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EVA-LIISA ROHT-YILMAZ

Converting identities and moralities: Pentecostal Christianity among the Roma in Estonia and Latvia

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

Article I. Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2020. A Constant Border-Crossing: Conversion and Evangelical Charismatic Christian Identity among the Roma in Estonia and Latvia. – *Journal of Romani Studies* 30 (1): 89–113.

Article II. Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2019. "Fortune Telling Is a Curse on Your Children": Conversion, Fortune Telling, and Beliefs in Magic among Roma Women in Estonia. – *Journal of Folkloristics and Ethnology* 13 (1): 107–129.

Article III. Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2020. "God Is My Bosom Buddy": Experiencing Faith and the Role of Ethnicity in Roma and *Kaale* Missionizing among Roma in Estonia and Latvia. – *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 45 (1): 4–28.

1. INTRODUCTION

The PhD thesis discusses the interplay of cultural and religious identifications of the Roma in Estonia and in the Latvian Vidzeme region during and after their conversion to Pentecostal Christianity. Both Roma people and Pentecostalism have a long history in the two countries. Nevertheless, both – the Roma and Pentecostal Christianity – have remained for a long time on the margins of scholarly interest. The thesis aims to fill this gap by offering an ethnological/anthropological contribution to the studies on ethnic and religious minorities, concentrating on the current cultural processes among the Roma. It aims to demonstrate how Roma, who had previously belonged to Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran or Catholic congregations, have been adapting and tailoring Pentecostal Christianity to their needs in the context of the wider Estonian and Latvian religious landscapes. I demonstrate how such religious shifts significantly shape various existing cultural practices and social relations that the converted Roma have within the larger Roma community and also how they affect connections with the non-Roma (*gadže*[1] in Romani).

Most Roma in southern Estonia and northern Latvia are closely connected to each other. The Roma who speak the Latvian (*Lotfitka*) dialect live on both sides of the Estonian–Latvian state border and stay in contact with their kin in the neighbouring country. I have conducted much of my ethnographic fieldwork, especially at the beginning of my research, among Roma who live in Estonia and among whom many have converted to Pentecostalism. However, as in the recent years the main part of the Pentecostal mission activities carried out by Finnish Roma has generally shifted to Latvia, I have been doing fieldwork in the parts of the Latvian Vidzeme region that are close to the Estonian border.

Until the publication of the articles that constitute the main core of my thesis, there has been no research that would offer an in-depth analysis of the nature of religion as experienced and practiced among the Roma in Estonia and Latvia. My focus on "lived religion" (see McGuire 2008; Sremac 2020) is based on ethnographic methods (see chapter 2). An important recent addition to the field of research is an article by Lidia Gripenberg (2022) that explains the motivations of the Finnish Roma who have been missionising among Roma in Estonia in the last decades.[2] Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that in 2006, Mareks Ignats, a Lutheran pastor of Roma background, wrote in his diploma for the Luther Academy in Latvia on the religious expressions in the traditions of Kurzeme (Courland) Roma. In the past, Paul Ariste (1905–1990), a linguist and professor at the

[1] The term *gadžo* (masculine), *gadži* (feminine) *gadže* (plural) denotes non-Roma in Romani language, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. Similarly, for a non-Roma boy (*raklo*) and girl (*rakli*) different words are used and not the words for Romani boy (*chavo*) and girl (*chaj*).

[2] Lidia Gripenberg's (2019) PhD dissertation concentrated on interaction between Roma immigrants to Finland from Bulgaria and Romania and the Finnish Roma (*Kaale*). She also discusses Pentecostal conversions in this context.

University of Tartu (2012a [1940]) touched upon some aspects of religiosity among Roma in Estonia before World War II.

Conversion to Pentecostal Christianity in Roma communities, and its influence on identification practices and social relations, have recently been studied among various Roma groups in countries such as Bulgaria (Benovska-Sabkova and Altanov 2009; Slavkova 2007; 2014), Hungary (Fosztó 2009; Lange 2003), Spain (Cantón Delgado 2010; 2014; Gay y Blasco 1999; 2000; 2002; 2012), Argentina (Carrizo-Reimann 2011), Sweden (Thurfjell 2013; 2014), Romania (Ries 2014), Slovakia (Hrustič 2014; Podolinská 2014; Podolinská and Hrustič 2011; Zachar Podolinská 2021), Finland (Gripenberg 2019; 2022; Roman 2015a; 2015b; 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2018b), Serbia (Todorović 2016, Wachsmuth 2021; 2022), and the United Kingdom (Doležalova 2021). In addition to being a contribution to the growing body of study on Pentecostal conversions among Roma, the more specific aim of the thesis is to analyse ethical choices and moral challenges in the religious identity formation of converted Roma in Estonia and the Vidzeme region of Latvia. The thesis is influenced by the ethical turn in anthropology and concentrates on the ethical self-formation of Roma converts by looking at two important aspects of Pentecostalism: firstly, language and speaking, and secondly, the embodied and sensory practice of faith.

By analysing ethical choices and moral challenges in the religious identity formation of converted Roma, the thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

- What has contributed to the successes and failures of the Pentecostal mission among Roma in Estonia and the Latvian Vidzeme region?
- What role do ethnic and cultural identities play in the mission encounter, when both the missionaries and the prospective converts are Roma?
- How do Roma converts combine their parallel and competing identity layers?
- How are conflicting moral codes managed in ethical self-formation by Pentecostal Roma?

