

ANTHROPOLOGY OF EAST EUROPE REVIEW

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CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTES.....	3
Krista Harper and Julie Hemment, University of Massachusetts, Amherst	
CALL FOR PAPERS .....	4
Anthropology of East Europe Review	
<b>SYMPOSIUM: "AEER SPECIAL ISSUE: ROMA &amp; GADJE"</b>	
GUEST EDITORS' INTRODUCTION.....	5
Yasar Abu Ghosh, Department of Anthropology, Charles University, and IRIS-EHES Krista Hegburg, Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University	
THE "CIVILIZED TRAP" OF MODERNITY AND ROMANIAN ROMA, 1918-1934.....	12
Susan Williams, Indiana University	
ROMANIAN ROMANI RESISTANCE TO GENOCIDE IN THE MATRIX OF THE <i>TIGAN</i> OTHER.....	28
Shannon Woodcock, School of Historical and European Studies, La Trobe University, Canada	
HIDDEN HISTORY: PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROMANI HOLOCAUST IN ROMANIA VIEWED THROUGH CONTEMPORARY RACE RELATIONS.....	44
Michelle Kelso, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan	
PHOTO-ESSAY: THE ROMA OF SLOVAKIA .....	62
Julie Denesha, Documentary Photographer, Merriam, Kansas	
THE POLITICS OF THE CENSUS: OF GYPSIES, ROMS, AND EGYPTIANS .....	67
Eben Friedman, European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, Germany	
ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AND ADVOCACY RESEARCH: THEORY IN ACTION AMONG ROMANI NGOS IN UKRAINE .....	78
Adriana Helbig, Division of Musicology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	
WORKING WITH THE ATHENIAN ROMA: CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES FOR A COMPLEX FIELD.....	84
Othon Alexandrakis, Department of Anthropology, Rice University	
RESISTING EVICTION: SULUKULE ROMA IN SEARCH OF RIGHT TO SPACE AND PLACE.....	96
Semra Somersan, Department of Sociology, İstanbul Bilgi University Süheyra Kirca-Schroeder, Faculty of Communication, Bahçeşehir University	

REPRODUCING INEQUALITIES THROUGH REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL: THE CASE OF ROMANI WOMEN FROM ROMANIA.....108  
Enikő Magyari-Vincze, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University

THE REVITALIZATION OF DIVERGING RITUALS: THE CASE OF ROMA AND GADJE IN A TRANSYLVANIAN VILLAGE.....121  
László Fosztó, Institute for the Study of the Problems of National Minorities, Martin Luther University

“I MUST LOVE THEM WITH ALL MY HEART”: PENTECOSTAL MISSION AND THE ROMANI OTHER.....132  
Johannes Ries, Institute for Ethnology, University of Leipzig

### **OPEN FORUM**

CZECH POLITICAL PRISONERS: REMEMBERING, RELATEDNESS, RECONCILIATION.....143  
Jana Kopelentova Rehak, Loyola College

### **BOOK REVIEWS**

REVIEW OF *ETHNOGRAPHY OF PROTECTED AREAS: ENDANGERED HABITATS – ENDANGERED CULTURES* (SIMONIČ). .....151  
Reviewer: Barbara A. Cellarius, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Alaska

REVIEW OF *DREAMING OF A MAIL-ORDER HUSBAND: RUSSIAN-AMERICAN INTERNET ROMANCE* (JOHNSON).....154  
Reviewer: Jennifer Patico, Georgia State University

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<http://Las1.depaul.edu/Aeer/>***

## REVITALISATION OF DIVERGING RITUALS IN EASTERN EUROPE: THE CASE OF ROMA AND GADZE IN A TRANSYLVANIAN VILLAGE

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This study addresses the postsocialist transformations of rituals in the regional and local public spheres of Romania. I argue that the ritual transformations can be differentiated according to the ethnic groups involved. My analysis is based on fieldwork carried out in the Transylvanian city of Cluj, and in a nearby village *Gánás*.<sup>1</sup> *Gánás* is a polytechnic settlement where Roma coexist with Hungarians. The village has around 1,300 inhabitants, a third of whom are Roma,<sup>2</sup> with the remainder primarily Hungarian, though there are also a handful of Romanian families. I carried out fieldwork between June 2003 and September 2004. The ethnic pattern is characteristic for the surrounding region known as *Kalotaszeg* in the Hungarian ethnographic literature.

