public sphere in Romania was also marked by the emergence of more positive elements, including domestic and international investigations of violent abuses of vulnerable minority groups such as institutionalised children, ethnic minorities, and abused women. These precursors were not without precedent in the socialist period, when secret protest letters against abuses of power played a similar role. These letters were usually addressed to international bodies and 'free' organisations of the international mass media. This tradition of protest-publicity emerged as a major force after the fall of the regime, and attempts to protect the disadvantaged were not rare. Moreover, the domestic public sphere became a venue for such protests. This development contributed to combating discriminatory treatment, abuses by officials, and hesitation over investigating violent attacks on minorities (most often Roma). As a result of such initiatives, anti-Gypsy violence had visibly declined in Romania by the second half of the 1990s. I interpret the actions initiated by Emma Nicholson in this frame. Her denunciation was nevertheless perceived as farfetched, not only by the families involved but also by a portion of the non-Roma public that either opposed the missionary universalism of the EU or considered it more reasonable to allow the Roma to continue in 'their ways'.

The third postsocialist process reinforced in the public sphere, which arguably has a considerable past – socialist and even older – is 'refeudalisation'.[116] This process involves the putative monopoly of an organisation or

[116] Habermas (1974: 54) used the term *refeudalisation* to indicate the process through which the public sphere is divided among large political organisations that negotiate compromises among themselves, with the state ignoring public opinion whenever possible. Anthropologists

community over its 'internal matters': problems that can be dealt with internally are removed from the control of the general public sphere. The creation of the appearance of homogeneity in local communities, as in the case of confirmation discussed in chapter 3, is an example of ways of masking internal divisions that are connected to this process. The re-created ethno-religious monopolies of the historical churches (chapter 2) can also be understood in these terms. In the case of the Roma, some of the newly emerging churches seem to be important for legitimating and offering a public arena for attempts to create an autonomous political space. But as the example of these media events indicates, churches dissociate themselves from the political actors – that is, the kings – when these Roma leaders attract public criticism.

It is reasonable to expect that some form of multiculturalist solution will emerge in the case of the Romanian public sphere, but a public discussion is needed to negotiate the fragile balance between cultural autonomy and public intervention. In these processes the media continue to play a role. Group claims to autonomy based on tradition or culture are not sensitive enough to the plurality of Romanies. Moreover, group autonomy would continue to expose the weakest members of these groups to internal oppression. In my view, the protection of personal autonomy, together with a socialising environment that enables the reproduction of personal and group identities (Habermas 1998), promises more freedom to Romanian Roma than a strong cultural (or ethnic) autonomy. Such a theoretical debate has begun (Mudure 2003; Timmerman 2004; Oprea 2005), but only once this discussion reaches beyond the walls of academe will it be correct to say that a public discussion of multiculturalism in Romania has begun in earnest.

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have also discussed other aspects of 'feudalism' emerging after socialism (see Verdery 1996c: 205–228).

Chapter 8
Conclusion

My research began as a project about Pentecostal conversion among Romanian Roma. During my fieldwork, and even more during the write-up phase, I became aware that conversions were just a part of larger contemporary transformations in the Romanian public sphere. The intensification of religious phenomena and the revitalisation of rituals after the fall of the socialist regime can and should be interpreted within a unified theoretical frame. In the introduction to this book I proposed the concept of ritual communication to capture the multifaceted religious changes of postsocialist Romania. Throughout the chapters I have presented various aspects of these transformations by focusing on different communicative practices involved in ritual processes.

The study of Christianity has been a recently expanding field in the anthropology of religion (Robbins 2006). I worked with two Protestant denominations: Calvinist (Reformed) and Pentecostal. Although the paths of ritual analysis have been relatively well beaten in the case of Catholic rituals throughout the world (e.g. pilgrimages, ritual revitalisation, worship of icons), the Protestant traditions and the entirety of Eastern Christianity have been relatively neglected.[117] Ellen Badone (1990: 21) noted that despite anthropologists' interest in popular religiosity, they have viewed Protestantism as less attractive than other religions. One reason is that Protestant traditions are often viewed as more rational, and so they contain less 'ritualistic' and non-canonical 'popular piety' than does Catholicism: 'The more highly developed processes of rationalisation and disenchantment in Protestant contexts have narrowed the gap between official and popular styles of religious expression' (Badone 1990: 21).[118] I have opted for an approach that eschews traditional concerns about the differences and tensions between

[117] See Hann (2007) for a critique of the recently emerging anthropology of Christianity for its neglect of the Eastern tradition, both Orthodox Christianity and Greek Catholicism.

[118] For a short review of work done on Protestant popular religiosity, see Badone (1990: 21–22).

popular and official forms of religiosity in order to centre my analysis on the 'practical religion' (Leach 1968a) of Protestants. By doing so, I demonstrate that Protestant traditions are not necessarily more rational and disenchanted than other Christian traditions. Ritual is important in Protestant practical religion, although religious communication is ritualised in different ways.

One topic that has received slightly greater scholarly attention is Protestant conversion. This is a relatively new area of study, with the bulk of works on the topic published over the last decade. My theoretical contribution to this area is to reconnect the study of conversion to the analysis of ritual and to bridge the gap between the study of ritual speech acts and other aspects of ritual communication. In doing so I rely on the work of Webb Keane (1997, 2002). By bringing conversion closer to the study of symbolic religious practices, studies of different forms of religious rituals can be better integrated: conversion rituals can be seen as part of the broader landscape of religious revival rituals. This study deals with cases of conversion from the Calvinist faith to Pentecostalism in the broader context of a predominantly Orthodox country.

Focusing on rituals and related communicative practices has also enabled me to investigate the role of religion in the Romanian public sphere. Multiple public spheres exist in postsocialist Romania, most of which are maintained by rituals connected to different religious denominations. Religious and secular public spheres are not only layered according to national, regional, and local levels but are also segmented along lines that are often connected to and reproduce ethno-religious identities. The Roma with whom I worked lived in a village in which the majority of inhabitants were Hungarian. Both groups are legally recognised national minorities in Romania, but locally the two groups are separated by economic inequalities and differences in social status, language use, and social organisation. They are united by belonging to the same denomination, the Calvinist Church. Their shared religion contributes to the maintenance of a unified local public sphere, which is dominated by the Hungarians.

