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Between Religious Identity and National Identity? Pentecostal Finnish Roma in Lutheran Finland

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Abstract
Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, this article focuses on the present-day belonging of Finnish Roma to Pentecostalism. On the one hand, in what appears to be a ladder of social mobility, Pentecostalism provides Roma with the opportunity for enhanced participation in the nation-state, thus enhancing their relationship with the majority Finns. On the other hand, Lutheranism continues to be a symbol of Finnish belonging and a symbol of unity across the Nordic countries. Therefore, in the case of a historically marginalized group adopting a minority religious denomination, this article explores the complex relationship between community belonging, religious identity, and national engagement, and the ways in which these become entangled with one another. The aim is thus to introduce a contemporary perspective on how minorities themselves are actively engaged and reflect upon their role within their society, while also developing grassroots "strategies" of connecting with others (majority "Finns"), and with one another.

1 The ethnographic material of this article was informed by research conducted as a part of the "Roma and Nordic Societies: Historical security practices of the majority and strategies of the minority" research project, funded by the Academy of Finland (2015–18). The more recent archival material was collected as part of the ongoing research project "RomaInterbellum: Roma Civic Emancipation between the Two World Wars," which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 694656). This article nevertheless reflects only the author's view, and the funding agencies are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains. I would like to thank all the issue's contributors and its editors, as well as Paloma Gay y Blasco, Elena Marushiakova, Marko Stenroos, and Alex Archer for their feedback and comments on different drafts of this article. Most importantly, I would like to thank all Kaale interlocutors who have helped and contributed to this research.

Keywords: Finnish Roma, Pentecostalism, ethnography, religion, social engagement

Introduction

Bringing an anthropological perspective to this special issue's analysis of the construction of "Finnishness" and the shaping of "national ideas"/ national identity, in this article I present a somewhat distinctive image of "minority strategies" in shaping belonging not only within the nation-state but within and with one's own community. I do so by exploring the contemporary experience of identity politics among a particular minority group in the country, the Finnish Kaale (or, as they are more widely known, the Finnish Roma[2]). More concretely, I explore the connection between ideas of community belonging, by emphasizing the at times contrasting and at times overlapping meanings this has to the idea of "Finnish identity." Finally, I will also look at the combining of Pentecostal belonging and Lutheran attachment among Finnish Kaale, and the ways in which a strong sense of Finnish identity becomes complementary (rather than opposed) to a strong sense of Kaale identity among Finland's national Roma minority, even in the context of belonging to a minority religious denomination.

Methodologically, the bulk of this article is based on ethnographic fieldwork that I have been conducting with Pentecostal Finnish Kaale since 2011. The process of fieldwork included extensive participant observation within both family life and community events (including participating in religious services, missionary practices, and broader community gatherings), as well as the collection of life stories and family histories. During this time I lived with both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal Kaale families in the South of Finland (primarily Helsinki and Eastern Savo), whose subjective expressions of belonging, identity, and religious transformation have contributed heavily to the subject matter of this article. In addition to the ethnographic material, I have conducted dozens of in-depth interviews with Pentecostal pastors, majority members of Pentecostal congregations, and non-Kaale missionaries. Finally, the historical sections are informed both by secondary sources and by additional archival material collected since 2016 as part of an ongoing European Research Project, "RomaInterbellum," which looks at the processes of Roma civic emancipation. This archival research included both private archives and national archives. All this combined material has highlighted the ways in which religious belonging is both influenced by and influences specific understandings of social change and community-cum-national identity among Finnish Kaale.

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2 Throughout this article, I will use the term Finnish Kaale (or, more simply, Kaale) to refer to the national Roma community in Finland. Though the term Finnish Roma is often used by policy-makers, historians, and politicians in the country, the people I lived and worked with used the term Kaale to refer to themselves. For this reason also, I retain the emic term as a means to reproduce people's own expression of their community belonging.

I should mention that many of my interlocutors became my close friends, who not only shared with me their life stories and experiences but also their homes. I am forever grateful for their generosity and openness, and I have become closely connected to their desire to make their views known and heard beyond the often perpetuated stereotypical representations of Roma in the country. As such, it should be of no surprise that all of my interlocutors were well-aware and engaged in all stages of my fieldwork, and I have shared many of the arguments shaping this paper with some of them. Needless to say, I am well aware that, like in the case of most academic research with historically marginalized minorities, the interpretation and analysis of the ethnographic material is entirely my own and, as a non-Pentecostal myself, this may at times diverge from the way in which they see faith manifesting in their lives. Despite this, the aim and focus of this article is to bring, to the best of my abilities, a perspective from "within" (no matter how mediated this may be), a perspective which complements and hopefully contradicts stereotypical representations of Roma as living on the "outside" of societies. In fact, as my purpose is to offer an ethnographic perspective concerning the manifestations of, and the search for, a sense of social and spiritual "security" among a minority group in present-day Finland, this article fits as the counterpoint to historical narratives of the "nation" which have often overlooked minority voices. It is through this that this article aims to shift the narrative from the outside-in and from the majority to the minority. In what follows, I will succinctly present the ethnographic context of my material, with a focus placed on the central configurations of community belonging among present-day Kaale in Finland.