Fifteen years ago Jeremy Boissevain (1992) in a seminal volume directed attention to the process of revitalization of European rituals, however the revitalization of East European rituals was addressed sporadically since. Here I am concerned with the revitalisation of existing rituals

and the invention of new celebrations. My primary argument is that, while an intensification and diversification of ritual practices can be observed in all segments of the Romanian society since the fall of the socialist regime, not every group is equally affected by a collective revitalisation process. Based on the ethnography of a village I argue that some local Roma are more receptive to rituals focusing on moral personhood, while local ethnic Hungarians tend to be more involved in revitalisation, focusing on village traditions and folklore celebration symbolically connected to their broader ethno-national community. Religion plays important role in revitalisation rituals in both cases. Herein I develop an analysis of transformations observable in the local public sphere; analysis of the national level is subject for another study (see Fosztó 2007).

Recent sociological research on the relationship between religion and ethno-national identities in the East Europe confirms the continuation of well known pre-existing historical connections between churches, states, and identities in Eastern-Central Europe. This has been well documented in the case of the Hungarians living outside of Hungary in neighbouring countries.<sup>3</sup> One Hungarian anthropologist (Papp 2003) similarly argues that historical churches confess 'ethnic religions' in former Yugoslavia. Indeed, in regions where the possibility of institutional support of ethnic mobilisation was more limited, in some cases 'historical churches' are the most important actors involved in the construction of ethnic identity.<sup>4</sup> It is understandable that these churches excel at mobilising 'national' identities amongst ethnic minorities in regions 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' (i.e. Hungary).

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Author's note: This study is based on a chapter of my PhD dissertation defended in July 2007 at the Institute for Ethnology, Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg. The research was part of the 'Religion and Civil Society' project of the Postsocialist Eurasia Department at Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle. I owe thanks to Chris Hann and all the participants of the writing up seminar organized at the MPI for commenting on an earlier draft of this study. I also benefited from the AEER editorial comments by Yasar Abu Ghosh.

<sup>1</sup> The research was supported by the MPISA. The name of the village and all personal names are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> These Roma belong to the Romungro group also called "magyarcigány" meaning 'Hungarian Gypsies'. Most of the local Roma are trilingual: in addition to their native dialect of Romani they are proficient in Romanian and Hungarian.

Throughout this study I refer to this group simply as 'Roma' following the in-group usage of the term.

<sup>3</sup> For the case of Transylvania see Gereben (2000).

<sup>4</sup> For a case study of Subcarpathia see Zoltán Fejős (1996).

Roma nationalism, however, seems to have a very limited appeal in post-socialist Romania. The handful of attempts at ethnic mobilization based on conventional ethno-politics, which in eastern and central Europe usually involves the politicization 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 a low potential for ethnic mobilization (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 rapidly emerged among Roma following the fall of the socialist regime. There are various patterns of group identification on the ground, and it is important to analyse the emerging forms of identities and the resources they draw upon let these new identifications be either 'religious' or 'secular', 'civic' or 'ethnic'.

In the following 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 revitalization. Pentecostal assemblies mobilise the support of church members, attract adherents, and contribute to the expansion of the religious movement through the incorporation of new recruits. The second form of revitalisation I address is the revitalisation of 'village traditions'. These rituals and celebrations are organised in rural communities, and their focus is on local traditions, though they also reinforce the metonymical link between local traditions and the Nation. In the postsocialist period there have been many instances of these rituals in villages inhabited by Hungarians throughout Transylvania. 'Gánási Village Days' is a relatively recent development.

The structure of the study is the following: first, I discuss the centrality of the role attributed to the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal rituals for religious mobilization. I then describe and analyse a large mission event in the city to demonstrate how this form of revitalisation works in practice. In the third section, I turn to a parallel (though much more modest in terms of resources involved) example of Pentecostal ritual revitalisation efforts in the village. The fourth section provides an overview of the main aspects

of the revitalisation of village traditions through a case study of 'Village Days'.

### **The Holy Spirit as a source of mobilisation**

If conversion was limited to only transformations of individual personhood, and if the practices of born-again selves remained narrowly contained within the bounds of the assembly, there would be little expansion of the religious movement. But Pentecostalism is a growing movement in Romania and in the World.<sup>5</sup> The role of missionary work cannot be underestimated, nor should the involvement of material resources be ignored. Institutional and logistical aspects of missionary activities influence growth of the Pentecostal church. However, herein I limit myself to a discussion of 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 mobilization (i.e. politicisation of identities). Religious movements create networks and public rituals which provide an alternative space in which identities may be constructed. But the 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 which create and maintain member loyalty.