The main feature of the representative public sphere in the village is the symbolic suppression of differences and maintenance of the appearance of a homogeneous 'local community'. That community is ethnically marked as Hungarian for outsiders, but local interactions are often unmarked by ethnicity. The representative public sphere masks both local social divisions and local effects of transformations in the broader Romanian society. At the local level, the production of a 'unified locality' through ritual is dependent on the relative religious homogeneity of the village and the tacit agreement of all participants to maintain homogeneous appearances. Roma participate in the representative public sphere of the village and tacitly agree to uphold

the appearance of a unified community, but they have different ways of maintaining their own identity.

Although the local community frames the lives of Roma villagers, individuals are not subordinated to the community, nor are shared cultural traits such as language and folklore politicised as a means of expressing a separate collective identity. A constant focus on the performance of moral personhood is central to the maintenance of the Roma community. A continuous focus on the personhood of each individual through everyday interactions and ritual events is the basic structure through which the community is reproduced. Analysing a life-crisis ritual, the taking of an oath before God, I have argued that religious ideas are central to the reinforcement and transformation of personhood, and the practice of oath-taking is not connected to the local parish. Both close family and non-local Orthodox priests can play roles in oath-taking rituals. Oaths do not rely on the public sphere of the local community, so loyalties and obligations dictated by the terms of the oath must be reinforced primarily by the oath-taker's close kin. Transformations in the personhood of the oath-taker reverberate throughout his or her social relationships, and adherence to the terms of the oath is guaranteed by a religious imaginary of divine surveillance and punishment.

My analysis of Pentecostal conversion among local Roma follows a line similar to that of my interpretation of oath-taking practices. Conversion, too, transforms moral personhood, but it has a broader effect on the social relationships of the people involved. Nevertheless, it is not always easy to validate a transformed personhood within the public sphere of the local Roma community. Refusals of and debates over the possibility of born-again personhood, and the reluctance of some converts to engage in public missionary work, indicate that simple explanations of the motives leading people to convert cannot do justice to the empirical realities. Although the wish to escape stigma or to exchange an ethnic stigma for a more neutral religious identity point in the right direction of transformative attempts (see Chelcea and Lățea 2000: 99), joining the Pentecostals cannot undo status differences between minorities or even between Roma groups (see Ries 2005b). Still, different groups or segments of a local society can engage in the revitalisation of divergent rituals.

Postsocialist religious and cultural revitalisation has distinctive features in different communities. Some groups are more receptive to revitalising communitarian rituals and 'traditions', whereas for others revitalisation seems to be more effective when it is individually focused. My case demonstrates that segments of a local community can opt for divergent forms of religious revival. The social stratum with relatively high status and control over more resources tends to prefer more communitarian rituals. The main

purpose of these communitarian rituals is the public enactment of group belonging, so the appearance of a homogeneous community is produced. Individual deviations from this appearance are either neglected or tolerated if they remain private, not challenging the order publicly. External relations are involved in order to support (both ideologically and materially) the homogeneous appearance of the local community. On the other hand, Pentecostal conversion, a ritual focused on the individual, is likely to be linked to social positions regarded as lower in status. Conversion promises to change this status position by transforming the moral personhood of the convert without requiring additional material resources. Conversion can be sanctioned by ruptures in local social relations while simultaneously reinforcing translocal relations and involving external resources.

Religion and ritual provide major resources for individuals and communities seeking to publicly assert themselves in postsocialist Romania. The need for public affirmation seems to be acute among members of minority groups, although the forms of ritual they adopt may differ. The postsocialist public sphere accommodates a variety of new rituals, which are increasingly influenced by translocal and global forces. David Lehmann (1998) has distinguished two forms of religious expansion characteristic of the age of globalisation: 'fundamentalist' and 'cosmopolitan'.[119] These forms oppose each other in the way they relate to the cultural boundaries they penetrate. Cosmopolitan expansion, as Lehmann describes it, is more characteristic of centralised and hegemonic religious institutions, which incorporate and accommodate local differences. Cosmopolitan expansion may accept syncretism and may theorise and value otherness (Lehmann (1998: 612).[120] Fundamentalist religious forms spread through more diffuse institutional arrangements and are characterised by indifference to local cultures and implicit rejection of the notion of the wholeness of these cultural complexes or their inherent value or 'authenticity' (Lehmann 1998: 613). The opposition posited by Lehmann is important for my conclusions, because his analysis focuses on the way different religious systems incorporate previous cultural ideas and practices in order to mobilise followers. In my Romanian village case, Calvinism seems to be more concerned with (Hungarian) 'culture', relying on the affirmation of cultural values to mobilise the faithful. Pentecostals value 'culture' less, instead advocating a new form of personhood. In doing so they seem to find increasing numbers of followers among Romanian Roma.

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[119] The labels 'fundamentalist' and 'cosmopolitan' are ideologically charged and therefore divert attention away from the real value of this distinction.

[120] The Catholic doctrine of enculturation is a relevant illustration of this form of religious expansion.

In an earlier work (Fosztó 2003a) I addressed Roma ethno-politics and concluded that segments of the Roma elite were beginning to experiment with political projects in the wake of the collapse of socialism and emergence of a market economy. The emergence of conventional cultural politics, involving the use of selected and standardised cultural features in collective mobilisation, had yielded limited success. These earlier conclusions need to be revisited in light of my study of conversion and ritual revitalisation in a Transylvanian village. Political mobilisation based on cultural politics has strong limitations among Transylvanian Roma groups, but I suggest that religious conversion illustrates the possibility of alternative forms of grass-roots social activism. Anthropologists working among Gypsies in France (Williams 1987) and Spain (Gay y Blasco 2002) have noted the emergence of new ethno-religious categories (e.g. *notre peuple* and *pueblo*, respectively) that overcome traditional divisions between Gypsy groups (e.g. Manouche, Rom, Gitano) as a consequence of religious conversion. Incipient signs of similar developments can be observed in Transylvania, but status divisions among Roma groups seem to remain at this point.

