
**Experiencing Distinctiveness at
the Margins of the School:
Relatedness, Performance and
Becoming a Greek Gypsy**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on a sedentary Greek Gypsy population in Athens. The arguments presented in this ethnographic study are structured through a discussion of what I call 'the schooling paradox'. This paradox indicates that the children's and adults' acknowledgement of the importance of the school co-exists with the recognition of the incompatibility between Greek Gypsy life and formal education. The degree to which adults entrust in their children the decision whether or not to attend classes, draws attention to the blurred boundaries between Greek Gypsy childhood and adulthood and processes of becoming through which children actively participate in the adults' worlds.

Based on the premise that children are subjects with agency, their views reflect broader perceptions of the Greek state and other institutions. Considering these perceptions, the thesis examines Greek Gypsy projects of identification and explores children's and adults' degrees of participation within wider Greek society. Whilst acknowledging the importance of a specific 'Gypsy' sense of distinctiveness, this study recognises that there is a Greek component to it.

Here, the experience of being a Greek Gypsy is seen as premised on age and gender-specific embodied performances. These performances are principally located within marriage, work and the kinship network and are sustained through the acquisition of knowledge through practice. This thesis argues that the schooling paradox is symptomatic of alternative processes of learning as well as relationships and practices which inform Greek Gypsies' experiences of becoming and belonging. The schooling paradox provides the vehicle for examining the ways through which an individual and a shared sense of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness are primarily sustained and reproduced at the margins of the school.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	2
<i>Table of Contents</i>	3
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	10
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	11
Chapter One: Introduction	14
The Blackboard	14
The Children of <i>Gitonia</i> and the Schooling Paradox	15
The Shifting Greek Context, the School and ‘Multicultural’ Models of Education	17
The Gypsies in Greece	21
General Framework	21
Perceptions of the ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Gypsiness’ in Mainstream Discourse	25
Gypsies, the Greek State and the Use of the Term ‘Minority’	27
Place: <i>Gitonia</i>	30
The History of <i>Gitonia</i>	35
The Politics of Space	38
The <i>Nikokirio</i> as a Marker of Distinctiveness and the ‘Threat’ of the Albanian Gypsies	38
The Impeding Eviction	40
Defining the Subject of this Study and Related Areas of Literature	42
Children at the Centre of the Study of Greek Gypsies	44
Childhood, Becoming and Belonging	46
Approaches to Gypsies	49
The Anthropology of Greece	50

The Schooling Paradox, Ethnography and Greek Gypsy Distinctiveness	52
Outline of this Thesis	55
Chapter Two: Problematising Fieldwork: Children, Methods, and the Politics of Doing Research	62
Introduction	62
Gaining Access	63
The Role of the Children	63
Getting Involved in the Negotiations of the Resettlement and the Role of the Children	66
Doing Research with Children	69
Theoretical and Methodological Concerns	69
Meeting Children’s Expectations in Building Up the Methodology	71
Addressing Ethical Considerations	74
Issues Emerging from the Field	76
Reflexivity	76
Encountering ‘Otherness’	78
Space, Place and Ethnography	80
Obtaining Knowledge	82
Keeping Balances: Gendered and Personal Encounters	84
Assessing Data	86
Advocacy and the Role of the Researcher	89
The issue of the Resettlement and the Problem of Ethnographic Representation	95
Conclusion	97
Chapter Three: Approaches to Gypsies, <i>Greek-Gypsiness</i> and the Relationship between the Greek Gypsies of <i>Gitonia</i> and the State	100
Introduction	100

Gypsies and Ethnographic and Theoretical Framework	101
Gypsies and Theoretical Ambiguity	106
The Anthropology of Greece: A Review of the Literature	111
From the Anthropology of the Mediterranean to the Study of Gender and Kinship	111
The Study of Minorities, Migration and Studies in Urban Settings	114
The Case of Gypsies in the Literature on Greece	116
<i>Greek-Gypsiness</i> and the Politics of Culture	117
Examining Projects of Identification	117
“Who are the Real Gypsies? The Greek Gypsies!”: Belonging and the ‘Play’ of Difference	120
Embodied Distinctiveness: Performing <i>Greek-Gypsiness</i>	123
Greek Gypsy Morality	127
The Idiosyncratic Relationship between the Greek Gypsies of <i>Gitonia</i> and the State	130
The Greek Gypsy View of the State	130
The Peculiarity of the Relationship between the Greek Gypsies of <i>Gitonia</i> and the State	134
Conclusion	139
Chapter Four: Mirroring Children’s Views: Schooling, Knowledge and Future Aspirations	142
The Importance of Children’s Views	142
Children’s Schooling Experience—Some Examples	144
Reflections on the School from Children with No Schooling Experience	153
The Case of Sotiris and Angelina	156
Growing Up and Prioritising Different Kinds of Knowledge	159
Participatory Learning and the Performance of Knowledge	164
Peripheral Sources of Knowledge	167
Children’s Priorities: Marriage, Family, Work and the Future	169

Shifting Knowledge—A comparative Example: The Albanian Gypsies of the Neighbourhood	176
Conclusion	182
Chapter Five: Greek Gypsy Marriage and Relatedness: Becoming and Belonging	185
The Centrality of Marriage	185
Working out the Marriage Plan: The Development of Marital Alliances and the Money ‘Loaning’ Project	187
The Wedding	192
The Wedding Preparations	194
The First Day	195
The Pre-wedding Celebrations	196
The Religious Wedding Ceremony and the Post-wedding Celebration	198
Getting Ready for the Marriage: The Transitional Period	204
Virginity	208
Endogamy	213
Conclusion	215
Chapter Six: Constructing Relatedness through Performance: The Importance of Enacting Kinship	218
Extended Kin Networks and Performative Relationships	218
Relatedness in <i>Gitonia</i>	220
The Extended Families—Some Examples	222
Hierarchies, Power Relations and Solidarity within the Extended Family	223
Negotiating Power within the Extended Family: Female Heads and Daughters-In-Law	227
Hierarchies and Power Relations in the Household Unit	229
Negotiating Hierarchies in the Household Unit; Negotiating a Position in the Extended Family	231

Children, Hierarchies and Power Relations	233
Parenting in the Extended Family	234
Male and Female Parenting Roles	234
The Parent-Child Relationship	237
‘Extended’ Parenting	241
Children Enacting Parenting Roles	243
Conclusion	247
Chapter Seven: The <i>Nikokirio</i>: Becoming and Belonging through Performing Household Work	251
The Meaning of Performative Tasks	251
Unpaid Household Work: The Importance of Performing Age and Gender- Oriented Domestic Activities	253
Women Performing <i>Nikokirosini</i>	253
Learning how to Become <i>Kali Nikokira</i>	259
Performing Masculine Roles in the <i>Nikokirio</i>	261
<i>Gitonia</i> ’s Gypsies and Paid Work	264
Flexible Work Patterns	264
Paid Work Patterns in the Extended Family—An Example	268
<i>Gitonia</i> ’s Gypsies and Wage Labour	270
Women and Paid Work	272
Children and Paid Work	274
Conclusion	279
Chapter Eight: Childhood and Greek Gypsy Distinctiveness	284
The Centrality of Childhood for Definitions of <i>Greek-Gypsy</i> ness	284
The Experience of Greek Gypsy Childhood	285
Children’s Competence Acknowledged	285
Adults Looking through the Eyes of the Children	286
Qualities and Attributes of Childhood	289

Celebrating Childhood	291
Children's Play	291
Children's Dirt is 'Good' Dirt	292
Being Naughty and Cunning	294
Childhood and Difference: <i>Raklakia</i> and <i>Alvanakia</i>	298
Negotiating Greek Gypsy Childhood within Diverse Institutions: Embodying Christian Orthodoxy and National Consciousness	300
Conclusion	310
Chapter Nine: Conclusion: Reassessing the Schooling Paradox	313
The Gypsies and the School	313
The Schooling Paradox and Perceptions of <i>Greek-Gypsy</i> ness	314
The Children and the School	314
Negotiating the Incompatibilities between the Family and the School	316
Contributions to Anthropological Theory	321
Children and the Study of the Greek Gypsies of <i>Gitonia</i>	321
Contributions to the Study of Gypsies	323
Appendix 1	328
Graph 1: Different Types of Residence of Gypsies and Roma in Greece	328
Graph 2: Religious Affiliations of Gypsies and Roma in Greece	329
Graph 3: Percentage of Gypsies in Greece who speak Romani	330
Appendix 2	331
Diagram 1: Greek Educational System	331
Table 1: Immigrant and Total Population Growth in Greece 1971–2001	332
Table 2: Number of Registrations in Primary and Secondary Schools	332
Graph 1: Levels of Education of Gypsies and Roma in Greece	333

Appendix 3	334
Forced Evictions of Roma Communities in Greece in Relation to the Preparation of the Olympic Games	334
3.1. The Roma Community of Marousi and the Olympic Stadium	334
3.2. The Municipality's failure to implement the agreement	335
<i>Bibliography</i>	337

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1.1: Map of Greece	12
Fig. 1.2: Map of the Greater Athens Area.....	13
Fig. 1.3: The wider area where the Greek Gypsy settlement was located	59
Fig. 1.4: <i>Gitonia</i>	60
Fig. 1.5: Picture of <i>Gitonia</i>	61
Fig. 1.6: Picture of <i>Gitonia</i>	61
Fig. 4.1: Haris' picture of his classroom arrangement	149
Fig. 4.2: Manolis' picture of the best football players at school	150
Fig. 4.3: Xanthi's drawing of the earth and the sun.....	156
Fig. 4.4: Haris' dream of marriage	173
Fig. 4.5: Haris' picture of the house of his dreams.....	175
Fig. 4.6: A teaching and drawing session.....	184
Fig. 4.7: A drawing session	184
Fig. 6.1: <i>Gitonia</i>	249
Fig. 6.2: The Christopoulos extended family	250
Fig. 6.3: The Petridis extended family	250
Fig. 7.1: Performing <i>Nikokirosini</i>	282
Fig. 7.2: Setting off for the market	282
Fig. 7.3: Preparations for the market	283
Fig. 8.1: Stelios drawings of the Christ and Virgin Mary.....	304
Fig. 8.2: Haris' drawing of his dream house with a church on the side	305
Fig. 8.3: Paris' drawing of his dream house with a church on the side.....	305
Fig. 8.4: Stelios' drawing of a boat with a church built on it and the Greek flag	306
Fig. 8.5: Manolis' drawing of the Greek flag.....	307
Fig. 8.6: Stelios' drawing of the memorial for Elli on the 15th of August in the port of Tinos	307
Fig. 8.7: Six-year-old Stelios dressed up in a policeman's costume during carnival, posing for Mr. Alexandridis' camera.....	309
Fig. 8.8: Children playing football.....	312
Fig. 8.9: Having enjoyed playing, a display of 'good' dirt	312

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Fig. 1.1: Map of Greece



Fig. 1.2: Map of the Greater Athens Area

Chapter One

Introduction

The Blackboard

It was mid January when nine-year-old Manolis came looking for me to tell me that he had spotted a used school blackboard, stashed away somewhere in the neighbourhood close to the Greek Gypsy settlement of *Gitonia*. He pointed out that if we had it, it would transform the teaching sessions I had been having with the children of *Gitonia* since the beginning of my fieldwork into a ‘real’ class:

“I’ve seen this blackboard, somewhere close to the school. It’s been there for quite a long time but I don’t want to take it during the day. I need to go with my father at night and bring it here with the truck. I swear to you. Ivi. I’ll bring you the blackboard for your teaching! And we can practice as I used to do at school!”

A few days later, a group of children from the settlement called me to show me “a big surprise”, as they said, leading me to the storage room of Manolis’ family. Six-year-old Stelios, Manolis’ younger brother, took the key to the door of the storage room from his father, handed it over to his brother and Manolis opened the door revealing the big surprise: “I got the blackboard!” he said proudly.

First thing the next day, I bought chalk for the blackboard and our teaching sessions were suddenly transformed into a performance for the whole settlement. The blackboard even attracted the adults’ attention to the reading and writing sessions. In Manolis’ house the parents and relatives of the children were sitting around us, clapping their hands proudly each time I praised the children for reading and writing words correctly on the blackboard. Manolis’ parents admired not only their son’s writing skills, but also emphasised the fact that it was he who had spotted the blackboard and carefully organised the process of bringing it to *Gitonia*. His younger brother, his cousins and peers also admired him for this little operation. But at the same time Manolis’ father, Theofilos, warned me in front of the children not to get overexcited about the blackboard:

“Don’t get enthusiastic, this won’t last long ... these children are *different* [my emphasis], they can’t concentrate, one influences the other ...”

Unfortunately, as Theofilos had predicted, the teaching sessions with the blackboard didn’t last long but for an altogether different reason. A few weeks later, Manolis came to me, devastated, to tell me that we had to continue our teaching sessions as before; without the blackboard:

“Ivi, these thieves, the Albanians [meaning the Albanian Gypsy children from the neighbouring settlement] nicked the blackboard! {*Ivi, afti i kleftes I Alvani mas pirane ton pinaka!*}

His mother, Katerina, who was washing clothes in her yard next to us, said something that made him angry:

“I’m so happy that you lost the blackboard! You got what you deserved. You don’t deserve having it, since you are not capable of keeping your things safe!”

The Children of *Gitonia* and the Schooling Paradox

Manolis, along with the rest of the Greek Gypsy boys and girls of schooling age of *Gitonia*, did not go to school. In the mornings, when the children in the neighbourhood were heading for school, they normally accompanied their parents or relatives to the markets, or stayed in the settlement with their close relatives, looking after their younger siblings and cousins, and played. In the afternoons, when the Albanian Gypsy girls from the neighbouring settlement, Anna and Eleni, passed by *Gitonia*’s yard proudly showing off their school bags, the Greek Gypsy children stopped their games and stared at them, loudly making fun of their country of origin and the fact that they were going to school.

Manolis and a few of his cousins had gone to school some time ago but after a few weeks of irregular attendance they dropped out. Nevertheless, most of these children acknowledged the importance of schooling for their future and they wished to go back to classes one day. This is why they asked me to organise a series of teaching sessions when I was conducting my fieldwork, in order to assist them with reading and writing, preparing them for their return to school.

Talking about a Gypsy settlement and children who follow their parents at work, simultaneously encountering difficulties with incorporating themselves into

the schooling process, one might easily associate Manolis' case with one of the numerous examples of children from displaced groups or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.¹ However, Manolis, Stelios, Pavlos, Kalliope, Haris, Dimitris, Fotis, Nikoleta, Paris and the rest of the children of *Gitonia* were Greek citizens, faithfully adhered to Orthodox Christianity, spoke Greek as their only language, as their parents did, and this settlement was where their parents and grandparents had lived for several decades.

What is more, although both the Greek Gypsies and the Albanian Gypsies lived in impoverished conditions in the same neighbourhood, Manolis did not face the same difficulties as Eleni and Anna from the neighbouring settlement, whose parents had recently come from Albania to Greece in search of a better future. The girls' parents did not possess any documents to prove their legal entry to Greece, they spoke Romani or Albanian at home and they had a very poor command of Greek. It was only recently that both the parents and the girls had been christened in the church, in order "to make a new start in their life", as Konstantinos, their father, explained to me. Nevertheless, in contrast to Manolis and the rest of the Greek Gypsy children, Anna and Eleni regularly, and successfully, attended classes in primary school along with a number of other Albanian Gypsy children.

Taking into account these contradictions, the incident with the blackboard mirrors the most important issues inherent in what I call the schooling paradox in relation to the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*. One of these issues is that the children's enthusiasm with the blackboard and the teaching sessions coexists with persistently high illiteracy rates in the settlement. Indeed, none of the inhabitants (children and adults) of *Gitonia* had graduated from primary school. More specifically, only one adult (Theofilos)² could read and write at a very basic level and the only five children (Pavlos, Haris, Dimitris, Manolis and Kalliope) who had enrolled in the first grade of primary school soon dropped out.

Additionally, parents and adults' praise and their clapping of the performance of their children in front of the blackboard during the teaching sessions goes hand in hand with the pessimistic belief that their children are 'different' and this is

¹ Here, I refer to official definitions of the term minority. As we shall see, Greek Gypsies, as also most of the Gypsies and Roma in Greece (with the exception of the Turkish or Muslim Gypsies) are not officially recognised as a minority by the Greek state.

² Although he had not been to school, Theofilos had learnt how to read and write with the assistance of a non-Gypsy Greek friend who was a teacher in Crete.

why they cannot be successfully incorporated into the schooling process. Theofilos' comment suggests there is a set of different qualities, priorities and aspirations among the children and probably among the adults, which to a greater or lesser extent are incompatible with the experience of schooling. Furthermore, the fact that Katerina's admiration for her son, for procuring the blackboard, quickly shifted to scorn at his inability to look after it, suggests that Greek Gypsy children are constantly evaluated on the basis of their performance of roles which involve important duties and obligations.

In fact, as the earlier vignette reveals, Manolis' achievement of finding the blackboard and bringing it to the settlement attracted the interest of the rest of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* and provoked the admiration of his parents and his brother far more than his actual performance during the teaching sessions. Most importantly, his act added credit to his status within his peer circle in the settlement. A further point of interest is that, in Manolis' mind, what was previously considered to be an achievement (the act of procuring the blackboard) became an immoral act of stealing, attributed to the Albanian Gypsy children who lived in the nearby settlement, when the blackboard was lost.

In short, the event with the blackboard points to significant incompatibilities between the formal educational process and the Greek Gypsy way of life. What is more, it offers a glimpse into the shifting context in which these incompatibilities are expressed by highlighting the interplay between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and their Albanian Gypsy neighbours who recently migrated to Greece. The analysis of these incompatibilities, as expressed from the point of view of the Greek Gypsy children and adults, constitutes a useful strategy for disentangling definitions of *Greek-Gypsiness*. More specifically, it opens the way for explorations of those processes that inform particular ideologies and practices which are seen to distinguish Greek Gypsies from non Greek Gypsy 'others'.

The Shifting Greek Context, the School and 'Multicultural' Models of Education

During the last thirty years legal and illegal migrant flows to Greece have altered the composition of contemporary Greek society, resulting in significant changes in the country's socio-economic arena (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004; Fakiolas, 2003, 1999; Lambrianidis and Limberaki, 2001; Lazarides and Wickens, 1999). Since

the restoration of democracy in 1974, the country's growing levels of economic prosperity, in association with a number of other significant political processes, such as EU membership and the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, has transformed Greece into a country that imports rather than exports migrants (Fakiolas, 2003; Gallant, 2001; Markou, 1998b).³ Although throughout the last decades Greece has hosted a large number of migrants from various countries, Albanians constitute by far the largest migrant group in contemporary Greek society (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004; Fakiolas, 1999; Petriniotou, 1993).⁴

The change is nowhere more striking than in the competitive schooling arena. In contemporary Greek society education has been widely considered as the most important means for upward social mobility. And, given the fact that there are no private universities in Greece and access to higher education can only be achieved through a highly competitive national system of exams, even the early years of schooling are seen as a key that can grant access to higher levels of education and subsequently the economic market.⁵ Additionally, the growing proportion of migrant children in Greek schools (App. 2, Table 2) and the growing number of migrant children who outperform the long-established majority of students enhance this sense of competition.

The following example shows some of the tensions that are reflected in the education system. In 2003, a few days before the national celebration of the 28th of October,⁶ there was a strong reaction by a number of people—also prompted by some local authorities and ultra right-wing political representatives—in Nea Michaniona, near Thessaloniki, against the proposal that a sixteen-year-old Albanian, Odysseas Tsenai, should carry the Greek flag during the school parade.⁷ Odysseas had scored the highest grade in his school and as recognition for this outstanding performance, he was supposed—according to the custom—to carry

³ See App. 2, Table 1.

⁴ According to the 2001 Census, Albanians count 440,000 people which is around 65% of the non-EU, 'non-ethnic Greek' aliens residing in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004).

⁵ See the diagram of the Greek educational system (App. 2, Diagram 1).

⁶ The 28th of October is the *Ochi* Day, celebrating the refusal of the Greeks to grant the Italians free passage into the country in 1940 during WWII.

⁷ Such as the local parents council in Nea Michaniona, the Prefect of Thessaloniki, Manolis Psomiadis (Ta Nea, 22-10-2003; 25/26-10-2003) and the leader of the ultra right-wing party of LAOS [ΛΑΟΣ], Giorgos Karatzaferis (Ta Nea, 14-10-2003; 01-11-2003).

the flag in the national and religious celebrations. But this generated a wider debate and considerable tension within Greek society and faced with these reactions, he decided to withdraw from his right to carry the flag on the 28th of October, as he had also done in the previous years.

Odysseas' case is neither entirely new, nor the only one. Similar cases, such as that of an Egyptian girl in Kalithea, a Philipino boy in Lesvos, and a Polish girl in Nafplio are only some of the children of immigrant parents who achieved a distinguished performance at school. But in contrast to Odysseas, they did carry the flag in the parades of the 28th of October with the support of the authorities and without provoking any reactions among the local people.

My intention in raising Odysseas' case here is to bring to light the current transformations that Greek society is undergoing, also showing that the school constitutes a place of growing tension which absorbs and reflects the impact of these transformations (Damanakis, 2001; Govaris, 2001; Katsikas and Politou, 1999). The reactions from some of the local population and the authorities in Odysseas' case, the stunning increase in the number of studies on the changing character of Greek schools (Damanakis, 2001; Govaris, 2001; Katsikas and Politou, 1999) as well as the proliferation of studies calling for a multicultural turn in the Greek educational system (Damanakis, 2001; Govaris, 2001; Nikolaou, 2000; Gotovos, 1998; Markou, 1998b, 1998a, 1996) reflect these changes.

What is more, one can assume that since 130.000 migrant children from many different countries currently attend classes in Greek schools throughout the country (Katsikas, 2003; Katsikas and Politou, 1999)⁸—an increase of over 520% since 1995 (Katsikas, 2001)⁹—the possibility that migrant children might score higher grades than non-migrant children increases significantly (Fakiolas, 2003). In this sense, the school opens the way for migrant children to compete in the socio-economic arena with the children who belong to the majority population, under much more favourable terms than their parents do today. As we shall see in the following section, this particular group of Greek Gypsies acknowledges this changing reality but it remains largely outside of this competition.

⁸ "To Sholio ton ...30 Politismon: 130.000 Xeni Mathites sta Ellinika Thrania" (Ta Nea, 25/26-10-2003).

⁹ "100.000 Xeni Mathites sta Ellinika Thrania" (Ta Nea, 13-8-2001).

The decision of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* to remain at the margins of the formal educational process is a point of further interest here. This is so because this specific attitude towards schooling contrasts with the emergent discussion around multicultural models of education developed within the Greek academia and other educational bodies as well as within the EU and the Council of Europe. As in other European countries (Guy, 2001b; Acton and Klímová, 2001), also in Greece the emergence of Roma-related programmes funded by European institutions¹⁰ took place in parallel with a wider discussion of ‘multiculturalism’ and a discourse around migration and minorities.¹¹

Since the 1990’s, the rise of a Roma policy within the EU, the Council of Europe and its associate organizations brought the educational problem of the Gypsies and Roma in Europe at the top of the agenda of the Roma related policies (Kovats, 2001). A growing number of funded programmes and support projects among the member states and candidate countries of the EU—such as the *Phare*, the *Access* and the *Socrates* programmes—are geared towards multicultural models of education which encourage and support the Gypsies’ and Roma participation and integration in all grades of the educational process.

In Greece this growing awareness around ‘multiculturalism’ and specifically around multicultural models of education have prompted a growing number of research projects within and outside the Greek academia,¹² conferences¹³ and publications on Roma issues¹⁴, media reports¹⁵ as well as a circle of Roma support

¹⁰ As for example, the programs undertaken by G. S.A.E. [General Secretariat of Adult Education (*Geniki Grammatia Laikis Epimorfosis*)], such as the SOCRATES and the MULTI ROMA ACTION HELLAS programs.

¹¹ More on the discussion of ‘multiculturalism’ and minorities in Greece see Kravva, 2003b; Cowan and Brown, 2000; Mackridge and Yannakakis, 1997; Karakasidou, 1997; Danforth, 1995). See also the literature on the sociology of education (Damanakis, 2001; Govaris, 2001; Nikolaou, 2000; Gotovos, 1998; Terzopoulou and Georgiou, 1998; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Markou, 1998b, 1998a, 1996).

¹² Such as the project “Education of Gypsy Children” (*Ekpedefsi Tsigganopedon*) undertaken by the university of Ioannina or the Action Program for the Gypsies [*Olokliromeno Programma Drasis gia tous Tsigganous*] approved and promoted by the Ministry of Interior.

¹³ For example, the conference on “The Role of Local Authorities in the Education of Gypsies” [*O Rolos tis Topikis Aftodiikisis stin Ekpedefsi ton Tsigganon*] (Athens, 10-11 December, 1999) and the international Symposium on the “Education of Gypsies: Elaboration of Educational Material” [*Ekpedefsi Tsigganon: Anaptixi Didaktikou Ilikou*] (Athens, 6-9 April, 1995).

¹⁴ See the publications of the G.S.A.E. [General Secretariat of Adult Education (*Geniki Grammatia Laikis Epimorfosis*)] (Terzopoulou and Georgiou, 1998; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Markou, 1998b, 1998a, 1996).

organisations¹⁶ which have contributed to an important public discourse on Gypsies and Roma in Greece.

The Gypsies in Greece

General Framework

The size of the Gypsy population in Greece can not be easily estimated, since it has not been recorded with accuracy in the Greek census.¹⁷ Nor does it reflect important differences among various Gypsy groups. As is also the case in other European nation-states,¹⁸ Gypsies and Roma in Greece are divided into a variety of groups and subgroups, crosscut by a wide range of descriptive characteristics, such as language, religion, ethnic affiliation (Greek, Turkish, Albanian, Romanian, Bulgarian), different levels of education and integration into wider society, etc. Some of these groups accept to be called or consider themselves to be Roma while other groups refuse this appellation.

Estimates of the total number of Gypsies and Roma in Greece vary considerably, ranging from 120.000 to 350.000.¹⁹ Government figures suggest that the Gypsies and Roma are between 120.0000 and 150.000 (1,5% of the total population),²⁰ while international NGOs estimate the figure to be between 140.000 and 200.000.²¹ Local non-governmental organisations, as well as representatives of Roma and Gypsy organisations, estimate the number is as high

¹⁵ See, for example, the special editions of *Eleftherotypia*: "Istorika: Tsiggani Afti i Agnosti" (21/06/2001), "Tsiggani: Ke an Ime Rom Mi Me Fovase" (11/03/2000)

¹⁶ Such as the state-sponsored POSER (Panhellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations) and the SOKARDE (Coordinated Organizations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece).

¹⁷ The citizens are not obliged to state their membership or affiliation with particular socio-cultural groups (<http://osce.org/odhir/hdim2001/statements.phb3?topic=4a&author=23>). According to the census of 2001, the size of the total population is 10. 939.771 (see also App. 2, Table 1).

¹⁸ See Marushiakova and Popov, 2001a; Kovats, 2001.

¹⁹ Here, I call Gypsies and not Roma those groups of Gypsies which reject or do not use the term Roma, such as the Greek Gypsies in this study.

²⁰ This figure was presented by the Greek delegation at a Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the Organisation for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2001. (<http://osce.org/odhir/hdim2001/statements.phb3?topic=4a&author=23>)

²¹ For example, Minority Rights Group International estimated the number of Gypsies and Roma in Greece between 160.000 and 200.000 (*Roma Gypsies: A European Minority*, 1995: 8).

as 300.000 or 350.000 (around 3% of the total population).²² According to a survey conducted by the University of Ioannina,²³ the vast majority of Gypsies and Roma in Greece²⁴ are sedentary.²⁵ The same survey demonstrated that 84% of Gypsies in Greece are Christian Orthodox while 15% of them are Muslim (App. 1, Graph, 2). Only 8,8% of the total Gypsy population in Greece do not speak Romani (App. 1, Graph 3).

Until the second half of the 20th century, the Gypsies in Greece shared similar characteristics with the non-Gypsy population particularly in the rural areas, such as high levels of poverty and low levels of education, similar economic activities and extended family organisation, as well as variations of ideologies of gender, honour and respect (Gotovos, 2001). Like other groups, Gypsies who have worked and lived over the last two centuries (since the foundation of the Greek nation state in 1831) in a mainly agricultural economy—that due to specific socio-political circumstances skipped the characteristic phases of the industrialisation process—have become part of a process of modernisation (Gotovos, 2001). Gypsies felt the impact of rapid urbanisation, economic restructuring and recession and followed the internal²⁶ and external²⁷ migrant flows of the beginning and the last quarter of the 20th century (Ntousas, 1997).

²² Greek Helsinki Monitor has estimated the Roma and Gypsy population between 300.000 and 350.000 (ERRC and GHM: *Cleaning Operations: Excluding Roma in Greece*, Country Report Series, No12, April 2003)

²³ The first large-scale research related to Gypsies and Roma ever conducted in Greece. The survey, conducted by Papakostantinou, Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre as part of the wider project “Education of Gypsy children” of the University of Ioannina, took place between November 1997 and January 1998 in ten prefectures, where 68% of the Gypsies and Roma in Greece are estimated to live. In 1999, another study with similar findings in five more prefectures of Greece supplemented the previous one (for more see the special edition of *Eleftherotypia*, 11/03/2000: “Tsigani: Ke an Ime Rom Mi Me Fovase”).

²⁴ Including Gypsies and Roma who stated as their place of birth countries such as Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania.

²⁵ Indeed, 63.5% of the Gypsies and Roma in Greece are sedentary and living in houses, 27.1% are sedentary and living in settlements, 5.6% are semi-sedentary, and only 3.5% are traveling (App. 1, Graph 1).

²⁶ Internal migration, which was very much the result of agricultural recession, affected the rural Gypsies who migrated into towns and big cities.

²⁷ Gypsies who came to Greece either as migrants from Asia Minor in 1922 or through the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1924 (Ntousas, 1997). The agreement for this compulsory exchange of populations was signed in Lausanne in 1924 following the Lausanne treaty of 1923 which concluded the First World War (1914–1918) and the Greco-Turkish War in Asia Minor (1919–1922).

Since the early 1950s, different Gypsy groups living in the urban environment had to shift their economic activities towards more flexible, labour-intensive and opportunistic work patterns. Sedentary urban Gypsies tried primarily to take advantage of the new opportunities that urbanisation and industrialisation generated and filled the gaps in specific niches, such as street-vending, repairing and trading of second-hand furniture²⁸ and gadgets, recycling of scrap metal and seasonal trading of various goods.

Many recent studies on Gypsies in Greece increasingly pointed to the Gypsies' marginal incorporation into the educational process as the key factor which explains their inability to follow the pace of economic development that started in the second half and intensified in the last quarter of the 20th century (Katsikas and Politou, 1999; Lidaki, 1998; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Ntousas, 1997; Pavli and Sideri, 1990). Various statistics (official and unofficial) demonstrate high rates of illiteracy among Gypsies in different areas of Greece. This verifies that Gypsies have largely remained marginal participants in the Greek educational process during the last fifty years in contrast to the successful integration of the non-Gypsy population (Gotovos, 2001).

For example, the survey conducted by the University of Ioannina estimates the levels of illiteracy among Gypsies and Roma of between eighteen and forty-seven years of age as high as 69,7%, also acknowledging that 14, 9% of those who have been to school are functionally illiterate (App 2, Graph 1). What is more, a research conducted by DEPOS²⁹ in 1998 on Gypsy and Roma children between six and eighteen years of age in a number of settlements in Greece, revealed that only 21% of children of primary school age have ever been to school, while only 13% have adequate literacy skills.³⁰ In some cases, statistics based on more localised samples show even higher rates of illiteracy. For instance, in a survey of 301 households conducted by N.E.L.E Magnisias³¹ in Volos in 1990, only 5% of

²⁸ At the peak of the process of urbanisation, the vast majority of urban households replaced the heavy old-fashioned furniture, used kitchen appliances and household items with modern ones. Big quantities of this furniture and household items ended up (were sold, given or found) to the Gypsies who stocked, repaired them and sold them in the 80s to the bourgeois Greek society.

²⁹ *Dimosia Epihirisi Poleodomikis Stegasis* [State Enterprise for Urban Planning].

³⁰ Cited in ERRC and GHM: *Cleaning Operations: Excluding Roma in Greece*. Country Report Series, No12, April 2003

³¹ *Nomarchiaki Epitropi Laikis Epimorphosis Magnisias* [Prefectural Adult Education Committee of Magnisia].

Gypsies under the age of twenty could read and write (Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998).

Apart from their marginal incorporation into the schooling process over the last fifty years, the long established groups of Gypsies and Roma in Greece, such as the Greek Gypsies and Turkish Gypsies, have recently felt the impact of migrant economic activity. Especially in big cities, migrant economic activity has had a tremendous impact on 'traditional' Gypsy occupations. Since the fall of Communism in the Balkan and Eastern European countries, the Gypsies' near monopoly over what was considered to be the 'margins' of Greek society has had to face the economic activity generated by new, different Gypsy groups which have migrated to Greece (Gypsies from Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, etc.).

Particularly during the last decades, the economic opportunities for these long established groups of Gypsies, such as street vending, have shrunk considerably due to the growing competition from recent migrants (including Gypsy migrants). At the same time, migrant activity in the informal sector of economy has led to a more rigid legal framework that minimises state authorities' tolerance towards illegal work and trade. Greek law regarding vending has become stricter and vendors who don't possess both a permit and legal proof of purchase of their products are at risk of having their goods confiscated.

Having sketched the general framework within which different Gypsy groups in Greece live and interact, the next sections offer a glimpse into the intricacies relevant to the examination of this specific case. In the absence of concrete and linear historical evidence that could illuminate both the routes followed by the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* within Greek society in general and the particular socio-cultural processes that have defined their relationship with other groups and the state, this study inevitably concentrates on the exploration of ethnographic data produced in fieldwork. Constrained by such historical limitations and the absence of solid statistical data based on large samples over extended periods of time, the use of ethnographic material can make an important contribution to a more informed theoretical analysis.

Perceptions of the ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Gypsyess’ in Mainstream Discourse

This study argues that what is considered to be ‘Gypsy’ for the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* involves networks and practices which cannot be merely seen as the result of a rigid conceptual or ideological distinction between the ‘Gypsy’ and the ‘non-Gypsy’. However, such a distinction clearly prevails and is reproduced in mainstream non-Gypsy discourse, in spite of the fact that the ‘Gypsy’ is often represented as part of contemporary mainstream culture in the arts, the popular literature and the media. The following example from the closing ceremony of the Olympics of 2004 is representative of two contrasting images of the ‘Gypsy’ [*Yiftos, Tsigganos*] and ‘Gypsyess’ [*Yiftia*] in the current popular discourse in Greece.

In the closing ceremony of the Olympics of 2004, its creator, Dimitris Papaioanou, chose to present a patchwork of representative songs and dances from all over Greece.³² Part of this event was a group of actors and dancers dressed as Gypsy men and women who entered the stadium on a red truck with water-melons.³³ As soon as the truck entered the stadium and the ‘Gypsy’ women danced *tsifteteli* (a Greek type of belly-dance), the excitement of the spectators was evident in their loud expressions of enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the very next day—and despite the widely acknowledged success of the ceremony—a public debate arose whether the group which played the Gypsies should have been part of the ceremony or not. The discussion was focused on whether the ‘Gypsy’ truck and the Gypsies in general are actually part of a representative image of what is thought to be today ‘Greek’ culture.

In less formal non-Gypsy discourse and in everyday speech, the frequent use of the nouns *Yiftos* and *Yiftia* as synonymous of the words dirt and dirty, cheap and crook demonstrates a clear connotation between representations of the ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Gypsyess’ and notions of social inferiority. A similar ideological distinction also prevails in discourses often used by state officials. For instance, for a great number of municipal representatives the existence of *Tsiggani* or *Athiggani* in the

³² While music was playing during the ceremony, different groups of actors and other participants paraded and danced, enacting various socio-cultural groups of contemporary Greek society (peasants, immigrants, Cretans, Pontiacs, Gypsies etc).

³³ The truck which carries water-melons is widely seen as a ‘Gypsy’ image in non-Gypsy Greek discourse.

borders of their municipalities is associated with various problems which threaten the existing social order such as sources of pollution, illegal access to land, rise of criminality, possible reactions of the local non-Gypsy local population against the Gypsies' presence.

This is interesting because in the case of the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, as we shall see in the forthcoming paragraphs, conceptual associations of the 'Gypsy' and 'Gypsiness' with dirt and dirtiness, cheap and crook clearly contradict with the values on which the members of this particular group lay emphasis upon, namely the concepts of *timi* [honour] and *nikokirio* [household]. Indeed, most of the elder women of *Gitonia* used to offer—and a few of them still did—their services as cleaners in various non-Gypsy neighbouring households. This proves that in contrast to the widely accepted stereotype of the non-Gypsies of the dirty and crook 'Gypsy', some of the local non-Gypsy Greek housewives had acknowledged the women of *Gitonia* as good cleaners and even trusted them to take care of their own households. In addition, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, strongly stereotype the *balamo* [non-Gypsy Greek] 'other' as dirty and morally inferior.

A different image of the 'Gypsy' [*o Yiftos* or *i Yiftisa*]³⁴ either as the familiar 'other' or as a representative character of Greek society has often been depicted both in the popular literature and in the media. The collection of poems "*O Dodekalogos tou Yiftou*"³⁵ written by Kostis Palamas in 1907 is probably the most famous example in the popular literature where the 'Gypsy' represents the exotic, the wise and the independent. What is more, in the classic black and white Greek film "*Laterna, Ftokia ke Filotimo*", the 'Gypsy' is represented as passionate and uncompromised.

More recently, in the highly popular for over a decade T.V. satire "*Deka Mikri Mitsi*" [Ten Little Mitsi], their creator and famous comedian Lakis Lazopoulos enacted ten different representative characters of contemporary Greek society. One of these central characters was the Gypsy [*o Yiftos*] who played the news presenter with a characteristic Gypsy accent and who cleverly commented on current issues of Greek society. In addition, in 1998 the T.V. series "*Psithiri*

³⁴ Male or female Gypsy.

³⁵ Translation: "The Twelve Words of the Gypsy".

Kardias” [Whispers of the Heart] which was about the love story between a rich middle-class man and a young woman from the Gypsy settlement of Nea Liosia achieved record numbers in Greek T.V. ratings.³⁶ What is more, there is an increasing presence of members of various Gypsy groups in Greece along with non-Gypsies as guests or participants in reality shows, beauty contests and talent shows of Greek trash T.V.³⁷ Whilst, on one hand the Gypsies’ presence in such shows reinforces the non-Gypsy stereotype of the ‘Gypsy’ as marginal, on the other hand it presents Gypsies as an active part of current Greek society.

Also the press often reflects the two contrasting views of Gypsy ‘otherness’ mentioned above: the ‘Gypsy’ as the distant ‘other’ and the ‘Gypsy’ as the familiar ‘other’. Indeed, current articles and reports regarding Gypsies in Greece range from prejudiced assumptions of the Gypsy criminality to more folklorist descriptions or sympathetic attitudes towards their victimisation and conditions of poverty.³⁸

Gypsies, the Greek State and the Use of the Term ‘Minority’

The multiple and often ambiguous uses of the term ‘minority’ in popular and academic discourse in Greece have caused considerable confusion and a wider theoretical discussion which has revolved more around what is thought to be ‘Greek’ than what constitutes a ‘minority’ both in legal and sociological terms (Gotovos, 2002; Kourtovik, 1997; Dimoulis, 1997; Tsitselikis and Christopoulos, 1997).

Following the basic outline of international law for the definition of the term minority, Tsitselikis and Christopoulos (1997: 431–433) indicate that the recognition of a group as a minority within a particular country presupposes that the members of the group: a) possess the citizenship of this country, b) constitute a numerical minority in this country’s population, c) are differentiated in terms of

³⁶ Whilst not avoiding folklorist representations of ‘the Gypsy’, the series succeeded in bringing out with sensitivity some aspects of what is distinctive among the Gypsies of Nea Liosia. Indeed, the series were widely accepted both by the Gypsies as well as by the non-Gypsy Greek viewers.

³⁷ Such as the program presented by Annita Pania which is called *Agripnies*.

³⁸ See for example GHM report to the ERRC: Report on the Coverage of the Roma in the Greek Press (May, 1999).

ethnic, linguistic, religious, or cultural identity and d) express a collective consciousness of this identity and the willingness to persevere it.

During the 1990s, the growing numbers of migrants in Greece, the Macedonian conflict and the rise of the voices of particular groups within Greek society who describe themselves as minorities contributed to the elaboration of a wider anthropological discourse around minorities in Greece. Following the theoretical debates on state and nationalism of the 1980s and 1990s within social sciences and the discipline of anthropology (Hobsbawm, 1990; Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983), this discourse also acquired significant importance among theorists of state and nationalism in Greece (Karakasidou, 1997; Danforth, 1995).

For Danforth (1995), minorities constitute specific groups within the borders of a nation state whose members' points of collective identification differ from the national standards in terms of culture, ethnicity or religion. In addition, Danforth (1995) argues that although the existence of minorities is seen as posing a threat to the image of a homogenous national identity, at the same time minorities are the very product of the same process which consolidates the building of a nation. For Cowan and Brown (2000), within a framework of a politics of identity and difference minorities are neither homogenous entities nor pose the same degree of threat to national identities. According to Cowan and Brown (2000), the existence of points of difference with the national culture among the members of a group does not necessarily mean the absence of points of identification with mainstream culture.

In official political discourse, the Greek state does not bestow the status of minority to any ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural group living within its territory,³⁹ with the exception of the Muslim population, whose minority status was officially acknowledged with the Lausanne treaty of 1924.⁴⁰ The Muslim population is recognised as a religious minority which comprises “the Turkish-

³⁹ Apart from Gypsies and Roma, the Muslim minority and the immigrants who recently came to Greece from various countries, there are long established communities of Armenians, Vlachs, Jews, Pontiacs and Macedonian Slavs.

⁴⁰ The official acknowledgement of the Muslim population of Western Thrace as a religious minority was signed in Lausanne in 1924 in a separate agreement following the Lausanne treaty of peace settlement of 1923 which ended the First World War (1914–1918) and the Greco-Turkish War in Asia Minor (1919–1922). In this agreement, Greece and Turkey agreed the compulsory exchange of their ethnic populations (the ethnic Greeks who lived in Turkey and the ethnic Turks who lived in Greece), with the exception of the ethnic Greeks living in Istanbul and the ethnic Turks living in Western Thrace (see also footnote 27).

speaking” population or groups “of Turkish-origin descent” in Western Thrace⁴¹—in the words of Greece’s former Prime Minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis in his speech on 1990 in Xanthi (cited in Heraklidis, 1997: 219). Consequently, Gypsies in Greece (including the Greek Gypsies) are not officially recognised as a minority with the exception of the Muslim Gypsies who belong to a wider Muslim minority.

Across Europe on the other hand, the emergence of a well-educated political Roma élite—particularly strong in Eastern and Central European countries (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001a; Gheorge and Acton, 2001)—and the overwhelming expansion of institutional bodies and organisations which promoted Roma-related issues (Acton and Klímová, 2001) have advocated the development of a global Roma movement.⁴² At the same time, Gypsies and Roma have been acknowledged as a minority by the EU and other European institutions.

However, Gheorge and Acton (2001: 63) recognise that while the concepts of minority and minority rights may be meaningful for some Gypsy groups, such concepts may not make sense nor reflect the actual position and aims of other Gypsy groups, even within the same country. As far as the Greek Gypsies of this study are concerned, they are reluctant to be differentiated (in legal terms) from the non-Gypsy Greek population and to be officially recognised as a minority, while also consistently differentiating themselves from other Gypsy groups in Greece. On the other hand, they strategically use the term minority when negotiating state benefits. A similar confusion reflects the ambivalent stance of the Greek Gypsies towards the use of the term Roma. As Alexis, the middle-aged head of the Christopoulos extended family explained:

“One day, somebody passed by the settlement and told us we are called Roma ... and I told him that all my life I’ve been a Greek. I’m a Greek Gypsy [*oli mou ti zoi ime Ellinas, ime Ellinas Tsigganos*], but if he wants us to be called Roma in order to get houses, then there is no problem, let him call me whatever he likes. I know who I am.”

⁴¹ This religious minority includes the Pomaks and the Muslim Gypsies (Heraklidis, 1997: 219).

⁴² Whilst this movement does not promote territorial claims or the pursuit of the founding of a nation-state, it endorses some of the strategies of nationalistic projects (Guy, 2001b). For example, it promotes the construction of a homogenous ‘Roma’ cultural identity through the use of the unified term ‘Roma’ for various Gypsy groupings, the emphasis on recent historical events such as the Holocaust and the promotion of a more standardised Romani language (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001a).

The following issues make the use of the term minority in this particular case even more complicated, while suggesting that it should be used in more fluid terms than those assumed in official discourse.⁴³ The fact that, in contrast to the vast majority of other Gypsy groups in Greece, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* do not speak Romani but only speak Greek, as well as their strong affiliation to Orthodox Christianity and their attachment to particular places (place of birth or place of origin), such as *Gitonia* and Khalkida, allows them ample space to negotiate their *Greekness* enmeshed with a notion of *Gypsiness*. Simultaneously though, some of these characteristics, such as the exclusive use of Greek, or the attachment to particular places do not make them ‘less’ Gypsy than other Gypsy groups. On the contrary, in their view, elements of *Greekness* enhance and simultaneously naturalise perceptions of *Gypsiness*.

Place: *Gitonia*

This thesis is grounded in material obtained during a fifteen-month period of fieldwork (from July 2001 until October 2002) conducted in a Greek Gypsy settlement to which I give the pseudonym *Gitonia*.⁴⁴ The settlement which numbered approximately 100 people was located on Kimis Avenue and on the northern side of Spiros Louis Avenue, close to the Olympic Stadium of Athens, in Marousi, the middle-class northern suburb of the Greek capital (Fig. 1.3). *Gitonia* stood 250 metres away from the railway station Irini, only 100 metres away from and on the western side of the premises of the Olympic Stadium, on a sparsely populated area, known as Kaloghreza or as the greater periphery of the Olympic Stadium. There were two entrances to *Gitonia*, one from the Kimis Avenue and one from a small road which led from Spiros Louis Avenue to Irini station and the premises of the Olympic stadium (Fig. 1.3).

⁴³ For Hawes and Perez (1996: 149), although there are significant differences between the Gypsies and other minority groups, the analysis of the Gypsies should constitute part of the study of minorities within the wider theoretical framework of nationalism and ethnicity: “If the concept of ethnic minority is defined by its subordinate status within a wider society, by the low esteem in which its characteristics are perceived, and if its distinctive cementing features are to do with feelings of shared history, culture and tradition, then there is no doubt that Gypsies and Travellers constitute such a minority.”

⁴⁴ *Gitonia* means neighbourhood in Greek. The selection of this pseudonym aims to convey the reader the inhabitants’ attachment to this particular area with this specific synthesis of houses and the relatedness of its members.

In their vast majority, the inhabitants of the settlement were both legal and illegal street and market vendors of fruit and vegetables as well as vendors of kitchen items and clothes. However, the economy of *Gitonia's* Gypsies was also characterised by a considerable degree of flexibility in terms of time and space of work as well as the load and type of work (labour-intensive occupations).⁴⁵ Therefore, although vending is considered to be their main occupation, economic flexibility is achieved through following a wide range of diverse occupations (sale of fruits and vegetables, kitchen items, clothes, seasonal trade, repair and cleaning services, etc.). These can be undertaken in different places (markets, particular posts on the streets, the neighbourhood, the settlement, etc.) and at different times (on a daily basis, at specific seasons, during particular celebrations and festivals, etc.), easily shifting from legal to illegal work activities, and which can potentially engage all family members, men and women, above five or six years old.

The Gypsies of *Gitonia* claimed that they came from Khalkida,⁴⁶ the capital of the island of Euboea (Fig. 1.1), and belong to a larger group of Greek Gypsies known as *Khalkidei* [those who come from Khalkida],⁴⁷ or *Ellines Tsiggani*, or *Ellinoyifti* [Greek Gypsies].⁴⁸ The inhabitants of *Gitonia* accept all of the three

⁴⁵ As we shall see in chapter 7, flexibility in the Greek Gypsy work patterns cannot be seen independently of the extended family and intra-family alliances as well as the arrangements and organization of domestic activities.

⁴⁶ The monument in remembrance of the Gypsies who fell in the National Resistance Movement during World War II in the city of Khalkida which includes a close relative of Alexis Christopoulos, the male head of one of the six extended families of *Gitonia*—who also carries the same family name—verifies the acclaimed connection of this particular group with the capital of Euboea. Alexis Christopoulos was unaware of the existence of this monument. Nevertheless, he claimed that his cousin—with the same name as that of the person commemorated in the monument—was killed during the war.

⁴⁷ NGO specialists on Roma issues, as well as established theorists on Gypsies in Greece agree with the Gypsies themselves on the terms *Khalkidei*, *Ellinoyifti*, or *Ellines Tsiggani* [Greek Gypsies] for those Gypsies who still live in or come from Khalkida and have the above-mentioned characteristics. However, the terms *Ellinoyifti*, or *Ellines Tsiggani* [Greek Gypsies], which associate Gypsies with the geographical area of Greece, are not used only for those Gypsies living or coming from Khalkida. Also other Gypsy groups in Greece call themselves and are being called by theorists as *Ellines Tsiggani* such as the Gypsies of Aghia Varvara in Athens (Vaxevanoglou, 2001). Greek Gypsies with similar characteristics (language, religion, etc.) live in other parts of central and southern Greece, such as for example Khios and Crete (Fig. 1.1). In spite of the apparent confusion in the use of the term 'Greek Gypsies', I decided to use it exactly because it reflects my informants' preference for using it. For the purposes of this thesis, the term Greek Gypsies refers to the inhabitants of *Gitonia*, unless indicated otherwise.

⁴⁸ It is important to stress that the Greek Gypsy community of Athens is wider than the group I conducted fieldwork with and, in fact, it is dispersed in settlements and houses in different suburbs and the outskirts of the capital, or the wider area of Attika, such as Aghia Paraskevi, Menidi, Gerakas, Khalandri, Spata, etc (Fig. 1.2).

terms about themselves and use both the words *Tsigganos* and *Yiftos* [‘Gypsy’] to describe themselves. However, these two words take different meanings depending on the framing context in which the words are uttered and therefore they should not necessarily be seen as synonymous. The term *Ellinas Tsigganos* [Greek Gypsy] is more commonly used in both the everyday language and in formal representations of themselves, as for instance *vis à vis* state officials and NGO representatives. In everyday discourse, the appellation *Ellinas Tsigganos* is mainly used by the Gypsies of *Gitonia* for positive and neutral representations of their individual and collective selves.

By contrast, the terms *Yiftos* [‘Gypsy’] and *Yiftia* [‘Gypsiness’] clearly carry a less positive meaning among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* for what is thought to be ‘Gypsy’. Both words connote with inversions of some of the negative non-Gypsy stereotypes of the ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Gypsiness’ as something of a ‘lower’ social and moral status and are often used during interpersonal quarrels and disputes among the members of the *Gitonia* settlement. When used by this particular group of Gypsies to describe different Gypsy groups, such as the Albanian Gypsies or the Turkish Gypsies, the words *Yiftos* and *Yiftia* take an even more degrading meaning. In such cases, as also in mainstream non-Gypsy discourse, the terms *Yiftos* and *Yiftia* are clearly associated with perceptions of the ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Gypsiness’ as dirty, immoral, dangerous and inferior.

The 4000-acre Greek Gypsy settlement was composed of 22 self-made separate *paraghes* [shacks], as their inhabitants called them, made of wood, card board, and plastic, which lacked basic infra-structure facilities such as sewage facilities, water and electricity. Most *paraghes* were equipped with generators and only one communal water tap was shared in the common yard of the settlement by its inhabitants. A few self-made toilets were shared by the members of each extended family. The concrete-based common yard and a narrow road which connected the two entrances of the settlement constituted the communal spaces of *Gitonia*. The yard also served as a parking space for the trucks of the members of the settlement (Fig. 1.4; Fig. 1.5). The 22 *paraghes* housed 24 nuclear families which belonged to six extended families. The six extended families—the Christopoulos, the Petridis, the Anastasiou, the Ioannou, the Markopoulos and the Theodorou—carried the surname of their male founder or head and were all connected through some sort of kin affiliation (Fig. 1.4).

The *paraghes* which comprised the households of each extended family were all built in ways which clearly denoted a specific household configuration associated with the extended family hierarchies and power relations. The Greek Gypsy extended family was founded on patrifocal links which joined the male siblings of the family and their children within a virilocal form of residence. In all extended families with the exception of those whose male head was deceased the house of the founder of the family or the male head and his wife was making an angle with the house of the eldest son and his family.

Specifically, the Christopoulos extended family comprised the founder of the family Alexis and his wife Evgenia as well as their three sons with their wives and children (Fig. 1.4, 1.4.1). The head of the Christopoulos family, Alexis, was the brother of Varvara, the wife of Antonis who was the head of the Petridis extended family (Fig. 1.4, 1.4.2). Antonis and Varvara lived in *Gitonia* along with the families of their three sons and the family of their daughter. Alexis and Varvara, the male and female heads of the Christopoulos and the Petridis extended families respectively were siblings with the male head of the Theodorou extended family, Marios, who had long passed away (Fig. 1.4, 1.4.3). The wife of the deceased relative, Ifigenia, lived in the settlement with the families of her two sons.

Next to the Theodorou family lived the founder of the Anastasiou family, Kostas, with his wife Antigoni and their sons' family (Fig. 1.4, 1.4.4). Kostas and Antigoni were the parents of Argiro, the wife of Vangelis, the older son from the Theodorou extended family. In the Markopoulos extended family, Alexandra, the wife of its founder, Nektarios—who had also passed away—was the daughter of Marios and Ifigenia the male heads of the Theodorou extended family and the niece of Alexis Christopoulos and Varvara Petridis (Fig. 1.4, 1.4.5). Alexandra lived in the settlement along with her sons and their families. The Ioannou extended family was also related to the Anastasiou family through a sibling bond. In fact, Fotini, the wife of the family founder Stamatis, was the sister of Kostas, the male head of the Ioannou extended family. The couple lived there along with their sons' families (Fig. 1.4, 1.4.6).

In close proximity of the *Gitonia* settlement, lay the shacks and houses of a group of Albanian Gypsies who inhabited the area throughout the 1990s, following the migration flows of non-Gypsy Albanians into Greece after the fall of the Albanian Communist regime (Fig. 1.3). On its northern side the settlement

of *Gitonia* neighboured with an Albanian Gypsy settlement which comprised approximately 15 families (Fig. 1.3.b) and on its southern side stood Albanian Gypsy houses (previously inhabited by non-Gypsy Greeks) which were let from their non-Gypsy owners to the Albanian Gypsies (Fig. 1.3.c). Further up from *Gitonia* very close to the railway tracks also stood houses which were inhabited by Albanian Gypsies (Fig. 1.3.d).

According to the words of the Albanian Gypsies of the greater area of the Olympic Stadium, in the settlement next to *Gitonia* (Fig. 1.3.b) lived those families of Albanian Gypsies who had come to Greece more recently. In houses lived mostly families which settled in the area in the early 1990s (Fig. 1.3.c, Fig. 1.3.d). Most of these people lived in the shacks near *Gitonia* when they first came to Athens and then gradually moved into the houses nearby. The Albanian Gypsy families which first inhabited the greater area of the Olympic Stadium were then followed by relatives who also set up their households in the same area. Although most of the members of this Albanian Gypsy population see themselves as people who live and work permanently in Greece, they occasionally travel back to Albania where they retain extended kin networks of relationships and property.

A smaller Greek Gypsy settlement with six nuclear families—some of them related to the families of *Gitonia* through kinship bonds—was located five hundred metres away from *Gitonia* on Spiros Louis Avenue (Fig. 1.3.e). The inhabitants of *Gitonia* stood in good relations with the Greek Gypsies of their neighbouring settlement but also with other Greek Gypsy communities who lived in settlements and houses throughout Attika and Piraeus—such as in Gerakas, Menidi, Aghia Paraskevi, Khalandri, Aspropirgos, Spata (Fig. 1.2)—as well as with Greek Gypsy communities all over central and southern Greece and the islands—such as Euboea, Crete, Santorini, Khios, Volos and Aetoliko (Fig. 1.1). Indeed, marriages among members of *Gitonia* and members of other Greek Gypsy groups have played the most important role in the development of socio-economic relationships among these different Greek Gypsy groups.

Although the Greek Gypsy settlement was located in one of the less densely populated areas of the suburb, it stood relatively close to non-Gypsy Greek residences (Fig. 1.3.f). Most of the inhabitants of *Gitonia*, maintained that the relationship between them and their non-Gypsy Greek neighbours had never been problematic. By contrast, as the majority of *Gitonia*'s members stressed, their

relationship with the Albanian Gypsy neighbours who recently inhabited the area surrounding the settlement was in constant tension.

The mapping of the houses and the common yard in *Gitonia* demonstrates that the Greek Gypsies do constitute a bounded group of people in relation to their Albanian Gypsy neighbours (Fig. 1.3). However, the two main roads (Kimis and Spiros Louis Avenues) and the railway track, also separated the Gypsy (both Greek and Albanian) inhabitants from the non Gypsy neighbourhood. Six primary schools were located close to *Gitonia*. Four of them were just across the main avenue on the south of the settlement. As illustrated in figure 1.3, two more primary schools were almost a kilometre away from *Gitonia*, on its north-western side.

The History of *Gitonia*

The particular piece of land on which *Gitonia* stood as well as the two other settlements (the Albanian Gypsy and the Greek Gypsy) and the house where Albanian Gypsies inhabited were thought to be mainly private-owned properties and public land. With the exception of the houses which have been legally let by non-Gypsy Greeks to the Albanian Gypsies, the majority of the people of *Gitonia* admitted that the land on which both the Greek and the Albanian Gypsy settlements stood was illegally appropriated by them.

The older members of *Gitonia* claimed to have moved from Khalkida to the city of Athens three or more decades ago. Alexis, the head of the Christopoulos extended family was the first to settle there, together with his wife, Evgenia, and their three children. According to Alexis and Evgenia's words, what today constituted the settlement and the wider area of the Olympic stadium was previously a huge piece of mainly farm estates and fields. Indeed, Alexis and Evgenia lived in the area of Kaloghreza before the construction of the Olympic stadium of Athens in the early 1980s.⁴⁹ This quite plot of land close to the central markets of the suburbs of Marousi and Heraklio was the ideal place for settlement for the five members of the Christopoulos family. As Evgenia described:

“It was us who found this place thirty to thirty five years ago. There was nothing here, nobody, it was a little paradise! There was just the small shoe-factory next to

⁴⁹ The Olympic stadium of Athens was made available to the public in 1982.

us. The owner of the factory. God bless him, told me that the land belonged to a rich man who lived in America and didn't care much about it. So I said, since he is not here, I'll make a shelter for my children and if he comes and wants us to leave, we'll leave. And after a couple of years he came and we were so scared that he would throw us out, but he didn't! He was a very nice man! He saw that we were poor with three children and he said we could stay here for as long as we liked. Since then, every three to five years he visited us to see how we were doing. Lately, I found out that he died and now I don't know who owns the land because he was not married and he didn't have children. Some people say the land is now owned by the state ... I don't know."

Gradually, more and more relatives of the Christopoulos extended family moved into this area and built their houses close to the Christopoulos extended households. First, after the Christopoulos family settled in *Gitonia* the Petridis family moved there with their children and grandchildren. Then, the Theodorou, the Markokopoulos, the Ioannou and the Anastasiou families followed them and built there their own houses. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* had to co-exist with their Albanian Gypsy neighbours who started moving into the area. In another passionate account, Evgenia illustrates the process through which the settlement and the surrounding area took its present shape:

"What you see here, now, has been built with our blood and sweat ... At the beginning I built this little room that today is my bedroom. I had neither a living room nor a kitchen. The kitchen was in this room [pointing at it]. Later, I built another little room next to it that is today my main hall and the kitchen. Then, my sons started building their houses and then the other relatives settled in here and did the same. And then we decided that we should also do something for the common yard, where all these families park their trucks and where children play. So the men constructed this concrete-based yard that you see today. Everything has been made by us! But when these dirty ones [meaning the Albanian Gypsies] came here, our paradise became this mess [*ahouri*] that you see today."

Evgenia liked to call the settlement "little paradise" when she was referring to the years before her Albanian Gypsy neighbours settled next to them. The existence of the Albanian Gypsy migrants in settlements and houses in close proximity of *Gitonia* was not only a source of conflicts between the two Gypsy groups but also a source of constant fear and competition over the control of the

scarce resources of the area as well as the scarcity of posts and stalls in the markets and streets. Indeed, the inhabitants of *Gitonia* were constantly concerned about the effect of migrants' economic activity—particularly the Albanian Gypsies' economic activity in the informal sector of economy—on their own flexible work patterns.

However, it was not only the presence of their Albanian Gypsy neighbours that preoccupied the minds of the people of *Gitonia*. The inhabitants' passionate descriptions of *Gitonia*, as for example expressed in Evgenia's words above, coexisted with their constant fear of an impending eviction due to the Athens Olympics of 2004. No doubt the location of the settlement, close to the premises of the Olympic stadium of Athens justified their fears (Fig. 1.3). Due to the staging of the Olympics of 2004 in Athens and according to official plans and announcements presented by the Ministry of Environment, extensive reconstruction and infra-structural interventions were expected to be undertaken in this particular area (including the neighbouring Albanian and Greek Gypsy settlements and the Albanian Gypsy houses),⁵⁰ leading inevitably to a large number of land and house expropriations.⁵¹

Despite the fact that the land where *Gitonia* stood was illegally appropriated by its inhabitants, no authority or any individual had ever bothered them for this illegal appropriation until the initiation of the negotiations for the resettlement of the inhabitants of the greater area of the Olympic stadium due to the Athens Olympics of 2004. Indeed, they received the post regularly and claimed that they got water in the settlement with the assistance of a relative who worked in the Municipality of Marousi many years ago. They also admitted that although the police was aware of the existence of the settlement, the presence of the police in *Gitonia* was in general discreet. For most of *Gitonia*'s people, the police did not come to the settlement without reason. It was mainly during celebrations, when music was playing loud throughout the whole night and the neighbourhood was

⁵⁰ Such as the construction of the Spiros Louis and Kimis Avenues overpass junction and other reconstructions in the surrounding area of the Olympic sports complex (for instance the construction of parking spaces).

⁵¹ Given the fact that the Olympic Stadium of Athens belonged to the geographical area of the Municipality of Marousi, the Municipality and its Mayor Panayotis Tzanikos—who was also a member of the organizing committee of Athens 2004—were actively involved in the constructions and reconstructions which took place or were scheduled to take place within its borders.

bothered that police came to the settlement and asked the Gypsies to turn off the music.⁵²

More distant—at least until the initiation of the negotiations for their resettlement—seemed to be the relationship between the municipal authorities and the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. Specifically, when asked at the beginning of my fieldwork, the representatives of the Mayor of the Municipality of Marousi, Panayotis Tzanikos—who held the Mayor's position since 1990—ignored the existence of the Gypsy inhabitants of the greater area of the Olympic stadium. And the vast majority of the inhabitants of the settlement said that they also avoided any contact with the local authorities. In fact, most of *Gitonia's* Gypsies admitted that they and their families were officially registered with a different municipality (for example the municipality where they were born or previously lived).

The Politics of Space

The Nikokirio as a Marker of Distinctiveness and the 'Threat' of the Albanian Gypsies

As we shall discuss in chapters 6 and 7, the emphasis on *nikokirio* (household) and the performance of *nikokirosini* which involves paid and unpaid household activities and work among men and women as well as adults and children in *Gitonia* is intimately connected with processes of relatedness, becoming and belonging. In contrast to other Gypsy groups in Europe who construct and reconstruct relatedness as well as a shared sense of distinctiveness through processes of sharing (see for example Stewart, 1997), for the Gypsies of *Gitonia* the *nikokirio* constitutes a significant point of reference for individual and collective identification and a crucial marker of distinctiveness.

Various ethnographers of Greece (Hirschon, 1993b; Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b; Dubisch, 1986b; Salamon and Stanton, 1986; du Boulay, 1986, 1974) have stressed the prominent role of domestic idioms such as the *nikokirio* and *nikokirosini* in mainstream discourse. Similarly to non-Gypsy Greek discourse, the appropriation of these mainstream idioms by *Gitonia's* Gypsies as powerful

⁵² Occasionally, however, such incidents ended up in violent quarrels.

symbols of identification (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b; Salamon and Stanton, 1986) and metaphors of social order (Hirschon, 1993b; Dubisch, 1986b) and social relationships (du Boulay, 1986, 1974) indicate a particular mode of social arrangements and use of space. Whilst through this appropriation the inhabitants of *Gitonia* emphasised their *Greekness* along with their *Gypsiness*, they also placed emphasis on settlement as opposed to movement and privileged their relationship with their non-Gypsy neighbours instead of the Albanian Gypsies.

As already discussed, for the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, not only was the presence of the Albanian Gypsies in the greater area of the Olympic stadium a source of constant anxiety over the control of the scarce resources around the settlement, but it was also a source of significant economic competition in the surrounding markets and vendors' places. In the geographical limits of the neighbourhood, however, what worried most the long established group of the Gypsies of *Gitonia* was the fact that the presence of the Albanian Gypsies next to their settlement 'threatened' the good reputation of its inhabitants as '*timii*' [people with honour], '*nikokirides*' [good householders] and '*kathari*' [clean] Gypsies.

For instance, the words *vromiarides* [dirty] and *ahouri* [mess] that Evgenia used above (see page 36) to describe her Albanian Gypsy neighbours and their settlement indicate exactly this fear. What is more, the involvement of some inhabitants of the Albanian Gypsy neighbouring settlement in drug and gun dealing as well as the fact that some of their children begged around the neighbourhood's traffic lights worried significantly the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. Therefore, it was common for the people of *Gitonia*, such as Kostas, the head of the Anastasiou extended family, to express their fears about *Gitonia's* reputation in the eyes of the non-Gypsy neighbours since the Albanian Gypsies have settled next to them:

What will our neighbours say? These dirty ones destroy our good image. Living next to them destroys our reputation [*Menontas dipla stous yiftous mas pernei ke mas I mpala*]!

However, the acknowledged by the members of *Gitonia* successful incorporation of the Albanian Gypsy children of the neighbourhood into the

formal educational process compared to their own low rates of school attendance and the Albanian Gypsies' tendency to gradually move from the shacks into rented houses also preoccupied *Gitonia's* Gypsies. Indeed, they saw in this tendency of this specific group of Albanian Gypsies a clear strategy of adaptation within Greek society which appropriates other fundamental aspects of the mainstream non-Gypsy culture than the idioms of *nikokirio* and *nikokirosini*. These are sedentarism in houses as opposed to the shacks and incorporation into the schooling process instead of marginal participation.

The Impeding Eviction

Although when I introduced myself to the settlement in July of 2001 the eviction was only a matter of speculation, as we shall see in the forthcoming chapter, the initial speculations of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* were officially verified by their municipality's representatives a couple of months after the beginning of my fieldwork. This verification by the municipal authorities initiated a series of negotiations for reaching an agreement for their resettlement, all of which took place during the period of my fieldwork. Indeed, the agreement was signed on the 1st of August of 2002. And although the actual resettlement happened a few months after I completed my research in *Gitonia*, this issue unsurprisingly constituted the main concern of its inhabitants at that period of time.

What was striking regarding the impending eviction was the fact that the inhabitants of *Gitonia*—and in spite of their constant worries about the settlement's fate—seemed as if they had long been prepared for this eviction. As Evgenia said above, she had expected the eviction to take place at some point in time since she had settled in the settlement many years ago. Additionally, for the vast majority of them, as for thirty-year-old Katerina, the reason for their eviction was absolutely justifiable:

“The land is not ours and the visitors of the Olympic Games [*i xeni pout tha'rthoun stous Olimpiakous*] should not see the shacks here.”

When rumours for the eviction spread in the neighbourhood and when the local state authorities approached the inhabitants of *Gitonia* to announce their eviction and to initiate the processes of negotiations for their resettlement, the people of

Gitonia gave me the impression that they downplayed the issue. This impression was based on the fact that since the initial announcement and until the actual day of the eviction (a period of more than a year), they continued to take good care of their shacks (to paint and decorate them) and their small gardens, they made infra-structural reconstructions in the common yard and they planned their wedding parties and celebrations to take place in the settlement even though they knew the eviction was pending.

For example, at the day that the agreement for their resettlement was signed on the 1st of August of 2002 many of *Gitonia*'s women painted their shacks internally and externally for the celebration of 15th of August (St. Mary's Assumption Day). Even after the signing of the agreement and when almost all their Albanian Gypsy neighbours had evacuated the area, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* retained the same attitude. It was only when the bulldozers literally reached their doors that the inhabitants of *Gitonia* actually moved out from the settlement.

More surprised was I when I found out that most of the heads of each extended family in *Gitonia* as well as some of their children's families legally possessed land on which they had already built privately owned houses in the suburb of Gerakas. These houses were either built long time ago such as the houses of the Petridis and the Theodorou families or nearly finished such as the two houses of the Christopoulos family. The answers of the people of *Gitonia* to the obvious question why since some of them long had their own houses they had not yet moved in there were almost identical: "Nobody moves from *Gitonia*, our kids have grown up here, our relatives are here".

All these suggest that the issue of the eviction is a complex issue that cannot be reduced to a static description of an external event but it is part and ingredient of a politics of space and Greek Gypsy process of identification in which the eviction plays a crucial role. This politics of space involves multiple and often ambiguous attitudes such as the appropriation of the mainstream symbols of *nikokirio* and the idiom of *nikokirosini* which in conjunction with the downplaying of the eviction in everyday life in *Gitonia* denote a sedentary mode of existence which has been reinforced by the eviction. On the other hand, this fixity to place co-exists with the absence of claims to the particular piece of land where the settlement is located and in certain cases the possession of property in a different location.

The involvement of different actors in the processes of the negotiations for the resettlement, such as the Gypsies themselves, the municipal and state officials, the NGOs, the Albanian Gypsies, the non-Gypsy Greek neighbours and myself, have played a decisive role in the ways the inhabitants of *Gitonia* participated in a politics of space. For instance, my everyday presence in the settlement and the undertaking of the teaching sessions with the children, the frequent visits of the representative of the MRG-Greece as well as the occasional visits of journalists in *Gitonia* were used by its inhabitants as means of communicating to the non-Gypsy others and state officials that fixity in space has been a fundamental principle in Greek Gypsy life.

However, the frequent presence of NGOs, of state authorities, of local and international media representatives especially when the official processes of negotiation for the resettlement of the people of *Gitonia* reached their peak, was not only used as a means of communicating their preference for a sedentary mode of existence. This unexpected—for most of the members of *Gitonia*—interest of diverse bodies for the issue of their eviction enhanced their awareness about the strategic location of the settlement and influenced both their attitudes towards the settlement as a space and their stance towards the content of the agreement. In fact it prompted reactions which were geared towards ensuring the content of the agreement to their favour.

Defining the Subject of this Study and Related Areas of Literature

Taking into consideration the shifting character of contemporary Greek society, as well as the central role of the school in modern societies, I realised that the persistently low rates of school attendance and the concomitant high illiteracy rates among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* pointed to a set of interesting contradictions and paradoxes that needed to be carefully unpacked. A number of important and intriguing questions preoccupied me since the period of my preliminary research and the first weeks of my presence in the settlement. These questions undoubtedly challenged many of the initial assumptions that had informed the preparation of my fieldwork proposal.

In the first instance, what struck me the most was the fact that these low rates of school attendance co-existed with the Greek Gypsies' acknowledgement of the

importance of schooling. The vast majority of children between four and twelve years of age, as well as their parents, clearly expressed their wish to go to school and at least to develop reading and writing skills. As already mentioned, even children who had been to school for some time and then dropped out, talked proudly about this experience and said they wished to return to school at some future stage of their lives. For most of the Greek Gypsy adults and children, neither the prejudiced school environment, nor the state, were to blame for their illiteracy. So, why did they not acquire the degree of education they wished? And why did they insist on blaming themselves for this failure? These questions do not have simple answers. But they have been central to defining the theoretical and methodological orientation of this work.

Whilst issues such as poverty, prejudice, discrimination, inefficient and ineffectual state policies and interventions clearly frame the answers to these questions, making these issues the key answer to the schooling paradox in relation to the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* would fail to tackle other important issues which the children's and adults' stance towards formal education pointed to. In the first place, what I found most intriguing in the settlement was that the Greek Gypsies' marginal incorporation into the schooling process did not preclude their preoccupation with a construction of a shared sense of difference premised on entangled perceptions of *Gypsiness* and *Greekness*.

In acknowledgement of this, I shifted the focus of my research from what initially was to be an ethnography of the school to the examination of alternative forms of learning which both children and adults actively engage with and which are seen as more central than the school. Indeed, this thesis is neither an ethnography of the school nor does it look at institutional policies and educational programmes. Rather, using as a reference point the paradoxes relevant to the Greek Gypsies' attitudes towards schooling, it concentrates on those ideologies, relationships and practices through which the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* realise their long and short-term projects and construct distinctiveness at the margins of the school.

The priorities of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* are located within the family and the extended kin network as well as within marriage and work. However, kinship, marriage and work cannot be examined independently of the wider processes of which they are part. Therefore, the schooling paradox provides the framework for

the analysis of the ways through which and extent to which this specific group of Greek Gypsies come to prioritise marriage, work and kin relatedness over the school within a context of wider processes and institutional workings. In order to do so, I draw on the theories of childhood, approaches to Gypsies and the anthropology of Greece.

Children at the Centre of the Study of Greek Gypsies

The main body of this thesis starts and finishes with children's experience of the school. This is so because, as already outlined, 'the schooling paradox' is symptomatic of relationships and practices which the children of *Gitonia* actively engage with and which are central for Greek Gypsy projects of identification. In fact, children are seen here as competent members of a kinship network who actively participate in the interdependencies of relatedness through their involvement in the family, work and the household.

This task is facilitated by recent shifts in the scholarship on children which have promoted an approach to children as competent social actors and subjects with agency.⁵³ Increasingly, academic work on childhood is pointing to the fact that children display a variety of behaviours in managing their encounters, ideas and aspirations that constitute elaborate social competencies.⁵⁴ Within this

⁵³ Following the theoretical and methodological turn of the 1970s in sociology and anthropology with ethnographers increasingly pointing to the need to listen to the voices of the children and take into account their experiences and views of the world (Jenks, 1982; Hardman, 1973), the study of childhood was no longer regarded merely as the study of socialisation or child development (Lee, 2001; Smart, Neale, and Wade, 2001; Schwartzman, 2001; James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; James and Prout, 1990). The new or emergent paradigm that views children as social agents and inventive participants in social life has urged a new approach in the study of childhood, in which children are seen as having a conceptual autonomy (Corsaro, 1992) and therefore should be studied *in their own right* (Stephens, 1995; Corsaro and Eder, 1990; James and Prout, 1990; Willis, 1981; Hardman, 1973). What is more, a growing body of studies on children in their localities has shown that childhoods are socially and temporally constructed, while each culture defines childhood in terms of its own cultural meanings and institutional practices (Gupta, 2002; Jenks, 1996; Hall, 1995; Stephens, 1995; Qvortrup, 1994; Ennew, 1994; Hendrick, 1990; Ennew, 1986; Davies, 1982; Jenks, 1982; Opie and Opie, 1977; Ariés, 1962). The theoretical shift towards seeing age as an important cognitive or developmental variable culturally and temporally defined (Toren, 1999, 1993; Christensen, 1998, 1993; Soldberg, 1990) has gone hand in hand with a growing attention to notions of childhood as fragmented and crosscut by factors such as gender, class, and ethnicity (Gilliam, 2003; Prendergast, 2000; Backett-Milburn, 2000; Stephens, 1997, 1995; Jenks, 1996; Wee, 1995; Qvortrup, 1994; James and Prout, 1990).

⁵⁴ For example, James and James (2004), Olwig and Gullov (2003), Mayall (2002), Foley, Roche and Tucker (2001), Smart, Neale and Wade (2001), Lee (2001), Alanen (1998), James, Jenks and Prout (1998), Hutchby and Moran Ellis (1998), Jenks (1996), Stephens (1995), Qvortrup (1994), Ennew (1994), James and Prout, (1990).

emerging theoretical framework children are seen as active participants in the process of making culture (Stephens, 1995),⁵⁵ whose actions have an impact on those they are related to (James and James, 2004; Toren, 2002), and who shape while simultaneously being shaped by their circumstances (Alanen, 1998; Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, 1998; James and Prout, 1990). In exploring the ways these processes happen, we come to understand how children engage with the adults' worlds, participate in the interdependencies of social relationships and make sense of their diverse encounters (Toren, 2002, 1999).

This task is supported by a body of studies on child labour (including household work) which have stressed the association between the economic importance of children's work for children and their families (Mizen, Pole, and Bolton, 2001; Goddard and White, 1982) and the ways through which children's work may be valued in diverse cultural settings (Helleiner, 2003; Punch, 2001; Nieuwenhuys, 1996; Boyden, 1990; Soldberg, 1990).

Based on the premise that children are subjects with agency, this thesis aims to place children at the centre of the study of Gypsies. This work looks at the ways through which the Greek Gypsy children of the settlement of *Gitonia* perceive, experience and negotiate their shared sense of belonging within a framework of relationships and through processes of becoming that sustain and reproduce *Greek-Gypsiness*. In this sense, not only does the concept of *Greek-Gypsiness* inform a shared experience of a distinctive childhood among this group of Greek Gypsies but a collective sense of being a Greek Gypsy cannot be seen independently of children's experiences of becoming and belonging. Here, childhood and adulthood can only be viewed as two categories that sustain each other through reciprocal effect rather than two clearly demarcated conceptual groupings or distinctive areas of morality or experience.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ As Ackroyd and Pilkington (1999) add, our understanding of childhood in social theory has been altered as a consequence of rapid global upheavals, which have resulted in the erosion of concepts of bounded and homogeneous childhood cultures. For Ackroyd and Pilkington (1999), the numerous examples of studies on British youth (Back, 1996; Hall, 1995, 1992) echo Stephens' (1995) earlier observation that global changes enable children to pursue and negotiate new or multiple identities in the process of making culture.

⁵⁶ The case of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* points to notions of childhood and adulthood as domains that are less clearly demarcated and distinct than those implied in 'Western' assumptions (Olwig and Gullov, 2003; Lee, 2001), simultaneously challenging 'nostalgic' views of childhood (Jenks, 1996; Steedman, 1995) as 'innocent', 'immature', 'at risk of disappearing', and 'in the need for protection' (Jenkins, 1998; Stephens, 1995; Postman, 1983). Such conceptions have been associated with specific socio-historical processes, particularly the development of capitalism and

However, while children's experiences, perceptions and aspirations regarding their future are central to this work, this is not a concern that is exclusive to a study of Greek Gypsy childhood. In fact, looking at the Greek Gypsy children of *Gitonia* outside of the context of family and kin relatedness, or at adulthood and parenthood separately from children, would be rather misleading.