The Ethnographic Context

The Finnish Kaale are officially recognized as a "traditional minority" within the country. As such, they are granted minority status and have access to specific minority rights (such as language), in addition to being guaranteed the same equal rights as majority Finns. All Kaale speak Finnish as their first language with some also speaking a Finnish dialect of Romani language. In terms of their internal social organization, Finnish Kaale continue to uphold specific norms of conduct which were described by my interlocutors as key elements of their Kaale belonging: a strict age and gender hierarchy (wherein the elders and the men of the community are the ones who receive the highest forms of respect); specific dress codes which distinguish Kaale from Kaaje (the name Kaale use to refer to all non-Kaale, Finns or otherwise); clear-cut metonymical understandings of bodily purity and pollution (the lower half of the body is considered unclean/polluted, while the upper half if considered clean/pure, which then translates in many other aspects of social life); and a central focus placed on maintaining the honor of the family.[3]

3 For example, among Kaale, one's birth family is considered the central unit of solidarity and emotional connection, and maintaining the honor of one's family name is a central duty

Yet, beyond these internal community norms, all Kaale I met professed and expressed a strong sense of Finnish identity, emphasizing the long-term presence of Kaale in the country, the embeddedness of their lives in majority Finnish society, and the historical connection between their community and the shaping of the Finnish nation (for a historical analysis of the social embeddedness of Roma in the country, see Pulma 2006; Tervonen 2010, 2012). Thus, while internal elements highlighting the shaping of their community as seemingly in distinction to majority Finns (i.e., through dress codes, purity norms, family allegiance), they continuously and emphatically underlined their sense of Finnish belonging. This is especially interesting in the context of the more recent "migrant" Eastern European Roma presence in the country. As such, while indeed emphasizing a connection to the latter, many Kaale I met throughout my fieldwork continued to express the importance of being and feeling "Finn" as a distinctive factor between them and the migrant communities (cf. Roman 2014).

In this context, it is interesting to look at the ways in which a minority community in Finland, Finnish Kaale, has become intrinsically connected to a minority religious movement in the country, Pentecostalism. Indeed, since the 1960s and 1970s, large numbers of Finnish Kaale have become members of Pentecostal congregations, and the majority of Kaale are, in some form, connected to Pentecostalism. While seemingly a novel experience, connected with the spread of Pentecostalism among Roma elsewhere in Europe (Canton Delgado 2010; Fosztó 2009; Gay y Blasco 2000; Marushiakova and Popov 1999; Ripka 2015; Rose Lange 2002; Williams 1991), Kaale's close relation to Evangelical movements is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Rather, it can be traced back to the Finnish Reformation years of the twentieth century and, much later, also to the Pentecostal revival of the 1960s (Ruohomäki 2014; Schmidgall 2013). Very often, at its inception, this was the work of several individual non-Kaale (Kaaje) missionaries, who came to be central names in the religious revival of the Roma in Finland and contributed to the rise of Kaale Evangelical revivalism.

What is striking in this context is that, in the past decades, more and more Kaale have become directly engaged in processes of both social-religious outreach, becoming involved not only in forms of social work within their own community (i.e., among other Kaale) but also within the local environments they inhabit (i.e., conducting prison work, street evangelism, etc.). Furthermore, several Finnish Roma NGOs, the majority of which are religious or religiously affiliated organizations (though not necessarily having a Pentecostal label), hold a prominent voice in contouring modern-day policies concerning the Roma community in Finland.[4] These contemporary manifestations of their religious belonging are central in

of all individuals. This, in the past, has been connected to the prevalence of blood feuding as a means of maintaining one's own family honor (Grönfors 1977).

4 Such as *Romano Missio* and *Elämä ja Valo*.

understanding also the social mobilization of individual Kaale believers. As an experience, rather than as a strategy, Pentecostalism provided the people I met with both a pathway for further engagement with the non-Kaale individuals around them (i.e., “majority Finns”) and, at the same time, a pathway for further engagement with one another, in the shape of social work conducted among other Finnish Kaale and, more broadly, among Roma communities in other countries.