Particular ritual forms can deeply penetrate social structures. The telling of conversion narratives can transform speech habits and the personhood of the convert. But there is another way in which ritual penetrates the national public sphere. Some ritual events call for ideological support from the nation, whereas others attract media attention and public disapprobation. Mediated rituals reach larger audiences, which changes the nature of ritual communication. This is because these events communicate messages not exclusively to participants and immediate observers but also to non-participants and outsiders. Mediated rituals are vulnerable to appropriation by the more powerful. In response to such appropriation, groups and organisations may attempt to protect their 'internal matters'. The refeudalisation of the public sphere is under way in Romania, and it is more evident in the case of Hungarians than in the case of the Roma. Such refeudalisation cannot provide a solution to the need for social integration and individual self-affirmation of ethnic minorities, nor can it replace a functional multiculturalism and positive involvement of the majority in the lives of Romania's minorities.

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Appendix

I. Transcripts of Narratives

1. Narrative in Romani about the effects of oath-taking (see translation in chapter 4). Romanian words are underlined; Hungarian words are in italics.

Zhanes so? Kîrdjas . . . kise crize kîrdjas, Laci . . . [Vash e colax?] Kade ke colaxardjas. Colaxardjas, Laci . . . (te na mai pel . . .) *Elsö*von djes Patra-gjakro trin crize kîrdjas Trivar, jek pal aver. Tosara ko okhto, kana has ande kangeri o manusha, jek ko *dél*o, jek ratjake ke sho. Ratjake ko sho pe Gabi has te hutjel. Po *ablak*a. Kode dikleas o udar. E Gabi has ando pato, akkor kide has amare pato, me kode sovas . . . kide pash e ablaka, pas o udar. Thaj Gabi has ando pato thaj vo kodetar, de ando maskar keresro, hutjile direct ando pato te zhal avri po *ablak*a. E Gabi pale *nyom*iddjas les . . . 'Jaj mamo, penel, kada *direct* pe mande hutjilas! Tulaj mamo!' E Gabi has te merel daratar. E Rita na achileas pas leste . . . e Rita kide daralas lestar, Laci . . . *világmentig* nashelas e Rita lestar.

Jekhar gileam amen *csipkézni*. Thaj kana avileam karig . . . Pileas vo tele, ande Vama, pileas jek decivo pálika. Me se puchleas: 'Mihai, nu-ți ră̆u?' 'Nu!' 'Mihai, nu-ți ră̆u?' 'Nu!' zhik kaj kidindjam kode e *csipke*. Kana avileam karig tele, penav leske 'Mihai, nu-ți ră̆u?' 'Nu!' Kana resleam, ke ande gileam, *méri*ndjam e *csipke*, pas o podo, kode las o Gazho e *csipke*. Kana ande gileam, dikhleam ke isairol, thaj bum! . . . de o phu. 'Tulaj Doame!' Numai kicom . . . zhanes sode lipsa has? . . . Sar de tar, dikh, zhik ko pato, te perel ando Samosi. 'Tulaj Doame! Tulaj Doame!' Me nashav pale ke e Gazhi: 'Doamnă̆ numai atâta ţuică dacă̆ ai, dă̆-o la Mihai, că̆ uite a picat jos Mihai!' Prindjanelas les te lakro Gazho. 'Nu am, voi, nu am!' 'Dă̆ doamnă̆, că̆ a că̆zut jos, si n-am . . . nu pot sa fug până̆ acolo să̆ iau ţuica!' Te lakro Gadzo: 'Dă̆i tu un păhărel de ţuică̆, că̆ a picat jos, tu! Dă̆i tu!' Avileas, lakri Gazho chuchardjas panji ando lakri muj. Me mînre diklehe koshos de o rat lakro muj. [Rat?] *Vér . . . mindig harapta a nyelvét. El is dobtam azt a kötényt, nem tettem volna elémbe . . . be a Szamosba! Jaj! De Rita nem nyúlt hozzá*. [Has e colax? Na nyavalyatörés . . .] Vas e colax!

Thapă̆i ligardja les Rita ke kangeri, apă̆i desputridja les. O rasaj ingindjea pe leste . . . *olvasott rá* . . . Telepatjarel, thaj o biblia vo inginel pe lesro shero. *Térdepel*inel angle o rasaj . . . thapă̆i trivar has te *kerüli*nel o altari, kide dikh, thaj chumidel o thrusul. *Persze*! Laci e colax hin bari! Laci, bari, bari, bari hin e colax! Nanji slobodon dakă̆ gîndines kă̆ na birines.

2. Fragment of a conversion narrative in Hungarian (see details in chapter 5). Romanian words are underlined.

[S így, akik meg vannak keresztelve, mint hívők, csak azok jutnak a menybe, az Úrhoz?] Csak, csak, csak, csak. Azt mondja az Úr, aki átkeresztelkedik az Úr nevében, az Úr-Jézus nevében, s az ő, a bárány véribe, hogy mint a bárányt, levágták . . . úgy-e a kicsi bárány milyen ártatlan, és levágják, és egy szót sem mond szegény. Na úgy volt az Úrjézus is. Mert hiába vagyunk jók, hiába imádkozunk, mert azt mondja a Biblia, úgy mondja a Biblia, csak a papok nem úgy mondják, a papok tanulják az iskolában, mert ha mindenki azt mondaná, hogy mindenki meg kell keresztelkedjen, nem lennének papok, nem lenne fizetés, papok nem lennének, csak prédikátorok. És kívül a Bibllián mondják. És ez nagyon bűn nekük, és hány pap van megkeresztelkedve, mert nem bírta a lelkiismerete (Igen.) Hogy nem mondják meg a Biblia: Noul- Vechi Testament . . . És nem mondják ezt, azt mondják, hogy: Trebuie să mergem pe drumul lui Isus. De nem mondják hogy: Trebuie omul să se nască din nou! Ahogy mondta Nikudimus: Mindenki kell legyen mint egy gyermek, amelyik most születik. S akkor csak a mi bűnünket átveszi, magára veszi a Jóisten.