In the next sections of the introduction, I will give an overview of previous research on Roma in Estonia and Latvia, as well as some general background information about Roma in the two countries. I then touch upon Roma religiosity and general trends in the Estonian and Latvian religious landscape. After the outline of the current processes, I will give an historical overview of Roma in Estonia and Latvia in the following section of the introduction. The last section will give contextual information about the missionary activities organised by Pentecostal Finnish Roma in Estonia and Latvia which began in the 1990s.

1.1. Information about the Roma and the general trends of religiosity in contemporary Estonia and Latvia

Most of the information about the Roma in Estonia before World War II and the Roma Holocaust[3] is known thanks to the works of aforementioned Estonian linguist Paul Ariste. Among many other languages he also studied the so-called Latvian (*Lotfitka* in Romani) and the Laiuse (*Lajenge* in Romani) dialects, which he learned from Roma living in Estonia. He also learned some Finnish Romani (Bakker 2012 [2005]: 194–195). In addition, Ariste published some texts about the customs of the Roma in Estonia and collected their folklore, especially tales. Most of his articles combine linguistic, historical, and ethnographic notes (Bakker 2012: 200; see for example Ariste 2012a [1940]).

It has to be noted that language was the main focus of academic research on the Roma in Estonia during the Soviet period (see for instance, Ariste 1961; 1962; 1964a; 2012 [1966]). Although the scope of research on Roma after Estonia and Latvia regained their independence in 1991 has somewhat widened, the number of publications remains relatively small. These fields include history (Blomster 1999; Kott 2015; Weiss-Wendt 2003; 2023), folkloristics (Annom 2011; Annom 2015), linguistics (Kozhanov and Ross 2022; Ross 2016; manuscript; Tenser 2008) and ethnology/anthropology (Roht-Yilmaz 2019; Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; Roht-Yilmaz 2020b; Roht-Yilmaz 2023, with two unpublished MA theses: Purret 2014 and Roht 2011). The representations of Roma in newspaper articles in the Estonian Republic before the Soviet occupation in 1940 has been discussed by Toomas Kroll (2002).

During the 1930s, the pioneer of Roma activism in Latvia, Jānis Leimanis, from Kurzeme, collected Roma folklore, with his relative and stepson Juris Leimainis published a collection of stories about Roma in Latvia in 1939 which has been translated into Estonian only in 2022 (Leimanis 2022 [1939]; Tihovska 2021: 673; Tihovska 2022: 352; Vīksna 2022 [2005]: 11–13). In Estonia there were no Roma activists. Folklore collectors like Jānis and Juris Leimanis in Latvia – where the community was bigger and where later during the Soviet period scholars of Roma background – contributed to research on Roma, especially in the field of linguistics. During the 1960s, Leksa Mānušs (birthname Aleksander Belugin), a linguist of Romani (and Russian, Latvian, German and Polish) background, compiled and systematised Romani folklore and studied the influence of Baltic languages on the Romani language, also touching upon the religious life of the Roma (Mānušs 1972; 1981; 1985; 1886/87; 1999; see also Apine 1998; Kozhanov and Makhotina 2018; Tihovska 2017: 226). Another Roma linguist and scholar, Jan Kochanowski, whose mother was from Latvia, published mainly on the Romani language (Kochanowski 1963). Recent academic research has been focused on the field of folkloristics (Vīksna 2022 [2005]), ethnomusicology, Tihovska (2017), history and oral history (for instance Apine 1998; Garda-Rozenberga and Neiburgs 2023; Garda-Rozenberga and Zirnīte 2014; Garda-

[3] Roma Holocaust and Roma genocide are used in this text interchangeably.

Rozenberga and Zellis 2015; Greitjane 2003; Kretalovs 2009; Šūpulis 2017; 2019; 2022; Tihovska 2014; 2021; 2022; Zirnīte 2017), and linguistics (Perkova and Kozhanov 2022; Tenser 2008). In ethnology, BA and MA theses have been defended (Dambe 2008; 2010).

The Roma community in Estonia is rather small and the general knowledge in society about the Roma is relatively limited (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2023: 126). According to the most recent statistics, the number of Roma in Estonia is 654 (Statistics Estonia 2023). Nevertheless, in the case of statistics on Roma one must also rely on the unofficial estimates as many may not want to indicate their ethnicity due to fear of discrimination, among other things related to the historical trauma of the Roma Holocaust, as community representative Zalina Dabla has explained (Roht-Yilmaz et al. 2021). Furthermore, people from multi-ethnic backgrounds may refrain from indicating Roma as their ethnicity and instead claim some other ethnicity. Dabla estimates that the number of Roma in Estonia is around 1,500, including people who spend around half of the year in Estonia and half abroad (personal communication with Zalina Dabla, Oct 21, 2023). In Latvia the number of Roma is much higher. The newest statistics from 2023 gives the number of Roma as 6,589 (The Office 2023) or 4,677 (Statistics 2023). This considerable difference also demonstrates the difficulty of accessing accurate statistics about the Roma. The decrease in the number of Roma in Latvia from 2015 to 2022 has been significantly higher – 12%, compared to the total population change which is 6% (*Pētījums* 2023). Going abroad in search of employment is another factor affecting the changing statistics (Roma in Latvia 2015: 18). The Council of Europe estimated in 2012 that there were around 1,250 Roma in Estonia and 12,500 in Latvia (European Commission Estonia 2012; European Commission Latvia 2012). Nevertheless emigration caused a significant change in these statistics after they were produced.