Pentecostalism among the Kaale

As mentioned above, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, a large number of Kaale have converted to Pentecostalism and other Evangelical movements in the country (including the Free Lutheran Church, a charismatic movement that grew out from the Lutheran state church of Finland). Likewise, similar to Roma/Gypsy Pentecostals elsewhere, the increase in the number of Kaale Pentecostals has led many to ponder the relationship between Pentecostal belonging, sedentarization, and social integration of this minority in the country (Mohamed-Salih 1985; Thurfjell 2013, 42). In other words, the social effect of Kaale Pentecostal belonging thus became a point of debate in terms of the changes that Pentecostal belonging may bring to the shape and modes of interaction among Kaale (Thurfjell 2013), their relationship with wider society, and their understanding of belonging within what is still a minority religious movement within the country.

For instance, the process of sedentarization of Kaale in the country—of gaining access to cheap, affordable housing, in living conditions similar to majority Finns—occurred with the passing of a housing law in the 1970s. The 1960s and 1970s were also the decades when Pentecostalism grew in the country, and a time when, according to my interlocutors, a large number of Kaale began converting to Pentecostalism. Though the popularity of revivalism had been growing since the early twentieth century, it was during the 1960s and the 1970s that the spread of Pentecostalism became most evident. Since then, the improvement in the living conditions of Kaale in the country has been remarked upon, with Finland often given as an example of good practice in terms of the inclusion of its Roma minority. Though it is unlikely that these changes are a direct consequence of conversions to Pentecostalism, Pentecostalism has become a central source of engagement not only in religious matters but also in social affairs (Friman-Korpela 2014; Thurfjell 2013). At the same time, unlike among Pentecostal Roma/Gypsies in other countries, the congregations that my Kaale friends attend are not separated from those of Pentecostal majority Finns: that is, their membership is made of not only of Kaale but also of majority Finns, minority Swedes, and immigrant groups alike. In this context, Pentecostalism is not only a broader marker of how the Kaale I met described their religious identity (i.e., “as believers”) but has also become a marker and a point of connection between Kaale and

non-Kaale in the spaces of their congregations, thus also contributing to processes of ethnic boundary crossing within this context.

As will become clear throughout this article, Kaale believers see their Pentecostal faith as a "vital part of the articulation of their personal and communal identity" (Mitchell 1997, 81), while also being a way in which they position themselves in the world in relation to other Kaale and to other believers (both Kaale and non-Kaale). Much like for the majority Pentecostal Finns, this is, on the one hand, a personal and emotional engagement with God and with their understanding of salvation. At the same time, the context in which these engagements occur is also a deeply social one: a context that reveals both continuities and shifts in understanding the setting for Kaale interactions (as in, within their own "community") and the possibility for breaching and crossing boundaries that were often highlighted as distinguishing them (or detaching them) from so-called "majority" Finns. It is under this background that this article is devoted to this specific form of belonging among my Kaale interlocutors, an Evangelical belonging, inspired by their entering and, at times, exiting the Pentecostal movement in the country, and the ways in which this process of spiritual change shapes their understanding of engagement with their Kaale community and their surrounding society.

Kaale Pentecostalism, the Lutheran Way?

Unquestionably linked with the broader Pentecostal upsurge of the early twentieth century (starting with the Azusa Street Revivals in California, in the early 1900s), the birth and growth of Charismatic Christianity in Finland (and, later, Pentecostalism) is most clearly embedded within the historical trajectories of the spiritual and religious environment of the country. For this reason, the type of Finnish Pentecostalism that I am referring to here cannot be analyzed outside of its national history, nor simply as a branch of a global homogeneous Pentecostal movement. Contextually, it has its own expressions and local history, which shaped its present-day forms and manifestations.

On the one hand, as early as the nineteenth century, several Charismatic revivals in Finland, emphasizing the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, had been branching from already-established spiritual movements in the country. Examples of this are the "Awakened" movement within the Lutheran church, Finnish Pietism, and the Laestadian movement (Anderson 2004, 86). In that sense, a first reference to speaking in tongues and prophesying dates back to 1796, a century before the famous Azusa Street Revival (Schmidgall 2013, 77).

However, it was only later that encounters with Evangelists from England, Norway, Sweden, and other European countries took place (Schmidgall 2013, 77–78). Thus, in the early 1910s, incipient forms of present-day Pentecostalism emerged within the country, under the influence of Norwegian pastor T. B. Barratt (Anderson 2004, 86; Ketola 2007; Ruohomäki 2014; Schmidgall 2013). From then on, the number

of Pentecostal congregations in Finland grew: from only 2 in 1915 to approximately 224 in 1997 (Schmidgall 2013, 82). Though the history in between these moments was characterized by series of revivalisms, the steady and gradual increase in the number of Pentecostal adherents came into clear contrast to the gradual decrease in the membership of Finland's national church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, especially as witnessed among the younger generation (see Niemelä 2015).