The Bible, the written word, provides the primary inspiration for Pentecostal revitalization, as is the case for most Protestant denominations. The Holy Spirit and the idea of spiritual gifts are another source of revitalizing power unique to Pentecostals. Strictly speaking, Pentecostal views on the manifestation of the Holy Spirit are scripturally based (particularly Acts 2, Hebrews 2:4, Mark 16:17-18, and Matthew 3:16, amongst others). Therefore one could argue that there is a strong connection between the Word and 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 argues:

If the Holy Spirit and the Word of God realize the act of conversion and they make us born-again, the emphasis on one or the other will separate us sometimes antagonistically. The best way to illustrate this is the example of the "Christian Steam

<sup>5</sup> For a brief historical overview of the Pentecostalism in Romania see Fosztó (2006).

Engine". In order to run the engine you need two elements: the rails and the steam. There are some Christians who value just the rails that would be the guideline offered by God for the life of the faithful, in this parabola. (...) But the engine is not running although the rails might be polished admirably. The other extreme faction values only the steam. The engine is under pressure, in power, but making a lot of noise, since most often their steam engine is running onto the tillage. 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 as 'fundamentalist' versus 'experientialist' approaches in Pentecostalism. It is beyond the scope of this study to go into the details of this opposition, but the term 'experientialist' points in the right direction to a practical religious attitude oriented toward direct religious experience and the main source of these experiences: the Holy Spirit.

### Destiny Conference

I attended many services among the Roma in which some of the 'gifts' were practiced. Glossolalia, prophecy, and healing are usually attributed to the Spirit. I describe an exceptional event below; a rather large conference organized by a local Pentecostal assembly in the city. I choose to analyse this event because it displayed many aspects and problems connected to Pentecostal revitalisation.

The conference was organized in a large 'house of culture' in the centre of the city. The 'Destiny Conference' was well advertised in public spaces as a faith healing event. I came to know about the conference through Roma converts from the city. The conference lasted three days, and it had two sections, as one pastor told me. Morning sessions were designed for training church workers, pastors, deacons and presbyters; while evenings were reserved for public meetings. A large banner declaring "God is healing today!" was placed over the entrance advertising the evening services. 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-organized 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 arranged. A band was stationed at one side of the stage, on which a pulpit stood in the middle, and in the background banners were hung bearing the names of the pastors and promises that "God will heal you everywhere you hurt". Beyond the pulpit two large flags were placed: one Romanian and the other American. As the service started the main orators (two pastors from America) alternated preaching, and musicians and vocalists led the singing. The lyrics of the songs were projected on a large screen next to the stage.

Towards the end of the night 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 organizers walked between 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 end of 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 hearts and lives of and save the people reciting the prayer.<sup>6</sup> After this prayer, the participants were invited to recite a common prayer for the newly converted, and singing started. The names of the newly converted were written down. This list of names was later used to distribute the newcomers in "groups for growth" at assemblies that would best suit each person in terms of place of residence, needs, and age.

This scene may be familiar to anybody who has attended a missionary event in other contexts. These sorts of events are not unique to Pentecostalism and are practiced by Evangelical and other born-again Christian movements. The ritual summarizes, in a nutshell, the main themes of conversion, but is only the beginning of this process. The person who opens his or her heart to God must go through a long process of transformation in order to become a full member of an assembly. I witnessed similar rituals many

<sup>6</sup> "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."

times during my fieldwork among the Pentecostals, mainly during services, conferences, and other performances that were addressed to the larger public. These events provide individuals with an opportunity to take their first step from being a non-believer to a believer. Further personal development is aided by the network of assemblies, which are sensitive to social differences, unlike the ritual described herein, which symbolically diminishes social categories.

The motivations of each convert and background channels for recruitment are of course diverse; organizers usually draw on kinship, friendship, and other networks of insiders, but the events are also widely advertised. In this ritual the social relations or group-memberships which are meaningful for the individuals outside the ritual context become insignificant in the revitalization ritual, which emphasizes 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 makes the ritual capable of penetrating 'intermediate' social structures, downplaying status, ethnic, racial, and language differences. The main requirement for initiating conversion is the idea of an open heart and this is equally achievable by every person. The second requirement, the presence of the Spirit, is produced in the ritual context.