[Így aki megkeresztelkedik, azután milyen változás van az életében?] Az olyan változás van fiam, hogy mint egy gyermek, amelyik ma születik, annyi bűnöd nincs, csak kell vigyázni, akkor jön az Úrjézus a Szentlélekkel, hogy megkeresztelkedjen, nekem is volt, akkor mikor megkeresztelkedtek, akkor este, csak az öreg megijedt tülle, mert akkor jön, mint egy tűzzel jön reszketsz . . . És gyenge voltam, nem bírt még a lábaim, hogy álljak a Jóistennel szemben, hogy tudjak beszélni . . . Kell legyél erős, hogy beszéljél. Akkor mennek ki a rossz szellemek . . . Tudod? [S akkor beszélt? Vagy nem?] S akkor kell, beszéljen. Az Úr beszél veled, és akkor ad neked egy Szentlelket, hogy valamit tolmácsoljon valamit . . . [Hogy szóljon . . . Igen.] Igen, valami próféta. Más nyelven, tudod? Hogy azt nem mindenki tudja, csak te. Akkor van . . . ad neked egy Szentlelket, hogy beszélsz úgy a Jóistennel. S akkor megint kell hogy kérjed, hogy adja, hogy tudjad, hogy letolmácsoljad, hogy mit mond. Vótál vaegyszer? Hallottad hogy beszél a próféta? (Hallottam, persze.) S le is fordítja. (Igen, igen.) És ha te mész egy olyan gonddal, hogy: 'Na Istenem, mutasd ki s add egy prófétának, hogy lássuk az én életsorsom, hogy hogy van'. Már mindjárt, mondj: Omule! Mert az már érzi . . . (Igen.) 'Omule, mert azt már te magadra veheted (Hm . . .) omul care a intrat, cu acesta probleme Domnul o să rezolvează lucrarea lui'. Úgy hogy ez nagyon nagy dolog.

[És a férje megijedt mikor jött a Szentlélek?] Megijed az öreg tőlem. Én a testvéremnél voltam. 'Ne csináld az eszedet, azt mondja, mert félnek a

gyermekek'. Nagy szavakat . . . Felemelkedtek a kezeim, reszkettem, kiabáltam, már meg voltam . . . le voltam pecsételve már. De nem tudtam állani, mert ő megszólított, kell hagyni, és le kellett volna térdeljenek, ők is segítsenek az imádságba: 'Da Doamne botează cu duhul Tăul sfânt! Iartă-l! Revarsă-l Duhul Tău cel Sfânt!' Kellett volnas segítsenek, és ne bántsanak, se ne szólítsanak, mert nem szabad, hogy megbántsanak vagy megszólítsanak. (Megzavarják.) Megzavarják. S akkor már mindjárt meg vagy keresztelve a szentlélekkel. Te már olyan vagy, hogy csak legyen szárnyad, hogy repülj. Már tisztán gondoltam, hogy nekem szárnyam kell legyen, hogy menjek fel az Atyához. Úgy vagy mikor megkeresztelkedel, s minden bűnödet elveszi az Úr, tiszta vagy mint a tiszta víz. S akkor . . . Csak kell ügyelni a Szentlélekre, nehogy megbántsad, vagy nehogy hazudjál, valamit tévedjél. Mert ha tévedsz valamit, vagy hazudsz már az Úr haragszik. Akkor már többet nem jön hozzád. Még sokat kell akkor büjtöljél, sokat imátkozzál, hogy megint jöjjön az Úr.

3. Pentecostal sermon in Romanian by a Roma preacher (see details in chapter 6). Mistakes are in the original oral performance.

Vreau să mai vă spun cîteva cuvinte apoi ne apropiem de încheiere. Fratele Dani o mai spus încă un cuvînt, şi cuvîntul ăsta rostesc . . . şi rostăşte toata ţara asta. Şi nu numai ţara asta, în lume toate neamurile şi popoarele spune acest cuvînt. Pe care nu este adevărat! Spune că un ţîgan ajunge aicea . . . ca să fie pocăit şi să meargă în împărăţia lui . . . o să ajungă în împărăţia lui Dumnezeu. Dragii miei, nu este adevărat că există pe pămîntul acesta ţîgan. Sfînta Scriptură nu aşa spune . . . şi nu spune asemenea lucruri că îs ţîgani. Nu iaste ţigani, dragii mei, noi nu suntem ţîgani şi pe pămîntul aceasta oriunde există ţîgani, nu îs ţîgani. Poporul acesta pe care se numeşte neamurile şi popoarele . . . o numit, şi i-o pus un nume de ciufală.

Si pentru ce o pus anume, aceasta nume de ciufală că-s ţigani? Pentru că este un neam şi un popor cel mai jos, din toate popoarele care există şi din toate neamurile. Oriunde va mere un ţîgan nu poate să spuie că ţara mea, ca dacă merg la unguri şi vine acasă nu poate sa spuie ca mă duc în Romania în ţara mea, că nu-i ţara lui. Şi în orice ţară se află. Dar dacă mere un ungur, un român ori un neamţ or un tot . . . orice naţie ar spune mă duc acasă la ţara mea, dar ţiganul nu poate să spuie că 'Eu mă duc în ţara mea', că el n-are ţară.

Dar in fond, în timpul lui Noe, Noe s-o înbetat, şi cînd s-o îmbătat s-o dezbrăcat în pielea goală. Şi o arătat goliciunea. Şi atuncea fratele . . . . ăăă feciorul lui cel mai mare, o mustrat: 'Că nu-ţi e ruşine, că stai înaintea neamurilor şi popoarelor ca să-ţi vadă goliciunea?' Şi prin mustrarea aceasta

Noe s-o supărat şi-atuncea Noe o blăstămat pă copilu-su. Dar blestemul, pe care o blăstămat Noe nu o prins de copiii lui, pentru că copiii lui o fost binecuvîntati de Dumnezeu [Glorie Lui!] Şi-atuncea pă nepotul lui o prins blăstemurile pe care o zîs Noe. Zice: 'Blestămat să fie copii tăi şi neamurile tale pe care au ieşit din . . . din . . . din voi . . . ca cel mai jos neam şi popor să fiți din toată lumea asta . . .' Şi de acolo, sigur, că o ieşit țiganii, pe care spune că-s țîganii: un neam şi un popor cel mai jos.