When speaking Romani, Roma in Estonia and Latvia call themselves *roma* (pl). When speaking in other local languages they also use exonyms such as *mustlased* (pl) in Estonian, *čigāni* (pl) in Latvian, *цыгане* (pl) in Russian. Over the last two decades Roma representatives in Estonia have expressed their preference, at least in official documents, for *romad* (pl) rather than *mustlased*, as *must* in Estonian means not only the colour black, but also dirty and therefore contributes to a negative stereotype of the Roma. The word *romad* in Estonian has entered into official documentation, and into media texts over the last decade, but *mustlased*, which has the same root as the Finnish word *mustalaiset* (pl), is still commonly used among the majority of people, and also by the Roma when speaking in Estonian. In Latvia, the situation is similar: *romi* (pl) is used in official documentation and communication while *čigāni* (pl) is still used in informal communication by non-Roma and Roma alike. The abovementioned exonyms have been translated in the thesis as "Gypsy/Gypsies". I use also this word when discussing work by contemporary scholars who use it in their work to denote the groups they are studying, or when discussing the stereotypical image of the Roma that is common in society.

Linguistically the Roma living in Estonia today can be divided into closely related *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) dialect groups (Ross 2016: 155; Tenser 2008). In Latvia, the same dialects, which belong to the north-eastern subgroup of northern Romani dialects, are spoken (Tenser and Granqvist 2015: 3–4). In Estonia and Latvia, as in many other countries, Roma groups live across state borders; furthermore, several different Roma groups live in one country. These group names stem from their dialect group and their ancestors' birth country.

Additionally, the Roma divide themselves into subgroups based on geographical location, and kin and family groups. The *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma can be divided into the Kurzeme and Vidzeme Roma according to a territorial principle and further into subgroups based on kin and family lines, and traditional professions. For instance, five Roma 'tribes' in Kurzeme and two in Vidzeme lived in Latvia before World War II, as mentioned by a Roma author, Juris Leimanis (2022 [1939]: 27, 31, 144). The Roma communities in Latvia and Estonia before World War II had their own so-called social classes based on these kin and family lines. Currently in Estonia the differentiation is drawn more according to family lines while occupation names are no longer used.

It should be noted that when the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and the *Ruska* (Russian) Roma use a state name in their group name, this does not mean that they necessarily live in that state or identify themselves with that state. For instance, the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma mainly live in Latvia, but also in the neighbouring countries of Estonia and Lithuania. The *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma who have lived in Estonia for generations consider themselves to be *connected* to Estonia. In Estonia, there are also families with both *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma backgrounds. There are also some families who have begun to self-identify as *Laloritka* (Estonian) Roma as their families have lived in Estonia for generations. The Roma who consider themselves *Laloritka* (Estonian) Roma usually speak the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) dialect but might in some cases also be of mixed *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma background (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; Ross manuscript). As both the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and the *Ruska* (Russian) Roma communities in Estonia are small, knowledge of different Romani dialects becomes necessary for interaction with Roma from other groups (Ross manuscript). Most of my interlocutors belong to the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma group or have a background of both *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma; a few self-identified as *Laloritka* (Estonian) Roma. I will give more information about the history of Roma groups in Estonia in the next section of the introduction.

The Roma in the region under focus consider knowing the Romani language a key aspect of their identity (see also Ross manuscript). At the same time, Ieva Tihovska (2014: 236) rightly points out that, although language plays a significant role in Roma identity, the usage of other languages is not considered a threat to their ethnic identity. The Roma in Estonia and Latvia are multilingual. Ross (manuscript) has pointed out, that in addition to Romani, which is spoken in the private sphere, Roma in Estonia often speak Russian and Estonian in the public sphere. Knowledge of Russian is common not only among the *Ruska* (Russian)

Roma but also among the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma group. Knowledge of Latvian is more common among the Roma than among the rest of the population; English is spoken among younger generations or those who have worked and lived in the UK; Finnish is used by those who have worked or have connections in Finland (Ross manuscript). Missionisation by Finnish Roma, the *Kaale*,[4] as they call themselves, and especially conversions have given motivation to learn Finnish, which – as it is closely related to Estonian – is also easier to learn if one already knows Estonian (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; 2020b; see also Gripenberg 2022; Ross manuscript).

In my MA thesis, where I discussed identification practices among Roma in Estonia (2011: 136), I demonstrated that blood ties, connectedness to family and kin, together with the following of the ritual code of purity, are the main ways to distinguish Roma from non-Roma, the *gadže*. Central to this distinction is *Romanipen*, the rules and customs regulating life inside the community. At the same time, shared practices with Estonians and other non-Roma in Estonia are often used to show their belonging to Estonian society. In different contexts with different communication partners, including Roma and non-Roma, Roma individuals sense a need to express and highlight different layers of their identity by relating to others and differentiating themselves both at individual and group level (Roht 2011: 127). There are of course also Roma who choose to assimilate to the majority society and do not participate in kinship solidarity networks; for others, there can be different degrees of participation in community life. In addition to different forms of self-identification a person's belonging to the community is also assessed by others. Usually people find different ways to participate both in general society and in the Romani community specifically. It can be noted that in Estonia there is a considerable community among whom the Roma language is preserved and Romani customs and cultural values – which are obviously constantly changing and negotiated – transmitted, keeping the Roma identity alive (see also Ross manuscript).

It has been argued that religion, in addition to ethnicity, is one of the most important identity markers and certainly therefore deserves to be examined in Romani studies in all its complexity (e.g. Zachar Podolinská and Hrustič 2021: 148). Historically the Roma have belonged to the main religious communities that are common in the countries where they live, nevertheless studies on Roma religiosity mainly concentrated on the folk traditions, something that changed only when the study of Pentecostal revivalist movement among the Roma started (Thurfjell 2009: 181–183; cf. Fraser 1992). The Roma in Estonia and Latvia have traditionally belonged to various Christian denominations, such as Eastern Orthodoxy, Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism. Generally, the *Ruska* (Russian) Roma in Estonia are predominantly Russian Orthodox, while the *Lotfitka*

[4] *Kaale* is the endonym in Finnish Romani language, generally used by Finnish Roma when speaking about themselves, also in Finnish. As the Finnish Roma I encountered generally referred to themselves as *Kaalet* (pl, when speaking Finnish), less as *romanit* or *mustalaiset* (exonym in Finnish), therefore I also use *Kaale* throughout the text next to "Finnish Roma".