Childhood, Becoming and Belonging

In this thesis, I argue that Greek Gypsy distinctiveness cannot be understood independently of children's lives and experiences. Nor can Greek Gypsy childhood be seen and examined in isolation from adult relations. Anthropologists have been clear about the fact that "the separation of children and adults [...] is not a general characteristic of life everywhere in the world" (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003: 13). Furthermore,

(...) an important task therefore becomes that of examining the various positions from which children seek to develop a place for themselves in society through time. This perspective requires careful research on how children gradually learn, through reciprocal relationships, to take intersubjective action that is meaningful in relation to their physical surroundings and the wider society of which they are part (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003: 13)

What is more, Toren (1999: 115) suggested that "as anthropologists, we cannot fully understand relations between adults unless we investigate what children know about these relations and how they know it." And vice versa, "to study children in the absence of a concurrent study of relations between people in the collectivity at large, can result only in an inadequate analysis" (Toren, 1999: 103).

Toren's suggestion seems to be especially relevant regarding the study of Gypsies. This is so because children can provide an important focus in examining the ways through which different expressions of *Gypsiness* are sustained and

its concomitant processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, through which children are no longer seen as economically active members (James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; Connolly and Ennew, 1996; Ennew, 1994, 1986; Stephens, 1995; Zelizer, 1998; 1985; Hockey, 1993). Rather children are seen as an investment in human capital that flourishes through the educational process (Qvortrup, 1985). In fact, since the early days of industrialisation, there has been a great concern for street children and urban street life associated with dangerous spaces (Valentine, 1996; Stephens, 1995; Boyden, 1990). Additionally, the restriction of children in specific places (homes, schools, playgrounds, clubs) has generated an idea that "to be a child outside adult supervision, visible on city centre streets, is simply to be out of place" (Connolly and Ennew, 1996: 133).

reproduced. But ironically, at a time when the proliferation of childhood ethnographies fostered what is called the new or emergent paradigm in childhood studies (see footnote 53), children have remained largely marginal in ethnographic explorations of diverse Gypsy groups—with only a few exceptions (Jordan, 2001a,b; Helleiner, 1998a,b; Okely, 1997).⁵⁷ In spite of the recent shift in theories of childhood, age, in contrast to gender, has remained a rather unexamined variable in traditional ethnographic accounts on Gypsies.⁵⁸ Especially intriguing is the fact that although most of these ethnographic accounts acknowledge some distinctive features which characterise diverse Gypsy childhoods, this acknowledgement has not been followed by an in-depth analysis of different conceptualisations of age among various Gypsy groups.⁵⁹

With respect to this study, the extent to which the children of *Gitonia* actively participate in the interdependencies of relatedness and the ways they do so, entail meaningful—for them—interpretations of adults' ideologies and practices. And vice versa, the particular ways through which children embody and perform Greek Gypsy distinctiveness inform adults' perceptions and experiences of collective self. In this sense, *Greek-Gypsiness* does not simply relate to adults' views of childhood but also to the particular ways through which children perceive and embody these views.

⁵⁷ Most of these works have concentrated on the relationship between the Gypsy children's educational exclusion and specific state policies. Amongst these exceptions, the most consistent work on Gypsies and childhood has been produced by Helleiner in relation to the Irish Travellers. Helleiner (2003, 2000, 1998a,b) in her studies on the politics of Traveller childhood in Ireland reveals the extent to which state intervening policies on children—based on a model of sedentary, domesticated home life and full time education—reproduce and reinforce discourses of social inequality, while also informing Travellers' projects of identification within a wider framework of a politics of culture. Jordan (2001a,b) looks at the irreconcilable differences between the process of learning within the family and the process of learning at school for the Travellers' children in Scotland, as well as the processes of institutional exclusion of Traveller children from Scottish state schools. Okely (1997) examines the ambiguity surrounding state educational policies in Britain geared towards Gypsy children's schooling

⁵⁸ As we shall discuss in chapter 3, although the management of the Gypsy body (particularly the female one), as a means of expressing Gypsy distinctiveness, has been explored extensively by a number of ethnographers on Gypsies (Gay y Blasco, 1999, 1997; Stewart, 1997; Okely, 1983; Sutherland, 1977, 1975; Miller, 1975; Gropper, 1975), age has remained a much less examined variable in relation to explorations of the embodiment of *Gypsiness*. This happens in spite of the fact that Sutherland (1977), Miller (1975) and Gropper (1975) recognised early that the concepts of purity and defilement alter throughout the life circle among different age groups of Gypsies.

⁵⁹ For example, Okely (1983: 160) recognises that among the Gypsies and Travellers in Britain the family constitutes the locus where alternative forms of children's learning and education are being produced. What is more, Stewart (1997) acknowledges among the Hungarian Rom that children as young as seven or eight years old are bestowed a moral autonomy (1997: 56).

Becoming and belonging are seen here as two interconnected processes that constitute the basis on which an individual and a shared sense of Greek Gypsy self is affirmed throughout a person's life cycle. Specifically, belonging is construed in terms of processes of identification that involve embodied performances and ideologies through which spatially and temporally defined social relationships are experienced (Hetherington, 1999; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a). Yet belonging takes place at many different levels, including tangible and more abstract social relationships, institutional processes and multifaceted social contexts.

Therefore, children's ways of prioritising relationships and following practices in the course of their everyday lives, while also seeking connections and affiliations in the society at large, inform us about the ways the micro-politics of everyday life relate to traces and effects of wider institutions, national identities and global processes. But in order to understand how children actually come to favour particular embodied performances—on which they build meaningful social relationships—over others, or on what grounds and to what extent they choose to move within and across different social networks and institutions, we have to grasp how children and adults perceive and experience the process of becoming a Greek Gypsy.

Becoming is seen here as a process of constructing personhood, emotions and knowledge (Toren, 1999). Although in this study processes of becoming concentrate on adults' perceptions and children's experiences of childhood, becoming clearly points to a culturally constructed perception of development of personhood which pertains not only to children but also to adults (Stewart, 1999). In this sense, becoming differs from what in theories of child development is seen as the process of transformation of cognition through the development of conceptual schemata.⁶⁰ Instead, becoming in this study refers to the different ways through which the individual embodies the changes that take place at different stages throughout his or her life and the extent to which he or she receives and bestows meaning and gets involved within different contexts of intersubjective relationships.

With respect to the study of childhood, this thesis is clearly placed within, and contributes to, approaches that promote the analysis of concepts of childhood in

⁶⁰ See Collins, 2002. Jenks, 2002. Piaget, 1977.

parallel with concepts of adulthood (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003; Toren, 2002; Toren, 1999). Methodologically this study stands alongside Amit's (2003) argument that anthropologists should shift their focus away from child-centred institutions and practices to those processes and practices that children themselves focus upon in diverse cultural contexts.

Approaches to Gypsies

It is widely accepted that approaches to Gypsies involve a great variety of studies with diverse aims and purposes which have drawn on different theoretical and methodological backgrounds. In contrast to a number of studies on Gypsies elsewhere in Europe (Liégeois and Gheorge, 2002; Liégeois, 1994; Kenrick, 1994; Fraser, 1992; Kenrick and Puxon, 1972) and Greece (Gotovos, 2002; Vaxevanoglou, 2001; Karathanasi, 2000; Terzopoulou and Georgiou, 1998; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Ntousas, 1997) which belong to the disciplines of history, linguistics, folklore and the domain of the sociology of education, this thesis is an ethnography of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* that aims primarily to make a contribution to the literature on the anthropology of the Gypsies.

What is more, my research clearly indicates that it is inappropriate to generalise from the site of fieldwork to characterise a broader 'Gypsy experience'. In this respect, this ethnographic work follows the turn in the study of Gypsies in Europe (Williams, 2003, 1993; Marushiakova and Popov, 2001b; Lemon, 2000; Helleiner, 2000; Gay y Blasco, 1999; Stewart, 1997; Hawes and Perez, 1996; Okely, 1983; San Román, 1986, 1976), the United States (Salo, 1981; Sutherland, 1975) away from generalisations towards the examination of those particular practices that exemplify the particularities of diverse Gypsy groups within specific nation-states.

More specifically, this study concentrates on the complex processes through which a particular group of Gypsies constructs and manifests its shared sense of distinctiveness, while also perpetuating a sense of belonging with respect to the Greek nation-state. In addition, by using the schooling paradox as starting point to disentangle notions of *Greek-Gypsiness*, the approach followed here shows that the Greek Gypsies are part of Greek society dynamically and contextually related to the changes occurring within this society.

I argue that in the case studied here the concept of ‘belonging’ cannot be seen independently of Greek Gypsy processes of ‘becoming’ and of children’s experiences of childhood. By taking the schooling paradox as a starting point for explorations of processes of *Greek-Gypsiness*, this thesis addresses the implications of age and gender in the performance of an individual and a shared sense of belonging. What is more, by viewing children as competent participants who actively respond to the challenges produced in the wider socio-economic arena, we gain an insight into the ways through which *Greek-Gypsiness* is being constructed, adjusted and negotiated *vis à vis* other groups within the rapidly shifting context of contemporary Greek society.

In turn, such an approach seems to address what Papapavlou and Kopasi-Ikonomea (2002: 16) recognise as a gap in the literature on Gypsies in Greece; the gap that lies between an impressive body of studies focused on education and educational policies (Vasiliadou, 2000; Katsikas and Politou, 1999; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Ntousas, 1997; Dedikousi-Iakovidis and Leftheriotou, 1996) and the absence of studies on Gypsies concentrated on issues such as age, gender and kinship. Specifically, this thesis aims to illustrate the importance of conceptions of age and childhood in exploration of *Gypsiness*.

The Anthropology of Greece

The case of the Greek Gypsies touches upon and contributes to the contemporary turn in the anthropology of Greece from the study of almost exclusively ‘Greek’ communities often in remote geographical areas (Dubisch, 1995; du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962) to the study of minorities (Kravva, 2003b; Cowan and Brown, 2000; Mackridge and Yannakakis, 1997; Karakasidou, 1997; Danforth, 1995). Greek society increasingly experiences multiculturalism not merely as the sum of different cultures which coexist but as “a new, and internally plural, praxis of culture applied to oneself and to others” (Bauman, 1999: vii). Therefore, this particular study, along with other ethnographic approaches to minorities in Greece, offers useful insights into the ways the interplay between the state, ethnicity and religion has informed diverse projects of identification which challenge notions of a homogeneous ‘Greek’ social entity.

This study also engages with some core concerns within the discipline, particularly in relation to the anthropology of the Mediterranean, such as family, kinship, gender and honour. However, it tackles these issues acknowledging the socio-economic and historical specificities of Greek society, while rejecting ‘The Mediterranean’ as a homogeneous and clearly defined ethnographic region (Goddard, Llobera, and Shore, 1996: 4).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the anthropology of Greece fell under the umbrella of the anthropology of the Mediterranean, a sub-field that has been widely criticised (Greverus, Römhild, and Welz, 2001; Goddard, Llobera, and Shore, 1996; Dubisch, 1995; Pina-Cabral, 1989; Herzfeld, 1987). A central criticism was that the definition of a field, the Mediterranean, has tended to limit the elaboration of constructive anthropological explorations and comparisons through ‘inventing’ a homogeneous cultural area that covered the wider geographical area of the Mediterranean, extending from the Northern African countries to the Balkans and from Israel and Turkey to Portugal (Goddard, Llobera, and Shore, 1996). This particular approach to inventing ‘The Mediterranean’ (Goddard, Llobera, and Shore, 1996: 4) was primarily elaborated and sustained through studies which focused on reifying notions of honour and shame among rural populations (Gilmore, 1987; Gilmore, 1982; Peristiani, 1976; Peristiani, 1965; Davis, 1992, 1988, 1977, 1973, 1969; Pitt-Rivers, 1965). Most of these studies involved research which was conducted in small-scale rural societies and misleadingly created an image of the Mediterranean “as a repository of traditional ways of life and world views” (Greverus, Römhild, and Welz, 2001: 1).

Such studies lacked a historical dimension and were unable to tackle the impact of global forces on local, small-scale processes, or offer a comparative framework of analysis in the wider anthropological discipline (Goddard, 1996). Following other ethnographic studies on Greece which criticised the concept of ‘The Mediterranean’, here, issues of honour, gender and kinship are being seen and examined not as self-contained notions but rather within a framework of relatedness, agency and practice which constitute what Herzfeld (2001) describes as interconnected elements of a politics of culture. This approach is more preferable to earlier forms, since it links body practices, ideologies of personhood and emotionally charged social relationships with wider projects of identification, ethnic, national or cultural identities.

In addition, far from seeing the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* as a self-contained and self-referential community, this study uses Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy (1997) which is based on the premise that people acknowledge common grounds of familiarity to show how this group of Greek Gypsies draw on the state's nationalist discourse to consolidate a shared experience of belonging. Nevertheless, while belonging to the Greek national community, the Gypsies of *Gitonia* perceive, manifest, and negotiate a sense of distinctiveness and realise their long-term projects through alternative mechanisms and processes of 'knowledge' which take place outside or at the margins of institutions such as the school and most other institutions that the very same discourse promotes.

Simultaneously, these alternative mechanisms and 'knowledges' are primarily sustained and reproduced within informal networks of relatedness which nevertheless appropriate elements of the official rhetoric of the nation-state in order to affirm a shared sense of belonging. Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart (1999) have demonstrated how people who are seen as 'marginal', such as Gypsies in Hungary (Stewart, 1999) and gamblers in the Greek island of Lesbos (Papataxiarchis, 1999), subvert mainstream concepts and practices to seek dependence from their conditions of marginality.

The Schooling Paradox, Ethnography and Greek Gypsy Distinctiveness

From a closer examination of the contradictions inherent in attitudes towards schooling it becomes obvious that simplistic interpretations of the official figures regarding rates of literacy and school attendance fail to disclose the particularities and complexities of the case of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* (see page 17). For example, simply by mentioning that only one of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* can read and write at a very basic level does not actually reflect the paradoxes of the Greek Gypsies' stance towards the school. Ethnography constitutes the research tool through which these contradictions and particularities are unravelled. This is so, because ethnography links the more generalised attitudes of *Gitonia's* Greek Gypsies towards schooling with their mundane experiences, while shifting our attention to those issues that children and adults themselves put emphasis upon.

Recent ethnographic studies on Gypsies and Travellers have pointed to some of the contradictions and particularities evident in the relationship between other

Gypsy groups and the school. For example, Okely (1997) has acknowledged that Gypsy children in Britain have elaborated strategies of subverting educational policies aiming at their assimilation. With respect to the Traveller's children in Scotland, Jordan (2001a) stressed the fact that the processes of learning at school clash with processes of learning taking place within the family.

Having acknowledged that *Greek-Gypsiness* is premised on the experience of becoming both Gypsy and Greek among the members of *Gitonia* and that the schooling paradox provides a useful focus to explain this, it is clear that the Greek Gypsy sense of difference cannot be seen independently of children's experiences of childhood and adults' views of these experiences. In particular, the extent to which Greek Gypsy children perceive schooling as compatible or in conflict with the main aspects, values and activities of Greek Gypsy life and the degree to which parents entrust in their children the decision on whether they will attend school reveals much about the blurred boundaries between childhood and adulthood as well as about children's agency and competence in engaging with adults' activities.

The less rigidly separated conceptions of childhood and adulthood among the Greek Gypsies of the settlement of *Gitonia* can only be understood within a framework of kinship relatedness and marriage ideologies which generate multiple sets of hierarchical relationships which are also relationships of knowledge. Shifts in anthropological approaches to kinship as "cultures of relatedness" (Carsten, 2000) have facilitated this task. The schooling paradox reflects the primacy of relatedness over schooling among Greek Gypsy children, while stressing the importance of kinship relatedness in generating knowledge. Children participate actively in the interdependencies of kin relatedness, undertaking age based and gendered embodied performances that become the vehicle through which an individual and a shared sense of self sustain each other and produce difference.

More broadly, Greek Gypsy relatedness in *Gitonia* is about marriage and the performance of domestic and work activities, the management of sexuality and the expression of sentiments as well as participation in supportive relationships within the extended kin network. The importance of these networks is illustrated in the words of Manolis who confessed to me that when he attended school he would inevitably miss class over several days in the event of the wedding of a close

relative. “There is no way that I’d miss the wedding preparations or the wedding parties for anything in the world!” Manolis said to me pointing to the fact that children themselves value these moments of sociality.

As already discussed, Greek Gypsy distinctiveness is realised and sustained at the margins of the schooling process, nevertheless this distinctiveness affirms a strong sense of *Greekness* along with *Gypsiness*. Taking the schooling paradox as a starting point, ethnographic analysis brings to light the more subtle ways through which the Greek Gypsy children and adults of *Gitonia* choose to engage with or abstain from various state institutions. The extent to which the Greek Gypsies engage with diverse institutions, such as the school or the church, reflects the ways through which their experience of belonging in the Greek nation-state co-exists with a distinctive sense of collective Greek Gypsy self. Subsequently, ethnographic analysis informs us about the more nuanced aspects of the interplay between Greek Gypsies and non-Gypsy Greeks as well as about the relationship between the Greek Gypsies and the state. In addition, ethnographic research reveals differences and conflicts emerging from the interplay among diverse Gypsy groups, simultaneously mirroring the changes taking place within Greek society.

This strong emphasis on *Greekness*, appropriated and objectified at the margins of the schooling process, challenges traditional theories of nationalism and state that see formal education as the most central medium for the dissemination of nationalist ideologies (Hobsbawm, 1990; Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983; Foucault, 1977). Additionally, in accordance with recent theories which stress the importance of the analysis of culture in the study of the state (Steinmetz, 1999; Bourdieu, 1984) and studies which take into account local-level values and social practices (Sutton, 2000; Herzfeld, 1997; Sirman, 1990), the schooling paradox in this particular study sheds light on the ambiguities of the relationship between the Greek Gypsies and the state.

In short, the attitude of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* towards schooling sheds light on particular ideologies and practices through which conceptions of sameness and difference, childhood and adulthood, *Greekness* and *Gypsiness*, as well as an individual and a shared sense of self assume different meanings on different occasions. This thesis therefore explores not only children’s and adults’ attitudes towards schooling but pays attention to those areas of social life and those social

relations that Greek Gypsy children and adults identified as meaningful and productive, such as marriage, family and work.

Outline of this Thesis

As we have seen, this chapter focuses on the main themes of this thesis and discusses its aims and objectives through a specific example extracted from the field. It also introduces the group that this study focuses upon, presents the location of fieldwork and describes the wider context in which this research took place. More specifically, this introductory chapter highlights the questions and issues arising from what I have called 'the schooling paradox', evident among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, outlining why this paradox constitutes a useful reference point in the study of this particular group.

Chapter 2 concentrates on a discussion of methodology as well as the ways data and information were obtained and processed at different stages of the fieldwork. In particular, taking as a starting point the central role of children in facilitating my relationships with adults, this chapter deals with the methodological specificities implicated in conducting research with children, while discussing the ethical considerations that derive from the use of this particular methodology. It also stresses the importance of my involvement in the negotiations for the resettlement of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* in establishing relationships of trust with the adults and the role that children played in this involvement. What is more, chapter 2 places the specific issues that emerged through my fieldwork experience within the wider framework of anthropological debates regarding the politics of research. In particular, the discussion focuses on issues such as the experience of doing fieldwork 'at home', the issues of reflexivity and advocacy in anthropology and the meaning of place in ethnographic research and representation.

The following chapter (chapter 3) provides a general background to the main issues elaborated in the thesis. This includes a discussion of literature domains such as the anthropology of Gypsies and the anthropology of Greece, as well as of nationalism and ethnicity, difference and identification, embodiment and performativity. This chapter also defines *Greek-Gypsiness* as the vehicle through which the embodied performance of a Greek Gypsy personhood articulates and

sustains a shared sense of belonging that is seen primarily as morally distinctive. It is this moral quality that provides the basis for the Greek Gypsy sense of difference *vis à vis* the non Gypsy-Greek 'others'. What is more, chapter 3 explores the idiosyncratic relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the Greek state from the Gypsies' point of view, also looking at the ways both perceptions of *Greekness* and *Gypsyness* have nourished and, simultaneously, have been nourished by this peculiar relationship.

Chapter 4 focuses on children's perceptions and experiences of school and their expectations regarding the schooling process. More specifically, this chapter looks at the extent to which children consider schooling to be compatible with or contradictory to Greek Gypsy life, processes of knowledge taking place within the family, and their own aspirations. In this chapter, children outline their views about school, as an institution characterised by rigidities, but also as a source of knowledge and as a space of interaction with non-Gypsy children. This opens the way for a discussion of what Greek Gypsy children in the settlement consider to be 'knowledge' as well as the grounds on which they prioritise different sources of knowledge. Through the analysis of children's perspectives, it becomes obvious that not only do children acquire knowledge but they also generate it and are recognised by adults in doing so. Greek Gypsy children see knowledge as an embodied process which to a large extent involves meanings and feelings implicated in significant social relationships and practices.

Chapter 5 engages with a detailed presentation of ideologies, skills, attitudes and practices regarding marriage. Marriage produces and consolidates intra-family alliances that are premised on reciprocal relationships of long-term economic and social support. Indeed, marriage engages community members in forms of investment which are realised outside the boundaries of the state and the formal economy through ideologies of gender, sexuality and kinship. The lengthy and lavish wedding celebrations confirm the interdependencies of Greek Gypsy relatedness. Additionally, the practice of endogamy and concerns over honour and female virginity reinforce intra-family solidarities and constitute the means through which Greek Gypsy distinctiveness is not only 'imagined' but also realised in contacts, alliances, relationships and sentiments. In contrast to previous approaches to virginity in the literature on the Mediterranean, virginity here is

achieved, even though intimacy is allowed, through self-discipline and self-control.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus of analysis from the process of building intra-family or intra-group relations to the process of the extended family fragmentation. The extended family is founded on patrifocal links and the practice of virilocal residence that correlates with the emphasis on brotherly relations. In the Greek Gypsy settlement of *Gitonia* kinship constitutes a notion of relatedness that needs to be constantly verified through affirmative relations that, however, tend to reinforce this fragmentation. This chapter looks at the particular ways through which the performance of kin related roles is inextricably connected with the performance of personhood. Specifically, personhood is constantly evaluated on the basis of an age and gender-specific kinship morality that is expressed in terms of hierarchies, caring and parenting relationships. Parenthood within the extended family can be more broadly translated into a set of caring and supportive relationships defined and redefined by different agents, including but extending beyond the relations of parents and children. What is more, this chapter deals with hierarchical and caring relations based on parenting ideals which are developed among children themselves.

The next chapter, chapter 7, concentrates on the intimate association between kinship networks and extended household work. This chapter shows how the performance of gender and age-specific activities in the *nikokirio* (household), which involves the domestic domain and the world of work, consolidates personhood, affirms kinship relatedness and manifests a shared sense of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness. Since conceptions of personhood, domestic activities, family and work intersect, the emphasis on performativity suggests that it is through a constant enactment of roles by adults and children through which a shared experience of being a Greek Gypsy is affirmed. Therefore, this group of Greek Gypsies invest a considerable amount of time and effort conveying to younger generations the significance of these activities as well as the methods of carrying them out appropriately and effectively. In fact, this chapter shows that children are not only recipients of this knowledge but they are themselves important carriers of Greek Gypsy performativity.

Chapter 8 looks at the ways through which children's experiences of their childhood and adults' perceptions of these experiences inform and sustain a

shared sense of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness among the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. In addition, this chapter discusses how children's sense of sharing a distinctive childhood is constructed and reconstructed in the framework of their relationship with Greek Gypsy adults, other experiences of childhood, such as the Albanian Gypsy and the non-Gypsy Greek children, as well as within and through institutional processes. In particular, this chapter focuses on the ways through which and degree to which children value institutions such as the army and the police, and embody national and religious consciousness in order to negotiate their sense of belonging in the Greek nation-state, while also manifesting their *Greekness* and *Gypsiness*.

Maps and Figures

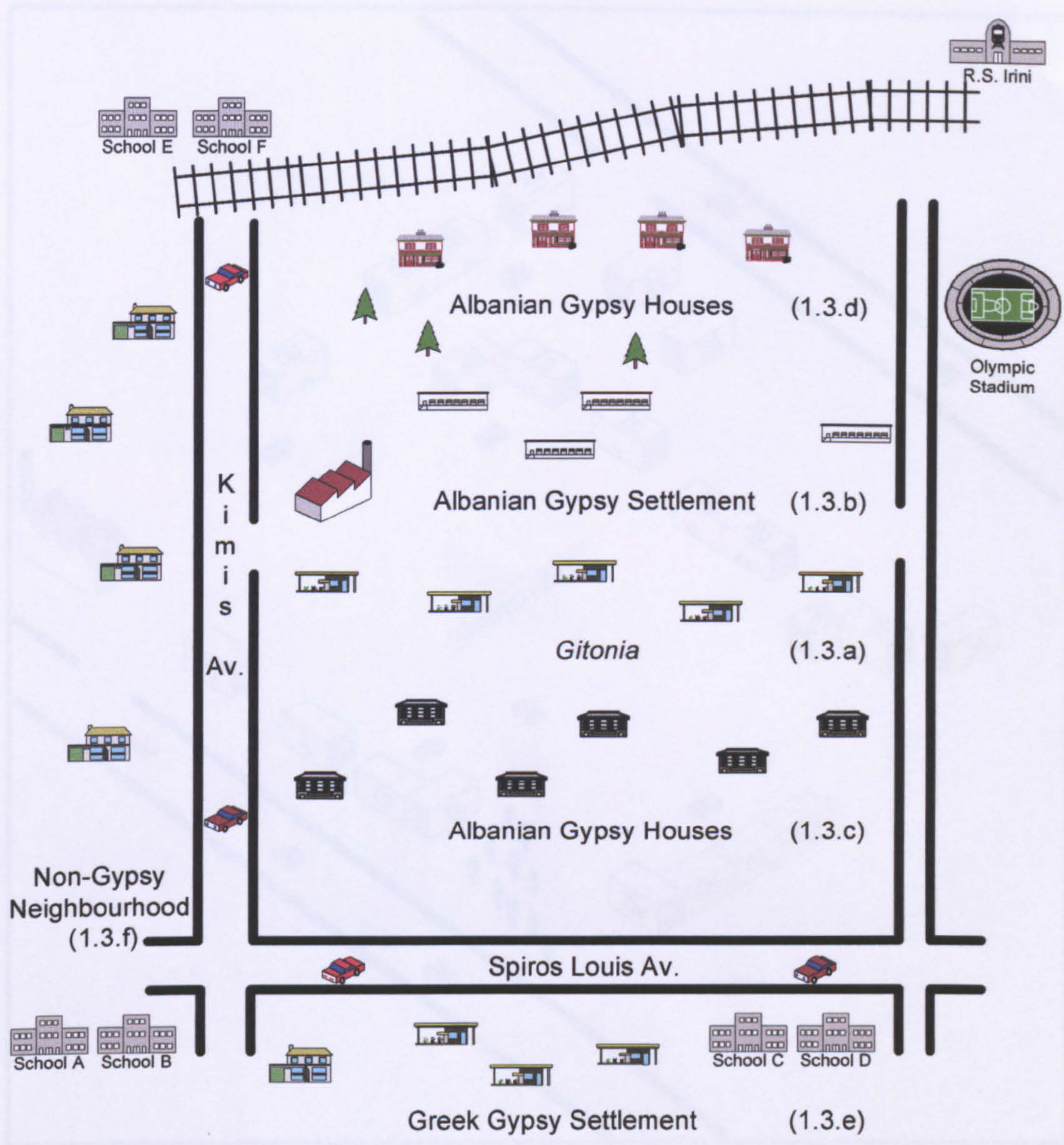


Fig. 1.3: The wider area where the Greek Gypsy settlement was located

- 1.3.1 The Chrysomayri Extended Family (1a-1b)
- 1.3.2 The Pervasi Extended Family (2a-2b)
- 1.3.3 The Dimitriou Extended Family (3a-3b)
- 1.3.4 The Antoniou Extended Family (4a-4b)
- 1.3.5 The Markoulaki Extended Family (5a-5b)
- 1.3.6 The Nektarios Extended Family (6a-6b)

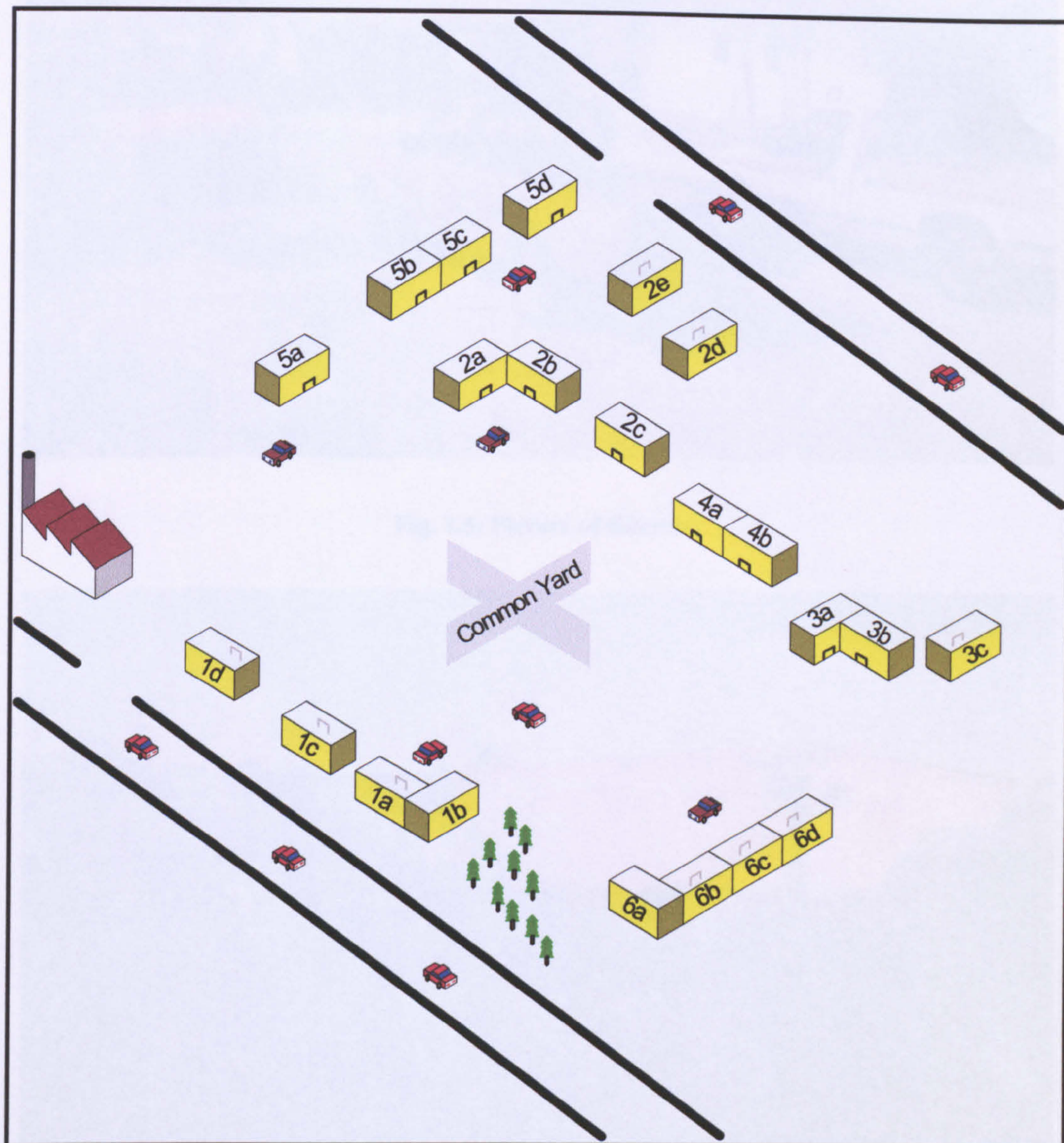


Fig. 1.4: Gitonia

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 1.4.1 | The Christopoulos Extended Family | (1a-1d) |
| 1.4.2 | The Petridis Extended Family | (2a-2e) |
| 1.4.3 | The Theodorou Extended Family | (3a-3c) |
| 1.4.4 | The Anastasiou Extended Family | (4a-4b) |
| 1.4.5 | The Markopoulos Extended Family | (5a-5d) |
| 1.4.6 | The Ioannou Extended Family | (6a-6d) |



Fig. 1.5: Picture of *Gitonia*



Fig. 1.6: Picture of *Gitonia*

Chapter Two

Problematizing Fieldwork: Children, Methods, and the Politics of Doing Research

Introduction

The acknowledgement that fieldwork produces knowledge through immersion into the intersubjectivity of empathetic relationships (Thapan, 1998) suggests that the transmission of this knowledge cannot be reduced to the mere translation and rational objectification of the fieldwork encounter (Das, 1998; Pina-Cabral, 1992). More specifically, ethnographers try to understand systems of meanings not only through linguistic forms and the analysis of objectified categories but also through their senses, their bodies and through practice (Coffey, 1999; Okely, 1992; Bloch, 1991) as they engage themselves in intersubjective relationships.

Therefore, ethnographic knowledge involves the very process through which the ethnographer's perception of what is to be 'different' has been affected by an anthropological encounter that is charged with interpersonal subjectivities. Consequently, the most important of these subjectivities which have influenced the very experience of fieldwork as well as the ethnographer's perception of 'otherness' should be made clear to the reader. Drawing reflexively on issues which have emerged from the field, this chapter demonstrates that the methods followed in this research, the modes knowledge was produced through the fieldwork encounter, processed and represented ethnographically cannot be separated from the specific context and events which frame this encounter.

In acknowledgement of this, this chapter engages with the most crucial relationships and events which have informed the fieldwork encounter throughout the research period. In the first place, chapter 2 discusses the importance of my relationship with the children of *Gitonia* in carrying out this research. This relationship, based on the development of mutual affection and trust, granted me access to the everyday activities and social life in *Gitonia* and gradually enabled me to build on my relationships with adults. In this chapter, I also discuss how

children's priorities and expectations regarding this research have played a central role in the theoretical and methodological approaches followed in this study. What is more, not only does chapter 2 engage with the important role of age but also with the role of gender in gradually shaping an increasing familiarity in my relationship with my informants.

In many occasions, reciprocal emotions entailed in empathetic relationships in the field evoke expectations, such as that of the anthropological advocacy, which cannot be ignored by the fieldworker. Specifically, chapter 2 focuses on the ways through which and the extent to which my presence in *Gitonia* relates to my involvement in the negotiations for the resettlement of its inhabitants due to the Olympics of 2004. It also shows how my close relationship with the children of *Gitonia* prompted high expectations from adults regarding my involvement in the processes of these negotiations. In turn, my attitude towards the problem of the impending eviction in *Gitonia* throughout the period of my fieldwork was judged and evaluated constantly both by children and adults in the settlement, feeding back to the quality of my relationships with them and the quality of fieldwork.

Taking into account the importance of the issue of the impending eviction in *Gitonia* in shaping the ethnographer's conception of the ethnographic site as a socio-spatial location, this chapter looks at the ways through which perceptions of 'space' and 'place' in relation to the ethnographic site have been seen here as interconnected locales of processes of becoming, belonging and relatedness. In addition, the last section of this chapter discusses how the impending eviction and the processes of negotiation of the resettlement of the people of *Gitonia* brought wider problems of ethnographic representation, while informing a dynamic and contextual approach in this specific study.

Gaining Access

The Role of the Children

Although working closely with children was a very sensitive matter both theoretically and methodologically, making children key informants in the field, constituted the most challenging aspect of my research project. Despite the obstacles and the ethical considerations that will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs, making children the focus of my fieldwork proved to be

very rewarding. And it is true that in spite of the numerous difficulties I encountered, it was my special relationship with the children that facilitated my access to the adult's world and consolidated my relationship with the adult members of the settlement.

The following example demonstrates that the adults' stance towards me was clearly influenced by the ways I interacted with the children. In one of my first visits to *Gitonia*, I was in the main yard discussing the content of my research with the heads of the Christopoulos extended family, Evgenia and Alexis. They seemed bored, indifferent and suspicious, until their youngest granddaughter, two and a half year-old Areti, showed up. I spontaneously turned to her asking her name and she started playing with me. At the very moment I hugged her, her grandparents' attitude towards me changed completely. They invited me into their house, they offered me drinks and started asking me questions about what I was doing, this time full of interest.

During the whole period of my fieldwork I had the feeling that adults viewed me through the eyes of their children. The adults' perception of my personality, my intentions and aims was filtered through the children's feelings and accounts of me. It was obvious that the adults' direct interaction with me was an insufficient basis for them to judge me. To them the most important factor was their children's opinion of me. Realising the centrality of my relationship with the children in building up a relationship of trust with the adults encouraged me to adjust my methodology so as to make it clear that children were central to my research from the very start of my work there.

During my second visit, as already mentioned in the introductory chapter, nine-year-old Manolis who had been listening to me explaining to his father what I was doing in *Gitonia*, asked me politely to assist him with his reading and writing skills. I jumped at this chance but I made it clear to him, as I did so many times later on with different inhabitants of the settlement, that I was not a teacher and that I was by no means capable of substituting for what school offers children. The teaching sessions came to be attended by most of the children in *Gitonia*, aged between four and twelve years.

These daily gatherings gave me the chance to work closely and methodically with the children in the sense that I didn't have to organise meetings with them in order to work on my research project. Both the teaching sessions and a number of

other sessions that followed them (such as drawing sessions, the encyclopaedia session, discussions) as well as a number of diverse activities (such as photographic projects and visits to the neighbouring schools, the Olympic stadium and the playground) ran together smoothly. The content, timetable, and duration of these sessions was organised jointly by myself and the children. For example, the teaching and drawing sessions took place almost daily throughout the whole year of my fieldwork.

The projects I undertook with the children constituted the medium through which I premised my relationship with the adults. On many occasions, especially at the beginning of my research, showing the parents or the relatives their children's writings and drawings was a good starting point for a warm and fruitful discussion about their views and aspirations regarding their children. Later on, the photographic projects that the children undertook by themselves also produced opportunities for warm gatherings with the adults in *Gitonia*.

Working with the children I soon managed to become an active participant in the daily life of the settlement. It granted me access to the most private spaces of the households, spaces that the adults had been cautious about showing me in the first place. Having a close relationship with the children additionally enabled me to be present at the beginning, and later on participate, in activities such as eating, having coffee, watching TV, sleeping, gossiping and resolving intra-family differences.

What is more, it was also children who first invited me to celebrations such as weddings, christenings, and namedays. It was six-year-old Stelios and his nine-year-old brother, Manolis, who told their father to invite me to their cousins' wedding in February. "Daddy, can we take Ivi to the wedding?" Stelios asked his father and Manolis added: "Yes, daddy she has to come!" Their father, Theofilos, asked me, almost convinced that I would reject his invitation, if I was willing to go as far as Khalkida (a hundred kilometres away from Athens) for the wedding: "If you don't mind coming all the way down there, we would like to have you there with us!" To Theofilos' surprise, I immediately accepted his invitation and this visit proved to be the start of a series of invitations from different members of the settlement to a wide range of celebrations inside and outside *Gitonia*.

When I started to participate actively in the social life of settlement, I got offered a sleeping place in a couple of houses of *Gitonia*. Although I had long

waited for these proposals, I decided after careful thought not to move into a particular a house of the settlement but to do occasional overnight stays in different houses. My decision was based on two important reasons: Firstly and most importantly, my experience so far in *Gitonia* showed that spending more time in certain houses caused me significant problems in my relationship with the inhabitants of different houses in *Gitonia*.¹ Secondly, spending more time as a member of a particular household would evoke considerable expectations regarding everyday activities which would clearly distract me from the daily gatherings with the children.²

Getting Involved in the Negotiations of the Resettlement and the Role of the Children

As already discussed in the introductory chapter, one of the main concerns of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* throughout the whole period of my fieldwork was their impending eviction due to the Olympics of 2004. Initially, my presence in *Gitonia* at this particular point in time which coincided with the uncertainty of its inhabitants about the future of the settlement reasonably created an atmosphere of suspicion among the adult members of *Gitonia* towards the purpose of my research. In contrast to children, who thought they could benefit from my presence in the settlement in many different ways, such as through the teaching sessions,³ the adults of *Gitonia* soon made me realise that my attitude towards the issue of the eviction would play a crucial role in shaping my relationships with them.

At that stage, it was evident to me that building relationships of trust with my adult informants could not be achieved without a certain degree of involvement in the negotiations of the resettlement. However, my potential involvement in this issue presupposed that the adults of *Gitonia* placed a certain degree of reliance on my intentions regarding the sensitive problem of the eviction. Otherwise, any kind

¹ See also the work of Gay Y Blasco (1999) on the Gypsies of Madrid where she describes how she was criticized and isolated by her informants who belonged to a specific family when she started spending time with the members of other families in Jarana.

² See Gay Y Blasco's study on the Gypsies of Madrid (1995). Gay Y Blasco discusses how by having been offered shelter and food she was expected to undertake a variety of chores by her informants.

³ The decision for the undertaking of the sessions was exclusively taken by the children without any kind of encouragement, interference or objection by the adults of the settlement.

of suspicions of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* towards my intentions could easily jeopardise my fieldwork.

Once more, the catalyst in building on a good quality of relationships with the adults in *Gitonia* regarding the issue of the eviction was the children. Indeed, my relationship with the children, as this developed through their request for undertaking the teaching sessions, relates to the degree of my involvement in the issue of the eviction and the processes of negotiations for the resettlement of the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. The mode in which the sessions progressed affected the views of the adults towards me and shaped their expectations regarding my involvement in the issue of the resettlement.

In other words, the children's positive views of me influenced positively the adults' assessments of my intentions but simultaneously evoked certain expectations. After the first month of my presence in the settlement, the teaching sessions enabled the development of a relationship of trust between the children and me. Consequently, children's trust influenced adults' views of me. And the more the adults' positive opinion of me grew, the more I felt their pressure for taking an initiative regarding their impending eviction.

The expectations of the inhabitants of the settlement were high and a source of stress for me, especially because I realised that my attitude relating to this issue constituted the 'test' I had to 'pass' in order to prove my intentions and loyalty towards them. All these reflect Hastrup and Elsaas' (1990: 301) point about anthropological advocacy that:

"(...) in particular cases advocacy is no option but an implicit requirement of the social relationship established between the anthropologist and the local people (Hastrup and Elsaas, 1990: 301)."

The problem of the resettlement of the people of *Gitonia* could neither be ignored nor did I wish to make it the central theme of my research. Since I wanted to take an active part in the daily life of the settlement, keeping a neutral position by avoiding direct or indirect involvement in their future negotiations would be hypocritical (see also Kirsch, 2002). Therefore, I decided to take careful steps and get involved in the negotiations when asked by the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. And, although sometimes it was at the expense of my research, I invested time and

effort in the processes of negotiating their resettlement throughout the whole fieldwork period.

From the very beginning though, I was open and clear about the fact that the type of assistance, support or involvement that I was able to offer would by no means take the form of an organised action or an official mediating role between them and the authorities. In fact, neither the purpose of my research nor my status and position there would justify my official participation in the negotiations relating to their resettlement. Additionally, I made it clear to them that this kind of involvement did not merit inflated expectations.

What I also thought was important to clarify was the fact that I'm of the opinion that Gypsies should start facing the authorities directly, no matter how painful it might be, instead of seeking the mediation of third parties. In other words, I believed that any kind of support from third parties—which, however, was undoubtedly essential in the case of their resettlement—should have functioned as a peripheral means of putting pressure on the authorities by promoting their demands or as a network to facilitate the processes of negotiation. The point was to avoid the risks of patronising and imposing opinions.

Despite the fact that I did not participate in the official negotiations and the signing of the agreement for the resettlement (which took place at the end of my fieldwork on the 1st of August of 2002) and the actual resettlement (which actually started in September 2002 but completed a few months after my fieldwork) my unofficial involvement has undoubtedly influenced both the quality of my relationship with the people of *Gitonia* and subsequently the actual product of my fieldwork.

As fieldwork progressed, children's interest for the teaching sessions operated as the most important means for balancing the adults' requests for my involvement and my priorities in the field. Undoubtedly, working with the children in *Gitonia* was a very important reason to keep me away from any other issue—even the most important one—that took place in the settlement. For example, there were times when sessions with the children took place in *Gitonia*, while discussions with the representatives of the municipality and the NGOs were also in process. And I was told not to worry about it but stay with the children, unless there was something in particular that my informants would like to ask, to sort out, or assist them with.

It is true that the adults placed strong emphasis on the teaching sessions that we undertook with the children in the settlement of *Gitonia*. For the vast majority of them, the daily informal classrooms in the midst of the processes of negotiations for their resettlement conveyed an important message to the state and municipal representatives and the members of the NGOs: That projects of identification among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* involve strategies and practices which could possibly engage its members in mainstream institutional processes in ways that this engagement informs a distinctive Greek Gypsy shared sense of self. Similarly to the schooling paradox, children's successful participation in the informal teaching sessions in the settlement and adults' emphasis on these sessions denotes, on the one hand, the wish of the Gypsies of *Gitonia* to engage with mainstream processes of education and, on the other hand, their refusal to participate in this process at the expense of Greek Gypsy processes of learning within informal networks of relatedness.

Doing Research with Children

Theoretical and Methodological Concerns

The first problem with researching children is the very issue of the definition of childhood (James and James, 2004). Acknowledging that there is not one childhood but many childhoods, crosscut and fragmented by important asymmetries (Stephens, 1995; Qvortrup, 1994; James and Prout, 1990), Mayall (2002) suggests that conceptions of different childhoods should be seen and examined in contrast to conceptions of adulthood

However, Olwig and Gulløv (2003), presenting a number of studies conducted in diverse cultural settings (Nieuwenhuys, 2003; Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen, 2003), argue that although the generational approach is important in understanding the children's position in a particular network of relationships, we have to bear in mind that not every culture defines children in contradistinction to adults and "it should therefore not be presented as an all-too-rigid categorisation of children's lives but as a point of departure for empirical investigations" (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003: 14).

As Parkin (2000) argues, within the field the researcher gradually tries to elicit the "more subtle ranges of otherness" which "while invisible to the outsider, are

important to the local people themselves” (2000: 272). To take Parkin’s argument further, in the case of researching childhood, the task of the fieldworker is to reveal the cultural and temporal defining elements of the childhood studied (Ennew, 1994) and how these are perceived in relation to adulthood revealing how children embody and experience relatedness in everyday life through specific practices (James and James, 2004; Olwig and Gulløv, 2003; Toren, 1999; Christensen, 1998), which while they might be invisible to the outsider are nevertheless, important for the people and children themselves. This relates to Bloch’s (1991) earlier argument which maintained that participant observation enables the researcher to become familiar with cultural knowledge through participating in the intricacies of everyday life.

Such an approach suggests that the researcher should not hesitate to abandon or defy all taken-for-granted assumptions and distinctions between adulthood and childhood (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003; Christensen and Prout, 2002; Ennew and Morrow, 2002). Because of this, it is unhelpful to cross-culturally apply methodological tools especially designed for research on children.

If we want to elicit children’s views in ways which reflect the cultural and temporal features of their childhood, we have to adopt a flexible set of methods that do not necessarily assume that a ‘child-centred’ methodology is suitable in all cases and for all kinds of children (Punch, 2002). Innovative research methods especially designed for children have no practicality unless they satisfy the particular needs and interests of the particular children the researcher works with (Punch, 2002; Christensen and Prout, 2002). To claim that an innovative research method might universally be useful in doing research with children is misleading. This would equate with the acceptance of the fact that all childhoods are the same (Christensen and James, 2000).

Inevitably, by focusing the core of my thesis on children, flexibility became the key issue in conducting my research. Acknowledging the importance of specificity in the study of childhood, we enable ourselves as researchers to define the degree that makes each study of children “potentially different” in terms of ethics and methodology from that of adults (Punch, 2002: 321) and to demarcate the constitutive parameters of such a potential difference, adjusting our methods according to the particular needs of each case (Connolly and Ennew, 1996).

The design of the research methods, as Christensen and Prout (2002) stress, should take into consideration the aims of the research, the social and cultural context in which the research takes place, as well as the ways children respond to the research process and the methodology employed. Connolly and Ennew (1996) insist that the researcher should elaborate those research methods that will enable him or her to understand the perspectives of the children. Indeed, according to them: “ It is not enough to hear and record what a child says, it is also necessary to understand what he or she means in the context in which the words are uttered” (Connolly and Ennew, 1996: 141). Ennew and Morrow (2002) indicate that children have the right to be carefully, accurately and properly researched through a set of multiple methods for obtaining, crosschecking through triangulation, assessing, and processing data, which should be contextualised in accordance with wider theoretical discussions within diverse political and economic frameworks.

Children’s acceptance of and receptivity to the research methodology seems to be the most effective way of extracting consistent results and valid information while at the same time sustaining children’s interest throughout the whole research period. By accepting the research methodology children engage more actively and enthusiastically with the research product. However, what primarily ensures more viable and reliable results seems to be the development of relationships of trust and respect between the researcher and children (Punch, 2002; Ennew, 1994).

Meeting Children’s Expectations in Building Up the Methodology

As already described, it was children who proposed the teaching sessions that went on during the whole fieldwork period. The teaching sessions provided the basis for the participatory design of the research methodology based on children’s preferences, demands and receptivity. In addition, the teaching sessions became the starting point of everyday conversations both with children and adults.⁴ Most importantly, the teaching sessions enabled the development of an intimate relationship between myself and the children based on feelings of mutual trust and

⁴ Conversations, in Forrester’s (2002) opinion are proven to be especially revealing of discourses of childhood.

affection which constituted the most essential ingredient for the success of the research project.

The sessions were gradually enriched with different sub-sessions that, responding to the children's demands, took the following forms: a) the reading and writing session, b) the drawing session, c) the photographic session, d) the encyclopaedia session, e) the television session, f) the visits (to the neighbourhood's schools, the Olympic stadium, playgrounds, etc.) and g) the general discussions. Usually, after a session of two hours, either the children or myself got tired and asked to finish it.

In contrast to their parents, the children of *Gitonia* accepted the use of the tape-recorder during our sessions and group discussions. The decision was exclusively theirs (their parents didn't interfere). However, because of the adults' earlier rejection of the use of the tape-recorder I also sought their parents' consent. Their agreement to the use of the tape-recorder proved to be extremely useful to me. However, the children agreed to use the tape-recorder only if I let them use it themselves while they were talking. I agreed and I explained to them how it worked. I also explained why I needed these recordings. And although I had my doubts about its effectiveness, the tape-recorder did work and, indeed, it worked at different levels. Children appreciated the trust I showed them in letting them use the machine. The first time the father of twelve-year-old Kalliope saw her in *Gitonia*'s yard carrying my tape-recorder he shouted at her: "Bring this back to Ivi immediately! You'll break it and it is expensive!" And Kalliope answered: "Ivi gave it to us to use it, she trusts us, mind your own business! I take good care of it as if it were mine."

Drawing sessions were a very important part of these projects. Drawing was an activity which children hardly ever missed. Children's drawings were mainly the product of different themes that I encouraged them to draw about, as for example how they imagined their future home, or neighbourhood. Themes could also be past memories such as the composition of their class for those who had been to school. The most difficult part in the use of drawings as a research tool was the control of our limited resources. Paper, coloured pencils, and markers were all bought at my personal expense. Children knew that and refused to keep them. They decided that I had to be responsible for this material because according to ten-year-old Haris: "If we keep them they will be lost in a moment ..."

The photographic projects covered themes that were discussed during the teaching sessions and were elaborated and enriched in the drawing sessions. Shots were taken by all the children who participated in the teaching session. As soon as the pictures had been developed I showed them to the children for further discussions. For example, as soon as we finished the first round of sessions, in which children expressed their views about *Gitonia*, their family and work, I told them to go around the settlement and photograph what they thought was most important. The material that came out of this project proved to be a very useful starting point for fruitful discussions both with the children and the adults about the grounds on which they prioritise their relationships within the settlement. The difficulty here was to gain the children's consent in using the camera for the purposes of the research. I had to explain to them that the camera was expensive as was the development of the film, so our photographic projects could not be repeated very often and the shots should not be taken without purpose in mind.

An integral part of our teaching sessions was the encyclopaedia session. It was an idea that came to me because children kept asking me about issues relating to natural phenomena such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions, hurricanes and so on, which they saw on television happening either in Greece or in other countries. Therefore, I decided to visit a bookstore trying to find a suitable encyclopaedia with good illustrations. This session attracted not only the interest of the children but also of adults, helping our general discussions expand on a variety of interesting topics.

Another important session for the purposes of the research was watching and then commenting on television programmes, as well as my reading and children's commenting on magazine articles. This helped me understand the way children perceive the everyday life of the non-Gypsy population, as well as those aspects of the non-Gypsy life that they adopt or reject. This process also gave me access to the ways children and subsequently their parents (through discussions that followed those with their children) react to the main problems, trends and changes that take place in wider society.

A very important methodological tool was the visits with the children to places near the settlement, such as the schools, the playgrounds and the Olympic Stadium. In fact, I went twice with the children to two of the nearby schools, a couple of times to the Olympic stadium and quite often to the neighbourhood's

playgrounds. These visits, especially those to the schools, gave us more ground to discuss important aspects of this research. During these visits children had the chance to either come closer to the school environment (they had the chance to talk with other children and some of the teachers) and then express their opinions about it, and for those who had been to school, to discuss their own schooling experience at greater length.

Addressing Ethical Considerations

Undoubtedly, ethnography has been a methodology which has given voice to “children’s muted voices” (Lee, 2001: 49) and made them active participants in the production of research data (James and Prout, 1990). More recently, a new approach stemming from the paradigm that views children as competent social actors sees children as co-participants throughout the research process (Theis, 2001; Alderson, 2000).

However, as Christensen and Prout (2002) indicate, the growing theoretical awareness of children as social actors and agents of change has also widened the scope for consideration of “ethical dilemmas and new responsibilities for researchers” (2002: 478) in the study of childhood. For them, the fact that children’s voices are increasingly being heard in diverse domains unravels a whole range of new relationships between children and other social actors—such as parents, teachers, institutional agents and policy makers, politicians and researchers—as well as a set of particular interests that stand in association with these relationships, thus proliferating the complexities of the field.

Therefore, Christensen and Prout (2002: 448) call for an “ethical symmetry” in the study of childhood and the researcher’s engagement “with ethical questions through a reflexive research practice” (2002: 493). Their call combines a commitment to ethical guidelines with the researcher’s responsibility to respond with flexibility and common sense to the particularity of each research case. Regarding my own research, working closely with children meant that I had to take into serious consideration children’s hierarchical relationships in the same way I did with the adults.

In accordance with Christensen and Prout’s (2002) suggestion, I found it equally important to remain committed to the basic and more formalised ethical

guidelines such as being open, clear and sincere about the aims and objectives of the research in order to gain access, to recruit, gain consent, as well as work within a framework of anonymity and confidentiality. However, as Alderson (2000, 1995) has also argued, more complex and difficult to deal with were those ethical dilemmas and considerations that arose throughout the stages of research design, the research process itself, and the stage of interpretation and dissemination of data.

For example, children (particularly older ones) participated actively in the design of the research methodology. My ethical consideration here was not whether children were competent to do so, because they undoubtedly were, but whether their active involvement would cause problems among children themselves. For instance, the cases where children (usually siblings or cousins from the same extended family) excluded other children from different extended families from the design of a research project were not rare. Depending on the context and in order to avoid misunderstandings among children or even their families, I sometimes had to turn down their interesting proposals.

Additionally, in the process of interpretation and dissemination of data, I found that I had to be cautious not only with age and gender asymmetries among children but also with the asymmetries generated by children's hierarchical relationships within their families and peer group. The fact that childhoods do not constitute homogeneous entities but entail important inequalities and group dynamics reflected in children's relationships should be made clear at the stages of interpretation and presentation of fieldwork material. Regarding my case for instance, it was not rare that children got influenced by the peer group leader and this influence was obvious in the content of their answers or their drawings.

Furthermore, according to my findings in the field, children were less tolerant and flexible than adults as informants. Although at first glance children might seem easier to engage in the research, any failure to meet their expectations in this process could easily lead to complete failure. The danger, here, lies in the fact that the researcher might seek to adjust the methodology to the particular needs and interests of the children omitting to get children's consent for any possible adjustments, or confusing children's engagement with consent.

Therefore, as many researchers working with children agree, the importance of children's consent to their participation in the research project is not enough.

Ennew (2001) stresses that there is always a difficulty in obtaining informed consent from children, a difficulty that makes this process with children different from that of the adults. The principle of informed consent (Lindsay, 2000), or giving all subjects a clear account of the research, should be tackled constantly, at all stages of the research. It is also important to gain children's consent for the use of the particular methodology throughout the whole research period. The researcher also ought to evaluate the extent to which this methodology continues to be accepted by the children throughout the whole period of the research and he or she should be careful not to confuse engagement with consent. Children have to know—and the researcher has to make sure they understand—that they have the right to withdraw at any time they want from the research or refuse to participate in any of its parts (Ennew, 2001).

Finally, my case also proved that the process of obtaining consent from children should also take into account the specificities of the culture studied. For example, throughout my research period, for the accomplishment of a task I had to negotiate and renegotiate consent not only from the parents but also, either from the leader of the peer group or from the older siblings as well as the children themselves.

Issues Emerging from the Field

Reflexivity

As Dresch and James (2000) point out, the growing concern with 'reflexivity' in the discipline of anthropology has recently shifted its focus away from the discussion of methods to the exploration of "the role and responses of the researcher as an individual apprehending the world" (2000: 3). What is more, Shore (1999: 45) reminds us that the concept of 'reflexivity' has been used in diverse frameworks serving a wide range of agendas in anthropology, often trapping the anthropological thought in solipsistic arguments. This echoes Strathern's (1987) earlier suggestion that 'reflexivity' should not equate with self-consciousness. Rather, it should be about the particular ways in which the process of acquisition of anthropological 'knowledge' engages the anthropologist and the subject of research (Hastrup, 1995). In this sense, by turning ourselves into objects of study, we become more aware of ourselves as ethnographers through

challenging our “cultural assumptions” (Herzfeld, 2001: 46) and, therefore, we become more sensitive to the methodology we use (Strathern, 1987).

With respect to this particular study, self-reflections concerning the pre-fieldwork period, the fieldwork, and the writing-up, as well as some post-fieldwork considerations, will be deployed in a framework of analysis that should by no means be seen as “a pure self-examination” (Herzfeld, 2001: 45) or “as an end in itself” (Herzfeld, 2001: 50). Here, the discussion of issues such as the experience of doing anthropology ‘at home’, conceptions of space and place in relation to ethnography, the importance of gender and power relations in the field, as well as the issue of advocacy in anthropology, will be seen as serving a particular purpose, that of enhancing analytical awareness (Herzfeld, 2001). Thus, ‘reflexive thinking’, in this case, is intimately connected with questions of theory and methods, as well as the ways anthropological ‘knowledge’ is generated and processed (Shore, 1999; Strathern, 1987).

It is important, though, to note at this point that apart from the exploration of the above-mentioned issues, which to a greater or lesser extent have increasingly constituted a commonplace in the elaboration of a thesis, ‘reflexive thinking’ also brings out a rather neglected aspect regarding the experience of the field, that is the significance of sentiments. In my case, as already described, emotions and the expression of them played a central role in gaining access to *Gitonia*, the development and establishment of my relationship with my informants and the elaboration of the methodology used. No doubt, immersion in another culture affects our bodies and senses. However, much less attention has been paid to emotional processes than to visual and conceptual ones in conducting fieldwork. This happens despite the emergence of ethnographic and theoretical explorations of sentiments which acknowledge the fact that feelings and emotions are perceived and expressed differently within different cultural frameworks.⁵

This absence of discussion of “emotional discourses” (Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990: 1) or of the “embodied motivation” produced in the field (Hastrup, 1995: 77), or what I call reciprocal emotions between the researcher and his or her informants, results in a failure to acknowledge the cultural dimension in the

⁵ For example, Peletz (1996), Lyon (1995), Lyon and Barbalet (1994), Lock (1993), Seremetakis (1991), Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990), Rosaldo (1984).

expression of feelings and sentiments. In addition, such a failure leads to a neglect of the impact that possible cultural differences and commonalities in emotional expressions and affinities may have in the process of doing fieldwork (the ways access is gained and information obtained, the acceptance and receptivity of methodology and the processing of data).

Encountering ‘Otherness’

Doing anthropology ‘at home’ proved to be a factor that had not been assessed correctly during my training year. I hadn’t realised the practical implications of all the issues that I repeatedly encountered in the anthropological literature. To me the answer that everything—even ‘home’—can be ‘different’ and simultaneously interesting for analysis was enough. Presumably, it had been difficult for me to realise just how ‘different’ this world was because it was only one hour away from my home, in the same city, simply in another suburb. Maybe it was the overconfidence of speaking the same language that prompted my ignorance of how ‘different’ the experience of home is, something that you don’t realise until you physically transcend ‘boundaries’.

In fact, before ‘entering’ the field, I hesitated to introduce myself to the inhabitants of *Gitonia* for quite a long time, finding a number of different justifications to postpone my first visit. Presumably, my hesitation is intimately associated with particular notions of the field as ‘our own’ or ‘their territory’. For example, when I conducted research with Gypsy and migrant children in the familiar setting of a school in Evosmos in Thessaloniki,⁶ I felt much more confident to introduce myself in the field.

And, of course, as soon as I set foot in *Gitonia*, its inhabitants noticed my nervousness. That is probably why the male head of the Christopoulos extended family, Alexis, explained to me: “There is no reason for you to be worried, my girl. I personally guarantee that nobody will ever make you feel uncomfortable here.” His wife Evgenia added:

⁶ As an undergraduate student, I worked for a year and a half with Gypsy and migrant children as co-ordinator of an inter-disciplinary research project carried out in primary and secondary schools in Thessaloniki. The research, which was conducted with the support of *AIESEC* of the University of Macedonia focused on the relation between the high illiteracy rates among Gypsies and migrant children and their social discrimination.

“I can assure you. from now on walking around the settlement will be safer for you than walking anywhere else in Athens—ask the neighbourhood’s girls. they can verify my words any moment—that our people might be poor but they have honour!”

At that time, I couldn’t foresee that only a few weeks later, each time I got off the train and walked down the same street approaching the settlement I would have completely different feelings. Soon, I started viewing this very same area and its people from a new perspective. Suddenly, everything there, the people, the way they talked, dressed, moved and behaved seemed so familiar to me, albeit in a very strange and contradictory way. On the one hand, the growing familiarity between my informants and myself enabled me to view this very same city where I had been brought up from a completely new perspective, having what Okely (1984: 5) describes as “a double vision” of my own country. As she puts it:

“I had to learn another language in the words of my mother tongue. I unlearnt my boarding school accent. changed clothing and body movements ... Washing and eating became different procedures with the same utensils and food from the same shops up the road ... My past identity was slowly dismantled in the home countries I had inhabited since childhood (Okely, 1984: 5).”

On the other hand, this “double vision” did not only have a synchronic dimension. Through a reverse process this very same vision took me back in time to experiences, stories, and visions of a different Greek society. The different ways of dressing, cooking, moving, and talking I was now learning were not entirely strange to me. They took me back to my childhood, to a memory of Greece that I had as a child when visiting my grandfather in his remote village in Mani, or to my grandparent’s experience of Greece, passed down through stories to me. Or even my own childhood experience living in the same building with my extended family, with my grandparents, my aunt, uncle and cousins.

Gradually, as the fieldwork progressed, I realised that doing anthropology ‘at home’ brings to light revealing commonalities and differences about one’s own culture and experience. Becoming familiar with another vision of my own culture entailed a growing flexibility in thinking and being in terms of everyday activities. Most importantly, however, it opened a new perspective on the ways I was managing and expressing my feelings. In the field I increasingly adapted to new modes of conveying emotions. Modes which challenged my previous assumptions

that had restricted the expression of emotions such as love, affection and suffering to my most private spaces, while limiting the expression of other feelings, such as joy and laughter, from the spontaneity I was familiar with. I learnt, for example, that laughing loudly and spontaneously in front of men or older people (both men and women) was disrespectful, while doing the same in front of children or younger women was not only acceptable but also essential for developing affinities. On the contrary, expressing suffering and pain in front of men and older people was especially appreciated. For Cohen (1992) this process of self-awareness:

“(…) does not concern only our hitherto unsuspected resourcefulness, durability and ingenuity; it is also that, by struggling to understand other people’s complexities, we are brought face to face with our own (Cohen, 1992: 223).”

Space, Place and Ethnography

Although this particular research has been conducted in a specific ethnographic site, the settlement which I call *Gitonia*, it nevertheless seeks to encompass the broader system and wider processes that relate to this particular site. For Hammersley (1992), ethnographic studies should produce analytical descriptions of socio-spatial locations linking the specific context of particular events with more general aspects of human life. An increasing number of recent anthropological works indicate that the most difficult task for the ethnographer, both in terms of theory and methodology, is to subject the data obtained in the field to an interpretation that is on the one hand a reflection of the broader socio-economic and political context, while on the other, an interpretation in accordance with the wider theoretical considerations of the discipline (Hastrup and Olwig, 1997).

With respect to the study of Gypsies, such interpretations should tackle notions of ‘boundedness’, revealing simultaneously fractures and discontinuities among diverse and often competing Gypsy groups, as well as reflecting Gypsies’ active engagement in a system of interconnected locales, subjects and processes (see also chapter 3). For example, regarding this study, the attitude of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* towards their impending eviction, as discussed in chapter one, and the issue of the eviction itself, the impact of urban migration on the settlement’s

organisation and the particular affiliation between its inhabitants and the Greek Gypsies of Khalkida (their acclaimed place of origin) reflects exactly these issues. In Hastrup and Olwig's (1997) opinion, traditional anthropological descriptions of unique cultures and communities:

“(…) must give way to a new genre, taking its point of departure in those nodal points in the networks of interrelations where there is a mutual construction of identities through cultural encounters (Hastrup and Olwig, 1997: 5).”

In response to this theoretical awareness, this study uses the single site (Williams, 1982) as a circumstantial locality for conducting what Marcus (1995: 110) calls a “strategically situated ethnography”, which “might be thought of as a foreshortened multi-sited project and should be distinguished from the single site ethnography” (Marcus, 1995: 110). This particular ethnography looks at processes of becoming and belonging among the Greek Gypsies of a particular settlement, *Gitonia*, but whose experiences can only be understood in the wider context of kin relations, school, the working environment, the neighbourhood, all of which are embedded in the wider socio-economic and political context of Greek society. From this perspective, the emphasis of this study lies in the exploration of networks of relatedness as they emerge from marriage practices, kinship relations and work patterns.

The centrality of relatedness is primarily mirrored in children's reflections and priorities regarding processes of becoming and belonging. Marcus (1995) notes that in the strategically situated ethnography, the single site constitutes the nexus of the subjects' awareness of their relation (and not always through tangible relationships) with other sites, agents and processes. For him, what matters when conducting this type of ethnographic research is the fact that “within a single site, the crucial issue concerns the detectable system-awareness in the everyday consciousness and actions of subjects' lives” (Marcus, 1995: 111).

Simultaneously, such a critical approach to the fieldwork site encourages the researcher to focus on a set of relationships rather than specific locations, which seem to be significant for the definition and demarcation of this specific construct. In addition, it allows the researcher to trace and highlight those particular historical processes from which the interconnected sites of the research, or these networks of interrelations have emerged.

Obtaining Knowledge

The ability of the anthropologist to interpret cultures (Geertz, 1973) is inextricably associated with the degree of familiarity and intimacy the researcher achieves with his/her informants in the field (Bloch, 1991). The acquisition of cultural knowledge cannot be achieved merely through explicit linguistic forms of expression “since words have only a distant relationship to the knowledge referred to” (Bloch, 1991: 192). For Bloch (1991), it is through the constant and intimate relationships that cultural knowledge is mediated and validated. Through participant observation anthropologists gradually learn to follow and improve the everyday procedures and tasks that the informants themselves have learnt to follow, also being able to assess whether they fulfil these tasks as adequately and fast as the informants (Bloch, 1991).

In addition, Hendry and Watson (2001: 1) indicate that anthropology constitutes “the art of spying”, the process of unravelling the disguised within diverse modes of communication. For them, the task of the anthropologist is to unpack and convey through a set of methods and techniques the underlying messages embedded in what they call *indirections* or *indirect communication* (Hendry and Watson, 2001: 2). These ‘hidden’ messages are embedded in different forms of human interaction consisting of verbal and non-verbal forms of expression, actions or flows of actions, emotions and sentiments, displays and performances. Having accepted the significance of indirections in the study of cultures, we inevitably come across two questions related to this issue. First, what is the suitable methodology which would enable the researcher to become familiar with these *indirections*. And, secondly, what are the difficulties and intricacies of decoding such modes of expression in the terms or the logic of the culture studied.

Becoming familiar both with cultural practices and knowledges (Bloch, 1991) and with indirect forms of communication (Hendry and Watson, 2001) presupposes the deployment of a methodology that would grant a significant level of intimacy between the researcher and the informants. Regarding my case, soon after I went to the field, I realised that the methodological plan I had prepared in my training year would not enable me to achieve the sort of intimate relationships that would bring out the thresholds of what participant observation was pointing to as most central in my research, namely embodiment and feelings. For instance,

my initial attempts to approach my adult informants through informal interviews and semi-formal discussions (based on pre-arranged questions) neither produced nor even reflected the importance of modes of expression and the significance of feelings and affinities. This awareness enhanced my flexibility in adjusting and readjusting my methodology, trying constantly to achieve a synthesis of methods which would combine my familiarity with the culture studied with an adequate degree of ethnographic objectivity.

My emphasis on familiarity also led me to reassess the suitability of research tools such as the tape-recorder and the notebook. Building on relationships of trust with my adult informants required the elimination of the factors which caused suspicion or uneasiness between us. The tape-recorder produced such suspicions: "What do you need this for? To hand in information to whom?" an elderly man asked me. It was becoming obvious that the use of the tape-recorder was causing problems rather than being a useful tool in my work. To avoid jeopardising my relationship with my adult informants, I decided to put the tape-recorder aside and instead take notes during our discussions. As mentioned, with children the tape-recorder was an asset, largely because they were able to make their own use of it.

But taking notes during general discussions also proved to be a considerable inconvenience and caused unease both for me and my informants. Although the members of the settlement didn't really object to me taking notes, it was I who felt more nervous with this particular process. It wasn't only that writing down in front of an illiterate group of people made me feel nervous. It was also that in my effort to write down everything that was said I was not paying the necessary attention to the arguments expressed by the informants and I could not follow the flow of the discussion properly. Taking notes also obscured my ability to sense and see what was happening throughout the discussion and reduced face-to-face contact with my informants, missing the 'indirect' forms of communication. Thus, as time went by, I chose to use my notebook only if I felt I had to take down some important information immediately. In fact, my engagement with everyday activities in the settlement and my relationship with my informants at this later stage in the field would make my preoccupation with the notebook seem ridiculous. Instead I found it easier and more practical to transfer my daily experiences and thoughts onto paper at the end of the day.

The abandoning of the tape-recorder and the cautious use of the notebook gradually enabled me to become incorporated into the normal flow of life in *Gitonia* and become familiar with its inhabitants' modes of expressing indirect forms of communication. Additionally, my methodological rearrangements enabled the flourishing of feelings of trust between myself and my informants, constituting the basis for my sharing with them these indirections. As already noted, it was mainly through the sharing of sentiments, or better, the performance of feelings such as love, pain and affection that my informants were increasingly releasing more and more information relevant to the research. Finally, having myself experienced the process of sharing indirect forms of expressions with my informants verified through their increasing levels of acceptance towards me, it brought the decoding and interpretation of indirections closer to the logic of the culture studied.

Keeping Balances: Gendered and Personal Encounters

The way my relationship with the male and female members of diverse age groups developed in the field was another issue that contradicted my preliminary expectations and challenged my stereotypes. During my training year, I incorporated into my fieldwork proposal a whole section that dealt with the ethical considerations I had as a female researcher working in a male dominated, conservative group of people. I insisted that an effective way to overcome the gender biases in the field (Watson, 1999; Callaway, 1992) was to start by building up relationships of trust with the female members of the settlement and primarily with those female members who were close to me in age. However, the fieldwork experience proved that these concerns were the products of my personal stereotypical knowledge and had nothing to do with reality.

What I initially thought would be the most difficult part of my fieldwork, my relationship with the men turned out to be no problem at all. Neither the young nor the older men of *Gitonia* made me feel uncomfortable in any respect. More difficult proved to be my interaction with these female inhabitants of *Gitonia* aged between twenty and thirty-five. Women of this age were extremely cautious about getting close to me and this continued long after they had accepted my presence in the settlement and despite the fact that their children liked me. This was

presumably because women at this age were extremely busy with work, house chores, and children and did not have enough time for socialising with me. Younger women of between fourteen and twenty as well as older women above the age of thirty-five were far more receptive due to the smaller load of work and more available time they had to spend with me.

In the field men were the people whom I first came into contact with and who decided to let me work with the children and conduct my research. My male informants were those who spent considerable time with me discussing general issues and the everyday problems of the settlement as well as being those who first spoke about more personal topics. They were the ones who first offered me food and drink, who invited me to different events such as weddings and christenings as well as those who invited me to be present in the negotiations of their resettlement or asked me to represent them in some of the processes of their negotiations.

It took more than half of the period of my research to get close to women of between twenty and thirty-five years of age. What actually brought me closer to them were my daily accounts of the experiences I shared with their children enriched with a strong sense of self-irony. Undoubtedly, the element that eventually changed their stance towards me was humour. As fieldwork progressed and my understanding of their humour became clearer, I decided to adopt an openly critical stance towards myself as a non-Gypsy researcher and share its funny aspects with my female informants. In fact, I used the things children found funny in me, things that they expressed in different ways during our sessions or the time I spent with them. Later on, making fun of each other became an inseparable part of my relationship with women.

Another inseparable but sensitive part of my relationship with the women was gossiping. Gossiping, as we shall see in chapter 6, constituted a daily practice and the most important daily form of socialising among the female inhabitants of *Gitonia*. Often, however, gossiping led to misunderstandings, some of which had important implications for the relationship between the members of different extended families. Therefore, although gossiping constituted the most important means of socialising with the women, I was very careful to avoid involvement in gossiping that might have insulted or caused trouble to other members of *Gitonia*.

Participant observation was in many respects a very difficult task, both physically and psychologically. Physically because it could be exhausting dealing all day long with the children and then talking to the adults and follow the normal flow of life in the settlement. At the same time, all these daily inputs from the field had to be processed and evaluated in a way that could be taken down as notes. This process of writing took the form of a diary that comprised selected notes that were kept on a daily basis, describing both the flow of the day as well as important incidents that took place in *Gitonia*. I also held a separate notebook, which included dialogues and interviews.

Psychologically, participant observation was exhausting because I was constantly preoccupied with keeping a fragile balance between myself and my informants as well as between myself and the product of my work through the use of the appropriate methodology. Keeping a balance also meant being in a position to handle misunderstandings and disputes between different members of the settlement or even whole families, between children and adults, between the members of the settlement and outsiders (such as their neighbours, or the municipality) as well as misunderstandings between myself and my informants.

A very difficult task, indeed, regarding this very last point, was the way I divided my time between the different households. Members of different households, both adults and children, often complained that I was spending more time in somebody else's house than in theirs. Sometimes, children complained that I was spending more time with the adults than with them. Frequently, children reminded me that my aim there was not to be with the adults but to work with them. But even the opposite occurred as adults complained that I was spending all my time with the children and less time with them. According to my personal experience in the field, the sensible and flexible use of methodology that also entails a flexible organisation of time and activities is what contributed to the preservation of this fragile balance.

Assessing Data

Apart from the material obtained in the settlement directly from my informants through participant observation interviews and discussions with the adults and a set of innovative research methods with children, there was also important data,

both qualitative and quantitative, attained through a number of other sources, such as NGOs, public institutions and libraries in Greece. Internet research also produced important quantitative material the quality of which was evaluated through crosschecking and triangulation with other resources (articles, official statistics). Finally, of crucial importance were my contacts with different people, who had done some sort of research or work on Gypsies. Such contacts gave me the chance to discuss my findings and to compare them with the results and data of different research works.

The validity of quantitative data has been challenged in various ways, as for example for neglecting individual creativity and dynamic explorations of society, and entailing the danger of misinterpretations and generalisations (Hammersley, 1992). Particularly in the case of Gypsies, statistics have repeatedly resulted in misleading subjectifications which depict different Gypsy populations within the same national borders as sharing the same characteristics and facing the same levels of poverty, illiteracy, and state oppression (for example, see App.2, Graph, 1). In addition, regarding the Greek Gypsies,⁷ the ambiguity of statistics is reflected in two important issues. On the one hand, the Greek Gypsies are generally absent from national statistics due to the fact that they are not officially recognised as a cultural minority by the Greek state (see chapter 1). On the other hand, in statistical data produced by private researchers and university projects, or NGOs, the Greek Gypsies are often subsumed under the larger category of ‘Gypsies’ (see App.1, Graphs 1–3 and App.2, Graph 1).

In general, the interpretation of quantitative data in conjunction with ethnographic results can provide the tool for revealing interesting commonalities and contradictions in comparative analysis, exemplifying particularity rather than creating overgeneralisations. With regard to the quantitative material in my project, the analysis and interpretation of the existing figures on Gypsies provided a good starting point for questioning their validity and detecting any possible gaps.

⁷ Here I do not only refer to the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* but I also refer to other Gypsy groups who live in Greece and they are called Greek Gypsies.

Specifically, statistical data generated by diverse sources⁸ on the estimated participation of Gypsies throughout Greece in the schooling process, pupils' drop out rates and parents' preferences for their children's education provided the basis for drawing the specificities of the case of the Greek Gypsies in *Gitonia*. These figures were compared with the numbers, produced through the processing of fieldwork-generated quantitative data as well as with qualitative material generated in the field. Most importantly, as already discussed in chapter 1, this comparison clearly pointed to the necessity of a more nuanced, ethnographically informed and historically-minded interpretation of what I called 'the schooling paradox'. By contrast, statistics on the general characteristics of diverse Gypsy groups (such as for example language, religion, and ethnic affiliation) provided important tools for drawing the general framework in which Gypsies and Roma in Greece live. In tandem with a number of different ethnographic accounts of Gypsies in Greece⁹ the use of this data has facilitated a more informed comparative analysis.

An important amount of information (both qualitative and quantitative) came through my co-operation with the Roma Project co-ordinator in GHM¹⁰ (Greek-Helsinki Monitor), and MRG-Greece,¹¹ Thodoros Alexandridis. Mr Alexandridis, with whom I was in contact throughout the whole fieldwork year, systematically provided me with official and unofficial information concerning the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* as well as other Gypsy groups across Greece. Information also came from the General Secretariat for Adult Education [*Geniki Grammatia Ekpedefsis Enilikon*].¹² This institution constituted an important source of research

⁸ Such as individual research and university projects, statistics produced by state institutions, European bodies and organizations, etc.