More important for the purpose of this article is that many of these revivalist movements—at least to some extent—seemed to have transcended the ethnic, class, and social boundaries existent at the time within the Lutheran church. It was thus that in the early 1900s a small itinerant group, known as the "Gypsies," became direct targets of Evangelism and Christian missionizing (cf. Pulma 2006; Tervonen 2010), though mostly as an incentive to transform them into "better Finns." Furthermore, while not yet under the label Pentecostal, the revivalist period of the 1900s led to an increased evangelization among Kaale, through the work of key promoters of revivalist theology. Names such as Eeli Jokinen (then a member of the Finnish Evangelical Free Church), Oskari Jalkio (founder of the "Gypsy Mission"), Herta and Einar Virjo, Ernst Mattsson—though all majority Finns[5]—are well-known among Kaale believers in the country as central to the process of evangelization among the Kaale (see the individual histories of these non-Kaale evangelists in Mäkinen 2014).

It was also during this time that one of the oldest Roma organizations in the country was set up, in 1906 (by non-Kaale evangelist Oskari Jalkio, also part of the Free Church), under the name of the "Gypsy Mission" (*Mustalaislähetys*), nowadays known as *Romano Missio* (Grönfors 1977, 22; Thurfjell 2013, 39). While initially a spiritual-revival movement, targeting the Roma in the country, this organization gradually moved into the realms of social work, and, between the 1940s and the 1980s, it was closely tied to state incentives for making Roma into "better" Finnish citizens (Grönfors 1977, 25; Pulma 2006; Thurfjell 2013).[6] Now, after several restructurings over the years, and with primarily Kaale leadership, much of its focus is on social, rather than evangelizing work.

Apart from the "Gypsy Mission," another Roma-focused missionary organization, under the name of the Free Romani Mission of Finland (*Suomen Vapaa Romanilähetys*), was formed in 1964, having a clearer

5 The first Kaale to become a Pentecostal pastor (in a mixed congregational setting) is remembered to be Viljo Mäntyniemi (Mäkinen 2014; Thurfjell 2013, 40). Since him, many other Kaale have become pastors of Pentecostal congregations. Henry Hedman was also the first Finnish Kaale to become the chairman of Romano Missio.

6 This also meant a rather dark time in the history of the "Gypsy Mission" itself, particularly in the 1950s, when the government, through its assimilation policies and via the newly founded Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs (*Mustalaisasiain Neuvottelukunta*), used the collaboration of the Gypsy Mission and its social work dimension (including the setting up of orphanages for Roma children) to take thousands of children away from their families and place them into children's homes (Grönfors 1977, 29; Thurfjell 2013, 22). Unsurprisingly thus, to this day, many Kaale remain somewhat suspicious of any collaborations between Roma organizations and the government.

Pentecostal background. At its inception, as its name also suggested, this organization set itself apart from the Gypsy Mission (and perhaps also the darker history of working in connection with the state),[7] and its perspective was quite ecumenical in approach, seeking primarily the collaboration of different churches to evangelize among the Roma (Thurfjell 2013, 42). Nevertheless, this organization was also more closely tied to the global Pentecostal Romani movement initiated by Clement Le Cossec, which had a major influence in the Roma Pentecostal revival in France, Spain, Portugal, Britain, and other European countries (cf. Acton 1979; Canton Delgado 2003; Strand 2014; Thurfjell and Marsh 2013; Williams 1991).[8] Gradually thus, the Free Romani Mission of Finland would change its name to that of *Elämä ja Valo*, connecting it via a straight translation to the *Life and Light* movement so popular elsewhere in Europe (Thurfjell 2013, 42). Furthermore, *Elämä ja Valo* is currently the most active organization in setting up missionary projects both for Kaale in Finland and for Roma elsewhere in Europe (for more, see Roman 2015, 2018, 2019).

Going in-depth into the particular history of each of these organizations is beyond the scope of this article; however, highlighting the distinct story of their growth is relevant to the present-day experience of faith and religiosity among my Kaale interlocutors. Many of them were, in fact (and in different ways), affiliated with either of the two organizations or the projects they managed. Furthermore, both organizations continue to be influential not only in the ways in which large Kaale spiritual gatherings are organized across the country (*Elämä ja Valo* plays an important part in this) but also in shaping large-scale projects of not only religious but also social dimension (*Romano Missio*, in particular). Both of their stories are also embedded within the relationship between Kaale and the state in Finland, as well as to the missionary ethos of Kaale Pentecostalism in the country.

Furthermore, though some Finnish Kaale still continue to be official members of the national Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, most belong to and practice their faith in independent Pentecostal congregations across the country.[9] Therefore, I believe, Lutheranism and continued membership in the Lutheran church is primarily a symbol (and an expression) of their national Finnish identity, rather than the practice of

7 Another organization that would come as an "alternative" to the "Gypsy Mission," political rather than religious, was the radical minority group Finnish Gypsy Association (*Suomen Mustalaisyhdistys ry*), formed in 1967, whose role was to act as a pressure group, formed primarily of engaged political Kaale activists (Grönfors 1977, 29). A more thorough analysis of its history can be found in Sarita Friman Korpela's PhD thesis (Friman-Korpela 2014).