(Latvian) Roma are either Lutheran or Catholic (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; Tali et al. 2007: 38; see also Ariste 2012a [1940]). The affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church is less common in Estonia than in Latvia, where in the eastern parts it has been the predominant denomination. More recently, from the 1990s Roma started converting to Pentecostalism and Baptism. In addition, to my knowledge, there are currently Adventists and also Jehovah's Witnesses among the Roma. The newly converted Roma in Estonia and Latvia, among whom I conducted my fieldwork, refer to themselves simply as "believers" or "Christians"[5]. When denominational belonging is queried, most of them regard themselves as Pentecostals. There were also Baptist Roma among my interlocutors and some Roma I talked to belonged to non-denominational charismatic ("free") churches closely linked to Pentecostalism. The Finnish Roma missionaries who are the most active proselytisers among the Roma are Pentecostal. They co-operate mainly with local Pentecostal churches and occasionally also with Baptist churches. Furthermore, some Pentecostal Roma converts sometimes attend Baptist services as well.

In the thesis, I use the term "Pentecostal Christianity" or "Pentecostalism", after Thurfjell, "in the broadest possible sense" (2013: 181n3; see also Thurfjell 2009: 183). It is thus an umbrella term for the "new" Protestant churches, including Pentecostal, Baptist and charismatic "free churches". In doing this I am not in any way trying to deny or disregard their differences, but I see a certain "family resemblance" between them, as historically in the region under focus they have been closely connected to each other and, as explained above, they interact closely with each other today. My aim here is not to discuss the exact boundaries between churches and their labels. Commonly the congregations I have visited have stressed the need to make a personal choice for conversion and to become "born-again". Particularly in Pentecostalism the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including glossolalia, healing, prophecy, Biblicism and the requirement to proselytise are emphasised. To mark similar movements among Roma in different countries with their specific historical religious contexts, scholars have used various terms, such as "evangelical", "charismatic", or "new churches" (see, e.g. Marsh and Thurfjell 2014; Thurfjell 2009; 2013; Wachsmuth 2022).

In the articles I have sometimes also used "evangelical Christianity" as an umbrella term, including Pentecostals. Nevertheless, as the Lutheran Church, which has been the most traditional Protestant church in this region, also uses "evangelical" in its name (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church), I prefer not to use it here to avoid confusion. However, when discussing the work of other researchers who have chosen

[5] The converted Roma call themselves either "believers", that is *usklikud* in Estonian, *верующие*/*veruyushchie* in Russian, or "Christians", that is *kristlased* in Estonian, *христиане*/*khristiane* in Russian. During my field work I used these languages for communication, together with Finnish. The *Kaale* used the expression *uskossa* in Finnish ("being in faith"). I did not use Romani as my knowledge was very basic. The Romani word for believer is *pachakuno*; when using this word they can specify in what they believe, for instance, that they believe in Jesus Christ or express their denominational belonging. For the very devout person *devlikano manuš* (God's/godly person) can be used.

a different word as their umbrella term, such as Pentecostal/charismatic (P/c) Christianity or Pentecostalism/evangelicalism (P/e), I refer to these as in the original.

Conversions to Pentecostalism among Roma in Estonia and Latvia – and their religiosity more broadly – are connected to the socio-political contexts and also wider trends in the religious and spiritual attitudes of the general populations. Although the Roma under focus here belong to the same Christian denominations as many from the majority population, certain traditions, ways of practicing religion and attitudes can be more specific to the community. It should be stressed that currently like the rest of the population in Estonia and Latvia, the Roma are exposed to various types of religiosity, being thus influenced both by numerous forms of new spirituality and also by secularisation (cf. Zachar Podolinská and Hrustič 2021: 146–147). However, my Roma interlocutors stress that, while not all people regularly attend church services and sometimes family members belong to different denominations, Roma are a "religious nation". They stress that "everyone believes in God". For instance, funeral traditions with proper rituals and baptism for children are of great importance and it is unimaginable to have a burial without a pastor or priest. The ways Roma express their attitudes to their religious affiliation can be considered to differ somewhat from those of the main population as the Roma show a more positive attitude towards religion – and Christianity in particular.

Both Estonia and Latvia can be considered countries with rather tepid attitudes towards religion, in its institutionalised forms in particular. Estonia has been described as an extremely secularised Protestant society, and due to the long period of secularisation, religious identity has lost its importance for ethnic Estonians, whose national identity is more connected to the land and language (Ringvee 2014: 512–513). According to the latest censuses, the number of people who do not declare a religious affiliation has increased from 54% in 2011 to 56% in 2021[6]. The most common denominations are still Eastern Orthodoxy (16% of the population) and Lutheranism (8% of the population), 50% of people of Russian nationality, 47% of Ukrainians and 58% of Belarusians declare affiliation with Orthodoxy, while among ethnic Estonians the most prevalent religion is Lutheranism with 11% claiming affiliation. Nevertheless, instead of considering Estonian society to have become extremely secular, a more likely explanation is that some kind of religious change has taken place, as identities such as non-religious, irreligious, spiritual are difficult to measure and conceptualise (Remmel and Uibu 2015: 16; Uibu 2016). The low percentage is a combination of several factors. In addition to a national myth that is hostile to Christianity (Christianity has been seen as the religion of the foreign rulers in Estonia – the religion of Germans and Russians), negative stereotypes of religion that were inculcated during the Soviet