⁹ Vaxevanoglou (2001), Karathanasi (2000), Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre (1998), Lidaki (1998, 1997), Ntousas (1997), Pavli and Sideri (1990).

¹⁰ Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) is the Greek member of the International Helsinki Federation (IHF). It is also a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), and the Southeast Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO). Moreover, it is affiliated to Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) and the Consortium of Minority Resources (COMIR), while it is a co-founder of the centre of Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe-Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE). Since 1997, in cooperation with the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), it runs a Roma Office for Greece.

¹¹ Minority Rights Group-Greece

¹² The G.S.A.E belongs to the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

projects conducted on Gypsies, symposium and congress minutes, which have not been widely published, but which can become available to research students.

The most important problem with the analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data coming from these sources was the difficulty in the selection of the most representative ones from this enormous amount of information in order to support my case. Particularly, at the writing-up stage, I encountered considerable difficulty when deciding to incorporate only a few of these data into my thesis, while excluding an important number of figures and qualitative material, which nevertheless has played a decisive role in the interpretation and analysis of data produced in the field. The basis on which I took such decisions depended exclusively on the degree of viability and relevance of the data regarding the context I intended to highlight.

Finally, there is also an important ethical issue here, concerning the use of data and information coming from unofficial discussions with a number of people 'experts' on Gypsies. How can the researcher be sure of the validity of these data that although they might seem important, it is not supported by any form of official backing (research, statistical figures, etc.). Indeed, I personally avoided the use of such material in my analysis and interpretations unless they were confirmed and verified by some sort of reliable source.

Advocacy and the Role of the Researcher

In the field, the mere presence of the researcher has political implications. The ethical considerations that preoccupied me as a researcher in the field related to the ways in which and the extent to which my words, actions, or general involvement, could affect both my research and myself, as well as my informants. Since the very beginning of my research, as already discussed, my presence in the settlement evoked my informants' expectations regarding my possible assistance for one of the most serious problems of the settlement, their imminent eviction.

Their concern was evident in the first questions I was asked when I introduced myself to the settlement: "Do you know when we are being kicked out?", "What is going to happen with us?" and "When are the bulldozers bringing our houses down?" When I replied that I had no information about the future of the settlement, the people of *Gitonia* were clearly disappointed. My intention in

discussing this issue is intimately connected with the politics and ethics of doing research.

During the first few months of my research, from September of 2001 until January of 2002, the eviction was only a matter for speculation; albeit a reasonable one. One of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* noted that the works in the wider area of the Olympic stadium were progressing and encroaching on their site. However, no authority had visited the settlement to inform its inhabitants about their fate. The speculations around their possible eviction were strengthened by rumours that spread in the neighbourhood through informal channels, such as the non-Gypsy neighbours, the workers and engineers from nearby construction sites, etc. Only the co-ordinator of the GHM for Roma issues in Greece had let them know that, according to all the information he had, their eviction would take place in the near future.

Around mid November, I was asked by the male heads of the settlement's extended families to visit the municipality offices in search of some answers. I agreed to go since I was planning to visit the offices anyway for the purposes of my research, and grasped the chance to introduce the problems of *Gitonia* and to open a channel of communication between its representatives and the local authorities. In fact, I went there in the official role of researcher, seeking information about the municipality's projects on Gypsies in the wider area of Marousi.

After a couple of failed attempts to trace the right person in the municipality's offices I was finally sent to the Mayor's office and introduced to "the person responsible for these issues", as I was told. A young woman who was the daughter of the Mayor Panayotis Tzanikos, as I found out later, invited me into her office to have a private discussion. Although unaware of the existence of this specific settlement within the municipality's borders, she explained to me that there were a number of projects—still at a preliminary stage—for the Gypsies who lived in Marousi, which aimed "at their full integration into wider society."¹³

Indeed, she was also unaware of the fact that there were other Gypsy settlements in the wider area of the Olympic stadium. "We are still in the process of counting the Gypsies, who live within the borders of our municipality" she said

¹³ It was unclear to which group of Gypsies she referred to.

to me and she thanked me for giving her this information. She told me that if the municipality would get the funding from the Ministry of the Interior, there was an ambitious project that aimed at the Gypsies' permanent resettlement in houses that would operate in association with health and educational projects, as well as the creation of a number of job opportunities for them. However, these projects were still at a preliminary stage, since the funding from the Ministry of the Interior had not been approved yet. Apart from this general discussion, she was not in a position to give me any information on the timetable of the Olympic works and how these could affect the Gypsies. Nothing new came of these visits except for general promises of a good deal for their resettlement.

The results of my visit did not surprise the members of the settlement at all. However, my immediate response to my informants' request to visit the Municipality of Marousi was strongly appreciated and widely discussed among them. Especially appreciated was the fact that I kept trying for a couple of weeks to trace the right person over the phone and in the municipality's offices even though my first attempts had failed.¹⁴

The visit itself to the municipality did actually succeed in opening the way for future meetings between the Mayor's representatives and the representatives of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*. A couple of months later, the municipality sent its representatives to take notes on the number of households in the settlement and the number of people who belonged to each household. When I volunteered to assist the municipal representatives with this process of counting and making lists of names, since I was familiar with the number of households and the names of the members of the settlement, I was kindly thanked for my offer but it was obvious that I was left out of this process. Whilst this attitude from the municipality's representatives left me little room for my active involvement, however, it was positively interpreted by the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. As for

¹⁴ These positive assessments about me further strengthened my relationship with my adult informants. At that stage and having judged my intentions regarding my involvement in the issue of the eviction, the inhabitants of *Gitonia* were careful not to make me feel that they were taking advantage of me. In fact, after these visits to the Municipality some male heads of the families of the settlement told me that all they asked from me from now on was nothing more than a certain degree of support.

instance, Theofilos said to his relatives: “this makes clear to us that Ivi is not sold out to the Mayor’s people”.

When the lists with the names of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* were ready, a cycle of long and difficult negotiations started, in which different parties were involved: the settlement’s inhabitants, the inhabitants of the surrounding settlements (the Albanian Gypsy and the smaller Greek Gypsy settlement)¹⁵ and the elected representative of the Gypsies’ association *Elpida*, the Municipality of Marousi, plus representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and two NGOs,¹⁶ some of whom acted as mediators. Whilst the members of *Gitonia* would like me to accompany them in the official meetings, they soon realised that this kind of involvement would have an impact on my gatherings with the children. In addition, after the first meetings with the official mediation of third parties (the MRG-G and The Doctors of the World), the municipality rejected the MRG-G as well as any other official mediating party and accepted only the mediation of The Doctors of the World (whose representative actually signed the final agreement).

Therefore, I stayed out of the official meetings but I was always available to my informants for assistance, such as in clarifying details of the agreement at the different stages of the discussion, or offering my personal suggestions, when I was asked to do so. My decision not to take active part in the official meetings was also based on the fact that the negotiations started late and lasted long. In fact, the agreement was signed in August of 2002 when I was nearly finished with my fieldwork. My active participation in the processes of negotiations would have had to end at that stage, leaving in effect my inhabitants alone at the most crucial stage of the actual resettlement and the period which followed the agreement.

Of course, keeping a distance from the actual processes of negotiations proved to be an extremely difficult task for a number of reasons. It was not only that the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* were hampered by their illiteracy and trusted me and counted on my help and support, but also that the representatives of the other party (the Municipality of Marousi and the Ministry of the Interior), as well as the official mediator, also occasionally—but always unofficially—sought my

¹⁵ Despite the fact that the Albanian Gypsies were involved in the first stages of the negotiations for their resettlement, they were excluded from the final agreement.

¹⁶ MRG-G (Minority Rights Group-Greece) and The Doctors of the World were the two NGOs which took part in the first stage of the negotiations.

presence and assistance in the negotiations. As time went by and the municipality's proposal was taking its final form, the negotiations regarding the resettlement reached their peak and considerable tensions threatened to put an end to the possibility of reaching an agreement.

The final proposal for the agreement of the resettlement consisted of three different phases: a) a period of funded renting of houses, b) a period of provisional resettlement into compounds and c) final resettlement into houses. At that stage, the authorities realised that neither themselves nor the NGO mediators could easily convince the inhabitants of *Gitonia* to sign the agreement and move.

This hesitation by the Gypsies of *Gitonia* was absolutely justified given the fact that the proposal for the agreement failed to provide guarantees to the inhabitants of the settlement in the unfortunate case that something went wrong throughout any of the three faces of the process of their resettlement. And they all turned to me in order to help convince the inhabitants of the settlement sign the agreement. Inevitably, at this final stage, I became more involved in this issue. However, this direct involvement resulted in a clash of opinions between me and the municipality's representatives as well as the representatives of social services. In an incident which occurred in the yard of the Christopoulos extended family I came to an open conflict with one of the social services' representatives.

I was having a teaching session with the children when the adults called me to attend a meeting with the president of The Doctors of the World in Greece and the social services' representative. As soon as I got to the yard of the Christopoulos family, the social services' representative asked for my assistance in front of the people of *Gitonia* saying the following:

If you are really interested in these people, you should convince them do what is best for them, and this is to accept this agreement. These people count on your opinion and this is natural, since they know you better and I can see they trust you, this is obvious.

Because I got very irritated by her words, I replied that it was not my job to convince the inhabitants of the settlement to accept the agreement but hers, while pointing out to her the dangers stemming from this agreement for the people of *Gitonia*:

I think it is your job to convince these people to sign the agreement and not mine. Most importantly, I cannot assume the responsibility of leading them to this or that solution, because if something goes wrong—and this is very likely in this country—and they'll be on the streets, they'll also turn to me for an explanation. Besides, I strongly believe that they know better than anybody else what is best for them and their families. However, when they ask my opinion— because they do—I suggest that they shouldn't sign the agreement before they make sure that in the unfortunate case that something goes wrong in any of the three phases of the project, they will be covered by feasible alternative solutions.¹⁷

Not only did this conflict cause the immediate reaction of my informants both adults and children who supported me openly (in fact some of the children were ready to attack physically the woman). This dialogue also provoked the intervention of the Doctors of the World representative, who was supposed to sign as a third party (an observer) the agreement. She turned to me saying that she was interested in hearing my personal opinion regarding the provisional form of the agreement: “we would like to have such an input from people like you, who work in the field.” In front of my informants, I explained to her that my objection was the fact that this project was a last-minute solution, which although it seemed ambitious, failed to take into serious consideration issues, such as the input of those directly involved (the Gypsies themselves) and the result or input of any research done on this domain which would ensure its success.¹⁸

My attitude in this specific meeting played the most crucial role in shaping the quality of my relationship with my informants in *Gitonia* until that day for two reasons: Firstly, because I argued openly in front of them and in support of them and, secondly, because my arguments presented there were especially relevant to the problems that the people of *Gitonia* faced after the realisation of the agreement.

¹⁷ If, for example, during the first phase of the project which covered the funded renting of houses, the Ministry of Interior delayed the funding, what would be the guarantee that the Gypsies of *Gitonia* wouldn't be evicted by their landlords from the houses? Who would cover the expenses in such a case?

¹⁸ Ignorance or negligence of particularities of diverse Gypsy groups has resulted in the failure of a number of different projects involving Gypsies in Greece. For example, the very ambitious housing project of the 3.500 Gypsies of Gonos in Thessaloniki failed, because, among other reasons, the housing design did not take into account the Gypsy family structure, in which the male siblings of an extended family usually cohabit with or live next to their parents, leading many of them to construct barracks next to the their relatives' new houses in order to be together.

As I write these lines, (September of 2004), the inhabitants of *Gitonia* have been resettled, according to the agreements' conditions. However, the direction that the agreement took after the completion of my fieldwork confirms my initial fears about an agreement which aimed at a quick solution of resettlement with the least possible cost for the authorities and with less attention to the real needs of the Gypsies. The latest report of COHRE (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions) for the problems which arose from this agreement verifies the failure of the Municipality of Marousi to fulfil its pledges.¹⁹ At this point, the families which lived in *Gitonia* had not yet received the funds to cover the rent for several months and they are being threatened by their landlords with immediate eviction. They repeatedly complained to me about the fact that both the Municipality of Marousi and the Doctors of the World organisation which had signed this agreement can do nothing about this delay, since the municipality has not received the cash from the Ministry of the Interior!

The issue of the Resettlement and the Problem of Ethnographic Representation

Undoubtedly, I was lucky with the timing of the research, since the resettlement did not take place until after the end of my fieldwork. Nevertheless, the uncertainty produced by the imminent eviction had influenced both my view of the settlement in relation to its inhabitants and the ways I processed and presented the data obtained in the field.

Since the beginning of my research, even in its preliminary stage, I was concerned about the fact that during the writing-up stage I would have to write about people and activities associated with a particular setting (Williams, 1982) that would no longer exist. Questions such as, how can I collect data that would very soon be invalid in reference to a particular place, preoccupied my mind throughout the whole fieldwork period, affecting at the end the focal point of my research as well as the style of my writing. In fact, while I was processing my fieldwork material at the stage of writing-up, my informants had been evicted from *Gitonia* and resettled in rented or owned houses (depending on the case), most of them located in a different suburb of Attika, Gerakas.

¹⁹ See App. 3.

This brings us, I guess, to the discussion of the ways in which a wide range of socio-economic and political transformations and global processes have altered the context of ethnographic research, leaving social theorists and anthropologists in confusion and seeking answers and interpretations for the new, fractured realities, discontinuities and complexities of this rapidly changing context. The shift from the ideas of ‘bounded cultures’ and ‘spaces’ within the anthropological literature challenged the traditional ethnographic subject, its methodology, and the form of its representation and raised a number of issues related to ethnographic explorations. Reflecting the above-mentioned theoretical concerns, a growing body of the anthropological literature engages both with the fieldwork methodology problematising and reassessing its ethics and its aims (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997c; Marcus, 1995; Clifford, 1988) and with the art of writing ethnography and the politics of representation (Geertz, 1988; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Wolf, 1982).

Returning to my case, as already mentioned, the contradictions produced in the field due to the eviction not only indicated that space and place should be seen and examined dynamically but also that these contradictions should be seen as intrinsic of the fluidities and complexities that wider changes bring. Such a view shifted the focus of analysis away from static notions of ‘community’ and ‘locality’, and led me to conduct a strategically situated ethnography (Marcus, 1995),²⁰ concentrating on the exploration of those relationships, practices, and processes of becoming and belonging which the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* laid emphasis upon. Their emphasis on relatedness, on specific practices and performances, processes of becoming and belonging in tandem with dynamic explorations of ‘place’ and ‘space’ also pointed to the need of incorporating the ethnographic present of these courses of action in their social and historical context (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b; Marcus, 1995).

This takes us to the discussion of two important issues relating to the inherent difficulties of ethnographic representation. First, the difficulties of processing and presenting data obtained in the field at a particular point in time into written text—a process that refers to a different point in time—aiming to convey to the reader this changing element of time and space as well as to frame the wider

²⁰ See also page 81.

context in which these changes take place. Second and most important, the difficulties of interpreting the ways such changes have been experienced in the logic of the culture studied.

Regarding this study, the changing element of time and space is reflected in my emphasis on the processual character rather than the ostensible 'fixities' of conceptions of childhood and *Greek-Gypsiness*. Simultaneously, interpretations of the ways changes of time and space have been experienced in the terms of this particular group of Greek Gypsies have been deployed in this work through the dialogic encounter between the ethnographer and his or her subject of study. This encounter promotes polyphony and polyvocality and constitutes an inextricable part of the ethnographic present. However, this is an encounter that reflects both the wider socio-economic context and the particular circumstances and power relations in which it has been expressed.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 offered a detailed analysis of particular issues that emerged from my experience in the field and which have been central in shaping the theoretical and methodological orientation of this study. By highlighting the centrality of children in conducting fieldwork, this chapter dealt extensively with a discussion of recent developments in theories of children and childhood. It also outlined the most important ethical and methodological issues implicated in conducting research with children. Additionally, drawing on my personal encounters in the field, this chapter concentrated on the discussion of a series of issues which have constituted the subject of wider anthropological debates.

By bringing into discussion those incidents and experiences, those "particular episodes or scenes which were representative or have retained a powerful hold on memory" (Watson, 1999: 15), this chapter prompted a critical assessment of fieldwork, and more particularly a critical assessment of fieldwork which engages children as key informants, in the framework of a kind of 'reflexive thinking' that contributes to a constructive theoretical and methodological analysis. Such an analysis does not merely engage with a meticulous account of the methods used in the field filtered through the lens of the relevant theoretical approaches, neither constitutes a report of the ethical implications that emerge from the fieldwork

encounter, which capture the researcher's mind in a never-ending circle of defensive stance.²¹

Rather it deals with those personal reflections, which constitute representative features of a wider esoteric process that engages the researcher towards her/his product of work, his or her identity as an observer and theorist, as well as towards his or her informants. For Watson (1999), critical comparisons of representative personal accounts from the field project "the changing circumstantial context" (1999: 14), in which the anthropological knowledge is being produced, raising simultaneously important questions of methodological and theoretical orientation.

As far as my experience in the field is concerned, chapter 2 focused on the ways in which my relationship with the children granted me access to the adults' worlds and facilitated my participation in the social life of the settlement. In addition, it stressed the importance of meeting children's expectations in building up on the methodology. This means that the researcher has to challenge any taken-for-granted conceptions of childhood and generational differences. Furthermore, as my experience in the field showed, the design and implementation of the research methods should be done within an ethical framework which combines the more formalised guidelines (informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality etc.) with the researcher's responsibility to respond reflexively to the problems arising throughout the different stages of the research.

Drawing on Marcus (1995) definition of the strategically situated ethnography, this chapter explained why the single site of the settlement of *Gitonia* is seen as a connecting site that links specific persons and events within a particular place with wider relationships and connections, practices and processes. Furthermore, taking into account that fieldwork is an embodied experience which is premised on intersubjective relationships, chapter 2 revealed the role of reciprocal emotions in shaping my relationships with children and adult informants.

In specific, it described how these relationships have informed my encounter in the field and the production of knowledge and have shaped the product of my research. Indeed, this chapter dealt with the ways my presence in the settlement

²¹ Parkin (2000) acknowledges that "fieldwork is apparently always likely to be hedged about rule-governed expectations, however much altered or disregarded in practice" (2000: 261). Young scholars, more than anybody else, find themselves in the embarrassing position of transferring into paper the reasons and justifications for altering or disregarding these rule-governed expectations.

and my close relationship with the children prompted the adult informants' expectations for advocacy regarding their impending eviction. In addition, it dealt with the degree of my involvement throughout the different stages of the negotiations of their resettlement.

Having discussed in this chapter the politics of conducting fieldwork and the methods used in this particular research, the next chapter focuses on specific areas of literature upon which this thesis is premised.

Chapter Three

Approaches to Gypsies, *Greek-Gypsiness* and the Relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the State

Introduction

This chapter illuminates the problematic of analysing Gypsy cultures in the context of the nation-state. In addition, it discusses some of the inconsistencies underlying studies of Gypsies which have tended to reproduce static representations of *Gypsiness*. Taking into account the gaps entailed in such studies produced in Greece and elsewhere, chapter 3 tackles views of different Gypsy groups as bounded entities which passively acquire national characteristics within the nation-state context. Instead, it sees diverse expressions of *Gypsiness* as the outcome of many-stranded relationships, local practices and ideologies and wider institutional processes.

As already discussed in chapter 1, this thesis acknowledges the need for a contextual and historically-minded approach in the study of Gypsies. Therefore, it places this particular study of Greek-Gypsies into the wider framework of the anthropology of Greece. Chapter 3 discusses recent developments in the anthropological literature on Greece and outlines the most important representations of Gypsies in Greek academic discourse.

Seeing *Greek-Gypsiness* as the nexus of complex processes of negotiating an individual and a collective sense of belonging within the framework of a politics of culture within Greek society, this chapter explores the ways in which Greek Gypsy distinctiveness among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* is negotiated and expressed, reproduced and sustained. Central here is a 'morality' that informs ideologies and performative practices which uphold a shared sense of self that is seen to distinguish the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* from the non Greek Gypsy 'others'.

Simultaneously, not only such ideologies and practices have been nourished by the state's nationalist rhetoric but have been re-appropriated to sustain and reproduce *Greek-Gypsiness*. Feeding back towards the nationalist discourse some appropriations challenge the official integrity of the state. Drawing on Herzfeld's (1997) concept of cultural intimacy and examined through the lens of Greek Gypsy 'morality', the last section of this chapter will bring out the idiosyncratic characteristics of the relationship between *Gitonia's* Gypsies and the state.

Gypsies and Ethnographic and Theoretical Framework

Since the 18th century, and more intensively in the 19th century, the disciplines of comparative linguistics, popular culture and folklore studies,¹ and later the work of historians and anthropologists, have tried to give answers to the obscure origins of Gypsies mainly through explorations of linguistic models.² Folklore and popular literature have often reflected the "ideological and symbolic disorder" (Okely, 1983: 2) that the Gypsies seem to threaten the dominant system with, and have drawn attention to the Gypsies' marginal position within diverse societies. In so doing, they have also contributed to the creation of a stereotyped, exoticised and often homogeneous image of the Gypsy. By contrast, historians and anthropologists, criticising folklore and popular literature on Gypsies, have challenged this traditional view of a homogeneous Gypsy community.

Indeed, ethnographic studies of Gypsies across the United States, North America and Europe provide a clear indication of the differences between diverse Gypsy groups within different and across national boundaries.³ In addition, these

¹ See Sampson (1926), Smart and Crofton (1875), Leland (1882), Grellman (1783).

² Relevant examples are: Hancock (2002, 1970), Liégeois, (1994), Kenrick (1994), Fraser (1992), Okely (1983), Acton (1974), Vesey-Fitzerald (1973), Kenrick and Puxon (1972). A puzzle of all the existing resources on the history of the Gypsies leads most of scholars to the conclusion that the Gypsies emigrated from India many centuries ago and passed through the Middle East to the Byzantine Empire and then Europe [Okely (1983) is one of the few theorists who have debated the Indian origins of Gypsies]. Fraser (1992) gives a detailed account of the written texts that refer to the presence of Gypsies at the Byzantine Empire as early as the 11th century. Gradually, in the beginning of the 15th century, as Liégeois (1994) describes, different Gypsy groups appear in central Europe and in northern Europe in the 16th century. Both Fraser (1992) and Liégeois (1994) agree that the break-up of Gypsies into smaller groups within Europe was very much the outcome of their continuous persecution and attempts to enforce their assimilation.

³ Examples of studies on Gypsies in the United States and North America are: Salo (1982, 1981), Salo and Salo (1982), Sutherland (1975), Miller (1975), Gropper, 1975. Examples of studies on Gypsies in Europe are: Williams (2003, 1993, 1982), Helleiner (2000), Lemon (2000), Gay Y

studies have demonstrated that significant differences and variations among Gypsy groups—including the specific ways in which they perceive and construct their difference and express their distinctiveness—have been the result of different politico-historical and economic processes within different nation-states (Gay y Blasco, 1999).

Important aspects of social life such as housing, language, religion, concepts of pollution and related taboos, political organisation, work patterns, marriage and kinship structures may all vary significantly.⁴ For example, within Europe, Okely's (1983) English Travellers lead a nomadic life, speak one of the Romani dialects and have rigid pollution taboos, while Gay Y Blasco's (1999) Gypsies of Madrid have long been sedentary, speak the language of the non-Gypsy majority and do not have rigid pollution taboos. As Stewart (1997) stresses, while in Western European countries the majority of Gypsies reject wage labour, the Hungarian Rom and other Gypsies in the former Communist countries have on the whole been proletarianised. However, even within the countries of Eastern and Central Europe which have experienced Communist regimes, important differences mark numerous divisions among Gypsy groups (Guy, 2001b; Marushiakova and Popov, 2001a). Placed within national boundaries, Gypsy groups participate in the complexities and pluralities of a politics of culture (Helleiner, 2000). Various Gypsy groups within different nation-states are subject to diverse cultural influences, acquiring but also informing 'national' characteristics within the countries in which they live (Lemon, 2000).

The emphasis on the ways through which distinct Gypsy groups within different national borders experience their distinctiveness clearly suggests that the perplexities of expressions of *Gypsiness* are located within and not outside the structures of the societies in which Gypsies live and interact. Consequently, diverse expressions of *Gypsiness* are inseparable from forms of state and governance. This awareness has generated different approaches in the study of Gypsies each of which reflects the concurrent theoretical framework prevailing in

Blasco (1999). Stewart (1997). Okely (1983). Gmelch (1986, 1977). San Roman 1986, 1976). Kaprow (1982). Acton (1974).

⁴ For a brief review of studies which demonstrate the differences among diverse Gypsy groups as well as the differences between Gypsies and other artisan, trader and entertainer minorities, in Europe and the rest of the world, see Gmelch (1986).

anthropology. For instance, influenced by Sutherland's (1977, 1975) and Miller's (1975) earlier works on Gypsies in North America and drawing on Douglas' (1966) argument that pollution anxieties reflect anxieties over social contradictions which are projected into the body, Okely (1983) uses the concept of symbolic boundaries expressed through pollution beliefs to explain the relationship between the Gypsies and the dominant *Giorgio* [non-Gypsy] majority as well as the relationship between the Gypsies and the state.

More specifically, Okely's (1983) study of Travellers and Gypsies in England suggests that the tension between the Gypsies and the *Giorgio* majority as well as the Gypsies and the state lies in the specificity of Gypsy culture. According to Okely (1983), for the non-Gypsy society and the state, the Gypsies represent a threat to the prevailing order by demonstrating alternative ways of economic activity, thinking and living. Embodying all that is threatening and polluting, the Gypsies have repeatedly been the target of institutional assimilatory practices.⁵

In addition, for Okely (1983), the Gypsies in Britain are aware of the prejudice and stereotypes through which they are perceived by the non Gypsy population. In turn, they classify the *Giorgio* [non-Gypsy] as polluting in an effort to retain their integrity and distinctiveness. In this sense, the problems arising from the relationship between Gypsies and non-Gypsies are projected in the symbolic distinction of the inner and outer body. The Gypsies' concern with the treatment and cleanliness of the inner body symbolises the importance of Gypsy 'purity'. By contrast, the outer body symbolises the surface that comes into contact with the polluting non-Gypsy 'other' in everyday life.

Structuralist approaches in the study of Gypsies⁶ which focus on pollution beliefs assume Gypsies' exclusion, failing to tackle the more complex processes underlying the marginal position of Gypsies within different socio-economic and political contexts. They also tend to conceal the fluidities of intra-group

⁵ Following Okely's argument, Hawes and Perez (1996) give extensive accounts of specific state practices in Britain that result in explicit or implicit and multilevel exclusionary actions against Gypsy groups in Britain. They analyse the ways in which and the degree to which public prejudice against Gypsy cultural diversity fuels institutional reactions in the form of public policy or, in other words, the ways public prejudice transmutes into institutional prejudice and becomes part of the structure and response of the dominant society to Gypsy groups. Hawes and Perez also show how state policies contribute to the reproduction of the traditional image of *Gypsiness* as 'other' and 'different'.

⁶ Apart from Okely's (1983) structural approach, see also Sutherland (1977, 1975) and Miller (1975).

relationships and the changing character of the Gypsy experiences generated by rapid global processes. What is more, seeing *Gypsiness* as a result of monolithic relationships attributed to purity/pollution distinctions can neither account for explaining important variations among Gypsy populations, especially within the same national borders, nor for bringing out the complexities and particularities of the relationship between Gypsies and the state. Such a view of *Gypsiness* also fails to explain important generational variations among different age groups of different Gypsy cultures.⁷

In other words, structuralist approaches have failed to recognise that various expressions of *Gypsiness* are not merely the result of relationships frozen in time and space and always in antithesis with the non-Gypsy 'other' and the state. Instead, *Gypsiness* should be seen as the result of a flux of relationships which constantly change in response to the wider and shifting socio-economic and political conditions.

More recently, theorists on Gypsies suggest that the examination of notions of purity, dirt and pollution—if they exist—among diverse Gypsy groups should not be conceptualised as rigid boundary markers. Instead, they should be perceived in more fluid terms—often as shifting markers which change through time and space and in diverse situations—to reflect the intricacies of relatedness, perceptions of belonging and dissent, bringing out simultaneously aspects of gender, notions of shame, fertility and sexuality (Lemon, 2000; Gay y Blasco, 1999; Stewart, 1997).

Increasingly, ethnographic studies have turned their focus away from symbolic approaches in the study of Gypsies towards explorations of *Gypsiness* in relation to topics such as gender, sexuality and personhood (Gay y Blasco, 1999, 1997) gender and performativity (Gay y Blasco, 1999), memory and the past (Williams, 2003; Gay y Blasco, 2001) memory and performativity (Lemon, 2000), Gypsy politics and performativity (Lemon, 2001, 2000), often examined through the prism of the relationship between various Gypsy populations and the state or state institutions (Lemon, 2000; Gay y Blasco, 1999; Stewart, 1997).

⁷ As already mentioned in chapter 1 footnote 58, Sutherland (1977), Miller (1975) and Gropper (1975) acknowledge that notions of purity and pollution take different forms among different age subgroups within a particular Gypsy group but fail to explain how these account for wider generational variations among different Gypsy groups.

For Stewart (1999, 1997), different state practices dictate the elaboration of different resistive tactics by Gypsies. Stewart's (1999, 1997) studies of the Hungarian Rom unravel the ways through which Gypsies in Eastern Europe cultivated distinctive ideologies, practices and skills—such as a sense of cohesiveness sustained by the notion of brotherhood, an anti-authoritarian organisation within the family, a renegotiation of labour and market conditions, a specific preoccupation with the management of their bodies—as forms of resistive strategies towards state oppression and assimilation. The importance of Stewart's work lies exactly in the fact that it reflects how socio-economic and political circumstances have led the Hungarian Rom to undertake non-Rom activities and to transform them into meaningful Rom practices, thus redefining simultaneously the differences between themselves and the non-Rom 'others' within Hungarian society. According to Stewart (1997: 232):

“(...) the key to understanding the persistence of Rom communities and the Rom way of life lies in the way these Gypsies have been able to take the experience of the world around them and convert or transform it into their own cultural terms, into a specifically Rom sense of what it was to be human.”

Practically, Stewart's (1997) Hungarian Rom, similarly to Williams' (2003) Mānuš they take items, ideologies and established practices of their surrounding world and subvert their meanings to their own ends, developing a distinctive perception of collective being which enables them to gain control in certain domains of social life, to exert agency and to renegotiate their position within society. For instance, Stewart (1997) stresses that horse dealing and market trading enabled the Hungarian Rom to retain a sense of autonomy *vis à vis* other groups of people, including the *gažo* [non-Gypsy] peasants. Through price-setting, bargaining and dealing, Gypsies managed to redefine their subordinate position within Hungarian society by seeing themselves as market dealers who exercised agency, autonomy and control.

So far, the existing ethnographic studies on Gypsies suggest that different expressions of *Gypsiness* have been widely influenced by historical, economic and socio-political factors. Therefore, we need to examine the issue within the context of the nation-state, in which state practices and policies are developed and implemented. From this perspective, the exploration of Gypsies' marginal

position within wider society, their specific relationship with the state, their relationship with non-Gypsy populations, as well as their relationship with diverse Gypsy populations within the same national borders need to be studied within the theoretical framework of ethnicity and nationalism, as well as theories of state and systems of governance. However, by placing explorations of *Gypsiness* within this framework we come across considerable theoretical ambiguities that need to be further scrutinised.

Gypsies and Theoretical Ambiguity

It is true that concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identity, and in this specific case the very notion of *Gypsiness*, constitute complex and often ambiguous aspects of the politics of difference. Since Gluckman⁸ (1958) argued that relations among diverse ethnic groups are constructed and reconstructed in the frame of specific categories, or what Barth⁹ (1969) later called ‘ethnic boundaries’, anthropologists have been particularly preoccupied with challenging the myth of ‘the bounded ethnic group’ (Modood, 1997). In 1969, the same year in which Barth argued that ethnicity is best understood as a way of ‘narrativising’ the everyday life through processes of boundary formation, Cohen (1969) was pointing to the fluidity of ethnic boundaries raising simultaneously the instrumentality versus primordiality debate in the study of ethnicity.¹⁰

However, the representation of the Gypsy experiences in much of the literature on Gypsies has been trapped in what Herzfeld (2001: 136-137) describes as the taxonomic construction of groupings, in which the Gypsies do not fit. Malkki

⁸ Gluckman (1958) talks about physical, cultural and material differences that actually mark these boundaries and indicates the important role that communication and customs play in their formation and maintenance.

⁹ According to Barth (1969), the political significance of ethnicity lies in the ways narratives of commonality and difference are constituted and contested, and how these are marked and transformed by the influence of specific socio-economic and political circumstances. Barth saw ethnicity as a subjective process of constant interaction between groups in which people use ‘labels’ in order to identify themselves in relation to the others. Barth’s study showed how distinguishing boundaries between groups are maintained and reinforced in a constant process of individual and collective classification of ‘ourselves’ and ‘others’. According to him, the ethnic groups are socially constructed and the boundaries defining these groups are relative stable and continuous.

¹⁰ Barth (1969: 13) and other primordialist theorists see ethnicity as a natural condition that imposes a superordinate ethnic identity, while Cohen (1969: 27) and instrumentalists see ethnicity as a goal-directed process, formed by internal organisations and external stimuli and driven by economic and political interests.

argued that “the modern system of nation-state has come to be a natural order of things in many dimensions of human life” (1995: 5). In this sense, naturalised concepts of being and belonging have been strongly associated with taken-for-granted forms of classification of people and cultures. Such taxonomic classifications, which Malkki neatly describes as “the sedentarist’s metaphysics” (1997: 55), have strongly influenced notions of displacement and mobility presenting displaced people—both in ordinary discourse and scholarly studies—as ‘uprooted’, ‘unclassifiable’, and ‘polluting’ (Malkki, 1995).

As with displaced populations such as the refugees, both travelling and sedentary as well as semi-sedentary groups of Gypsies have been depicted for a variety of reasons as ‘unclassified’ categories of people, who do not fit in the above-mentioned taxonomic groupings, and as such, they have been described as people ‘outside of place’¹¹ (Sibley, 1995), whose presence is seen as ‘threatening’ the existing order and stability (Okely, 1983). Such representations of Gypsies have produced and reinforced overgeneralised perceptions of *Gypsyness*, which inevitably sustained notions of ‘boundedness’.

As we have already seen, some of the inconsistencies in approaches to Gypsies have been overcome by the proliferation of ethnographic examples, which stressed that *Gypsyness* is not a homogeneous and harmonious whole but a quality that attains different characteristics within and between different national borders. Nevertheless, prevailing images of ‘the Gypsy’ as opposed to ‘the national order of things’ resulted in one-dimensional analysis of the relationship between Gypsies and non-Gypsy ‘others’ and between Gypsies and the state or state institutions, and resulted in the unproblematic conceptualisation of the relationship between *Gypsyness* and ‘placeness’ and the interplay among diverse Gypsy groups.

Although most of the recent ethnographic studies of Gypsies recognise the fact that Gypsies between and within the boundaries of the nation-states constitute a highly fragmented group of people rather than a homogeneous entity, limited

¹¹ Sibley (1995), drawing on Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger* (1966), showed how feelings of hostility and anxiety bound up with notions of ‘placeness’ create stereotypes that play an important role in the categorisation of social space. Stereotypes associated with space reflect the importance of keeping a ‘safe’ distance from the dangerous and different ‘other’, creating, at the same time, what she calls “landscapes of exclusion” (Sibley, 1995: i). Under this framework, place has constituted an important element for stereotyping the Gypsies, and conversely, the Gypsies constitute a frequent feature of stereotypes associated with place.

attention has been paid to the ways different Gypsy groups visualise and perceive their distinctiveness in relation to conceptions of space, place and locality, leading, in effect, to concomitant connotations of *Gypsiness* with lack of place. Regarding conceptions of place and space, diverse expressions of Gypsy distinctiveness have been merely associated with the national borders in which different Gypsy groups live and interact, omitting to bring out Gypsies' affiliations with specific localities within the same national borders. Similarly, in most works on Gypsies sedentarism and travelling have been conceptualised as naturalised elements of different Gypsy groups or merely the effect of wider structural transformations.

What is more, as Banton (1983) stressed, the case of the Gypsies hardly fits any existing theory on intra-group relations and therefore its analysis needs to overcome considerable theoretical gaps. Theories of ethnicity and nationalism, the concept of minority (see chapter 1), and theories of state and government alone cannot sufficiently explain the intricacies of various Gypsy experiences. Indeed, the confusion that characterises the literature on Gypsies mirrors the wider problematic in the anthropological discipline around the inadequacies of concepts, such as 'culture', 'ethnicity', 'identity', and 'community'.

Regarding the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identity, as already discussed, attempts to trace the Gypsies' origins retrospectively (representing different Gypsy groups as sharing the same ethnic roots) and explanations which symbolically equate conceptions of Gypsy distinctiveness with ethnic purity both fail to explain the discrepancies and fluidities of contemporary expressions of *Gypsiness*.

Both Stewart (1997) and Gay Y Blasco (1999) argued that the Gypsies do not ground their perception of distinctiveness from the non-Gypsies in a primordial, superimposed identity, or something forged in the past. In contrast, they build their shared sense of belonging in the present. Stewart (1997: 92) sees Gypsy identity "as something that could be acquired *and could therefore also be lost*" and Gay Y Blasco (1999: 15) as something that "is more performative than reproductive." For them, the Hungarian Rom and the Gypsies of Madrid cannot be seen as sharing an ethnic identity and therefore the study of Gypsies should shift its focus from those elements that illustrate Gypsy distinctiveness towards those

particular processes in which this distinctiveness persists, is reproduced and sustained.

However, despite Stewart (1997) and Gay Y Blasco's (1999) important observations that *Gypsyness* is a fluid category embedded in relationships in the present, less has been said on the particular ways through which this fluidity is constructed, expressed and negotiated in diverse circumstances. Recent examples on Gypsies¹²—and the present case—verify that *Gypsyness* is a shifting term that takes different meanings in relation to different groups and in diverse circumstances. For example, Lemon (2000) describes how the Russian Gypsies constantly shift from the use of the term *Roma* and expressions of *Gypsyness* to the term *Gazhje* [non Gypsy] and expressions of Russian nationalism depending on the framing context.

In addition, Lemon (2000) indicates that taxonomic classifications have also had a considerable impact on the representation of the relationship between Gypsies and the state. It is true that in the literature on Gypsies the unproblematic association of *Gypsyness* as in complete opposition to the ideologies and practices of the state and state institutions has constrained our understanding of diverse Gypsy experiences. This is because this association implicitly or explicitly assumes that Gypsies live and operate outside of or are victimised by state institutions and bureaucratic mechanisms. And, whilst acknowledging that in most cases state policies have aimed at the Gypsies' assimilation and have reinforced the prejudice of the non-Gypsy population towards them, this alone cannot account for simplistic and generalised assumptions for the relationship between different Gypsy groups and the state.

Recent examples from ethnographic studies prove that Gypsies strategically take advantage of social policies, such as the Gypsies of Madrid (Gay y Blasco, 1999), subvert state practices and ideologies (Stewart, 1997), or even work in the state mechanisms (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001b; Lemon, 2000) and seek political mobilisation, such as the Gypsies in many Balkan and Eastern European states (Barany, 2002, 1998; Guy, 2001a; Gheorge and Acton, 2001). These examples point to a less antagonistic relationship between the Gypsies and the

¹² See Csepeli and Simon (2004). Marushiakova and Popov (2001b). Lemon (2000).

state or the other institutions than that so far depicted in the earlier literature on Gypsies (Hawes and Perez, 1996; Okely, 1983).

More than anything else, these cases indicate the need for a more nuanced approach in the study of the relationship between the Gypsies and the state. This principally means that it should take into consideration the fact that different Gypsy groups often have different political aims, such as the Roma communities in Transylvania described by Foszto and Anãstãsoaie (2001). Examples which tend to treat simplistically the relationship between different Gypsy groups and the state leave, in effect, the analysis of the impact of different policies on intra-Gypsy group relations within the same national borders unexamined (Lemon, 2000). Variations arising from different local conditions, even within the same national borders, in connection with the role of transnational bodies in promoting Roma policies¹³ (Kovats, 2001) and mobilisation (Acton and Klímová, 2001) should also be taken into account.

The problem with the theoretical and ethnographic analysis of Gypsies does not end here. Although the cases of different Gypsy groups cannot be examined outside of the framework of their relationship with the state, this relationship cannot in itself account for intra-group differences and diverse Gypsy identities within the boundaries of a single nation-state. Indeed, long ago, Okely (1983: 74), citing Acton (1974), made an observation that is crucially important for this thesis. She acknowledges that different Gypsy groups in Britain have different geographic and national affiliations, 'Irish', 'Scottish' and 'English' that can be enhanced when these groups interact (Okely, 1983: 74; 1975: 38). However, she did not go into depth in the analysis of the association between these affiliations, intra-group relations and place.

Neither can the analysis of the relationship between Gypsy populations and the state be detached from the rapidly shifting reality generated by global transformations and migrant flows. This is particularly obvious in the case of Greece where there are different and often competing Gypsy groups with a great variety of cultural characteristics, such as different descent groups, places of origin, language, religion, customs and work patterns (see chapter 1). Some of these Gypsy groups, such as the Albanian Gypsies, have recently migrated to

¹³ For example, the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Greece from Albania, indicating that wider geopolitical transformations have not left Gypsies untouched.

What is more, the example of this group of Greek Gypsies, who consider *Greekness* along with *Gypsiness* an intrinsic aspect of their sense of belonging, makes this theoretical problem even more striking. However, the acknowledgement that different Gypsy groups attain national characteristics within and across diverse national borders (Gay y Blasco, 1999) indicates that the theories of state and nationalism, the concept of ethnicity and minority remain useful analytical tools in the study of the Gypsies. This is supported by recent ethnographic examples which point to the fact that some Gypsy groups have developed a sense of belonging to particular nation-states or adherence to nationalist ideologies (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001a).

The Anthropology of Greece: A Review of the Literature

From the Anthropology of the Mediterranean to the Study of Gender and Kinship

According to Herzfeld (1987), modern Greece had long been surprisingly absent from the development of mainstream anthropological theory and mainstream anthropological theory had for long been absent from modern Greek studies. In his book, *Anthropology through the Looking Glass* (1987), Herzfeld proposed a comparative analysis between modern Greek culture and the anthropological practice, thus attempting to place Greece at the centre of the anthropological discipline and shift it away from the margins of the anthropology of the Mediterranean (see chapter 1).¹⁴

Looking at the literature on the anthropology of Greece throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, one easily recognises the gaps and inconsistencies entailed in

¹⁴ Through the elaboration of the concepts of *diglossia* and *disemia*, Herzfeld (1987) demonstrates a twofold Greek identity that is characterised by the contradicting meanings of the notions of *Hellenism* and *Romiosini*, or the tension between the European and the Oriental, which are similar to the tensions generated from the use of Western and non-Western ideologies within the anthropological discipline. Herzfeld seeks to unravel the hidden meanings, semiotics and power of linguistic forms which constantly produce opposing meanings and dualisms, such as those of *Hellenism* and *Romiosini*, or the European and the Oriental, reflecting the tension between official language, ideologies and practices and everyday practices and modes of expressions. For Herzfeld, Greek identity is dialectically constructed through disemic schemata embedded in language and semiotic practices (including silence and gestures) which involve a process of constant negotiation and renegotiation of the official rhetoric and the need for self representation in diverse contexts.

this body of studies inherited from the problematic concept of 'The Mediterranean' (see chapter 1). Since the early 1960s, a new body of ethnographies on Greece has gradually emerged which concentrated on tackling the problematic concept of 'The Mediterranean' and those ethnographic approaches which viewed the geographical area of the Mediterranean as a homogenous cultural region. In contrast to the anthropologists of the Mediterranean who examined issues of gender, kinship, honour and shame as self-contained notions, this emerging work on Greece clearly pointed to the importance of the analysis of sexual and power relations within a context of gender-based socio-economic roles and local kinship variations.

Specifically, Friedl's (1962) pioneering anthropological monograph on the Vasilika Viotias in central Greece¹⁵ and Campbell's (1964) study on the Sarakatsani, the semi-nomadic, pastoralist population of Northern Greece¹⁶ inspired a process of reflection on the ambiguous concept of 'The Mediterranean'. Prompted by the work of Friedl and Campbell, more and more ethnographic studies on Greece—mainly conducted by non-Greek anthropologists (Herzfeld, 1985, 1980; Danforth, 1982; Hirschon, 1993b; Handman, 1978; du Boulay, 1974; Dubisch, 1974) and most of them concentrated on rural or mountainous populations¹⁷—sought to reiterate issues, such as gender, kinship, honour, and shame, previously explored by the anthropologists of the Mediterranean, within a framework of wider anthropological theories.

Through the course of the 1980s, ethnographic studies on Greece (Dubisch, 1986b; Hirschon, 1984; Rushton, 1983) engaged with the wider debates of feminist anthropology and tackled issues such as the universality of gender roles and the subordination of women. Issues of gender and kinship remained central in anthropological explorations of Greece (Dubisch, 1986a, 1983; Herzfeld, 1985;

¹⁵ Friedl (1962) showed how women's roles and actions and their rights on property in the village of Vasilika play an important role in the organization of the household, in spite of the phenomenological dominance of men in the household.

¹⁶ Campbell (1964) reveals the ways the Sarakatsani distinctive way of living and thinking contrasted state and religious ideologies, which resulted in their marginalisation and exclusion both by the state and their sedentary neighbours. In addition, Campbell explores the specific strategies they adopt, particularly emphasizing ideologies of honour and shame, in order to reconcile these differences and gain a respectful position within wider society.

¹⁷ With the exception of the urban study of Hirschon (1993b [1978]) among Asia Minor refugees in Piraeus.

Skouteri-Didaskalou, 1984; Hirschon, 1984) but were increasingly approached contextually and historically. What is more, in most ethnographies on Greece throughout the 1980s emphasis was placed on the analysis of both female and male roles in conjunction with or as metaphors of other areas of social life, such as the public and the private (Hirschon, 1989; du Boulay, 1986), the domain of religion (Dubisch, 1983; Rushton, 1983) and the politics of identity (Herzfeld, 1985).

In the early 1990s an edited volume on gender, kinship and identities in modern Greece (Loizos and Papataxiarchis,¹⁸ 1991a) and another edited volume on identities and gender a year later (Papataxiarchis and Paradellis,¹⁹ 1992) were published, contributing to a more nuanced approach in Greek ethnography, while taking into account variations and local particularities. The authors of these volumes sought to unravel the specificities of Greek society through the comparison of the particular ways through which kinship as an important locus of personal and collective identification within and outside marriage implicates diverse gender models in different contexts (Iossifidou, 1992; Cowan, 1992; Papataxiarchis, 1991).

A further volume (Papataxiarchis and Paradellis,²⁰ 1993a) stressed the centrality of historical processes in the construction of contemporary ideologies of gender, kinship and family in Greece. Simultaneously, Dubisch's (1995) study on pilgrimage and gender politics in the island of Tinos, Seremetakis' (1991) work on women, death and divination in Mani, Cowan's (1990) study on dance and body politics in Northern Greece and Vernier's work on kinship relatedness and migration in the island of Karpathos (2001 [1991]) offered new perspectives in the study of gender in Greece.

After Campbell's (1964) classical study which was the first community level ethnography in Greece that addressed issues of cultural distinctiveness in conjunction with state practices and ideologies, the discussion of kinship and gender differentiations in the Greek ethnography of the 1980s and the early 1990s

¹⁸ *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece.*

¹⁹ *Taftotites ke Filo sti Sighroni Ellada.*

²⁰ *Anthropology and the Past: Contributions to the Social History of Modern Greece.*

brought out the cultural complexities of Greek society and opened the way for the proliferation of studies on minorities throughout the 1990s

The Study of Minorities, Migration and Studies in Urban Settings

Ethnographic accounts of minorities in Northern Greece proliferated in the anthropological literature on Greece during the 1990s (see also chapter 1). During the last couple of decades, this emerging body of literature addressed issues of ethnicity, identity and nationalism mainly focused on Northern Greece and more specifically in Macedonia (Kravva, 2003b; Danforth, 2000, 1995, 1993, Cowan, 2000; Triandafyllidou, 1998; Karakasidou, 1997; Mackridge and Yannakakis, 1997). The significance of this work is highlighted by the growing concern for the Macedonian conflict which has recently constituted an issue with national, regional and international implications.

The development of an ethnographic body related to the Macedonian issue, which brought into discussion what Herzfeld (2001: 150) calls “the porosity of borders and the negotiability of identities” in the study of Greece²¹ was not followed by a large-scale proliferation of anthropological studies on ethnic minorities or migrant populations in other parts of Greece. Indeed, with the exception of ethnographic studies on Macedonia and only a few other exceptions (Demetriou, 2004; Vernier, 2001; Gefou-Madianou, 1999; Hirschon, 1989), ethnographies concentrated on minorities and migrant populations are relatively absent from recent anthropological work on Greece. This happens even though the fall of Communist regimes in the Balkans and central Europe and wider socio-political transformations resulted in overwhelming migrant flows into the country in the course of the 1990s (see also chapter 1).

What is more, in spite of the fact that ethnographic studies on Greece increasingly engaged with cities as research sites, such as the studies on Macedonia (Kravva, 2003b, Boeschoten, 2000; Agelopoulos, 2000, Cowan, 1990), Faubion’s (1993) study on the city of Athens, Panourgia’s (1995) Athenian anthropography, as she calls her work on death and identity, and Hirschon’s (1989) study of Asia Minor refugees in Piraeus, urban-centred ethnographic work

²¹ Regarding this issue, see particularly Danforth (2000) and Agelopoulos (2000).

on Greece has not proliferated at the same pace as ethnographies on urban settings conducted in other areas proliferated.

Taking into account the emergence of the discussion of minorities related to the Macedonian issue, the shift in the ethnographic explorations of urban settings in Greece as well as the recent changes in the composition of contemporary Greek society, it is striking that anthropologists of Greece have not yet adequately addressed current issues of minorities and ethnic identities, migration and social mobility in association with particular urban settings. Additionally, this happens at a time when other theorists outside the discipline of anthropology, such as political and social scientists²² and sociologists of education²³ increasingly engage with the issues of migration and minorities in the study of Greece.

Recently, as the *1st PhD Symposium on Modern Greece: Current Social Science Research on Greece*²⁴ (2003) revealed, a new generation of scholars coming from diverse disciplines (from within and outside the Greek academia) are increasingly engaging in studies conducted in urban settings among diverse cultural groups.²⁵ As Cowan (2003) mentioned in her plenary speech at this interdisciplinary symposium,²⁶ the anthropology of Greece faces the challenge of conducting research on the new, emerging themes that characterise Greek society.

According to Cowan, the anthropology of Greece needs to deal with these very important issues (such as urbanisation, migration, education) and the ways that these issues prompt projects of identity and processes of belonging in a framework of production of difference that takes place in and through everyday discourse. In other words, the anthropology of Greece needs to refocus on those populations that reflect the restructuring of contemporary Greek society. This should be done in places, such as the neighbourhood, the coffee shop, the school, the place of work.

²² See Baldwin-Edwards (2005), Hatziprokopiou (2003), Fakiolas (2003, 1999), Lambrianidis and Lymberaki (2001), Lazaridis and Wickens (1999), Gotovos (2002).

²³ See Katsikas and Politou (1999), Terzopoulou and Georgiou (1998), Damanakis (1997), Markou (1996).

²⁴ The *1st PhD Symposium on Modern Greece: Current Social Science Research on Greece* which took place in LSE on the 21st of June in 2003 was organised by the Hellenic Observatory, European Institute.

²⁵ Such as the Thessalonikan Jews (Kravva, 2003a), the Pomaks of Xanthi (Michail, 2003), a multicultural school in Athens (Lytra, 2003).

²⁶ Notes taken from Cowan's plenary speech.

The Case of Gypsies in the Literature on Greece

Herzfeld (1987, 1982), as well as Papataxiarchis (1993), have indicated that the foundation of the independent Greek nation-state was accompanied by the elaboration of an academic discourse that served both as a means of forging a national consciousness and as a reaction to various studies produced by foreign scholars that questioned the 'purity' of Greek *ethnos*. For Danforth (1995) as well as Cowan and Brown (2000), the disciplines of history and folklore played an important role in shaping a feeling of ethnic continuity and commonality, grounded in a mythology of a glorious ancient past.

In fact, folklorist studies not only fed the nationalist discourse in Greece but also prompted a strong nationalist orientation in academic research that contradicted traditional anthropological thinking (Herzfeld, 1987), whilst also concealing the multicultural character of contemporary Greek society. Consequently, the disciplines of history and folklore in Greece have largely neglected the contribution of minorities to Greek tradition. It is also true that folklorist and historical studies have, to a large degree, ignored the contribution of the Gypsy legacy to modern Greek history, partly because the Gypsies, along with other minorities, have not inspired the vision of a 'homogeneous' Hellenic *ethnos*.

Although recent anthropological studies on northern Greece have shed light on the relationship between the Greek state and particular minorities, the absence of broad ethnographic accounts on Gypsy populations has tended to exclude Gypsies from this academic discussion. What is more, the academic literature on Gypsies in Greece remains trapped almost exclusively in folklorist approaches (Vaxevanoglou, 2001; Lidaki, 1998, 1997; Ntousas, 1997) as well as a body of works which belong to the sociology of education (Terzopoulou and Georgiou, 1998; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Markou, 1996). What is striking in the literature on Greece is the absence of a systematic ethnographically-based analysis of Gypsy groups.

This marginal position of Gypsies in Greek ethnography has consequently reinforced an exoticised image of 'the Gypsy', clearly distanced from the wider socio-political and historical context of Greek society. The Gypsies, in this sense, remain encapsulated in representations as a distant, bounded, unchanging, and homogeneous community, 'frozen' in time and space. Consequently, the Gypsies

in Greece have been absent from the discourse on the politics of identity, power and culture.

Lately, historians and theorists on Gypsies in Greece²⁷ increasingly emphasise the contribution of diverse Gypsy groups to the history of the recently formed nation-state, depicting them for the first time as an integral part of modern Greek society.²⁸ As such, they are seen as both contributing to and being influenced by the wider Greek socio-economic and historical processes. A different point is made by the historian Gallant (2001) who acknowledges the importance of ethnographic accounts in historical explorations of modern Greece and on marginal populations.

In contrast to the ahistorical and exoticised image of the Gypsies in Greece that has been created by popular and academic literature and sometimes sustained in the rhetoric of minority groups rights organisations and political parties that victimise, oversimplify and generalise ‘the Gypsy’ for the sake of an effective political negotiation, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* constitute a group that not only participates in the politics of culture and identity but also takes part in the nationalist discourse—and clearly reproduces it. This is particularly visible in the tension that characterises the relationship between the Greek Gypsies and other Gypsy groups in Greek society.

Greek-Gypsiness and the Politics of Culture

Examining Projects of Identification

At first glance, it seems quite easy to define and describe a visibly poor and illiterate group of people living in shacks, who share particular customs, and working and living habits. It seems even easier to distinguish such a group of people from their middle-class neighbours. The difficulty, however, lies in the demarcation of those shifting elements (such as aspects of *Greekness* and *Gypsiness*) which the Greek Gypsies of this particular settlement strategically

²⁷ Gotovos (2001). Gallant (2001). Georgiou, Dimitriou and Politou (2001). Terzopoulou and Georgiou (1998). Lidaki (1998, 1997). Ntousas (1997). Giannakopoulos (1981).

²⁸ For example, Gypsies took part in the Greek War of Independence in 1821 (Ntousas, 1997; Giannakopoulos, 1981), in many social fights (Ntousas, 1997) and the National Resistance Movement during World War II (Georgiou, Dimitriou, and Politou, 2001).

draw upon in order to negotiate their distinctiveness in diverse contexts. For instance, in spite of the apparent (for the non-Gypsy) distinction between the Gypsy and the non-Gypsy, the members of this particular group were especially preoccupied with the construction of a shared sense of belonging that not only made them different from the non-Gypsy 'others' but also differentiated them from other Gypsy groups in Greece.

Such a difficulty reflects the intricacies that characterise the study of the Gypsies stemming from taxonomic categorisations of *Gypsiness* exclusively in terms of opposition versus the non-Gypsy population, a signification that prevents proper consideration of the interplay among diverse Gypsy groups within the nation state context. Although the objective of this research is not to look at intra-Gypsy group relationships in Greece, this preoccupation of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* suggests that *Greek-Gypsiness* should not be viewed unproblematically in relation to projects of identities and notions of place and locality, as well as the centrality of such concepts in diverse expressions of a politics of culture.

The increasing recognition by anthropologists of the need for more nuanced analyses of "totalising concepts" (Geertz, 2000: 221) such as 'culture', 'society', 'community', 'ethnicity' and 'identity' has gone hand in hand with the acceleration of large-scale processes and geo-political transformations (Fardon, 1995) which, according to Geertz, "have produced a sense of dispersion, of particularity, of complexity, and of uncentredness" (2000: 220). In response to these changing realities, Geertz proposes ways of thinking, which recognise distinctiveness, diversity and particularity as intrinsic aspects of processes of belonging and being:

"What we need are ways of thinking that are responsive to particularities, to individualities, oddities, discontinuities, contrasts, and singularities, responsive to what Charles Taylor has called "deep diversity", a plurality of ways of belonging and being and that yet can draw from them—from it—a sense of connectedness that is neither comprehensive nor uniform, primal nor changeless, but nonetheless real (Geertz, 2000: 224)."

Nowhere are these pluralities more visible and striking than in "the politics of the urban arena" (Cross and Keith, 1993: 30). The explorations of "the organisation of diversity" (Hannerz, 1996: 9) within cities and urban sites shifted

the anthropological lens from the concept of whole, discrete entities, as well as the analysis of structure, symbolic representation and determinism, to the study of relationships, practices, interactions and interconnections (Hannerz, 1996). Simultaneously, the growing acceptance of the fluidity, (Hall, 1996) plurality (Calgar, 1997) and negotiability (Herzfeld, 2001) of boundaries and identities produced the researchers' greater sensitivity to the effects of local contexts. Subsequently, this turned the anthropologist's eye to the exploration of "the intertwined processes of place making and people making" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a: 4) in a context of identity politics, as well as politics of culture and power within context of the nation-state.

From this perspective, groupings, as Öncü and Weyland (1997: 2) note, take place within complex socio-political networks "that serve as the locus of identification and belonging, as well as the source of power and legitimation." The emphasis on the connection between identity and place (Keith and Pile, 1993) as well as identity, culture and power (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a; Öncü and Weyland, 1997) has turned the focus of anthropologists towards the study of identities as transformative processes, rather than static attributes, embodied in specific agents that enable the subject to act and transform itself. For Calhoun (1994: 27):

"As lived, identity is always a project, not a settled accomplishment: though various external ascriptions or recognitions may be fixed and timeless."

Simultaneously, as Herzfeld (2001: 10) indicates, the shift towards the exploration of agency and practice has resulted in the blurring of boundaries of previously separate anthropological domains. Today, once clear-cut anthropological topics such as kinship, religion, politics and economics can be examined as related areas of study, thus overcoming the constraints and inadequacies of totalising and self-contained concepts. For example, it is through the unravelling of "the intimacies of everyday life" (Herzfeld, 2001: 118) that kinship and gender relations,²⁹ or concepts of childhood³⁰ have enabled bottom-up approaches in the study of ethnicity and nationalism.

²⁹ See Herzfeld (1997); Delaney (1995); Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989); Das (1995a).

³⁰ See Helleiner (2001); Stephens (1995); Wee (1995); Staiton-Rogers (1992).

“Who are the Real Gypsies? The Greek Gypsies!”: Belonging and the ‘Play’ of Difference

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that shared fields of belonging are experienced through a set of socio-spatial relations, which are historically and discursively constructed. With respect to this specific population of Greek Gypsies, the settlement, the neighbourhood, their claimed region of origin, Khalkida, and Greece as a territorial space, constitute important aspects of the ways *Greek-Gypsiness* is being imagined, negotiated and sustained.

For example, for six-year-old Stelios, the fact that his extended family members came from Khalkida was more than enough to affirm his *Greek Gypsiness* to me as opposed to the ‘different’ *Gypsiness* of his Albanian-Gypsy neighbours:

“Who are the real Gypsies? The Greek Gypsies! These people [meaning the Albanian Gypsies] live here but they come from Albania, while we live here but we come from Khalkida! We are the real Gypsies because we were born here! We were born in Greece not in Albania! They [pointing to the Albanian-Gypsy settlement] are just Gypsies ...”

For Stelios and his father, Theofilos, who agreed with his son, when he claimed that they are the ‘real’ Gypsies because they were born in Greece, notions of the ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ Gypsy were intertwined with perceptions of locality and space. It is true, that among other specialists on Gypsies in Greece, Terzopoulou and Georgiou (1998: 13) mention that diverse Gypsy groups attain differentiating names that are associated with the particular geographical areas, which they come from, such as the *Stamboulia* (those coming from Istanbul), the *Yunanlia* (those coming from Asia Minor), the *Romyoyifti* (those coming from central Greece).

Having acknowledged the fact that *Greek-Gypsiness* among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* constitutes the nexus of distinct processes of self and group identification, which differ from other expressions of *Greekness* and *Gypsiness*, means that definitions of *Greek-Gypsiness* should be examined in parallel with the ongoing problematic around the term ‘community’ as well as the notions of ‘identity’ and ‘difference’.

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) stress that ‘localities’ and ‘communities’ are constructs, which articulate perceptions of difference and distinctiveness not

merely premised on the awareness of a pre-existing similarity and commonality but rather on the continuous construction of 'otherness'. For Hall (1996: 5), identities as "points of temporary attachment", should not convey solidities, boundaries and fixities but should point to the fluidities and perplexities of processes of identification. Identification is a process that "is subject to 'the play' of *difference*" (Hall, 1996: 3), a difference, that in its Derridean sense,³¹ "is positional, conditional and conjunctural" (Hall, 1992: 258). Drawing on Derrida's concept of *différance*, Hall (1996: 5) argues that identities are "a point of *suture*" constructed and articulated through difference (Hall, 1996: 3).

With respect to the case of the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, such a view of 'community', 'identity' and 'difference' enables us to see Greek Gypsy distinctiveness as a point of identification that produces difference by downplaying, amplifying or fusing aspects of *Greekness* and/or *Gypsiness* in diverse contexts. In this sense, difference does not necessarily create rigid polarities but constantly operates through different positions (Bhabha, 1994), where identities emerge often in tension or even in interconnection with other identities (Strathern, 1991).

In order to look at perceptions of *Greek-Gypsiness* among *Gitonia*'s Gypsies, I also suggest we take into consideration what Sutton (2000: 205) calls "the shifting boundaries of insiderhood and outsiderhood" which have dominated modern anthropological theory. These shifting boundaries indicate that the use of the word 'community' should be perceived and examined "as a network of agents with ever-changing projects rather than a tapestry of people with shared roots" (Alleyne, 2002: 622), or as a " 'black box' concept" (ibid: 608) that encompasses ahistorical, and 'fixed' in time and space totalities of people.

Then, the question is what exactly makes one particular group of people distinctive and differentiated (Donald and Rattansi, 1992), or rather, how does belonging to a particular network come to produce an all-encompassing identity that is nevertheless subject to *the play of difference*. For Olwig (2002: 125), communities constitute cultural constructs with "important symbolic as well as practical frameworks of life" for individuals and collectivities. Additionally, as

³¹ Derrida (1991a) sees *différance* neither as static nor as generating rigid separations but rather as an ongoing spatio-temporal process that produces simultaneously sameness and otherness.

Amit (2002) emphasises, the imagined and symbolic dimension of 'community' in Anderson (1983) terms cannot stand alone without its "actual and limited social relations and practices through which it is realised" (Amit, 2002: 18).

Regarding this group of Greek Gypsies, as we shall discuss extensively in chapter 6, an individual and collective sense of distinctiveness can only be conceptualised and examined within the framework of a specific relatedness that privileges extended kin values, while also promotes through particular marriage practices intra-family alliance networks. Relatedness, as a more recent focus in anthropological analysis of kinship, which emphasises what kinship does rather than what kinship is, enables a more profound exploration of relationships of kin (Carsten, 2004; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001; Carsten, 2000; Schweitzer, 2000; Holy, 1996; Strathern, 1992). The concept of relatedness has widened explorations of interconnections between biology and culture (Carsten, 2004; Franklin, 2001), kinship, gender and personhood (Busby, 2000; Loizos and Heady, 1999; Astuti, 1995; Howell and Melhuus, 1993; Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b), kinship and performativity (Busby, 2000; Thomas, 1999), and kinship and emotions (Borneman, 2001; Peletz, 1996). Kinship, in this sense, is not necessarily viewed as an autonomous system of relationships but rather as a nexus of relationships crosscut by other cultural domains such as gender, age, ethnicity, class, as well as concepts of personhood and identities.³²

³² The study of kinship, as an autonomous domain, had been predominant in the traditional anthropological theory since the time of Malinowski. However, since the 70's and the 80's, the study of kinship as a separate domain has been challenged by a body of literature producing a critique on traditional kinship studies (Carsten, 2004, 2000; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001; Faubion, 2001; Peletz, 2001; Schweitzer, 2000; Schneider, 1984, 1980). Schneider's (1984) influential study - which followed the shift of anthropological focus into a more self-critical and reflexive analysis (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus G. E. and Fischer, 1986) as well as the elaboration of feminist anthropological debates about nature, culture, and gender (Delaney, 1995; Strathern, 1992, 1981; Collier and Yanagisako, 1987; McCormack and Strathern, 1980; Yanagisako, 1978) - claimed that traditional anthropological thinking had been biased by Euro-American perceptions of the predominance of biology in the analysis of kinship ties. Strathern (1992), taking further Schneider's assumption, stressed that in Euro-American cultures kinship functions as a duality based on the perception that nature constitutes the ground on which culture is embedded. McCormack and Strathern (1980) and later Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) argued that gender and kinship had long been examined as categories premised upon ethnocentric assumptions that reproduced the biological discourse and naturalised hierarchies and differences based on categories such as "sex", "gender" and "family." These challenging studies had a major impact on kinship theory and prompted the emergence of new approaches that view kinship as networks of relatedness that should be examined in a comparative context (Carsten, 2004, 2000; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001; Schweitzer, 2000; Holy, 1996; Strathern, 1992).

Embodied Distinctiveness: Performing *Greek-Gypsiness*

The emphasis on human interaction and the practices through which belonging is expressed brings us to Bourdieu's (1984) concept of *habitus* and concomitant *theory of practice*. In his terms, *habitus* is both "a structured and structuring structure" that produces classificatory practices entailing the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices through taste (Bourdieu, 1984: 170). As he maintained, classifications operate "below the level of consciousness, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will" (Bourdieu, 1984: 466). Although clearly Bourdieu's theory attempted to reconcile dualities, such as body and mind, practice and representation, structure and agency, he did not manage to rescue *habitus* from the determinism of reproductive embodied actions (Noble and Watkins, 2003; Csordas, 2002; Crossley, 2001; Lambek, 1998). For Crossley (2001: 116), it is precisely because Bourdieu neglects the centrality of agency that his theory remains vulnerable to accusations of determinism.

Nevertheless, in conjunction with other theories, Bourdieu's *habitus* still remains a central concept in social theory, primarily because it focuses on the importance of the body for demarcating differences through practice (Csordas, 2002; Morris, 1995; Lock, 1993). Noble and Watkins (2003) suggest that what we need is to reject the unconscious nature of Bourdieu's *habitus* and reconceptualise it as a generative concept entailing capacities and the modalities of consciousness which enable the subjects' agency in social practice and subsequently in the process of the production of difference. More specifically, as Lambek (1998) points out, thought and practice or mind and body are not mutually exclusive opposites but rather "fundamental incommensurables in human experience" (Lambek, 1998: 109). For Lambek (*ibid*: 108)

"(...) it is the particular constitution of the dialectic of the body and mind in practice. the means. performative obligations and possibilities, and the particular dynamic trajectories they establish in a given society that are of interest: the ways they shape experience, model personhood and social connection, and underpin political, moral, religious, and therapeutic agency and institutions and their changing relations."

What is more, Csordas (2002), combining Bourdieu's (1984, 1977) work on *practice* and Merleau-Ponty's (1964, 1962) analysis of *perception*, stresses that embodiment can serve as a paradigm that is useful for the study of culture and

self. Defining perception as an embodied process and the body as “the existential ground of culture” (Csordas, 2002: 243), he elaborates the concept of “somatic modes of attention” (ibid: 241) to show that the experience of embodiment is implicated in intersubjective relationships.

This brings us to the question of how people experience their bodies (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994) and articulate their experiences (Schilling, 1993), how bodies are managed in everyday life (Nettleton and Watson, 1998; Turner, 1995) and how people use their bodies to structure selfhood and personhood and premise social relations (Csordas, 2002, 1994, 1990). What we need to know is how the body constitutes the ground for things such as experience, meaning, relatedness, becoming and belonging, continuity and transformation, and how these issues are configured in thought and expressed through embodied performance (Lambek, 1998). In other words, if embodiment reflects what the body and mind assume within a web of specific relationships, it is exactly through “the dialectic between body and mind in practice”, as Lambek (1998: 118) stresses, that difference is produced and identities are created.

This interplay between mind and body in practice through which sameness and difference are produced cannot be viewed independently of the role of emotions in the construction of affiliations, relatedness, belonging and dissent.³³ Rosaldo (1984) has long stressed that emotions are “embodied thoughts” culturally and temporally defined which are inextricably implicated in the materiality of social relationships. The importance of emotion in the study of the body lies exactly in the fact that emotions mobilise the body and constitute the moving force of “embodied agency” (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994: 58) through which perceptions of selfhood and subjectivity are articulated and sustained (Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990). In accordance to Lyon and Barbalet (1994), Schilling (1999) acknowledges that disregarding the role of emotions in social relationships can only result in a disembodied view of the agent.

For Hetherington, (1999:15), the production of sameness and difference is an embodied project and therefore “identity is about expressive performance, identification and communication with others” that articulates expressive

³³ Williams (2000). Burkitt (1999: 1997). Schilling. (1999. 1997. 1993). Peletz (1996). Das (1995b). Lyon (1995). Lock (1993). Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990). Abu-Lughod. 1986). Rosaldo (1984). Jackson (1983). Elias (1978).

sentiments and affiliations embedded in forms of belonging (ibid: 19). The notion of performativity, elaborated by Butler as gender performativity,³⁴ assumes that “identity is the effect of performance” (Bell, 1999: 3) and as such an embodied process (ibid: 8). For Butler (1993: 2), performativity is not “a singular or deliberate ‘act’ ” but:

(...) a reiteration of a norm or sets of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition (Butler, 1993: 12).

Inspired by the reiterative nature of Butler’s performativity, Bell (1999) suggests that day-to-day norms can be subverted, re-signified or re-enacted. However, in contrast to Butler (1993), Bell and other theorists (Busby, 2000; Hetherington, 1999; Lloyd, 1999; Fortier, 1999) suggest that the concept of performativity cannot stand alone outside the space where the performance takes place and the very relationships among those who are involved in this performance. For example, drawing on Butler’s concept of performativity but by emphasising the importance of mundane practices, Fortier (1999) shows how citation operates to produce and sustain belonging in the Italian émigré ‘community’ in London through performative acts of gender and ethnicity.

The project of identity is exactly a play of difference that is performed differently on different occasions verifying that “belonging is achieved at several levels of abstraction” (Bell, 1999: 3). If we come to accept the temporal, fluid and performative nature of identities that operate through difference and that performance is temporally and spatially situated, then it is important to see how identities are produced, performed effectively and reproduced or how self and group identifications are negotiated and sustained through embodied practices, emphasising the subjects’ agency.

³⁴ Inspired by Austin’s (1955) and Derrida’s (1991b) concepts of performativity and citationality respectively, Butler (1993, 1990) argued that gender is not a natural fact but a set of repetitive and performative acts that produce the effect of gender. According to Butler, the body assumes its male or female identity through the reiteration of culturally-specific normative practices which offer the possibility to the body to reconstruct its identity often in subversive ways. Although Butler’s theory of performativity has contributed to the critique of the distinction between culture and biology by rejecting the dichotomy between sex and gender, however, as Busby (2001) notes, her concept of performance seems to be detached from everyday practices and the intimacies of social relationships in favor of a more abstract philosophical discussion.

Returning to this specific case, the notion of performativity enables us to examine what *Greek-Gypsiness* entails in order to affirm a shared sense of distinctiveness and belonging among the people of *Gitonia* in different occasions. In detail, emphasising the performative nature of *Greek-Gypsiness* we come to understand how embodied performance becomes the vehicle through which an individual and a collective sense of self among the members of this specific group of Gypsies sustain each other and produce difference that is very much the outcome of particular relationships within specific places. This embodied distinctiveness, which is charged with the emotional dispositions inherent in interdependent relationships and hierarchies, is intrinsically associated with the ways the body is managed at different stages of a person's life to undertake embodied performances.

The ways of participating in hierarchical relationships and affinities among the children of *Gitonia* also articulate embodied performances which sustain Greek Gypsy distinctiveness. As James (2000) notes, children's bodies should not be seen "as divorced from conscious, thinking and intentional mind" (ibid: 27). In fact, how children mobilise and manage their bodies, their sensations, feelings and mind and undertake intersubjective action is of extreme importance. An increasing number of childhood studies have shown that children not only resist, subvert and seriously affect their relationships with others but they actively participate in the embodiment of distinctiveness (Thomas and Ahmed, 2004; Ali, 2004; Toren, 2003, 1999, 1993; Simpson, 2000; Connolly, 1998). In fact, children appropriate and reproduce their bodies and subsequently their social worlds through the agency of embodiment (James, 2000; Prout, 2000).

In specific, it is through the performance of *emotional affiliations* and the undertaking of gender and age-specific *embodied obligations* (Howson, 1998) that a Greek Gypsy personhood is sustained and a collective sense of distinctive becoming and belonging is affirmed among the Gypsies of *Gitonia*. Children's embodied performances reveal that notions of personhood in the case of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* cannot be seen independently from kinship and gender relations.³⁵ If we want to understand Greek Gypsy kinship relatedness and the

³⁵ Ethnographic examples from other parts of the world, such as the Vezo of Madagascar (Astuti, 1995), have also shown that the notion of personhood cannot be seen independently from conceptions of gender and kinship.

ways age, gender and personhood are implicated in this relatedness, we also have to examine the meaning of culturally specific forms of emotional expressions and embodied obligations in defining and redefining hierarchical relations and relationships of knowledge and respect. In order to do so, we first have to understand the centrality of morality in Greek Gypsy projects of identification.

Greek Gypsy Morality

Various ethnographers lay emphasis on the preoccupation of Gypsies with the demarcation of the boundary between themselves and non-Gypsy society, predominantly expressed in moral terms (Williams, 2003; Gay y Blasco, 1999; Stewart, 1997; Okely, 1983; Sutherland, 1975). They emphasise the ways in which the Gypsies constantly stress the ‘superiority’ of Gypsy morality as a quality that becomes the vehicle through which they perceive their distinctiveness in relation to the non-Gypsy ‘others’.

Gay Y Blasco (1999: 41) indicates that for the Gypsies of Madrid the term ‘community’ does not refer to “a cohesive or harmonious whole, but to the Gitanos’ awareness of each other as moral beings.” And this awareness, or conceptual dimension of community is being sustained by individuals’ performance of Gypsy morality. According to Gay Y Blasco (1999), *Gypsiness*, for the Gypsies of Madrid, is intimately intertwined with ideas of a sexed personhood that should be constantly enacted, manifested and evaluated by the members of the group in order to affirm a collective sense of being. In this sense, ideas of personhood and perceptions of belonging seem to be inextricably connected. Through the performance of *Gypsiness* that is consolidated in this distinctive morality, the Gypsies of Madrid create a rigid hierarchical system among themselves that is based on relationships of ‘honour’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘respect’, creating this way a particular form of social and political organisation different from the non-Gypsy one.

Gay Y Blasco’s (1999) notion of morality as the quality through which an individual and shared sense of distinctiveness are conceptualised and sustained through embodied performance is especially useful for the analysis of relatedness. Taking as a theoretical premise that the mind is an embodied phenomenon, morality is seen here as the vehicle through which distinctiveness is the outcome

of the dialectic between conceptual workings and embodied performances embedded in the interdependencies of specific social relationships.

In this sense, the embodiment of morality often encompasses considerable tension and involves hard work. For Stewart (1997, 1989), the performance of an individual and shared sense of Gypsy self among the Hungarian Rom reflects the tension between egalitarian and individualistic ethics. Through the act of singing the Hungarian Rom pursue to reconcile the tension between their constant effort to retain their individual autonomy, on the one hand, and on the other, to reinforce brotherly egalitarian relationships (Stewart, 1999, 1997, 1989).

With respect to the Gypsies of the *Gitonia* settlement, morality constitutes the ground on which kindred and intra-family relatedness is conceptualised and organised, objectified and projected as an expression of *Greek-Gypsiness*. This presupposes that kinship is perceived as interwoven with personhood. Thus morality involves the dynamic relationship between an individual embodied performance and processes of objectification of a collective sense of self. Having recognised personhood as intrinsic to kindred relatedness in *Gitonia*, Greek Gypsy morality cannot be disentangled from processes of becoming. Indeed, here morality is articulated through the performance of gender and age-specific practices which produce knowledge and consolidate personhood, also evoking hierarchies, reciprocities and solidarities.

The concept of an embodied morality embedded in particular networks of relatedness and charged with its emotional affiliations, hierarchies and power relations enables us to see how the self is governed and the body is mobilised to produce agency in diverse occasions. Such a view of an embodied morality, which acknowledges the importance of individual agency, enables us to see how individuals use their bodies to undertake *embodied obligations* (Howson, 1998), or how they willingly discipline themselves—through a discipline different from the Foucauldian one (Foucault, 1977)—in order to demarcate belonging or dissent.

Here, an embodied morality does not refer to ‘docile bodies’, institutionalised through disciplinary techniques and ‘surveillance’ (Foucault, 1977). Rather, it represents the result of individual will to produce a personhood that articulates ideologies of gender and age, honour and sexuality, knowledge and solidarity through which relatedness is realised and sustained. Regarding this particular

case, this is best mirrored in Greek Gypsy children's ways of embodying becoming. From a very early age, Greek Gypsy children learn that the ways they treat, move, discipline and enjoy their bodies, as well as the ways they participate in the interdependencies of kin relationships and express their emotions become the most important signifiers of their individual and their shared sense of distinctiveness.

Interestingly, as already discussed, the members of this group of Greek Gypsies premise their shared sense of self, as well as their distinctiveness and superiority, on a moral framework that is not only *Gypsy* but also *Greek*. And in this sense, morality does not operate as the vehicle through which *Gitonia's* Gypsies differentiate themselves from the non-Gypsy 'others'. Rather, the performance of a distinctive entanglement of *Greekness* and *Gypsiness* can be seen as an amalgam of diverse characteristics and practices that are negotiated differently among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and other Greek Gypsy groups, between the Greek Gypsies and the non-Greek Gypsies or the non-Gypsy Greeks, as well as between themselves and the state.