Dar Scriptura mai departe spune că Dumnezău va întoarce înapoi şi va scoate şi va ridica . . . De aceea spune Scriptura: 'Te-oi ridica din gunoaie, şi te-oi pune între oameni mari . . .' [Aşa spune biblia . . .] În ziua de astăzi deja vedem, cîți țîgani sînt care s-o pocăit, mai înainte nu era ca țigan să fie pocăit, nu prea vedeai în besărică, 'Că-i țigan, un popor şi un neam mai jos . . .' şi în ziua de aztăzi nu vede cu ochi buni . . . Dar spune Scriptura: 'Te-oi ridica din gunoaie, şi te-oi pune între oameni mari . . . Şi ți-oi da neamurile şi popoarele pe mîna ta'. [Amin, amin, aşa ieste!] Aşa spune Sfînta Scriptură. Şi deja ajungem acolo, că țigani din toată țară sînt sprijiniți şi ridicați. Deja fac şcoli, măr g la biserică, au facultate şi aşa mai departe . . . Dumnezău deja arată că va ridica poporul său din gunoaie şi voi pune în oameni mari.

II. Sample data of the *kirve* network

I derived basic network information from my questionnaires in order to provide a preliminary picture of the structural characteristics of the *kirve* network (see details in chapter 3).

Figure 1 presents a subset of the network of *kirve* couples, nine families whom I selected from the total sample. The data were processed and analyzed with UCINET 6.02 (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2002), a publicly available computer program designed for network analysis of sociological and anthropological data. The matrix represents godparent relations between each of the nine families. Presence of a kinship tie is indicated by a 1, and a lack of kinship ties, by a 0. Two nodes, families 3 and 6, exhibit the greatest degrees of centrality, as shown in Figure 2.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
5	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Figure 1. Matrix showing godparent relationships among nine families in Gánás.

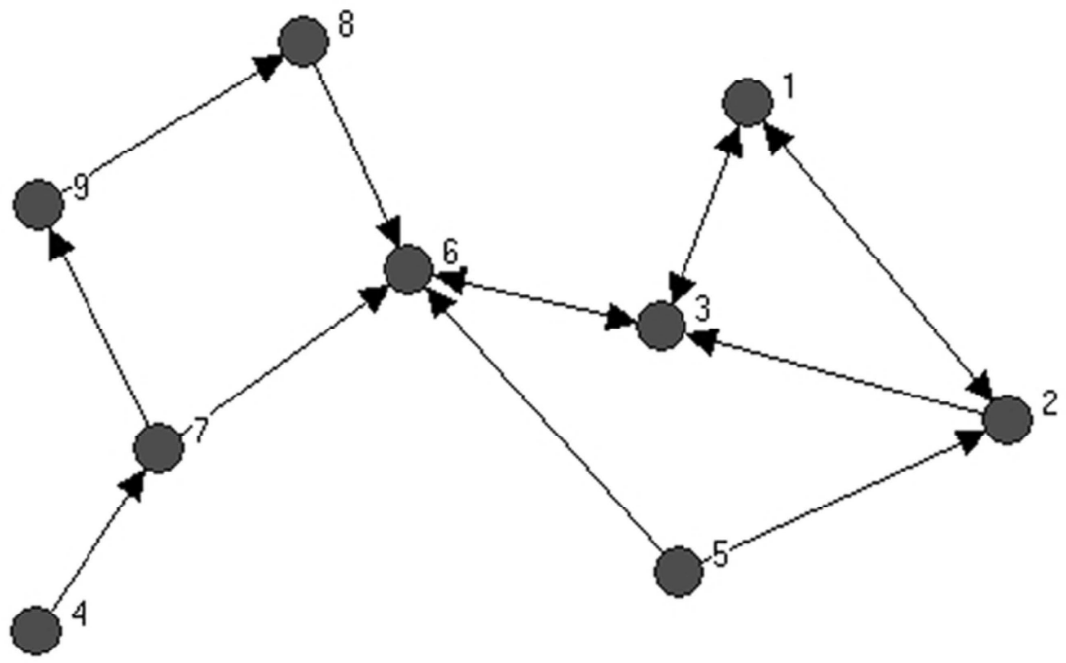


Figure 2. Graphic representation of the matrix shown in Figure 1.

Index

Achim, V. 21n
Adventists 47, 52, 97n, 164, *see also* churches
aid (also distribution of aid) 143
alcohol 97n, 112, 116, 125, 140, 145, *see also* drinking
Anăstăsoaie, V. 17n, 21n
Andreescu, G. 55
animals 64-66, 159-61; theft 115
anthropology 4-7, 12, 13, 17, 22n, 27, 28, 33, 41, 44, 45, 113, 183n; Anglophone 7, 22n; of religion (also 'practical religion') 4, 27-8, 35, 38, 183, 184
anti-Gypsy 19, 20, 181
anti-minority 49
anti-Semitic 55
assimilation (also assimilated) 9, 19, 24, 25
Austin, J. L. 113

Badone, E. 183, 183n
Baptists 47, 52, 69, 141, *see also* churches
Barth, F. 180
Beck, S. 19-21, 24
Bible (also Scripture) 53, 57, 111, 125-7, 133-6, 140, 149, 155-7; Biblical texts 156; interpreting 38, 156; reading 45, 157
Bloch, M. 35, 74
Brubaker, R. 60, 60n
Burke, P. 36