[6] The last population and housing census took place at the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022. Estonians are the least religiously affiliated nationality: only 17% of Estonian have an affiliation to a religion, while 71% are non-believers; among Slavs 65% of Belarusians, 56% of Ukrainians, and 54% of Russians claim an affiliation to a religion.

era are still widespread; at the same time religious pluralism and tolerance and therefore lack of conflict between religious traditions is common (Altnurme 2011: 79–80). Neo-Pagan identities, the so-called native or ethnic religions of Estonia (*Maausk* or *Taarausk*, claimed to be related to the "pre-Christian" ideas as well as to Finno-Ugric animisms) and Latvia (*Dievturība*, claimed to be related to the Baltic pre-Christian beliefs and mythology) are more connected to national and ethnic identity and more positively perceived, even though they are practiced by a very small number of people (Krūmiņa-Koņkova 1999; Strmiska 2013; Västrik 2015).

Solveiga Krūmiņa-Koņkova and Anita Misāne (2018: 673) point out that while Estonia is predominantly secular, in Latvia, according to a survey from 2015, the number of people who do not declare themselves as adhering to any religion is around 20%. The number of Catholics, Lutherans and Eastern Orthodox are roughly equal with the percentage of adherents to Eastern Orthodoxy around 29% while the percentage of Lutherans and Catholics is around 20% each. Similarly to Estonia, the number of Orthodox adherents in Latvia is rising, finding followers mainly among those who did not previously consider themselves religious (Krūmiņa-Koņkova and Misāne 2018: 673). In both countries, the greater part of those following Eastern Orthodoxy are people of Eastern Slavic background, especially Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians. The increase in the number of adherence to the Eastern Orthodox churches in both countries can be explained by the connection of Eastern Orthodoxy to ethnic identity (Krūmiņa-Koņkova and Misāne 2018: 676).

In Estonia, according to a survey from 2021, the percentage of Pentecostals was 0.21%, Baptists 0.47% and Adventists 0.09% (Statistics Estonia 2021). In Latvia, according to a survey in 2015, the percentage of Pentecostals was 0.1, Baptists 1.1 and Adventists 0.1. It is difficult to estimate the overall number of people involved in the charismatic and Pentecostal Churches in Estonia, as there are many independent churches and unions of churches that have overlapping identities and practices (such as charismatics among the Baptists, etc.) (Ringvee 2015: 65). Since the 1990s in Estonia, the charismatic and Pentecostal churches have become increasingly diverse, and at the same time the numbers of followers is increasing (Ringvee 2015: 57). Despite Pentecostal, Baptist and Adventist denominations being relatively small compared to the dominant denominations (Lutheranism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism), the new denominations are gaining adherents due to active missionary activities. They also preach in the social media, which is attractive for youth, and are active in social rehabilitation (see also Ringvee 2015: 63).

In Estonia, the marginalisation of Pentecostals seems not to be as strong as in several European Orthodox or Catholic societies where the Pentecostals can be considered more directly as opposing to the predominant religion (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a: 104; cf. e.g. Koosa 2013: 32–33; Podolinská 2014; 107). Christians belonging to different denominations in Estonia have explained that the wider society has often a negative stereotype of them, lumping all Christians together, making it difficult for individuals to talk about their own religious views

(Jaanhold 2022). Although, in general, declaring one's religious belonging in public could occasionally lead to ridicule or denouncing by outsiders, as described by Laura Jaanhold (2022), in the case of Roma, the image that comes with the stressing of "Christian honesty" is hoped to overtake the negative stereotypical image of "stealing and cheating Gypsies" (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2020a).

Although traditional Christian churches are not particularly popular according to censuses, it does not necessarily mean that most people would be "indifferent" and Estonia might not be as secularised as it may seem when looking at the statistics (Remmel 2017). Various forms of new spirituality are very common, which demonstrates the overall individualisation of religion (Altnurme 2007; 2011; Remmel 2017; Uibu 2016). This means that instead of people becoming atheists, their religiosity is switching from institutional to non-institutional forms (Remmel 2017). In Latvia, it can similarly be noticed that individual religiosity is becoming more private and subjective and that the particular framework for this is created by individuals (Krūmiņa-Koņkova and Misāne 2018: 681). The new spirituality is influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism (Altnurme 2007: 11). It has been argued that in Estonia a new monistic/holistic paradigm that is inspired by these religions exists alongside the Christian monotheistic/dualistic paradigm (Altnurme 2011: 92). Similarly in Latvia, what can be considered 'alternative', and folk or popular, religious practice has become more and more common and visible in public (Krūmiņa-Koņkova and Misāne 2018: 680). The popular new spiritualities also include "beliefs in magic" (Remmel 2017). For instance, in Estonia different neo-pagan beliefs and ritual practices including fortune telling, offered as "counselling practices", have also moved to social media platforms (Renser and Tiidenberg 2020). These have gained a substantial and dedicated audience among the general public.

These favourable attitudes towards practices such as fortune telling can also provide more possibilities for the Roma to offer their service for money. However, the negative attitudes of non-Roma about Roma fortune tellers are more likely formed due to the widespread assertive style of offering their service on the street or other public places. Nevertheless, seeking out fortune tellers in their homes avoids this type of negatively perceived interaction. One can remember here that active missionising associated for instance with Jehovah's Witnesses is usually viewed negatively in Estonia (Jaanhold 2022; Plaat 2003). The Roma who tell fortunes are themselves also aware of those non-Roma fortune tellers who have become famous through the media (TV shows, newspaper articles), as well as of books and social media groups on the same topic. Therefore, they are not unaffected by the general attitudes present in the wider society.