After almost two hours of preaching and singing one of the pastors started to speak in tongues. He pronounced foreign words slowly and with a rhetorical tone. I had the impression that some words resembled Spanish, but on the whole 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 below:

This place tonight, says the Lord, there is a spark of new beginning in the life of many of the people here, and the spark and fire of my Spirit descends upon you and I come to invade 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 am 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 realized 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 done in the capitals of the world.

The other pastor later took up a similar line of reasoning when he spoke about how "spiritual walls are coming down" and the Spirit has 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 good following conversion in these places. The vision of the Spirit 'invading' the city and the region is a radical promise of renewal formulated in the language of dominance and liberation.

The event continued with an offering of anointment for those who wished to receive it. The anointment ritual was performed on the stage. The first round was offered to pastors and other church workers, followed by others. 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 blessings be heard by the entire audience. Some people collapsed after being touched. Helpers were prepared to hold them, and they were laid down 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 blessing are inspired by the same idea: the empowering divinity. Though I was aware that there is usually a large social and cultural distance between pastors and those receiving the Spirit, during this event that gap was bridged by the ritual. As I attended other services, most of which were more modest and less spectacular, I came to realize the uniformity of this ritual for mobilisation. There is an ideal unity of discourse, which is connected to experiences inspired by the Spirit. The ritual is deeply universalistic: its mobilising power is seen as unique, and ideally everybody can have access. The discourse that emerges from this experience is built on ideas of inequality and liberation.

### Testimony with reference to Gen 9: 20-25

The ritual described above is so widespread that it can be viewed as clear evidence of a global Charismatic Christian culture (Robbins 2004). The ways in which this global form meets and intertwines with local elements and conditions can be shown through comparative studies. In this section my intention is to consider one such local context in the case of Roma who convert to Pentecostalism. The conference described above 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 on stage.

Although no convert from Gánás was present I attended rituals in the village with similar underlying ideas and comparable practices. Though there was a sharp contrast between the well-funded Destiny Conference and these village gatherings in the houses of poor Roma, similarities in the discourse of the preachers and involvement of participants in both cases were striking. I interpret these similarities as evidence of the force of and capacity for Pentecostalist revitalisation to reproduce its rituals in disparate conditions and contexts. In spite of their scarcity of material resources and the hardships of everyday life, some of the Gánási Roma nonetheless preached and experienced the empowering effects of the Spirit.

On a Sunday in early 2004 I attended a Pentecostal assembly in the village. One of the 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 while the singing was more dominated by the women. Intense collective prayer connected the different stages of the event, and Dani led the service. The dominant language was Romanian, though some of the songs were in Romani and some exchanges in Hungarian also occurred. 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 this gathering and was performed by a middle aged Roma convert, Jani:

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: țigan], 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 it is mocked in this way, this people, that they are Gypsies? Because it is the lowest nation and people [Rou: neam și 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.<sup>7</sup>

Jani spoke freely without looking at the Biblical texts, encouraged by the preacher that he was correctly quoting. Later when I was visiting Jani in his home to discuss other issues and asked about the exact reference he had difficulties finding it in the book. He insisted that he had read the story in the Bible and had not heard it from somebody else. As I was not sure myself about the verse I later checked and realized that it was almost perfectly quoted (Gen 9:20-25). The other quotation (God's promise to raise his people) can be found in Exodus 3:17. Some minor differences though are important for the interpretation of the biblical story as an origin myth of the Roma and as an evocation of Scriptural authority to reject stigmatisation.

Even though the rhetorical performance is 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; this is "mockery". This rejection of social stigmatization 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 those people labelled and stigmatized as 'Gypsies' are, in principle, on equal footing with other nations. This should not be exaggeratedly read as a sign of nascent ethno-national mobilization amongst these Roma. It would be farfetched to theoretically 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 as Gypsies, and attributes the group's present subjugated social position to a past injustice. It also asserts the common origins of both the Roma and all other nations (and therefore equal rights) through the genealogical relatedness

of humanity (i.e. other nations came into being as descendants of the other children of Noah). It is important from the perspective of collective identity construction that this scriptural interpretation bases its explanation of present inequalities and the low status of 'Gypsies' not on the divine order, but instead explains it as a consequence of the curse brought on by the original patriarch Noah. The cause of this curse is not clear in the original scripture<sup>8</sup>, but Jani's interpretation attributes the plight of the 'Gypsies' to the fury of a drunken father who felt his son had defied his authority, even though Noah himself had not been behaving properly (standing naked in public). The divergence from the original text here is significant because in the Biblical version Noah was asleep in his tent. The version presented in Jani's testimony permits the insertion of another important deviation from the original text: 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 not clear why Noah curses his innocent grandson rather than his son who is guilty of "seeing his nakedness". In Jani's testimony this problem is solved by the blessing attributed to the son, and through changing the scene in order to introduce a public gaze that legitimizes the son's actions. The origin of inequality is in this way shown to be deeply unjust in religious terms.