Calvinism (also Calvinist) 4, 37, 38, 44, 45, 53, 54, 58, 59, 65, 68, 70, 74, 81, 89-90, 92n, 98, 101-5, 159, 162, 184, 186; Calvinist (Reformed) 183; *református* 68
Calvinist Church 15, 54, 58, 89, 105, 159, 162, 184, *see also* churches
Casanova, J. 40
Chelcea, I. 16
churches (also denominations) 1, 2n, 8, 38, 46-9, 51-3, 54n, 56-60, 69, 71, 95, 97, 122n, 140, 147, 149, 151, 158, 159, 166, 177, 179, 182-4, *see also* Adventists; Baptists; Calvinist Church; Evangelical Christians; Greek Catholic Church; Jehovah's Witnesses; Pentecostals; Roman Catholic Church; Romanian Orthodox Church; Unitarians
civility 2, 55, 56, 95, 98, 105; rural 95, 105
class 19, 20, 24, 26, 27, 35, 65, 68, 88-90; lower 19, 26; underclass 12, 16, 24-6, *see also* culture of poverty
Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár [city]) 3, 4, 14, 53-5, 60-1, 64, 70, 72, 80, 95-7, 102, 110, 139, 140, 149, 152
Cole, J. W. 6-8, 9n, 14
communication 3, 4, 18, 23, 27, 28, 30-3, 35-44, 62, 72, 73, 105, 121, 139, 179, 189; non-verbal 23, 30, 38; ritual 4, 30, 32, 35, 38, 73, 105, 121, 165, 183, 184, 187; technologies of 31, 33, *see also* media
Communist Party 1, 19, 49
community 6, 23n, 24, 26, 30, 34, 38, 56, 62, 65, 70, 73-8, 84, 87-90, 92n, 98-101, 105, 107-8, 115-20, 130, 140-4, 147, 157-9, 162, 164, 168, 178n, 182, 184-6; converted 23n, 30, 38, 70, 103, 104, 105, 144; local 15, 41, 56, 73, 90, 92, 98, 104, 105; 120, 143, 164, 184-6; religious 75, 88, 89; ritual 15, 30, 37, 38, 41, 70, 73-5, 77, 78, 84, 87-90, 92, 98, 100, 104, 105; studies 6, 9, 24, 26, 30
conversion(s) 4, 12, 16, 23-4, 27-32, 36-8, 44, 47-8, 51, 56, 58-9, 71-2,

97, 107, 112, 119-22, 128-32, 137-44, 148-52, 183-7; in history 27, 44, 71, 72; missionary conference 141, 151; narrative 30, 38, 71, 121, 122, 128, 130, 138, 187
converts (*pocăit, o pocăiti*) 24, 38, 52, 69, 71, 95, 97, 103, 112, 119-22, 125, 130-3, 136-44, 150, 151, 158, 185
costumes 61, 67, 81, 90-1, 159, 161; dress code 90-2, 105, 131; folk 61, 67, 90, 91, 161
Creed, G. 9n, 97
culture of poverty 25-7

dance 13-5, 18n, 61, 67, 72, 84, 85, 158, 159, 161, 162; Dance House movement 15; folk dance 14, 61, 158, 161n; with the children 84-5
development 4, 7, 9, 13-6, 19, 29, 31, 37-9, 43, 44, 49, 53, 59, 75, 80, 127-8, 148, 151, 169, 179, 181, 187; underdevelopment 7, 14
devil (also *beng*, *bizhuzho,* Satan) 79, 80, 122, 125, 128, 131
dream 22, 129, 130, 137, 169, 179, 180
drinking (also alcohol consumption) 85-6, 107, 110, 116, 119, 123, 125-6, 131, 140; Noah's drunkenness 155-7
Durkheim, E. 33

Eastern Europe 4-8, 10, 11-2, 16, 18n, 27, 97, 169n
economic relations 160-1; buffalo herding 64-6; gift collection (*tányérozás*) 81, 85; gift exchanges 178; socio-economic 62, 64
elites 12, 16, 20-1, 39, 43-5, 48, 51, 59, 60, 144, 174, 179, 181, 187; local elite 16, *see also* intellectuals
Erdős, K. 17n
ethnic groups 8, 9n, 18n, 46, 51, 57, 59, 62, 98, 110, 140, 148, 164, 173, *see also* Hungarians; Romanians; Saxons; Szeklers (group); Szeklerland (region)
ethnicity 8, 20, 24, 26, 51, 56, 57, 60, 61, 63, 68, 75, 90, 157, 163, 184; ethnic divisions 8, 14, 15, 43, 105, 164, 166; ethnic relations 8, 9, 12, 17, 20, 24, 26, 62, 72, 171n
ethnography 3, 4, 13, 14n, 26, 28, 31, 61, 64n, 71; local ethnographers 5, 7, 12
Eurocentric 40
European Union 166, 172, 174
Evangelical Christians 1, 24, 48, 52, 54n, *see also* churches
exclusionary tendencies 27, 165, 180
extreme right (also Legion of the Archangel Michael, Noua Dreapta) 49, 55, 173, *see also* anti-Gypsy; anti-minority; anti-Semitic; exclusionary tendencies

folklore 6, 13-5, 18, 50, 51, 147-8, 159, 161-2, 170, 185; local 161-2; performance 13, 51, 159, 161, 170

gambling (also playing cards) 98, 100, 112, 116
Gay y Blasco, P. 17, 23, 24, 38
Gellner, E. 11n, 113n
gender 12, 24, 35, 87, 115, 157; family relations 112; gender relations 12; gendered division of labour 66, *see also* infidelity; kinship
Gheorghe, N. 19
glossolalia (also tongues) 63, 129, 139, 149, 151
God (also Lord, *o Del*) 2, 38, 107, 112, 115-8, 122, 127-31, 136-40,

150-1, 157-8, 163, 185; Holy Spirit 129-31, 137, 139, 148-51; Jesus 128-30, 133-4, 137-42, 150-1
godparents 71, 74-88, 104, *see also* kinship
Goffman, E. 33, 34n
Goody, J. 31, 32
Greek Catholic Church 49, *see also* churches
Gypsy 3, 4n, 16, 18n, 19-23, 38, 75, 90, 178, 187, *see also* Roma groups
Gypsy Kings 166-70, 174, 179, 181; crowning 169-73

Habermas, J. 38-40, 179, 181n
Hammel, E. A. 75
Hann, C. 10, 11n, 13, 183n
Havas, G. 24
Herzfeld, M. 115
Hobsbawm, E. 60
Hofer, T. 13, 61
holidays 68-9, 158, 159
Hungarians 2n, 4, 9n, 15, 18, 20n, 48, 51, 54, 58-63, 67-70, 73, 81, 88-9, 95, 101, 105-8, 147-8, 158, 160, 162-3, 184, 187

identity 8, 10, 15, 19, 21-3, 38, 51, 56, 74-5, 83, 108, 121, 127, 147-8, 156-7, 162-3, 171, 185; collective 10, 156, 163, 185; ethnic 21-2, 51, 147, 171; local 15; personal 121; social 8, 74, 75, 83, 157, 163, *see also* personhood; stigma
illiteracy 89, 135
illness 102, 112, 117, 131; healing 129, 130, 149, 150, *see also* miracle
infidelity 112, 116, 118, *see also* gender
intellectuals 9-11, 12n, 15, 21, 49-51, 159, 161n