There are two other significant elements that distinguish the morality of this particular group from that described by Gay Y Blasco (1999). Firstly, in the case studied here morality draws its distinctiveness from the content of its performative roles, through which the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* view themselves as the carriers of an 'authentic' tradition that, interestingly, entails claims not only to Gypsy but also to Greek 'authenticity'. Simultaneously, while this group of Greek Gypsies consolidate their collective identity through performance in the present, the content of this performance, or in other words, the ascribing features of performative roles claim authenticity in relation to an 'old Greek tradition' that, they claim, is widely forgotten.

The exploration of the most important aspects of Greek Gypsy social organisation, such as marriage, kinship relations and networks of relatedness, as well as domestic activities and work patterns through which *Greek-Gypsiness* is performed, illuminates the ways through which the members of *Gitonia* perceive, manifest and transmit a gender and age oriented enactment of roles that transforms performative practices into multi-level processes of objectification of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness. For instance, the methods and outcome of performing *nikokirosini* or domestic tasks in the public eye by the women of

Gitonia constitute the means, through which personal and group identity is affirmed, reinforced and transmitted to the younger generation, contrasted with other group identities and projected into wider society (see chapter 7).

The Idiosyncratic Relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the State

The Greek Gypsy View of the State

Having acknowledged the difficulties in the analysis of the relationship between different Gypsy populations and the state that is rooted in taxonomic categorisations, this section illuminates the particularity of the relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the Greek nation-state by concentrating on those constitutive parameters that make this relationship idiosyncratic. This presupposes a shift from those theoretical models that view different Gypsy experiences in different nation-states either as merely a resistance by a marginalised population towards the state's intolerance for distinctiveness, or as the result of an unproblematic conflation of 'Gypsy' and national characteristics.

The relationship between the Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the state should be seen and examined within a framework of identity politics and a politics of culture rather than strictly theories of ethnicity and nationalism, state policies and systems of governance. However, the fact that *Greekness* constitutes an element enmeshed with *Gypsiness* in this case suggests that this specific analysis cannot ignore theories of ethnicity, state and nationalism.

This is by no means a socio-historical review of particular political decisions and state policies that directly or indirectly have resulted in the process of marginalisation of Gypsies within contemporary Greek society. Neither is this an attempt to present a structural analysis of the specific politico-historical and economic processes that have framed the marginal position of Gypsy groups in Greece. Instead, this section seeks to throw light on the hidden aspects of the relationship between this group of Greek Gypsies and the state from the Gypsies' point of view, while defining its oddities and perplexities.

Before we look at the relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the state, it would be useful to examine how the Greek Gypsies, a predominantly

illiterate group, perceive the state. Although this illiterate population finds it difficult to objectify the notion of state and its mechanisms, its members acknowledge the fact that these apparatuses keep the nation-state functioning effectively through time and space. As for example Andreas, a man of around forty, maintained: “if the state does not exist, then Greece does not exist either [*an den iparhi to kratos, tote den iparhi ke i Ellada*].” In fact, for the people of *Gitonia*, perceptions of the Greek state, the Greek nation and the church or Orthodox Christianity clearly overlap. Children’s words and drawings displayed in the forthcoming chapters (chapter 4 and 8) demonstrate the fact that for the Gypsies of *Gitonia* these three notions interweave.³⁶

However, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, more complex interpretations of the notion of state emerge in the framework of everyday activities. Sirman (1990) discusses a similar process regarding the relationship between the state and peasants in Turkey. As also described in Sirman’s case, in the everyday context, the Gypsies’ contact with state institutions and officials, as for example, with the school, the police, the courts and the municipality officers, transforms their view of the state from a totalising concept into fragments of personified relationships between themselves and state representatives. However, at a more abstract level, the state represents for them a transcendent form over and above its mechanisms and separate from its officials. This process of evaluation should be seen through the spectrum of Greek Gypsy ‘morality’ described above.

In specific, the ways the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* interpret different forms of institutionalised racism which they face in their everyday activities are especially revealing of Gypsies attitudes towards the state and its institutions or representatives. In most cases, they believe that prejudice and racism are the product of the failure of the agents of the state to follow the proclaimed ethics of the state. For them, the police, the courts and the schools are undeniably serving the right cause, whereas policemen, judges and teachers often fail to do so.

The informants’ reflections on cases of institutionalised racism, as expressed both in informal discussions and in everyday language, demonstrated a mixture of sentiments of anger about the state officials’ negligence towards their problems

³⁶ To a great extent, these three notions overlap for the non-Gypsy Greeks as well.

and gratitude for the state's tolerance towards their 'Gypsy' way of life. The words of a middle-aged woman, Anastasia, echoed this contradiction:

I don't believe them [meaning the state's representatives in general] because they've never held their promises. they simply don't care about us ... But I have to admit that the state has been good to us. For example, we are lucky that the state hasn't kicked us out for so long. The land is not ours. the state has every right to kick us out.

Interestingly, these views reflect an important ideological distinction between the morality and ethics of the state and the actual interventions of its agents. On one hand, the Gypsies of *Gitonia* show confidence in the state's proclaimed ethics and aims, while on the other, they attribute the failure of the realisation of these aims to its representatives. For example, when I asked Theofilos, the man who represented *Gitonia* in the long negotiations regarding their resettlement for his opinion on negotiations, he gave me the following answer:

"The state wants to spend money and build houses for us but the problem is that all these immoral [*atimi*] politicians will rip the state off and nothing will be done for us again."

What is more, during fieldwork, it wasn't rare for the inhabitants of the settlement to even praise the very same institutions that seemed to be the source of their continuous oppression such as the police and the courts. Antonis Petridis, one of the elder males in *Gitonia* maintained that:

"The police and the courts should do their jobs. They shouldn't do favours to anybody. The problem is that we are poor and illiterate and whatever happens the police blame us and the courts convict us. If you have money, you can easily escape jail. Policemen and judges are sometimes immoral [*atimi*] and get bribed [*theloun ladoma*] to set you free. If you don't have money, they lock you up."

From these words it is clear that they see the state's representatives as people who are prone to corruption, but most importantly as people who have betrayed the ideals and ethics of the state. The phrases *afti den ehoun timi ke mpesa*³⁷ or *afti den sevonte tipota*³⁸ were common characterisations used by the Greek Gypsies of

³⁷ These people do not have value and do not keep their word of honour.

³⁸ These people do not respect anything.

Gitonia for the representatives of the state institutions and mechanisms, as for example ministers and politicians.

This explains why the army seems to be the institution that more than any other, along with the church, seem to be highly respected by most members of this group of Greek Gypsies. This is presumably because the army exemplifies ideals such as solidarity, brotherhood and hierarchical relationships that lie at the very core of Greek Gypsy morality, while at the same time, its highly authoritarian character leaves little space for corruption and discrimination. And although not all the male members of the settlement join for a variety of reasons (such as for example high rates of drug addiction), those who have joined the army are highly respected. For Fotini, the female head of the Ioannou extended family and mother of three sons, the fact that her older son had been in the army made him “a man to be respected in society.”

As many theorists on Greece have argued, the church has played a central role in the formation of the Greek nation-state and the consolidation of a Greek consciousness among its citizens (Stewart, 1991; Dubisch, 1991; Herzfeld, 1982). Indeed, the conceptions of the Gypsies of *Gitonia* of *Greekness* and Orthodox Christianity are inseparable. Such conceptions are primarily expressed in the worship of the icon of the Virgin Mary, the *Panayia*, in the largest church dedicated to Virgin Mary in Greece, which is on the island of Tinos (*Panayia tis Tinou*). As Dubisch (1991: 42) describes, the *Panayia*:

“(...) is not only all holy and the mother of God (*Theotokos*), but also at this church in particular, a symbol of the nation of Greece itself, since the miraculous icon was supposedly discovered during the turbulent years of the Greek struggles for independence (Dubisch, 1991: 42).”

For *Gitonia*'s Gypsies, the most important day of the Christian Orthodox calendar is the 15th of August, the Day of the Assumption (*Kimisis tis Theotokou*). On that day the pilgrimage to the island of Tinos is widely practiced both by Gypsy and non Gypsy Orthodox Christians.³⁹

One of the most important domains, where the ambiguous perceptions of state institutions among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* are expressed, is the school. As mentioned in chapter 1, the vast majority of Gypsy parents and children

³⁹ For more on the pilgrimage on the island of Tinos see Dubisch (1995, 1991).

acknowledge illiteracy as one of the main sources of their marginalisation and they would at least like to have a minimum degree of education. However, the extremely high illiteracy rates among the members of this group and the high drop out rates among children indicate that schooling constitutes a process with a highly problematic profile for the Gypsies of the settlement of *Gitonia*. This is best described in my informants' continuous acknowledgement that, in their case, the state cannot be responsible for their illiteracy. Kostas' words, the male head of the Anastasiou extended family verify this:

“Enough with blaming the state for our *agrammatosini* [illiteracy]! How can the state be responsible for this when there are so many schools around? The state cannot come and take your children by hand to take them to school.”

On the other hand, Kostas and the rest of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* (including children) repeatedly admitted that schooling was one of the institutional processes which children encountered difficulty to incorporate themselves in since its lengthy and demanding curriculum is incompatible with some of their most important everyday practices and long-term aspirations. This means that it threatens the basic aspects of a Greek Gypsy sense of belonging (family, marriage, domestic and work patterns). And this is presumably why, as fieldwork reveals, Greek Gypsy children in *Gitonia* generally decide to drop out of school at the time when their duties and obligations in the family become the first priority in their lives.

The Peculiarity of the Relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the State

So far, we saw that processes of identification involve fluid, shifting and negotiable positions among different agents. We also recognised that the interplay between conceptual objectifications and mundane performative practices assume human capacitation and agency in processes of identification. However, various expressions of belonging and distinctiveness are the result of particular social relationships or networks of relatedness which are reproduced and sustained within wider institutional frameworks. And since projects of identification and interrelations “are infused with arguments of power” (Herzfeld, 2001: 131), this section reveals the particular ways through which *Greek-Gypsiness* can be seen as

the outcome of the constant negotiation of forms of power between the mundane practices among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* which assure a common ground for collective identification and the state.

The focus on relatedness and the particular performances it invokes, enables a bottom-up analysis of the ways local-level actors engage with large-scale structures, processes and institutions (see for example Sirman, 1990), while revealing “the ways in which those structures get called into the service of highly localised interests” (Herzfeld, 2001: 218). Indeed, with respect to the study of nationalism, Sutton (2000: 174) maintains that anthropology should move its focus away from top-down approaches, inspired by Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990), to processes through which “local-level kinship ideologies and practices feed into feelings of nationalism.”

The process of organisation of relatedness, grounded on metaphors of kinship and notions of kinship loyalty, cultivates the moral basis on which the state’s nationalist project and the expression of collective being among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* intersect. At the same time, however, this very same point of reference may easily transform into a source of ideological or moral disorder for the state. This happens because Greek Gypsies’ networks of relatedness operate at many different levels, surpassing or invalidating—through their marginal participation—official state mechanisms and institutional processes, such as schooling. What is more, by demonstrating alternative ways of living within the boundaries of the nation-state, they challenge the effectiveness of the state’s apparatus. For example, their economic activity within the informal sector, or their illegal occupation of land (Williams, 1982) are only a few examples of these alternative ways of living.

Interestingly though, *Gitonia*’s Gypsies are neither opposed nor entirely absent from institutional mechanisms and processes. On the contrary, they both draw on institutional ideologies and participate in institutional practices to express and affirm a sense of belonging to the Greek nation-state. Herzfeld’s (1997) concept of cultural intimacy provides us a useful analytical tool to unravel the ways local-level ideologies and practices fuel nationalist emotions shaping simultaneously the relationships between the members of this group and the state in the framework of identity politics.

Cultural intimacy refers to those aspects of everyday life—practices, ideologies and norms—which the nationalist project draws upon but in turn people reappropriate in order to serve their cause. The tensions created between the official rhetoric of the state and norms and the ways intimate ideologies and practices are subverted among ordinary people Herzfeld (2001: 53; 1997: 139) calls them “social poetics”. Inevitably, these tensions facilitate projects of collective identification and reinforce commonality and difference among different social groups.

Herzfeld (1997: 75) sees the essentialism of the state and people’s everyday practices as premised on a rigid rhetoric that exemplifies notions of community, family, solidarity and interdependence, all drawing on metaphors of localism and relationships of blood. Additionally, Herzfeld (1997: 171) argues that these attributes of the state’s rhetoric—the family, the community and the individual—entail empowering possibilities for plural expression and continuous reification. In this sense, the nation-state “shows that its apparent fixities are the products of the very things they deny: *action, agency, and use*” (1997:165).

At the same time, Herzfeld maintains that the nationalist project has been largely successful because “its formal ideology encapsulates, or, incorporates, all the inward flaws and imperfections to which it is officially and ostensibly opposed” (1997: 172). These features, however, seem to be the very issues that define the problematic relationship between the state and its people. As Herzfeld (1997) puts it:

“The state is caught on the horns of its own reification. To achieve at least an illusion of stability it must command the active involvement of ordinary people; and ordinary people reify, all the time, everywhere. They too invoke, involve solidified histories, rediscovering in the official mythology some aspects that will serve their own cause (Herzfeld, 1997: 24).”

The case of this group of Greek Gypsies, who strongly premise their identity on aspects of relatedness and extended family solidarity is particularly revealing. The distinctiveness of the members of *Gitonia* is based on family and extended kinship networks that exemplify brotherly relations and relations of interdependence and solidarity, the most important issues the nationalist project draws upon. At the same time, they seem to use networks of relatedness and its associated processes

in order to realise short and long term projects, such as marriage and work mainly at the margins of state institutions. These networks of relatedness simultaneously substitute for those social institutions and state processes from which Gypsies are largely excluded (such as pension schemes, social insurance, etc.).

But exactly here lies the problematic relationship between the Gypsies of the settlement of *Gitonia* and the state, also pointing to the ambivalences of power reflected through a constant shift from empowerment to disempowerment (Cheater, 1999). The members of this group do not only perceive and realise their long-term projects beyond the boundaries of state institutions through alternative mechanisms and processes but also, in order to achieve their goals, operate at the fringes of these institutions. Clearly, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* seek affiliations and create connections that enable them to constantly renegotiate their positions *vis à vis* the state and other groups within Greek society.

However, the emphasis on networks of relatedness seems to be the reason for the problematic participation of the members of this specific group of Gypsies in some state institutional processes such as schooling which seem to constrain their position within wider society. As we shall see in chapters 4, 6 and 7 children's responsibilities towards their younger siblings and cousins and their priorities within the household conflict with the rigid timetable of the school. What is more, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* themselves adopt the very same aspects of nationalist speech in order to consolidate their distinctiveness *vis à vis* the non Greek Gypsy 'others' (including other Gypsy groups such as the Albanian Gypsies). For Herzfeld (1997: 43) "the language of national or ethnic identity is indeed a language of morality."

The ways the inhabitants of *Gitonia* appropriate the state's rhetoric is primarily reflected on the management of their bodies and the particular ideologies which this management is premised upon. In this sense, *Gitonia's* Gypsies draw on the ideologies sustained in the essentialism of the state and state institutions in order to reinforce notions of *Greek-Gypsiness*. In practice though, they subvert these ideologies through ways of managing their bodies which are different to those ascribed in institutional practices in order to serve their own purposes, namely the consolidation of their distinctiveness. For instance, their emphasis on marriage, family, and solidarity, also sustained in the nationalist rhetoric, informs certain

practices, such as underage marriage, or long lasting household training and work, which obstruct children's participation in schooling (see also chapters 5,6 and7).

Consequently, the ways and degree to which the people of *Gitonia* engage with institutional structures, the church, the army, the school, depends on the extent to which institutional ideologies and practices are compatible or contradict with Greek Gypsy perceptions and practices of the body. For example, the Gypsies of *Gitonia* were more than willing to express their faith as Orthodox Christians by travelling to the island of Tinos and crawling on their knees all the distance from the harbour up to the Church of *Evagelistria* during the pilgrimage on the 15th of August, but do not necessarily obey all the rules of the church, even the most important ones, such as to marry in church or have children within a religiously constituted marriage. Or, as we shall see in chapters 4 and 8, the stance of the people of the settlement of *Gitonia* towards the school is largely the result of the clash between their embodied obligations within the family and the rigid curriculum of the school.

From the analysis above it becomes obvious that cultural intimacy regarding the Gypsies of *Gitonia* refers to long-term strategies of accommodation within Greek society through a strategic use of the 'margins'. These strategies of accommodation involve non-mainstream educational practices and processes of learning which appropriate the rhetoric and norms of fundamental state institutions and subvert them into ideologies and mundane practices which are sustained in networks of relatedness. The long-term use of the 'margins' of Greek society by the inhabitants of *Gitonia* differs from the ways other groups in Greece—such as the gamblers of Lesbos (Papataxiarchis, 1999)—strategically use the 'margins' at some particular point in time. In contrast to the gamblers of Lesbos whose strategic use of the 'margins' aims to reiterate a sense of independence and autonomy from the conditions of their dependency with the state and institutions in the present, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* seek through long term strategies of accommodation both common grounds of collective identification and significant points of differentiation with state ideologies and institutional practices.

Conclusion

This chapter offered an analytical review of literature domains such as studies of Gypsies and the anthropology of Greece, including a discussion of issues such as nationalism and ethnicity, difference and identities, embodiment and performativity which have shaped the theoretical framework of this specific study.

Chapter 3 demonstrated that in most of the existing literature on Gypsies the examination of diverse Gypsy groups has been constrained by conceptions of *Gypsyness* as a category that is antithetical to “the national order of things” (Malkki, 1995). Although important ethnographic studies on Gypsies have illuminated the differences among various Gypsy groups within and across different national borders, the examination of ‘the Gypsy’ as exclusively opposed to the non-Gypsy ‘other’ and the state has left considerable gaps in the study of Gypsies primarily reflected in the theoretical confusion around notions of *Gypsyness*.

In effect, explorations of different expressions of *Gypsyness* hardly take into account the ways through which various Gypsy groups interact with meaningful ‘others’ (including different Gypsy groups) and seek affiliations within institutional structures in the boundaries of the nation-state. Following the ethnographies on Gypsies which stressed the importance of examining the Gypsy experiences within the nation-state context, recent ethnographic studies on Gypsies in Europe point to the fact that different Gypsy populations participate in state institutional processes and seek or negotiate connections with the non Gypsy majority within the society in which they live.

The proliferation of such examples verify that *Gypsyness* is a shifting term, a quality which can be amplified or diminished according to the specific projects of its agents within particular socio-historical frameworks. In particular, a variety of responses from diverse Gypsy groups within the ex-Communist countries in Europe to changing conditions reinforces this assertion (Guy, 2001a). In this sense, *Gypsyness* should be seen and examined as a project with ever changing aims and contents.

Acknowledging the fluid, temporal and processual character of identification, this chapter argued that conceptions and manifestations of *Greekness* and/or *Gypsyness* among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* fuse, merge, are reconstructed,

downplayed or amplified through the elaboration of diverse practices and appropriations of ideologies. Having recognised that, this chapter showed that *Greek-Gypsiness* involves the outcome of conceptual processes and embodied performances which affirm a distinctive morality in practice. This is seen as the quality that distinguishes this specific group of Gypsies from non Greek Gypsy ‘others’, while drawing at the same time both on elements of *Gypsiness* and *Greekness*. However, this quality that empowers the projects of identification of the inhabitants of *Gitonia*, or the micro-politics of everyday life, may also constrain them in wider contexts and institutional frameworks.

The means through which *Gitonia*’s Gypsies enact morality and perform distinctiveness is their body. For them, their bodies constitute the vehicle through which *Greek-Gypsiness* is not only mediated through bodily memory but is also articulated through actions, words and sensations. Indeed, they see their bodies and bodily manifestations as the markers of individual and collective senses of belonging through which personhood and collective being interweave. And, since “persons experience themselves in and as their bodies” (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994: 54), simultaneously sustaining and reproducing through their bodies the very materiality of relationships (Featherstone and Turner, 1995; Turner, 1995), conceptions of age and gender are unquestionably implicated in embodied manifestations of Greek Gypsy morality among the people of *Gitonia*.

The concept of morality is also central in the analysis of the idiosyncratic relationship between this specific group of Greek Gypsies and the Greek nation-state. The examination of this peculiar relationship through the analysis of ethnographic data, informed by Herzfeld’s notion of cultural intimacy, suggests that the Greek Gypsy experience within the context of the Greek nation-state cannot be reduced to a strategy of resistance and passive adaptation. The use of the concept of cultural intimacy in this analysis enables us to unravel the particular ways through which the inhabitants of *Gitonia* have negotiated their shared sense of distinctiveness, by filtering those aspects of the state’s essentialist rhetoric that intersect with Greek Gypsy morality, while simultaneously informing practices that differentiate them from the non Greek Gypsy ‘others’.

In this sense, this specific group of Gypsies has elaborated an ambiguous concept of the state, in which its representatives, lacking Greek Gypsy morality, have failed to sustain the state’s proclaimed ethics by slipping into an immoral

path. On a more mundane level, *Gitonia*'s Gypsies seem to be more successfully incorporated into those state institutions which, rather than threatening its basic tenets, exemplify ideologies and promote practices compatible with Greek Gypsy morality. In this sense, it becomes obvious that the Gypsies here use state institutions and mechanisms in a multiplicity of ways—and they are not exclusive recipients of repressive policies—in order to consolidate their shared sense of belonging. What is more, the concept of cultural intimacy helps us view the Gypsies of *Gitonia* as a group that constitutes an intrinsic part of Greek society and, therefore, removes it from the margins of theoretical and ethnographic analysis.

Following the review of the key areas of literature which this study draws upon and the analysis of the relationship between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the Greek state, the forthcoming chapters are primarily ethnographically based. Chapter 4 takes as a point of departure children's views on schooling, knowledge and their aspirations for the future in order to examine what it means to be a Greek Gypsy.

Chapter Four

Mirroring Children's Views: Schooling, Knowledge and Future Aspirations

The Importance of Children's Views

Drawing on children's reflections on the school, their conceptions of what constitutes valuable knowledge and their aspirations for the future, this chapter attempts to bring together the different thresholds that express Greek Gypsy distinctiveness through the eyes of the children that took an active part in my research. Children's opinions, experiences and expectations regarding their participation or non participation in formal education inform us about the extent to which they consider schooling to be compatible or in conflict with other, alternative processes of learning and with their own personal aspirations. These aspirations are located in Greek Gypsy life: in the centrality of marriage, the importance of kin relations and work.

The analysis of children's spaces, experiences and priorities enables us to elicit those important and meaningful relationships and practices that emerge from children's everyday lives (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003). Additionally, the distinctive mechanisms that children deploy in order to interpret these relationships and practices reflect the particular ways in which knowledge is acquired and meaning is constructed in diverse cultural settings (Foley, 2001; Spyrou, 2001; Toren, 1999; Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, 1998).

Taking as a theoretical premise that children are not only recipients of knowledge but also capable of generating important knowledge (Foley, 2001: 100), the words and drawings of the children of *Gitonia* show that learning is an embodied process premised on significant social relations which are intimately associated with the production of meanings, the expression of feelings and the performance of skills. As is the case for adults, the children of *Gitonia* do not conceptualise their bodies as abstracted from their minds, actions, and emotions. Neither do they see knowledge as abstracted from practice (see also chapter 3).

However, processes of acquiring knowledge often evolve through conflicting practices. In this instance, childhood constitutes a conceptual category that grants children considerable space and freedom to explore various sources of acquiring and grounds for performing knowledge. In fact, children's attitudes towards diverse sources of learning relate to their experiences of the present and conceptualisations of their future in the frame of the interplay of different and often contested spaces of belonging and competing roles.

Alanen (1998) argued that the modes in which children prioritise and embody knowledge enable us to link children's mundane experiences and future priorities with wider institutional practices and relations that shape and constrain children's lives.¹ Taking Alanen's argument further, this chapter sheds light to the extent to which different kinds of knowledge, such as knowledge produced in the family and the school, overlap or collide, entailing possibilities for children to negotiate what constraints their lives.

This is clearly reflected in children's awareness of the degree of incompatibility between their expectations regarding school and their priorities within the Greek Gypsy network of relationships. Indeed, the children of *Gitonia* acknowledge the fact that the school is disconnected from the Greek Gypsy network of relationships while it also constitutes a demanding process that in many respects contradicts their present and future concerns. Simultaneously though, they admit that their marginal incorporation into the schooling process imposes limitations on some of their present and future ambitions, particularly regarding the professions they may aspire to.

However, this awareness does not seem to produce a clear-cut rejection of some sources of acquiring knowledge over others. On the contrary, the ways through which and the extent to which children in *Gitonia* value and prioritise different kinds of knowledge generated within the family and the school at different stages in their lives, reveals children's ability to negotiate their sense of belonging within different entities and institutions, being simultaneously active negotiators and agents of their own future. In specific, varying views of the school

¹ Alanen (1998), building on James and Prout's (1990) argument that children are to be understood as social actors who shape and are shaped by their circumstances, stresses the need for associating the children's every day experiences with the particular circumstances that children both act upon and are constrained by.

coming from children of different age groups and adolescents suggest that there is considerable space in which both girls and boys seek to negotiate their sense of belonging within conflicting institutional workings.

Although this discussion does not offer an analysis of children's cognition, it is important to highlight that the ways through which the children of *Gitonia* manage knowledge inform us about Greek Gypsy perceptions of individual and collective self and conceptions of 'otherness'. These include both Greek Gypsy views of non Greek Gypsy others as 'other' and their perception of a distinctive sense of individual and collective self as 'other'. The extent to which children acknowledge, interpret and respond to diverse sources of knowledge, such as the family, the peer group, the school and the media (TV), shows the very grounds on which conceptions of *Greek-Gypsiness* are being objectified and negotiated.

Children's Schooling Experience—Some Examples

Manolis who was nine, Haris ten, Dimitris eleven, and Pavlos thirteen, are four cousins from *Gitonia* who decided to enrol in two of the neighbourhood's schools at the beginning of the school-year in September 2000, just one year before I started fieldwork. Following their parents' suggestion, as they explained to me, the four boys divided into two groups that registered with two different schools (see schools A and B in Fig. 1.3, p.59). Manolis and Haris decided to go together to the primary school that was located five hundred metres away from the settlement, while Dimitris and Pavlos registered with another school adjacent to their cousins'. As Haris explained to me, their enrolment in two different schools served a particular purpose, aiming at minimising the possibility of the boys being distractive to each other.

"Can you imagine what would have happened if the four of us were together in the same class? How much noise and how many fights? They wouldn't have kept us there. not even for a single day! So. we decided to split. two and two."

Irrespective of their age, they were all enrolled in the first grade of primary school. Given that both schools were close to each other, all four were walking to class together each morning from *Gitonia*. At least for the first couple of weeks, until Pavlos, the eldest of the cousins, realised that school did not offer him what he had expected and decided to drop out. Indeed, it was after a month and a half of

irregular attendance that Pavlos finally reached the decision to abandon school once and for all. Thirteen-year-old Pavlos justified his decision by questioning the usefulness of schooling for a Gypsy youngster who was already well trained to go out to work along with his father and make enough money for both his family and himself:

“I don’t like school and I can explain to you why: School is such a boring thing and such a stupid way of wasting your time ... It goes slow, very slow. I swear to God, I was falling asleep there all the time [laughs]. I was bored in the class for so many hours with the kids. I know that letters [*grammata*] are useful, but for me it is more useful to make money right now and help my family, rather than waste my time with all these stupid kids there.”

Interestingly, soon after Pavlos dropped out of school, he was followed by his cousin and classmate, Dimitris. Eleven-year-old Dimitris admitted that, in contrast to Pavlos, he didn’t really want to abandon school. However, he didn’t want to continue now that his friend had left. In the following dialogue Dimitris explains why he dropped out of school and Manolis agrees with his justification, underlining the importance of supportive relationships for children. Indeed, the boys confirmed that being enrolled at school in pairs ensured a minimum degree of support for each other, while also indicating that the school is a place where they clearly experience prejudice:

Ivi: “Why didn’t you carry on by yourself?”

Dimitris: “Alone? No. I’m not going alone because I fight with the other children. If they call me ‘Gypsy’, or if they tell me ‘Get out of here Gypsy’, I fight ...”

Ivi: “How do they know you are Gypsy?”

Manolis: “Eh! Ivi, come on they know! They ask where you come from, where you live and they understand ... They see us coming to the *paraghes* [the shacks] and they know ...”

Dimitris: “Yes, that’s why I don’t want to be alone. If there is at least another one, it’s fine. I liked school a lot, but alone ... it is difficult, you know.”

Manolis: “If Pavlos was with him, who would dare to talk to him? Ha ha, nobody! Alone is always different ... The *raklakia* [the non-Gypsy Greek children] tease you if they find you alone. And of course, he can fight, even alone, but at the end he will end up beating everybody and he will be the bad one. And then what happens? They’ll send you home [meaning that they will expel you]!”

But when Dimitris decided to follow Pavlos' steps a few weeks after him, the other two boys, Manolis and Haris, completely lost their incentive for school. Waking up early in the morning and going to class alone, while knowing at the same time that their cousins and friends, and especially Dimitris—who was the leader of their peer group—would probably sleep, work, or play football seemed very hard and unfair to them. That is how they described their decision to drop out:

Haris: "First Pavlos left, then, Dimitris, then you [pointing at Manolis] and then me."

Manolis: "No, you left first, you were the one who tore my books, when Dimitris stopped going to school!"

Haris: "What are you saying?" ... [Shouting and fighting]

Ivi: "O.K. It doesn't matter who left first. I want to know why did you both follow Dimitris' decision?"

Haris: "Because, Dimitris is everybody's favourite here, we respect him, and we want to be with him when we are playing!"

Manolis: "Yes, come on, what do you think? That we are not jealous when we think that he is here at home hanging around without us? ... And playing football?"

Ivi: "When exactly did you leave school? Immediately after Dimitris did it?"

Haris: "No, we kept on going until Christmas"

Manolis: "But not every day ..."

Haris: "No, not every day ... One day we went and the next we didn't ... And, at the end, more days we didn't go and maybe one day per week we went ..."

Manolis [interrupts]: "Until Christmas came and then we stopped going. I tried to go back again some time after Christmas but they told me I had to repeat the same grade and that was it with the school ..."

Ivi: "I see, so, Manolis, would you go alone to school without Haris?"

Manolis: "No!"

Haris: "Me, I would go without him!"

Ivi: "Why don't you go then?"

Manolis: "Yes, why don't you go alone, eh? Ivi is right, come on tell us now!"

Haris: "[Facing his cousin] Because you wouldn't be there ..."

Ivi: "So, you two want to be together."

Both: "No!"

Haris: "Look. Ivi, we'd better go together but to different schools ..."

Manolis: "I agree!"

Ivi: "So, why you don't do it then?"

Manolis: "We won't. Ivi, we say that now but none of us would do it ... we wouldn't go alone, because I told you it's better if we are together."

In the dialogue above, although confused over who to blame for their dropout, the boys seem to have grasped the implications of peer relations for their successful attendance at school. With the exception of Pavlos who admitted straightforwardly that the school offered him less than he had expected, the rest of the boys had regretted abandoning it, blaming each other for their decision.

All three of them admitted that the knowledge they obtained at school was useful and that they would like to continue at least for a couple more years, until they learn how to read and write. Manolis made that clear to me from the beginning: "Listen, Ivi, what I want from school is just to learn how to read and write." Dimitris also made a similar statement and Haris maintained:

"We can use some of the things we learn at school in our life to make it easier. For example, I don't think I need all what school offers ... although I like going to school,—I think it's fun—I just need to learn how to read and write. That's all I need. Because if I know how to read and write, then everything is going to be much easier in my life."

However, the boys often also became sentimental and confessed to me that they missed their class and classmates, although they were ashamed of facing them again after a year away. On one of my first visits to *Gitonia*, Haris asked Manolis to show me the photo of their class that according to him he had kept "in a safe place" because he didn't want to lose it. Using this school photo, where all the class' pupils stand around their teacher in the schoolyard, the boys gave me their views about their class as a space and their opinions about their classmates and the teacher.

They asked me to guess where they were standing in the photo and they pointed out two male classmates, who they got on particularly well with. They also showed me Elisso, the girl, who Haris "fell in love with" but Manolis found her "fat", and of course their teacher, who according to them, "looked like a

ghost.” For Manolis, their teacher was “very mean, because she threatened to put everybody with the rats in the basement!” Haris confirmed that: “Yes, I didn’t like her, my Virgin Mary [*Panayitsa mou*], she was like a ghost! She threatened the whole class, not only us!” By contrast, when Dimitris compared his and Pavlos’ class with that of their cousins’, most importantly, he said, that his teacher “was a very good one and not at all like theirs.”

When I asked for details about the quality of their relationships with their schoolmates and more specifically if they favoured girls over boys, Haris gave me the following answer:

“Yes. I prefer girls to boys. Because the girls are better than the boys and they don’t make fun of us. We were teasing the girls and they were teasing us, then, we were running after them and it was much fun.”

Dimitris and Manolis agreed with Haris that they had a better relationship with the girls than the boys of their class, since girls of their age are much more fun to play with. Adding to his cousin’s words, Dimitris explained:

“I enjoy talking to the girls ... you can play with them and they seem to pick up exactly what we want from them: to tease them and then to come after us ... they are more clever than boys and more relaxed with us. And they laugh with our jokes while the boys are always serious!”

Overwhelmed by our discussion, Haris decided to draw the classroom with the desks, the chairs and the blackboard in order to describe to me the relationship between him and Manolis and each of their classmates (Fig. 4.1). He circled the desk where both of them sat in the middle of the last row of desks at the rear of the class. Haris also marked his teacher’s position in front of her desk and the blackboard. The boys’ comments on Haris’ drawing confirmed their earlier claims of having better relationships with their girl classmates and their problematic relationship with most of their male ones. Dimitris indicated that the only thing that he personally found exciting in the boys of his class was the fact that “they could organise successful football games.” And Manolis added an arrow on Haris’ drawing, pointing to the only boys they were having a good relationship with.

“These [pointing to their desk on the drawing] are our friends! They are very good boys, never creating a problem with us. They respected us and we respected them!”



Fig. 4.1: Haris' picture of his classroom arrangement

Interestingly though, all three of them agreed that boys from higher grades were far more interesting than the boys of their class, suggesting that the age difference between them and their classmates had played an important role in shaping their relationship.² Manolis confirmed this when he drew the schoolyard with the small football pitch and those boys whom he liked playing football with (Fig. 4.2). As he explained:

“With some older boys, not from our grade but from other grades, we were also good friends. We played football together during the breaks. Let me draw you the best footballers of the school. If we play football together, we beat everybody.”

² Children enroll in the first grade of primary school at the age of six (see App.2 Diagram 1).

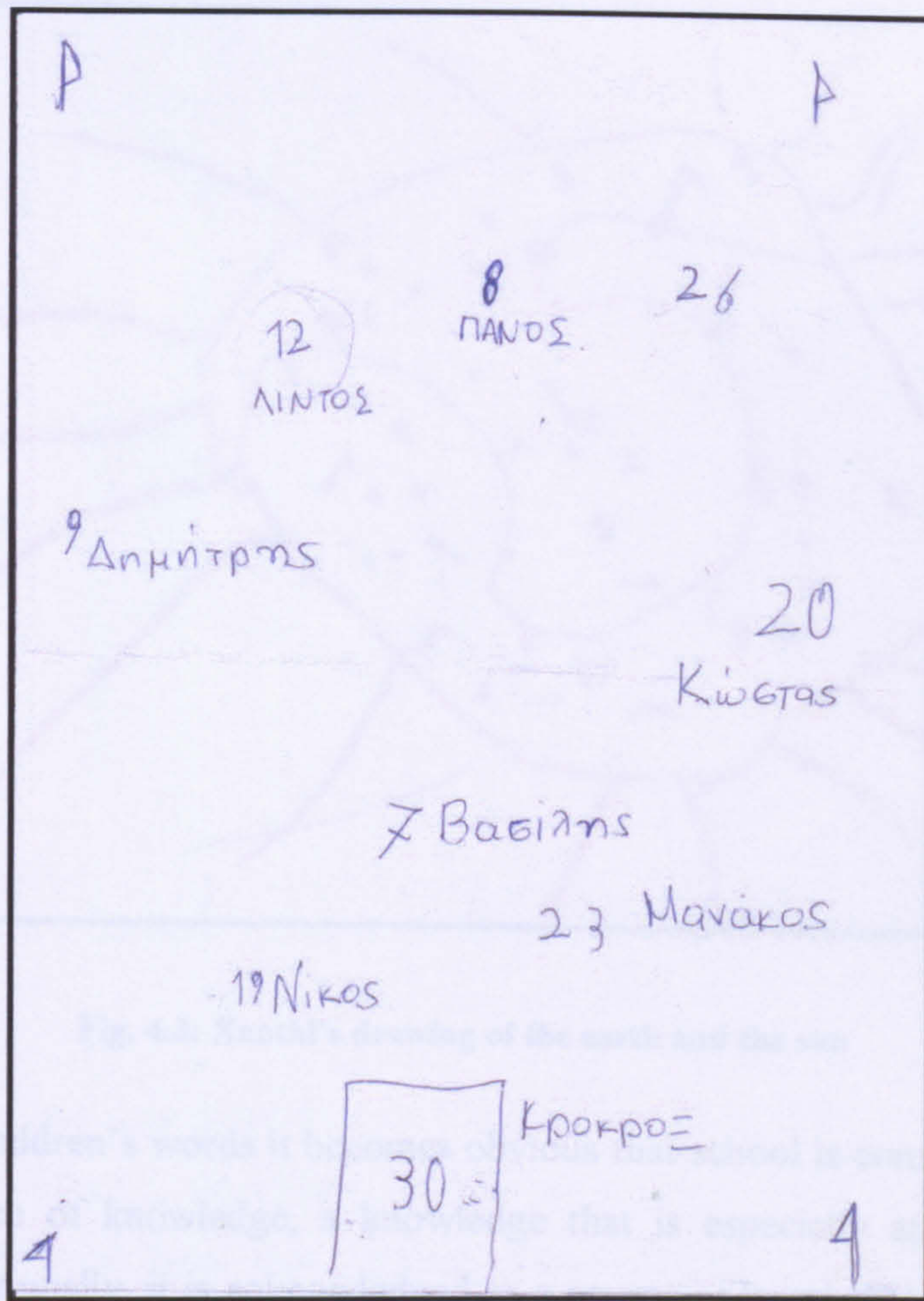


Fig. 4.2: Manolis' picture of the best football players at school

Whilst the boys indicated that in general they had a better relationship with girls than boys and the boys of higher grades than their classmates, when I asked if they still played or met any of the children befriended outside of school, since they lived in the same neighbourhood, Manolis laughed:

“Of course not! What are you saying? None of those kids would take us into their homes and neither girls nor boys have ever come over here. Are you joking? No way, no child has ever stepped his foot in these *paraghes*, but I tell you, at least in school, girls are better than boys with us.”

For the only girl from *Gitonia* who had also been to the first grade of the primary school for a few months, twelve-year-old Kalliope from the Ioannou extended family, school had been a less complicated experience than that of the boys. In contrast to the four boys, Kalliope enrolled in the school without the company of any of her Gypsy friends or relatives and admitted that she didn't

have any problem making friends at school. Kalliope had not been to one of the neighbourhoods' schools but had gone to school when she lived for three months in Aetoliko with her uncle a few years ago. As she described in the following dialogue:

Kalliope: "You know that I was in Aetoliko with my uncle for a while. He had to do work there and I went with him, two years ago, I think. There, I went for three months to school, but then I had to come back here and I dropped out."

Ivi: "And why didn't you carry on here?"

Kalliope: "I don't know why, but when I came back here I didn't continue in another school ... Because I liked mine so much and I wanted my teacher and classmates not other ones. I should have gone to enrol here ... Maybe, I would have liked it here as well. But, now, it's too late."

Ivi: "Did any of your cousins there accompany you at school?"

Kalliope [laughs]: "No, I was alone. Alone I was going to school and I didn't have any problem."

Ivi: "With the children? Did you have any friends?"

Kalliope: "Of course I did, boys and girls."

Ivi: "Did you have any problems?"

Kalliope: "Not at all, and my teacher was very very nice, Ivi. She helped me more than the others. She had brought me a nice book to practice with letters at home. To me only! Not to the other children, because, you know, the only problem I had was that nobody could help me at home with the letters. The book I kept it and I still do exercises on my own"

For the children with schooling experience up to the age of twelve, their words, drawings and comments prove that the school constitutes a meaningful social space which involves various relationships. These relationships take different meanings depending on issues such as gender, age and personality. For instance, for the Greek Gypsy boys, their relationship with most of their schoolmates were problematic in general. Nevertheless, some of these relationships, such as those with the girls or with some of their classmates or pupils from higher grades, were worth mentioning as more important than the others. In contrast, for Kalliope, relationships at school were far less problematic and involved both boys and girls. For thirteen-year-old Pavlos, however, the experience of the school and the relationship between him and his schoolmates meant nothing but a waste of time.

For most of the children of this specific group of Gypsies, the school is a space where they clearly experience prejudiced attitudes against them. When I asked the children with schooling experience and their parents if they faced any difficulty throughout the process of their enrolment, they all agreed that enrolling in school was not a problem at all. In contrast, as the boys admitted, when they started going to school, they faced the hostility of their male classmates. However, not only does hostility and prejudice come from their schoolmates but also from the teaching staff and the non-Gypsy parents whose children attend the same classes as the Gypsy children. The head teacher of one of the primary schools close to *Gitonia* confessed to me:

“It is a shame for all of us who work in education. I mean from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy, from the teaching staff to the Ministry of Education. Including myself. Especially for us, who work and live in this area—many teachers from this school live in this neighbourhood—and we know about the settlement but we don’t do anything ... But look what happens now: According to the law, it is the head-teacher’s responsibility to investigate such matters. For example, I should have visited the settlement to find out how many children of schooling age do not go to school and why, to inform their parents about the consequences, etc. But even if I’m willing to take such a step, the very core of the system, the teaching staff would hardly accept it. When I said in one of the meetings, here, that I would go to the settlement to bring the Gypsy children to the school, my staff reacted negatively to my proposal. They shouted “No, don’t do it!”, and “If you do this, our children will leave”, “You’ll create a problem”, etc. And I think that the parents of the children that go to school here would also react against such a decision. The vast majority of them wouldn’t accept it, because they would be worried about the quality of the education of their children. On the other hand, the ministry keeps sending us papers saying that we have to accept any child that comes for registration in the school even without papers.”³

A young teacher from the same school, whom I interviewed twice during my fieldwork, also contributed her valuable insight from a comparative case, built upon her voluntary work in the Gypsy settlement of Volos as a teacher, while she was waiting for her placement in a school. According to her, not only is prejudice that frames Gypsies’ experience at school but also a high degree of indifference—

³ Here, the head teacher makes clear that the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs tries to facilitate the registration of children whose parents don’t possess legal documents of entry in Greece, while also verifying the growing impact of migration in the schooling process.

evident at all levels of the educational process—towards the particular needs of the Gypsies and their expectations from schooling:

“From my experience with the Gypsies, what I’ve seen is a completely different way of bringing up their children. Different priorities and different expectations. And, why should they at the very end adjust to the existing schooling process? Why not produce alternative ways of education that would fit their way of living and thinking? Why should it always be six years of primary school? Why not cultivate their special talents? For example Gypsy kids are so good with numbers. Why not cultivate this talent? But nobody ever cared. It is also difficult within the school itself. Even if there are people who care, most of the teaching staff is indifferent or negative to such alternative methods.”

Reflections on the School from Children with No Schooling Experience

For most of the children of schooling age in *Gitonia*, at least the younger ones, who had no prior schooling experience, the school primarily represented for them the place where alternative processes of socialisation outside the extended family, the peers and the wider Greek Gypsy group took place. For the vast majority of them, such as for six-year-old Stelios, the school was a set of interesting activities and relationships that offered to those who took part in them an exciting experience:

“I know how it is when you go to school. You can choose your friends, because there are so many children, so many, that even if you don’t like some of them, there are many others who you will find to like. And you never get bored ... You play and if you get bored, you find people to play something else, and then something else ... so, you never really get bored. And there are many, many girls to tease! You draw, you do what the teacher tells you to do, you write, you sing, you parade. That is what you do in school.”

For Stelios’ cousin and best friend, five-year-old Paris, the school was a nice place to make friends and play but not exactly the one suiting his naughtiness:

“The school is nice because you make a lot of friends there and you play ... But you know what? I think I’m too naughty to go to school ... I’ll mess up everything at school and the school will stop working because of me ...”

Four-year-old Xanthi would also like to go to school because she was fed up with her cousins, who were all boys, and wanted to meet new girlfriends:

“Yes. I want to go to school. I want to play with girls ... Ooooh I had enough with all these boys here!”

The socialising aspect of school attracted twelve-year-old Nikoleta as well, who was much older than the rest of the children with no schooling experience:

“I like the school not only because you learn a lot of things but also because you make friends, you play. ... in general, you do a lot of different things.”

Children with no schooling experience not only valued school as a space of socialisation but also as a source of knowledge. Once, during one of our encyclopaedia sessions with the children, in which we were going through the illustrations of an encyclopaedia on natural phenomena, Stelios asked me a particular question on how earthquakes happen:

Stelios: “Fuck. I don’t understand Ivi, who is this person who makes earthquakes? Where is he? Underneath us? Down here? In Penteli⁴ [pointing at the mountains]? Tell me, is it God? No, God can’t be that bad ... Is it an Albanian God? This person wants to kill us all. Please tell me ...”

Ivi: “There is no person who causes earthquakes, sweetheart. An earthquake is like rain and snow, like thunder and lighting. It just happens on earth. Things happen in the air but also things happen underneath this surface, things we can’t see the same way we do with rain and snow. One of these things is the earthquake, which we can only feel ...”

And as I went on explaining to them in depth how earthquakes happen, using the illustrations of the encyclopaedia, Nikoleta interrupted me, impressed:

Nikoleta: “Hmm. You know everything Ivi! You know all these ... my God!”

Stelios: “Of course, she knows everything, she is *balami* [non-Gypsy Greek]!”

Kalliope: “So what? She knows everything because she went to school.”

Nikoleta: “Did you learn all these at school?”

Ivi: “Yes, Kalliope is right, what I explain to you now I learnt at school. And I did some reading on my own. But I don’t know everything for sure.”

⁴ The epicenter of the last major earthquake which happened in Athens in September 1999.

Nikoleta [To Stelios] “Yes, if you had finished school, as Ivi did, you would have known all these things, right Ivi? It doesn’t make a difference that she is *balami*.”

Ivi: “Of course not!”

Nikoleta: “Ivi, how many years did it take you to finish school?”

Ivi: “Lets calculate how many years does it take to finish school: six years in primary school, three years in Gymnasium, and three in Lyceum which in total makes twelve years. And if you want to become a teacher or a doctor, like you [Kalliope], it needs four to six more years ...”⁵

Nikoleta: “Which is how many years in total?”

Ivi: “Sixteen to eighteen ...”

They all stopped for a while calculating and Nikoleta burst into laughter saying: “Come on Ivi, I’ll be dead by then! There is no time for us to do all these years!”

On a different occasion, four-year-old Xanthi admitted that she was impressed by our encyclopaedia sessions along with the rest of the children and she often expressed her interest in natural phenomena through her drawings (Fig. 4.3). But, when I asked her if she was willing to take classes at school for many years to learn more about natural phenomena, she looked at her drawing, which depicted the earth and the sun, and responded: “And, when will I get married? *Yi* [the earth] is not as important as marriage!”

⁵ See App.2, Diagram 1.



Fig. 4.3: Xanthi's drawing of the earth and the sun

From the children's words it becomes obvious that school is considered to be a valuable source of knowledge, a knowledge that is especially appreciated and admired. Additionally, it is acknowledged as a source of learning that is produced outside of the Greek Gypsy network of relationships. And although they know they can access it, they are also aware of the fact that it contradicts their present and future priorities. Nikoleta's cynical conclusion that finishing school and going to higher education would exhaust her life cycle indicates exactly this contradiction. And Xanthi's fascination with natural phenomena was not more important than her future as a wife and mother.

The Case of Sotiris and Angelina

The case of two siblings from the Markopoulos extended family, Sotiris and Angelina, who were fourteen and eleven years of age respectively, illustrates the stance of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* towards education from a different angle. The youngsters' parents, who lived in the settlement, had long been determined not only to send their children to school but they had also tried hard to convince them to attend classes regularly. It was at the beginning of my fieldwork when their father, Marios, took the initiative of coming to talk to me:

“What are you trying to find out? I will tell you what happens here ... It’s not all the state’s fault. we are here and the schools are just across the road. You just cross this road and you enrol your child in any of these schools ... No, it is partly our fault, if not all ours. that our children do not attend school. I say, it’s all our fault! Look, we don’t push them enough to go to school. we don’t put pressure on them because we, ourselves, are illiterate and we don’t know how to convince our children that the school is something important ... something, let’s say, useful for their future. And above all is, that going to school hardly matches with the life here ... You can see how things are here. Listen, Ivi. I’m also illiterate and I know what it feels to live like that ... I know it very well from my children. It has not been difficult to convince them to go to school but it has been extremely difficult to convince them to stay at school. Finally, I made it! Do you know how? I had to send them to their grandmother’s house in order to keep them away from the rest of the children here in the *paraghes*. And I had to talk to them daily about the importance of the school ... Not to push them for God’s shake, no pushing is needed, with a good way [*me to kalo*]. Now, it seems absolutely natural to them to attend their classes regularly.”

Sotiris is attending the first grade of high school in Gerakas, while his younger sister, Angelina, goes to the fourth grade of primary school in the same area. The two youngsters described to me their schooling experience in one of the teaching sessions that we undertook with the rest of the children on a Sunday evening, when the siblings came from their grandmother’s house in Gerakas to *Gitonia* to visit their parents and members of their extended family for the weekend.

Ivi: “Can you tell me if you see school differently now after all these years you have spent on schooling than when you first enrolled? What kind of problems did you face in the beginning, if you did at all, and what kind of problems do you face now?”

Angelina: “I don’t have problems at school any more. I used to have a lot of problems, but not any more. You know, now school is part of our life, something normal. Now, I can’t think of myself without going to school. School is the place where I learn interesting things that will be useful for me in a few years ... Mmm, what else? The place where I meet my friends daily. But at the beginning, especially for me, it was a torture [*vasano*] to wake up every day to go to school ... And really I had a lot of difficulties, not like Sotiris, he didn’t have as many problems as I had.”

Ivi: “Would you like to discuss with us what kind of problems you used to have?”

Angelina: “I didn’t want to go to school in the beginning ... I wanted to stay at home and play, just like my cousins ... But my father was telling me: “Please, go to school, you’ll get used to it by the time” ... nothing ... I didn’t want to go. So, one day I was telling him I was sick, the next I was crying saying I didn’t want to go back to school

... you can imagine! And one day I broke my leg and I had a good excuse to stay at home for a month! But when I went back to class the teacher told me that I had to retake the same grade once more ... and I didn't want to do it. My father insisted that I should retake the grade no matter what ... Eventually, I went and I did the same grade—the first grade of primary school—twice. But when I started going every day, I made friends and I liked that. I didn't want to miss them, not even for a day! Now, I'm going to the fourth grade and I thank my dad for not letting me do the wrong thing!"

Sotiris: "Our parents sent us to Gerakas to live with our grandmother, they didn't want us to stay here with the kids ... because you see, Ivi, here, nobody goes to school, and those who went did not stay long ... when Pavlos left everybody left."

Ivi: "I know, your father told me that he didn't want you here with the other children."

Sotiris: "Of course, he is right. How can you concentrate if you come back from school and you have to do your homework and everybody is making fun of you here? Our cousins live in a different world. When you go to school you have to follow a programme. The truth is that both of us stayed at school because our parents tried hard to keep us at school in the first grade. Even I that I'm a better student than Angelina, I would have probably quit school if I had the chance. Of course, now, we realise how useful it is but at that time we were jealous of our cousins who were free to do whatever they wanted."

The case of the two siblings, Sotiris and Angelina, although undoubtedly an example of children who started and carried on with schooling successfully, it nevertheless clearly verifies what their cousins and their father have pointed out above; that schooling, although recognised as useful and important, is, to a great extent, incompatible with the way of life in the Greek Gypsy settlement. In particular, it verifies what the three boys who registered in *Gitonia's* schools had explained to me: that their relationships with their peers seem to be an obstacle for their smooth participation in the schooling process but nevertheless they remain very important for them.

Sotiris and Angelina had to move out of the settlement in order to be able to continue their schooling.⁶ As they both admitted, the hardest thing for them was to stay away from their cousins and peers at home. And their absence from *Gitonia* had an impact on the way the children of the settlement viewed their relationship

⁶ Both children continued to attend school at the time this thesis was written.

with them. Indeed, I never heard Sotiris and Angelina being counted as members of their peer group or mentioned in their friendships. And vice versa, Sotiris and Angelina insisted that they have different interests than their cousins in *Gitonia* and more important friendships at school, suggesting that relatedness among Greek Gypsy children has to be performed in the present in order to sustain its validity.

Growing Up and Prioritising Different Kinds of Knowledge

Children's views of schooling revealed that school, at least for the children between four and twelve years of age, is considered to be a valuable and attractive source of knowledge. However, the children, especially those who had some sort of schooling experience, also acknowledged that there was a considerable degree of incompatibility between their full participation in formal education and the processes of relatedness taking place within the extended kin network of the Gypsies of *Gitonia*. Older children, above the age of twelve, were far more dismissive or completely indifferent regarding the usefulness of schooling as a source of knowledge at this stage of their lives.

These views came to be verified by the children's stance towards the teaching sessions throughout my fieldwork year (Fig. 4.6, Fig. 4.7). The enthusiasm of the vast majority of children in *Gitonia* between four and twelve years of age for the teaching sessions and their determination to learn how to read and write was remarkable. Soon, after the first round of sessions with Manolis, Stelios, Haris and Dimitris, more and more children became interested in participating in the sessions on a daily basis. Even for those children such as Kalliope and Nikoleta who were going almost on a daily basis to the market with their families, the sessions seemed to be very important. In fact, Kalliope politely asked me to reorganise the sessions' programme to three or four o' clock in the afternoon so that she too could join us after work.

The same applied to her cousin and best friend, Nikoleta. However, whilst Nikoleta wanted to attend classes, she made it clear to me that she would come only if she was not busy with her three-year-old brother Fotis: "I cannot join you Ivi, if Fotis wants to sleep. I have to take care of him, to feed him and wash him." As time went by and Nikoleta became more and more interested in reading and writing, she found a way of coping both with her little brother and attending the

sessions, sometimes bringing him along or asking us to wait for her to put him to bed.

Equally remarkable, however, was the fact that no young man or woman above the age of twelve ever wanted to attend the sessions on a regular basis. In fact, Pavlos thirteen, Thanos fourteen, Penelope sixteen, Aristides sixteen and other youngsters all laughed each time they saw me and their younger siblings or cousins having a session in *Gitonia*. Without denying the importance of cultivating skills such as reading and writing, they all admitted to having different priorities. Work and marriage was what counted for them as most important at this stage of their lives. Aristides who was already engaged and worked as a vendor in the family business told me: “What are you saying? School and all these are good but not if your father counts on you, or if you are engaged and you want to get married.” Thanos, also engaged, assisted his father at work too. Therefore, he laughed at the possibility of going to school: “Come on, ... what I need is money and a wife right now!”

Therefore, for these young people, learning was a process associated with gender-based domestic and paid work activities which was considered to be generated through practical experience. Pavlos, who, as already said, had recently started working daily in the market along with his father and younger brothers, points at them as the most important sources of knowledge in his life:

“What I have to learn. I learn it basically from my dad and then my brothers who are more experienced at work than me.”

Thanos also confessed, “getting experienced at work” was the kind of knowledge that he privileged at this stage. For a young woman such as Penelope who was recently engaged, acquiring and performing an adequate standard of knowledge in undertaking domestic chores was what she was interested in: “*To nikokirio* [the household], this is what counts for me, now.”

Clearly, age and gender were important factors in shaping children’s attitudes to and understanding of different forms of knowledge. Indeed, the ways children of different ages and adolescents responded to the sessions soon led me to understand how different sources of knowledge were valued and prioritised by children between four and twelve years of age and young men and women above the age of thirteen.

As the sessions progressed and became part of everyday life in *Gitonia*, I also became familiar with the ways in which children who participated regularly in the sessions managed their time and activities so as to enable them to participate in the sessions. Thus I was led to the assumption that knowledge was perceived and prioritised differently among children of two main age groups, those up to the age of six or seven and those between seven and twelve years of age. For children above the age of six or seven, knowledge became increasingly related to the Greek Gypsy socio-economic activity.

What is more, in the teaching sessions I also had the chance to discuss these issues directly with the children. Children's words, drawings and photographic projects revealed that for them the most important sources of knowledge were persons, primarily those belonging to their extended family—and not necessarily in their nuclear family—and secondly their peer group. Indeed, there was a clear association between children's favourites within their family and peer group and those from whom they thought they learnt important things in life.

This becomes clear from a number of activities. For example in one of our sessions, I asked children to draw the person whom they favoured or liked the most.⁷ Strikingly, they all drew somebody who belonged to their family environment. Given that they had privileged their close relatives over friends, non-settlement people and celebrities in their drawings, in the next session I asked each of them to go around the settlement with a disposable camera and take two or three pictures of those persons whom they especially liked. This time, probably because they could take two or three shots each, children presented persons not only from their extended families but also friends from their peer group. Acknowledging that children couldn't of course take shots of non-settlement people, in the following session I asked them to draw as many favourite persons as they liked in order to compare these drawings with the previous ones and the shots. Here, while they had the option, children's drawing did not produce new favourites as for example non-settlement people. Finally, in another session, we sat down to discuss their drawings and pictures and I asked each child to explain the grounds on which he or she had selected these particular persons.

⁷ I made it clear that this person could be anybody. It could be a family member or relative, a friend, or a celebrity, such as a singer, a football player or an actor.

In the general discussion that followed their personal comments on their drawings and pictures, we all agreed that a source of knowledge can be anybody and anything such as family members, friends, the school, the TV, the radio, games etc. All children, however, maintained that the most valuable knowledge for them comes from members of their family. As nine-year-old Manolis said proudly: “the one I learn from is my father.” When I asked him if he learns things only from his father he answered:

“Not only from my father, my mom teaches me how to take good care of myself and to be careful, but my dad is the one from whom I learn the most important things! I learn from him how to calculate, how to make good sales, how to fix things, how to drive, such things I learn from my father.”

His cousin Haris who was ten considered firstly his uncle (Manolis’ father) and secondly his father as the most valuable sources of knowledge in his life. “I’m learning a lot of things from my uncle Theofilos, and then my father.” When I asked him if his mom was a source of knowledge for him he gave me a similar answer as Manolis but added a very interesting comment: that ‘learning’ for Gypsy children is intrinsically associated with Greek Gypsy economic socio-activity which involves, as we shall see in chapter 7, paid and unpaid work within and outside the settlement.

Ivi: “What about your mom?”

Haris: “No, I don’t learn anything from mom.”

Ivi: “How come, she doesn’t tell you anything? I’ve seen Irini [his mother] telling you to be careful when you go to play football for example.”

Haris: “Of course she does. Mom tells me to be careful, especially when I cross the street, she also tells me to eat and take a shower, these sorts of things ... but this is not learning things, this is taking care of yourself ...”

Ivi: “So, what things are important for you to learn?”

Haris: “To count without making mistakes when we sell things, to think how to make money, to fix the car and the stereo ... you know all these things.”

Twelve-year-old Kalliope also showed a preference for her uncle and father as the most valuable sources of learning, confirming the interconnection between

processes of learning, sources of knowledge and Greek Gypsy socio-economic activity:

“I learn a lot of things from my uncle, things about work and the world in general, because my uncle, who is a vendor, travels a lot and he has been to many different places. I love travelling with him for work. He also knows a lot of people in many different places. I also learn from my father a lot of things.”

So, it was especially children aged between seven and twelve who most favoured or admired the person they saw as an important source of knowledge. Children of this age have just started participating in the economic life of the extended family and they enthusiastically demonstrated their more independent stance in life by detaching themselves from the protective character of their relationship with their mothers. In contrast, younger children who had not yet been incorporated in the socio-economic life of the extended family to the same extent seemed to be less focused about the difference between a source of knowledge and a source of affection or protection. This explains why children aged between four and six kept mentioning all the relatives they favoured for a great variety of reasons as the most valuable sources of knowledge in their lives.

For example, six-year-old Stelios, said:

“I love my mother. I learn everything from her. I also learn things from my dad, Manolis, Haris and Dimitris. And my uncle and grandpa and grandma and Elpida, because she is my Godmother ...”

Four-year-old Xanthi explained to me why she favoured her mom, dad, Manolis, Haris and Stelios: “My mom loves me, dad takes me out for walks, and Manolis, Haris, and Stelios are my cousins and I play with them.” A similar view came from five-year-old Paris: “I learn from my mom most of the things, and a little from dad and uncles and cousins.”

Not only age but also gender is an important factor in children’s ways of evaluating sources and processes of knowledge. Clearly, as we see from children’s words, what they perceive as a source of knowledge is intrinsically bound to household work that gradually attains a highly gender-specific character. Children of both sexes between six and twelve years of age valued primarily the knowledge they attained from the most experienced person at work. However, as

boys and girls above the age of twelve reach the time for their engagement, they start taking up gender-specific roles, valuing mostly the person from whom they get the immediate guidance and support at that stage of their lives. Twelve-year-old Nikoleta, for instance, who got engaged during my fieldwork and her premarital training at home had already started (see chapter 7), maintained that she was closer to her mother and grandmother than anybody else, also stressing the importance of performativity in processes of knowledge transmission and knowledge acquisition.⁸

“My mom shows me how to do things and she helps me along with my grandmother in the kitchen and the house. I learn from them how to cook, how to wash, how to keep everything clean ...”

As the children’s words reveal, the extended family is the main locus where they learn what the most important things in their lives are and perform the knowledge they acquire. Most children recognise that the older family members are the people from whom they get the most valuable knowledge. And gradually, children reach a position where they can recognise the specificity of gender in the process of obtaining different kinds of knowledge from their older male and female relatives. However, as the following paragraphs demonstrate learning and knowledge involve more complex and many-stranded relationships and processes than depicted in children’s priorities in this section.

Participatory Learning and the Performance of Knowledge

A closer inspection of what constitutes a significant source of knowledge for children indicates an intimate association between the performance of knowledge and gender and age-based hierarchical relationships premised on the values of Greek Gypsy morality. This means that children, within different entities, such as the family and the peer group, are related with individuals from whom they acquire knowledge as well as with individuals to whom they transmit this knowledge. And children find meaningful relationships in entities, in which they can participate in this two-way process.

⁸ The same preference was expressed by older women who were recently married or engaged such as Marina, Athina, Elpida, and Penelope. They all saw their mothers and grandmothers as the most valuable persons at the stage of their training period.

In the following example, six-year-old Stelios shows us the meaning and importance of relationships of knowledge as well as the way of performing age and gender-based hierarchical roles among children in the framework of a Greek Gypsy morality of relatedness. Furthermore, this example clearly suggests that among this particular group of Greek Gypsies processes of learning do not merely involve the transmission of knowledge from adults to children or older to younger persons but involve a more negotiated and participatory way of learning which involves meanings and feelings embedded in caring relationships and relationships of respect.

Once we were about to start one of our teaching sessions with the children and we were discussing where they preferred to have the session, the father of six-year-old Stelios, Theofilos, offered his house as usual. Theofilos, however, seemed upset that day for a reason unknown to me. He angrily said that all children, except for his boys, Stelios and Manolis and his nephew Haris, should leave the rest of us alone to have a proper session. It was the first time that an adult had interfered in some way in our sessions. All the children complained to Theofilos as they left the house and I remained both silent and embarrassed. I noticed that four-year-old Xanthi, the boys' cousin from the same extended family, left her uncle's house disappointed, desperately looking for support from one of her cousins. Stelios decided to stand up for her against his father: "Dad, why did you send Xanthi away? This is not fair! Xanthi belongs here with us and I'm not having a session until she comes back! [shouting]." Theofilos looked at me, stunned and remained silent. Then Manolis took over from Stelios and asked his cousin Haris: "Go to call Xanthi, but not anybody else, because dad is upset with them today." When Haris left, Manolis explained to me that his cousin and peer group leader, Dimitris, had sworn at his mom, Katerina, this morning in the yard and his dad went mad at him and at the rest of his cousins from his extended family. "We are still friends but it's better for them to stay away from our house for a couple of days until dad calms down" Manolis explained. And Haris added: "Don't worry, they know that Dimitris did a stupid thing and that my uncle is right, the others are not mad at us."

The children's commitment to the extended family is obvious in Stelios' complaint to his father that he had mistakenly sent his younger cousin Xanthi from the same extended family away along with the rest of his cousins who come

from the other extended families. His older brother, Manolis, took the responsibility to explain his dad's strange decision, while at the same time, he indicated that his friendships had not been affected by this incident. Stelios acted as the older male cousin who protected his younger female relative when he thought that the family's moral code had been violated. At the same time, Manolis, the oldest son, on the one hand covered his father and on the other protected his relationship with the peer group and its leader. Finally, Haris put the incident within a shared moral framework by stressing the fact that even their friends know that Theofilos was right to be angry with Dimitris and the rest of his family members. As the example reveals, it is primarily through this puzzle of relationships within the extended family unit and the peer group that moral knowledge is acquired, transmitted, negotiated, but most importantly performed among its members.

Although most of the children up to the age of twelve emphasise the role of the family in the process of acquiring knowledge, it is primarily the peer group in which they perform this knowledge at this stage of their lives.⁹ The peer group gives them the space and freedom both to perform knowledge and to acquire their peer's evaluation of this performance. Children of all ages stressed the admiration they felt for the most experienced members of their peer group. Most of the children, both male and female, confessed that they greatly admired and valued the way their older friend Dimitris performed knowledge in the group. For example, ten-year-old Haris stressed that Dimitris was every child's favourite friend and leader exactly because what he knows was performed in an adequate standard: "It is not that Dimitris knows what is right. He does things right."

The examples presented here suggest that processes of learning, the performance and acquisition of knowledge entail meanings and feelings which are implicated in relationships with adults and other children. In this sense, not only do affinities and relationships of respect constitute an important source of knowledge for children but also the very ground on which feelings are performed and evaluated. The mode children manage and express their feelings in is itself an

⁹ As we shall discuss more extensively in the forthcoming chapters, the peer group of *Gitonia* consisted of male and female children and youngsters between four and twelve years old as well as male youngsters above twelve who were still related to it as far as some specific events were concerned, such as playing and watching football matches.

important process of learning. What is more, learning through practice and through actively engaging in the interdependencies of relatedness grants children scope for individual freedom and autonomy, as the example with Stelios and his father demonstrated, but also involves important responsibilities. In fact, as we shall discuss in the forthcoming chapters, becoming a Greek Gypsy is premised on the very process through which children and adults gradually learn to combine individual freedom and autonomy with the undertaking of embodied obligations *vis à vis* those they are related to.

Peripheral Sources of Knowledge

In the previous sections we saw that boys and girls of different ages have different attitudes towards schooling. And, whilst schooling seems to be more important for certain age groups than others, all children and adolescents considered the knowledge produced in the school as useful, at least up to a point. By no means, however, was the school considered to be a primary source of knowledge for any of these age groups of children and youngsters. This is evident in the incident where children considered school as an important source of knowledge but not as important as to waste so many years of their lives in formal education. Or in Dimitris', Haris' and Manolis' exclusive interest in learning how to read and write. These examples suggest that the school is only a secondary or peripheral source of knowledge for most of the Greek Gypsy children of *Gitonia*. Possible exceptions such as in the case of Sotiris and Angelina, who had managed to make the school central in their lives presuppose a partial detachment from the Greek Gypsy socio-economic framework.

Apart from the school, as already mentioned, children and youngsters acknowledged that there are other important sources of knowledge for them outside of the family unit, such as the television and interactions with non-family members. The children of *Gitonia* are interested in things such as music, sports, films, games, interests that vary according to their age and sex. Nevertheless, while all these activities clearly amuse them and constitute sources of knowledge, as they admitted, they are not considered to be important sources of knowledge. Such sources are useful and valuable only as peripheral or additional knowledge to what they get from their family environment.

For example, when during my first visits to *Gitonia*, I asked children if they were fond of music, they all showed a particular interest in a great variety of Gypsy and non-Gypsy singers and instrument players. Although they talked enthusiastically about music and singers, when I asked them if any of them knows how to play a musical instrument, as many Gypsies are famous for in Greece, Manolis explained to me:

“We, here, [implying this specific Gypsy group], are not living out of music, none of us here knows how to play an instrument, we all work in the markets.”

When questioned about sports and football, specifically boys answered that they were very fond of both playing and watching football in the stadium or on the television. However, Dimitris along with Manolis, made a clear distinction between what is work and what is fun: “Ivi, all these things you are saying are just fun.”

Television also constitutes a peripheral source of knowledge for children. As they all agreed, you can learn from TV about what is happening in the world. “We can learn if there is going to be a war, so that we leave our houses to go to the mountains to live”, said Stelios.¹⁰ Apart from its informative purpose, TV is also considered to have educational value both for children and parents. Five-year-old Paris explained to me why he thought TV as a means to learn interesting things:

“This evening’s programme with the fairytales is nice! There is one guy who tells fairytales to children on TV and then they draw what he had said. That is were I first learnt how to draw. Sometimes, if I have paper, I draw as well.”

In fact, everybody, Xanthi, Manolis, Haris, Paris, Dimitris, Kalliope, and Nikoleta, seemed to like this particular programme.

Additionally, television is considered to be an important source of amusement for the children. The girls told me how much they liked watching some of the soap-operas shown during the evenings. Stelios said that even late at night he watches television. He lies in his parent’s bed next to his father who reads for him the subtitles. Theofilos, his father, confirmed:

¹⁰ It was the period of the war in Afghanistan.

“He likes watching movies, even those *xenes* [foreign ones] and I help him as much as I can with the subtitles. He likes asking what is this and what is that. It is also a good exercise for him.”

But his mother added that television might also have a negative influence:

“Ivi, he watches all this rubbish on TV and he is especially fond of Big Brother. He doesn't miss that ... I don't understand what he likes in this trash. I hate it but he wants to know everything and if you ask him he will tell you exactly what is going on ... He stays awake until one o' clock to watch it!”

Although Katerina made clear that she personally disapproved of reality shows in general, she nevertheless expressed admiration when her son went on explaining his preference for them. As Stelios told us, he found this particular program interesting in the following aspect:

“They are all *poutanes* [whores] there! Did you see what they wear? How they sit and talk? *Megales poutanes* [big time whores]! They show everything on TV! They are not good girls those who go there.”

As Stelios' words reveal and his parents' stance towards his preferences confirms, television constitutes the means through which children assess different messages, images, perceptions and actions from the perspective of the Greek Gypsy morality. The effect and influence of this knowledge is filtered and processed within this specific framework, re-affirming Greek Gypsy values in the mind of Greek Gypsy viewers.

Children's Priorities: Marriage, Family, Work and the Future

It is interesting to explore the puzzle of the various answers I got from children between four and twelve years old with reference to questions about what they would like to do or be in the future, and how they visualise their future lives. Their responses varied considerably depending on whether they placed their answers on what they thought of as a realistic or a fictitious version of the future context. Indeed, what has most struck me about the children during fieldwork was their significant ability to conceptualise their lives at two different levels simultaneously, being able to switch easily from one level to the other.

Children were able to talk about their future grounding their views on ostensibly unfeasible hypotheses, while being aware at the same time that most important for them is the enactment of *Greek-Gypsiness* in the present. When they grounded their answers in a realistic future, most of them emphasised marriage, extended family relations and future work plans. When they placed their answers on a fictitious context, however, their answers—and sometimes the answers I got from the same child—varied according to the context and depended on who was present. Children know that they can fantasise about their future but they are also conscious of the fact that this freedom and ability to play with their aspirations is part of their experience of childhood, knowing that they won't have the same space for speculation in the future.

For example, six-year old Stelios had always been willing to take up different roles when asked to describe or draw what he would like to be in the future. Once, we were alone with the rest of the children without the presence of adults, Stelios said that he would like to be a gardener. He was drawing a tree at the time I questioned him, but when he saw his brother drawing a boat he changed his mind and said he would like to become a sailor. As we shall also see in chapter 8, Stelios asked his parents to buy him a policeman's costume during carnival, which they actually did. He had been wearing the fully equipped policeman's costume proudly not only during the carnival but also long after it. At that time, he was convinced that he wanted to be a policeman and he was copying expressions from a famous TV character who played the role of policeman. It was interesting, however, that he preferred to perform the policeman to me or to non-Gypsy visitors such as the NGO's representative, instead of his parents and older family members. He complained that they either didn't pay much attention or they laughed at him: "They don't take me seriously, Ivi, they make fun of me ..."

Remarkably, Stelios completely changed both his language and the content of what he was saying regarding his future aspirations, concentrating on issues such as work and marriage when he talked in front of his parents and older family members. Although according to him and his parents he was still too young to go out to work on a daily basis, he nevertheless participated enthusiastically in the economic life of the family during the seasonal trade. In most of our discussions in the presence of his parents, he boasted about his success as a salesman on different occasions with overwhelming confidence, while being aware that this

evoked the admiration of his parents and close relatives. He also told me once in front of his parents that all he actually cared about was “to find clever ideas to make enough money and get married soon.”

His aunt, Maria, confirmed that Stelios was desperate to get married and that he had already started looking for his wedding suit. “When we went with my daughter to try on her wedding dress he wanted us to buy him his wedding costume!” Maria explained. He even came to me asking me seriously: “Ivi, what do you think, when am I going to be tall enough to get married? Will it take much time?” And he brought a chair next to me and jumped on it saying:

Stelios: “I think that if I get that much tall I’ll be ready to get married! Tell me. Ivi, don’t you think that I would be a handsome groom?”

Ivi: “More than handsome ...”

Stelios: “Then, can you wait a few more years for me to get old enough to marry you?”

Katerina told me that since he was a little boy he had always wanted to get married early but lately he had expressed a particular preference for marrying me. As she passionately described:

“Do you know what he asked me yesterday for? Money to buy you a present! Then, I asked him what he wants to buy you and he said a ring! He wants to buy you a ring ... And when I told him, O.K., make your own money and buy her whatever you want, he went to the other kids and suggested that they should all put money for your present!”

Stelios, who was listening to our conversation and was upset, came to me saying loudly:

“O.K., you will see bitches. I’ll sell kites on *Kathari Deftera* [Mardi Gras] and I will buy you a wedding ring! And I’ll tell you something, I’m still young and I can say whatever I want!”

Stelios seems to be completely aware of the stages and processes that he has to go through in order to achieve his goal. He knows he has to grow a few more years as well as that he has to establish a successful work activity in order to be able to provide for his family. Most importantly, however, he knows that being a

child grants him enough freedom and space in fantasising his future even for serious matters, such as marriage, and even in front of his parents and relatives.

Obviously, Stelios does not seem different from any other child that experiments with different preferences. However, at the age of six, he seems capable of distinguishing dreaming from viewing his future. It also seems more important for him to seek his family's approval for his view of the 'real' future. His preference for about becoming a policeman was seen as funny but didn't have any effect on his close family. On the other hand, marriage and his boasting about work, were discussed seriously and positively by them, although he expressed a preference in marrying me.

Similarly to Stelios, four-year-old Xanthi' expressed to me numerous aspirations regarding future professions, such as becoming a teacher, a nun, a policewoman etc. But as soon as she named her aspiration, she always added that what she would actually become in the end is a wife and mother. She seriously confessed to me that she aspired herself being married to a boy from a neighbouring settlement: "Only my mother knows that. I want to marry Stratos and have children with him."

Older children, such as Haris, Manolis, Dimitris, Nikoleta, and Kalliope all between nine and twelve years of age, seemed more dismissive when talking about their near future regarding marriage or engagement. This is especially the case for the girls, who realise that there are a few stages ahead of them before they become engaged. But boys also preferred not to talk about this subject and simply said that they were still too young to get engaged. Nevertheless, they clearly illustrated marriage as important in the drawings. When Haris finished drawing a picture which illustrated a house and a married couple on a bed (Fig. 4.4), he said to me: "This is what everybody dreams: a house and a wife."



Fig. 4.4: Haris' dream of marriage

Engagement can take place any time above the age of twelve or thirteen both for boys and for girls, depending on children's personalities and children and parents' preferences (see also chapter 5). Although Stelios did not mind expressing his dream of getting married in front of his parents and relatives, older children seemed more reserved in doing that. Manolis got irritated every time the discussion touched the possibility of him getting married, although his mother brought this up quite often. Haris and Dimitris preferred to talk about girls they chased in school. The girls did not even want to talk about boys and Nikoleta maintained this attitude until the day she actually got engaged. As we shall see in the following chapter, Kalliope also reacted angrily and aggressively when her best friend and cousin got engaged. Presumably because she realised that her time was not far away.

Although all of the children at this age had already started taking part in the economic life of their family occasionally or regularly, helping their parents with the seasonal trade, or working daily for a few hours in the markets, nevertheless they still expressed aspirations about specific future professions that they admitted were not feasible for them. The boys mainly expressed the dream of becoming football players or singers. Manolis, Dimitris, and Haris agreed that being a football player or a singer were two lucrative and enjoyable professions which did

not demand other skills than your talent. On the other hand, Nikoleta and Kalliope repeatedly said to me that they would like to become policewomen, teachers or doctors, but they definitely knew that they could not do it without some sort of formal education. As Kalliope confessed to me:

“Do you know, Ivi, how much I would like to become something such as a teacher, or a doctor? I want to work and feel that I help other people! I like that, but I know it is too late for that now ... I can't do it without going to school.”

And Nikoleta added, recognising that her devotion to her younger brother, Fotis, had kept her away from school and prevented her from fulfilling her dreams:

“I would like exactly the same, or being a policewoman ... but how could I do this without going to school? It is impossible I think ... but for me it has also been impossible to leave Fotis [her little brother] alone. Fotis has been everything for me. How could I have left him alone [hugging and kissing her brother who was sitting on her laps]?”

Apart from these aspirations expressed more formally by children, their everyday language verified the fact that they saw their current or future participation in the economic life of the family as extremely important. What is more, participation in economic activity seems to be viewed by children as intrinsically bound with kindred relatedness, as an activity embedded in family and group.

Children repeatedly expressed short or long term working plans as part of their families' wider projects. Even if the plans were part of individual aims, children placed them in the wider framework of their family's activities. As did Manolis, who thought of getting a supply of Christmas trees in order to sell them and with this money help his grandfather to pay off his debt. It becomes apparent therefore through this analysis that children view work in their everyday lives as an activity that covers both their personal as well as their family's short and long term needs. This, however, does not prevent them from dreaming of a different future.