8 Its founders, Herta and Einar Virio, had been influenced by a visit Clement Le Cossec had made to Finland, at a larger Pentecostal festival organized in Pieksämäki (Thurfjell 2013, 41).

9 I would like to thank one of my anonymous reviewers for pointing out the fact that membership in both the Lutheran church and Pentecostal congregations is common also among non-Kaale Pentecostals. This indeed highlights once more that Kaale religious belonging is not and cannot be understood solely through ethnic lenses but within the broader context it manifests itself.

Lutheran faith itself. For example, despite some of them maintaining this official attachment, my interlocutors rarely attended Lutheran services. Furthermore, though they still remain a minority group in the Finnish Pentecostal congregations they attend (most of them primarily frequented by non-Kaale Finns), Kaale are an active, visible, and engaged category of believers. They participate in the services, sing songs of praise, and, more often than not, engage in religious missionary work among Roma and non-Roma alike, in Finland and abroad (Roman 2015, 2018).

Thus, a specific manifestation of Pentecostal Kaale sociality needs to be understood in the manners in which Finnish Pentecostalism has shaped the lives of Kaale believers, but also in the ways their Kaale belonging continuously re-shapes their understanding of Pentecostal faith. Therefore, my focus in what follows will be to explore the subjective ways in which belonging to this movement promotes a sense of both moral and social duty among believer Kaale. I will also explore the ways in which the embodiment of a Pentecostal faith becomes both an individual pursuit (personal salvation) and a collective process of creating new social bonds (or breaking others), in the broader process of Roma evangelization. In this sense, I argue, grounded in the historical trajectory of Pentecostalism among Roma in the country, the type of faith that Kaale embody not only transcends the dichotomy between individuality and dividuality (cf. La Fontaine 1985; Robbins 2007; Werbner 2011), Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, but also re-positions believers in a triadic relationship with the divine, their fellow, non-Kaale believers, and with their understanding of Kaale belonging.

Belief, Faith, and the Experience of Self-Transformation

In one of my first discussions with a Kaale Pentecostal pastor, sharing his own story of the transformative power of faith, he explained to me what he considered to be the most central distinction between belief in God and living in faith among Kaale, and a striking element in highlighting the relationship of Kaale to their religious life.

> You have to see that all Finnish Roma have always had a very big fear of God. Because, living as precariously as they did, traveling around, with no housing and no roof over their heads, depending on the mercy of others and of God, throughout our history, you needed to believe in something more powerful than yourself, in something bigger than yourself. You could not go through life without the belief in something greater than that. You needed hope. And hope could only be found in God, in something much greater than yourself.[10]

10 The interviews and discussions with my interlocutors were conducted in Finnish and, in very rare cases (primarily in my interviews with pastors), English. All translations into English are by the author.

I would hear such statements recurrently in my discussions with Kaale religious leaders, with Kaale believers, and with Pentecostal Kaale activists trying to highlight the deep-running spirituality that many had noted amongst their community, a spirituality shaped by history, by connection to one another, and by connection to an invisible world whose presence they always sensed and respected. Tuula,[11] another Kaale Pentecostal believer and a vocal activist, had highlighted this type of spirituality in linking it to her own personal salvation. As she began telling her own experience of salvation, she emphasized that which connected her own spirituality to that of Kaale, and the spiritual outlook of Kaale with the spiritual life of Roma people more broadly.

> I made myself the decision to be saved when I was fifteen years old. But the spirituality was always there. It came into my being from my parents, because each and every Roma person and parent says, whenever they are greeting each other: "I leave you in God's protection." And from what I've seen, this is common for all the world's Roma groups. Which also means it's very deep rooted because it runs deep into our beliefs.

And, as she continued her analysis of this type of faith, she also emphasized the social consequences that belief in God and the turn to faith may have in the lives of those who chose to come into faith.

> So if you want to see a change in the worst criminal, Roma criminal, for example, nothing else changes them as strongly as going inside of their belief and putting your fingers on the belief in God. This belief that wherever you go, you do know that God looks on you. The invisible world as concretely exists as the visible world. And this is something that many people do not understand actually, the majority especially.

Here, the argument that Kaale have always had a close connection to the spiritual world is an argument for the centrality of God, rather than a particular religious denomination, in shaping the lives and experiences of individuals. Following it, the recent Evangelical revivalism among Roma communities across the world (cf. Canton Delgado 2003, 2010; Fosztó 2006, 2009; Gay y Blasco 1999, 2000, 2012; Ries 2011; Rose Lange 2002; Thurfjell 2009; Williams 1991) would be, in this sense, a re-discovery of something that was somehow always there. And it was through this action that the transformation of one's life was possible; it was through this revelatory relationship that one could understand the deep changes that many believers often pointed out in their tales of salvation.