The presentation of the story is consistent with the moral world of the Roma 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 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 criticize somebody if the accuser cannot claim any common personal or communal obligations existing 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. Sometimes wives use this forum as a source of authority in family arguments. I observed teenagers teasingly

<sup>8</sup> First I found Edmund Leach's interpretation of the story (2000: 38) as a homosexual incest committed by the son rather farfetched, but I realised (reading Bergsma and Hahn 2005), that this interpretation is not unknown in the exegetical scholarship.

<sup>7</sup> Sermon in Romanian recorded in February 2004.



training each other in this practice while sitting outside on summer afternoons. When the strategy is successful, the targeted party feels ashamed and thus feels 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 how Roma rework scripture in order to adjust the message to their own needs in constructing a social identity. Theological authorities might accuse Jani's interpretation of being heretical, while some social analysts would expect "ethnicity" to emerge from this discourse. I am more reserved here: in my view this 'reading' of Scripture is a rather universalistic and 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 this day of reckoning seems to be imminent. The redemption of the Gypsies is based on a divine promise of liberation, 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 etc). 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.

Before turning to another form of revitalisation observable in Gánás I would like to introduce a series of questions, which I seek to answer: To what degree may identities forged in these new religious movements be performed outside the boundaries of the revitalized religious establishment? In other words, is there space for newly emerging ('born again') public identities? These questions do not provoke simple, concise answers. I suggest that it is 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 these identities publicly. In Gánás there are no signs that the rituals of new religious movements are being incorporated into representative local public rituals. Nor are the converts assertive in claiming their share in the village public sphere beyond their own rituals. Pentecostal rituals are 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 involving village fairs, folkdance performances, and competitions, accompanied by feasting, dance, and disco. This form of local celebration appeared throughout Transylvania after the fall of socialism. It is more common in some regions like Szeklerland, but several villages in Kalotaszeg have also initiated their own 'village days' over the last decade. Village days involve ritual forms that have not been invented completely anew. Various forms of community festivals continued in rural areas throughout the socialist period. The most common form of local celebrations was pilgrimages (Hun: *búcsú*) held on religious holidays in villages or 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 Reformed Church, although there are no such religious pilgrimages, there is a traditional ritual connected to shepherding. In this ritual the local Reformed pastor does not play a 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 total quantity of milk provides the basis for the milk products the owner will produce over the summer. This ritual is organized each year in late April on Saint George's day, and is followed by a popular celebration with music and dance. These events were discovered and attended by the urban intellectual public from the city and from Hungary in the late socialist period. These rituals were perceived as expressions of ethnic and local identities. The main organizers and sponsors are local sheep owners (Hun: *juhosgazdák*). They hire shepherds for the whole summer and pay musicians for the celebration. Although the number of the sheep has decreased (there are less than 300 in Gánás nowadays), the ritual continues

to be organized and remains an important attraction for locals and visitors alike. In 2004 an American tourist group arrived to the village on this day. They were guided by two ethnographers from Budapest.

Village Days are tied to a particular point in the agricultural cycle in early summer. In 2004 they took place on a weekend in late May. The organisers (a group of local intellectuals and a church related-foundation) built on some features of the traditional spring shepherding ritual, as Village Days incorporates an animal exhibition, local economic activities, and traditions, which are all are 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 there were several competitions for children and a coach race for the men. Farmers' wives competed in a cookie contest, and the program also featured a farmer contest in which animals were paraded. Village Days attracted locals and a large number of visitors alike in spite of the rainy weather.

The farmer contest is usually rather well attended by the *gazdas*. Traditionally there is not a milk measuring ritual organised around the spring departure of the buffalo to the pasture because buffalo are milked individually by their owners, and the milk is processed separately by the households. Nevertheless, buffaloes are a source of pride for Hungarians, and owners are attentive to the body-shape and appearance of their buffaloes (Kós 1979: 265-267). Before I attended 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' organised for the occasion of previous Village Days. The differences between the buffalo are hardly discernible to an outsider, but villagers and good herdsman know each animal by its name and character.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Papu ridiculed some of his fellow herdsman who were unable to recognise the buffaloes by their 'faces' and particular ways of movement.