Apart from the double standard language that children of all ages use, to a greater or lesser extent, in expressing their future aspirations, they showed a different attitude when they talked about the way they viewed their future life regarding their family. While they explicitly expressed specific dreams such as

having proper houses with nice gardens, swimming pools and bigger trucks for trading, they never forgot to mention the presence of their extended family in this future picture. Haris drew me the house of his dreams—a house with a garden that included a block of flats—and did not omit to explain to me (Fig. 4.5):

This house is not for me only but for my dad, mom, and Thanos [his older brother], of course. And grandma and grandpa, and my uncles will be next to us in their own houses. That is why I would like to have a bigger house, for everybody not just for myself. But, I don't know if I want a garden or a flat, I think I want both!

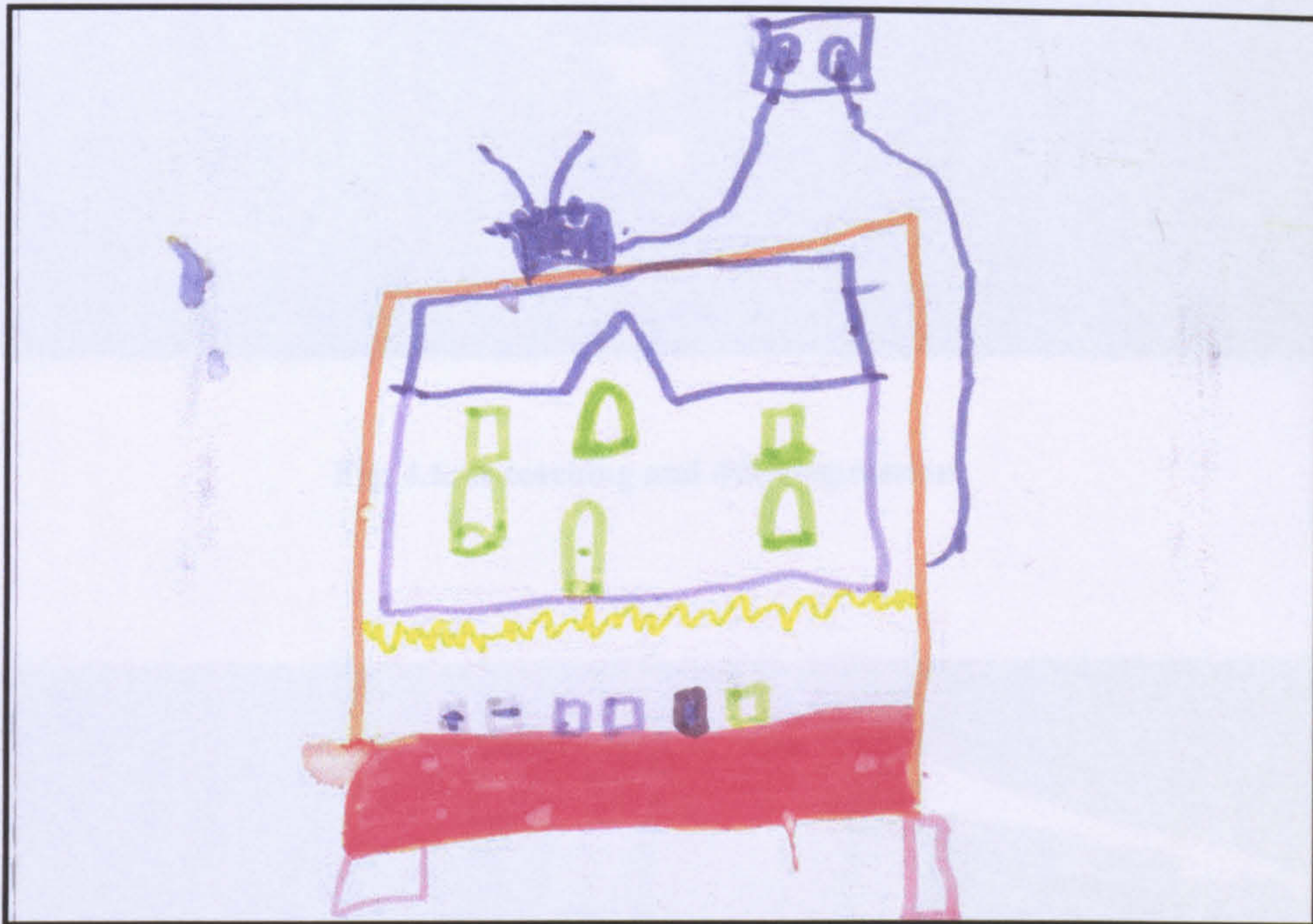


Fig. 4.5: Haris' picture of the house of his dreams

However, once the children reached the age of twelve or thirteen, or more specifically when youngsters start to work—in most cases along with their fathers—on a regular basis or when girls get engaged, discussion about future aspirations of this kind lose their meaning. As already seen, Pavlos, at the age of thirteen, had already started helping his father and his older brothers in the market stall. And although he was still close to his younger cousins, discussions about future aspirations seemed quite distant for him: “What future? ... I have to work now and this is my only future!” For his older brothers, Aristides and Thomas, sixteen and seventeen years old respectively, as well as for the girls recently engaged this discussion was absolutely pointless.

Having discussed children's views of schooling in relation to their future concerns and their perceptions of processes of acquiring and performing knowledge, the following section summarises some of the issues discussed above through the presentation of a comparative example.

Shifting Knowledge—A comparative Example: The Albanian Gypsies of the Neighbourhood

In the neighbouring Albanian Gypsy settlement, the sisters of the Denkou family, Anna and Eleni, seven and six years of age respectively—who a few months ago had been christened in the church—were convinced by their parents, Konstantinos and Vasiliki,¹¹ and godparents, to enrol in the first grade of primary school.¹² As the girl's father told me:

“I'm determined to send my daughters to school without letting them skip any classes. The godparents supported me a lot. They are very nice people. They did the paper work for their registration at the beginning. Ivi, I want to forget my life in Albania and become a new person here. And I want to give these children a better chance in life.”

Anna, the elder of the two sisters, kept me informed about their progress in school.

“The assistance that we take after the classes has been very helpful to us.¹³ We feel more and more confident. I'm no longer shy about my Greek in the class.”

Another boy from the neighbourhood who lived in one of the houses near the settlement of *Gitonia*, eight-year-old Dinos, was the third Albanian Gypsy child who regularly attended the first year at a different primary school (see school C, Fig. 1.3, p.59). Dinos was visiting the boys in *Gitonia* to arrange football games and that's where we caught up with his progress at school. His command of Greek seemed excellent but as he said: “I take the support courses not because I feel weak with Greek but because I need someone to help me with my homework.”

¹¹ The parents had also been christened along with their children in the church.

¹² According to the parents, the children's godparents initiated and facilitated their registration at school.

¹³ Support courses, scheduled normally after the regular school hours, aiming at offering assistance to pupils whose Greek is not their mother tongue.

By the time I completed fieldwork, all three Albanian Gypsy children had successfully finished their first year at school and in September carried on to the second grade. They all said that although Greek was not their first language, they nevertheless managed to reach a good standard of Greek with the support of their teachers. They also admitted that as their level of Greek was improving, they felt increasingly confident in class. However, the most serious obstacle they faced in school was the difficulties they encountered in doing their daily homework, because they couldn't seek the assistance of their parents. According to Anna:

“It is more difficult for us than the other children, because if I have a question when I do my homework I cannot ask my parents ... they can't help me. I have to ask my teacher at school the next day.”

And Eleni added:

“This is why we stay two more hours at school than the other children, because the teacher helps us with the homework and we do more exercises.”

However, no matter what difficulties they faced, all three children admitted that they loved school “not only because they learn useful things but also because they had made very good friends” as Anna phrased it. Eleni also enjoyed other activities that she was doing in school: “I like when we draw in the class and then we give our drawings to the teacher to show them in the class!” Dinos was very proud of what he had learnt at school so far and seemed determined to go on to the next grade. “I will continue, for sure, I like school because I learn so much there! I have friends as well there but learning is more important.”

Strikingly, the adults of *Gitonia* have noticed the fact that their Albanian Gypsy neighbours have found it easier to send their children to school. Irimi, the mother of Haris, bitterly confessed to me once:

“Have you seen them? They've just been a few years in Greece and they send their children to school! Not like us! They understood the importance of being literate [*tona'se grammatizoumenos*] in this world.”

The children of *Gitonia* made a similar observation, when Dinos, the Albanian Gypsy boy, joined us for a teaching session. Although he was still in the first few months of the first grade of primary school, he had already learnt how to read and

write. Dinos was modest and shy with me but always quick and enthusiastic in answering questions and writing words. Manolis noticed that Dinos knew more than he did and didn't hesitate to say that openly: "He knows everything better than us Ivi ...". I said: "Yes, because he has not skipped classes at school and therefore he practices his reading and writing every day." And Manolis, half angrily, half disappointed, added: "If we were attending regularly as he does, we would be as good as he is, eh? But you see we don't do it ...".

At least at this stage of their lives, the Albanian Gypsy children, Anna, Eleni and Dinos, all see schooling as an asset that would help them have a better future. "When you go to school you can find a good job when you grow up." said Eleni. Her sister added: "If you know how to talk nicely, read and write, you can have a better life, because you understand more things." Finally, Dinos pointed out "that schooling makes you useful in your family. You can help yourself and your family more by going to school."

This work cannot offer an in depth comparison between these particular Greek and Albanian Gypsy groups. However, we can suggest that these three examples of successful participation of Albanian Gypsy children in the Greek formal educational process support what both Greek Gypsy parents and children from *Gitonia*, as well as the majority of teachers whom I talked to from the neighbouring schools, repeatedly pointed out. It is the Albanian and Albanian Gypsy children who seem to have developed strategies that have helped them integrate more successfully into the formal educational process than the Greek Gypsies.

In the first place, Albanian Gypsy children register with schools as Albanian, easily hiding their Gypsy identity, while at the same time they get all the benefits and support granted by the Greek educational system, such as the support courses. Obviously, this makes it easier to stay at school alongside the growing number of non-Greek pupils in Greek schools (see chapter 1). This is actually the strategy that Anna, Eleni and Dinos followed when they registered with their schools. Anna and Eleni's parents, in fact, went even further. They sent them to a school that was a few blocks away from the settlement in order to avoid other children seeing where they live (see school E in Fig. 1.3, p.59). Their father, Konstantinos, explained to me:

“It is a little bit far from home but we thought it would be better for them, because it is not nice when other children know that you live in this mess. When I collect a bit more money, we’ll move into a rented house.”

In addition, the three children did not deny their Albanian identity but they nevertheless changed their Albanian names into Christian ones and were christened in the Greek-Orthodox Church. In contrast, although they enrol as Greeks, Greek Gypsy children find it extremely difficult to conceal their Gypsy identity, while facing considerable difficulties both in their performance in class as well as occasionally with their relationship with their teachers and classmates.

Yet the above-mentioned observations do not seem to answer the question of why the Albanian Gypsies from the nearby settlement and houses have and the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* have not managed to participate more successfully in the schooling process. This question becomes even more interesting if we think of the fact that undoubtedly the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* have been more strongly affiliated with the wider non-Gypsy Greek society in terms of history, religion, language and traditions.

Although searching for answers to this question is not the purpose of this research, the cases of the Albanian Gypsy children from the wider area of the Olympic stadium of Athens led me to re-evaluate a lot of my initial assumptions about the and their stance towards formal education (see also chapter 1). More specifically, these comparative examples shifted the focal point of my research from the weaknesses or incompatibilities of the Greek formal educational system¹⁴ to those processes and practices through which knowledge is rendered meaningful for a particular group of people. So, the examples of the successful incorporation of some of the children of this specific group of Albanian Gypsies into schooling directed my analysis towards the ways through which knowledge is perceived, constructed and reconstructed for the Gypsies of *Gitonia* within particular networks of relatedness.

For instance, from my close relationship with the Denkou family as well as my daily contacts with the Albanian Gypsy inhabitants of the neighbourhood, I soon realised that for the vast majority of them, migration from Albania to Greece

¹⁴ These weaknesses and incompatibilities are acknowledged by various researchers of Gypsies in Greece (Katsikas and Politou, 1999; Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre, 1998; Lidaki, 1998; Ntousas, 1997; Pavli and Sideri, 1990).

during the last 15 years had had a tremendous impact on the organisation of the ‘traditional’ Albanian Gypsy model of extended family. Subsequently, for most of the Albanian Gypsy children and their parents’ temporal or permanent separation from their extended kin network had serious implications on the ways school came to be seen as an important source of knowledge that substituted for the knowledge previously produced and acquired within the extended kin network. Because of these disruptions to the kin networks, extended kin relations, although clearly considered very important, could not have the same meaning—at least as a source of knowledge—for this group of Albanian Gypsies, as was the case for the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*. Konstantinos’ words are particularly revealing regarding this issue:

“Here, I have nobody to rely on ... I’m on my own. Although I have relatives here and there [meaning both in Greece and in Albania], in Greece I’m alone. It is because it has been very difficult for all of us [meaning him and his relatives] here that each of us has to care exclusively for his own family. Of course, there [meaning in Albania], we are more like a proper family. That’s why I’m telling you I want the young girls to go to school. My older children are too old for this, they have already made their families, but these younger ones ... I don’t want them to hang around in the neighbourhood doing nothing. The school is good for them when I go with Vasiliki for work and there is nobody to look after them. There, they learn something at least ...”

A number of important issues emerge from the study of this comparative example. First of all, different attitudes towards schooling cannot be examined disentangled from their own context. In the case of this specific group of Albanian Gypsies who in general live in similar conditions as the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* do and who share similar family-oriented values and work patterns with them, the attitudes of the children towards formal education seem to be different than those of the children of *Gitonia*.

For example, in both cases the children have elaborated an instrumental view of the school which is intrinsically associated with their view of the family and their aspirations about the future. However, the Albanian Gypsy children who live near the settlement of *Gitonia* believe that schooling constitutes an investment for a better future both for them and their families. In contrast, the children of *Gitonia* clearly argue that—although undeniably useful—proper school attendance is

incompatible with their life within processes of learning which emerge through relationships within the extended family. This is probably why ten-year-old Haris interprets the successful attendance of his Albanian Gypsy neighbours as morally inappropriate:

“They came to Greece to make money; they learn *grammata* [letters] because they want to make money. That’s what they only care about. They don’t care about family.”

From a completely different point of view, Konstantinos, the father of Anna and Eleni confirmed to me that schooling was an ideal option, considering the fact that for him and his family migrating to Greece resulted in a less effective kinship support network and as such a less effective source of knowledge for his children.

In addition, in spite of the fact that the children of the settlement of *Gitonia* admit that they feel closer to ‘the Greek’ cultural values, in terms of language, customs and religion, they also admitted that they have failed to conceal their *Gypsiness* at school. On the contrary, Albanian Gypsy children in the same neighbourhood have managed to conceal their *Gypsiness* at school, mainly by making use of their Albanian identity.

As already discussed, this study has not proceeded in an in depth analysis of the case of the Albanian Gypsies who lived in the close proximity of *Gitonia*. However, the striking differences in the social and cultural foundations of the attitudes towards education exhibited by Greek and Albanian Gypsies in this chapter support—at least to a certain extent—the argument that the members of this group of Albanian Gypsies have followed strategies of accommodation similar to other non-Gypsy Albanian communities in Greece.

Indeed, similarly to the Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki described in the studies of Hatziprokopiou (2003) and Lambrianidis and Lyberaki (2001), it is also possible that the Albanian Gypsies of the wider area of the Olympic stadium seek vertical integration within the “host” society through patronage networks. In this sense, this particular group of Albanian Gypsies may also follow along with other Albanian communities a strategy of adjustment based on cultural plasticity which denotes a strong desire to accommodate themselves in the cultural terms of Greek society.

Conclusion

Through the discussion of the attitudes of the children of *Gitonia* towards schooling, this chapter sought to work as a vehicle for their perceptions of what constitutes knowledge, while taking into account the grounds on which they value and prioritise various sources of knowledge. This included a consideration of the extent to which schooling matches or contradicts children's ideas on what is valuable knowledge. Additionally, this chapter looked at the ways children visualise their future life, with respect to issues such as family, marriage and work. The presentation of comparative material provided the basis for summarising and evaluating the assumptions drawn in this chapter.

From the accounts of the children we learn that for them school represents both a space for acquiring useful knowledge (the ability to read and write) as well as a space of social interaction and as such a source of both positive and negative relationships. Undoubtedly, however, children's accounts showed that neither does the school constitute the most important source of knowledge for them nor is it a prerequisite of what they consider as valuable knowledge. According to the children's own words, the acquisition of knowledge which takes place outside the Greek Gypsy socio-economic network, such as the school, contradicts processes of knowledge taking place within the family.

Despite this acknowledged contradiction, the children of *Gitonia* do not simply dismiss schooling in favour of their future within the extended kin network. This is primarily mirrored on the children's instrumental view of the school. In most cases, children are willing to participate in the schooling process to the extent that their participation does not seriously obstruct their place and sense of belonging within their extended family and the wider Greek Gypsy network of relationships. This explains why, in contrast to male and female youngsters who are more actively engaged with extended family duties, children up to the age of twelve consider schooling as both interesting and useful for them.

Children's words point to the different kinds of knowledge generated by different sources. However, the most valuable knowledge is generated within the extended family and the peer group, and is inevitably associated with the Greek Gypsy socio-economic activity, processes of relatedness, hierarchies and affinities, as well as the moral framework that underpins these processes. This is

supported by the fact that the majority of children in *Gitonia* recognise in a member of their extended family the person from whom they acquire knowledge in their lives.

However, this chapter showed that valuable knowledge for *Gitonia*'s children is the kind of knowledge which can also be performed and evaluated by their extended kin members and peers. In other words, for them, important knowledge seems to be intrinsically bound with the performance of gender and age-specific domestic, economic and hierarchical roles within the family and the peers. And children value diverse sources of knowledge according to the effect that these have on the ways they themselves embody knowledge which is related to these specific roles.

For the children of *Gitonia*, knowledge also involves the modes through which feelings and the interdependencies of affinities among family members and peers are expressed. In fact, the generation, performance and acquisition of knowledge constitute embodied performances (Lambek, 1998; Csordas, 1994) that inform family and peer relationships in which children are active participants. What is more, children's embodiment of their own interpretations of adults and peers' words, actions and feelings, their evaluations of different kinds of knowledge and the ways they manage diverse and often conflicting sources of knowledge reveal the ways through which acquiring and performing knowledge becomes a marker of an individual and a shared sense of distinctiveness. For them, even peripheral to the 'strictly' Greek Gypsy sources of knowledge, are processed and filtered through the code of Greek Gypsy ethics, serving simultaneously as an affirmation of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness.

In this chapter, children's views and experiences, priorities and aspirations have pointed to the significance of marriage, the centrality of kinship relationship and the importance of work. The following three chapters expand on these issues that children have drawn our attention to, starting from the analysis of marriage.



Fig. 4.6: A teaching and drawing session



Fig. 4.7: A drawing session

Chapter Five

Greek Gypsy Marriage and Relatedness: Becoming and Belonging

The Centrality of Marriage

As we saw in the previous chapter, marriage is what every child in *Gitonia* aspires to for his or her future. In addition, for young men and women in the settlement of *Gitonia*, marriage is considered to be the most anticipated day in their lives, while for married men and women, marriage is commonly described as the woman's and man's only destination in life.

Greek Gypsy marriage, however, means a lot more than personal aspirations and expectations. I was told once by Theofilos, while I was helping his family during the preparation of his niece's wedding that: "The only interesting thing that the Gypsies have to show is marriage." Indeed, as Theofilos' words reveal, and somebody who has lived closely with the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* easily picks up, marriage constitutes a crucial nexus of socio-economic and cultural processes, in which material flows are embedded in marriage relations.

Anthropologists and other social theorists have long stressed the role of reciprocity in establishing and strengthening social bonds.¹ Through an extensive account of marriage ideologies and practices, particularly reflected in the lengthy wedding celebrations, this chapter looks at the ways through which marriage transactions, exchanges (Strathern, 1984: 41)² or strategies (Argyrou, 1996; Yan, 1996; Sant-Cassia, 1982)³ sustain and reproduce the interdependencies of kin

¹ Strathern and Stewart (2000), Strathern (1999, 1988, 1984), Godbout (1998), Bloch and Parry (1989), Mauss (1990), Toren (1999, 1989), Hart (1986), Simmel (1978), Sahlins (1972), Lévi-Strauss (1969), Polanyi (1957).

² Strathern (1984) examines patterns of marriage exchanges which include persons, rights, objects and long-term cycles of reciprocal obligations in Melanesia.

³ Argyrou (1996) looks at the changes in wedding practices in Cyprus since the 1930s and the role that these changes played in shaping present-day class identities among villagers and the bourgeois society. Yan (1996) refers to dowry practices in China and Sant-Cassia (1982) to property transmission and dowry practices in Cyprus.

relatedness. These are embedded within a morality of reciprocal exchange that not only affirms social relations but also becomes a marker of a distinctive sense of collective self and distinctive processes of becoming.

Marriage mobilises economic activity within a context of intra-family relations while at the same time it activates a set of cultural practices through which group alliance networks operate within a specific framework of ethics and an informal code of Greek Gypsy morality. Ideologies of age and gender, as well as concerns of honour and sexuality, lie at the centre of a socio-economic process through which distinctiveness among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* is not only 'imagined' but also realised. The protection of women's virginity as well as the practice of endogamy that characterise the majority of marriages in *Gitonia* are central to the preservation and reproduction of these networks that sustain *Greek-Gypsiness*.

Interestingly, marriage or a prospective marriage engages the members of this particular group of Gypsies and other Greek Gypsy communities in a cyclical investment project that signals a long-term commitment to economic and social support. In other words, it triggers a range of economic and social strategies and alliances based on sets of reciprocal relationships. This socio-economic activity actually takes the form of money recycling and forms of investment that simultaneously indicate the existence of strong socio-economic bonds among different extended families. Such bonds constitute the basis for the creation of extensive networks of support among the Greek Gypsies within and outside *Gitonia* that operate mainly at two different levels: firstly, at the level of the extended family unit, between different generations, and secondly, at the group level, among different extended families. These networks of supportive relations that are generated and reinforced through marital alliances substitute the dominant institutionalised non-Gypsy Greek forms of social support, such as welfare state benefits, from which the members of this group are largely excluded.

Simultaneously, non-mainstream ideas of long-term investment for the future, underpinned by reciprocal relationships, are manifested in the lengthy wedding celebrations, where luxury, abundance, consumption of food and drinks, dance and the 'throwing' of money constitute what the contributors of the *Lilies of the Field* have called a sharing of "an expansive hospitality and sociality" (Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart, 1999:12). The wedding celebrations become the specific point in time and space where *Gitonia's* Gypsies enact *Greek-Gypsiness*

in the present and experience an individual and a shared sense of distinctiveness as an active response to the conditions of marginalisation.

Working out the Marriage Plan: The Development of Marital Alliances and the Money ‘Loaning’ Project

From the moment of their birth, children in *Gitonia* trigger a multiple set of actions by their parents and families that aim at creating a stable network of relationships that will help them face the consequences of their marginalisation. As soon as a married couple has their first child, female or male, they have to organise and follow a strategic plan of money investment, or ‘danio’ [loan], as the Gypsies of *Gitonia* themselves call this process. This long-term investment project takes the form of wedding gifts to the children of close relatives, friends and group members and plays a double role. In the first place, it creates a reciprocal relationship between the recipient family and the one who gives—or rather ‘loans’—who will automatically expect in return a ‘pay-off’ at their own children’s weddings. Secondly, it establishes intra-family alliances and reinforces group relations.

The words of Alexis, the elder male head of the Christopoulos extended family, illustrate the obligatory nature of the gift, which resembles what Mauss (1990: 8) called regarding the case of Polynesia “the obligation to reciprocate”, by stressing the reciprocal aspect of the money ‘loaning’ process:

“It is a ‘loan’ Ivi, not a present. You take a loan from the bank—we take it from relatives. You save money in the bank for your children, while we loan money to relatives’ children to start up their lives and we anticipate one day to take this money back from them on our children’s wedding day.”

In addition, this continuous socio-economic activity that is prompted by wedding ceremonies but is worked out from the moment of a child’s birth reflects the primacy that is given to investment in the children’s future as well as the ways through which and the extent to which the members of this group of Gypsies adapt their work and relations to their children’s needs. And Alexis’ wife, Evgenia adds:

“People say, oh! Look at the Gypsies they are not as poor as they seem to be because they spend so much money on their weddings. But they don’t know that we work all

our lives like dogs to put this money down for relatives' children. We have to move our ass and find a way to do it otherwise we are nobody here. All our children have to start their lives is this money. You [meaning the non-Gypsy Greeks] ... your children are educated, you can easily find a job but what about them? We do it for our children and for our family name."

It is common practice for parents to organise their economic activities in such a way that enables them primarily to support their families on a daily basis, while at the same time they can intensify their work in order to cover their children's wedding expenses or the gift for an upcoming relative's wedding ceremony. Indeed, parents not only have to plan their work and savings for their children's wedding preparations but also, as already noted, they have to put down money for the weddings of relatives and family members in the process of intra-family money recycling.

Interestingly, this process that is vitally linked with children's interests engages all the members of the family. This means that both parents and all children take part in its accomplishment, even if it is not their turn to get married, according to the parents' marriage plan for each child. This applies to girls as well as to boys, although the girl's contribution would not be considered as important as the boy's. This is because a girl is occupied with household activities (which is the priority in her life), and secondly, because she has to invest most of the money she earns from work in her own dowry, the so-called *prika* in Greek, soon before her wedding.⁴ Regarding the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, the term *prika* refers to the bride's collection of household items (multiple sets of dishes, glasses, cutlery, bedding, towels, table-cloths) and clothes.

Parents with more than one child have to organise a good working plan early on for each child. Normally, and if everything goes as planned, parents marry their children by order of seniority. For example, at the time I conducted fieldwork at the settlement, Michalis, a father of four children (a daughter of

⁴ For more on various meanings of *prika* in Greece see (Papataxiarchis, 1993; Daskalopoulou-Kapetanaki, 1993; Psychogios, 1993; Hirschon, 1993b; Sant-Cassia and Bada, 1992; Skouteri-Didaskalou, 1984; du Boulay, 1983; Herzfeld, 1980). Most importantly, what these studies on *prika* suggest is that the term *prika* does have a unified meaning across Greece and through time. Therefore, synchronic analyses on *prika* should take into account the concurrent socio-economic context and wider social relationships which affect its usage. What is more, such analyses should be placed in the specific historical context which illuminates the changes on the use of *prika* within and possibly between different cultural groups.

twenty one, a son of seventeen, another son of sixteen and a third son of thirteen years of age) had long ago prepared a plan that would enable him to marry his children, whose age difference was small, so that the period between the eldest child's wedding and the youngest one's, would be relatively short. However, depending on the circumstances, parents with female and male children who are close in age may give priority to the female children's weddings.

A more thorough examination of the marriage strategies and their association with the socio-economic organisation of Greek Gypsy life sheds light on the difficulties faced by the Gypsies of *Gitonia* to accumulate money and invest in housing. In fact, families, especially those with many children, find it extremely difficult to collect the money needed to buy land or build a family house. This is because the largest sums of money produced through the family's work activities, apart from the everyday household expenses, are invested in wedding gifts for relatives' children. For example, at the age of forty Michalis had a permanent job as a legal vendor in markets and was thought to be well off compared to other male family heads in *Gitonia*. Michalis had not yet managed to finish building his house on the land that he had bought with his own wedding money around twenty years ago. Property acquisition is more likely to happen, if it happens at all, when all the children of the family are married and the parents are informally dismissed from the 'money loaning' process.

It is true that as soon as parents have all their children married, they tend to gradually distance themselves from both the 'money loaning' process and, subsequently, from the intensive rounds of participation in wedding ceremonies. Varvara, the female head of the Petridis extended family, justified her reluctance to attend a relative's wedding party:

"No, you go, have fun, you are going to like it you'll see! Why should I come? All my children are married, there is no need for me to come ... actually ... I've done my duty for a long time and I'm tired. Now, it's only a trouble for me."

The female head of the Christopoulos extended family, Evgenia, told me that normally September is a time when Greek Gypsy families have earned a lot of money from the summer seasonal trade and, therefore, many weddings take place then. However, she didn't really care much about weddings herself because she and her husband didn't have any obligations to their relatives:

“Even if we want to go to the party to have fun, to eat and drink it’s different for us, we don’t have to work so as to put down money for them. It’s just fun, like my husband, you know he goes sometimes to weddings in order to drink with his friends.”

In contrast, she explained to me how worried she was about her son, Michalis, who had to attend three weddings in a row:

“I’m worried about him, it’s been three weeks now that Michalis is going to these wedding parties and stays awake all night long but the next day he has to go to work at 5:30 in the morning. It’s both very tiring and expensive. But he has to do it because Thomas’ [his son] wedding is coming soon. It’s not nice if somebody gives money to your child and you don’t return it to his.”

However, the gradual distancing from the wedding processes does not apply when a close member of the family gets married. In fact, both Varvara and Evgenia took an active part and contributed substantially (in terms of money and effort) to the weddings of their grandchildren that took place the year of my fieldwork. In such cases, participation in weddings for a parent with married children constitutes either an affirmation of a very special bond and a specific form of attachment with the couple, or merely a form of socialising.

Putting money down for a relative’s wedding not only has economic importance for the future of the married couple and for the future of the donor’s own children, but it also establishes prestigious names and, simultaneously, reinforces family reputations. As also illustrated in other ethnographic cases, asymmetries in the flow of gift exchanges generate asymmetries and imbalances in social relations (Yan, 1996; Mauss, 1990; Strathern, 1984). Regarding *Gitonia*’s Gypsies, when somebody (most of the time the head or representative of the family) offers a lot of money for the wedding of a relative’s child, he or she will consequently gain the praise of the community members and will automatically enhance the whole family’s prestige. In return, as already discussed, the donors’ family will be expected to collect big sums of money from the family of the recipient at its own children’s wedding.

The association of gifts of money with family reputations triggers the fortification of economic activity of different extended families before an upcoming wedding. Families work hard in order to give as much money as they

can to the couple, always depending on the quality of relationship they want to built with the bride's or groom's family within the framework of alliance-making strategies and, simultaneously, gain a good profile within their group. Michalis recently gained the growing respect of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* immediately after they saw the money he put towards the wedding of a relative. His generous gesture was extensively discussed and positively commented on within the settlement the day following the wedding.

As we shall see in the following sections, the family representatives of the bride and groom openly announce the gifts of money so that everybody can know the exact amount that each family member gives to the couple.⁵ In most cases, the names of those making a big financial contribution would be especially mentioned and applauded by the family representative, who will accompany his words with characteristic promises of friendship and loyalty to each other's families. However, close relatives are not only supposed to put money down for the married couple during the wedding but also to contribute to the founding of the couple's household and offer them gifts of golden jewellery.

For the bride, the process of contributing to the establishment of her household by her extended family starts long before her wedding or even her engagement. In fact, it starts at birth but is intensified before the wedding. Close relatives from the extended family unit (parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts) frequently buy any kind of household items small or big that they think should be added to the girl's dowry. The girl herself normally buys the items she likes with the money she earns, when she works.⁶ Such items can be purchased in festivals [*paniyiria*], where the majority of Gypsies trade and buy a variety of goods, from stores and markets, or from vendors who visit the settlement. In fact, Gypsy dowry items constitute an important and extremely lucrative sector of the wider Gypsy economy.⁷ The Greek Gypsy dowry components are household items collected in astonishingly large quantities (see also page 188). As Evgenia described:

⁵ Gifts of money are given at the wedding party after the religious ceremony (see page 203).

⁶ Some young women in *Gitonia* worked occasionally while others worked daily in the markets, depending on their needs.

⁷ This involves the trading of dowry items among the Greek Gypsies, between different Gypsy groups and between Gypsies and non-Gypsies. The trading of dowry items has been considerably affected by changes in manufacturing and these changes have altered the composition of dowry today from hand-made to almost exclusively mass-produced goods. Other ethnographic examples

“You should have seen my granddaughter’s dowry when she got married! Her father knew a lot of traders and whenever he liked something he bought it in dozens of pieces. Athina has innumerable sets of glasses, dishes and cutlery of different quality, shape, and design, which of course she hardly uses!”

The groom’s family contribution to the founding of the couples’ household takes a different form. The groom’s parents are expected to buy the bedroom furniture and bedclothes for the wedding-night, which will be exhibited to the relatives the first day of the wedding. Close relatives will usually buy pieces of furniture or electric devices for the couples’ new household.

Along with the financial contribution to the couple, both in money and in kind, the close relatives of the bride and groom (the members of their extended families) usually offer them gifts of gold and jewellery, also at the wedding celebration. Such gifts entail a more opaque symbolism than the gifts of money or the contribution to the founding of the household. Presents of jewellery, such as golden rings, earrings, bracelets and necklaces constitute an affirmation of a close kinship bond between the bride or groom and members of her or his extended family that exceeds the socio-economic element (the strategy of marriage monetary transaction) of the Greek Gypsy wedding, or what Alexis described as the money ‘loaning’ process (see page 187). In effect, jewels and the ability to wear them indicate a more profound and personalised aspect of this relation than that embedded in the flows of money or in the impersonal character of household items. This relates to Mauss’ (1990) point on the interconnection between flows of presents, interpersonal relations and the performative expression of feelings.

The Wedding

While I was conducting my fieldwork, two weddings took place in *Gitonia*. Seventeen-year-old Thomas from the Christopoulos extended family married sixteen-year-old Anthi from Piraeus, and twenty one-year-old Elpida, the eldest granddaughter of the Petridis extended family, married twenty-two-year old Kiriakos from the settlement of Spata. Not only did I attend the three-day celebrations in both cases, but I also took an active part in the extensive

also reflect that changes in dowry practices are related to changes in the wider socio-economic framework (Yan, 1996; Sant-Cassia, 1982; Loizos, 1975).

preparations that preceded the weddings. Both weddings took place during the first two weeks of September, while preparations had started as early as May and intensified during the summer.

Apart from the wedding preparations lasting at least three to four months, the Greek Gypsy wedding consists of three main phases or stages that in total last for a week. At the first stage, there is the display of the dowry (*ta prikia*) by the bride's family and the making of the bed (*to krevati*) by the groom's family that take place in the houses of the couple's families. The second phase consists of the pre-wedding parties, held separately for the bride and groom's relatives. The third phase comprises the church ceremony and the post-wedding party involving all sides. Each phase is indicative of the way and degree the close family, the extended family and relatives, as well as other Greek Gypsy families engage in the wedding process. For example, in the first phase, *ta prikia* and *to krevati* are both prepared and celebrated mainly by extended family members and close relatives. In the second phase, there are two different versions of pre-wedding parties, one for the bride and one for the groom. Both parties are prepared by extended family members and are held for each family's relatives and friends respectively. The wedding ceremony and the post-wedding party constitute the celebration, in which both families' relatives and friends take part.

In most cases, the wedding celebrations should be as luxurious as can be afforded by the couple's parents who want to show their appreciation to their family and friends for both their presence and support. It is worth noting that apart from the gifts of money they make to the couple, the Greek Gypsy families invest time and energy in the wedding preparations of a close family member, with the same expectations that money investment generates. One day, this help will be reciprocated at the wedding preparations of their own child.

Dance is an essential element of all three phases in Greek Gypsy wedding celebrations.⁸ In fact, at the weddings I attended as celebrations escalated, dancing also escalated. Although describing the details and the flow of movements of the

⁸ Many scholars have stressed the central role of dance in understandings of the embodiment of culture (Ness, 2004; Martinez, 2002; Reed, 1998; Rodriguez, 1996; Daniel, 1995; Cowan, 1990). For Reed (1998), a politics of dance involves an expressive embodiment through which multiple identities, such as ethnicity, class and gender, are invented and renegotiated. Cowan (1990), in her work in northern Greece, argues that the ways dance is embodied by women articulates the tension between the expression of female sexuality and women's self-discipline.

Greek Gypsy dances is not the scope of this thesis, it is important to mention here that dance constitutes the means through which relatedness, interconnections and flirting, hierarchies, gratitude and respect, feelings of joy for the joining of two people and sadness for the girl's separation from her family are expressed in weddings.⁹

The Wedding Preparations

The wedding preparations in the settlement started in May with the booking of the church for the religious ceremony and the nightclub for the post-wedding party. In June, Elpida kept herself busy with the selection of the wedding dress while Thomas bought his wedding clothes. In the middle of July began the process of internal and external conversion of Elpida's and Thomas' family houses. In fact, their houses had to be repainted internally and externally and the inner structure had to be modified. For the purpose of her dowry display, the furniture had to be removed from Elpida's family home, and stored in a warehouse until after the wedding. Maria, Elpida's mother explained to me that everything had to be organised by her but all her female relatives would give a hand in the preparations. Similar conversions were made in the main room of Thomas' house that would become the bedroom of the newly married couple for a time after their wedding.

As the date of both weddings got closer, the two families' preparations overlapped and their members occasionally cooperated. For instance, the male members of the two families had to transform the common yard of the settlement into a convenient area for the open-air celebrations. The last two weeks of August were hectic. Male members of both families, young and old, were busy constructing the dancing area, the stage for the D.J., and the kitchen where women had to store the food for the guests. Female relatives were busy decorating the inside of the houses as well as planning and organising the food preparations. A few days before the weddings, the whole settlement looked like a construction site and I couldn't believe how this mess could change within the limited time we had

⁹ Whilst Greek Gypsy dances hardly differ from non-Gypsy Greek ones, the ways in which dance is performed constitute a significant marker of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness. In fact, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* boast about the fact that their girls and women dance the *tsifeteli* (a Greek belly dance) much better than the non-Gypsy Greeks.

left. However, everybody assured me that everything would be ready in time for the important events.

The First Day

As the preparations continued, I was advised to go home and rest for a couple of days and come back for the first phase of Thomas' wedding, which in Greek is called *to krevati*.¹⁰ It was actually the day that the close family of the groom as well as other inhabitants of the settlement and relatives from outside participated in making the wedding bed and the decoration of the couple's bedroom. That day, my participation proved to be extremely useful, since I was familiar with the similar non-Gypsy Greek version of that custom. I gave them some input and I made suggestions about the decorative style of the bedroom that they seemed to appreciate very much. In fact, everybody agreed to leave—in the previously heavily decorated room—just the new bedroom furniture, decorated with the embroidered wedding bedcover and the new curtains. The only things we added were a couple of family pictures on the walls and two huge vases with colourful flowers on each side of the bed. Thomas' mother and grandmother offered drinks to those who were helping with the preparations, while music was playing loudly throughout *Gitonia* and guests and relatives were dancing.

The first phase of Elpida's wedding, *ta prikia*, took place a week later, and kept mainly the female members of the settlement preoccupied with the display of her dowry. When, a few weeks before the display, Elpida invited me to see her bedding and towels, I was so surprised that I started counting one by one the packets she had stored in her grandmother's house. She had, among other things, more than 100 bedsheets, around 100 towels and 50 bedcovers. The great number and variety of her dowry pieces—ranging from bedding and towels, kitchen and household items, as well as clothes—were exhibited in every single part of the walls and every corner of her parents' house and were decorated with colourful ribbons. Her family offered drinks to relatives who called in during the evening to see the *prikia* and congratulate the bride and her parents.

¹⁰ There is a similar non-Gypsy Greek custom under the same name that precedes the wedding ceremony. In the non-Gypsy Greek version *to krevati* is the day that the bride and groom's close female family members make the couple's bed so that relatives and friends can pass by and offer money or jewellery for the couple's happiness.

The Pre-wedding Celebrations

Following the first phase, a couple of days later, the second phase of the weddings took place in *Gitonia*. It was Thomas' and Elpida's pre-wedding parties for his and her family relatives respectively. Here, I describe Thomas' pre-wedding party, which preceded Elpida's. Despite my worries, all the arrangements in the common yard were completed successfully in time for Thomas' party. The wooden constructs the men had built over the previous days had been wrapped in glittering paper and decorated with colourful lights. Chairs and tables for approximately 300 people decorated with flowers were put around the dancing area and the D.J.'s stage was set up, equipped with a rented stereo and sound system. The D.J., who was Thomas' younger brother, Aristides, was on the stage selecting the latest Greek hits, sung mainly by famous Gypsy and non-Gypsy Greek singers. The decorations and the arrangements around the dancing stage clearly pointed to the fact that this area was the centre of the wedding events.

Food was another important parameter in the pre-wedding celebrations. Women stored the food they had cooked for their guests in the kitchen, built in a corner of the common yard especially for the occasion. All female members of the settlement had given a hand in the preparation of an assortment of dishes such as a variety of salads and fruits, baked potatoes, and some *mezedakia* (dolmas, prawns, and meatballs) that accompanied the main course. The main course was lamb roasted on the spit by the male relatives of the groom.

Interestingly, as soon as the guests arrived, the women of the family left the kitchen and went down to the dancing stage to dance with the groom. After the first couple of songs, the elder male members of the families started serving the guests with food and drinks in amazingly big quantities. Women did not get involved in serving food and drinks during the entire night and continued dancing in turns on the stage with the groom's relatives. This is a reversal of usual practice which underlines, on the one hand the importance of the event, and on the other hand the men's leading role in hosting this important event.

In the middle of the party, women brought the wedding dress that Thomas' family had bought for Anthi and displayed it on the stage. The young unmarried girls of the family danced, holding the wedding dress one after the other, while the older women danced around them. At the same time, the men brought around the

dancing area the furniture that had been bought by close relatives for the couple's household. A family representative announced on the microphone the family names of the donors, while displaying the particular piece that came from each of them. After dinner, at around 1 o'clock in the morning, all this furniture had to be transferred to the family's vehicles and taken along with the wedding dress to the pre-wedding party of Anthi, the bride. The wedding dress had to be handed by Thomas' parents to the bride's family and the furniture items had to be displayed to their guests and then taken back once again to the groom's house. The guests at Thomas' party went on dancing until the groom's family had returned to *Gitonia*. The groom, stayed in the party because, according to the custom, he was not 'allowed' to see his bride before the church ceremony.

This is how Marina described the pre-wedding celebration at Thomas' wedding over dinner, especially pointing to issues such as the girl's separation from her family and to the symbolic importance of flows of goods in establishing communications and interconnections:

Marina: "The parents of the groom have to buy the bride's wedding dress and the bedroom furniture for the couple and we [the close family members] buy the rest of the furniture, which tonight will be displayed to the relatives and friends of the groom. Do you know that now there is a similar celebration at the bride's house with her relatives?"

Ivi: "Yes."

Marina: "Do you know that they are bringing the wedding dress now here in the middle and the groom's family will dance around it and then we are going to take it together with the furniture to the bride's place?"

Ivi: "No, I didn't know that, so are you taking the bedroom there? To Piraeus?"

Marina: "[laughs]. No the bedroom will stay here, where are they going to sleep? From Monday [the actual wedding day], Anthi will have to sleep here, in her parents-in-law, she has to forget her home ... They are taking the furniture, these presents given by the relatives, just to show it to her family and they'll bring it back here, those things [points at them to me], the T.V., the sofa, and the rest of them, these are all gifts from us! "

Ivi: "So, everybody is going to the bride's celebration?"

Marina: "Only the close relatives, but you are staying here to take care of my baby girl because I want to go down to Anthi's place! O.K.?"

Ivi: "O.K."

A few days after Thomas' party, a similar celebration took place for Elpida. The main difference between the male and the female pre-wedding party was the reverse process of handling the furniture and the wedding dress. For instance, at Elpida's celebration, it was she who danced with her female and male relatives until around 2 o'clock, when her parents-in-law's family arrived with the presents and the wedding dress. As soon as they arrived in *Gitonia*, accompanied by a dozen cars, they kissed and hugged the bride and her parents, offered them a basket of flowers, and handed over the wedding dress. The dress was received and taken to the dancing area by the virgin female members of the family, who, as Thomas' young female relatives had done, again held it one after the other while dancing. The bride's family led Elpida's parents-in-law to the dancing area to dance a couple of songs together, surrounded by the dancing circles of men and women and then they all went together to take pictures with the bride in front of her dowry.

The Religious Wedding Ceremony and the Post-wedding Celebration

Once the bride receives the wedding dress from the groom's family the couple is ready to proceed with the religious ceremony, which normally takes place two or three days after the pre-wedding party. Thus, given the strong emphasis of the people of *Gitonia* on Greek-Orthodox beliefs, it is intriguing that the ceremony in the church does not seem to have the same importance for them as the earlier celebrations and the post-wedding party. During fieldwork, discussions about the upcoming weddings rarely dwelt on the church ceremony itself. The guests, relatives and friends are not expected to be present at the church ceremony but they are definitely expected at the wedding parties. It is mainly the close family members that accompany the groom and bride to the church.

Although I was invited in both weddings' religious ceremonies, I was strongly and repeatedly advised not to go to any of them. Rather, I was told to wait with other relatives in *Gitonia* until the ceremony in the church was finished. In fact, I was told that the ceremony in the church is boring, tiring and isn't worth the trouble. For example, Evgenia advised me regarding her grandson's wedding:

“No, don’t come to the church! It’s an hour drive to Piraeus. It’s not worth it an hour in the traffic, then another hour to wait in the church, just to listen to the priest for half an hour. Stay here until we come back and be ready for the party. You shouldn’t get tired, you should be fresh in the club! To tell you the truth, maybe I won’t go to the church either. I’ll see. I haven’t decided yet.”

Despite the fact that this specific group is faithfully adhered to Orthodox Christianity and most of its associated ceremonies, the incorporation of a religious wedding into the Greek Gypsy traditional wedding cannot only be explained by the concept of religious faith. Nor is the concept of marriage itself enough to explain the role of the religious ceremony in the Greek Gypsy wedding. Indeed, neither their Christian faith, nor the validity of a Greek Gypsy marriage depend on or presuppose the church wedding ceremony. For the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, as may also happen with non-Gypsy Greeks who conduct civil weddings, going through a wedding outside the church does not necessarily question their Christian Orthodox faith. Clearly, for them, practices, such as the christening and the pilgrimage, are more affirmative of their religious faith than the wedding in the church.

There are a few cases of couples who are considered to be married according to the Greek Gypsy standards, but have not gone through a religious wedding. Sometimes, such couples might decide to get married in church at some stage. This is common in cases, where legally under-age girls and boys want to get married, and the church will not give its consent (usually for girls and boys under the age of fourteen).¹¹ Increasingly, however, over the last decades, obtaining the official paper that states the marital status of a married couple has been considered essential for the future life of the couple and its children.¹² The same has also been observed by Ntousas (1997) regarding the Rom of Karditsa.

This explains why the vast majority of the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, and especially the younger generations, sooner or later decide to get the official acknowledgement of their marital status. Although the religious ceremony is

¹¹ The legal age of consent for marriage in Greece is eighteen. However, the church may give its consent to younger people by obtaining a written permission from the parents of both the bride and the groom.

¹² In Greece, this happens either through religious or civil weddings. The Gypsies of *Gitonia* have increasingly recognised the importance of the official acknowledgement of their marital status for obtaining a variety of benefits from different state institutions.

associated with legal purposes, they clearly prefer the ceremony in a church rather than a civil wedding. Both younger and older generations have the same preference. Elpida told me once that she would never want to marry in the municipality office even if she was wearing the wedding dress. Her mother Maria admitted that she could not even envisage “how this can be called a wedding.” But although the church ceremony has added a religious and ritualistic element to the Greek Gypsy marriage with a practical usefulness, it does not seem to evoke any particular associations with the intra-family supportive alliances and material exchanges that take place within the Greek Gypsy network of relatedness. And it is presumably for this reason that it does not attract the same interest from the group’s members as the rest of the wedding phases.

The post-wedding party follows the church ceremony on the same day. Both Thomas’ and Elpida’s parties took place in Khalkida, 100 kilometres away from Athens, in a nightclub “famous for its post-wedding celebrations”, according to Aristides, Thomas’ brother. This nightclub became the centre of many of my discussions with Elpida’s and Thomas’ family. “It’s the biggest place in Greece, it must take two thousand people, very luxurious with a huge stage for the band and very nice food, you haven’t seen anything like that” Thomas’ grandmother, Evgenia, told me. What is more, Elpida’s uncle, Theofilos, explained to me why most of the ‘good’ Gypsy weddings take place there: “It’s because it reaches the standard of wedding we like, you’ll see and you’ll tell me.”

Indeed, I didn’t have to wait until Thomas’ and Elpida’s weddings to see the place because in February I was invited by Theofilos and Katerina to attend the post-wedding party of a relative who lived outside the settlement. Varvara and Evgenia insisted that although the distance from *Gitonia* to the nightclub was quite long it was worth it for me to go because this was supposed to be, according to them, “a real Gypsy wedding [*alithinos Tsigganikos gamos*].” But Evgenia was particularly preoccupied with me travelling at the back of her son’s truck in the cold:

“We are used to drive all this distance to go to relative’s weddings and stay awake all night long, we do that very often, but I’m worried about you, it is going to be a long and tiring night for you.”

I said I didn't mind since I had Marina and Giorgos with me to talk and laugh during the journey. Evgenia gave us a couple of bedcovers and pillows in order to make ourselves comfortable in the back of the truck, took off her scarf and tied it around my neck and kissed us goodbye: "Oh God!! I'm not going to sleep until you are back!"

As soon as we arrived at the club, after our long but pleasant journey, the first thing that impressed me was the large number of trucks and cars parked outside. And the place was in fact huge, around 3000 square metres, with hundreds of tables surrounding the central stage, very luxurious, and with excellent food and service.

The whole post-wedding celebration is like an interesting puzzle of traditional 'Greek Gypsy' and modern 'non-Gypsy' features of wedding celebrations (see also Lidaki, 1997 regarding the Gypsies of Ano Liosia). The selection of a luxurious nightclub for the post-wedding party indicates a shift from the traditional celebrations within settlements to a more modern, public and not strictly or exclusively Gypsy setting. This shift suggests that views of wedding celebrations differ from generation to generation. The cutting of the wedding cake or the opening of champagne can be also characterised as 'modern' influences. As in other settlements, it is the older generation who can confirm this merging. Evgenia asserts that although this modernised way of celebrating a wedding is very impressive, it has changed the traditional Greek Gypsy wedding considerably:

"In the past, post-wedding parties that used to take place mostly in the settlements were more spontaneous. You didn't have to wait for all these things, the food to be served, the cake to be cut, the champagne, the dancing of the couple and the best-man, the money [meaning the gifts of money]—that, believe me, take a lot of time. Nowadays, there is not much time left for the guests to dance ... you arrive at the club at 11 o'clock and you have to stay awake until 6 o'clock in the morning in order to get the chance to dance. I don't know, but if you are not dancing, what the hell are you celebrating? In our days, the guests were dancing from the beginning until the end of the party!"

On the contrary, seventeen-year-old Marina, believes that the post-wedding party is both luxurious and entertaining:

“What do you think of the place? I always have fun here. I like it a lot! This is a proper celebration! You know most of these singers in the band, don't you? They are famous! They love coming to this place, but again they take a lot of money for that.”

The guests started coming around 10 o'clock and around 11 the live band started to play. When the bride and groom entered the ballroom at midnight and greeted each other's relatives, they went up to the stage to dance the first dance alone and the second with their best-man or best-woman. Then, followed the dance with their parents and other close family members. As soon as the meal was served and finished and the cake cut, at around 3 o'clock in the morning, there started the process of announcing gifts of money and of jewellery. In the following extract from a dialogue between myself and Marina, who on her own initiative, thought it would be useful for me to become familiar with the wedding processes, she pointed out some important features of the post-wedding celebration:

Ivi: “What about all these people, were they all invited?”

Marina: “Anybody who hears about the wedding can come. Do you see [pointing at them] these families over there with the Turkish Gypsy clothes? Look at their funny clothes! They are *Tourkoyifti* [Turkish Gypsies] ... They just came for the food and the drinks ... because the food is delicious and they can drink as much alcohol as they like!!”

In this dialogue, Marina makes it clear that post-wedding celebrations are open to the wider Gypsy group as a gesture of hospitality and that is mainly affirmed through the offering and sharing of abundant quantities of food and drinks. Anybody who has heard about the event is welcome to the party. Non-Gypsies are also welcome in these celebrations. The family of the bride and the groom, or other guests who are related to non-Gypsy Greeks, such as friends, Godparents, neighbours, may bring them along to the party.

In fact, wedding celebrations become the specific point in time in which many of the boundaries of everyday life dissolve, while simultaneously connections with non-Greek Gypsies are reconstructed. In the post-wedding celebration of Theofilos' niece from Menidi, the best-man and the best-woman of the bride and groom were a non-Gypsy Greek couple. Their presence was continuously accentuated by honourable appellations through a microphone. Most importantly,

the representative of the families that hosted the event called the young couple to take over from the bride and groom's initial dance on the stage.

But hospitality in post-wedding celebrations does not necessarily mean that a guest's presence signifies a special bond with the couple's family, unless it is accompanied by a reciprocal relationship in the form of a wedding gift. In the example mentioned above, the gifts offered by the non-Gypsy Greek best-man and best-woman marked the bond between them and the family of the bride and groom. In that occasion, visual differences in dressing between the non-Gypsy Greek couple and the Gypsy guests, such as the woman's revealing top or the man's elegant suit were completely disregarded.¹³ In contrast, regarding the non-Greek Gypsy guests, such as the Turkish Gypsies, the absence of a special bond was exemplified by reference to particular signs of difference such as variations of the dressing code (see Marina's words in dialogue, page 202).¹⁴

Gifts were announced through a microphone while music was playing and everything was being recorded on a video tape. In that sense, everybody can hear and see each family's contribution to somebody's wedding and reach their conclusions. While gift announcements take place the guests can dance on the stage. Normally, if a relative or a friend of the couple's family dances on the stage, the family members 'throw' money at him or her for participating in their children's happiness. The money thrown to the stage is later collected by the children, who love undertaking this role and, who then, hand it over to the band.

Anna Lidaki (1997: 81), in her account of Gypsy marriage in Ano Liosia, asserts that the 'throwing' of money on to the stage for the band demonstrates better than anything else the special relationship that Gypsies have with money. In fact, according to Lidaki (1997), it is this specific way of 'despising' money—symbolically expressed through the gesture of throwing—that manifests the way Gypsies use money in order to affirm interpersonal and family relationships and establish family names. This action of 'despising' money in these important

¹³ In everyday speech, non-Gypsy Greeks' ways of dressing—especially younger women's preference for trousers and mini skirts and men's preference for suits—were a common reference point for a moral distinction between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the non-Gypsy Greeks.

¹⁴ The difference between Turkish Gypsy and Greek Gypsy clothes is mainly visible in women's dressing. Although both female groups should cover their legs with long clothes, Turkish Gypsy women wear long and loose fitting dresses or baggy skirts and loose blouses, while Greek Gypsies wear long and tight skirts and tight blouses.

moments of sociality and in the same event in which gifts of money are accumulated suggests that money underpin the relationships they establish but are less important than the reciprocities they evoke. Similar attitudes towards money have also been described by Papataxiarchis (1999) in the non-Gypsy context of gamblers in a village in the Greek island of Lesbos.

The money that relatives put down for a wedding can add up to a large sum, enough for a couple to start up their life together. In general, the total amount of money invested in the couple's future ranges from 25.000 to 100.000 Euro. The amount of money invested by each family varies significantly depending on the family's economic condition and the kind of relationship they have or want to build with the couple's family. However, it can start from 50 or 100 Euro and reach up to 2000 Euro or more. In most cases, the first priority for the newly married couple is to buy a truck, or a van (as is becoming more common in the last years), the essential tool for their work activities. At the same time, they might well invest in a quantity of trading goods that they are going to sell in the markets and will enable them to set up a small family business. Alternatively, the man might decide to keep on working with his father for quite some time before he takes this more independent route. Finally, it's becoming more and more common for newly weds to invest their money in a plot of land that can either be resold in the future, or where one day they can build their house.

Getting Ready for the Marriage: The Transitional Period

The importance of weddings, and more specifically for close relatives' weddings, is obvious in children's enthusiasm both for their direct involvement in the wedding organisation and their anxiety for the success of the celebrations. In fact, children of all ages take an active part in wedding preparations and are present at all phases of wedding celebrations. Long before Elpida's wedding, almost a year ago, ten-year-old Haris explained to me that he anticipated this event more than anything else: "All I think about is the wedding, I can't wait for this time to come." And nine-year-old Manolis added: "I'll make my best for the wedding to succeed. You'll see what is going to happen!"

Young boys and girls get the chance to meet and flirt at the wedding parties, which they attend with their parents. The pre-wedding party enables children and

youngsters to meet with their close friends and cousins while the post-wedding event gives them the chance to meet new people and make new friends. Wedding parties can also be the ideal settings for a promising relationship because both girls and boys have considerable space and freedom to express themselves.

Although little boys and girls can express themselves completely in their own way, youngsters have to behave almost the same way as the grown-ups. Specifically, while children up to the age of eleven or twelve can play and gather separately from their parents, youngsters have to sit with their family at the dinner table and behave politely. However, youngsters find a significant space for interaction in the dancing area. The dance brings the young unmarried girls, who can easily be spotted because of their specific way of dressing¹⁵ and their bright make up,¹⁶ to the centre of attention that simultaneously legitimises the expression of their sexuality. And young boys grasp the opportunity to show their preference for a particular girl.

As soon as a young boy sets his eyes on a young girl and estimates that he receives a positive response from her, he expresses his choice to his parents, for them to make the first approach to the girl's family. Alternatively, the parents may understand the young boy's preference for a specific girl themselves and take the initiative to discuss it with him. Usually, the parents of the two youngsters discuss such an issue informally on the occasion of a wedding party, and later on, the boy's parents will visit the girl's house in order to gain her parent's formal consent. It is, however, important that the girl's parents will not proceed to the formal giving of their word, unless she agrees as well.

Flirting does not only happen among older children above the age of twelve but is also common among younger children. Four-year old Xanthi, for example, confessed to me that she was anxious to meet the little boy, Stratos, she was in love with at Elpida's wedding party. As in Xanthi's case, younger children may have specific preferences for a prospective partner but would not go so far as

¹⁵ Young unmarried girls usually wear tighter and more fashionable skirts and blouses than the married ones.

¹⁶ Make up is accepted on very rare occasions (such as in celebrations and photographs) among the Greek Gypsy women and almost exclusively for those who were young and unmarried (except in photographs). Putting make-up on a different occasion would provoke the strong reactions and negative comments from close family members and relatives.

expressing them openly, at least not until they feel their parents will give their consent.

As also mentioned in chapter 4, the age considered suitable for a young boy and girl to get engaged varies considerably, and mainly depends on the personality and character of the young person. It also depends on the way his or her parents view the engagement. However, the engagement seems to be an essential stage before marriage for all children. There are both boys and girls that might get engaged as soon as they reach the age of ten or twelve but for most parents the most suitable age for engagement would be between thirteen and fifteen. However, when a boy insists he wants a specific girl or when a girl wants a boy who has proposed to her, their parents may give their consent sooner. In addition, an early engagement may take place when parents notice a strange attitude from the child such as aggressiveness, drug addiction, disobedience, or distraction. During Elpida's pre-wedding party, nine-year old Manolis flirted openly with the young daughter of a family from Khalkida. According to his mother, Katerina:

“Did you see him? He kept dancing with her throughout the whole night and he says he wants her. It's better to get them engaged so that he will calm down a bit, otherwise he is going to drive us all crazy here!”

When I asked him in front of his mother if he really liked this girl that much, Manolis replied to me shyly:

“Eh, yes ... I like her. And, yes—why not—I want to get engaged with her, but we'll see ... we'll take it easy.”

Early engagement not only has a supervisory and training purpose for the girl but also plays a role in promoting the success of the marriage. By accepting the engagement proposal from the boys' family, young girls and their families agree to go through a transitional period until the wedding that in some cases can be quite long. Throughout that period, the daughter, initially in the company of her mother but later alone, will spend a few days of the week at her parents-in-law's house. Apart from the learning of household tasks, these regular visits aim to give the future couple time to get to know each other better and bring them closer to their future domestic environment. This transitional period has an additional

purpose with a psychological effect both on the parents of the girl and the girl itself. Indeed, it is helpful to the parents who soon after the marriage have to face the displacement of the daughter from their home and family and to the girl who suddenly would have to change both her living environment and her position in the family.

Marriage can be an extremely painful—consciously and unconsciously—process for the families that have daughters as well as for the girls themselves. From the time of the birth of a baby girl, parents know that, sooner or later, she will have to leave her home through a symbolic procedure that indicates the end of the parent-child bond. After marriage the girl belongs to the family of the husband and has to be obedient to them. They also know that their daughter will have to work hard to prove her abilities and gradually gain the acknowledgement of her new family. In addition, parents always have the hidden fear that their daughter might not be treated the way they wish by her parents-in-law. All this explains why parents and all the extended family seem to be ‘softer’ with their girls and tend to spoil them more than the boys. Moreover, it is especially the women who admit how difficult and painful it is for them to be separated from their daughters and they are not ashamed of showing their suffering openly. The duration of this transitional period or the time between the engagement and the wedding also varies considerably, depending on factors such as the couple’s relationship, the parents’ will, the boy’s performance at work and the girl’s performance in undertaking domestic chores and the couple’s financial stability.

Although close family members try to come to terms with this separation long before it actually happens, the tension escalates as the wedding day approaches. At the peak of the wedding preparations mothers or grandmothers might not be willing to talk to anybody or they may cry constantly. The most dramatic scene, however, takes place at the post-wedding celebrations. Although the wedding is supposed to be the most important celebration in a child’s life, when it comes to the family of the bride, especially the mother and the female members,¹⁷ they are suffering a great loss. Indeed, at the two weddings that took place in *Gitonia*, it

¹⁷ For the relationship between mother and daughter in the anthropological literature on Greece see (Danforth, 1991; 1983; Dubisch, 1991; Campbell, 1964; Friedl, 1962).

was obvious that Elpida's family members were having completely different emotions from Thomas' ones during that day.

Virginit

“To make you understand how important our granddaughter's proof of virginit was for our family, I'll tell you something: When Athina and Xenophon finished what they were doing in the bedroom after their wedding party I took the bed sheet ... and I was kissing it in front of everybody crying and thanking my little girl for making us all proud in the family. Imagine, all these people at the wedding and all the money they put, it would have been a shame, if she didn't make her father proud!”

For Evgenia, the elder female head of the Christopoulos extended family, as well as for the vast majority of *Gitonia*'s Gypsies, virginit is associated with the *emprakti apodixi timis*, which means the proof of honour in practice.¹⁸ *Timi* in Greek means literally ‘value’ and according to Pitt-Rivers (1965: 21 cited in Goddard, 1987: 167) “honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society.” For Papataxiarchis (1998: 45), ““honour” ties the moral person with society and validates social status.”¹⁹ Although *timi* is a quality that both women and men carry (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b) and is expressed differently in different occasions and contexts (Herzfeld, 1983, 1980), associated with virginit the term has a clear connotation with dignity, honesty and sexual ‘purity’ (Goddard, 1987). Often the inhabitants of *Gitonia* contrasted the ‘purity’ of their women with the ‘non-purity’ of the modern non-Gypsy Greek women [*balames*] who tend to loose their virginit before their wedding and, therefore, are called *atimes* (without ‘value’ or ‘honour’).

At first glance, Greek Gypsy morality seems to be premised on a notion of a fragmented relationship between the ‘moral’ Gypsy and the ‘immoral’ non-Gypsy Greek society which reflects a subjectivity constructed upon the specificity of the Greek Gypsies’ marginal position within wider society. However, a closer examination of issues such as virginit and endogamy among the members of this specific group of Greek Gypsies suggests that concepts of ‘morality’ and

¹⁸ The idea of the proof of morality in practice a few decades ago used to be very popular among the non-Gypsy Greek society especially in the rural areas (see for example Dubisch, 1974; Campbell, 1964).

¹⁹ My translation from the original: “η “τιμή” συνδέει το ηθικό πρόσωπο με την κοινωνία και κυρώνει την κοινωνική θέση” (Παπαταξιάρχης, 1998: 45).

'immorality' are more complex than often implied in such clear-cut divisions (see chapter 3).

First of all, while they often stress the 'purity' of the women of *Gitonia* over the 'defiled' [*magarismenes*] non-Gypsy Greek modern women, in their everyday speech,²⁰ Greek Gypsy parents in the settlement also continuously express the wish for their daughter or son to marry a non-Gypsy Greek man or woman respectively. The following dialogue that started with a joke made by the women of *Gitonia* to a young non-Gypsy Greek male—the representative of an NGO who visited the settlement—but ended up with the women being irritated, offers an interesting insight into these contrasting elements:

Evgenia [joking]: "Did you know that Ivi is engaged with one boy from us and they are getting married soon?"

NGO rep.: "Really? That's great!"

Elpida: "Yes, tell the Mayor not to start the eviction until mine, Ivi's and Thomas' weddings in September! We cannot leave now we have to get married first! And we'll find you a nice girl of ours to marry. You said you are not married, eh?"

NGO rep: "No, but I don't want one of your women because I'm particularly looking for a rich bride."

Evgenia: "Yes, Yes, You might find one of yours with money but our women young man have *timi* ... excuse me, but do you prefer a rich woman with a hole like this big ... ?"

What is more, in contrasting their *timies* [honoured] women with the modern non-Gypsy Greek *atimes* [dishonoured] women, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* clearly expressed their admiration for practices and ideologies, such as the protection of virginity, which were also shared widely by non-Gypsy Greeks in the recent past. This is obvious in Alexandra's words, an elder woman who made the following observation: "Our girls today are as pure as was your grandmother at this age." Most importantly, however, comparisons over purity and impurity were more often made in relation to the Albanian Gypsy, rather than the non-Gypsy Greek women. Albanian Gypsy women were continuously depicted as

²⁰ See also Herzfeld's (1983) relevant article for the importance of "the rhetoric of chastity" in Greece.

“*atimes*”, “*poutanes* [whores]”, “*vromiaries* [dirty]”, “*ginekes tou dromou* [women from the street].”

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned ambiguity, the centrality of virginity in Greek Gypsy ethics indicates an interconnection between ideologies of gender, honour and sexuality (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b; Goddard, 1987) and a vested with moral aspect practicality that facilitates the development and reinforcement of relationships of support that are sustained in Greek Gypsy marriage. The proof of women’s virginity is of extreme importance in this endogamous community since, on one hand, the choices of finding a partner are limited and on the other, looser sexual practices would threaten the stability of the intra-family socio-economic construct. This verifies Hastrup’s (1993: 41) view that virginity does not merely have a symbolic meaning for a particular society but also a “practical significance.”

Notwithstanding this, virginity seems to be important not only in endogamous but also in some exogamous societies, including rural Greece some decades ago (Hirschon, 1993a; du Boulay, 1974; Campbell, 1964). However, the proof of virginity among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* seems to serve a different objective: to signify symbolically the morality that underpins the network of supportive relationships. And this difference is primarily reflected in the whole process of protecting virginity. Indeed, some non-Gypsy Greek ideas of protecting virginity and female chastity were associated with a set of rigid practices of keeping women completely untouchable and therefore away from any kind of contact with men until their wedding (see for example Hirschon, 1993a: 56). But the Greek Gypsy idea of protecting virginity does not require this degree of abstinence and applies only to the particular aspects of intercourse that could jeopardise it.

In other words, whilst sexual desire isn’t repressed, looser sexual practices would have not permitted the development of the strong intra-family bonds through the cyclical process of money investment on the behalf of the children. The proof of virginity, but most importantly, the whole process and ideology of its protection, constitutes the basis on which intra-family marital alliances will be built and fortified. In effect, the proof of the girl’s *timi* represents a gift of dignity, honesty, and respect, primarily towards her family, but also to the groom’s family, and those who contribute to the couple’s future. At the same time, the protection

of the young girl's virginity from her fiancé and future husband becomes a proof of honesty and respect towards the woman and her family.

At the Greek Gypsy society level, it represents the importance of this newly forged family bond, a lifelong relationship, on which relatives are called upon to invest in. The proof of virginity stamps the importance and uniqueness of this informal contract, signifying the criteria of honesty and purity that underpin this process. The loss of a woman's virginity on her wedding day, the same day that the money investment process takes place, has a powerful symbolic meaning. These parallel procedures—both symbolically and practically—cannot be repeated in somebody's life. That is the reason why a possible second marriage will not be effected in the way described above.

Indeed, in the rare occasion that a second marriage does take place, it will often be between a Greek Gypsy man and an Albanian Gypsy woman and it will be done without an open wedding celebration and the money 'loaning' process. Sometimes, it will take place very rapidly. In such cases, however, we see that *Gypsiness* itself is not enough to mobilise and legitimise this whole set of economic and social relations that would be mobilised in a 'typical' Greek Gypsy wedding, because a second marriage would cause considerable disruption to the money recycling process.

Parents are responsible for conveying to their children, both male and female, the meaning of the woman's virginity before marriage. At the same time, both the mother and the father have divided their roles as far as the issue of their daughter's virginity is concerned. Indeed, the mother has a more formative and advisory role to play, while the father plays a stricter and more intimidating role in guarding her virginity. Young engaged girls often pointed out in our discussions the way their parents drew their attention to the importance of the protection of their virginity until their wedding day. Elpida illustrates her fathers' preoccupation with protecting her virginity as following:

"I've been sleeping with Kiriakos in the same bed at least half days of the week for more than six years but my father still keeps telling me every time I go there to be extra careful to stay virgin and not dishonour the family name on my wedding day."

However, the virginity issue is not just a private discussion between parents and the female child but a central issue that, given the opportunity, is discussed openly in front of the children of both sexes since their very early years.

As soon as a young girl becomes engaged she and her fiancé should be careful to protect her virginity under the discrete supervision of the parents of both parties. With the engagement, the girl's parents entrust their daughter's virginity to the fiancé and the boy's parents entrust the dignity of their family to the girl. During the engagement, the young couple can experiment with those sexual practices that won't jeopardise the girl's virginity. In fact, the couple is permitted to sleep together initially a few days a week and later on more often in the boy's house. But the young engaged couple might lose control and accidentally cause the loss of the girl's virginity. This is not rare²¹ and is the case of Aristides and Lena, both sixteen years old, who had been engaged for at least two years. Around a year ago they lost control and Lena lost her virginity. As Aristides asserted:

“The big accident happened after a wedding. We were drunk and ... back home you understand eh? Big mistake but what to do now? We lost control ... I think it's my mistake ...”

As also indicated in other ethnographic examples on Gypsies (Vaxevanoglou, 2001; Gay y Blasco, 1999), while Greek Gypsy moral values draw their effect from a set of extremely strict practices, at the same time, they grant considerable space for the possibility of human error. In such a case, a “rhetoric of chastity” (Herzfeld, 1983), cannot conceal the loss of a girl's virginity among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*. However, the accidental loss of virginity by a couple is followed by a number of long-lasting, ritualistic practices which aim at restoring both the reputation of those who are actively involved in the incident (the couple and their families) and the symbolic value of virginity in the eyes of the members of this group.

Primarily, it is the engagement itself that functions as a protective shield of the Greek Gypsy moral code in the event of an accidental loss of a girl's virginity by her fiancé. In such an event, a number of mechanisms with a highly symbolic character (elopement, intra-family negotiations) will be mobilised aiming at the

²¹ Especially, if for a variety of reasons the couple has to stay engaged for a long time before they get married.

restoration of the reputation of the couple and their families and the re-establishment of relationships of respect. Even in the extreme case that a couple who is not engaged has sexual intercourse resulting in the loss of the girl's virginity, the elopement of the couple and the negotiations between their families and themselves that follow this event and normally end in a marriage, function as a means of restoring both the familial bond and as a way of resolving the crisis.

Endogamy

The endogamous character of this particular group seems to be more circumstantial than deliberate. With respect to the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, endogamy is constructed and reconstructed on different grounds, according to different circumstances. As already noted, in spite of the representation of a moral divide in the relationship between Greek Gypsy and the non-Gypsy Greek societies, the inhabitants of *Gitonia* frequently expressed the wish that their children should marry a *balamo(i)* [non-Gypsy Greek], although they are also rather aware of the socio-economic boundaries that limit the chances of that significantly.

In fact, marriages with non-Gypsies (both with men and women) were more common some decades ago, when the divide between the poor and illiterate non-Gypsy Greek population and the Greek Gypsy population was less rigid, especially in the countryside. In contrast, *Gitonia's* Gypsies can hardly come to accept the intermarriages, even though they do take place, between their men and Albanian Gypsy women although the moral framework of both communities is premised on similar ideas and practices.

In *Gitonia*, Kostas, the male head of the Anastasiou extended family had actually a non-Gypsy Greek father and a Greek Gypsy mother but has always lived the Gypsy way of life. He was always proud of both his parents but he blamed his mother for bringing him up as a Gypsy. According to him:

“I was brought up with Gypsies and that's why I live like a Gypsy now because if you live with them you cannot do anything in your life, you can not escape from *Yiftia* [Gypsiness], you become useless like us here.”

The fact that he was the child of a mixed marriage between a Greek Gypsy and a non-Gypsy Greek seemed to be underlined continuously by his children, grandchildren and the rest of the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. Kostas was aware that

such a situation was unlikely nowadays: “We are poor and illiterate, who is going to marry our grandchildren?” It is true that in spite of the parents’ wishes about marrying their children to a non-Gypsy Greek, they know this is very unlikely, mainly because of the unbridgeable gap in terms of standards of living between the two societies. Alexis’ description of his relative from Menidi, Achilleas, a man of around fifty, who married a non-Gypsy Greek woman, Anastasia, almost thirty years ago, verifies the fact that intermarriages were more frequent in the past.

“Achilleas was a very handsome man, poor but handsome. All the Gypsy girls wanted to marry him. But he liked Anastasia, the young girl who was working in the bakery just a hundred meters away from his home. She was not a Gypsy and she came from a very poor family but he didn’t care she was poor. One day, he went into the bakery and asked her to marry him. They’ve been together for thirty years in a very happy marriage.”

What is more likely to happen nowadays, is a marriage between a male Greek and a female Albanian Gypsy. This is the case of thirty five-year old Giorgos, the Greek Gypsy who married Marina, a seventeen-year old Albanian Gypsy, as soon as he separated from his Greek Gypsy wife. For the parents of this mature man, calling their relatives for a second marriage and going through the money investment process for a second time would be disgraceful. A poor Albanian wife, whose parents would not ask for a wedding celebration because they couldn’t afford the cost of the parties and the dowry, seemed to be the best solution. His mother, Evgenia, put this in the following words:

“Eh, since his first marriage failed we said with my husband we’ll find a poor girl from the street, we’ll take her home and make her our child.”

However, Marina, the new bride, admitted that her life in *Gitonia* “is still very difficult” because of her Albanian origins. And, although she made an amazing effort to learn Greek with a perfect Greek accent and changed her Albanian name into a Christian one by getting christened in the church, she never managed to be totally accepted by the rest of the inhabitants of *Gitonia*. The wedding between an Albanian Gypsy woman and a Greek Gypsy man has the same validity as a Greek Gypsy wedding. However, the woman’s position in the family is more difficult than the position of a Greek Gypsy woman. Albanian women are thought to be

second-class wives that in the absence of any other choice serve a particular objective: to cover the disgrace of a failed marriage. Separations are rare among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* but if at all, they are more likely to happen during engagement. In fact, Giorgos' case was one of the two cases of failed marriages known to me in the settlement.²²

As the examples reveal, the wider socio-economic framework is central to the analysis of Greek Gypsy endogamous practices, activated and amended as they are, under different circumstances. For the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, the practice of endogamy has been proven to be a flexible practice that can be loosened or intensified, depending on the responsive tactics of the group to external factors. That explains why a few decades ago mixed marriages between Greek Gypsy and non-Gypsy Greeks were more usual than today, while today the intensification of endogamous marriages enables the construction of a more solid and effective network to overcome the increasingly competitive socio-economic circumstances. What is more, the Gypsies of *Gitonia* have to face the fact that intermarriages between Albanian Gypsy women and Greek Gypsy men constitute a solution for those cases that a failed marriage causes major disruption to the money investment process.

Conclusion

To summarise, chapter 5 focused on the centrality of marriage among the Gypsies of *Gitonia*. This analysis offered insights into the ways marriage produces and reinforces dynamic processes through which a number of diverse and important socio-economic and cultural features of Greek Gypsy life intersect and are sustained. At the centre of marriage practices lies the attempt of parents to secure their children's future in an insecure environment, living as they do at the margins of Greek society. The description of the content and characteristics of the different phases of a Greek Gypsy wedding shows the amount of time, money and effort that need to be invested for such a significant event, both by the members of the couple's families and the wider Greek Gypsy group. In this sense, weddings do

²² Regarding the second failed marriage, a young man who was thought to be psychologically disturbed divorced while I was conducting fieldwork. Immediately after the separation, his family started looking for an Albanian Gypsy wife for him.

not merely constitute an affirmation of the joining of two people, but rather an expression and consolidation of Greek Gypsy relations of support.

Marriage consolidates intra-family relationships of economic and social support which are fortified by reciprocal exchanges through the money 'loaning' project. These relationships constitute an effective support system, substituting for those social institutions and services in the wider society to which Gypsies are denied access because of their marginal position. This work has shown how long-term projects are realised outside of the boundaries of the state, the formal economy and educational process through ideologies of gender, sexuality and kinship.

Endogamy and virginity are crucial to the success of these marriage-bound practices. Endogamous marriages ensure the continuity of the complex cycles of investment and support. Therefore, wedding celebrations are not only important expressions of sociality for the adults but also significant occasions where dance and interpersonal contact create space for flirting among youngsters and children, while also creating ideal circumstances for flourishing relationships which may lead in engagement. For the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, the engagement or the transitional period of training and adaptation to marriage-like conditions, aims primarily at ensuring the happiness of the couple. Simultaneously, it aims at facilitating the dislocation of the girl from her natal family to her in-law family, while also ensuring the protection of the girl's virginity.

The value attributed to women's virginity provides a medium through which concerns for mutual respect, honour and integrity can be articulated and expressed. Apart from the culturally embedded notions of purity and integrity that women's virginity conveys, the proof of virginity—as it is openly manifested at the wedding ceremony—entails a symbolic affirmation of the honour and respect that underpin a number of different inter-personal and interfamilial relationships (child/parent relationships, the relationship between the two families of the couple, as well as intra-familial reciprocal relationships of support). Interestingly, however, the preservation of a woman's virginity does not exclude some form of sexual interaction since the young engaged couple is actually expected and gradually encouraged to sleep together during the transitional period of their engagement.

In addition, this chapter showed that we need to be extremely cautious when stating the centrality of endogamy in Greek Gypsy marriage. In the first place, there is the clear preference of *Gitonia*'s Gypsies themselves to marry their children to non-Gypsy Greek partners—at least in their everyday speech—as well as there being examples of successful marriages between Gypsy and non-Gypsy Greeks that prove the viability of non-endogamous marriages. Yet, endogamy is the most common practice, and seems to be intrinsically associated with the marginal position of the Greek Gypsies within Greek society. In this sense, rather than seeing endogamous practices as a responsive tactic to attempts of assimilation underpinned by ideologies of difference, as Mary Douglas (1966) and other theorists have suggested, it is more useful here to see this practice as resulting from their conditions of marginality.