Nevertheless, in Finland, unlike in the country's main religion (i.e., Lutheranism), Pentecostalism's central theological premise is the

11 All names used are pseudonyms, in order to protect my interlocutors' anonymity.

possibility of personal salvation, of being born-again in the Spirit, in being filled by the presence of God (Lindhardt 2010). Being born-again means, in this context, the abandonment of an old life and the adoption of a life lived in the Spirit. Among these, alcohol, gambling, dances, worldly music, horse-trading, and blood feuds were always pointed out as some of the most important elements that believer Kaale had to renounce in order to live a life according to Christian moral standards (see also Thurfjell 2013, 124–25, 135–36).

At the same time, rather than the theological predicates of a specific religious denomination or another, it was the feeling of acceptance and freedom within the Pentecostal congregational community that appeared to matter most for my believer Kaale friends, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for their choice of Pentecostal congregations. I've met, in fact, many believers who belonged either to Pentecostal congregations or to the Free Church of Finland while still maintaining official membership in the Lutheran church. Moreover, few of them were interested in the label of "Pentecostal" as such though all who were Pentecostal emphasized their status as being "in faith" (*uskossa*). Being part of this Evangelical movement proved that one was "in faith" but one may very well be in the Spirit even if one belonged to a different Charismatic denomination (such as the Free Church of Finland). It was hence a complex, multi-faceted, and diverse way of understanding the very meaning of religious/spiritual belonging.

Furthermore, there seemed to be a somewhat tensional relationship that many of my Kaale interlocutors had with the national, Lutheran church. On the one hand, they recurrently highlighted the importance of the Lutheran church in Finland and the importance of belonging to the church in establishing oneself as a full member of the Finnish nation. Yet, historically, Roma in the Nordic countries were oftentimes seen as a "problem" to be dealt with, and with the separation of Finland from Sweden, there was even a commission in the main Lutheran church that had set up the "Roma problem" division. Their approach was, at times, to take children away from the Roma families and re-educate them as "proper" Finns (see Kopsa-Schön 1996; Mohamed-Salih 1985; Pulma 2006; Tervonen 2010).

Being Lutheran was nevertheless acknowledged as being a very important part of the Finnish nation-state (cf. Stenius 1997) and a means of proving one's Finnish identity more broadly (Thorkildsen 1997). It is perhaps also because of this that several of my Kaale informants had maintained their Lutheran belonging while also fully attaching themselves to the Pentecostal or Free Church movement. This was, for instance, how Tanja, a twenty-eight-year-old woman from Lahti, saw her relationship to her Pentecostal faith:

> The truth is, it is not really about the place, it is about the connection you make there with others. Sure, there are times when

> I go there [. . .]. I just sit and listen to a sermon and then I leave. But it does matter [. . .]. I also like that I can meet other believers and that they are not all Kaale. It is good to talk and to worship with Kaaje [non-Kaale]. Our common faith allows us to do so. Because it is a journey we are all going on, together: as Christians, as believers, not as Roma or as Finns. You feel that strongly in our [Pentecostals] congregations. [. . .] But it is also true that I could never find this sort of feeling in the Lutheran church. Though we still go, of course, when needed. I had my confirmation at fifteen, just like any other [Finnish] person. It's important to do that. It has to do with us being Finns, also. But really, I see myself as a believer, a Pentecostal as you'd say. There is no conflict here, you know? You can really be all these things . . . many things at once.

Similarly, Janita, a thirty-two-year-old Kaale woman, had gone through her own series of personal revivalisms, belonging to different denominations and searching for her own personal religious identity. For her, more than anything, her religious identity came in the shape of a search for meaning. When I asked Janita what made her join the Pentecostal church rather than any other, she highlighted her own quest for finding her balance in the world:

> Janita: I questioned. I had my doubts. I even studied the Jehovah's Witness group [. . .]. I tried to find my answers there, but I found my answers here. I think since I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, I started to question everything and got really interested in religion and such. I questioned in a way the total existence and everything. I studied this Jehovah's Witnesses stuff and then the Muslim religion. I even had a Koran and everything. Which I tried to read, but it was too difficult for me.
>
> RBR: And why did you choose this congregation in the end?
>
> Janita: The answers really. After looking for so long, I remembered this church, because of my relatives had attended it. So I tried this Pentecostal congregation as well, and it just gave me the answers I needed. It's hard to explain, it just is the right place for me. And there were very many things that made me think that was the place for me: the feeling, the knowledge, the way the people who were believers acted toward one another, toward me, toward God. To me it is the only place where I found the answers that fit with my heart.