Jehovah's Witnesses 49, 97n

Kalotaszeg (region) 15, 61, 62, 64n, 72, 158
Kaminski, I. M. 17, 168
Kaneff, D. 10, 95
Karnoouh, C. 14n
Keane, W. 37, 138, 184
Keszeg, V. 18n
Kideckel, D. 6, 7n, 9n
kinship 24, 74-80, 86, 104, 130, 142-4, 151, 157; brother-in-law (*kumnato*) 123, 129-31, 144; daughter-in-law (*bori*) 70-1, 109, 138; grandfather (*papu*) 70-1, 75-8, 84, 87, 160; grandmother (*mamo*) 77, 83, 87; husband (*rom*) 87, 96, 98-100, 116-9, 129-31; kinship network 143; son-in-law (*zhamutro*) 110, 131
Kligman, G. 6, 14-5
Klímová-Alexander, I. 48, 167
Kürti, L. 15

Ladányi, J. 24-7
Lambek, M. 28
Lange, B. 12n
language; ideology 37; ritual division 36; use 48, 71, 108, 184
Leach, E. 28, 157n
Lehmann, D. 186
Lemon, A. 12n
lie 36-7, 136, 138-40, 144, 145, *see also* sincerity
literacy 31-2, 45; illiterate 89, 135; non-literate societies 31-2, *see also* communication; media
Livezeanu, I. 49n

marginality (also marginal) 5, 56, 57, 107, 144, 158
market economy 7n, 11, 57, 187

marriage 2, 39, 62, 73, 75, 86, 88, 104, 113, 115, 131; arranged 175-8
Matras, Y. 21n
media 3, 27, 32-3, 41, 54-5, 57, 165-9, 171, 175, 177-82, 187; electronic 165; events 27, 165-6, 171, 179, 181-2; freedom of speech 179-80; newspapers 118, 171-7, 180; radio 32, 51; tape 32, 154; television 57, 165, 173, 176, 178, *see also* literacy
Mihailescu, V. 7
miracle (miraculous healing) 127, 130
mobilisation 48, 147-9, 156, 158, 163, 187; ethnic 147-8; political 187; religious 148
money 12, 76-7, 81, 84-6, 96, 99-101, 103, 116, 119, 174-5, 178; borrowing 77, 86, 116, 119; debt 99, 116; as gift 85; payment 85, 98, 175; tithe (*zeciuială*) 140, *see also* gambling
morality 24, 28, 34, 40, 138, 157, *see also* personhood; sincerity
multiculturalism 27, 182, 187
music 13, 15, 18n, 61, 67, 72, 82, 84n, 86-7, 99, 101, 159, 161-2; musicians 67, 82, 84-5, 99-101; singing 18, 69, 71, 150, 159, 162, 180

nation 8, 14, 29, 45, 49, 61, 72, 147-8, 152, 154-6, 158, 162, 163, 181, 187; nationalism 12, 60, 148; national/ historical churches 46-7, 52-3, 56, 59, 147, 156, 158, 161-6, 168n, 171, 173, 175-7, 180, 182, 184, 187, *see also* churches
national minorities 184; nationalities 19; statistical data on 46, 58
neo-Protestants (also 'sects') 46-9, 52, 54, 56, 59, *see also* churches

oath-taking 23, 69, 96, 107, 112-5, 119, 121, 185; breach 112-4, 116-8; perjury 112-7
Okely, J. 17, 21-2

pastor 1, 53, 57, 65, 68-9, 74, 81, 84, 88-90, 91n, 95-105, 127, 139-41, 143, 149-53, 159, 166, 170-1, 177; Calvinist 65, 68, 74, 81, 98, 101-4, 159, *see also* priest
peasants 4-8, 10, 13-5, 25, 44-6, 49, 61, 64, 66, 72, 81, 96, 140n; postsocialist 10
Peel, J. 30n, 144n
Pentecostalism 4, 23n, 27, 37-8, 52, 60, 69, 71, 97, 107, 118, 129, 131, 138, 144, 148-53, 170, 184
Pentecostals 38, 48, 50, 52-3, 54n, 58, 69, 70-1, 103-4, 119, 125, 129-31, 137, 140-4, 149, 151, 177, 185-6, *see also* churches
personhood (also moral personhood, moral self) 16, 22-4, 30-1, 34-6, 38, 69, 105, 107, 117, 120-2, 127-30, 147-8, 185-7; born-again 56, 148, 151, 185
photographs 91; camera 132; cameramen 70; keepsake cards 91; memory cards 142; photographer 70, 141
Piasere, L. 17
postsocialism 5, 12, 26, 72, 102; market economy 7n, 11, 57, 187; transition 4-5, 7n, 11-2, 73, 180
Potra, G. 12n, 16-7
Pozsony, F. 18
prayer (also praying) 2, 53, 69, 71, 88, 99, 103, 129-30, 138-41, 150, 154; testimony 38, 153-7
preacher 32, 69, 71, 122, 127, 132-3, 150, 153-6; preaching 32-3, 69, 99, 122, 139, 150-4; prophecy 129, 149, 151, 153, 158; sermon 32-3, 69, 99, 140

priest (also *lelkész*, *rasaj*) 48, 53-5, 69, 74, 81, 87, 95-8, 100, 102, 111, 115, 117, 141, 161n, 173, 174, 185; Orthodox 48, 54-5, 69, 96-7, 115, 141, 173, 185, *see also* pastor
profanation 57, 173
property 10, 46, 53-4, 56, 59; abuses 54; church buildings 1-2, 52; confiscated (*naționalizare*) 53, 59; prayer house 53, 141; restitution of 53
Protestant 29, 37, 50-2, 54n, 56, 60, 97, 149, 183-4, *see also* Calvinism; neo-Protestants
public sphere 2, 4, 14-5, 19, 27-8, 34-5, 38-41, 44, 46, 48, 50-1, 56-7, 59, 72, 74, 147, 158, 164-6, 169, 179-87; bourgeois 39; local 38, 72, 74, 147, 164, 184; national 14, 41, 158, 166, 187; postsocialist 57, 165, 179, 181, 186; refeudalisation 181, 187; transformation of 179, 180