It seems that all the aspects that characterise Greek Gypsy marriage—intra-family social networks and economic alliances, endogamy, virginity, and a shared sense of distinctiveness—are in a constantly changing dialectical relationship with the projection of their position in the wider socio-economic arena. From this perspective, Greek Gypsy marriage has played an important role in defining and redefining characteristics attributed by Gypsies and others to this specific group. These serve as flexible negotiating tools in processes of adjustment and transformation within the wider society.

It becomes clear, that marriage and its interrelated practices should be viewed as aspects of a dynamic transformative process that is dialectically related to the wider social context. As Theofilos, the man quoted at the beginning of this chapter suggested, Greek Gypsies consider marriage as the ultimate expression of *Greek-Gypsiness*. But marriage is not a static tradition. As a strategic response to shifting and variable external conditions, marriage and thus the performance of *Greek-Gypsiness* can only be understood in relation to non-Gypsy Greek society. And as this specific chapter demonstrated, although Greek Gypsy marriages are distinctive, there are important continuities here *vis à vis* Greek society.

Having approached marriage contextually and having stressed its central role in Greek Gypsy life, we proceed in the next chapter with the analysis of what it means to be related as kin and the importance of enacting kinship in the process of becoming a Greek Gypsy.

Chapter Six

Constructing Relatedness through Performance: The Importance of Enacting Kinship

Extended Kin Networks and Performative Relationships

This chapter looks at the morphology of kinship bonds and explores some of the central aspects of Greek Gypsy relatedness in *Gitonia*. Continuing from the previous chapter, here the focus of analysis shifts from the process of building intra-family or intra-group relations to the process of fragmentation of the extended family. Both processes are intrinsically associated with networks of relatedness, even though one is concerned with the fortification of relationships among different extended family units while the other is concerned with their dissolution. Interestingly, the vehicle for these opposing processes is marriage. In the first case, as already demonstrated, marriage constitutes the means of consolidating extended family alliances, while in the second, marriage functions as the basis on which the Greek Gypsy kinship code is reconfigured.

Unlike other Gypsy groups, such as the British Travellers and Gypsies studied by Okely (1983), who after marriage can choose their affiliation with either the husband's or the wife's kin and may practice both virilocal and uxori-local residence, family organisation among the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* is characterised by the predominance of the extended family based on patrifocal links that accentuate brotherly relations through the practice of—almost exclusively—virilocal residence.¹

In addition, kinship in *Gitonia* involves “performatively constituted relationships” (Thomas, 1999: 19) that in fact tend to promote the fragmentation

¹ Loizos and Papataxiarchis in their edited volume on *Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991a) acknowledge three different types of family organisation in Greece: the virilocal, the uxori-local, and the neolocal. The Greek Gypsies constitute another example of virilocal family organisation added to Campbells' (1964) Sarakatsani of northern Greece and Herzfeld's (1985) study of mountainous communities of Crete (cited in Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b).

between extended kin networks. Conceptions of age, gender and personhood are central in shaping the content and degree of performativity of such relationships.² Taking on board the literature discussed in chapter 3 and following the shift from the analysis of kinship in terms of rules and structures to the more fluid concept of relatedness (Carsten, 2000) and the analysis of practices “of relating as kin” (Faubion, 2001: 1), this chapter shows how the embodiment of relatedness constituted in and through mundane practices, expressive sentiments and affinities renders individuals members of the Greek Gypsy kindred.

Although the importance of biological facts in the analysis of relatedness among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* cannot be ignored, the very need for constant reaffirmation and renegotiation of kinship bonds through performative embodiment suggests the impermanence and fluidity of such relationships (see also chapter 3). The denial of “the connection between birth and permanence” (Carsten, 2000: 27) in turn takes us away from theoretical discourses that see ‘biology’ as the only basis on which kinship ties are rendered ‘real’, while enabling explorations of the interplay between biology and culture in processes of relatedness (Franklin, 2001; Strathern, 1992).

Additionally, in contrast to Stewart’s (1997) Hungarian Rom and Gay Y Blasco’s (1999) Gypsies of Madrid, the Greek Gypsy family in *Gitonia* is organised along vertical and horizontal hierarchies which are hierarchies across and within generations. Indeed, gender and age-specific hierarchies that operate at many different levels within the extended family entail rights, duties and obligations which frame the moral context in which the performance of kin-related roles take shape and meaning.³ And *vice versa*, the particular ways through which extended kin relatedness is performed constitutes the ground on which personhood is consolidated and hierarchies among the members of the extended kinship network are negotiated.

² Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991b) suggest that the study of kinship in Greece cannot be examined separately from the category of gender and conceptions of personhood. Kinship, in their view, should be seen as the ground on which action and personhood “is implicated differently and often contrastingly” in different contexts of relatedness (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b: 5).

³ Unlike the Dumondian definition of hierarchy as a principle that ranks the elements of a whole which is defined by a religious cosmology (Dumont, 1970: 66), Greek Gypsy hierarchies, along with kinship ties, should by no means be presumed as ‘given’ or ‘superimposed’.

Undoubtedly, performing parenthood constitutes the most important expression of kin-related roles. Notions of fatherhood and especially motherhood as well as ideas of 'extended parenting' cannot be examined independently of the morality of the extended kinship relatedness that privileges brotherly relationships. Parenthood can be more broadly translated into a set of supportive relationships defined and redefined by different agents, including but extending beyond the relations of parents and children, to those between grandparents and grandchildren, aunts, uncles and nephews or nieces, or even older and younger (adult) siblings. Interestingly, the performance of parenting applies as well to children themselves. In that sense, parenthood constitutes a life-long obligation and simultaneously an affirmation of inclusion within a particular kinship group.

Relatedness in *Gitonia*

As Antonis, the head of the Petridis extended family pointed out to me, the six extended families in the settlement of *Gitonia* were all related through kinship and marriage: "We are all relatives here, everybody is somehow related to each other." Each extended family was composed of the heads of the family (the male and female eldest couple) with their married sons, their wives, and their unmarried children or grandchildren. The settlement consisted of twenty four nuclear families which lived in twenty two separate households (Fig. 6.1). Each household consisted of the married couple and their unmarried children.⁴ The houses of the separate households of each extended family were built to the left and right of the heads' family home in a way that indicated a hierarchy among its members.

In this chapter, for practical reasons, I present fieldwork material that mainly focuses on two out of the six extended families that lived in *Gitonia*: The Chirstopoulos and the Petridis extended families. This happens because the households of these two extended families comprised almost half of the households and half of the inhabitants in the settlement (around a hundred people).⁵ What is more, in two of the extended families in *Gitonia*, the Theodorou

⁴ As already shown in the previous chapter, there was an exception in the case of recently married sons, who would most likely stay with their wives in their parents' house for some time after their wedding, until they were ready to set up their own household.

⁵ With respect to the examination of kinship relatedness and as fieldwork progressed, I realised that my close participation in extended family relationships and everyday activities of twelve additional households would be impossible to take place throughout the course of my fieldwork

and the Markopoulos families, the male heads had passed away and another extended family, the Anastasiou, was a small family. Finally, the members of the Ioannou extended family travelled a lot throughout my fieldwork year and stayed for an extended period of time in Aetoliko. Therefore, I considered the cases of the Petridis and Christopoulos families as the most representative ones for the analysis of kinship and genealogies. Nevertheless, it should be noted here, that the Markopoulos, Theodorou, Ioannou and Anastasiou extended families are not absent from the description.

Each extended family had been driven to the settlement by different externally imposed factors. For example, the brother-sister bond between Alexis, the male head of the Christopoulos extended family and Varvara, the female head of the Petridis family did not seem to be especially significant in defining the content and meaning of the relationships between the two families. Although the relationship between the two extended families had not been affected by any major incident, there was a clear line both in symbolical and practical terms that divided their members into two different units. And even though both parties frequently mentioned the fact that they were related through this brother/sister bond, given the chance they would also make clear that this bond would not in itself justify or evoke any special relation or alliance in terms of everyday activities. Evgenia explained the incident that prompted her to invite her brother-in-law's family (the Petridis extended family) to live next to them, also stressing the importance of socialising among different extended families:

“They [the Petridis extended family] used to live in a house and one day they were evicted. I felt sorry for them and I thought it would be nice to have them here next to us. It is nice to have two-three neighbours to say a nice word everyday. isn't it? After all, there was enough space for everybody. It was quiet here and the people from the neighbourhood had always been good to us, we never had any problems with them. So, when Varvara and her husband were looking for a place to build their shelter, I told them: Why don't you come to stay next to us? And they came. Then their sons brought their families here and later on their daughter, Katerina, with her family moved here as well. It was only much later that they [the rest of the families] came.”

year. Therefore, rather than developing a large number of superficial relationships with the members of the different households in *Gitonia*, I decided to concentrate on a smaller number of households and take active part in the relationships and everyday activities of their members.

One should, therefore, be very careful in examining kinship relations within the framework of this specific settlement. In fact, looking at such relations at the level of the settlement would be misleading, since the choice of this specific place as a living space by each family has been prompted by different factors at different times and has been in a sense coincidental. For this reason, the centre of analysis in the exploration of kinship dynamics should be concentrated in the first instance at the level of each extended family. But we should not lose sight of the kinship bonds that extend further than the extended family that have been a defining factor for the configuration of the twenty two households and the organisation of social life in *Gitonia*.

The Extended Families—Some Examples

These sets of relationships that define extended families derive from a patrifocal form of descent, or patrifocal relations, consolidated through a virilocal form of residence, bringing the male members of a family with their married or unmarried children together under their parents' leadership. Although the extended kin relatedness is premised on reciprocities and interdependencies among its members, it is also strongly hierarchical.

For instance, as the genealogies demonstrate (Fig. 6.2), grandfather and grandmother Christopoulos had three sons: Michalis, Giorgos and Lefteris. The eldest, Michalis, was around forty years old and lived with his wife Anastasia and their three sons Thomas, Aristides and Pavlos. Their daughter, Athina, who was twenty one years old, married Xenophon two years earlier and moved permanently to Crete with her parents-in-law. Thomas married at the age of seventeen and since then has lived, albeit temporarily, at his parent's house with his wife Anthi (see chapter 5). Also living in the house was Aristides, who was sixteen years old and recently engaged, as well as his younger brother Pavlos, who was thirteen. The second son of the extended family, Giorgos, who was thirty five years old, as already discussed, was married for a second time to the Albanian Gypsy Marina. Together they had a daughter, Areti, who was two and a half years old. Lefteris, the youngest son, thirty years of age, was married to Vasiliki and had a one and a half year-old son, Michalis.

The heads of the second extended family were Antonis and his wife, Varvara (Fig. 6.3). They had four children: three sons and one daughter, all of them married with children. The eldest of the siblings, Aggelos, was married to Maria and had a twenty one year-old daughter, Elpida, who had recently married Kiriakos (see chapter 5). She left *Gitonia* in order to live with her husband Kiriakos in Spata. The second son, Andreas, was married to Irini and they had three children: Chrisi, nineteen, who married Theodoros two years ago and lived in Santorini, Thanos, who was fourteen and engaged, and Haris, who was ten and who like his brother Thanos lived with their parents. The daughter, Katerina, although married to Theofilos with whom she had two boys, Manolis, nine, and Stelios, six, paradoxically lived with her family close to her parents' house instead of living with her parents-in-law. This was because Theofilos left his family in Crete when he was young in order to find a job in Athens and when he married he decided to live with his wife and her extended family. Finally, Fanis, the youngest son of the family was married to Aspasia and they had two young daughters, Xanthi and Efi, four years old and six months old respectively.

Hierarchies, Power Relations and Solidarity within the Extended Family

Stewart (1999) asserts that daily activities among the Hungarian Rom “seemed to express a desire to render permeable the walls of the household and suggest that Gypsies should be open to one another independently of their household ties” (1999: 40–41). In addition, Stewart (1997) demonstrates how the act of sharing plays a crucial role in defining a sense of collective belonging and in shaping egalitarian relationships among the Hungarian Rom.

As far as the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* are concerned, household activities such as cooking, eating and sleeping took place almost exclusively within the same extended family. In fact, everyday language and practices among the Greek Gypsies verify that there were no barriers among the extended family's households. However, in contrast to Stewart's Hungarian Rom, barriers did exist among the households of different extended families. As already shown in chapter 5, intra-family relations among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* were constructed through monetary and gift exchanges rather than through the emphasis on the ritualistic processes of sharing among the members of different extended families. And as

we shall see in the following chapter, relatedness at the level of the extended family is primarily constructed and reconstructed through the undertaking of age and gender-based roles which involves hierarchies and solidarities within the extended *nikokirio*.

Franklin and McKinnon (2001: 15) suggest that “kinship can be mobilised to signify not only specific kinds of connection and inclusion but also specific kinds of disconnection and exclusion.” In fact, although members of the same extended family could eat, drink and sleep in the different households of the family, a common practice especially for children, non-family members were not particularly welcome in such activities. As forty-year-old Michalis explained: “Each extended family cares for its own members.”

The importance of permeating the extended households’ barriers is very obvious in the case of family conflicts. As we shall see in the forthcoming paragraphs, conflicts are not rare within extended families. Nevertheless, arguments and quarrels among individuals do not preclude supportive relations towards the rest of the members of the extended family or the undertaking of activities, such as cooking, eating and sleeping within different households. For example, Marina, Anastasia, Vasiliki, the three daughters-in-law of the Christopoulos extended family, and Evgenia, their mother-in-law, kept cooking for each other and taking good care of each other’s family members even during intra-family quarrels.

In the case of *Gitonia*’s Gypsies, as we shall also see in the following chapter, there is considerable tension between the ways in which individuality is pursued and the degree to which the moral obligation of performing relatedness among kin members is fulfilled within a context of family hierarchies and power negotiation. This seems to be both permanently hard work and a defining factor for establishing, affirming and reaffirming extended family hierarchies and relations. Individuals who fail to balance their individual expression with the morality of relatedness, as often happens with drug addicts, are strongly criticised by the extended family members and largely excluded from the family’s hierarchies and power negotiations.

Despite the fact that all extended families in *Gitonia* had a similar structure, each of them had its own functioning code and its associated ethics depending on its members’ individual wishes. The distinctive character of each family was

demonstrated through processes of inclusion/exclusion in all aspects of everyday life (work patterns, domestic activities and parenting). However, as with Stewart's Hungarian Rom, the absence of a specific overarching structure and a representative or leader at the community level suggests the existence of egalitarian relationships among the community's constitutive parts, which are the extended families. But at the level of the extended family there are clear hierarchies in place.

The head of each extended family is the eldest male. Second in the hierarchy comes the eldest female. The male head's authority is premised on three principal aspects: a) the patrifocal family patterns on which the Greek Gypsy kinship code is based b) his parenting experience and c) the importance of the male head's economic role in the family. In practice, these aspects constitute the male head as the representative of the family towards both other Gypsies as well as the non-Gypsies. The female head's authority is mainly premised on her parenting experience and her central role in the cultural reproduction of kinship relatedness.⁶ But both male and female heads play a role as the gatekeepers of Greek Gypsy morality. Male heads engage themselves with the reputation and honour of the family towards non-family members, while female ones, with the preservation of the precious Greek Gypsy moral standards within the family.

The female head's position within the extended family empowers her with a considerable degree of authority and supports her involvement in internal family relations as well as the family members' personal lives. In particular, female heads exert control upon the lives of their sons and their families. This form of control tends to diminish as the sons get older but does not actually disappear as long as they stay close to their parents. Inevitably, a female head's control over her son(s)' familie(s) becomes the source of constant misunderstandings and conflicts with her daughter(s)-in-law.⁷

Next in the extended family hierarchy after the eldest male and female comes their eldest son. If the eldest male of the extended family is deceased, as was the

⁶ Regarding the central role of women in the cultural reproduction of kinship, there are important continuities between other ethnographic examples on Greece and the case of the Greek Gypsies. For example, Dubisch (1991: 38) stresses that women in Greece "play an important role as the organisers of social interactions between families."

⁷ The problematic relationship between mother and daughter-in-law in Greece has also been pointed out by Dubisch (1991) and Danforth. (1991, 1983).

case for the Theodorou and Markopoulos families, normally the eldest son takes over the leadership of the family, while the widow retains her leading position among the women of the extended family. Alexandra and Ifigenia from the Markopoulos and the Theodorou families were two widows who performed a strong leadership as female heads in their families. If there is not a male child in a nuclear family, hierarchical relationships based on order of birth apply to female siblings. However, in this occasion, the nuclear family cannot constitute the basis for an extended family organisation in the future, since all women will gradually leave their parents' family and will move into their parents-in-law extended families. This probably explains why although couples favoured young girls, they nevertheless repeatedly emphasised the importance of giving birth to boys.

The structure of the families' houses is indicative of the eldest couple's and the eldest male son's power in the extended family hierarchy. In both the Christopoulos and the Petridis extended families, the houses of the parents and their eldest son are attached in such a way that they make an angle and share a common yard (Fig. 6.1). The Christopoulos family grandparent's house (1a) is built between Michalis' (1b) and Giorgos' (1c) family houses, the first and the second sons respectively. However, Michalis' house makes an angle with his parent's one while Giorgos' is built a couple of metres away from it. Lefteris, the youngest son's house (1d) is completely detached from his parents' house and is built a few metres behind Giorgos'. A similar structure applies to the Petridis extended family. Indeed, the house of the oldest brother (2b), Aggelos, is attached vertically to his parent's house (2a) that again is built between the houses of the elder sons, Aggelos (2b) and Andreas (2c). Andreas' house, however, is a few metres away from the head's house. The houses of their daughter, Katerina (2e) and their youngest son, Fanis (2d) are built behind those of the parents and the two elder brothers.

The oldest son gradually substitutes his father in the decision-making process concerning family business. As the mapping of the families' houses shows, the second son seems to come next in the hierarchy supporting his elder brother both in the decision making process and the family's economic activity. However, after the first and second elder sons the hierarchy of the family is not so clearly marked. Whilst for the two elder sons hierarchies are given, for their younger siblings they must be achieved. The establishment of their position in the hierarchy depends

largely on individual expression in the context of kin relatedness and the performance of *Greek-Gypsiness*.

The same applies to the women of the family. In other words, only the roles of the eldest couple and their two eldest sons are clearly defined by the more 'objective' criteria which are age and order of birth. The rest of the members, both men and women, try to establish their position within the family through more 'subjective' manifestations of *Greek-Gypsiness*, such as: a) respect of kinship code, b) contribution to the family income, c) parenting, etc. This is obviously hard work which entails the possibility of failure, particularly in relation to men whose hierarchical position in the extended family is not clearly demarcated. For example, the lack of clearly defined hierarchical roles for the youngest male siblings both in the Petridis and the Christopoulos extended families resulted in their addiction to drugs.

Negotiating Power within the Extended Family: Female Heads and Daughters-In-Law

In many cases, young married women considered their mother-in-law's imposition as an intrusion into their households and families. Elder women, by contrast, viewed their daughters-in-law' attitude towards them as lacking the appropriate standard of respect.

Evgenia, the female head of the Christopoulos family, admitted to me that young women today are very disobedient and disrespectful compared to her generation. Her words reveal not only a big generational difference but also a constantly changing process of negotiating power and authority:

“When I got married and I went to live with my mother-in-law, you don't know what I went through ... I was not even allowed to talk to my mother. She was passing outside of my home and I was turning my head to the other side full of tears ... My mother, my own mother and I couldn't talk to her! Those days, we were afraid of our mothers-in-law, we couldn't even set our eyes on them, we were always looking down when they were talking to us. Nowadays, these women have dirty mouths, you tell them something for their own good and they open their mouth and swear at you ... You don't dare tell them a word anymore ...”

During my fieldwork, Evgenia did not speak at all with two of her three daughters-in-law. While throughout the first months of my fieldwork she had a

pretty good relationship with Marina, the Albanian Gypsy wife of her second son Giorgos and her youngest daughter-in-law, a couple of months later they too stopped speaking to each other due to an argument. Marina considered that her mother-in-law was over-influencing her husband, in a way that was disgraceful both for him and for her:

“I don’t respect him if he acts like this because he is not a man in his family. He always listens to his mother. We say something together and he agrees, then she comes and says something else and he forgets what we had agreed! Where am I then? He doesn’t respect his wife! So, I told him either me or her!”

Although Marina was aware that such a threat would be far more than she could handle, she was attempting to renegotiate her position within the family. “I’m fooling them Ivi, because I’ve suffered enough, I won’t take it that far but I want them to see that I count here.” Breaking off a relationship means that the two sides do not exchange a single word, except for weddings and major Christian celebrations (Christmas, Easter, Saint Mary’s Assumption Day). However, as already mentioned, both sides keep on undertaking their duties as normal towards the rest of the extended family members.

Interestingly, the male head of the family, Alexis, kept a more neutral position in this dispute. Even though he did not openly disagree with his wife and seemed to support her in our discussions about her attitude towards his daughter-in-law, he did not break off his relationship with Marina. He kept talking to Marina as if nothing had happened and she kept on taking good care of him. In fact, he dealt with the problem from a safe distance. “I’m not worried, Marina is just playing her part and she will calm down in a while”, he said to me.

Varvara, the female head of the Petridis extended family, on the other hand, seemed to have a much better relationship with her three daughters-in-law at the time of my fieldwork. However, as Evgenia told me, Varvara’s daughter-in-law Maria, who was the wife of her eldest son, had suffered a lot because of her mother-in-law (Varvara) in the past:

“When she first got married, Varvara had an argument with Maria and threw her out of the house ... She had nowhere to go and she was standing hungry at the corner just across the main road. I was secretly bringing her food every day. I’m telling you she has suffered a lot.”

Anastasia confirmed her mother-in-law's words, also making an important observation. That mothers-in-law loosen the pressure they put on their daughters-in-law as the daughters-in-law get older and as they become more experienced as mothers:

"All her daughters-in-law are experienced mothers, except for Aspasia, who is still young. So, she has calmed down a bit. And, most importantly, she has her daughter Katerina next to her and she doesn't care much about them."

Hierarchies and Power Relations in the Household Unit

Within the household, hierarchies take a similar but less complicated form than in the extended family. What is more, hierarchies at the level of the household are more fluid and negotiable than at the level of the extended family. However, the ways hierarchies and power relations are negotiated among the members of each nuclear family is closely associated with the individual members' status and position within the extended family.

As the majority of women openly admit, it is the man who has—and should have—the leading role in the household. Antigoni, the female head of the Anastasiou extended family put forward her view on the man's role in the household:

"The man is the pillar of the family. He works hard for his family and, therefore, when he comes home he should get the respect he deserves. And if he says a word he shouldn't, the woman has to pretend she didn't hear it. Do you know that I, even now, after so many years we've been together with my husband, when he raises his voice, I'm sorry but ... I'm shaking."

This is a view that is generally shared by the rest of the married women, young and old. For example, shortly after her wedding, seventeen-year-old Anthi confessed that when Thomas, her husband, raised his voice, she was so distressed that this had an immediate impact on her health.

The man's leading position within the household derives from the authority conferred by the patrifocal system of genealogies and patterns of residence that grant him a considerable network of support within the extended family as well as from the importance of the male's economic role within the household unit. As already demonstrated, after marriage, young male members will continue to live

and work with their families. On the contrary, women have to leave their own families and move into their husband's household. At the stage that the new couple feels ready to set up an independent household, they will build their own house next to the husband's parents.

Moving out of the parents-in-law's house will give the woman a substantial degree of independence as far as her household and her privacy is concerned. This seems to be the starting point of what I call 'a domestic career', which she has been long trained for in her own family in order to practice in her husband's family after her marriage. A woman's 'domestic career' also involves an enduring struggle of power negotiation which will enable her gradually to establish herself in the extended family. However, her 'career' is not a promising one unless she experiences motherhood.

It is not rare among young women about to get married, as well as the newly weds, to get extremely stressed about their future in their parents-in-law's family. At the time of Elpida's wedding preparations, she suffered from severe symptoms of anxiety and stress that her parents had to take her to hospital. Elpida admitted to me that she was scared of taking this big step in her life:

"I'm not afraid of my life with my husband ... I'm worried about his family and my duties towards them. I hope I'll get pregnant soon, so that I can earn their respect more quickly ..."

Her married female relatives were trying to calm her down by repeatedly saying that they all had been through this stage in their lives and as soon as she had her first baby everything would be much easier for her.

Indeed, for as long as a married woman remains childless, her position in the household as well as in the wider family context seems insecure and unstable. As in other Greek contexts (Hirschon, 1993a; du Boulay, 1986), full status as a woman requires motherhood. However, what determines a woman's position in her family, as will be extensively analysed later on, is not actually the biological act of giving birth to a child but rather the successful performance of motherhood according to Greek Gypsy standards. This confers the additional credentials to the mother as far as her position in the family is concerned.

But having children, does not mean that the woman can give up the fight to maintain her position in the family. Aspasia, the mother of two girls described this

effort as “exhausting” and “energy consuming” but she confessed at the same time that through these efforts she has reached “a considerable degree of independence and respect.” Other young married wives agreed with her. For instance, according to Vasiliki, “this fight never ends as long as you are part of your husband’s family, it only becomes easier as you get older.”

Negotiating Hierarchies in the Household Unit; Negotiating a Position in the Extended Family

In this patrifocal family, women learn progressively to deploy their abilities for combating their submissive position. In many occasions, married women become capable of exerting not simply innovative tactics of resistance but also of taking the upper hand and give radical solutions if they think their position in the family has been underestimated. In most cases, women reach their aim by threatening to undermine the most important aspects of Greek Gypsy kinship relatedness, these aspects they normally support and transmit to their children.

The majority of women in *Gitonia*, except for Katerina who, significantly, lives with her family next to her own parents and not with her parents-in-law (see also page 223), have at least once in their married life left their home and their husband. In all cases, women admitted that they did so as a threat in order to gain some benefits as far as their relationship with their husband was concerned. Many women might also go as far as to maintain their threat until the man and his family seem ready to renegotiate.

Aspasia, for example, had left her husband, Fanis, for a year and a half and moved with her three-month-old baby girl, Xanthi, to her parents’ house. She only returned to her husband’s house after a long process of negotiations between them and their families resulted in mutually satisfactory agreement. Since then, she admits: “that he is the leader in the household, but she had managed to make her point.” In another case, Marina regularly threatened to abandon her husband, Giorgos, and take her little girl away if he did not support her more actively when his mother gave her a hard time. And indeed, she had left him for short periods, several times during my fieldwork. She had repeatedly admitted to me that leaving her home and her husband had been very difficult for her but as she said:

If you don't pose a threat to him, he will step over you. Threaten him, let him sleep alone for a while in order to see how sweet it is ... and he'll learn. Let him wonder where I sleep and what I do. Yes, I abandon him if I have to, but that's how I gain what I want. You know ... I'm strong enough to do this but the problem is always the children. When Areti starts asking for her father, I can't handle it and I know I have to come back home.

There were also cases of married couples in which the woman's economic role was much more important than the man's, as for example, in cases where the husband was a drug addict, sick, or very poor. In such cases, the woman could distance herself from her parents-in-law more easily and gradually impose her authority upon her husband. Vasiliki, the wife of Lefteris who was the youngest son of the Christopoulos extended family and a drug addict, had successfully managed to assume a leading role in her nuclear household and gain some degree of autonomy from her mother-in-law, Evgenia.

Women's negotiation of their position in the household and, consequently, in the extended family through the above mentioned tactics could cause a loss of balance in the traditional Greek Gypsy image of husband-wife relationship. Gossiping such as "she is the leader", "she wears the trousers" or "she has the upper hand" was a source of embarrassment for some couples in the settlement.⁸ However, women's ability to negotiate their position in their family and gradually gain a leading role applies both to the older and younger generation. The extent and degree to which this is happening successfully seem to be a matter of personality as well. For example, Evgenia, was thought to be a very strong woman within her family and the one who has the final word in many familial decisions. The same applied to her much younger daughters-in-law Marina and Vasiliki.

Nevertheless, when women argued with their husbands and decided to leave their home for a period of time, they were criticised by the rest of the women in *Gitonia*. The last time that Marina left her home, not only her parents-in-law and her husband's family but also the members of the other extended families commented negatively on her decision. Varvara argued: "She overdid it because she had already left her home many times and this is unacceptable for a married woman." And Varvara's daughter Katerina added that "She must have lost it ...

⁸ For more on gossiping [*koutsompolio*] in Greece see Delamont (1995), Zinovieff (1991), du Boulay (1986, 1974).

she is crazy for sure, or she sleeps with somebody else! She did it once, twice ... that's enough!" Although in general women acknowledged the difficult position in which other women might find themselves within the household, they also saw these attitudes as a threat to the Greek Gypsy moral code. Therefore, in those cases when women felt that such actions—which they might have also carried out at some stage in their own lives—would endanger the Greek Gypsy ethics, they deployed interesting mechanisms of condemnation and rejection.

Children, Hierarchies and Power Relations

The process of negotiating power in the framework of Greek Gypsy ethics within the household unit does not only affect the relationship between husband and wife. Hierarchies and, subsequently, relations of power are developed both between parents and children and among children themselves. Age and gender constitute the determining parameters in this process of power negotiation. From this perspective, children in *Gitonia* learn early on both to respect the existing code of behaviour and to enact hierarchical roles, gradually incorporating themselves into the system of family hierarchies and becoming familiar with the age and gender-based roles that these hierarchies entail.

Although children acknowledge their subordinate position in relation to their parents, they are capable of grasping and manipulating their fathers' and mothers' weaknesses and use them to succeed in their own goals and negotiate their own position in the family. For example, in those households where the woman seems to have a strong negotiating position, children are more disobedient towards the father than the mother. Marina admitted this about her two and a half-year-old daughter: "Areti doesn't listen to her father, whatever he says, no matter how angry he is, she doesn't care, she does what she wants. She knows it's me who has the upper hand here." And her husband Giorgos agreed: "Yes, I shout and she swears at me, she is only afraid of her mother ...". On the contrary, Xanthi, the four-year-old daughter of Aspasia and Fanis was only scared of her father as her mother explained: "Only her father can calm her down. He just looks at her and she freezes, but with me she doesn't care!"

In many cases, mothers take advantage of the—at least in theory—stronger position of their husbands in the family by transferring to them the responsibility

of resolving children's problems. However, if the man fails to succeed, women may question his authority. Simultaneously, children would grasp this opportunity in order to impose themselves upon the father and succeed in their goals. For example, Katerina often called on her husband, Theofilos, to prevent her nine-year-old son Manolis from doing something she didn't agree with. But he always failed to convince him. Indeed, he once explained to me: "He doesn't listen no matter what I say, but I cannot raise my hand to the children, Ivi, it's a shame, isn't it?"⁹ Katerina, however, grasped the chance to make her ironic comment in front of me. "He cannot take up his role correctly." And Manolis confidently added that since his father had failed to convince him he was free to do what he wanted: "Nobody can tell me what to do, so, I'm going ..."

As we shall see in the following paragraphs, children learn to perform parenting roles both in the household with their younger siblings as well as in the wider extended family with their younger cousins. The older child, whether male or female, is responsible for the well-being of his/her younger siblings. The undertaking of this responsibility constitutes a substantial source of power for the older child towards his or her younger siblings that, simultaneously, evokes a set of expectations on both sides. Such expectations, however, are strongly influenced by the gender of the children, determining both the form and the extent of the hierarchical relationships among children.

Parenting in the Extended Family

Male and Female Parenting Roles

The men of the extended family undertake those parenting roles that primarily ensure the wellbeing of the family and extend beyond the nuclear household. Such roles are usually exemplified by a certain degree of economic activity in the form of support among brothers towards each other's family members. It is common, for example, for the elder male head as well as his older male children to financially support the younger members of the extended family. The importance of this kind of support among brothers is clearly demonstrated in work patterns

⁹ I never witnessed any form of physical punishment from parents towards their children. Indeed, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* often criticised the non-Gypsy Greek parents who, according to them, "they raise often a hand to their children."

and the marriage investment process as well as the high levels of participation in the upbringing and support that brothers offer to their siblings' children. Michalis, the eldest son of the Christopoulos extended family, not only took care of his wife Anastasia and their three unmarried sons, but also supported his brothers Giorgos and Pavlos along with their wives and children.

Michalis along with his father, as already described in chapter 5, was also pre-occupied with the reputation of the Christopoulos extended family within the settlement and in the wider Gypsy and non-Gypsy context. This responsibility meant that Michalis, as the elder male brother offered protection and support to the members of his extended family and also exerted a form of paternal moral guidance. This was obvious in the ways the children of the extended family were continuously instructed by their parents to honour and respect their elder uncle.

For example, Marina and Giorgos, the parents of two and a half-year-old Areti often intimidated their disobedient daughter by telling her that her behaviour would infuriate her uncle Michalis. Marina shouted at her once when she refused to put on her underwear: "If your uncle sees you like that you know you are in big trouble, eh? Do you have the guts to go like that to his house and dishonour him?" Areti herself confessed to me: "Ohhh, uncle is shouting at me. I'm scared ... where is my underwear?" On another occasion, Marina pointed out to me how much her brother-in-law affected hers and her husbands' lives:

"I always have to think how to dress here. Not that I have a particular problem with my husband in the way I dress but I have to be careful with Michalis. Giorgos [her husband] always tells me not to wear clothes that his brother wouldn't approve of."

Thus, parenting roles are more clearly defined and straight forward for men than for women. For the women of *Gitonia*, the enactment of parenting roles after marriage will be transferred from their parents' extended family to that of their husband's. Through marriage the patrifocal form of family organisation becomes the moral base on which the degree of performativity of maternal roles - which transcend pure biological bonds—both with her children as well as with her nieces and nephews is what practically underpins this process of inclusion.

Women therefore undertake a dual responsibility: they fulfil parenting duties within their own extended family before marriage and after marriage they take on the role of mother to their own children and the children of their husbands'

brothers in the parents-in-law extended family. While the process of performing kin related roles by women within the parents-in-law extended family takes shape and intensifies, a reverse process of distancing from such roles within their parents' family shifts the organic position of women from the second to the first extended family.

As also described in chapter 5, the wedding signifies the process of initiation of an intra-family socio-economic alliance between the families of the groom and the bride. After the wedding, the bond between the girl and her biological extended family transforms into the symbolic union between two different extended families. Simultaneously, the bond between the married woman and her biological family takes on a more distant character and it is activated if and when, the woman's family judge there is a need for them to intervene.

Athina's relationship with her parent's family (the Christopoulos extended family) since her marriage, is illustrative of the relationships between married women and their parents' extended families. As her grandparents admitted, Athina had been everybody's favourite child in her parents' family before she married. Her grandmother described the way she cried on Athina's wedding day: "I couldn't breathe Ivi, I swear to God, I couldn't, I was losing her ...". Anastasia, her mother, suffered from high blood pressure since her daughter left home. She was convinced that her daughter's absence was the cause of her health problems.

Twenty one-year-old Athina married twenty-two year-old Xenophon from Nea Alikarnasso the year before my fieldwork and soon after the wedding moved to the island of Crete to live with her parents-in-law. Since the wedding, Xenophon had worked with his father as a vendor in Crete but every couple of months he returned to Athens with his wife and Mina, their little girl. The reason for their regular visits to Athens was to enable the couple to provide themselves with the seasonal products that Xenophon and his family sold on the island. Of course, in Athens, the couple stayed in *Gitonia* at Athina's house. Athina's example shows that the woman's family does not actually 'lose' its female member after marriage as Evgenia described above. In fact, during the year of my fieldwork, the couple visited Athens six times. In addition, they stayed for an extended period of time for Thomas' wedding preparations (see chapter 5).

However, the fact that every time she left Evgenia said: "Now, who knows when she is coming back again" indicates that the grandmother's feeling of 'loss'

is associated with Athina's absence from everyday life. The feeling of loss also reflects the shortfall of labour that resulted from Athina's absence which was replaced by the parenting roles she had to take up in her husband's family. Marina portrayed her awkward feelings towards her sister-in-law—and best friend—Athina since she got married:

“Nothing happened but we hardly talk to each other any more, it is not as it used to be. With her, before you came here, we used to do everything together, but now we feel like strangers. I don't even know how to approach her and I think she also has the same feelings towards me. That is why we avoid talking to each other. I'm telling you, as soon as a woman gets married she changes completely. All of us. Not even a single woman can escape this change. Only in her first visits Athina was asking me:

“Tell me Marina, are my mother and my grandmother sad about me? Do they miss me a lot? Or have they forgotten me? After a few months she didn't come back to ask anymore, she got so busy in her new family that she didn't have time to think about us here.” ”

The Parent-Child Relationship

At the time of fieldwork, I noticed that the pregnancies of two women in *Gitonia*, Aspasia and Marina, did not evoke any particular feeling or attention by their families, their husbands or even themselves. Marina claimed that: “I don't feel anything about the baby and I won't until it is born.” Giorgos, her husband, also seemed indifferent. When I asked him how he felt about it he laughed: “To feel what and about what? I don't understand ...” When she was in the fourth month of her pregnancy I accompanied her to the gynaecologist in order to have an ultrasound test. I was struck by the fact that nobody else in the family—including her husband—paid attention to this visit. While we were waiting for our turn, I asked her if she was worried and she replied:

“I told you a hundred times, I don't care about it, how would I care for something I don't know? You love somebody when you get to know him, over time, when you care about him, not like that, don't you think? The only thing I pray for is that the baby will be healthy and nothing more, because an unhealthy baby would cause me more problems in my life in the family. That's why I'm coming to the doctor, because the doctor can tell you if the baby has a problem, otherwise there is no need to come here and pay so much money.”

As Marina's words indicate, the parent-child bond both for the mother and the father circumvents the biological process and flourishes through the development of the specific relationship of giving and caring. Biology, however, seems to be important in the case of an unhealthy baby. Interestingly, Marina links this unfortunate possibility with a more demanding and probably unfamiliar parenting role that should be performed within the extended family. Biology, in this case, makes the enactment of motherhood an even more difficult task than if she had a healthy baby. This is because with an unhealthy baby she finds it difficult to perform motherhood. She confirmed this by giving an example of a relative:

“There is a relative who has a disabled little girl. She is seven and she can't do anything alone. She can't walk and she can't talk. She always needs her mother next to her. And the mother can't do anything else apart from looking after her. She can't look after her household properly. she can't take good care of the rest of her children. She doesn't have a normal life.”

The parent-child bond presupposes a family environment that must be compatible with the Gypsy kinship code in order to flourish. This explains why women are most likely to give up their newborn baby to another family to raise, in the case they separate from their husbands during pregnancy and decide they want to remarry. Marina and her younger sister Sonia, who were Albanian Gypsies but were both married to Greek Gypsies, were two young women who had to go through this process under pressure from their family after their first marriage collapsed. In the following paragraph Marina explains the reasons she and her sister had to give up their babies:

“My first daughter was beautiful like an angel and Lena [her oldest sister] let me breastfeed her for a few weeks and then she took her away from me. She gave her to a couple. I don't know who these people are. she wouldn't tell me and still I don't know where she is. But it is much better this way. let's face it. even the best husband in the world would not be able to love the child that his wife had with another man. Even if this happens with your new husband for sure it is not going to happen with his family. And I would hate myself if one day somebody from the family turned out to be beating my baby. Do you think my parents in law would love her the same way they love Areti? No way! So it was the best thing to do. and now God gave me Areti and all my love goes to her. so I don't think about the other girl. The same happened with Sonia. you saw that when it happened. She left her husband when she was pregnant and she didn't want to go back to him. She found another man to remarry

and she left the baby to me to breastfeed it for six months.¹⁰ Then we decided with Lena to give it to them [a young married couple from the Theodorou extended family]. That's very nice because they adore the baby! And besides it's just next door and I can see it everyday. But it was more difficult for me than for her to get separated from the baby because I breastfed it and I lived longer with it, while she lived with it only for a couple of days."

In Marina's words we encounter an interesting contradiction that proves once again the centrality of performing parenthood. Greek Gypsies give up and adopt babies for the same reason: to ensure that parenthood will be performed according to the appropriate moral standards within the extended family. Both in biological and non-biological parent-child relationships it is the ongoing performativity of parenthood that makes parenting valid. When I asked Marina, if she had ever thought of trying to trace her first daughter, she got very annoyed:

"What? She has parents who love her now. What would I mean to her and what would she mean to me? Nothing! No, this is not right."

Marina's account also demonstrates that biological acts alone are not enough to affirm kinship relatedness. Although she admitted that the process of breastfeeding her sister's baby enabled her to develop a closer bond with the baby, she also emphasised that it was not the act of breastfeeding *per se* but breastfeeding for such a long period of time that enabled this bond to flourish. In other words, whilst this example suggests that there is an association between the biological process of breastfeeding, substance or nurture and relatedness, it also demonstrates that this process alone is not enough to evoke claims of relatedness, unless it is repeatedly performed. This also comes to be verified by the fact that Marina occasionally breastfed other babies from the settlement (such as Michalis and Efi) when their mothers were away for work, without this producing any further connotations of relatedness.

In the following account of her personal experience when she gave birth to Efi, Aspasia sheds more light to the performative dimension of relatedness and stresses its importance for the father-child relationship:

¹⁰ Although Areti was two and a half-years-old, Marina continued to breastfeed her. Therefore she could also breastfeed her sister's baby.

“When I was pregnant, my husband wanted us give up the baby and in return get some money for the family. To tell you the truth, I didn’t want to do it because I knew deep inside that the money would not go for the family but for these dirty things [meaning drugs].¹¹ When I gave birth to Efi, he came to the hospital and we had a big fight. He insisted on giving up the baby but I refused. After a couple of months, I was so disappointed from my life at that time, from our poverty and my husband that I thought it would be better to give up the baby for its own good. But when I told that my husband he became furious! He started swearing at me: “Now, bitch that we’ve loved the baby and she understands and recognises us you want to sell it? Don’t you dare touch the baby!” Now, you know how much he loves her. At that time, I even called my father crying because I didn’t know what to do. And my father swore over the phone: “I’ll come to kill you with my own hands if you give up the girl now that she understands.” ”

Ethnographic data reveal that just as *Gitonia’s* Gypsies may give up a newborn baby for its own sake, they may also offer protection and support to a non-family baby. It is not rare for related or non-related Gypsy families to take a baby under their protection and bring it up as if it were their own.

Such an example provided the case of Stefanos, a non-Gypsy Greek man of around thirty years of age who lived most of his life in *Gitonia*. Since I started my fieldwork I thought of Stefanos as a Gypsy until I looked into the families’ genealogies. Strikingly, nobody from *Gitonia* had ever mentioned that Stefanos was not born a Gypsy. On the contrary, he was treated as one of the Petridis extended family. Evgenia explained to me how Stefanos came to be seen as one of the members of *Gitonia*:

“Stefanos is not one of ‘ours’ but one of ‘yours’. He grew up in the shacks although his parents lived just 500 metres away from us and they were well-off. I don’t know why but since he was a little boy he always preferred to be here. Every now and then his parents—very nice people—used to come to look for him here, they wanted to take him back home, but a few days later Stefanos was back in the settlement. He used to sleep and eat here and there in our houses and work with us. And he has given all his money for the Gypsies, especially for them [the Petridis extended family]. Everybody loves him. Stefanos is an exceptional man.”

The centrality of parenthood is particularly obvious in the cases where a couple can’t have children. Here, in contrast to the previous case, the biological fact of

¹¹ Her husband was a drug addict.

pregnancy seems to be of extreme importance not only for the woman but also for her husband and the rest of her family, suggesting that even within the same culture the same biological fact may produce extremely different cultural explanations depending on the context (Franklin, 2001). It is almost certain that women who have not become mothers will face a lot of pressure from their in-laws' family. This pressure is basically reflected in young women's fear of not being able to become pregnant after marriage. Irini, the mother of nineteen-year-old Chrisi, who got married with Theodoros two years ago and still hadn't become pregnant, explained to me how stressed her daughter was about that. "She has driven us all crazy, Ivi, she is very worried, all the time she talks about that." Chrisi, who was listening to us said: "Of course I'm worried, I've been married for two years and I haven't got a baby. My in-laws started looking at me suspiciously ...". Apart from Chrisi, there was no other married woman in the settlement without a baby. Marina, however, confessed to me that for two years after her marriage to Giorgos she couldn't become pregnant and this made her life in his family extremely difficult.

"For as long as I didn't have a baby, for two years, my life was a hell here. I couldn't say anything ... Giorgos wanted a baby desperately, and this was very stressful for me. When Areti was born everything changed. Thank God!"

'Extended' Parenting

The extended family members openly express a special attachment to a specific child. This is either the newborn child—or the youngest female child of the family. This sort of attachment is particularly exemplified by the grandparents' attitude towards their favourite grandchild. The gender aspect that underpins this sort of relationship and favours the female children is obvious in both extended families. For instance, when I asked Varvara, the grandmother of the Petridis extended family, which of her grandchildren was her favourite, she gave me the following reply: "They are all the same to me, I love them equally, but I admit that now the girl [implying Efi] is my big love ...".

Six-month-old Efi, the youngest member of the Petridis extended family was everybody's favourite child. At birth, Efi became the centre of attention for her parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as the rest of the family's

children. As soon as her aunts came home from work and had finished their household tasks, they anxiously waited for the baby to wake up in order to play with her in the grandmother's home.

Clearly, parents and relatives' attachment to a specific child is not permanent, suggesting that parenting relationships may also entail different degrees of performativity. Once, Efi's aunt, Katerina, confessed to me the way she felt about her, while holding her on her knees: "Ivi, it's so strange but now all my love goes to her, whereas before it was Xanthi [her four-year-old sister] that I favoured ... but now it's this one!" Xanthi was present when Katerina admitted the shift of her affection from her to her younger sister Efi. And she proudly hugged the baby completely aware of the fact that her aunts' statement signified that the period of her receiving unconditional love by the members of the family as the youngest child was over. From now onwards, she herself had to undertake the responsibility of enacting a form of parenting role for her sister Efi.

The grandparents of the Christopoulos family had six grandchildren (two female and four male) and one great-grandchild. The great-grandchild, Mina, was not even considered a member of the Petridis extended family, since she lived with her mother Athina in her parents-in-law extended family and not with them. The youngest grandchildren were two and a half-year-old Areti and one and a half-year-old Michalis. However, the centre of attention and everybody's favourite child was not the youngest boy Michalis but the girl Areti. Both grandparents did not hesitate to openly admit: "Before Athina [their oldest granddaughter] was my favourite grandchild, now it's Areti" Evgenia often repeated to me. And Alexis became very emotional when he talked about his granddaughters "I love her, Ivi, the same way I once loved Athina."

When Areti's mother, Marina, left her husband Giorgos after an argument and took the baby with her to her sister's home for two weeks, the grandparents grew anxious about losing Areti. Evgenia cried constantly saying that she had lost her interest in life since the day the baby had gone. "If she doesn't bring the girl back I'll die I swear to Virgin Mary!" One day while Marina was still away with the baby the family called me for a meeting and Alexis asked me to do them a favour:

"We decided that you should go to Lena's place to persuade her [Marina] to come back home. She loves you very much and she would be ashamed of you. Or at least

tell her to leave the girl with us to take care of and do whatever she wants with her life. We won't cause any trouble for her."

However, although I said I wouldn't mind going to talk to her, I suggested that Marina should come back home with her husband and not with me. Although the dispute was actually resolved a few days later when Giorgos went to ask her back, a similar mobilisation did not happen a few weeks later in the case of Vasiliki, their other daughter-in-law, who left her husband Lefteris with the baby Michalis. While I thought they would be horrified again about losing the boy, to my astonishment they weren't concerned. When I asked them if they missed him during the week he was gone Evgenia calmly said: "Mm, yes, but he should be fine with her parents, she'll be back. As long as we have Areti we are fine." And Alexis remained silent.

These parenting relationships function irrespectively of the quality of relationships among the adult members of the extended family. The most striking example comes from the Christopoulos extended family in which the relationships between Evgenia, the female head, and her daughters-in-law, as well as between the sisters-in-law themselves, were quite turbulent. But in fact, this tension affected neither the relationship between the grandmother and her grandchildren nor that between aunts and nieces or nephews. Marina affirmed that the problems she faced with Anastasia, her sister-in-law, had not changed the way she viewed her niece and nephews and admitted that this was also the case for Anastasia with regard to her daughter:

"Whatever happens it should stay between us and should not be transferred to the children. For example, I'll do whatever I can to support Thomas in his wedding as I did with Athina two years ago and I'll do the same for Aristides and Pavlos. I love them and it is not their fault that these arguments happened between us. And Anastasia does the same with Areti, she loves my baby so much, you know how well she looks after her."

Children Enacting Parenting Roles

Another important aspect of the Greek Gypsy parenting model is the parenting relationship between the older unmarried children and their younger siblings or cousins within the extended family. In that sense, sisterhood and brotherhood as well as relationships between cousins are also vested with a parental aspect.

Children soon learn to enact parental activities within the context of an age and gender-specific division of roles. Similarly to the adults, children form their own hierarchies both in the household and the extended family and take up roles that are intrinsically associated with this hierarchy.

As far as female children are concerned, they take on the responsibility of looking after their younger siblings as soon as they are five or six years old. Keeping an eye on younger children constantly constitutes one of their basic duties. Gradually, they also start carrying out activities such as preparing their siblings' food, changing their diapers, bathing them and putting them to bed. A few months before her engagement, twelve-year-old Nikoleta from the Theodorou extended family, talked to me about her relationship with her three-year-old brother Fotis:

“Since he was born, I’ve always been next to him. He doesn’t do anything without me. He doesn’t fall asleep if I don’t put him to bed. I’m like a mother to him. That’s why he is very attached to me and I to him!”

Like men, male children at the age of six or seven undertake the task of protecting the younger members of the family (siblings and cousins) from any form of external threat. At that stage, one of the key roles they take up is the representation and support of their younger siblings and cousins in the peer group. For example, nine-year-old Manolis and his ten-year-old cousin, Haris, were responsible for this role in the Petridis extended family. Indeed, their parents and aunts expected them to keep the rest of the family’s children safe.

In one of our teaching sessions, eight-year-old Albanian Gypsy Dinos showed up in *Gitonia*'s yard and asked to take part in the session. And while all the children objected loudly to his and my request, they suddenly all turned to Manolis for his response. He thought for a second and then said: “No, let him stay, I know him, he is a good boy, we played football together.” And immediately the rest of the children quietly accepted his decision. On a similar occasion, Manolis prevented seven-year-old Albanian Gypsy Anna from staying with us in the lesson and he accompanied her himself outside of his yard. He justified his action by saying that “her father threatens us when we are playing in his yard and my father would not like her here now either.”

Until the age of twelve to thirteen, when they get more seriously engaged with the economic activities and household tasks, children have considerable amount of free time to socialise with other children outside of their extended family environment. In most cases, children's peers are members of different extended families from the settlement or the surrounding settlements (who may also be relatives). However, even within the peer group, children build up their hierarchies in ways that include parenting roles.

Nikoleta and her cousin Kalliope, both aged twelve, had a leading supervisory and maternal role within the children's peer group in *Gitonia*. They kept the children's mothers and aunts regularly informed about where their children were playing and what they were doing. They were also the ones who took the initiative of peacefully resolving the fights among the children trying at the same time to be as sensible and fair as they could. In return, their younger cousins seemed to accept their leadership role and respect their decisions. On the other hand, eleven-year-old Dimitris from the Theodorou extended family was the one who had the responsibility of protecting the peer group from threats posed by non-settlement children. For the majority of the male and female children, Dimitris was very successful in his role. As Manolis confessed to me: "Dimitris is brave and clever! He is not afraid of the *Alvanakia* [meaning the Albanian Gypsy children]. He hits whoever tries to do something bad to us. He also organises good football games. I think he deserves the leadership."

Although young children have considerable space for forming their own circle of supportive relationships even with children from other extended families, these relationships tend to become weaker as the children grow up. This seems to be similar to Campbell's (1964) suggestion that among the Sarakatsani, the virilocal pastoralist community of northwest Greece, conceptions of kinship and relatedness seem to prevail over those of friendship and relatedness in all aspects of the community's social life. In fact, in the case of the Greek Gypsies, as children get older their interaction with non-family members diminishes and the bond with their peer group becomes looser, because of the load of responsibilities they increasingly undertake.

Female children, especially as they reach the age of engagement, tend to distance themselves from their peer group. During the last month of my fieldwork, when twelve-year-old Nikoleta got engaged and started the regular visits to her

parents-in-law's house, she left her cousin and best friend Kalliope, also twelve, without her company. When I once saw Kalliope bored, all by herself, I asked her: "What are you doing going like this up and down? Is it because you lost your friend and you feel alone now?" But she replied to me quite upset: "I don't fucking care about her, she can do whatever she wants!" So I went on teasing her: "Come on don't get angry, you have to find a man like her in order to keep yourself busy" and she hugged me almost in tears saying: "Me a man, no way, are you crazy? I have my friends, I don't need a man!"

The peer group, however, is not simply about social interaction. Within the peer group children/members of the same extended family learn to support and protect each other. As we have seen, it is everyday contact, interaction and constant proof of support that gives substance to the family bonds among the members of the extended families. Children are constantly encouraged by their parents and the older members of the family to prove their loyalty by offering their care and support primarily towards their younger siblings or cousins. In fact, children are expected to support their younger siblings or cousins both within their peer group in the settlement and outside of it. It is actually within the interactive relationships of the peer group that children learn to take over parenting roles towards the younger members of their extended family. Usually, parents do not interfere in children's quarrels unless they witness a physical attack against their child. In most cases, it is the older siblings or cousins who mediate in order to resolve a fight among children from different extended families.

Children of both sexes soon get involved in this process of support mobilisation among the members of the extended family and learn since they are young both its importance and the specific ways of enacting it. Through this active involvement children gradually become familiar with the wider process of dissolution among different extended families. Apart from its obvious practicality for the Greek Gypsy form of family organisation, the enactment of parenting roles by children signifies both the centrality of the extended family unit as well as the importance of 'extended' parenting relationships that keep this unit together.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter offered an insight into the ways the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* attribute meaning and weight to a specific form of kinship relatedness that privileges extended family patrifocal links which accentuate brotherly relations. It also explored the extent to which this relatedness is consolidated in performative relationships that affirm, on the one hand hierarchies and power relations and, on the other hand, love, loyalty, support, respect and cooperation among kin members.

As with Iñupiat or Yapese kinship, which are premised on ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’ (Bodenhorn, 2000), the performance of kinship relatedness among this particular group of Greek Gypsies seems to be a very demanding task “processually constituted through practice” (Thomas, 1999: 31). The experience of this demanding work which is evaluated on the basis of age and gender, creates different sorts of hierarchies (some more fluid and negotiable than others) and consolidates personhood. As in the case of the Gypsies of Madrid (Gay y Blasco, 1999),¹² individual and shared senses of belonging should be considered as mutually interdependent.

The emphasis on relatedness and performing in the context of kin relations does not preclude expressions of individuality. The co-existence of an important degree of individual autonomy with an enhanced sense of moral obligation among the members of *Gitonia* suggests that personal acts and, concomitantly conceptions of personhood, are entangled with a shared sense of what it means to be related as kin. In other words, personhood is evaluated on the basis of the individual’s ability to combine expressions of individuality with a kin-oriented performance of self. Individuals’ performance of personhood in the context of kin relatedness is inextricably bound with the specific ways in which the different extended families affirm their difference from one another, upholding simultaneously the distinctiveness of the Greek Gypsies as a group.

This chapter also dealt extensively with the form and shape of what I call parenting relationships within the extended family. The embodiment of multiple parenting roles constitutes the ground on which an extended family network of

¹² Gay Y Blasco has stressed about the Gypsies of Madrid that “each person sustains the worth of ‘the Gitanos’ as a whole” (1999: 177).

lifelong support will flourish and be sustained. Parenthood does not simply connote the relationship between parents and children but takes on broader sets of meanings in that the performance of parenting encompasses a multiplicity of age and gender specific roles enacted by different agents/members within the extended family. From this perspective, all the members of the extended family unit undertake parenting obligations while at the same time—except for the heads of the households—they in turn receive parenting care. Parenthood, and more specifically motherhood, constitute the inspiring source and reference point of these relationships of support. And it is the successful embodiment of these roles throughout the family member's life that primarily accredits personalities and establishes hierarchies within the extended family.

Finally, both hierarchical and parenting relationships are developed among children themselves. Children from different extended families start learning at an early stage the difference between being a friend/relative and a family member, whilst attaining their freedom to socialise according to their personal preferences outside of the extended family. Also aware of their own flexible position, children in many cases function (consciously or unconsciously) as regenerators of the differences between different extended families. In contrast, children connect families and construct relatedness within the extended kin network, even when disputes and conflicts take place.

What is more, children undertake parenting and hierarchical roles that extend beyond the younger members of their own extended family. But it is through this type of socialisation and the undertaking of parenting and hierarchical roles that children learn to affirm both their support to their family members as well as their belonging to a specific extended family unit. As they get older, however, the increasing load of family responsibilities leads to children's gradual distancing from the peer group and their greater devotion to their extended family.

This chapter underlined the most important characteristics of the Greek Gypsy family organisation in *Gitonia* and the centrality of performativity in constructing kin relatedness. This discussion provides the ground for the analysis of specific household tasks and income-generating activities and the understanding of how these constitute expressions of Greek Gypsy processes of becoming and belonging.

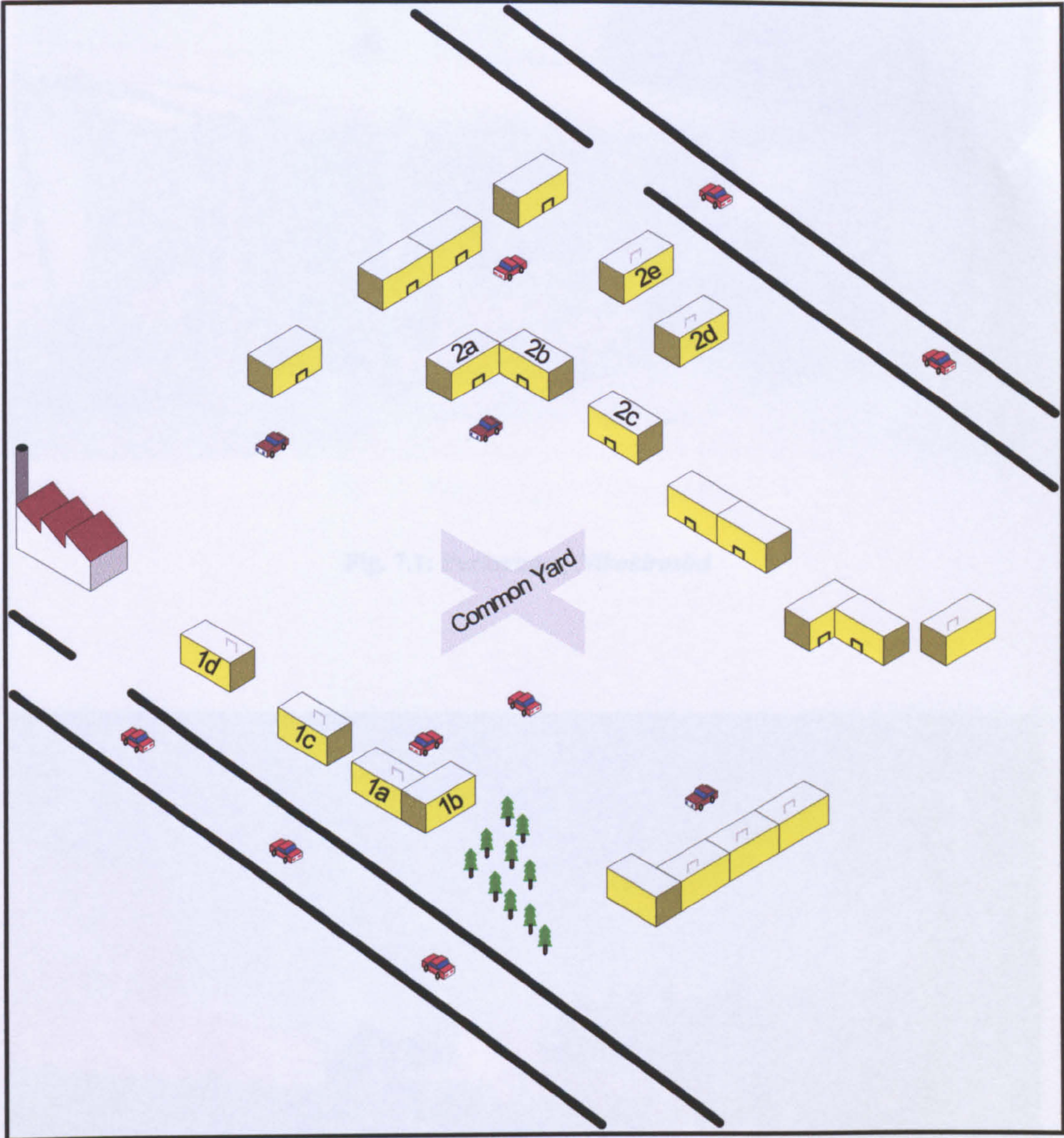


Fig. 6.1: *Gitonia*

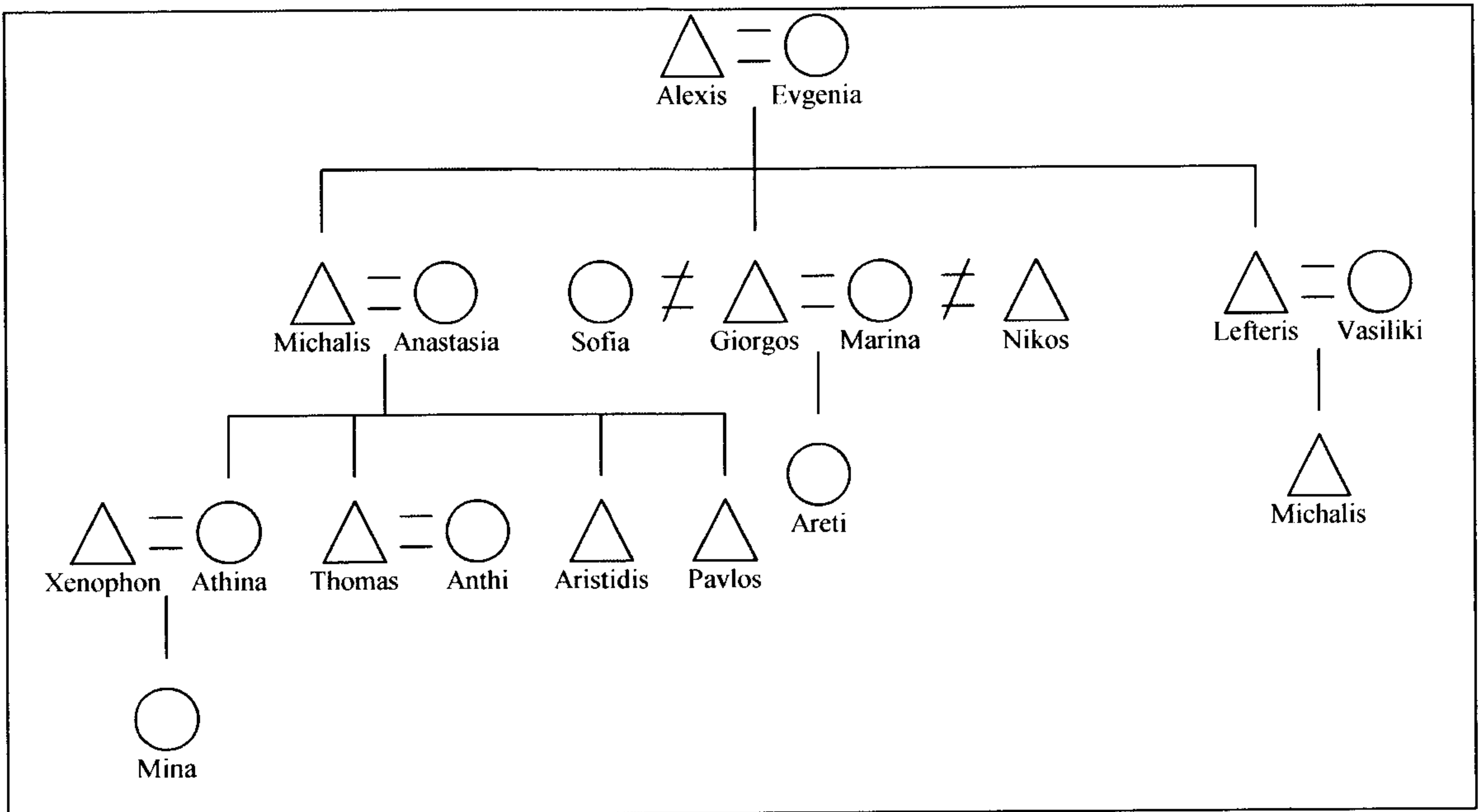


Fig. 6.2: The Christopoulos extended family

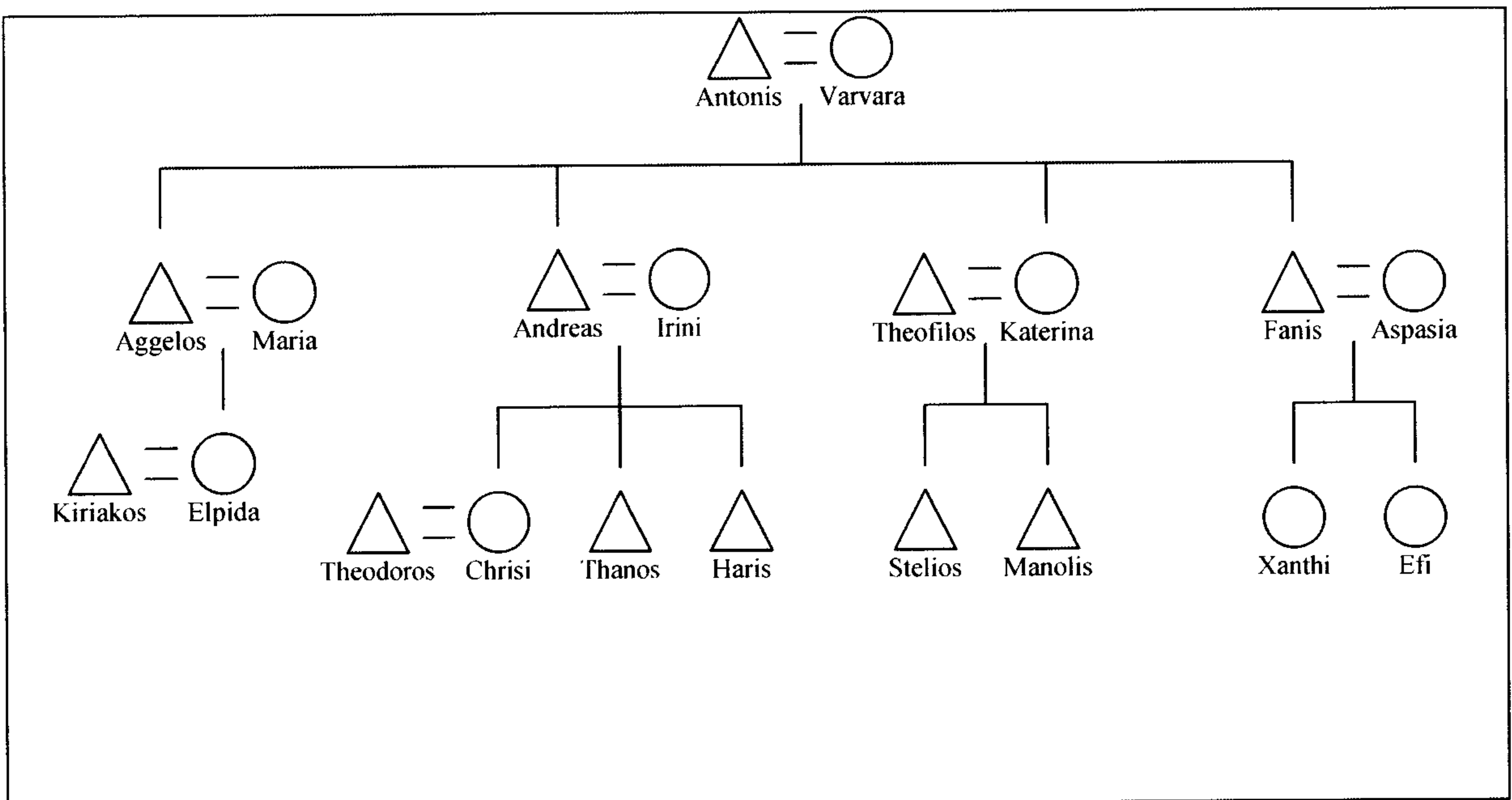


Fig. 6.3: The Petridis extended family

Chapter Seven

The *Nikokirio*: Becoming and Belonging through Performing Household Work

The Meaning of Performative Tasks

Having recognised the centrality of performativity in kinship relatedness, this chapter focuses on the performance of age and gender-specific roles. Taking into account that Greek Gypsy domestic tasks, paid work and family cannot be viewed as separate objects of analysis, chapter 7 explores the ways through which a Greek Gypsy personhood and a shared sense of becoming and belonging are expressed through learning and undertaking a variety of paid and unpaid activities within the extended *nikokirio* [household] in *Gitonia*.

Important studies on Gypsies have demonstrated (Stewart, 1997; Okely, 1983; Sutherland, 1975; Acton, 1974) that different Gypsy groups have always tried to maximise the degree of their autonomy from external factors in the organisation of their socio-economic life. However, most of the attention of the ethnographers on Gypsies regarding this issue has been focused on the examination of Gypsy economic activity rather than the organisation of domestic life. With respect to the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, their effort to maximise their autonomy is particularly obvious in both the ways through which they organise and manage their domestic unpaid work in the settlement and paid work outside the settlement.

Clearly here, a conceptual separation of domains, such as ‘the domestic’ or ‘the private’ and ‘the public’ cannot account for the examination of the Greek Gypsy *nikokirio*. In the case of the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, notions of the ‘the domestic’ or ‘the private’ and ‘the public’ can neither be viewed as rigidly separated realms associated with women’s and men’s roles respectively (Dubisch, 1991), nor as spatially defined domains which distinguish the household from its wider social and economic relations (Harris, 1981). Here, the ways through which the members of this specific group conceptualise and embody a range of paid and unpaid activities in different contexts and define selfhood and collective

belonging points to conceptions of ‘the private’ and ‘the public’ as “ideological constructs that define spaces, activities and persons in differing ways” (Goddard, 2000: 17).

Although the anthropology of Greece has made an important contribution to the analysis of the complementarity of men’s and women’s roles in the household (Hirschon, 1993a; Salamon and Stanton, 1986), recognising the household, the *nikokirio*, as economically active and as the locus of identification for both men and women (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b),¹ age has remained a rather unexamined factor in this sort of analysis.² As this chapter reveals, the vitality of household work for the Greek Gypsies is primarily reflected in the ways they pass on the knowledge for practising a variety of unpaid and paid activities inside and outside the domestic arena from generation to generation.

An emerging body of literature on different childhoods stresses that children are active participants in the management and division of labour both at home (Punch, 2001; Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Morrow, 1994; Soldberg, 1990) and at work (Helleiner, 2003; Invernizzi, 2003; Bey, 2003; Mizen, Pole, and Bolton, 2001; Miljeitig, 1999; Blagbrough and Glynn, 1999; Ennew, 1994; Boyden, 1990). Regarding working children (especially—but not exclusively—in the developing countries), recent studies point to the need for the examination of those mechanisms that determine children’s way to work, always taking under consideration cultural particularities and specific expectations in which the children’s contribution is valued by their parents or their group even though it may be of low status within wider society.

Exploring these themes in this chapter, it becomes obvious that the children of *Gitonia* are not only the recipients of the knowledge produced in the household but are also important carriers and negotiators of Greek Gypsy performativity. Their active engagement with paid and unpaid activities, like those of the adults, evokes prestige and admiration, shapes personhood and affirms distinctiveness.

¹ Important ethnographic accounts (Hirschon, 1993a, 1989; Dubisch, 1991; Salamon and Stanton, 1986; Danforth, 1983; du Boulay, 1974; Campbell, 1964; Friedl, 1962) have dealt extensively with what Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991b) describe as gender-specific spheres of domestic activities that their successful accomplishment attributes prestige to both genders.

² It is mainly the relationship between mother and daughter that has been more extensively examined from diverse scopes in the literature on Greece (Danforth, 1991; 1983; Dubisch, 1991; Campbell, 1964; Friedl, 1962).

The first section of this chapter looks at the concept of *nikokirosini* which represents a specific set of practices and methods in the performance of household chores. Undoubtedly, it constitutes one of the most important credentials for a Greek Gypsy woman. Therefore, young girls learn early on to perform these activities, undertaking an intensive training that facilitates their transition to married life. *Nikokirosini*, however, is not exclusively a female task. At a different level, young boys also go through a process of learning how to carry out male-oriented domestic activities. They start young to assist their fathers and elder male relatives in a variety of performative chores in the domestic sphere that uphold the smooth operation of the *nikokirio*. Such activities include unpaid work and all the heavy duties that are peripheral to the women's domestic chores (such as maintenance of the house and the car) but at the same time they are very essential for their survival.

The second section of this chapter concentrates on the general and most characteristic features of Greek Gypsy paid work patterns as well as the degree to which these patterns interconnect with family relations and household chores so that work and family cannot be viewed independently. A considerable degree of flexibility of paid work patterns and a labour-intensive Greek Gypsy economy ensure the close association between work and family. This is primarily reflected in the ways paid work engages extended family members in relationships of support as well as in the early participation of children of both sexes in the extended family's economic activity.

Unpaid Household Work: The Importance of Performing Age and Gender-Oriented Domestic Activities

Women Performing Nikokirosini

The first thing a visitor to the settlement notices is women cleaning and washing the concrete yard outside their houses or tidying up and cooking inside. Household chores, especially in bad weather, can be a very hard task, not only because each household lacks the average (sometimes even the basic) facilities (such as running water, heating, a washing machine, an electric cooker, etc.) but also because it is work that assumes a very competitive character. Being praised

as a good housewife, or *kali nikokira*³ (a good female householder) as it is commonly described in Greek, is one of the most important rewards for a Greek Gypsy woman. For Hirschon (1993a), being a *kali nikokira*:

“(...) depends upon maintaining objectively very high standards so that constant efforts and long hours must be devoted to household duties every day (Hirschon. 1993b: 67).”

Although during the last decades, this typical Greek expression may have to a great extent lost its significance particularly among younger women in urban centres,⁴ for the Gypsies of *Gitonia* it is still valued and connotes a responsible, organised, efficient and competent housewife. In addition, this praise of housework has been closely associated with a specific method that has to be followed in its general lines but, at the same time, enables each woman to improvise by enriching her tasks with her own personal aspirations.

The *nikokires* in *Gitonia* liked to compete with each other in terms of housework method, outcome, and improvisation. Women preferred to do their domestic work such as washing of clothes, bedlinen, blankets and carpets in the public eye for two reasons (Fig. 7.1). Firstly, to show off to those they are related to how *kales nikokires* they are, and secondly, to display to non-Greek Gypsy and non-Gypsy Greek societies the best proof of *Gitonia*'s Gypsies as clean and tidy. In order to reinforce the image of a good and efficient housewife they often enriched their performance with daily accounts, in which they proudly presented the tasks they undertook. It was also common among women to comment on and moan about the heavy load of work they had to accomplish, while they were occupied with the chores.

On days when work had been extremely hard, including washing big loads of dirty clothes, washing of carpets, blankets, or *geniki kathariotita*—that is a thorough cleaning of the entire house—constant moaning would invite the rest of *Gitonia*'s women to confirm a woman's hard work. However, once the daily accounting of domestic activities among women loses its mere form of

³ See also Zinovieff (1998), du Boulay (1986), Dubisch (1986b).

⁴ Especially among women who have entered the labour force and have increasingly become career oriented.

commenting and takes the form of gossiping about each other's performance it does, inevitably, lead to unbridgeable misunderstandings.⁵

Misunderstandings and conflicts could also erupt over the provision of the scarcest of the resources at the settlement: water. Since it was a woman's duty to provide the household with adequate quantities of water for washing and cleaning, there was a great deal of competition on both the use of the only water tap in *Gitonia* as well as the specific time of the day that this would be used. The competition could eventually lead to extreme tension and women had to develop a flexible working style when fulfilling domestic activities in order to overcome it. A mature housewife, Maria, dealt with the problem as follows:

“Sometimes, if I have a big load of washing to do and have to go to work afterwards. I get up at five o' clock in the morning in order to fill my container with water from the communal water tap, then start the fire to warm the water up before the other women wake up and run for the same thing. Can you imagine how cruel it is to do that during winter outside, in the cold, at five o' clock in the morning?”

Although competition over the performance and results of household chores was a daily issue at a personal level in *Gitonia*, at the group level, all women would translate the comparison between themselves and the groups they interact with into the concept of *nikokirosini*. They would support the overall image of the Greek Gypsy *nikokira* and her superiority in performing household tasks over the Albanian or Turkish Gypsy or the non-Gypsy Greek *nikokira*. Comparisons such as the following were made to me since the time of my very first visit to the settlement:

“All the women here clean and wash and take care of the common area. Look at the concrete, it shines; go next door to the Albanians you cannot stand there from the dirt ... No, go see, you wouldn't believe it!”

The comparison between the long established group of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the recently settled Albanian Gypsy neighbours often led to an impasse. The association between representations of ethnic Albanians and 'dirtiness', was quite clear in both the every-day speech as well as in a less conscious process of comparing cultural practices. Indeed, *Gitonia's* Gypsies

⁵ See also chapter 6, footnote 8.

blamed the Albanian Gypsies for the *katantima* of the neighbourhood, implying that the appearance of *Gitonia* that they had managed for decades to keep clean and tidy was ruined when the Albanian Gypsies came and messed it up.

It was not unusual, therefore, to hear expressions in *Gitonia* about the distance that separated the Albanian Gypsy from the Greek Gypsy women both at the level of household activities, domestic practices, and methods, as well as at the level of personal hygiene. Symbolic representations of gender, particularly manifested in the politics of the body (Herzfeld, 2001; Stewart, 1997; Cowan, 1990), such as the performance of *nikokirosini* by women here, are often implicated in the rhetoric and politics of difference. It was also common to hear negative comments about the unorthodox ways in which the Albanian parents raised their children. According to them, their unconventional practices had led most grownups to an 'immoral path' linked to gun and drug dealing, stealing, alcoholism, and vandalism. In the same way, Albanian Gypsy women were described as 'unethical', 'dirty', and 'devious' and had increasingly become the scapegoats for all the neighbourhood's problems. Likewise, when, during my stay at the settlement, Turkish Gypsy vendors came to sell their goods, the first comment whispered to me was: "*Exo apo do vromiarides ...* [Get out of here dirty pigs ...] Do you know how dirty they are? They are not the same as we are, they are *Gypsies* [my emphasis]!"

When discussion permitted, women brought up issues of cleanliness in a comparative way between Greek Gypsy and non-Gypsy Greek *nikokires*. Often, they would make diplomatic comments such as: "*Ine omos ke merikes apo' sas poli vromiaries ...*" which means: "Well, there are some of you [implying the non-Gypsy Greeks] who are very dirty." It was also usual in my first visits to a get more or less similar answer from the housewives when I asked how their day had been: "E! What to do, all day I'm washing and cleaning, because you know we wash our clothes every time we wear them." Or, "Oh! My back is aching because I washed the blankets again. You know we wash them every three or four days, not like you [meaning the non-Gypsy Greeks] that you wash them maybe twice a year." Commonly they also referred with emphasis to the fact that they did not use a washing machine but rather washed their clothes by hand, or the fact that they changed their bedsheets every day and washed carpets and blankets weekly. At the same time, they proudly talked about their custom to whiten, or paint in

general, their shacks twice a year, after carnival (usually in February) and before the 15th of August, *tis Panayias* (on Virgin Mary's Assumption Day).