While highlighting the importance of choice, it was also in Pentecostal congregations that Janita acknowledged the prior presence of her relatives, which means she had connections to that church before her decision to be

baptized in it. Thus, her choice of the congregation, though undoubtedly her own, may have been, at least partially, influenced by her mediated link to Pentecostalism through the medium of her family and kin.

At the same time, Janita, Tanja, and others like them, made a strong distinction between simply having a belief in God, simply belonging to one church or another, and the often-tumultuous process of becoming a believer. Thus, while many may believe in the existence of God, it was only through the process of being born-again in the Spirit that transformations of the person were thought to be made complete and visible to the world around them. And, again, this understanding of the Holy Spirit is central to the theological teachings of the Pentecostal church.

> Janita: Finnish people [i.e., non-Pentecostal Finns] don't really belong anywhere if you ask me. Spiritually, I mean . . . even if they say they are Lutheran. They might go to church at Christmas and when they get married and at confirmation ceremonies, but that is it, really. But it's different with being in faith. I myself am still a member of our main church, our Lutheran church how we call it. Because it's also about being and doing things like everyone else. But I am also saved. I choose to belong to this [Pentecostal] congregation in my heart because this is where I found the truth. And I pay a tithe in my congregation just like people pay taxes to the church, because I know it is the right thing to do.

The importance of being born-again (in Finland characterizing both the Pentecostal church and the Free Church of Finland) and of personal choice are perhaps two of the defining elements of charismatic and Pentecostal movements more widely (thus not just for Roma Pentecostals), highlighting people's abandonment of a past life and the adoption of a new one (cf. Maxwell 2002; Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004; Van de Kamp 2012). It is thus not spirituality as such that has become central in how Finnish Kaale relate to their religious belonging, to their identity as born-again Christians, but a type of spirituality that is translated in actions, in engagement in the world, and in an active attempt to convince others of the changes that God can bring in the lives of those who accept Him.

In this sense, it was also not just belief (*usko*) alone (as in, believing in God, *uskoa Jumalaan*) but being in faith (*uskossa*) that defined, shaped, and re-shaped the lives of the Pentecostal Kaale I met. It was a faith that, as Brian Howell has pointed out, was linked to commitment (Howell 2007), through commonly shared practices (such as church attendance, organizing prayer groups, reading the Bible on a regular basis). And, as Griffith's work among American Evangelical women reveals, change in religious life brings with it "the expectation that others will be able to see the changes wrought in this new creature and will want to experience the same kind of love and joy" (Griffith 1997, 104). It is through this transformation of the self, therefore, that the proof of leading a faithful life is

made visible for others, and it is through this that one can hope to transform others. It was through this particular trait that the Kaale individuals I met explained their understanding of seemingly multiple attachments.

Believers and Non-Believers

As shown thus far, for born-again Kaale, the transformation of the self is central in the process of becoming a believer. On the one hand, much like for Evangelicals elsewhere, Christian submission was closely linked to self-control (Griffith 1997, 202), to the ways in which people trained and disciplined themselves into becoming proper Christians. On the other hand, Pentecostalism puts an emphasis on charisma, the ecstatic and momentous overcoming by the Holy Spirit, which, when the believer fully surrenders to God, is deemed as liberating believers from the grasp of tradition and of their human condition (for similar experiences elsewhere, see Harding 1987; Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004). For born-again Kaale, self-control and liberation (from drugs, alcoholism, etc.) thus come together and shape the very experience of their new lives as believers.

Additionally, working with Evangelical women in America, Griffith (1997) has highlighted how this search for self-transformation is simultaneously "marking those who reject or question these scripts as rebellious, sinful, and miserable" (201). Therefore, the process of entering faith requires redrawing boundaries of attachment and belonging. For Pentecostal Kaale, such distinctions bring about the issue of family attachment, honor of the kin, and gendered experiences of faith: evangelizing one's own hence implies crossing some of the mandates of gender and culture and the abandoning of other elements, while the rejection of faith by some Kaale may imply the erecting of new mandates (i.e., between believers and non-believers).

In fact, though many Kaale had entered into some form of relationship with Pentecostal religiosity, and had, even for a time, been changed by this relationship, there were still others who had remained outside it and whose lives were configured in a different moral order than the individuals introduced thus far. For them, the religious belonging of Pentecostal Kaale was not only a means of attaching themselves to a religious community but also a means of drawing boundaries within and amongst Kaale: between those who are saved and those who are not, between those who fit and those who don't. Thus, beyond the cultural demands of how to be a proper Kaale (dress norms, gender/age hierarchies, moral codes), religious belonging brings about new means of configuring social relationships, norms, and expectations.

This is, for example, how Terno, a non-believer Kaale, also tried to find a reason for the attraction and the growth of Pentecostalism among his believer kin:

> Truthfully, Kaale can be as they are in these churches because they feel more accepted. And maybe that is the attraction. So I

> can understand why they like it. They can be religious but they can still maintain their own identity, as Kaale, you know? They don't have to change totally to manage in their surroundings, because nobody really demands that of them. God loves them as they are.