Ranger, T. 30n
Rappaport, R. 35-7, 90
Reformed Church, *see also* Calvinism
religion 1-2, 4, 12, 24, 27-9, 31-3, 36, 38-41, 45, 47, 49, 52, 53, 57, 59, 68, 71, 74, 129-32, 144n, 147, 162, 183-6; edict of religious tolerance 45; freedom of 59; Law on Denominations 47; new religions 12, 27, 32, 47; oral 32; practical 4, 28, 35, 38, 184; in the public sphere 2, 40; religious education (also church teaching) 53, 68, 72, 75, 89; religious marketplace 56, 59
religiosity 1-2, 56, 72-3, 87, 95, 97, 183-4; official 87; popular 56, 183
rituals 2-3, 13-5, 23, 28-9, 32-9, 41, 45, 58, 67-70, 72-4, 95, 97, 104-5, 107, 143n, 147-9, 151, 153, 158-9, 162-4, 169, 183-7; baptism 2, 67, 73-5, 78-84, 86-8, 96, 104-5, 107, 111-2, 119, 129-31, 139, 142, 178; burial (also funeral) 2, 18, 73, 95-105; church service 88, 139, 162; confirmation 36, 68, 72-5, 88-91, 92-4, 104-5, 107, 142, 159, 182; interaction 23, 33-4; life-crisis 107, 110, 185; life-cycle 2, 14-5, 68, 70, 73, 95, 104, 169; ritual analysis (also canonical messages, self-referential messages) 35-6, 104, 163, 183; revitalisation of 29, 72, 163, 183; ritual decline 97; secular 13, 29, 50; village days (*falunapok*) 16, 69, 148, 158-63, *see also* communication; public sphere
Robbins, J. 37
Roma groups 3n, 17, 51, 68, 109, 115, 148, 167-70, 178-80, 185, 187; căldărari (Kelderash) 166; corturari (*korturarija*) 123; Gabor 97n; Gitano 17, 23-4, 38, 187; *kashtale* 109; Manouche 187; *mântjene* 68, 109, 170, 178; Romungre (*magyarcigány*) 3, 17-8, 24, 27n, 68, 75, 77, 79, 87, 109, 119, 136n, 169n, 170, 178; Tigani 19-20; Vlach Roma 18, 22, 100n, 109, 116
Roman Catholic Church 44, 58, *see also* churches
Romani 16-8, 21-2, 51, 62, 69-71, 79, 84n, 108-10, 136n, 140n, 154, 167, 169-70; dialects 17n, 70; language 16, 18, 71
Romanian Orthodox Church 1, 4, 47, 49, 55, 58, 166, 169, 174, *see also* churches
Romanians 1, 2, 4, 19, 20, 46, 48, 52, 54, 57, 60-1, 63, 68, 107n, 159, 172, 174, 179-80

Sampson, S. 7n, 8n, 19n, 52n
Sárkány, M. 13
Saxons 44, 58, 60
Scheffel, D. 25
scripture 57, 127, 133-4, 155-7, *see also* Bible
secularism; secularist bias 40, 179; secular institutions 54, 166; secular ritual 13, 29, 50
sects 46-9, 54, 59
Sibiu/ Hermannstadt 170-5
Silverman, C. 168
sincerity 36-7, 136-40, 144-5, *see also* lie
slavery (*robie*) 20, 21, 46, 159, 169; abolishment of 169
socialism 5-6, 8-10, 12, 14, 17, 22, 25-6, 51, 53, 60, 62, 68, 72, 89, 95, 97, 102, 108, 158, 180, 182n, 187; 'actually existing socialism' 6; socialist planning 8n; systematisation (*sistematizare*) 52
sociology 16n, 24n, 40; considering rituals important 2-3, 28-9, 31, 38, 52, 61, 184; declared belief 1-2; indicators 2, 45, 95; surveys of religiosity 73
Sozan, M. 9n
spiritual kinship 142-3; brotherhood (*phrala*) 40, 142-4; godparents (*kirve*) 71, 74-6, 78-81, 83, 86, 88, 104-5, 143, 157; wife (*romni*) 70-1, 76-7, 79, 96, 102, 110-2, 116-20, 122, 126, 128, 131, 136, 139, 141-2
status (also social status) 10, 20, 35-6, 43-5, 47, 51, 58, 80-1, 90, 144, 151, 156, 163-4, 184, 187; groups 43, 44, 58
Stewart, M. 17-8, 21-3, 27, 87, 100n, 110
stigma (also stigmatised) 16, 34n, 156, 174, 185
Streck, B. 22n
Szeklerland (region) 69, 92n, 158
Szeklers (group) 44, 58, 95
Szelényi, I. 24-7

Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) 39-40
tolerance 2, 45, 55-6, 58, 95, 103, 105, 177; civility 2, 55-6, 95, 98, 105, *see also* media
Tomka, M. 2n
tourism (also tourists) 1, 62, 90n, 159
tradition 5n, 7, 10-1, 13-6, 18, 28-9, 31-2, 38, 47, 72, 74, 161, 162, 171, 176-7, 181, 182, 183n; invention of 29; revitalisation of (also *hagyományőrzők*) 15, 29, 38, 158, 161-2
transition 4-5, 11-2, 73, 180

underclass 12, 16, 24-6, 27n
Unitarians 58, 95-6, *see also* churches

van de Port, M. 12n
van der Veer, P. 40
Verdery, K. 6, 9-10, 15, 20, 50-1
violence 54, 116, 181; religiously motivated 54

Wanner, C. 12n
Weber, M. 29
Williams, P. 17, 23n
Wolf, E. 4, 7n

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