1.2. The Roma in Estonia and Latvia: a historical overview

The history of Roma in the area of Latvia and Estonia can be traced back to 15th and 16th centuries. In Latvia, it is claimed that the Roma first arrived in the area in around the 15th or 16th century, as surnames suggest from Poland and Germany

(Apine 1998: 200). A document from 1533, mentioning Roma (*zcigener* in Low-German), arriving in Tallinn from Germany, is the first source in Estonian archives about Roma (Ariste 2012 [1937]: 19; 2012b [1940]: 47; 2012 [1959]: 29; 2012 [1966]: 40). In a Finnish medieval source book, a document mentions the even earlier presence of Roma in this area, stating that in 1515 a group of Roma arrived in Finland from Estonia (Aaltonen 1963). Nevertheless, it is argued that the Roma arrived and settled in Finland from Sweden probably in the 16th century: a document states that in 1559 some Roma were sent back to Sweden, after they had stopped over on the Åland islands (Ariste 2012 [1967]: 73; Fraser 1992: 121; Tervonen 2010: 7).

In historical documents the more frequent mentioning of the permanent Roma presence in the area of today's Estonia starts in the 17th century with orders limiting the duration of stay for Roma in Tallinn during Swedish rule. During the 18th and 19th centuries, several similar decrees by Russian rulers ordered the expulsion of Roma from the country, demonstrating both the presence of Roma in these lands, and probably also that orders of expulsion were not successfully implemented (Ariste 2012 [1934]: 135; 2012b [1940]: 47–50). An order that is known to have affected the life of Roma significantly in Estonia was enforced in 1841, when the Roma living in Estonia were ordered to move to the parish of Laiuse. Their movement was restricted by law to ensure they returned from their travels. A special position, held by a Roma, was also created to control the community members' tax payments (Ariste 2012b [1940]: 52; Kukk 1983: 436; Ariste 2012 [1967]: 71). This forced relocation of the Roma resulted in them becoming known as the *Lajenge* (Laiuse) Roma (Ariste 2012b [1940]: 54). This was the first group to arrive in Estonia, who most probably came to Estonia either from Sweden or Finland; their Romani dialect was similar to the dialect of the Finnish *Kaale* (Ariste 2012b [1940]: 64; 2012 [1966]: 41; 2012 [1967]: 73). Because of the relocation to Laiuse, this Roma group had by the beginning of 20th century generally become sedentary, integrated and assimilated with Estonians compared to other Roma groups in Estonia. As a result, they had started to lose their native *Lajenge* (Laiuse) Romani dialect (Ariste 2012b [1940]: 53; 2012 [1966]: 41; 2012 [1967]: 74).

Ariste 2012 [1959]: 31–32) suggests that *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma, who were the biggest group in Estonia before World War II, arrived in the Estonian area during the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The third and smallest Roma group living in Estonia before World War II were the *Ruska* (Russian) Roma, who mainly lived close to the Russian border near Narva, at Lake Peipus and in south-eastern Estonia (Ariste 2012 [1959]: 32). The three groups – the *Lajenge* (Laiuse), the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma, and the *Ruska* (Russian) Roma – by and large kept to themselves. However, they were not completely isolated as occasionally they met at fairs, some travelled together and there were some intermarriages (Ariste 2012 [1959]: 32; Blomster 1999: 40). Ariste (2012b [1940]: 66; 2012c [1940]: 23) has stated that the small number of German Roma in this area had blended into the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma, something that has also been mentioned in the memories of some Roma (Kroll 2002).

Before World War II the increasing number of Roma in Latvia had become sedentarised and started to live in towns and cities (Tihovska 2022: 347), although seasonal travel during the warmer months was still widely practiced. The main occupation of more than half of the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma was horse trading, as well as fortune telling, asking for food, blacksmith and locksmith work, woodcarving, wickerwork, housekeeping, and farming (Leimanis 2022 [1939]; Greitjāne, 2003: 367; Tihovska 2022: 347). For Roma in Estonia, similarly, horse trading, blacksmithing, fortune telling, curing with herbal medicine and asking farmers for food have been the ways of earning a living (Ariste 2012 [1984]: 78).

Although religious practices among Roma in Estonia and Latvia before World War II and during the Soviet period have not been researched as a separate topic, there is some information and insights concerning religion among the Roma before World War II. For instance, a notable person in the history of Roma activism and evangelisation from the Kurzeme part of Latvia was the above-mentioned Jānis Leimanis. Leimanis had attended Eastern Orthodox school and worked as watchman at an Orthodox church (Vīksna 2022 [2005]: 13; Tihovska 2022: 353). Based on newspaper articles from that period, Tihovska (2022: 345) points out that Leimanis had a Romani Lutheran parish in Riga and expressed a wish to missionise among the local Roma.

Leimanis was active in many spheres relevant to the Roma during the 1930s. He established and headed the first Roma society in Latvia, called Friend of the Gypsies (Lat: *Čigānu draugs*) (Kenrick 2007: 152; Tihovska 2021: 673; Tihovska 2022: 348). He was trying to improve the living conditions for Roma and was an activist for Roma employment, a collector of Romani folklore, founder of the Friend of the Gypsies Romani choir, etc. (Tihovska 2021: 673; Tihovska 2022: 352; Vīksna 2022 [2005]: 11–13). Nevertheless, Tihovska points out that the contemporary Roma remember Leimanis as a "pastor" (original quotation marks), which shows the possible importance or influence of his work in the religious field (Tihovska 2022: 353). Significantly, he translated into the Romani language the Gospel of John in 1932, some Christian texts including several prayers (for instance, *Our Father*, *The Symbol of Faith*), spiritual songs, and in 1936 excerpts from the Catechism (Tihovska 2021: 673; Tihovska 2022). In 1933, Leimanis' translation of the Gospel of John was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Missionary work became his main activity during 1934 and 1936 when he collaborated with various religious leaders and organisations including Baptists and Methodists.