Pausing for a few moments, he continued:

> But, really, in another way this religion always dictates how they should behave, just as Kaale culture does. I think even more than that because it is a moral thing. The ones, like me, who are not in faith are always a source of their evangelism, they want to save us. But they stop being interested in us if they see they cannot convert us [. . .]. Unless they are your close family. Then they never seize it until you give in. I am not easily convinced though.

The possibility of change was then closely tied to the possibility of cultural continuity rather than, as arguments from works among Pentecostals in non-Western contexts have emphasized (Cole 2010; Gill 1990; Van de Kamp 2012; Meyer 1999; Robbins 2004; Scott 1994), a complete rupture with one's perceived notions of traditions. Indeed, for Kaale, the spiritual change of one's life had become, much like among non-Kaale believers, a moral decision, wherein elements of the past were re-shaped in their assuming a new born-again identity. Similar to Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism then, there is a tendency for born-again Kaale to see the "old ways" in a negative light, a need to break free from the past (Van de Kamp 2012, 441). This, however, does not always translate uniformly in a need to break free from social relations.

In some ways, belonging to an exclusive religious community may indeed foster new ways of understanding, fostering both a sense of openness and of closure, of connection and disconnection between believers and non-believers: similar to Evangelicals elsewhere, believers may at times "feel conflict between their religious lives and their family lives" (Griffith 1997, 128). Therefore, different types of boundaries and processes of boundary-drawings are re-shaped in the experience of religious transformation. As those perceived lost become a source of evangelization, the targets of believer's mission work, those who prefer to remain outside of Pentecostalism, have their own views on the new status of believers. Nevertheless, ties with family and kin, even in moments of disagreement about the new born-again identity of some of its members, are nevertheless kept, and at times enhanced, through the process of evangelization. While those who are targets of people's incentive for missionizing are not always happy about such experiences, these tensions do not usually end up in ruptures (cf. Lindhardt 2010).

Concluding Discussion

The born-again congregation (Pentecostal, Free Church, or otherwise) was often portrayed by the Kaale believers I met as an important space for not only sharing faith but as a setting where relationships are formed, shaped, and maintained, as a place to form smaller groups for worship (such as prayer groups, often made up of only Kaale members), and as a place where faith can grow or, even, at times, fade and dissipate in individualized ways. Therefore, similar to Pentecostals in Tanzania (Lindhardt 2010), rather than being detached from their devotion to kin and family, personal faith is always conflated within the social and spiritual relations that make up individual lives, some of which are difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle. The meaning of a common Christian "brotherhood/sisterhood," comprising of both Kaale and non-Kaale believers, is molded to fit within the Kaale discourse of belonging and community while relations with kin must nevertheless be maintained and emphasized rather than severed or ruptured (see Meyer 1998).

It is, thus, that understanding Pentecostalism among Kaale is important, for scholars and believers alike, not for what is distinctively Roma about it, but what is strikingly not so, moving beyond a "Gypsy"-centered narrative that often characterizes members (or studies) of this community. I am not implying here that being a Kaale (or a Gypsy, or a Roma) does not matter for the people concerned or for the individuals introduced here but that the concept of Pentecostal belonging (or the experience of being born again in the Spirit) provides a new framework of understanding both the connections and the borders that religious movements create and re-create among their believers. This framework includes the ways in which people subjectively position themselves within and in relation to a diversity of other groups (including "majority" Finns, born-again believers worldwide, non-believers, and Roma communities in other countries).

For Kaale, being born again means a re-shifting of one's life, as it emphasizes the almost universal experiences of hope, faith, and doubt among Western Evangelicals today, and the modern perspective placed on reflexivity, intimacy, and self-awareness in a northern European context; it brings forth the internationalization of a common narrative of salvation, at times transcending ethnic, community, or cultural barriers (belonging to mixed congregations, comprised of Kaale and non-Kaale believers), at times enhancing the barriers (emphasizing the distinction between believers and non-believers), and at times creating new ones altogether. Providing what for Kaale Pentecostals living in Sweden Thurfjell has called recognizable narratives with individualized messages (Thurfjell 2013, 91), Pentecostalism among Kaale can, therefore, be understood as defining both individual belonging and, at the same time, a common medium for an enhanced sense of social embeddedness. Through all this, in the background of a long history of marginalization, the analysis of religious belonging among Kaale (in this case, Pentecostalism), with its argument of "taking one's life into one's own hands," becomes an

important pathway to understand the contemporary means by which minorities may choose to express their own voices, and thus develop their own "strategies" of engagement not only with one another but with the majority society they inhabit and are intrinsically connected with.

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