Men also participated in this exercise. Given the chance, men tried to enhance their wife's image both to their relatives and to the other inhabitants of *Gitonia*, as well as to the non-Gypsies, portraying her as a typical representative of the Greek Gypsy *nikokira*. To the non-Greek Gypsy 'others' men tended to praise their women's image, not forgetting to mention the practical difficulties (scarce resources, lack of facilities, etc.) that they had to face every day in order to accomplish their domestic tasks. Kostas, the middle aged male head of the Anastasiou extended family, once said to a municipal representative who visited *Gitonia* to negotiate their resettlement:

"Under the poor conditions that you see, our settlement is so clean, imagine how clean we would be in houses with infrastructure and basic facilities ... You would not believe it!"

It becomes obvious that the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, conscious of the stereotype of the 'dirty Gypsy' held widely by the non-Gypsy Greek society, use performative and verbal affirmations of cleanliness both among themselves and wider society in order to combat this image. Simultaneously, they use these affirmations in order to demonstrate their difference from other Gypsy groups in Greece and negotiate a better reputation for themselves within Greek society.

As the above-mentioned examples reveal, 'dirt' is clearly associated with metaphors of ethnic classifications (Okely, 1983). However, the fact these classifications involve other Gypsy groups (Albanian Gypsies, Turkish Gypsies) along—and probably to a lesser extent—with the non-Gypsy Greek society suggests that affirmations of cleanliness by *Gitonia's* Gypsies differ from Okely's (1983) approach to pollution taboos which are seen as embedded in perceptions of a symbolic division of the inner and outer body (see chapter 3).

Interestingly, "women's ability to control household boundaries and transform polluting disorder into domestic order" (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b: 11) has been widely reported in the ethnographic works on Greece (Paradellis, 1999; Hirschon, 1993a,b; Rushton, 1992; du Boulay, 1986, 1974; Dubisch, 1986c, 1983). In many cases, symbolic perceptions about the inner and outer body, such as that the female body widens after marriage (Hirschon, 1993a), or that

menstruation (Paradellis, 1999; Dubisch, 1983) and birth (Rushton, 1992) can be polluting, are strongly held by the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* along with the non-Gypsy Greeks.

Among the women of the settlement, cleanliness has primarily a performative purpose that aims at manifesting, or making visible and sustaining, the more efficient, competent and disciplined Greek Gypsy female character. This resembles more Gay Y Blasco's (1999) view of the body as the vehicle through which a Gypsy personhood needs to be constantly performed and evaluated in order to affirm collective distinctiveness and manifest Gypsy superiority (see chapter 3).

I remember, once, on a rainy winter day, Theofilos called me into his house while his wife was about to finish cleaning the floor. Suddenly, recalling my mother's instructions not to enter the house with my shoes when it was raining, I felt embarrassed and hesitated to step in. Katerina, his wife, laughed at me as she dragged me in and told me: "Will you stay outside in the rain because you think you'll mess up my house?" At the same time, children heard I was there and they too came in to see me, also bringing mud on their shoes into the house. Katerina turned to me pointing to the mess they caused: "Did you see? What shall I do, lock them out? No! I'll do it again and again!"

For a Greek Gypsy woman having completed her household duties would not mean that the rest of the family members should be cautious within the household. Her domestic tasks would by no means disrupt the rest of the family's activities. On the contrary, the Gypsy housewife cleans and tidies up the household just to see it messed up again straight away. Indeed, as soon as the house is cleaned, the family is free to enjoy it as much as it can. For a non-Gypsy Greek *nikokira*, like my mother, tidying up the house would mean that the rest of the family should be extremely cautious with domestic activities trying to keep it tidy for as long as possible. Most likely, the non-Gypsy Greek *nikokira* would keep her children restricted to certain areas that would be designated for daily activities. Aware of this attitude of the non-Gypsy Greek *nikokira* towards her work, Katerina laughed at me and told everybody to laugh about the incident with me standing at her doorstep.

Learning how to Become *Kali Nikokira*

For women in *Gitonia*, the main household activities such as cleaning, washing, and cooking should follow specific steps and procedures that are passed down from mother to daughter. This gives primacy to the 'traditional', old-fashioned methods of cleaning, washing and cooking. As far as cleaning is concerned, the Greek Gypsy woman should not only constantly keep clean the interior of her house but, most importantly, the exterior concrete area where children play and which is visible to non-family members. Secondly, according to *Gitonia's* women, washing should be done by hand, according to the 'traditional' way and should be done outside the house so that everybody can see the housewife performing it. Performing the hand-washing seems to be of extreme importance and that is probably why Greek Gypsy women believe that the washing machine is a useless machine that does not really clean clothes as efficiently as the old fashioned hand-washing. Finally, cooking should be preferably done on the gas stove inside the house during the winter or outside during the summer and baking in the charcoal oven. Their cuisine is very similar to the non-Gypsy Greek one and is mainly based on 'traditional' recipes that are passed down from generation to generation and are preferably made with home-made products. Apart from the methodology of household tasks and their practical application, young girls should be taught how to be innovative to overcome difficulties in their tasks and the scarcity of possibilities, such as providing the house with water early in the morning, taking it illegally from a communal tap, or warming up water in the fireplace, etc.

Both the methods and practice of household activities should be taught to young girls from a very early age through a long process of practical exercises through allocation of duties and constant informal appraisal by the female members of the extended family. Given the fact that domestic duties take up most of a woman's daily activities, young girls learn their mother's work through imitation, as soon as they make their first steps, realising at the same time the attention they attract and the encouragement they get in their effort to imitate them. A mother, for example, would consider it important to praise her little daughter and let the other women in *Gitonia* know about the way the girl tried to wash the dishes or clothes, to handle the mop, or to cook.

Gradually, as young girls grow up, mothers give them responsibilities depending on the girl's personality and the degree to which she is willing to sacrifice her playing time. Acknowledging the importance of the successful accomplishment of household activities for the family, girls will start to respond positively to their mothers' calls for assistance or will take the initiative of undertaking some tasks themselves. It is worth noting that because girls between two and five or six years of age are encouraged to undertake a wide range of household activities, they would rarely play 'mothers' or 'housewives' in the way non-Gypsy girls of a similar age love to play. Similarly, parents, and especially mothers, do not view their daughters' imitative efforts to carry out domestic tasks, or later on, their actual participation in household activities merely as a game, but as the performative progress of an instructional process that has to take place sometime in their childhood. At this stage, however, although mothers praise their daughters, they would never push them to give up their free time in order to help them out with the actual domestic work. It is only much later, as the girls reach the age between seven and twelve that more and more household activities are allocated to them by their mothers in order to relieve themselves from the load of work, but most importantly, in order for the girl to perform the task in front of other people and show her progress.

This process does not seem to be a burden for the young girls. On the contrary, it constitutes the basis on which their personality is constructed and their position in their extended family reinforced. From this perspective, young girls love proving to their family that they are capable of fulfilling their expectations. But when a family notices that a girl does not pay adequate attention to domestic duties, her parents might try to find a more radical solution in order to bring her attention to the tasks. Nikoleta was one of these cases. As we already saw in chapters 4 and 5, Nikoleta was a twelve-year-old girl who worked daily in the market and was basically taking care of her three-year-old brother, Fotis. In her free time she preferred to play with the other children of *Gitonia*, or ride around the neighbourhood on her bicycle. Therefore, although Nikoleta had a very feminine body shape and was very pretty, the rest of *Gitonia's* members used to call her *aghorokoritso* [tom-boy].

Thus, one day, all of a sudden, after a wedding party her parents decided to arrange her engagement to a young boy whose parents had asked for her family's

permission. Nikoleta herself agreed to get engaged to this young boy. However, this abrupt decision from her parents surprised the inhabitants of *Gitonia* because it was not really well planned and thought out. Nevertheless, most people agreed that this was the appropriate step that had to be taken in order to force the *aghorokoritso* [tom-boy] to finally take over her responsibilities seriously. Eventually, the very next day, Nikoleta started visiting the home of her parents-in-law, where she actually did not have the space to move independently and ignore her duties as she did in her home environment.

Young unmarried girls should prove that as soon as they learn to undertake efficiently the basic steps of household chores, they are ready to get engaged, which means that their training will now be taking place in two spaces; in their parent's house as well as the parents-in-law house. This is where she is most likely to live when she gets married. But, in order to get married the girl must first complete the transitional training process and 'pass the unofficial exams' in her parents-in-law house usually under the strict supervision of her mother-in-law. Unfortunately, for a young woman marriage does not necessarily mean the end of her mother-in-law's close supervision. On the contrary, this is the time when she is under the most pressure to prove her ability to take care of her own household, at an adequate Greek Gypsy standard and simultaneously enhance her credentials within her husband's family (see also chapter 6).

Performing Masculine Roles in the *Nikokirio*

As already discussed, most ethnographic works on Greece acknowledge the complementary role of women and men in the operation of the household and family. Early on, for example, Campbell (1964: 150) saw the organisation of the Sarakatsan family premised on "a system of roles" with "complementary form." Nevertheless, in most of these ethnographic depictions, the role of the *nikokiris*, the male household head, is assumed to be more associated with "an active profile in public life" (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991b: 6) often in contrast to the more domesticated model of *nikokira* (Hirschon, 1993a), the female householder.

Interestingly, the case of *Gitonia*'s Gypsies brings to light a set of important domestic activities undertaken by men, which also have to be performed in order to affirm a Greek Gypsy male personhood and a sense of collective belonging. As

with the performance of *nikokirosini* by women, the enactment of male-based domestic chores entails the instructional framework for passing down to young boys the knowledge (methods and practices) of conducting such activities.

A number of diverse activities, such as the construction, repair and maintenance of the houses and furniture, the repair of cars and other mechanical and electronic devices, the cutting and provision of logs for the fire, as well as driving women to work or the market for shopping,⁶ are some of the chores that male inhabitants of *Gitonia* undertake daily, contributing this way considerably to the running of their households.

A *kalos nikokiris* [good householder], for the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*, is the householder who apart from providing money for his family, can be efficient and competent in performing the above-described domestic tasks. Evgenia, along with her daughter-in-law, Anastasia, repeatedly praised Michalis, Evgenia's elder son and Anastasia's husband, for being such a *kalos nikokiris* [a good male householder]. Anastasia, for instance, often pointed to the way he had taken care of the indoor decoration of the house that he had carried out himself. And Evgenia also spoke about his daily caring for the pots and flowers in his small yard. Men also liked to talk a lot about their performance of domestic activities, always putting emphasis on the manual effort that such activities demand.

For the members of this group of Gypsies, the *kalos nikokiris* is also the man who has elaborated a variety of skills that enable him to develop and maintain his household without the need for any paid, specialised worker. As Alexis, the first inhabitant of *Gitonia*, said:

“This place—whatever you see here—has been built from scratch by us. Little by little, we have managed to transform this place into a living space.”

In fact, I have seen Fanis' and Aspasia's new house in *Gitonia*, built from scratch by the men of their family. This process, as Giorgos, Alexis' son, explained to me, comprised four important steps that required a lot of hard work to be done. The first step consisted in providing the wooden parts that had to be collected from any possible source such as building sites:

⁶ None of the women in *Gitonia* drove, since driving a car was considered by the Greek Gypsies an exclusively male activity.

“Can you imagine how difficult it is to find all these pieces here and there? It might take time ... That is why it’s better to stock them here at the back of the yard in case we need them to fix or repair something.”

The second step is to prepare the ground on which the house will be built:

“That means we have to get the raw materials to make *kharmani* [the mix] for the concrete base and we do it all by hand.”

The next step is to build the structure with the wooden pieces. As Giorgos described:

“Joining all these pieces together is another difficult task because they have to be joined correctly in order to be resistant both to the rain and the wind. But the most difficult part is to construct the roof, because we have to climb up there and be careful not to make any mistake. In the roof, we use the best quality of wood available and try to make the strongest joints. Then, we cover it with a piece of thick plastic in order to prevent rain from pouring into the house and we add big stones or heavy bricks on top of that in order to keep the roof safe from the wind.”

When the main construction of the house is finished, the men make the doors and the windows and have to make some important adjustments for the infrastructure for the heating and air ventilation. When the house is ready the women take over from men and do the painting internally and externally and decide on the interior’s decoration.

So, as we have seen, the process of building a house in the settlement takes place without the need for any paid skills. All activities are undertaken mainly by the men of the extended families who assist each other. Men are not only preoccupied with constructing the house but also with preserving it. For example, as Evgenia pointed out:

“During the winter our men have to climb onto the roof regularly and have it checked and repaired if needed, because if it collapses it will kill us all here.”

The maintenance of a house that is built with such poor materials entails a great deal of work, which has to be done on a daily basis. Repairing damages and upgrading the already existing infrastructure are essential for the good functioning of a household. What is more, men also undertake the task of constructing and

keeping good all the common areas of the settlement such as the yard outside the houses, as well as the toilets, the communal water tap, and the rubbish area.

Young boys are usually encouraged to imitate their father's everyday domestic activities soon after they stand up on their feet. Doing that, they are praised in the same way that small girls are when they follow their mothers' movements copying out household tasks. Consequently, since they are very young they become familiar with and participate in activities such as cutting wood for the fireplace, starting the fire, constructing and maintaining the house, repairing the car or electric devices, gadgets etc. They soon also learn, in the same way that girls do, how to overcome the difficulties of life in the settlement by improvising cost-effective means or alternative ways to get the desired outcome.

Another significant skill that young boys have to master as soon as they reach twelve or thirteen years of age is driving their father's car. Simultaneously, they learn how to keep their car or truck in good condition. They normally assist the male members of their family in taking care of it on a daily basis and make most of the necessary repairs themselves. Driving a car is of vital importance for a boy because the car is a means of transportation and the main working tool of this particular group of Gypsies. Although children are not actually allowed to use their father's car before the age of thirteen or fourteen they would, however, learn how to start it up and take the wheel for their first movements within the settlement. From the time they are thirteen or fourteen they are normally allowed to use the car outside of the settlement for short drives. At the age of sixteen or seventeen, the young man can start driving the car for work purposes despite the fact that in Greece the legal age for holding a driving licence is eighteen.

Gitonia's Gypsies and Paid Work

Flexible Work Patterns

As already discussed in chapter 3, the literature on Gypsies has shown that different Gypsy groups have been through different socio-economic and historical processes that have resulted, among other things, in the deployment of diverse

Gypsy economic activities.⁷ For example, some Gypsy groups follow more 'traditional' Gypsy activities (sale of goods and items, fortune telling, entertainment, etc.) such as the British Gypsies (Okely, 1983: 51, table 1), while others, such as the Hungarian Rom, work alongside non-Gypsies in the industrial or agricultural sector (Stewart, 1997). Most theorists on Gypsies acknowledge that the Gypsy economy and prosperity is highly dependent on the wider economy of the society in which they live. However, there are some distinctive features that diverse Gypsy groups elaborate in order to differentiate themselves from the non-Gypsy population.⁸

In the case of the Gypsies of *Gitonia*, as already shown in the introduction, economic activity is mainly characterised by two important aspects: a considerable degree of flexibility in terms of time and space of work activity as well as the a degree of flexibility in terms of load, type of work and family participants (labour-intensive occupations). In the Greek Gypsy way of life it is difficult to separate paid work and family. In most cases, paid work demands the participation of the whole family with both its male and female members, children and adults. The family members might all work together or separately, depending on a variety of factors (heavy work-load, need for extra income, intra-family agreements, etc.).

More specifically, this urban population has learnt to benefit from the opportunities that the city of Athens offers as well as from the flexible characteristics of their own skills. In this sense, *Gitonia's* Gypsies make a multi-level use of the urban environment both in terms of space and time. For example, the daily trading of goods in the markets (legal and illegal), conducted by men and women, constitutes the main source of the extended family's income. Simultaneously though, this activity usually takes place while other members of the extended family, including children, trade goods (mainly illegally) in other

⁷ For a good account of examples of diverse Gypsy economic activities across Europe see Liégeois (1994).

⁸ Gypsies in Western Europe, as for example in Britain (Okely, 1983), and the United States (Sutherland, 1975), have resisted integration into the labour force—although it does occasionally happen—showing a clear preference for flexible and labour-intensive economic activities over which they can exert control. On the other hand, Gypsies who lived in the ex-Communist countries and worked in the industrial or agricultural sector along with the non-Gypsies, such as the Hungarian Rom (Stewart, 1997), had elaborated particular tactics (price dealing), mainly in the informal sector of economy (the horse dealing market), which enabled them to redefine their relationships both with the Communist state and the non-Gypsies (see also chapter 3).

public places such as streets, squares, outside churches, etc. In addition, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* use the urban environment for permanent occupations such as vendors in the markets, for seasonal trading such as Christmas trees, as well as for opportunistic earnings during religious celebrations, festivals and sport events. In the overcrowded urban space they get the advantages—while at the same time minimise the risks—of the informal sector.

The most common occupation of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* is small-scale selling at open markets the *laikes aghores*.⁹ However, they rarely possess a vendor's permit and most of the time they are confined to selling their goods illegally at the fringes of these markets. Those having a legal vendor's permit get a standard stall in the markets they are subscribed to, and legally sell their goods on a regular basis (Fig. 7.2). The holders of a vendor's permit normally sell fruit and vegetables that they obtain from one of the country's central markets (mainly from the central markets of Khalkida and Piraeus). On the contrary, those who do not have a legal permit in their possession must either find a stall to sell their goods outside of the market but close to it, or sell a variety of other goods in places, such as squares and churches, that tend to be crowded.

Although the above mentioned activities seem to offer to the settlement's population a more secure daily income, their most lucrative economic activity, as they confess, comes from seasonal trading such as Christmas trees during Christmas, kites on *Kathari Deftera* [Mardis Gras], religious items during Easter, etc. As Theofilos mentioned: "It is these days that we await to make some serious money, the rest is just to cover our daily expenses."

At the same time, those people who have more secure occupations such as legal vendors in the markets would not hesitate to grasp any chance of getting more money from any other alternative way they think could increase the income of their family. In fact, they could easily shift from legal to illegal trading taking advantage of occasions such as festivals and religious celebrations.

Except for the legal market vendors (who are adult men) the above mentioned work can actually be undertaken by all family members above the age of five or six. As we shall see in the following paragraphs, women and children play a very

⁹ Open markets that operate on a weekly basis (from Monday to Saturday) in different areas of Athens.

important role in Greek Gypsy economic activity and contribute enormously to the maximisation of the family's income through flexible work patterns.

What is more, *Gitonia*'s Gypsies use their settlement as a working space, where they sell, prepare, and stock goods for sale. In fact, not only does the neighbourhood in which they live and interact with the non-Gypsy population constitute a secure market for selling their goods but also a source of clients to whom they offer cleaning services. As Ifigenia, the female head of the Theodorou family, explained to me, after all the years they had lived in *Gitonia* they had managed to establish a network of clients based on their good reputation as traders and cleaners:

“The neighbourhood here knows that our men sell the best quality of products in the markets and often prefer to buy goods from us. And each of us [she means the women] has a couple of neighbours [female ones] who assist us on a regular basis, either by buying from us goods or by giving us some money. The *nikokires* in the neighbourhood know well that we are good cleaners and sometimes they call us to work for them in their houses for a couple of hours.”

During holidays or the summer, when there is no work in the city, some members of the extended families supply themselves with a variety of trading goods that they sell in the rural areas, villages, and islands. Some of the settlement's families plan short or long trips to the countryside's villages or the islands, where they usually have a circle of customers to whom they sell various products. In that sense, mobility is an important asset, even though this group has long been sedentary. Evgenia proudly told me once that:

“Even if there is no work at all in Athens, I'm not worried. I take the boat and go for one month to Samos to sell kitchen stuff and then I come back loaded.”

This flexible type of economic activity seems to be intrinsically associated with a specific type of family organisation that principally articulates a sense of support and solidarity among its members. In fact, although Greek Gypsy economic activity primarily aims at the generation of family income at the household level, the *nikokirio* cannot be viewed as outside of the extended family network (see chapter 6) nor as separate from the intra-family alliance building process (see chapter 5).

As already seen in chapter 5, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* tend to intensify their work activities before wedding events in order to be able to cover the expenses of wedding presents and gifts of money. What is more, as already hinted in the analysis of kinship relatedness (see chapter 6) and as will be more thoroughly examined in the following paragraphs, there is a strong association between the extended family's hierarchical organisation and each household's economic activity within the extended family unit.

Paid Work Patterns in the Extended Family—An Example

In the Christopoulos extended family, the male head of the family, Alexis, was specialised in repairing chairs. In fact, he was the only inhabitant of *Gitonia* who was specialised in an old-fashioned 'traditional' Gypsy occupation. As he described:

"My job is to repair chairs made of *psatha* [straw]. To weave *psatha* is art Ivi and only a few people in Athens know how to do it. For forty years I've been doing this job and if you ask in the market I have the best reputation. I sell my services to carpenters or work by myself but my job is not secure, at least not in the city because people here don't buy these chairs any more."

During the winter he worked in Athens while in the summer he did the same job on the island of Samos, where he had regular customers. His wife Evgenia, contributed to the family's income alongside him. Although she had stopped working as a cleaner a few years ago because of her fragile health, she continued to accompany her husband to Samos where she had her own circle of customers to whom she sold household items during the Easter and summer holidays.

The family's eldest son, Michalis, was a legal vendor in the *laikes aghores* of the northern suburbs of Athens. He owned a small truck that he used in order to transport the goods he obtained from the central fruit market in Khalkida or Piraeus every evening in order to sell them the following morning in the market stall. Michalis was not alone in this job. He was assisted by his three sons, Thomas, Aristides, and Pavlos. He was also helped by his younger brother Giorgos when he had no work with the non-Gypsy Greek vendor he normally worked with. The three brothers helped their father either by going to the central fruit markets every afternoon to purchase the goods or by preparing the truck for

the morning. They also took turns to assist their father in the market stall. His wife, Anastasia, worked in the nearby milk factory for several years, until it was closed down.

In Giorgos' household, Giorgos was employed by a non-Gypsy Greek and worked as a part-time vendor at his market stall. As already said, when there was no work for him, he was offered a vendor's position at his brother's stall in the market. His wife, Marina, occasionally helped with the family's expenses. She illegally sold clothes or household items on the fringes of *laikes aghores*. She had also managed to make her own circle of customers in Samos where she went with her parents-in-law during the summer. Lefteris, the youngest son of Alexis and Evgenia who was a drug addict, and his wife, Vasiliki, lived mainly on Vasiliki's insecure income, derived from the illegal sale of goods in the markets as well as the financial support of his older brother and his father.

Through the description of the Christopoulos family's economic activity it becomes apparent that the eldest male head, Alexis, and his elder son Michalis, share the responsibility for the extended family's well being. Alexis repeatedly mentioned that his only concern was that his children and their families should be doing well in their lives:

"For whom do you think I've worked all these years? For whom have I built the house in Gerakas?¹⁰ For me? I don't need it. I'm fine here, my home is here not there. I'm doing everything for them, for her [Evgenia] and the children."

And Evgenia added:

"Michalis does not need our help, he has his job, the boys to help him, and his own house to move into one day. But what about them [meaning her younger sons, Giorgos and Lefteris]? Giorgos is such a good and hard-working boy but struggles to support his family and Lefteris ... he cannot do anything ... he is ill [meaning a drug addict]."

In chapter 6 we saw that Michalis as the second in the family hierarchy after his parents and more active economically than his father, seemed to be responsible for granting some sort of support to the families of his younger

¹⁰ A house which was not yet finished.

brothers. In fact, the whole extended family unit depended on his legal vendor's permit and his secure income.

The extended family's solidarity is especially obvious during the periods of seasonal trading when its members organised and operated a work plan that gave each household the chance to maximise its income by joining and exploiting the common family resources—such as trucks, human resources, contacts, etc. The Christopoulos family, for example, organised the following work plan for the summer period at the year of my fieldwork. As Evgenia described:

“As soon as the schools close, my husband, me, Marina and the girl [Areti] will go to Samos. Michalis, Giorgos and the boys [Michalis' sons] will stay here to work at the markets, because they are busy during the summer. And Anastasia will also stay here to cook and clean for them. In Samos, we will work separately. Alexis will be going to his customers in the villages, I to mine and maybe I'll introduce Marina to some women in order to make her own circle. I'll sell kitchen items while Marina will sell women's clothes.”

Gitonia's Gypsies and Wage Labour

During the year of my fieldwork, when municipal representatives were visiting the settlement to discuss the problem of re-housing its members, the inhabitants of *Gitonia* repeatedly expressed their wish for jobs. And, indeed, before the last municipal elections (in October 2002) they had been promised a few jobs and had been asked by the municipal representatives to make a list with the names and preferences of those interested. Their response was astonishing. As I was the one who took down the names for the list, I noticed that the extended family heads decided to give the names of almost all the family members, both male and female, above the age of eighteen.

Although the majority of the inhabitants of *Gitonia* suspected that the municipality would not fulfil its pledge after the elections, they nevertheless agreed that if the jobs were to materialise this would be an ideal solution. As Penelope said:

“I think they are fooling us again Ivi, but we have nothing to lose by putting our names down. If they take us, I would go. I could clean the municipality's building or schools. Is there a better thing than knowing that each month your salary is waiting for you?”

In fact, most women were very excited by the prospect of getting a secure waged job. With the consent of their fathers and family leaders they put their names down as candidates for a cleaner's position, while the majority of men who put their names down preferred positions such as guards, gardeners, or drivers (for those few who possessed a drivers' licence).

Most men who possessed a vendor's permit or at least a truck, and their close relatives who assisted them, preferred not to put their names down. "What can I do with this job in the municipality? I have my stall in the market" said Vangelis, the male head of the Theodorou extended family. I got a similar answer from almost all male members of *Gitonia* who possessed a vendors' permit.

The examples above indicate that the Greek Gypsies have developed an ambiguous attitude towards wage labour. On the one hand, Anastasia proudly informed me about the fact that she worked for many years in the nearby milk factory. She highlighted this long-lasting work experience and emphasised the benefits that she had gained:

"It is because of my working experience that I have some social security services and advantages for me and my children today."

Evgenia, her mother-in-law also described Anastasia's work experience in the factory as "a decent and appropriate job for a woman." On the other hand, however, the vicinity of the factory to the settlement, as Evgenia confirmed, played a decisive role in her decision to work there: "It was very convenient for her. She would leave the children to us here and she was early back home for the *nikokirio* [the household chores]." And in fact, when the factory closed down she didn't look for a similar job somewhere else, simply because there was no similar work position in the vicinity.

On a different occasion, Evgenia told me about a relative who managed years ago to get a job in the municipality, pointing out once more that work (waged or otherwise) actually becomes meaningful only if it sustains extended family solidarity and intra-family relationships of support:

"Yes, he has worked many years there, he is very satisfied with his job. He is also a great help for us here! God bless him, he has brought us the water [meaning the illegal communal tap] here."

Their response to the municipality's call for lists of potential workers indicates at least a clear interest by some Greek Gypsies in wage labour. Furthermore, most of the parents express the wish that their children one day will manage to find a permanent, waged job. Children themselves often express the same preference like fourteen-year-old Sotiris from the Markopoulos extended family:

I would like to become a policeman. That is what my parents want me to do as well. That is why they insist on sending me to school, because as soon as I finish, my Godfather—who happens to be a policeman—will help me to make my dream true.

On the other hand, it becomes apparent that the clear interest of this group in wage labour cannot be viewed as a shift to new less flexible forms of economic activity. Indeed, it does not operate as a substitute but rather as complementary to the existing forms of economic activity. For example, we saw that those who have a secure source of income such as the legal market vendors, or at least have their basic working tool, the truck, looked down on the possibility of a waged job, even though they encouraged the rest of their family members to put their names down for that. We can, therefore, draw the assumption that wage labour is viewed by the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* as a possible additional work activity or as a complement to independent work within the wider framework of flexible work patterns that operate within extended family units.

What it more, the Greek Gypsies' stance towards dependent wage labour suggests a preference for forms of economic activity whose distinctive characteristics (flexibility, labour-intensive economy, adjustability) cannot be merely viewed as attempts to differentiate themselves from the non-Greek Gypsy population. Rather, they seem to be elaborate tactics or responsive strategies to external factors such as marginalisation, or changing socio-economic circumstances (urbanisation, migration), that favour a particular family structure and social organisation, premised on relationships of solidarity and support.

Women and Paid Work

The contribution of Gypsy women to the economic life of the family can be of extreme importance. Ideally, most Gypsy men would like their wives not to work but to stay at home. As Giorgos put it:

“I don’t want my wife—and I don’t think anybody else does—to go out to work. It’s a heavy load of work for her working in the market and taking care of the household. And of course, the market is not a nice place for the baby either.”

However, his wife, Marina, insists that her contribution is essential and she makes an interesting point saying that work, for her, is also a way of socialising outside the settlement: “If I don’t work we’ll starve and he knows it. Besides, sometimes I feel so bored at home that I need to go out to work. Sometimes I just want to see other people.” In most cases, the woman’s need for economic help is inevitable. This is especially so, since selling goods without a legal vendor’s permit has become increasingly risky, while at the same time migrant economic activity has expanded into the ‘traditional’ Gypsy economic domain. Women who go out to work alone or separately from their husbands mainly go to the markets and sell small kitchen items, religious accessories or garlic and onions.

For example, Theofilos and Katerina from the Petridis extended family live mainly from Katerina’s daily income from illegal vending in the markets. Although Theofilos possessed a truck he admitted that he found it increasingly difficult to sell non-seasonal products illegally, for a variety of reasons:

“There is no work for me Ivi anymore, because I cannot easily go out to sell products with my truck. If the police stop me and see that I don’t have papers [legal document to prove the purchase], not only will they prosecute me but they will also confiscate my goods. Only on Christmas, Mardi Gras, and Easter are the police more flexible. For us who don’t have the vendor’s permit the little money we make to cover our daily expenses comes from women. Still for them there is some work in the markets although the Albanian Gypsies have reduced our earnings. So, every day early in the morning I drive my wife, her sisters-in-law and my nieces to the market and then I pick them up in the afternoon.”

An additional factor that occasionally pushes women to work is the escalating problem of drug addiction among young men that has struck *Gitonia* in the last two decades¹¹. Drug addicts, who can no longer go out to work, or whose families prefer them to stay close to them in the settlement instead of letting them out and risking arrest, are primarily being supported by their wives, especially if they have young children. As described in chapter 6, Vasiliki and Aspasia were two women

¹¹ According to my data, at least three adult men in *Gitonia* had been for long heroin addicts or “*arosti*” [ill], as their family members called them.

whose husbands' addiction forced them to take the leading economic role in their households. Aspasia's husband, Fanis, was almost banned from leaving *Gitonia* by his family. Even when Aspasia was pregnant and shortly after she gave birth, she was trying to keep up her work in the market. Whenever she could, she left her toddler with other family members and went to the markets for a couple of hours to sell household items.

It is also true that in many cases women choose to work because they prefer to feel financially independent. This is more common among young women who do not have a good relationship with their parents-in-law or their husband. Vasiliki confessed to me that she liked earning money as a vendor in the markets although it was hard for her to work with the baby and afterwards to do the domestic chores. According to her:

“Earning my own money makes me feel not simply more independent but free in a sense that my mother-in-law would not comment on what and how I spend it.”

At the same time, she admitted that this money could allow her to leave the house at any time and abandon her husband if there was a problem or fight between them, a fact that apparently gave her more negotiating power at home.

Children and Paid Work

It becomes apparent through fieldwork that parents in *Gitonia* do not like separating from their children and if for some reason they have to do this they suffer enormously.¹² Consequently, parents prefer taking their children along with them to work, unless the children themselves do not want to accompany them. So, depending on the situation and the nature of the work, children follow their parents. For example, if a mother works separately from her husband, she will normally take her babies and very young children with her. In most cases (but not always), women prefer to take their babies and young children along. Besides

¹² For example, when Katerina, the mother of six year-old Stelios sent him with his aunt and uncle on a trip to Northern Greece because he insisted on going with them, she let him go without complaining but from the moment he left she cried for hours. A similar situation happened when Marina sent her two and a half-year-old daughter to her sister in order to give up breast-feeding. Although she and her husband believed they had done the right thing, the very next moment they regretted it and went to the sister's place by taxi during the night to bring her back home.

preferring to have their children nearby, mothers—especially those with babies—are less likely to be stopped by the police or the market security guards.

Apart from the daily domestic chores, small girls and boys gain early experience by going out to work with their parents or in other ways participating in the economic life of the family unit. Girls above the age of six or seven will usually accompany their mother to the market but will work on their own. Boys of the same age will normally go to help out their father or, if the circumstances permit, they may work independently yet close to him. Younger boys, however, may also accompany their mothers in the markets. Especially during periods when work-loads are heavy, as for example during seasonal trading, some girls and boys might also give a hand or work permanently with other close kin members such as a grandfather, a brother, or an uncle. It is also worth noting that both girls and boys might contribute substantially to essential work preparations that need to be done at home such as assembling, packing, or decorating products to be sold (Fig. 7.3).

However, girls above the age of six or seven should be more focused on the undertaking of the unpaid household chores rather than paid work. In contrast, for boys participation in paid work is of vital importance. At the age of five or six, boys start taking part in the economic life of the family, accompanying either one of the parents, or both at work. A couple of years later, boys gradually start taking a more active role, usually assisting the father or a close male relative in the economic activity of the family. Again, as happens with their female siblings, the timing for this transition will depend on the child's personality and parents would never push him to undertake tasks that he is unwilling to do. Nevertheless, young boys know well that they are close to the time when they will start looking for a girl to get engaged. Their participation in economic life at this point means both an important period of training before getting married, as well as making a substantial contribution to the family's expenses regarding the coming marriage. Most of the time, young boys help their father at work on a regular basis from the moment they get engaged. Depending on the agreement the boy makes with his father he might put some of his savings aside to add to his father's savings for his wedding, while keeping the rest for his daily expenses.

Interestingly, neither parents nor children consider this kind of activity as work, with its conventional meaning characterised by a rigid timetable, allocated duties

and responsibilities. Greek Gypsy children are not obliged to work the way a non-Gypsy would understand this activity as an ‘obligation’. Parents would never push children to take part in work activities if they didn’t want to. For example, Ifigenia, the head of the Theodorou extended family, expressed her disappointment in front of her grandson, Dimitris, who, according to her, had been reluctant to go out to work on a daily basis:

“I tell him, take a plastic bag with kitchen towels and go out to sell them in the market during the morning, but he doesn’t want to ... He only likes going with his father to work every now and then. All he cares about is playing football. What can we do? Nothing! One day he will have to do it though. When he finds a girl and wants to get married he’ll do it ... He will eventually work on a daily basis.”

Children and especially boys, as Ifigenia’s words indicate, are expected to work at some stage in their childhood and are therefore praised and encouraged if they fulfil these expectations. Katerina proudly described to me the fact that her six year-old son Stelios insisted on having his own stall in the park where she and her relatives were selling kites on *Kathari Deftera* [Mardis Gras]:

“Stelios is only six but he wanted to have his own business and make his own money. We let him a few metres away from us and we were helping him with the money.”

At the same time, parents strongly criticised the Albanian Gypsy parents of the neighbourhood, who they claimed, sent their children to beg by the traffic lights. For instance, Theofilos pointed out the immoral aspect of begging:

“To force your child to go out and beg in order to bring you back money is unethical. what kind of parent can you be to do that? They are doing it lvi [pointing at the Albanian Gypsy settlement].”

The immorality of begging was often contrasted with the morality of hard work that demands the cultivation of entrepreneurial skills. Antonis, the male head of the Petridis family, insisted that a *timios*, or an honoured man: “can only be somebody who sweats to make money.” And Irini, his daughter-in-law, added:

“A child should learn since it is very young that money is a hard thing to earn and it has to be done *timia* [in an honoured way]. Not to open the hand for a beg. This is easy but not *timio*.”

Children themselves often described those Albanian Gypsy children from the neighbouring settlement who begged in the streets as “*alites*” [bums] and “*atimous*” [without honour]. What is more, children’s perceptions of work as an activity that should be associated with the development and performance of particular qualities and skills undertaken within a particular social and moral framework was also illustrated by their opinions about those who earned their living through gun and drug dealing. For instance, as eleven-year-old Angelina explained to me:

“Many of the Albanian Gypsies from the neighbourhood make a lot of money through these illegal activities but no one respects them because they don’t work as real men ought to do, people are only afraid of them because they hold guns.”

Children also expressed criticism of their own relatives, such as the drug addicts, who could not work or participated in drug-dealing themselves. Once for example, I was alone with the children in Theofilos and Katerina’s house when Fanis, Katerina’s youngest brother, came in to ask nine-year-old Manolis for the key from his father’s truck but Manolis refused to hand it to him. When Fanis left cursing his nephew, Manolis confessed to me: “I didn’t give it to him, Ivi, because he doesn’t want the car to go to work properly. He wants it to do *vromodoulia* [dirty work].” And his younger brother, Stelios, added: “he is *ahristos* [useless] and *tembelis* [lazy] and not capable of doing anything”, while his four-year-old daughter, Xanthi, was whispering to me that “he is a junkie ...”

Gitonia’s children were used to accompany their parents and relatives at work since birth and to participate in family work patterns as well as contributing to the family income. However, for the vast majority of children, male and female, work clearly meant a lot more than their mere participation in the family’s work patterns and their contribution to the family income. For them, work constitutes an activity that is intrinsically bound with the ways through which personhood is performed and evaluated within the extended kin network and the peer group to affirm the group’s distinctiveness and a shared sense of belonging.

For that reason, when children came up with their own entrepreneurial ideas, these were especially valued and taken into consideration by their parents and relatives, such as six-year-old Stelios’ idea to sell candles outside the church on Good Friday, or twelve-year-old Kalliope’s input for a quick way of cutting

coloured paper for making the tails of the kites. Entrepreneurial ideas were often a common theme of discussion among children themselves and were especially appreciated by their peers. For instance, when Kalliope introduced her idea to quickly cut the coloured paper for the tails of the kites, Haris showed interest in getting the information of how to do it himself, also calling Manolis and Dimitris to hear Kalliope's idea. The boys found "*eksipni*" [clever] Kalliope's idea and all excitedly ran off to copy it themselves.

Children frequently came to discuss such ideas with me as well. One day, Manolis came to ask my opinion about his "perfect idea for making a lot of money during Christmas." And he went on describing his project:

Manolis: "Ivi, what do you think, if you teach us [implying himself, his brother and their little cousin] how to sing Christmas Carols and each of us goes to flats in different rich areas for one-two weeks in a row? How much money will we make?"

Ivi: "Yes, but you know there are only three specific days that children go to sing Christmas Carols at people's homes, one tomorrow [Christmas Eve], one next week [New Year's Eve] and one the following week [at the eve of a celebration called *Ta Aghia Theophania*] ... you cannot do it for one or two weeks in a row."

Manolis: "Why not? What's the problem? I want to sing it everyday during Christmas. I'm sure they are going to like it ... [laughs] ... Yes, maybe they'll give me more money because nobody else is doing it."

While in most cases children would make up an idea in order to buy something they knew their parents could not afford such as a bicycle, or footballer clothes, there were cases when children, mostly boys, would come up with work plans and projects with higher expectations. Manolis thought of finding a nice post of selling Christmas trees in order to help grandfather pay off his debt to somebody:

"First I'll borrow money from grandpa to buy the trees from somebody he knows along with those he wants to trade himself. Then I'll tell him to drop me off in a different post to sell them. The money I'll make I'll return it back to him with the profit."

Manolis' work plan, however, shows that children do not only pursue paid work in order to satisfy their personal needs and cover their everyday expenses. Instead, they view work as integral part of their relationships within the extended family network.

Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter explored a set of diverse gender and age-based activities undertaken by *Gitonia*'s Gypsies within the household. The undertaking of these activities is inextricably associated with the manifestation of those qualities that male and female members of this group need to progressively cultivate and demonstrate in order to contribute to the successful running of the *nikokirio* [household].

Along with other ethnographic studies on different areas within Greece, this study of Greek Gypsies recognises the prominence of the *nikokirio* in the organisation of socio-economic life. However, the Greek Gypsy household¹³ cannot be viewed separately from the extended family organisation and intra-family alliances which prompt economic activity. Therefore, it is more useful to look at the mode of operation of the extended *nikokirio* which constitutes the reference point of individual and collective identification.

The performance in and contribution to the extended *nikokirio*, are intimately associated with Greek Gypsy processes of becoming and belonging. The performance of gender and age-specific domestic and work activities based on distinctive practices and methods (such as *nikokirosini*, or flexible and labour-intensive paid work patterns) serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it progressively consolidates a 'Greek Gypsy personhood' that must constantly be enacted by male and female adults and children in order to manifest distinctiveness. Secondly, in a parallel process, the constant appraisal and evaluation of this performance by the members of the extended family and the wider community creates the ground on which hierarchies are negotiated and renegotiated and relatedness is affirmed.

Nikokirosini, represents a specific set of practices and methods in the performance of household chores and constitutes one of the most important credentials for a Greek Gypsy woman. At the same time, the undertaking of diversified male domestic tasks such as the construction and maintenance of the houses and the settlement's common yard, or the repair of cars, but, most importantly, the enactment and performance of family and intra-family relationships of respect and support—such as financial support, and wedding

¹³ As already shown in chapters 5 and 6, marriage processes (the money investment process), extended family structures and kindred relatedness primarily aim at the creation of the socio-economic conditions which can eventually enable the single household to operate successfully.

gifts—constitute the most important attributes of a male Greek Gypsy personhood.

The centrality of the *nikokirio* is primarily reflected in the preoccupation of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* with the efficient training of young girls and boys in order for their performance to attain an adequate standard, crucial for successfully founding a household. Young boys and girls are being brought up in a way that promotes their early active and thriving engagement in a range of activities. And in learning to undertake gender-based activities in the domestic environment they also learn how to participate in the patterns of the family's work outside the domestic arena following a specific division of labour. However, efficient training is not enough to ensure an adequate consolidation of Greek Gypsy personhood. As chapter 6 also demonstrated, Greek Gypsy personhood is being constantly evaluated through a life-long and strenuous process of the performative embodiment of a wide range of roles within the extended kinship network.

This chapter has made clear that domestic activities, work and family intersect. For example, Greek Gypsy economic activity tends to exclude work patterns that diminish extended family relationships of support and intra-family solidarity. That is presumably why the male heads or the oldest male siblings of the extended families generally rejected the idea of putting their names down for waged work in the municipality along with the close family members that assisted them. Greek Gypsy economic activity is characterised by a considerable degree of flexibility in undertaking a set of diversified occupations as well as a degree of flexibility that relates to time, space and number of contributors to the family's economic wellbeing. Every member of the family, male or female, adult or child, is a candidate in the process of generating the family's income. Similarly, as in the case of Anastasia, who worked for a few years in a neighbouring milk factory, one might accept a waged position, if this contributes to the generation of the family's income without obstructing the proper operation of the Greek Gypsy household.

Simultaneously, this labour-intensive economy shows a remarkable capacity to deploy a variety of economic strategies that enable this group of Gypsies to respond immediately and effectively to external changes. Indeed, flexibility constitutes the presupposition of the ability of the Gypsies of *Gitonia* to meet the challenges of shifting socio-economic conditions.

Having discussed in the last three chapters the centrality of marriage, the importance of enacting kinships relatedness and undertaking gender and age specific roles in the extended *nikokirio*, the following chapter shifts again its focus almost exclusively on children. Chapter 8 concentrates on the particular ways through which children and childhood articulate and inform perceptions of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness.



Fig. 7.1: Performing *Nikokirosini*



Fig. 7.2: Setting off for the market



Fig. 7.3: Preparations for the market

Chapter Eight

Childhood and Greek Gypsy Distinctiveness

The Centrality of Childhood for Definitions of *Greek-Gypsiness*

Through examples extracted from fieldwork, this chapter demonstrates that what is thought to be distinctive in the case of Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* is inextricably associated with children's experiences and adults' conceptions of childhood.

What is more, this chapter shows that children's experiences of childhoods are not only about the embodiment and interpretation of their parents' and relatives' views. They are also about participating in intersubjective relationships with different childhoods and adulthoods as well as engaging with institutional processes. In this sense, this chapter also seeks to examine not only how *Greek-Gypsiness* is experienced in childhood, but also how being a Greek Gypsy child seems to be different from other childhoods and adulthoods and to what extent children themselves acknowledge and reproduce these differences.

As discussed in chapter 3, seeing *habitus* as articulating the modalities of consciousness and agency in embodied practices, we also come to understand the ways through which children affirm selfhood and personhood, belonging and dissent, and produce difference, sameness and otherness. What is more, acknowledging children's bodies as markers of distinctiveness, this chapter reveals the particular ideologies and practices through which Greek Gypsy children's bodies come to be seen as producing shared fields of belonging both in the context of personal relationships and in and through institutional processes.

Similarly to adults, although children acknowledge the constraints that institutional processes entail for their lives, they also recognise the possibilities they may offer to them. Through children's words and drawings it becomes obvious that *Gitonia*'s children draw on and appropriate ideologies sustained in state institutions in a multiplicity of ways in order to manifest and negotiate what is distinctive about their lives. This is especially obvious in the ways children selectively use symbols, interpret ideologies and follow practices which are

articulated in institutions, such as the church, the army and the police. Indeed, it is through the ways children embody an individual and collective sense of institutionalised self—as for example through engaging with institutions that are meaningful for them, such as the church—that children embody and express national and religious consciousness and affirm Greek Gypsy distinctiveness. Again similarly to the adults (see chapter 3), this process of institutionalisation largely takes place at the margins or even outside of these institutions which are meaningful for the children.

The Experience of Greek Gypsy Childhood

Children's Competence Acknowledged

What struck me since my first encounter with the children in *Gitonia*, was the fact that children as young as three or four years old were not simply aware of the fact that I represented 'the other' for them. They immediately recognised in me a source of knowledge and skills which both they and their parents or other adults in *Gitonia* lacked. But significantly, they also acknowledged that I lacked important qualities and a kind of knowledge to which they did have access. They felt it was essential to make these qualities and this kind of knowledge explicit to me in order to make my life in the settlement easier.

For most of the children, as for example for six-year-old Stelios, I knew "how to read and write" but I definitely lacked an appropriate sense of the morality of his community because I was wearing trousers and make-up: "I know that you wear these [touching my trousers] and this thing [pointing at my lipstick] because you are *balami* [non-Gypsy Greek]." Sometimes he even said he was sorry but he had to remove it with his fingers because, as he explained to me, "the grown-ups will laugh at you." Four-year-old Xanthi and nine-year-old Manolis repeatedly warned me to be very careful not to be taken advantage of by the grown-ups in *Gitonia*: "You are *balami* and you won't understand when the Gypsies lie to you" Xanthi said to me on one of my first visits. In addition, Manolis insisted that I should always say no to the grown-ups' demands.¹

¹ Especially in the beginning. Manolis and the rest of the children insisted that I should not bring anything to the settlement either to the children or to the grown ups. However, when I did bring

“Whatever they ask you, just say no. Listen to me, don’t do favours for anybody. You have to be strong with them. Clear? Even if they show they are good to you, you shouldn’t show them you are soft.”

One day, Aspasia, Xanthi’s mother and Manolis’ aunt, politely asked me to buy her chocolates and biscuits. Manolis shouted furiously that I was not going to buy anything for her and that she must not ask favours of me again. And she angrily replied: “*Vre mpela pou vrikame me tin balami ke ta pedia!* [We are in trouble, now, with the non-Gypsy (meaning myself) and the children!].” Long after this incident Aspasia confessed to me that she wouldn’t dare ask me for anything “because my daughter and nephew protected you in such a way that if they found out they would ridicule me in front of everybody.” In a similar incident Irini, the mother of ten-year-old Haris, explained to me that her son shouted at her when she encouraged him to ask favours of me.

Through my personal encounter with the children I realised that they were conscious of the influence they had on the adults. This very awareness clearly indicates that they experience their childhood as a status that is different from Greek Gypsy adulthood. Precisely this difference in status also grants children a competence that differs from that of adults. The challenge for the researcher lies in the importance of revealing what this potential difference in children’s competence comprises, to what extent it is recognised by adults and how it is experienced and negotiated by children. The case of the children of *Gitonia* suggests that children feel competent because adults acknowledge their competence. For example, their loyalty towards me should not be interpreted as a betrayal of the adults. Instead, it should be seen as the children’s ability, recognised both by adults and children alike, to establish and negotiate meaningful encounters and manage a web of complex social relations.

Adults Looking through the Eyes of the Children

In particular, the ability of children to sense, evaluate and negotiate differences and commonalities in and through relationships, encounters and practices is especially valued by adults. For them, children’s ways of experiencing their

presents. children accepted my offers and always appreciated this gesture. In return, they also offered me presents which they sold in or bought from the markets or festivals [*paniyiria*].

childhoods seem to encompass a number of important processes through which children effectively distinguish difference. On many occasions, including the ways in which the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* interact with non-Gypsy Greeks and non-Greek Gypsy ‘others’, parents trust their children’s skills and intuition in encountering the ‘other’. This happens in different settings and environments, such as work, the neighbourhood and the school. The following examples suggest that children’s views of the world and of human relationships affect their parents’ stance towards difference, commonality and communication.

As already mentioned, adults’ trust in children’s judgement was particularly obvious in the way their stance towards me gradually took shape. Although I was greeted and treated politely, when I first entered *Gitonia* there was undoubtedly a sense of suspicion in the atmosphere towards me. But the more the children got to know me and trust me, the less suspicious adults were of my intentions. One day Elpida from the Petridis family confessed to me:

“Ivi, my girl. I know why all the families here love you so much. Because everybody’s children love you! And children cannot be wrong! Never! It is amazing that when you are away children keep asking for my mobile to call you. And if anybody dares to say something bad about you, you can’t imagine how much they support you.”

Varvara, the female head of the Petridis family, also had her own explanation about the reason why the children liked me:

“It is strange, but there must be a good reason for children behaving always well when they are with you. And I know the reason. Children know very well who to love and trust. You have a nice way with them, you talk to them nicely, you respect them ... I know you love them. And that is why they love you too. If they didn’t love you, believe me, these children wouldn’t have been manageable. God bless your patience! [*Hara stin ipomoni sou!*].”

The next example reveals how children’s assessments of particular events can easily influence adults’ attitudes towards ‘otherness’. One afternoon, Katerina heard her nine-year-old son Manolis whispering something about seeing the Albanian Gypsy boy [*to Alvanaki*] who had stolen his bicycle some time ago. She immediately instructed him to stop moaning and to go to take it back from him: “Stop crying and do something! Go and take it! What are you doing here? Watch

the Albanian having fun with your bicycle?” And Manolis, irritated, replied to her:

“What do you think? That the Albanian will give me back my bicycle like this? Where do you live my little child [ironic]? Not here? This boy is very *atimos* [meaning dangerous here]! Do you know that he might carry a knife?”

Listening to Manolis’ argument, Katerina became worried and immediately changed her position. She turned to me saying:

“You see? Things are getting worse and worse here with these Albanians. These dirty ones bring up their children teaching them how to steal other people’s things ...”

On another occasion, when Manolis invited Dinos, the eight-year-old Albanian Gypsy from the nearby settlement, to join us in a teaching session in his yard, he infuriated his father. Theofilos, his father, immediately asked him: “The boy? What is he doing here?” And Manolis explained to his father: “Don’t worry, I know him well. We play football together. He is a nice boy.” And Theofilos left, satisfied with his son’s answer.²

Adults’ trust in children’s decisions and views extended to attendance about school, including their decision to drop out of school. In fact, although adults acknowledge the importance of school for the children’s future, they nevertheless do not want to push children to attend school against their will. As Michalis, the eldest brother of the Christopoulos extended family, explained to me about his youngest son, thirteen-year-old Pavlos, who dropped out of school:

“It was he who decided to go to school and he who decided to leave. Maybe it is my fault that I didn’t push him to attend school regularly ... But how can you push him to do it if he doesn’t want it? Eh, he didn’t. That’s it! He said school was a waste of time and he preferred to work with me. There’s nothing I can do about it.”

What is more, children’s competence is also acknowledged at the level of making decisions in the family. Children participate in the planning of the family and their opinion is taken seriously into account. Their feelings and wishes are top priority and are treated with a great sense of respect and responsibility by adults, even for important family issues. For example, when I asked Theofilos and

² In chapter 4, we also saw that Manolis had convinced his cousins and peers that Dinos could take part in another teaching session.

Katerina where they were planning to go when the bulldozers would eventually appear in *Gitonia*. Theofilos told me:

“It would have been better for me and Katerina to go to my sister’s place in Peristeri, because she has a big and comfortable house. And we’ve transferred most of our stuff there just to keep it safe. But the problem is the children. They don’t like it there away from their grandmother and their cousins. Manolis told me that he can’t stand it at all, so we decided to go to Gerakas to stay with my mother-in-law. What can I do if they can’t adjust there? If they say they prefer to stay with my mother-in-law, we’ll go there. We have to listen to what the kids want.”

Qualities and Attributes of Childhood

Primarily, Greek Gypsy childhoods are lived and experienced within the extended family and *Gitonia*. As this study has shown, the performance of *Greek-Gypsiness* is not only the responsibility of the adults. Children too are conscious of the responsibility of undertaking age and gender-specific roles in the areas of domestic life and paid work. Children’s duties and responsibilities are embedded in relationships of support and solidarity within the family, the peer group and the members of the extended kin. In most cases, these are duties and obligations that children willingly undertake without feeling obliged to do so under the stressful instructions of the parents. For instance, children proudly undertake the responsibility of looking after their younger siblings, cousins, and peers.

However, to be a Greek Gypsy child is not only associated with important duties and obligations. Children are also recipients of love and affection expressed by the older members of their family, while simultaneously they are bestowers of feelings of devotion to their younger siblings, their extended families and their peer group. Devotion to the younger members of the family as well as devotion and respect to their elder relatives is clearly a determining factor of establishing both male and female children’s personalities within the family and the peer group.

In addition, *Gitonia*’s children are conscious of the fact that they enjoy a great deal of independence and autonomy in decision-making, moving and acting out. At the same time children’s independence should be respected, encouraged and protected by adults. This is most obvious in the ways children sort out their disputes. Although they seek the support of their peer group members or cousins,

they tend to leave their parents outside of their problems unless there is an important issue such as a physical attack against some child. Indeed, to a large extent their parents expect them to resolve their differences with other children without their intervention.

In many different ways Greek Gypsy childhoods are also childhoods of celebrating freedom, of enjoying playing and having fun. For *Gitonia's* Gypsies, childhood is about being excessive in playing, swearing, fighting, getting dirty, being cunning, laughing and making noise. This is something that both children and their parents consider an important asset in children's experiences. This contrasts with the conventional image of childhood, which sees and wants children in need of protection, restricted at home, and under the moral and physical surveillance of parents (see chapter 1). Here, children are exactly the opposite. As will be extensively illustrated in the forthcoming paragraphs, children are praised and encouraged to swear, to be disobedient, cunning and aggressive.

The attributes and qualities mentioned above entail some interesting contradictions. For example, Greek Gypsy childhood is expressed as a combination of freedom and responsibility, competence and cunning, disobedience and self-discipline. The children of *Gitonia* have more freedom than that awarded to the ideal 'Western' middle-class childhood but they also bear a lot of responsibilities. The particular ways through which these contradictions are managed and negotiated are intimately connected with children's personalities. Greek Gypsy children are judged according to the ways they individualise such attributes. There are clever children, lazy children, responsible children, *atima* [without values] children and disobedient children. However, among all these adjectives that the adults used in order to describe children's personalities, cunning seemed to be the most important. This is probably because cunning sums up the ability of children to manage and negotiate in a clever way the contradictions of their childhoods.

However, as we shall also see in this chapter, *Greek-Gypsiness* is not only lived and experienced by children within the family, the peer group and the wider Greek Gypsy group. It is also experienced and negotiated through the encounter of *Gitonia's* children with significantly different experiences of childhood and adulthood. Fieldwork unravels the particular ways through which Greek Gypsy

children view their childhood as different from that of the *raklakia* [the non Greek Gypsy children] as well as different from that of the *Alvanakia* [Albanian Gypsy children].

Celebrating Childhood

Children's Play

It is true that the children of *Gitonia* were not subject to many of the restrictions that the non-Gypsy children are. Especially within the settlement children were free to move and play in all sorts of spaces throughout the day. Parents believed children should be absolutely free to play wherever and whenever they liked. For example, Antigoni, the female head of the Anastasiou family, once told me: "Children need space to play, to shout, to do what they want, you can't deprive them of this." During our sessions, when I told children to let their parents know and gain their consent for doing things such as going outside of the settlement, the children, especially the older ones, laughed at me: "Don't worry, Ivi, we don't need to ask our parents—they let us go out", twelve-year-old Kalliope told me. Restrictions apply only where children are thought to be in danger and these restrictions vary according to the age and gender of the children.

In most cases, restrictions applied when younger children wanted to leave the settlement. Katerina, the mother of six-year-old Stelios and nine-year-old Manolis explained that she didn't let her younger son go outside of the settlement with the bicycle because she was scared of the cars on the streets: "Manolis is old enough to take the bicycle out but not Stelios. I'm so scared of letting him go out alone with the bicycle. He's only six." On the other hand, Katerina, along with the rest of the women of *Gitonia*, constantly criticised Marina, who, according to them, was overprotective of her two and a half-year-old daughter Areti. As Varvara said: "It must be unbearable for the child to hear all the time "where are you", "come here" and "what are you doing." Even Marina's husband, Giorgos, confessed that his wife "was acting like a madwoman with the girl." In his opinion "children are not stupid to leave their house and get lost or go out on the street and get hit by a car." Marina admitted that she was overreacting but she justified herself by saying that "Areti is a very naughty girl and I prefer being a bit stricter than being all the time in a state of worry."

Children's play is seen as an activity that should not be interrupted without good reason. In *Gitonia*, there were frequent quarrels between different extended families because of adult reactions to children's noise. In fact, arguments among parents of different extended families about children and noise was a very common reason for arguments among adults in the settlement. Parents constantly defended their children's right to play freely even if this caused problems in the nearby houses of *Gitonia*.

One day Manolis, Stelios, Dimitris, Paris, Aphrodite, Haris and Xanthi, children from the Petridis, Theodorou and the Markopoulos extended families were playing football in the settlement's common yard. I was relaxing with Evgenia and Alexis, the heads of the Christopoulos extended family, Marina and her husband, Giorgos, while the children were playing football in front of us. Suddenly, Evgenia started shouting at the children saying that it was too much—every evening when people want to sleep and relax—to be bothered by their unbearable noise: “Eh, enough with this football, you've made me mad again shouting and running up and down, I've got a headache!” Then, she justified her anger to me by saying:

“These children do not understand anything. When the people who wake up at five to go to the markets want to sleep, they start making noise and nobody can relax.”

However, the Petridis adults who were also relaxing in their yard opposite theirs, heard her shouting, stood up and started complaining to her. Varvara was the first one to defend her grandchildren, while they continued playing football completely ignoring the dialogue that took place:

“Why Evgenia, your grandchildren do not play football? They've broken all my plants here ... come here to see ... Or, is it only when our children play it bothers you?”

Children's Dirt is 'Good' Dirt

Becoming dirty while playing is also intimately associated with the way and extent to which Greek Gypsy childhood is experienced as distinctive, especially for children younger than twelve. Children always enjoyed becoming as dirty as they could. They were proud of it and not ashamed to show it. Xanthi, Areti,

Paris, Stelios, Fotis, Aphrodite and little Michalis repeatedly showed me with pride how dirty they became while playing in the soil in *Gitonia*.

Older children did the same. Every time they came back from playing they made the same gesture. They extended their arms showing their dirty palms to me (Fig. 8.9). But boys and girls above the age of ten or twelve, although they liked becoming dirty while playing, were careful to shower and change as soon as their play was finished. For example, Kalliope, Nikoleta, Manolis, Haris and Dimitris changed clothes and washed every time they came to the sessions after playing in the yard.

Although parents complained that their children were always getting dirty, they nevertheless kept repeating the fact that being dirty is associated with children's freedom in playing and enjoying childhood. Simultaneously, adults repeatedly stressed how important it was to constantly pursue the cleaning process for their children after their play. With respect to younger children, dirt is seen as 'good' dirt and, as such, as a marker of distinctiveness *vis à vis* non-Gypsy Greek children. According to *Gitonia's* adults and children, *ta raklakia* [the non-Gypsy Greek children] who are not allowed or encouraged to get dirty while playing cannot enjoy their childhood as the Greek Gypsy children do. Theofilos once told me that both his sons were always full of mud and dust because they played non-stop in the yard, while making clear that:

"The problem with our children (*me ta dika mas pedia* [the Greek Gypsy children]) is that we can't stop them from playing and that is why they are always dirty ... full of mud and dust. My wife showers them daily but as soon as they shower they go out to play again and they become as dirty as before the shower. But that's how children ought to be."

And Marina complained daily that no matter how many times she changed Areti's clothes, she would soil them again in five minutes:

"What I like in your children (*sta dika sas pedia* [the non-Greek Gypsy children]) is that they are always clean and shiny, not like ours. But this I guess is because they don't play, because they are locked up at home all the time ..."

Becoming dirty while playing, as the examples reveal, is not only associated with the ways Greek Gypsy childhood is experienced as different *vis à vis* diverse childhoods. Becoming dirty while playing among children, in contrast to adults'

emphasis on performing cleanliness through *nikokirosini*, clearly differentiates Greek Gypsy childhood from adulthood. What is more, the ways children manage dirt as they grow up points to a process which could be seen as the transition to adulthood. We saw that older boys and girls are more careful to get cleaned as soon as they finish playing. For example, this is obvious in girls who, although they retain their freedom to play and become dirty, they nevertheless take part in the training of the household [*nikonirio*].

Being Naughty and Cunning

Parents and relatives repeatedly approved, supported, or even praised the fact that their children were naughty, aggressive and disobedient. Children's swearing and cursing was also an act that occasionally evoked admiration by parents and relatives³. Undoubtedly, adults realised that this kind of behaviour towards other children and adults constituted a source of diverse problems both within the settlement and outside of it. And, although occasionally embarrassed or ashamed by children's reactions, they felt proud of—and at least with their praising approved of—their naughtiness. Above all, however, what was most admired both by children and adults was children's cleverness to test other people's limits on different occasions, trying to gain advantage over them (or the occasion) for their own interests. In other words, all these features summed up in the Greek word *poniria* [cunning] were considered important assets for children's personalities. As C. Stewart (1991) in his work *Demons and Devil: Moral imagination in Modern Greek Culture* has put it:⁴

“There is only a shade of difference between cleverness and cunning, and in many cases the two labels may be applied interchangeably. A person who is cunning is able to size up a situation where his own interests are at stake and anticipate the reactions of others involved so as to achieve his ends (Stewart. 1991: 62).”

Proudly exchanging detailed accounts of children's naughtiness was a daily practice in *Gitonia*. Marina, for instance, kept me informed every day about all the naughty things that her daughter, Areti, did. Aspasia did the same about Xanthi,

³ See also Herzfeld's work (1984) on blasphemy as an ideology and as a political act.

⁴ Again here we see important continuities between Greek Gypsies and non Gypsy Greeks.

Irini about Haris and Stella about Paris and Afrodite. Indeed, parents talked competitively about whose children were the naughtiest in the settlement. As Nikos, a relative from Khalkida once told me:

“Not only can these children cheat other children but also adults. And nobody can deceive them. These children are very clever! And, not only clever ... Ha ha! They have dirty mouths. You are ashamed to listen to the words that come out of their mouths. But, there is no way to control them.”

Aspasia, the mother of four-year old Xanthi, once interrupted our teaching with the children while passing in front of us and turned to me saying:

“What are you teaching them there? I bet, what you can't teach them is how to talk nicely and not to swear all the time. How to behave themselves. This is what you should teach them, but this nobody can ...”

Evgenia was constantly telling me about the swearwords that her grandchildren, one and a half-year-old Michalis and two and a half-year-old Areti, used with other children inside and outside the settlement, and within the family. Once she came towards me laughing and saying: “Ivi, do you know what Michalis told his father yesterday? He told him: “*ante fige mpampa zaki* [get lost, daddy, junkie]”, yes, yes ... *o poniros* [the cunning]” On another occasion, she told me proudly about how clever her little granddaughter, Areti, was because she always had a word ready in reply to people:

“I've never seen such a clever child in my life! Once I took the girl and went to visit my neighbour, the old woman who always helps me at Christmas. And when we got to her place, she gave me some money but it wasn't much ... Maybe the lady didn't have more to give me ... How the girl understood that the money wasn't much. I don't know ... Did she see my face and she understood it? I'm telling you, I can't figure it out. And she turned to her and told her: “Why you don't give more money, lady? Why did you give only this little? This is nothing. You don't have more, lady?” And I felt so ashamed ... Where she has learnt this I don't know ...”

Her mother, Marina, also had another story about Areti to tell:

“Yesterday, when her father came back from work he didn't bring her anything, because, you know that he normally brings her some biscuits, or sweets. When she saw him, first thing she asked him was: “What did you bring me daddy?” And when

Giorgos said nothing, she turned to him saying: “*Ante gamisou karioli mpampa*”
[Fuck you asshole dad]!”

Giorgos nodded his head and he half strictly, half proudly said to me: “Even if I want to shout at her she swears, I can’t deal with that girl!” In addition, every time Marina came back from shopping she complained that she couldn’t go into any shop with Areti because the child embarrassed her:

“*I poniri* [the cunning], she knows that I don’t have money to buy her candy and chocolate but every time she starts asking me to buy her things loudly in front of the people: “Come on, mommy, please buy me this little one” and when I tell her I can’t, then, she goes on asking and crying, but in a nice way, you know her way, so that people around us feel sorry for her. And, of course what to do, the people, they buy her what she wants. Last time in the bakery, I swear to God, I didn’t have money to buy her a sweet that she liked. And there was a lady there who offered to buy it for her. Oh God, I felt so ashamed that I wanted to kill her. The same she did again yesterday in the pharmacy and the lady who owns it gave her a bag of candy.”

One day after Easter I was sitting with all the women from the Petridis family who had gathered at Maria’s place talking about the Easter celebrations and the money they had made during the previous week. Elpida enthusiastically described to me what her nephew did outside the church of *Aghios Nikolaos* where they were selling candles:

“Listen, Ivi what your Stelios did on Friday night. We were selling candles outside the church with my mom [Maria], Katerina, Manolis and Stelios. And one old lady comes and asks for a candle from Stelios and one *fanaraki* [a paper-made cover for the candle]. And Stelios takes a candle and tries to stick it into the cover. But he said: *O gamoto, re pousti mou den mpeni* [Oh fuck, my faggot ... I can’t stick it] . And the lady turns to him and tells him: Why do you talk like this on holy days outside of the church? And Stelios answered to her: “Fuck you bitch and fuck your candle!” It was very funny and embarrassing for us because we were sitting a few metres away from him and we were laughing. Yes, Ivi, we pretended that we didn’t know him. I was so ashamed in front of the lady ... although I burst into laughter.”

Being naughty and cunning are qualities that are admired not only by parents and adults but also by other children. As we have seen in previous sections (see chapter 4), children who were acknowledged as having a leading role in their peer group were particularly admired by their peers for these qualities. For example,

Dimitris, the leader of the peer group of the children, was especially respected by the rest of the children for his cunning, and his naughty and aggressive attitude at home, in the neighbourhood and at school. In addition, children also praised their younger siblings and cousins for showing signs of naughtiness and cunning. One day, Haris warned me about his six-month-old cousin, Efi, who I was holding on my knees, while I was eating a bar of chocolate: “Be careful, Ivi, because she is *poniri* and she will lick the chocolate you are holding.” And she did. While I was talking to the children, she was secretly licking my bar of chocolate, when Haris shouted: “Yes, that’s my girl! I told you she is *poniri*! I knew it! That is why she came to your knees in the first place! ”

However, for the children of *Gitonia*, being cunning and naughty does not equate with children lacking a sense of self-control and discipline. On the contrary, children’s cunning and naughtiness are qualities assumed both by adults and children to be handled with judgement and responsibility by children towards family members, friends, and relatives, even towards the non Greek Gypsy ‘others’. Indeed, children’s accurate assessment of the circumstances and their responsibility in expressing disobedience, aggressiveness and guile requires discipline and self-control. Although it may sound like an oxymoron it is exactly through discipline and self-control that children ensure through their actions (cunning and naughtiness) an effective outcome with the least possible consequences for them. This is what is seen as differentiating *Gitonia*’s children from others, making them “better” “cleverer”, and “more cunning.”

When they described Areti’s naughty behaviour and cunning, both Marina and her mother-in-law, Evgenia added at the end of the conversation:

“Do you know why I’m telling you that she is clever and *poniri*? Because she knows where and when to do her *poniries* [cunning]. With her uncle, for example, she is like *Panayitsa* [the little Virgin Mary].”

Marina explained and Evgenia said:

“She just needs a few minutes to assess the situation. To judge if there is space for doing it [meaning to be cunning]. If she thinks there is space, she can buy you and sell you at the same time. If not, she will think twice and she will behave herself. [*Theli mono merika lepta na kopsi katastasi. Na di an tin perni. An ne, mpori na se*

aghorasi ke na se poulisi tin idia stigmi. An ochi, tha to skefti dipla ke tha katsi kala].”

Similarly, among the children, Manolis recognised in his cousin, Dimitris, the ability to be a good peer leader because “he is naughty only when there is a reason, normally he is very serious.” And ten-year-old Haris added:

“Dimitris was naughty at school so that our mates and the older kids counted him as a real *maga* [street-wise] and nobody could do any harm to us either, and not because he wanted to have fun. This, I’m telling you, is important!”

Childhood and Difference: *Raklakia* and *Alvanakia*

When I asked the children if they have non-Gypsy Greek friends, Dimitris turned to me saying ironically: “*Me pia? Me ta raklakia ti pareo na kanis, afta ine florakia*”, which means “What kind of friendship could we have with the *raklakia* [non-Gypsy Greek children]? They are *florakia* [soft, or homosexual].” *Raklakia* is a special word that children and adults in *Gitonia* use in order to describe unmarried non-Gypsy Greeks, or children.⁵ The same word does not apply for other Gypsies such as the Albanian Gypsy children or the Turkish Gypsy children. The Albanian Gypsy children are commonly called the *Alvanakia* [the little Albanians] and the Turkish Gypsy children are called the *Yiftakia* [the little Gypsies].⁶ The fact that the Greek Gypsies use a particular word in order to describe and differentiate their childhood from that of the non-Gypsy Greeks as well as from that of the Albanian Gypsies indicates that there are some particular elements and qualities through which children view their childhood as different.

Ta raklakia, according to Kalliope, are boys and girls who can’t do anything without the help of their parents. “They are *flori*, whose parents tell them all the time what to do, what to wear and when to shit.” As Manolis clarified: “The *raklakia* [He laughs ironically]? They are useless because they always run after their parents. You blow at them and they cry calling their fathers for support.” For Dimitris, they are also those children “who are afraid of their own shadow and in

⁵ The word comes from the Romani words *raklo/rakli* which means non-Gypsy boy and non-Gypsy girl respectively.

⁶ For the Greek Gypsy children, the Turkish Gypsy children are a less significant category, probably because the Greek Gypsies have much less everyday contact with the Turkish Gypsies.

a fight would not support their friends.” And many times thirteen-year-old Pavlos explained to me that he found the *raklakia* boring and stupid (see chapter 4). Most of the children, however, agreed that “the *rakles* [non-Gypsy Greek girls] were less dull than the *rakli* [non-Gypsy Greek boys]” as Dimitris said. Haris, as well, said that he preferred to interact with the girls at school because the boys were so dull to him (see chapter 4). Kalliope, Manolis, Haris, Dimitris and Pavlos all agreed that the *raklakia* are quite boring because they are *flori* and they hesitate to make noise and fights or to support their peers. Additionally, for sixteen-year-old Aristides, “they never work until they grow up and have everything bought by mom and dad.”

However, for the Greek Gypsy children, it is not only the *raklakia*, who live a different childhood to theirs. They also view the Albanian Gypsy children, the *Alvanakia*, as different to themselves. And, clearly, what makes the Albanian Gypsy childhood different than theirs is not the same that has been attributed to the *raklakia*. During my fieldwork, for instance, I never heard any of the Greek Gypsy children calling an Albanian Gypsy child *floro* or ever implying anything with a similar meaning. In other words, the *Alvanakia* were not criticised for lacking an autonomy and independence in their movements, neither that they were stupid nor that they hesitated to fight and support their peer in a difficult situation. On the contrary, the *Alvanakia*, lacked what in the previous paragraphs has been described as discipline and self-control in expressing their childhood qualities. They were also seen to lack a sense of moral limits as also the Albanian Gypsy adults were.

More extensively, the children of *Gitonia* considered the *Alvanakia* of both sexes as being immoral, irresponsible, disrespectful, and dangerous. On many occasions during fieldwork, when Albanian Gypsy children passed by *Gitonia*, the Greek Gypsy children commented negatively on what they saw as their tendency to exceed the limits of morality. Manolis, as already shown in the previous sections, clarified that his reluctance to mess with the Albanian Gypsy boys was due to the fact that they are “*atima*” [without values] and therefore “dangerous” since they steal, hit and beg on the streets. And, for Nikoleta, both boys and girls are shameless since they beg at the traffic lights: “*Ine ntropi na zitianeoun exo sta fanaria, alla afta den ehoun tsipa* (It is a shame to beg by the traffic lights, but they [meaning the *Alvanakia*] are shameless).” Paris as well seemed to interpret

the Albanian Gypsy childhood as different from his own in the sense that attributes that he values in his childhood are in this case taken to extremes:

“Ivi, the *Alvanakia* all they care about is money ... All day they hang out in the streets and beg. They become dirty but they don't wash. And, *Panayitsa mou* [my Virgin Mary], if you fight with one of them, then all the Albanians will come after you.”

Negotiating Greek Gypsy Childhood within Diverse Institutions: Embodying Christian Orthodoxy and National Consciousness

Gitonia's children acknowledge the fact that their world exists within a complex web of relationships and institutional processes. Therefore, they have elaborated a complicated way of perceiving and appropriating as 'theirs' what they think fits within their perception of becoming and belonging. In the previous paragraphs, we examined how Greek Gypsy childhood is seen and experienced as different in relation to Greek Gypsy adulthood and diverse childhoods. Here, as ethnographic data reveal, the Greek Gypsy childhood is also experienced as distinctive *vis à vis* different childhoods and adulthoods through the particular ways children appropriate institutional ideologies and practices and embody their institutionalised selves.

Undoubtedly, this experience of distinctiveness among the children of *Gitonia* is clearly interwoven with religious practices and feelings: *Gitonia*'s children were explicit about the centrality of Orthodox Christianity and the church in their lives. They were also clear that *Greekness* was constitutive of their individual and collective sense of self. Like the adults of *Gitonia*, children also lay emphasis on ideologies of place and locality, concepts of naming and language, symbols such as the national flag and the cross, in order to affirm their *Greekness*. Additionally, state institutions such as the army and the police are especially valued by the children. And yet, strikingly, the school is not identified as an important focus for the children in the process of elaborating and embodying Orthodox Christianity and Greek national identity.

Children perceive Albanian Gypsy childhood as a different childhood lacking, among other things, its religious and ethnic affiliation with Orthodox Christianity and notions of *Greekness*. An incident that took place in *Gitonia* one evening while we were having a teaching session with the children seems illuminating of

children's ways of negotiating their religious and ethnic affiliations *vis à vis* the Albanian Gypsy children. While the children were practising writing, seven-year-old Albanian Gypsy Anna showed up at our table taking a look at what we were doing. Manolis, who played the leader of the group, immediately decided that Anna should not stay with us and asked her to leave the yard. When I asked Manolis why, he replied that she should leave "simply because she is an Albanian and she shouldn't be here, where we are having a lesson." Hearing this, Anna started the following dialogue with Manolis and the rest of the children:

Anna: "Yes I'm Albanian, but I've been christened.⁷ here's my cross, where is yours [talking to Manolis]? You don't have one?"

Stelios: "We all have crosses, we are the true Greeks, we don't come from Albania, we come from Khalkida, we are Khalkidei!"

Kalliope: "You wear a cross but you don't go to *Panayia* in Tinos ... You don't even know where it is. We do!"

Manolis: "We speak Greek with our parents neither *Yiftika* [Romani] nor *Alvanika* [Albanian] ..."

Anna: "I speak Greek as well!"

Manolis: "Yes but you learnt Greek here, you are not Greeks like us!"

Kalliope: "Where do your parents come from? What is your real name? Not this one, the Albanian one? Eh? Tell us. This is what matters!"

This dialogue demonstrates that Greek Gypsy children challenge the Albanian Gypsy children's claims to *Greekness* and Orthodox Christianity. More specifically, it shows that the Greek Gypsy children do not recognise the Albanian Gypsy children as members of a Greek ethnic identity by laying emphasis on elements such as place and language of birth or place of origin of their parents and language spoken at home. In addition, the Greek Gypsy children defy the Albanian children's acclaimed religious affiliation to Orthodox Christianity by stressing their non-attendance of certain religious practices, such as the pilgrimage to *Panayia*.

What is intriguing in this for me and Anna embarrassing dialogue is the fact that although Anna was extremely irritated with the Greek Gypsy children, she

⁷ See chapter 4.

did not argue that she is ‘more Greek’ than them because she was actually going to school and knew how to read and write in Greek (see chapter 4). Instead she argued that she was christened in the church and speaks Greek as they do. Neither did the Greek Gypsy children defend the fact that they were not going to school. This is an additional element that shows that children do not see literacy as an intrinsic part of negotiating their distinctiveness nor their identities as Greek.

On the contrary, for them, both religious faith and conceptions of *Greekness* seem to be entangled and strongly naturalised elements. However, as more and more Albanian Gypsies get christened in the church and convert to Greek Orthodoxy as well as speak Greek, ultimately, for the Greek Gypsy children, the ability to achieve *Greekness* comes down to place of birth or origin. Kalliope was clear when she told me that:

“The Albanian Gypsies christen their children in the church in order to get papers and stay in Greece but this does not mean they truly believe in God and that they are Greek since they come from Albania.”

Twelve-year-old Nikoleta added:

“Ivi did you know that the Albanians don’t believe in God?⁸ What do you expect from people who don’t believe in God? It’s only when they came to Greece that they found out that God exists. How do you expect them to live and work? Even if they live in Greece whatever they do is immoral.”

The majority of children in *Gitonia* had been christened in the church. Most of them had either Greek-Orthodox names, such as Stelios, Dimitris, Pavlos, Nikoleta, Manolis, Efi, etc., or ancient Greek ones, such as Aristides, Kalliope, Aphrodite, Paris, etc. The importance of names was also reflected in children’s classification of people as ‘different’. Nikoleta, for instance, said that “the *Alvanakia* have these strange names that mean nothing, they don’t have real names.” Greek Gypsies consider christening to be an important process that each person should go through. During fieldwork a lot of parents described to me the day they christened their children as a valued memory. What is more, children repeatedly talked to me about the church they were christened in, who their

⁸ The majority of the Albanian Gypsies who lived close to *Gitonia*—with the exception of some Muslims—did not have a religious affiliation in Albania.