Tihovska (2022: 354–355) also points out that periodicals from the second half of the 1930s give information that the Lutheran church indeed had a special evangelisation policy for local Roma (in contrast to other minorities) and at least in 1935 and 1936 Leimanis was also involved in the Gypsy section of the Internal Mission of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church, which evangelised and provided support to socially vulnerable groups and people who were unable to attend church regularly because of their personal circumstances or professional duties. In 1934, the Internal Mission had opened a Gypsy mission as a separate branch that carried out baptisms, confirmations, marriage ceremonies, com-

munions, and regular services in churches and Internal Mission church houses as well as in Roma homes (Tihovska 2022: 354). However, in 1937 Leimanis shifted his focus again by turning from missionary work to the issues of Roma civic engagement, employment, and land ownership (Tihovska 2022: 354–355).

In Estonia, Ariste (2012 [1935]: 15; 2012a [1940]: 167), who was also informed about the translation and preaching work by Leimanis, considers the spread and effect of the religious literature among the Roma in Estonia minimal because of their very low literacy rate. As mentioned in the previous section of the thesis, though most of Ariste's scholarly articles were in the field of linguistics, he also touches upon the topic of Roma and religion in southern Estonia. In the article he points out that while *Ruska* (Russian) Roma were Russian Orthodox, among *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma the denominational belonging varied between Lutheran and Orthodox, although often they felt a closer connection to Orthodoxy even if officially not adhering to it (Ariste 2012a [1940]: 165–166). He adds that among the *Lajenge* (Laiuse) Roma, who were most probably the first to arrive in the area of today's Estonia, there were also many Orthodox. He explains the variety of denominational belonging in one family with the practical reasoning of the Roma – they would take children to be baptised at the nearest church, no matter whether it was Lutheran or Russian Orthodox (Ariste 2012a [1940]: 165–166). Today, the religious belonging between Roma spouses in Estonia can vary and usually seems not to cause problems. According to my fieldwork interviews and observations, blessings from a priest or pastor from another denomination is not avoided but is actually usually highly valued. For instance, an Orthodox priest is preferred to attend the memorial events of Roma Holocaust and some converted Roma still visit a Russian Orthodox convent, the Pühtitsa Dormition Convent (Kuremäe Convent), located in the eastern part of Estonia. Like many Orthodox Christians they take sacred water from the so-called holy spring that is located close by and is believed to have healing properties.

While trying to discuss the religiosity of Roma in more detail Ariste's claims are sometimes contradictory and too rigid. On the one hand, he claims that religion is not important to the Roma as they "do not have time for it due to the harsh practicalities of life", suggesting that they have become "materialists" and pointing out that baptisms are carried out for the practical reason of getting the child listed at the church, as mentioned above (Ariste 2012a [1940]: 165; 2012 [1959]: 33). Based on his observations among the Roma in Estonia before World War II Ariste claims that Roma have only a vague knowledge of the official religion – Christianity – and do not have many religious rituals, using their own prayers and not the commonly known ones (Ariste 2012a [1940]: 165; 2012 [1959]: 33). On the other hand, Ariste (2012a [1940]: 167) claims that Roma are more religious than other people and that it cannot be said that Roma are not Christians. He admits that Christian baptisms and especially funerals are important for the Roma and that belief in God and prayer is common. Ariste demonstrates that he has spent time and talked with Roma and therefore has many interesting observations, but his generalising efforts seem to lead to oversimplification and overgeneralisation. He evaluates the religiosity of Roma from his subjective point of

view by characterising it either as a deviation, or as something completely different from the Christianity of the majority population; he views Roma religiosity as unchanging and governed by "practicality" over religiosity. Nevertheless, his remarks on the situation and his personal experience make him admit the more complex nature of Roma religiosity.

While wanting to stress that the Roma are not at all "superstitious", as society tends to think, Ariste explains (2012a [1940]: 165; 2012 [1959]: 33) that the practice of fortune telling and the preparation of potions and amulets are just "an occupation" the same as any other for the Roma women, and that they very seldom believe in it, contrary to the gullible Estonian majority. Ariste adds that if the Roma should actually "believe in" something, then they keep this knowledge inside the community. With this comment he leaves open the possibility that some rituals might be practiced among the community. Ariste (2012a [1940]: 167) also points out that churches are visited for the Roma oath-giving/taking practice, a tradition that is still in use today. This is a procedure that proves innocence when one has been falsely accused or is suspected of a crime by another Roma. Another reason for Roma visits to churches mentioned by Ariste (2012a [1940]: 167) is the wish to get the candles that are blessed by the priest for what can be considered 'magic rituals'. Several rituals that use candles, to which Ariste refers, are still practiced, for instance when a person has been falsely accused by another Roma and wants to receive justice (cf. Ignats 2006). Ariste (2012 [1959]: 33) refers to the stereotypical understanding that Roma might steal from non-Roma, but he also points out that Roma have very high moral standards inside their own community and that "beliefs" exist that are not discussed with non-Roma as they are connected to the regulation of community life. This shows that he is aware that community life is regulated by *Romanipen* (although he does not use the word itself). Ariste (2012a [1940]: 167), although wanting to show that Roma should not be viewed through widespread and inaccurate stereotypes, regards the Roma as different from non-Roma, stating that they have a "totally different" morality that is not understood by non-Roma which binds them into a community or society and which is in some respects better than that of the non-Roma. Similarly he seems to argue that they have a "totally different" understanding of religion, without analysing its functioning in more depth.