The public exhibition of animals and presentation of local food strongly connect the ritual to material aspects of village life. The ritual is also intended to attract outsiders who can touch and taste bits of local life. The second element of the Village Days ritual is the presentation of local costumes and a folklore performance. The presentation of costumes was organised on the stage of the local house of culture, and was directed and commented upon by a local expert on regional folk costumes. The local group of revivifiers of folk traditions (Hun: *hagyományörzők*, literally 'those who retain/preserve traditions')<sup>10</sup> prepared a gala spectacle, which was performed Saturday evening, followed by a ball with local music.

One commentator on a similar celebration that signaled the opening of the local museum (which happened some years before I started my fieldwork) remarked how the local folklore intertwines with national significance:

The dancing group is not only a 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 production of tradition, a process which is organized 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 local, moreover it seems that local contents are organized as part of the ritual practice in a way that elevates them into 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, which co-organises Village Days. The regular Sunday service is also integrated into the program. During this service the Reformed church hosts and features a guest choir from Hungary. In

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Knowing the buffaloes is a basic skill of a good herdsman, and he can distinguish easily between the animals.

<sup>10</sup> *Hagyományörzők* groups in Transylvanian villages are often organized by local intellectuals (schoolteachers, priests etc.) and their role is to revitalize and 'retain' local folk songs, dance, or other folklore traditions.

this way, religion is intertwined with local traditions and the celebration is thus 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 conversations 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. Some disgruntled voices could still be heard, particularly among those who felt that their talents or abilities could have contributed to the celebration and from those who believed they could have provided a better performance than the actual performers who were chosen to dance. One young Roma man commented to me that he 'could cut down' all of 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 resigned. Another Rom, less self-assured, murmured to me that the old famous Roma dancers and musicians taught their skills to the non-Roma (Hun: *a Gázsokra hagyták a tudást*), teaching them all they knew leaving the present generation of Roma without those skills. There is an element of truth to this claim. The *hagyományörző* dance assemble is composed by Hungarians exclusively. Instrumental music was increasingly taken over by Hungarian youth from the village and neighbouring localities after the well-known Roma musicians died. The preparations for the farmer contest were also disturbed by a minor altercation: an elder Rom drove his horse and cart down the main street 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: Nation in the Village / Spirit in the Heart**

As ethnic and religious identities overlap in Transylvania, like 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. While this may be the case under certain

conditions, this study demonstrates that ritual revitalisation has no uniform effect on different groups. Segments/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'. In the case of local Hungarians, Village Days provided an instance for such a revitalisation. On the other hand, Pentecostal rituals are distinctive in symbolically separating the individual from his or her social identity and relationships, as the significance of ethnicity and social status are diminished in Pentecostal rituals. Pentecostal revitalisation creates and emphasises a direct and intimate connection between the open heart of the person and God. The religious ideas and communicative practices involved in revitalisation rituals are important resources for the construction and mobilisation of collective identity. Roy Rappaport distinguished between the self-referential and canonical messages as two aspects of ritual communication (1999: 52-54). He argues 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 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" (p. 53). I would add that the border between these two aspects can be subject to manipulation. Those in control of rituals have the power to change the borderline between the self-referential and canonical by either enhancing or de-emphasizing the canonical side of a ritual. The boundary between canonical (i.e. connected to putatively eternal orders) and self-referential messages (i.e. connected to the social order, and expressing the social status of the participants) of the 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) to 'cleanse' rituals of most self-referential content. In this respect, Village Days can be interpreted as an example of the first process (canonizing local social order), while Pentecostal revitalization rituals are of the second type. The impacts of these divergent forms of revitalization on collective identity are opposite, though not necessarily in conflict. Those revitalizations that canonize 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 are rather connected to broader collective ideals and ideologies, most notably, to the Nation. On the other hand, '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. Here I provided evidence that these different forms of revitalisation do not appear 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 argue that in this particular case no such tensions emerged because these 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 dressing and musical codes (i.e. folk-dresses and folk-songs), clash 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 scandalizing the local Hungarian community which sees this gesture as disloyalty to the ethnic group (Kiss 2005). In Gánás social divisions are tacitly agreed upon and masked by a homogenous appearance of 'local community'. The local public sphere is not disturbed when different identifications are created and practiced 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 of local society. These divergent revitalizations would serve to challenge local 'homogeneity' only if the different rituals were performed in a unified local public sphere, or if high status members of the local community were to refuse to take part in revitalization rituals that create and maintain the homogeneous appearance of the local community.

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