Godfather or Godmother was,⁹ and they showed off to me their crosses from their christening.

But although christening seems to be important for the children, it doesn't seem to be enough to affirm 'true' religious faith. Regarding the Albanian Gypsies, as already discussed, children do not recognise their christening as effective. On the other hand, there were cases of Greek Gypsy children who were not christened without this causing doubts about theirs or their parents' faith to Orthodox Christianity.

Nevertheless, both children and adults in *Gitonia* do not recognise the full status of personhood to children unless they are christened. In the case of Xanthi, who was already four years old and had not been christened, her relatives (including her mother) repeatedly mentioned the fact that she lacked some important quality. "What can she do in her life, she has not been christened [*avafisti*]" her aunt, Maria, said to me. Her other aunt, Irini, added: "She is clever but still not christened, it's a shame at this age for the girl." Xanthi's cousins confessed to me many times how sorry they felt that she had not been christened. "Do you know that she is not christened? And she is four years old!" Stelios told me with shame about his little cousin. "She can't go to school like that! My uncle is stupid and he hasn't christened her, what do you expect from a junkie?" Haris added.

Most important and affirmative of the 'true' religious faith seemed to be the pilgrimage to *Panayia* [Panayia] in the island of Tinos. For five-year-old Paris, "*Panayia* [Virgin Mary] knows well who goes to Tinos, who lights candles for Her Grace, who is the 'true' Christian." The pilgrimage to the Holy island of Tinos on the 15th of August, *tis Panayias* [Virgin Mary's Assumption Day],¹⁰ was a common theme in discussions with the children and for most inhabitants of *Gitonia*, the most important event of the year. In many cases, the trip to the island of Tinos for the Pilgrimage was a yearly project for many families in which children participated. Stelios admitted that although he didn't like the ferry journey much, it was nevertheless worth it to light a candle for the shake of *Panayia*:

⁹ Godparents could be both Greek Gypsy relatives or friends and non-Gypsy Greeks.

¹⁰ For more on the pilgrimage to the Holy island of Tinos see Dubisch (1995, 1991).

“My God and my Virgin Mary [*Theouli ke Panayia mou*], I’m afraid of the ferry but when I go to Tinos I don’t care because Virgin Mary takes care of us [*I Panayia mas filai*] and the ferry cannot sink!”

Many times the children asked me if I had been to Tinos for the Pilgrimage and asked when I was planning to go again next. Stelios made me promise him that I would go with him and his family the following August to the island of Tinos:

Ivi, come on promise me that you’ll come with us in August to the island, we’ll take the ferry to get there and we’ll go to the church to light a candle for *Panayia*. Wait, I’ll ask my dad to tell you when we’re going so you can ask your dad if he lets you come with us!

The children also frequently drew pictures with the image of the Virgin Mary and Christ without being asked to do so (Fig. 8.1). What is more, in most of the children’s drawings of landscapes a church was always included in the picture. For example, when I asked the children to draw their dream house, most of the drawings included a church next to the house (again, unprompted), such as in Haris’ and Paris’ pictures below (Fig. 8.2 and Fig. 8.3). As figure 8.4 shows, Stelios even drew a church on a boat.

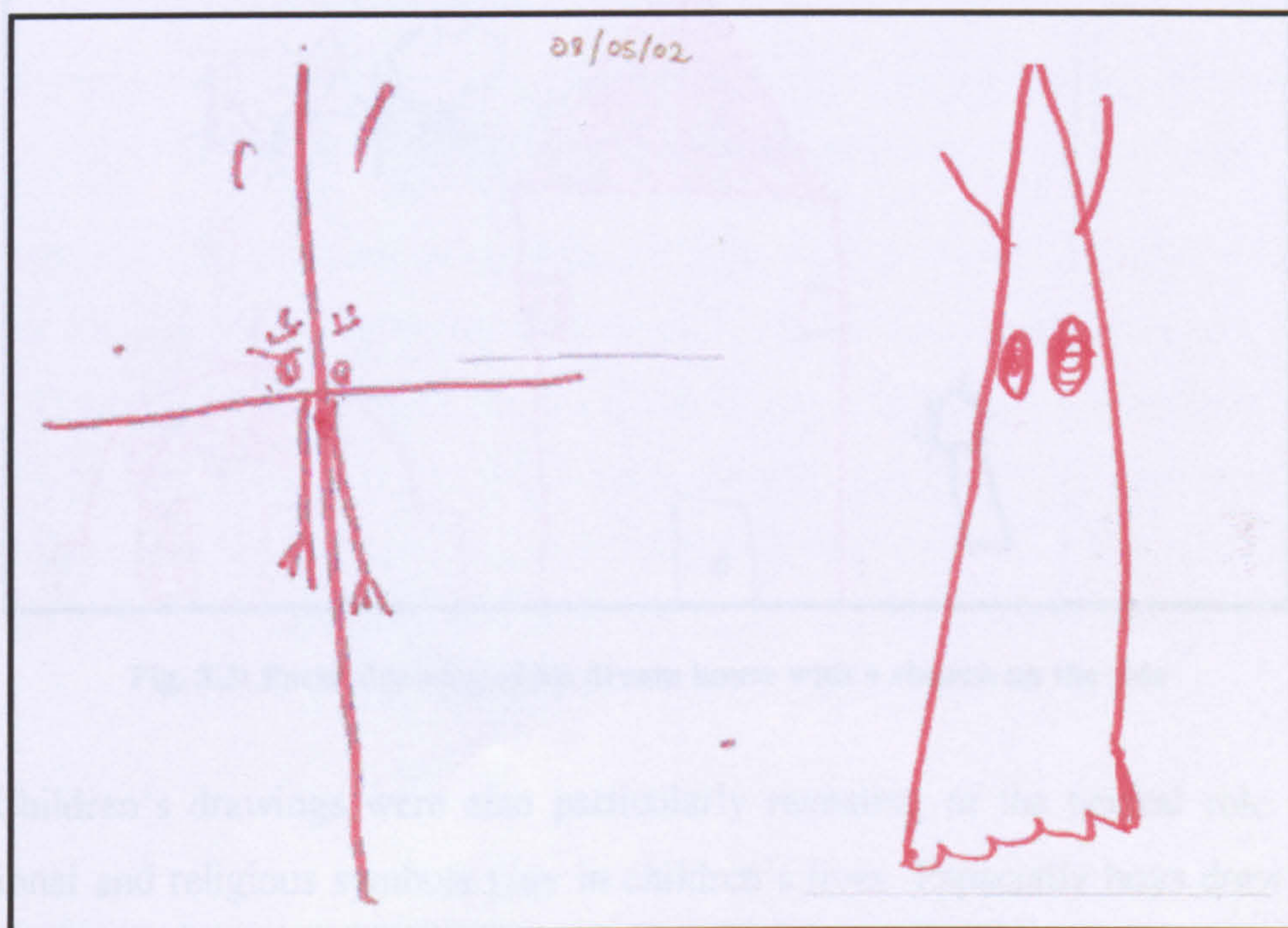


Fig. 8.1: Stelios drawings of the Christ and Virgin Mary



Fig. 8.2: Haris' drawing of his dream house with a church on the side



Fig. 8.3: Paris' drawing of his dream house with a church on the side

Children's drawings were also particularly revealing of the central role that national and religious symbols play in children's lives. Especially boys drew the cross and the Greek flag frequently (Fig. 8.4 and Fig. 8.5). The importance of the use of these symbols in children's drawings lies in the fact that their

familiarisation with them has been elaborated almost exclusively within their family environment and genuinely depicted in illustrations of their own lives. That is probably also why the Greek flag was not drawn correctly (Fig. 8.5). *Gitonia*'s children had never been encouraged or instructed to draw such symbols, as commonly happens in Greek kindergartens, since none of the children of *Gitonia* had ever been to a kindergarten. Nor did I ever ask them to draw such things.

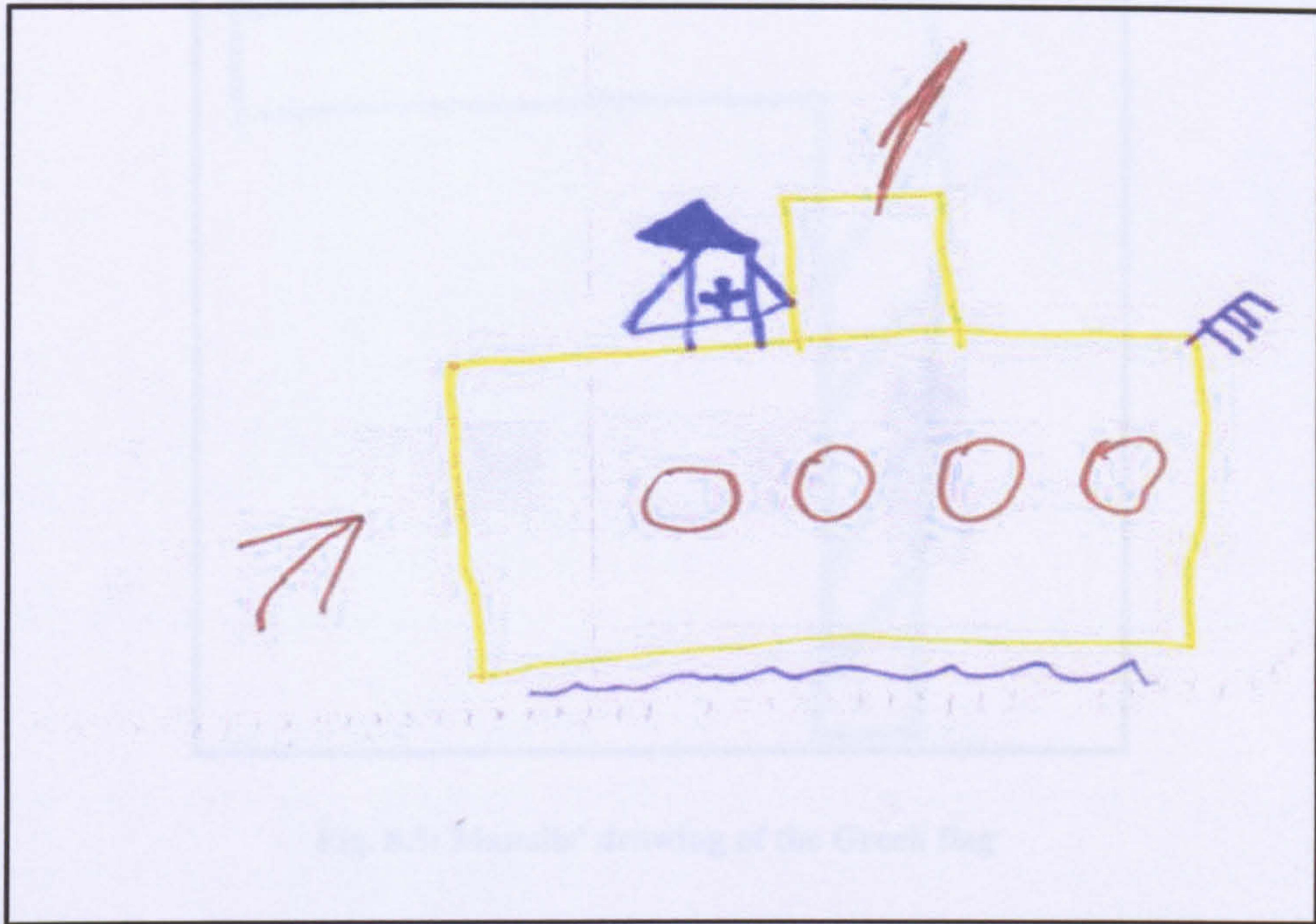


Fig. 8.4: Stelios' drawing of a boat with a church built on it and the Greek flag

Boys also liked to draw navy boats, air force helicopters and airplanes with the Greek flag and the cross depicted on them. In one of the teaching sessions at the end of August, Stelios asked for his personal space in order to draw something very important. When he finished, he proudly gave me a drawing (Fig. 8.6) that included a destroyer from the Greek navy with the Greek flag that was in the island of Tinos, a helicopter on top of the boat, with soldiers and politicians who carried a *stefani* [wreath], as he described to me. It was the memorial of the destroyer *Elli* which was sank by an Italian submarine during World War II and which takes place in the port of Tinos on the 15th of August (on Virgin Mary's Assumption Day). This he said I had to hang on my wall at home.

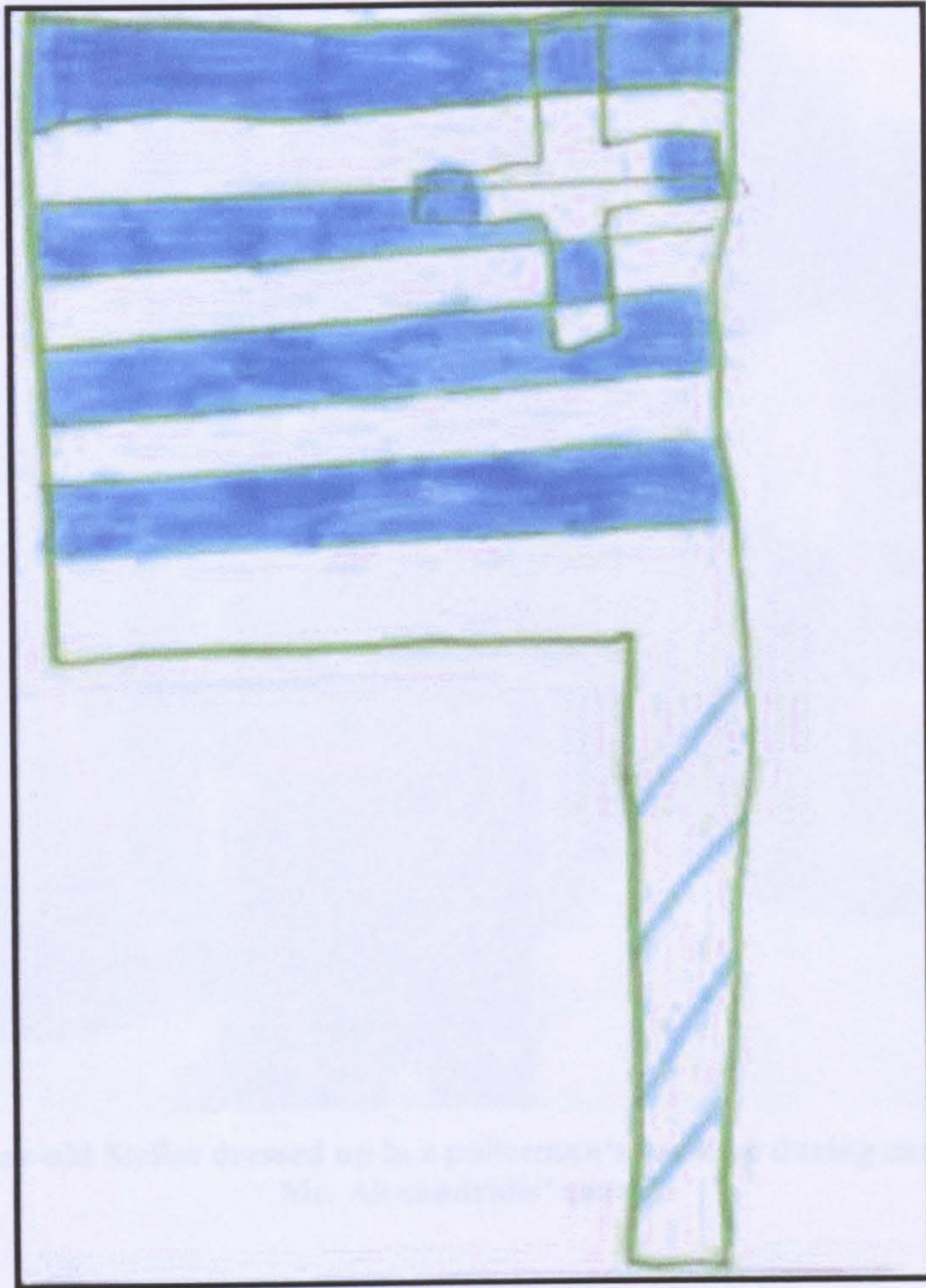


Fig. 8.5: Manolis' drawing of the Greek flag

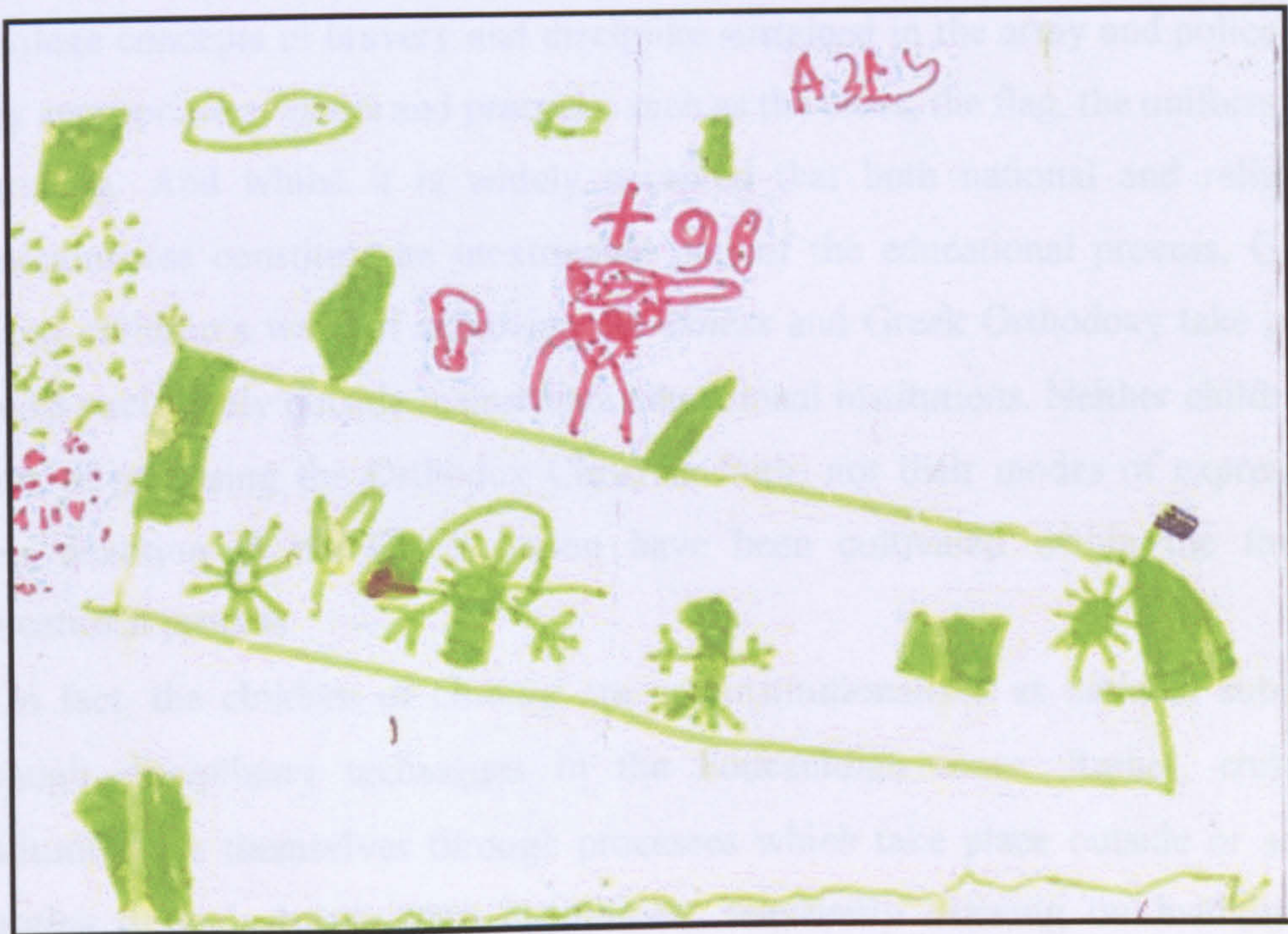


Fig. 8.6: Stelios' drawing of the memorial for Elli on the 15th of August in the port of Tinos

For the vast majority of the inhabitants of *Gitonia*, the army constitutes a highly respected institution that apart from its very important role for the safety and protection of the country also offers considerable opportunities to the individual who joins the force. Children, though, seem to particularly appreciate the army for the bravery of its soldiers to undertake a highly disciplined curriculum. Manolis, who had also expressed his admiration for the armed forces through his drawings, explained to me:

“Particularly some of these soldiers, such as those who are in the aircraft, they are very brave and strong because they do very difficult exercises and that is why they are very important people.”

On a different occasion, Stelios described to me very enthusiastically the parade of the national forces on the celebration of the Greek Independence Day on the 25th of March that their father took them to see down in the centre of Athens. Stelios in particular performed with appropriate seriousness the postures and the marching of the soldiers he had seen on the parade in front of me, holding a small plastic Greek flag.

“It is a very serious thing to do, because everybody has to move legs and arms at the same time and you can’t laugh! And your eyes, this round thing in the eye [pointing at my eye], you can’t move it!”

In chapter 4, children’s aspirations revealed that both boys and girls appreciated the police force as well. Fourteen-year-old Sotiris was seriously planning to finish school and then take the exams for the police academy. In addition, Nikoleta, as she confessed to me, regretted the fact that she hadn’t been to school, because she wouldn’t be able to fulfil her dream, “to become a policewoman.” And Stelios convinced his parents to buy him a policeman’s costume (Fig. 8.7) during carnival which he proudly wore even after the end of the carnival.



Fig. 8.7: Six-year-old Stelios dressed up in a policeman's costume during carnival, posing for Mr. Alexandridis' camera

We have seen that children's bodies are experienced as strongly religious bodies. They are also experienced as bodies with national consciousness. Children privilege concepts of bravery and discipline sustained in the army and police and they appropriate symbols and practices such as the cross, the flag, the uniform, the marching. And whilst it is widely accepted that both national and religious consciousness constitute an inextricable part of the educational process, Greek Gypsy children's ways of achieving *Greekness* and Greek Orthodoxy take place almost exclusively outside mainstream educational institutions. Neither children's ways of practising the Orthodox Christian faith, nor their modes of expressing their devotion to the Greek nation have been cultivated within the formal educational process.

In fact, the children of *Gitonia* are not institutionalised as national subjects through disciplinary techniques in the Foucauldian sense. Rather, children institutionalise themselves through processes which take place outside or at the margins of mainstream state institutions, selectively drawing on institutional processes and appropriating national symbols, ideologies and practices to the way

and extent it serves the demarcation and consolidation of their distinctiveness *vis à vis* meaningful others.

What is more, the children's institutionalised selves point to a management of the body which appropriates discipline in such a way that challenges hegemonic power.¹¹ For example, children witness in the army and value in the police embodied performances of discipline, or draw on national symbols and ideologies, whilst this appropriation takes place almost exclusively within the family and outside the processes that these very institutions promote.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that children's becoming and belonging in communities that are Greek and Gypsy involves a series of processes that affirm and manifest distinctiveness. However, being a Greek Gypsy child is not merely about reproducing difference. Nor does it simply reflect the adults' sense of difference. Being a Greek Gypsy child entails specific experiences (going to school or deciding not to go to school) and important qualities and attributes that adults do not possess and therefore set them apart from children. Nonetheless, children's experiences of childhood cannot be perceived in isolation of adults' views and interpretations of these experiences. At the same time, what it means to be a Greek Gypsy child informs adults' perceptions of collective distinctiveness.

Having acknowledged children's competence, this chapter depicted the most distinctive elements this competence consists of, differentiating Greek Gypsy childhood from adulthood and other childhoods. In short, this section outlines what it means to be a Greek Gypsy child and non-Greek Gypsy 'other', which are the meaningful relationships and practices, attributes and qualities that Greek Gypsy children see as making their experience of childhood different from others.

Within the context of extended kin networks, not only did *Gitonia's* children demonstrate that theirs is a childhood that enables the exploration of feelings, privileges and rights, but it also involves important duties and obligations towards the members of the extended family, particularly the younger ones, and the peer group. What is more, it has to do with experiencing a status which is lived and

¹¹ Seremetakis' (1991) ethnographic study of inner Mani in Southern Greece has also shown how ways of managing the pain and disciplining the body among Maniat women in death rituals may entail a challenge for institutional power and established gender relations.

enjoyed through particular modes of expression, that is a mixture of freedom and responsibilities, breaking the rules and also complying with them, independence and interdependence, cleverness and cunning, all within a framework of gaining knowledge and creating identities.

As far as diverse childhoods are concerned, on the one hand, Greek Gypsy children differentiate their own experience of childhood *vis à vis* the *raklakia*, drawing on the concepts of autonomy, bravery, solidarity, entrepreneurial skills and initiative. On the other, they also clearly contrast their childhood with the *Alvanakia*, drawing on concepts of *Greekness*, morality, and *timi*. For children and adults in *Gitonia*, the *raklakia* lack a capacity for cunning, making money, swearing, being aggressive, enjoying their play through becoming dirty, as well as defending themselves, their siblings and cousins, and their peer group. On the other hand, the *Alvanakia* lack a sense of moral limit as well as a proper consciousness of or the ability to achieve *Greekness*.

Greek Gypsy children's experience of their distinctive childhoods, as this chapter showed, is also constructed and negotiated within and through institutions that are meaningful to them. Children draw on symbols, ideologies and practices, sustained in institutions such as the state, the church, the army and the police, constantly appropriating these in order to serve their cause. We saw, for example, how children find meaning in symbols and processes such as the cross, the national flag, the uniform, the military parade, as well as in notions of faith, discipline, and solidarity. Appropriations, nevertheless, are amplified or downplayed by children through interactive relationships with important 'others', as is the case with notions and symbols of *Greekness* and Orthodox Christianity *vis à vis* Albanian Gypsy childhood.

Having considered children's views and experiences on schooling in chapter 4 and explored the ways *Gitonia's* children negotiate childhood within and through diverse institutions, we draw the assumption that the church and the school are the most important institutions for the children because they can engage with them and experience them directly. However, engaging with the school does not happen to the same extent and equally smoothly as with the church. In acknowledgement of these issues, we can return to a more informed discussion and the reassessment of the schooling paradox extensively discussed in the introduction and chapter 4, while in parallel encapsulating the issues examined in this thesis.



Fig. 8.8: Children playing football



Fig. 8.9: Having enjoyed playing, a display of 'good' dirt

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: Reassessing the Schooling Paradox

The Gypsies and the School

The partial incompatibility between different Gypsy and Traveller groups and the school has been acknowledged by various theorists on Gypsies within and outside Greece.¹ What is more, an abundance of statistics on rates of illiteracy produced by different bodies and institutions,² such as the statistics presented in the introductory chapter of this thesis, verify this incompatibility in a number of cases.

Despite the wealth of information produced in studies on Gypsies and displayed in statistical data, the clash between the school and different Gypsy groups can neither account for broader categorisations of *Gypsiness* nor for superficial assumptions that simply reduce the problem to one of prejudice, poverty and inadequate state policies. Undoubtedly, these issues frame Gypsy attitudes towards schooling. However, simplistic assertions which unreflectively associate the incompatibility between the Gypsies and the school with their conditions of marginality fail to tackle the intricacies underlying this incompatibility.

Oversimplifications and generalisations do not show the ways through which and the extent to which this “mismatch”, in Jordan’s (2001a: 57) terms, is experienced and negotiated by different Gypsy groups, revealing the specificities of each case. In fact, as illustrated in chapter 1, recent ethnographic examples have drawn our attention to some of these specificities. Furthermore, ethnographic studies on Gypsies in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe point to highly differentiated attitudes towards schooling among different Gypsy groups ranging

¹ See Jordan (2001a,b), Markou (1998a,b), Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre (1998), Lidaki (1997), Ntousas (1997), Okely (1997), Liégcois (1994).

² European institutions, Government statistics, NGOs, university projects and individual researches.

from marginal incorporation to full participation even in the higher levels of education (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001a; Lemon, 2001, 2000).

Most importantly, an unreflective reading of quantitative data and generalisations stemming from simplistic interpretations of studies on Gypsies do not grasp the various ways through which different Gypsy attitudes towards the educational process inform us about the politics of everyday life. Nor can they reveal the extent to which ‘this mismatch’ is indicative of potentially alternative processes of learning or specific relationships and practices which may be prioritised and pursued by different Gypsy groups within specific socio-economic and political frameworks.

As demonstrated in this study, the different stance towards schooling between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and their Albanian Gypsy neighbours who lived in similar—if not worse—conditions of poverty indicated that these two groups of Gypsies had very different expectations regarding school attendance. The Greek Gypsies clearly favoured learning through practice taking place within the kinship networks of relatedness over school. By contrast, the Albanian Gypsies increasingly sought participation in the mainstream educational process. For them, their conditions of poverty and migration resulted in different attitudes, aspirations and priorities within the family. Therefore, schooling gradually came to be seen as important or perhaps more important than processes of learning taking place within the family.

The Schooling Paradox and Perceptions of *Greek-Gypsiness*

The Children and the School

This thesis has argued in the introduction that although both children and adults in *Gitonia* acknowledge the importance of the school, they almost always choose to realise their individual aspirations and family-based projects at the margins of the school, either abstaining from the educational process or dropping out after the first grades of primary school. In fact, children’s own choices revealed the primacy of the duties entailed in kinship relatedness over the duties of schooling (see also chapters 5, 6 and 7). Whilst the clash between the requirements of these domains has an undeniable impact on children’s lives, it nevertheless reinforces the children’s perception of their distinctiveness, transforming this clash into a

feature that is compatible with their sense of distinctive childhood, while also informing adults' perceptions of collective distinctiveness.

The analysis of children's ways of negotiating the incompatibilities and contradictions inherent in the schooling paradox revealed that conceptions of age, notions of childhood and adulthood and processes of becoming are fundamental to the examination of a shared sense and experience of being a Greek Gypsy. The grounds on which children position themselves and move between the realms of family and school denote a subtle and overlapping generational distinction between childhood and adulthood which is affirmative of a shared sense of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness and perceptions of 'otherness'. What is more, children's emphasis on the primacy of the family over the school revealed that Greek Gypsy conceptions of valuable 'knowledge' interrelate with age based and gendered embodied performances, hierarchies and affinities among the extended kin members, concepts of personhood, work, self discipline and self control.

As sketched out in the introduction and described in chapter 4, Greek Gypsy children acknowledge that their participation in the schooling process is quite problematic. Clearly, the school is not a top priority in children's lives. But they do not simply reject the school. Particularly for children between the ages of four and twelve, the school is experienced or visualised as an attractive space dedicated to socialisation and learning. According to the children's own words, the school can also be a hostile environment, as it was in the case of Manolis, whose teacher was strict and had threatened to punish him on a number of occasions. Furthermore, the school may be the place where children experience prejudice, as when Dimitris' classmates made fun of him for being a Gypsy [*Yiftos*]. The school can also be a hostile environment as a result of its broader institutional form and, as such can become a mechanism that reproduces prejudice and inequality. This is recognised by the head teacher of one of the primary schools near *Gitonia* (see chapter 4, p. 152).

The experience of those children who had been to school and encountered hostility there did not seem to discourage others. On the contrary, children sought to participate in the schooling process admitting that it offers the opportunity to

mingle with other children as well as providing access to important skills.³ Indeed, even Manolis and Dimitris who had themselves experienced hostility at school, aspired to return to classes one day. However, as children increasingly engage with their duties within the family, they experience a greater tension and degree of incompatibility between their responsibilities at home and the requirements of the school.

The story of Manolis, who dropped out of school after a few months of attendance in the first grade, is instructive. The following sketches demonstrate the ways in which the contradictions between the family and the school are experienced and negotiated by Greek Gypsy children. Furthermore, it encapsulates some of the most important issues which in this thesis have been elicited through a consideration of the schooling paradox and which have been central to the attempt to demarcate a distinctive sense of being a Greek Gypsy.

Negotiating the Incompatibilities between the Family and the School

In the first place, as discussed in chapter 4, Manolis admitted that he dropped out of school because he was influenced by his cousins Pavlos and Dimitris, who had also decided to drop out. Later on, when he tried to return to classes, he realised that he couldn't easily follow the pace of learning of his class since he had been absent a lot. "I knew I had missed a lot of things, for example I hadn't learnt some letters" he confessed. Nevertheless, he said he couldn't understand why when he decided return to school, the head teacher told his father that his son had to repeat the same grade because he had had many absences. To him (and his father), the fact that he had missed school for many days because he went to work along with his parents or relatives and because he overslept after attending wedding celebrations was absolutely justified. In addition, he insisted that he could catch up with the rest of the class by doing some extra work at home:

Manolis: "Come on. Ivi, why this asshole says that I have to repeat the same grade?"

Ivi: "I assume it is because you missed classes for many days. Were they many?"

³ This view was not only expressed by children who hadn't had any schooling experience but was primarily expressed by children who had been to school (see chapter 4).

Manolis: "I don't know ... Yes many, I guess. So, what? I'll study more for a few days. I'll do more homework. It's not a big deal!"

Ivi: "There is some sort of regulation that says that if you don't go to class for more than a certain number of days, you have to repeat. And you must have exceeded this number ..."

Manolis: "But it wasn't that I didn't want to go to school. Either I was working with my dad or grandpa, or I couldn't wake up because I was going to bed late. Please, you have to go to the head teacher to explain that to him."

It is interesting that Manolis' decision to drop out of school in the first place and then to return to classes was exclusively his, although he sought his father support to confront the head teacher when decided to re-attend classes. The acknowledgement and respect of Manolis' autonomy by his father in making the decision whether to attend school or not verifies the blurred boundaries between Greek Gypsy childhood and adulthood. What is more, both Manolis and his father admitted that the relatives' weddings and children's involvement in work were more central than the school for them, simultaneously pointing to the primacy of kinship relatedness and processes of learning through practice over the school.

Equally interesting is Manolis' persistence to negotiate his participation in the schooling process in spite of his first failed attempts. This is interesting because it reflects that children seek to participate into this particular institution, although they realise that their incorporation clashes with their responsibilities at home. Manolis swore that he would start practicing reading and writing with me in order to be ready for next year's schooling period along with his cousins, though not in the same school: "I won't go to the same school again, I'll register in another one, probably near the new houses [meaning those they would get after their resettlement]."

Another incident, a few months later, also draws attention to the degrees to which *Gitonia's* children seek to engage with the school as an institution. Two Swedish journalists who visited *Gitonia* asked Manolis for a personal interview (along with his father and other members of the settlement). They also asked him to visit the school he had attended with them. Manolis agreed and they set a date. On that day, while I was acting as interpreter between the members of the settlement and the journalists, Manolis was behaving in a strange manner. And when the journalists said that they were ready to go down to the school, he asked

us to give him some time to get washed and dressed and we waited for him in the settlement's common yard with a bunch of children around us who also wanted to come along. Manolis had put on his best clothes, combed his hair nicely but eventually hesitated to come. He told his father, Theofilos, to tell me that he didn't want to come:

“He is not coming. Ivi, this boy is crazy, he hides somewhere in the settlement. You can take the people there to see the school if they want ... but he won't come.”

I then realised that almost none of the children who had been to the neighbourhood school volunteered to accompany us. It was just Haris, who said he would come to show us the way and children who had never been to school who came along. Before we set off I tried to find Manolis. He actually found me, saying that: “I'm very ashamed of seeing my schoolmates and my teacher again ... I don't want to come” and gave me detailed instructions how to find the teachers' office. When we reached the school, Haris showed us his and Manolis' classroom and walked us through a corridor that led to the offices where the journalists had a brief talk with one of the teachers. However, when we went back to *Gitonia* and the journalists left, Haris explained:

“I know Manolis well, Ivi, he would never show up in the school. He is ashamed of seeing his class since he left. Me too ... but I came with you, because I know it was already late and everybody would have left school ... And, I'll tell you something else, this was not his teachers' office where he told you to go, this was the teacher's office from the other school [the adjacent one] but he told you to go there because he didn't want those strangers (*afli i xeni* [meaning the journalists]) to see his teacher. Neither did I. That is why I didn't tell you the truth when we were there.”

The above reveals the practical difficulties that children face at school because of the clash between the organisation of Greek Gypsy life and the demanding curriculum of the schooling process. For Manolis, the inflexible character of the school was incompatible with his responsibilities in undertaking duties and chores within the family and gave him no chance to catch up with what he missed due to absences. And from the example presented in this section and children's words in chapter 4, we understand that the children of *Gitonia* are willing to comply with the school's rigid curriculum to the extent that this does not seriously affect their family commitments and values. Clearly, from children's attitudes towards school

attendance we come to understand the centrality of Greek Gypsy relatedness and the interdependencies underpinning this relatedness.

However, the acknowledged incompatibility between the children's way of living and the school does not equate with children's rejection of the school's curriculum. On the contrary, Manolis' reaction and Haris' confession on that day verify that it is actually through tangible and meaningful—although occasionally problematic—relationships, such as their relationship with the teachers or the classmates, that children's perception of the school takes shape and form. Children's sense of shame and their preoccupation with their reputation at school suggests that these are relationships premised on the shared acknowledgement of particular values sustained within the rigidities of the schooling process.

For instance, Manolis' and Haris' sense of shame at the prospect of confronting their teacher and schoolmates long after they had abandoned school clearly indicates that *Gitonia's* children acknowledge the legitimacy of the institutional framework (rules and regulations, timetable and class configuration), although this is largely incompatible with their lives. To some extent they are willing to adjust themselves to this institutional framework, without concealing their distinctiveness. However, rigidly demarcated curriculum and authoritarian and restrictive practices of schools leave little room for flexibility (Jenks, 2000; Simpson, 2000; James, 1998; Mayall, 1994). In the long run, it is exactly the set of rules, procedures and regulations, compressed in an inflexible mandatory timetable, which most children in *Gitonia* admitted they could not cope with.

The inflexible character of the school clearly constrains children's lives. Nevertheless, the ways *Gitonia's* children manage the incompatibility between their priorities within the family and the demands of the school suggests that children may exert agency and act as competent negotiators of culture even when and where they feel constrained. Obviously, at school, children are quite aware that intersubjective relationships have to be negotiated differently than in the family. This also means that being a Greek Gypsy child at school needs to be expressed and affirmed in a completely different way than at home, at work, in the stadium, or in the neighbourhood. For example, as described in chapters 6 and 7, children's conceptions of discipline at home are based on self-discipline and self-control, learnt through practice and experience.

Within the context of the school and its conception and implementation of discipline, rules and regulations children know that being cunning, swearing, fighting, or 'exceeding the limits' would not be appreciated in the same way as it would be in their families but actually have severe consequences for them. Children recognise that what the family considers to be a valued set of competencies, such as bravery, cunning, cleverness and independence outlined in chapter 8, have to be managed differently at school in order to affirm their *Greek-Gypsiness*, whilst avoiding disapproval and punishment. In other words, a shared experience of being a Greek Gypsy is not only affirmed and manifested within the family network of relationships but also through tangible relationships and meaningful 'others' within and through institutional workings.

As children in *Gitonia* admitted, being a Greek Gypsy child at school means: "to be clever in such a way that your cunning would cheat the teacher without creating a problem for you", or "to be brave when punished by the teacher in the class." In the school yard, where discipline is supposed to be looser than in the class, children confessed that being a Greek Gypsy child means "to fight and swear for your pride and your friend", "to be always ready to support your cousin", "to acknowledge the best footballer, even the *raklakia*", "to chase and tease the girls." What we see, here, is children's willingness to take some degree of discipline according to the school's regulations. For instance, they admitted to being more disciplined in class than during breaks. However, in both cases they seem to appropriate the school's curriculum in such a way that would affirm the distinctiveness of their own sense of childhood. This appropriation enables them to view and experience school as compatible with their lives at least to the extent that this does not clash with their way of living in their families.

When it comes to the point where the school's curriculum and structure clashes with family values and needs, children generally drop out of school (see chapter 4). Again, it is through this incompatibility that children consolidate their perception of self *vis à vis* other children and negotiate their distinctive sense of childhood, of being Greek and being Gypsy. As Manolis confessed, it is their autonomy and ability to choose if and when to attend classes that makes them different from other children:

“Do you know what makes the difference? That we can walk out of school any time without being afraid that our dad will smack us! [*Emis mporoume na figoume oti ora theloume apo to sholio horis na fovomaste oti o mpampas mas tha mas kani da da!*]”

Manolis’ emphasis on children’s autonomy, here with regard to school attendance and parents’ recognition and respect of this autonomy, is recognised throughout this research and has been crucial in shaping the theoretical and methodological orientation of this study.

Contributions to Anthropological Theory

Children and the Study of the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia*

The presentation of these ethnographic examples in this final chapter enables the consideration of some of the key areas of literature which this thesis has drawn upon and contributes to. In the first place, this ethnographic study engaged with and informed the study of Gypsies. What differentiates this approach from other studies on Gypsies is the emphasis on the central role of children and the importance of conceptions of age in approaching this particular group of Greek Gypsies. Taking inspiration from a growing body of studies on children, this thesis argued that childhood offers important insights into the ways an individual and a shared experience of being a Greek Gypsy is constructed and reproduced.

Specifically, this approach follows Toren’s (2003, 1999) argument that children’s views and experiences broaden our scope for understanding social relationships at large, while offering a dynamic perspective on the study of cultures. By approaching children as competent participants in social life and subjects with agency, this thesis contributes ethnographically to the literature on children and childhood. Nevertheless, I have argued here that children’s agency and competence cannot be studied independently from those particular relationships and practices which inform and constrain children’s positions and movements within society.

Additionally, this study argued that children’s movements, positions and relationships are not necessarily located within child-centered institutions and mainstream processes of learning within society (Olwig and Gulløv, 2003; Amit, 2003; Nieuwenhuys, 2003). In fact, abstention from or marginal incorporation

into the school pointed to alternative processes of learning in which children, alongside the adults, learn through experience and constant practice.

Therefore, this study on Greek Gypsies has been careful not to detach children's worlds from those of the adults. Whilst in many respects, the Greek Gypsies' experience of childhood is conceptualised as a different status from that of adulthood, this ethnography revealed that the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are constantly negotiated by children. What is more, their elders' acknowledgement of children's competence to challenge these boundaries points to perceptions of childhood and adulthood not as two opposed or dichotomous fields but as two conceptual categories which constantly intertwine.

Such an approach to childhood—and adulthood—enabled me to trace how individuals engage in processes of becoming at different stages of their lives. Subsequently, following Hall (1996: 4) and approaching identities as “processes of becoming rather than being”, a focus on children offers a useful perspective from which to understand the ways individual and collective projects of identification and the experience of Greek Gypsy distinctiveness are produced, negotiated and reproduced.

The focus on children's views and experiences brought to light the significance of different activities and feelings entangled in processes of relatedness, as manifested within Greek Gypsy kinship networks. It has been shown in chapters 5, 6 and 7 that relatedness is sustained through age-based and gendered embodied performances throughout a person's life that inform individual and shared senses of belonging. These performances underpin processes of relatedness and are intimately connected with conceptions of work and marriage and articulate ideologies of knowledge, personhood, honour and sexuality. The ways in which and extent to which individuals, including children, engage in practices that evoke reciprocal relations and emotions (such as parenting and affinities), hierarchies and solidarities frame and inform what it means to be a Greek Gypsy (see chapters 6 and 7).

This thesis has also addressed issues that have recently constituted core themes in anthropological explorations, such as the study of the body and body politics and emotions. This research shows that the less rigidly separated conceptions of childhood and adulthood co-exist with age and gender-specific notions of managing and disciplining the body. In this sense, becoming a Greek Gypsy man

or woman is inseparable from the affirmation of a sense of belonging that is in turn manifested through embodied performances and experiences. However, these manifestations often encompass ambiguities and contradictions which are sustained in Greek Gypsies' bodies (see particularly chapter 8). Children's constant efforts to manage these ambiguities and contradictions point to the grounds on which Greek Gypsy personhood is constantly evaluated by the members of this group to affirm a shared sense of distinctiveness.

For example, children's individual freedom, addressed in the discussions held with Manolis and described above, is seen as essential in all aspects of Greek Gypsy life. Learning through doing and engaging in adult activities and relationships from an early stage, inevitably contributes to a developed sense of children's independence. This gives children scope for individual autonomy and pleasure but at the same time involves important responsibilities and the demands derived from active participation in interdependent relationships. In fact, the ways children learn to balance their individual autonomy and responsibilities, the intimacies and interdependencies of relatedness, how they manage pleasure and duties, freedom and self-discipline or self-control, within and outside of the kinship network are all part of important processes of acquiring knowledge and performing Greek Gypsy distinctiveness (chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8).

However, as the schooling paradox revealed and this last vignette with Manolis highlighted, children's ways of managing the ambiguities and the contradictions articulated in bodily manifestations involve more complex and multi-level processes implicated in projects of identification and belonging. In particular, the children's ambivalent stance towards the school points to the fact that an individual and a shared sense of belonging emerge as the project of the subjects' constant negotiation and renegotiation of diverse and often contested sites of positioning between mundane practices and the wider socio-economic and institutional framework.

Contributions to the Study of Gypsies

This thesis made a straightforward commitment to contribute to the study of Gypsies. The contribution of this thesis is mainly ethnographic and it is theoretically informed from the point of view of anthropology. Returning to the

argument expressed in the beginning of this concluding section in relation to the danger of simplifications and generalisations underlying approaches to Gypsies, this thesis did not reduce the schooling paradox to the incompatibility between the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* and the school.

Instead, it traced those practices and relationships which the children and adults in *Gitonia* lay emphasis upon. These traces revealed that alternative processes of learning and of becoming and belonging are intimately associated with kinship networks, marriage and work. However, at the same time, this research illustrated how the Greek Gypsies' projects of identification largely take place within alternative sites of belonging and that becoming is experienced here in parallel with the negotiation of characteristics that make them distinct in relation to the wider society in which they live. In a sense, this thesis enriches the emerging body of literature on minorities and the relationship between minorities and the state within the anthropology of Greece as well as the wider literature on the politics of difference and the politics of culture.

Specifically, an exploration of the schooling paradox suggested that not only does the participation or non-participation of the Gypsies of *Gitonia* in schooling constitute the acknowledged space of micro-politics of everyday interactions, but also the arena of a politics of culture within the Greek nation-state context. In a broader sense, the schooling paradox is indicative of the wider paradox that characterises the Greek Gypsies' shared experience of belonging within Greek society. As this study revealed, on the one hand, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* see themselves as citizens of the Greek nation state and seek participation within the wider society's structures. On the other hand, they retain a marked sense of distinctiveness, largely through their marginal incorporation into mainstream state institutions.

Supported by Herzfeld's (1997) concept of cultural intimacy, a consideration of Greek Gypsies' attitudes towards schooling provided the means for examining the idiosyncratic relationship between this specific group of Gypsies and the state, as discussed in chapter 3. It also enabled the consideration of how belonging in the Greek nation is actually experienced at the margins of institutions and how state ideologies nourish and reinforce Greek Gypsy distinctiveness, while reproducing the nationalist discourse *vis à vis* meaningful 'others', such as their Albanian-Gypsy neighbours.

Indeed, the case of the Gypsies of *Gitonia* has shown that *Gypsyness* may also be experienced and negotiated as a shifting category, occasionally occupying the spaces of the ‘centre’ and ‘majority’, as for instance, through affirmations of national or religious affiliations (see chapters 4 and 8). In this sense, the process of affirmation of *Greek-Gypsyness* is neither exclusively a project of choosing the ‘margins’ as a form of resistive tactic towards repressive ‘centres’ or ‘majorities’, nor a mere conflation of Gypsy and non-Gypsy ideologies and practices.

Regarding school, we have seen that Greek Gypsy distinctiveness is constructed and negotiated at the margins of the schooling process. However, this marginal position in relation to formal education does not produce a ‘marginal’ Gypsy identity. On the contrary, as discussed throughout the chapters of this thesis, rather than seeking to emphasise *Gypsyness* versus ‘being’ Greek, *Gitonia*’s Gypsies deploy interesting ways of transforming their marginal incorporation in the school into an asset, manifesting and negotiating an entangled identity of *Greek-Greekness*, actively engaging themselves with the wider structures of Greek society.

In this ethnography we saw the children of *Gitonia* transform the incompatibility between their lives within the family and the school into an asset in the process of manifesting and negotiating a sense of distinctive childhood. The extent and degree of participation or non-participation in the schooling process that coincides with or contradicts children’s experiences of becoming and belonging, is itself affirmative of this distinctiveness. Children’s autonomy in deciding whether and when to attend or drop out of school seems central to what it means to be a Greek Gypsy child. To some extent at least, it can be suggested that this freedom of choice and agency marks the processes of Greek Gypsy identification.

While recognising illiteracy as the main source of their problems and their low socio-economic status within Greek society, the Greek Gypsies of *Gitonia* nevertheless use the marginal spaces consolidated by illiteracy to consolidate a distinctive sense of belonging. Interestingly, these ideas are premised on ideologies and institutions that the national project promotes, such as family and solidarity, but here they may be realised through practices that the state rejects, as for example underage marriage and withdrawal from or marginal incorporation into the school system. Simultaneously, through particular embodied practices and

conceptions of honour and sexuality, as for example the proof of virginity and the performance of *nikokirosini*, *Gitonia*'s Gypsies see themselves as the carriers of an 'old' or the 'authentic' Greek 'tradition' (chapters 5 and 6).

It is therefore clear that whilst on many occasions the members of this particular group of Gypsies acknowledge that they operate at the margins of Greek society, they do not necessarily see their distinctiveness as constructed in opposition to the ideologies of the 'centres' or the dominant non-Gypsy 'majority'. On the contrary, in many respects Greek Gypsy children and adults construct and reconstruct distinctiveness *vis à vis* meaningful 'others' through subverting institutional processes (as with the schooling paradox), through seeking connections and creating affiliations even where they feel constrained and excluded, while also participating in the nationalist discourse. For example, as discussed in chapter 8, children's embodiment of Orthodox Christianity and national consciousness informs perceptions of *Greek-Gypsiness* in relation to meaningful 'others' such as the Albanian-Gypsy neighbours and reproduces the nationalist rhetoric (see examples presented in chapter 4 and 8).

This discussion underlines the need for a contextual and dynamic interpretation and representation of different expressions of *Gypsiness*. This is crucial in order to tackle the confusion evident in the body of literature on Gypsies.⁴ In order to do so, we first have to recognise that what it means to be Gypsy in diverse situations and circumstances cannot be explained in terms of Gypsies as bounded and static communities. As Stewart (1997) argued, if we wish to broaden our understanding of diverse Gypsy experiences, we have to concentrate on the particular ways through which distinctiveness among different Gypsy groups is being sustained and reproduced.

Adding to Stewart's (1997) argument, I suggest we also take into consideration the ways through which and extent to which the concept of *Gypsiness* itself may be seen and experienced as fluid, shifting, contrasting or overlapping with other identities. In this sense, *Gypsiness* should be examined as a project of

⁴ As already discussed, this confusion is marked by the absence of clear lines of enquiry and conceptual tools in the body of literature on Gypsies and the lack of the acknowledgment of a diversity of expressions of *Gypsiness* even within the same national borders. The plethora of information produced by various sources, the often conflicting aims in representations of *Gypsiness* and the emergence of a transnational Roma political mobilisation are some additional reasons which have resulted in a wider confusion regarding approaches to Gypsies.

identification and as such a subject of constant negotiation and renegotiation, sustained and reproduced in the politics of everyday life, while also informed by the wider framework of which it is part.

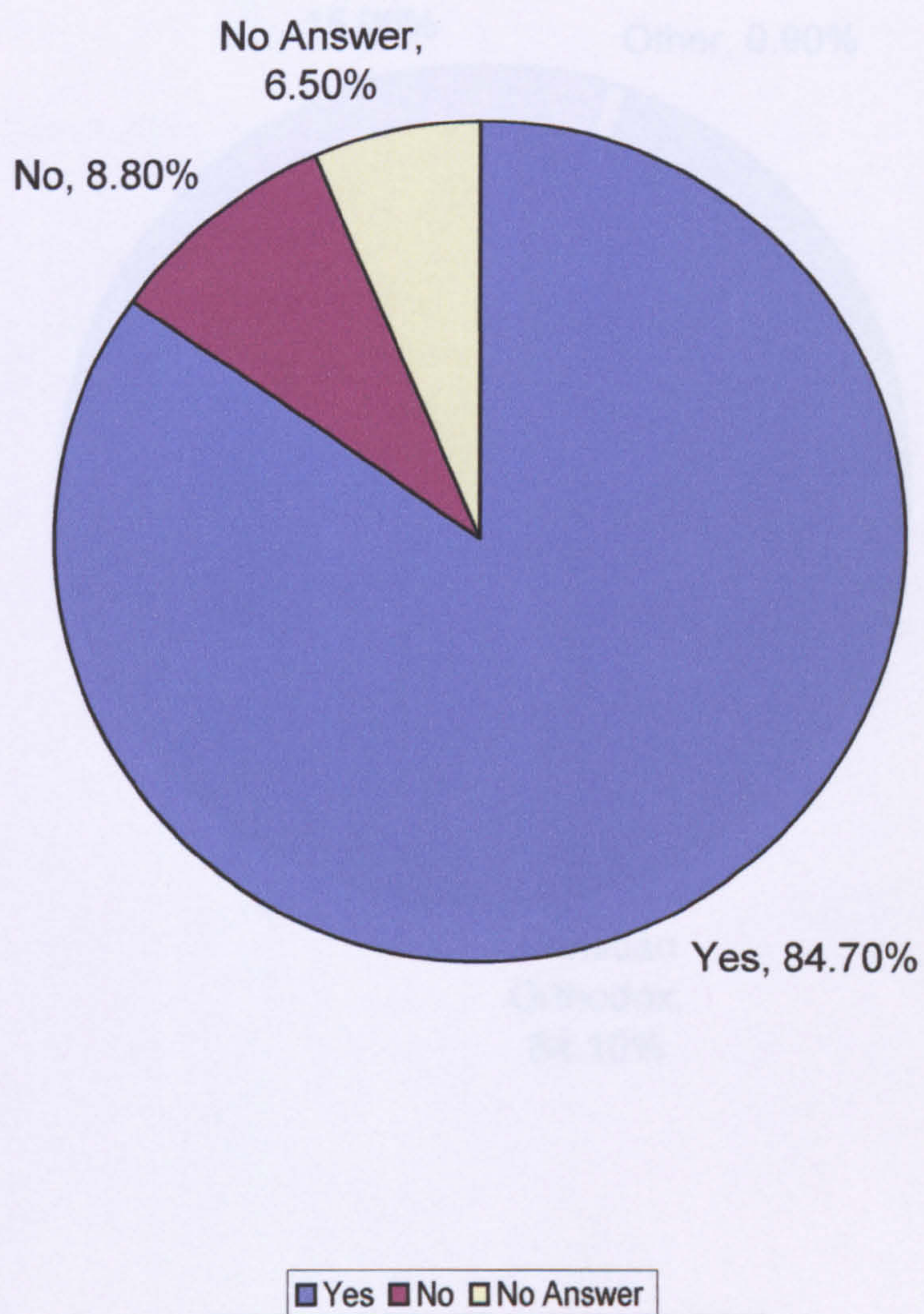
In this thesis, the schooling paradox expressed by adults and children has provided the vehicle for revealing and examining subtler relationships and complex processes which characterise the experience of becoming a Greek Gypsy. Simultaneously, this paradox reflected the fact that the expression of *Greek-Gypsiness* is entangled with the shifting context which frames Greek society. Engaging children along with adults in the analysis of Greek Gypsy projects of identification offered a dynamic perspective in the study of the Greek-Gypsy experience. This has proved invaluable for the full understanding of perceptions of personhood, relatedness and gender.

The complexities brought to light by this study on Greek Gypsies underscore the crucial role of ethnography in the study of cultures today. In relation to the study of Gypsy groups, a contextually informed, historically-minded and dynamically approached ethnography can provide the vehicle for tracing the multiple effects of wider changes and institutional practices on diverse Gypsy experiences. Most importantly, however, ethnography which engages children as well as adults as its subjects of ethnographic inquiry may contribute to a more informed understanding of expressions of *Gypsiness* and the ways these are experienced as shifting or fluid.

This thesis revealed that there is a shared experience of distinctiveness among the Gypsies of *Gitonia* which is encapsulated in the word *Greek-Gypsiness* or as Greek Gypsy culture. However, it has been shown that *Greek-Gypsiness* is neither a static nor a bounded concept. Instead, this study demonstrated that *Greek-Gypsiness* is a conceptual construct which articulates overlapping rather than contrasting perceptions of *Greekness* and *Gypsiness*. The ways through which *Greek-Gypsiness* is articulated verifies that cultures cannot be conceptualised as complex and distinct entities which are reproduced as wholes. Recognising the complexities and subtleties of cultures brought out by ethnographic examples, anthropologists around the world have worked consistently to disown static definitions of culture.

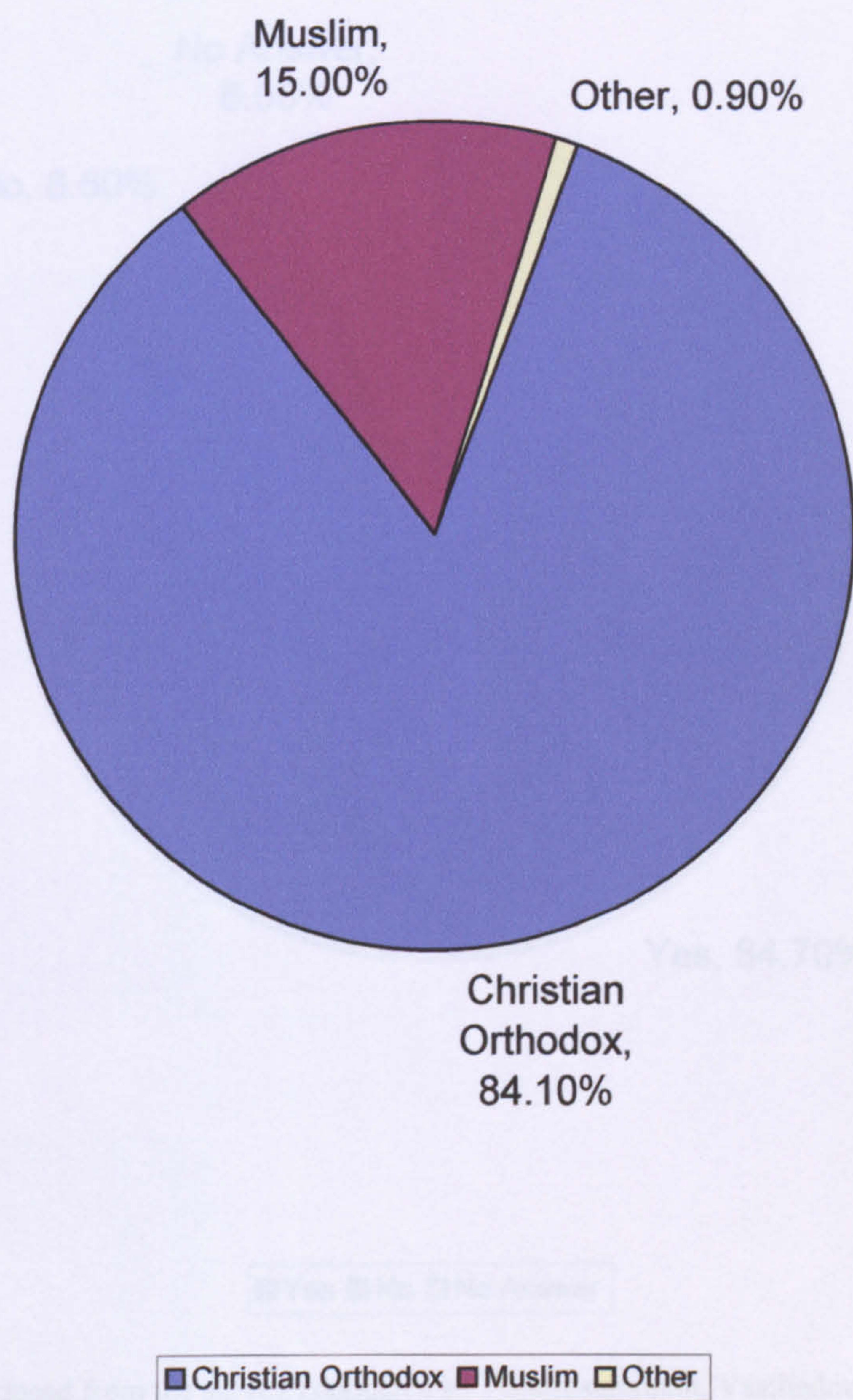
Appendix 1

Graph 1: Different Types of Residence of Gypsies and Roma in Greece



Statistics reproduced from the survey conducted by Papakostantinou, Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre "Economic-Social-Cultural Situation of Gypsies in Greece", University of Ioannina (cited in Special Edition, Eleftherotipia, 11/03/2000)

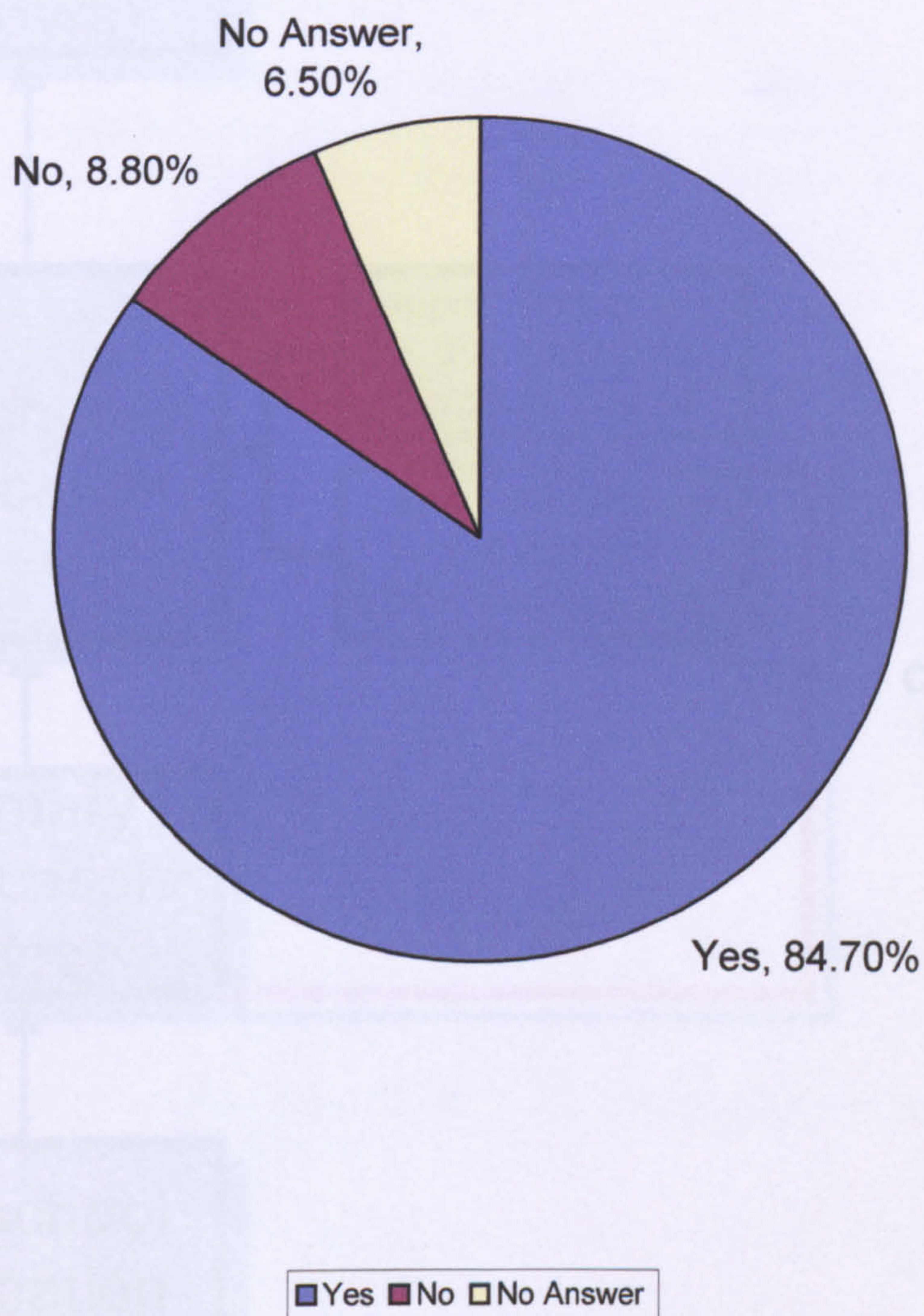
Graph 2: Religious Affiliations of Gypsies and Roma in Greece



Statistics reproduced from the survey conducted by Papakostantinou, Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre "Economic-Social-Cultural Situation of Gypsies in Greece", University of Ioannina (cited in Special Edition, Eleftherotipia, 11/03/2000)

Appendix 2

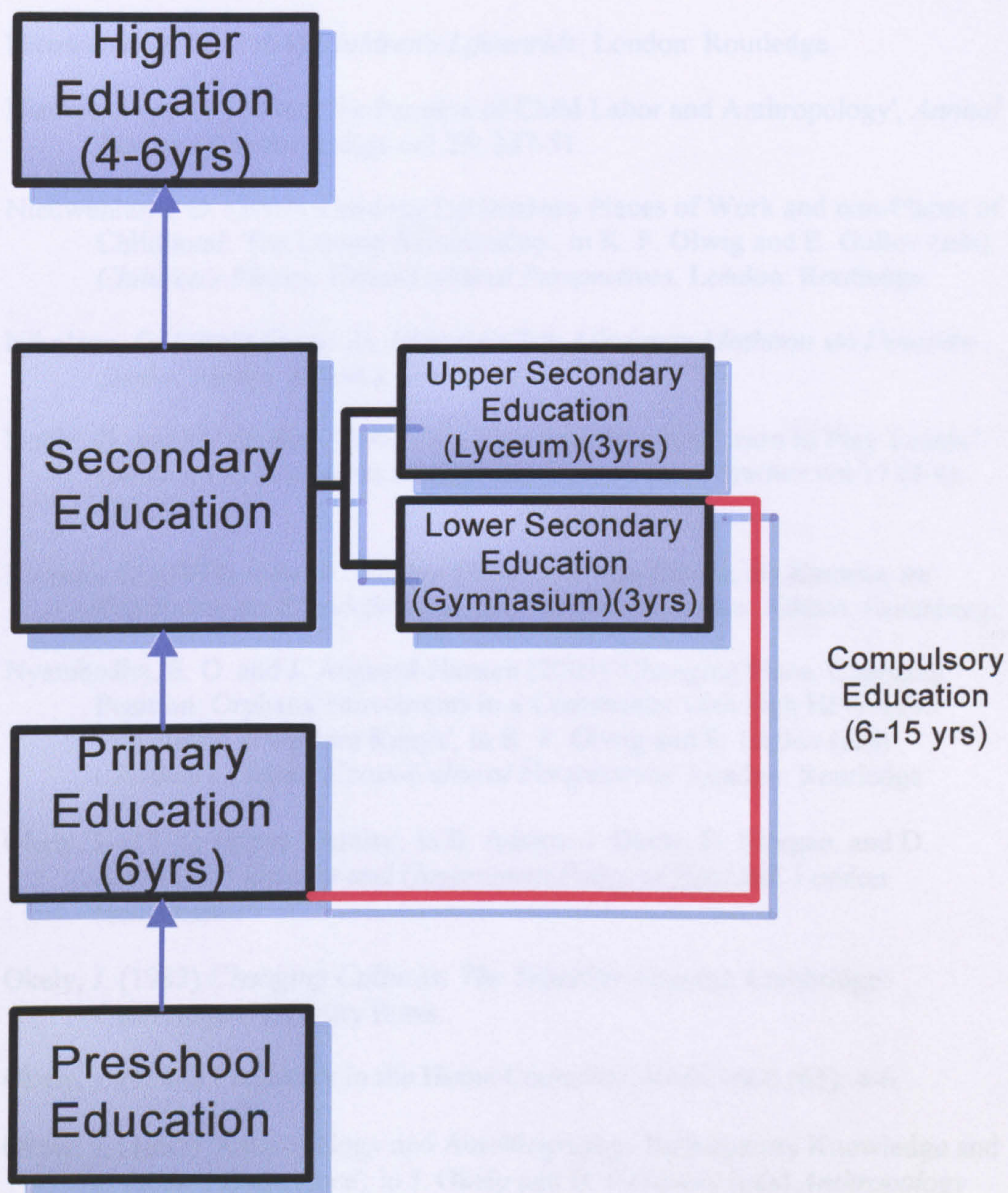
Graph 3: Percentage of Gypsies in Greece who speak Romani



Statistics reproduced from the survey conducted by Papakostantinou, Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre "Economic-Social-Cultural Situation of Gypsies in Greece", University of Ioannina (cited in Special Edition, Eleftherotipia, 11/03/2000)

Appendix 2

Diagram 1: Greek Educational System



**Table 1: Immigrant and Total Population Growth in Greece
1971–2001**

Year	Number of Immigrants	Total Population
1971	92,568	8,768,541
1981	171,424	9,740,417
1991	167,276	10,259,900
2001	797,093	10,939,771

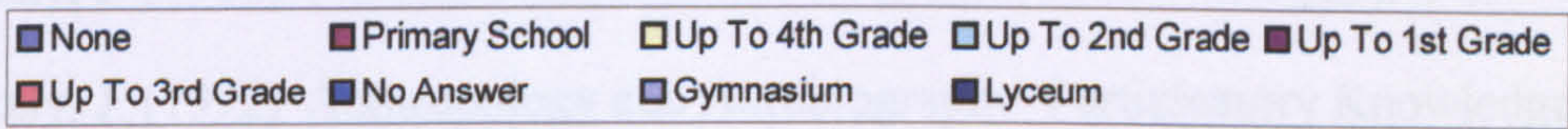
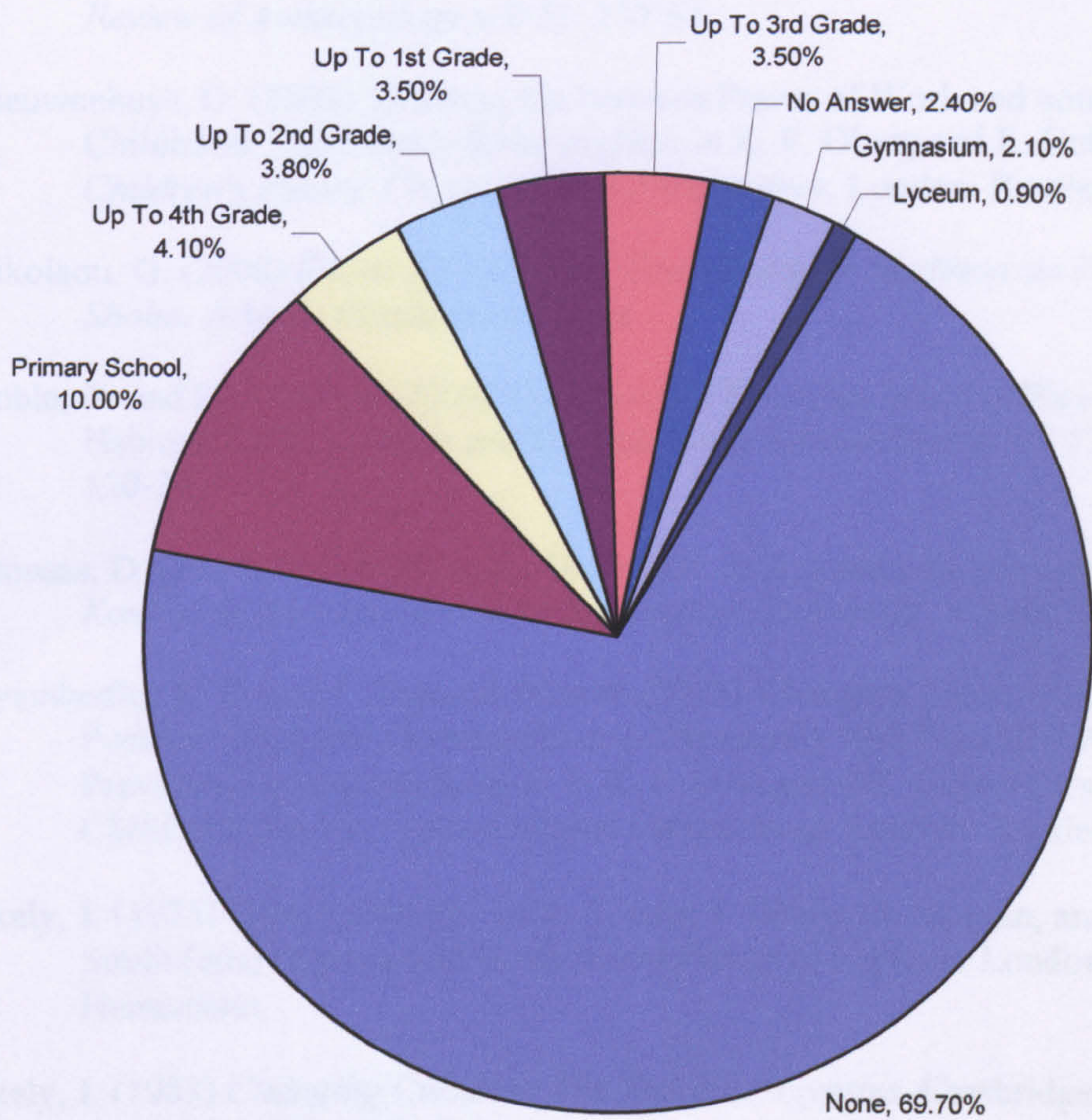
Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (NSSG)

**Table 2: Number of Registrations in Primary and Secondary
Schools**

Academic Year	Immigrant	Non-migrant	Total
1995–96	47,666	1,484,277	1,532,943
1996–97	54,943	1,450,351	1,505,294
1997–98	67,210	1,404,050	1,471,881
1998–99	79,737	1,352,144	1,431,881
1999–00	86,238	NA	NA

Source: Ministry of Education (2001: 18–19), cited in Fakiolas (2003)

Graph 1: Levels of Education of Gypsies and Roma in Greece



Statistics reproduced from the survey conducted by Papakostantinou, Vasiliadou and Pavli-Korre "Economic-Social-Cultural Situation of Gypsies in Greece", University of Ioannina (cited in Special Edition, Eleftherotipia, 11/03/2000)

Appendix 3

Forced Evictions of Roma Communities in Greece in Relation to the Preparation of the Olympic Games

Notes presented by COHRE Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

Source:

www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/articles/COHRE%20Roma_Forc%20Evictions%20and%20Olympic%20Games.doc (April 2004)

3.1. The Roma Community of Marousi and the Olympic Stadium

In 2002, the Roma community of Marousi has been asked by the municipal authorities to vacate their settlement because the 2004 Olympic Games Committee decided to extend the Olympic installation into that area to construct a parking lot or road enlargement for the 2004 Olympic Games.

At that time, the Municipality of Marousi assured the Roma families that special measures would be taken for their resettlement. In fact, an agreement was signed on August 1, 2002 between the Marousi Mayor and a representative of the Roma association *Elpida*. It is noteworthy to note that this agreement covered only the Greek Roma but not the Albanian Roma. Such exclusion reflects Greece's general policy to use its various plans only for Greek Roma and not for immigrant Roma, even if they are legal residents.

Under the terms of this agreement, the 40 Greek Roma families would vacate the plots of land where they have been living for decades. In return, the agreement stipulated that they would receive a significant amount of money, as a rent

subsidy every month.¹ As such, the Roma had to find houses/apartments, the monthly subsidy from the Municipality helping them to pay the rent.

The agreement also stipulated that the Roma families would, in the future, be resettled in heavy duty prefabricated houses to be constructed by the Marousi Municipality. In the longer term, the agreement also underlined that this relocation would be temporary and that the Municipality would also work towards guaranteeing permanent resettlement to the 40 families. Furthermore, under the agreement, the municipal authorities agreed to provide special assistance to the Roma families in clothing and food, as well as to elaborate a special plan for the Roma's integration in the local society.

From September 2002 on, and on the basis of this agreement, Roma families started to leave their settlement. Some of them rented houses, while others preferred to go and stay in houses that relatives owned or rented. Although the Roma promptly kept their part of the agreement, the municipality soon defaulted on implementing its various obligations under the agreement. Up to date, the Municipality of Marousi reportedly failed to implement the agreement passed with the Roma association *Elpida*. In that respect, some Roma families have voiced their concern that the agreement with the Municipality was merely a pretext to lure them to vacate the land where they have been living, as infrastructure related to the Olympic Games had to be constructed there.

3.2. The Municipality's failure to implement the agreement

According to reports, the municipality soon defaulted on the payment of subsidies. As a result, certain Roma families fell in arrears and were evicted by their landlords. As such, in September 2003, the two Roma families of Dimitris and Panayota Nikolaou and Petrou Mitrou and Dimitra Karagianni were evicted by their landlords because they could not pay the rent. Other families also faced severe economic hardship, as they did heavily rely on the subsidies to cover the rental costs.

On January 2004, the Municipality of Marousi claimed to have paid the Roma families the money it owed (money which in some cases concerned the subsidies of 6 months or more). According to the official responsible at the Marousi

¹ This amount depends upon the size of the family. For instance, a family with two children—that is four people—would receive 735 Euros, while a family with six children would get 1150 Euros.

Municipality for the payments to the Roma, with whom a representative of the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) spoke during the week April 19th 2004, all forty Roma families have been paid through December 2003.

Nevertheless, the Marousi Mayor, in this February 12, 2004 letter to the Greek Ombudsman's Office, mentions that only 14 Roma families have been paid all the money they were owed for all the months until January 2004. The letter also mentions that other 21 families had been paid until November 2003. The Ministry of the Interior, in an answer to a parliamentary question on January 29, 2004, reiterated this state of fact.

In any case, both the Mayor's document and the Ministry's document refer to 35 families, whereas the agreement refers to 40 Roma families. No justification has been advanced for this discrepancy and, in fact, it could be that 5 families of Roma have not been paid at all since August 2002.

At the time of writing (mid-April 2004), the subsidies from January 2004 had not been paid by the Municipality, which is, again, in arrears of payment. In that respect, the Mayor informed the Roma families in March 2004 that he decided to cease paying them the monthly subsidies until they had filed applications for housing loans for Roma. The Mayor alleged that as soon as all of them had made the loans applications, he would resume payment of the monthly subsidies. Such move constitutes a clear breach of contract, as no such provision exists in the initial agreement.

In addition to the Municipality's failure to provide the subsidies, reports indicate that it also failed to take steps to implement the resettlement parts of the agreement (i.e. temporary resettlement into prefabricated houses and permanent one). Although the Roma families have reportedly asked several times the Mayor to tell them where the prefabricated houses will be located, the mayor has not yet answered.

Regarding the provision of special assistance to the Roma families in clothing and food, some families have complained that they have not received much in the way of foodstuffs/clothing,

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