The effect of World War II and the German occupation of Estonia and Latvia was catastrophic for the Roma communities. The available data on Roma genocide in Estonia has been researched in most detail by Anton Weiss-Wendt (2003; 2023), who states that out of the registered 906–915 Roma, just 75–125 survived (Weiss-Wendt 2023: 14). Ariste had similarly estimated (2012 [1959]: 32) that before World War II there had been around 900 Roma in Estonia. Around 20 families survived (his guess based on interaction with Roma) (Silmaring 1989). It is estimated that almost all of the *Lajenge* (Laiuse) Roma and most *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma living in Estonia were executed, with only about 10% of the community surviving (Ariste 2012 [1959]; Kott 2015; Silmaring 1989; Weiss-Wendt 2003; 2022). The exact number of the executed Roma during the occupation of Estonia and Latvia by Nazi Germany during World

War II remains unknown and cannot be proven by documentation. Estimates by researchers and activists also vary, the latter claim that the number of Roma before World War II was considerably higher. In Latvia a higher percentage of Roma were able to survive. There were 3,839 Roma according to the census of 1935 (Lukumiete et al. 2003: 15). However unofficial estimates published in newspapers in 1936 and 1937 showed a considerably higher number, up to 5,000 or 6,000 (Tihovska 2021: 673). According to the available documentation, in Latvia around 2,000 Roma were murdered by the Nazi occupation regime (Kenrick 2007: 151; Kott 2015).

After the war Roma started moving to Estonia from Latvia and Russia (Lutt et al. 1999: 335–6). The surviving Roma in Estonia married the newcomers as they were already communicating with the Roma in Latvia due to kin relations across the state border (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; Roht-Yilmaz 2023). Unlike other minorities in Estonia who tend to make a distinction between their own pre-war community and the newcomers (for instance Russians, Jews, Tatars), this was not so important for the Roma because they had often had connections with the newcomers before World War II (Ross manuscript).

Because of the Roma genocide during the Nazi German occupation of Estonia and Latvia, the communities experienced a great disruption and destruction of their traditional culture and community structure, social and kin relations. Almost all Roma families have been affected by this tragedy both directly by the loss of family members, and indirectly because of the resulting distrust of authorities and non-Roma in general (see also Roht-Yilmaz et al. 2021). This is also apparent in the memories of survivors and their children. The collected stories of survivors tell about the traumas the Roma suffered and demonstrate their agency in escaping the concentration and forced labour camps and the different trajectories of Roma during the war and how the Roma community was affected by this great disruption (Roht-Yilmaz 2023: 130). In Estonia, where the majority of Roma were murdered, the dynamics of the community changed considerably (see also Ross manuscript). When discussing oral history interviews and the Roma Holocaust in Latvia, Edmunds Šūpulis (2022: 14) claims the Roma refrain from emphasising cultural differences and stress more common traits with the non-Roma. He considers this to be evidence of a shock that has persisted in social memory, i.e. ethnicity can be politicised at any moment and persecutions could return. The genocide also influenced the traditional social categorisation and the so-called social classes that regulate the interaction and marriage between social classes, different family and kin lines. It resulted in more marriages between different social classes. Slawomir Kapralski (2023: 11) has pointed out that for the survivors of Roma Holocaust their experience not only made them fear for their lives afterwards, but also that it caused disruption to the way Roma life had been organised, such as following rules connected to ritual purity, gender separation, age-related proper behaviour, and clan and group belonging.

During the Soviet period, the Roma in Estonia and Latvia were forced to become sedentary. The Soviet decree "On Reconciling Vagrant Gypsies to Labour" (1956) prohibited travel and demanded a permanent place of residence and en-

gagement in paid jobs (see Bartash 2015: 24; Ruka 2019: 6). Both in Latvia and Estonia at the beginning of the 20th century travel was seasonally nomadic (cf. Bartash 2015: 29; Matras 2000). Most Roma had winter homes with farmers; some even owned or rented houses. Travel during the summer months was still practiced. During the Soviet era, Roma worked in different occupations as fitting for their education levels, possibilities and preferences. Many Roma in Latvia worked in collective farms and factories while some picked berries in the forest and sold them at berry collection points, a practice that is continued by some Roma in Latvia and Estonia also today (Ruka 2019: 14). In Estonia the situation resembled that of Latvia, according to the accounts of my interlocutors. When Roma still owned horses, they used them to help out, for instance when farmers needed a horse for farm work on their land. Several Roma have related how they worked as collectors of discarded clothes and paper, bringing them to collection points for recycling.

During the Brezhnev era of economic stagnation and shortage in consumer goods the Roma found a way to earn a living by buying and selling various merchandise (Marushiakova and Popov 2003: 304). These possibilities were also used by many Roma in Estonia and Latvia. Trading became an important way of earning a living for both men and women. Goods brought from other Soviet Socialist Republics were later sold at home, with this kind of travelling for business being common. During the Soviet period trading was regarded as profiteering ("speculation") and was therefore illegal. My interlocutors have explained that many Roma still found ways to continue trading, sometimes by making agreements with the police. One way of trading was to travel to the countryside where shopping possibilities were limited and offering goods to farmers (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2018a).

The change to a capitalist system with the collapse of the Soviet Union made trading easier and more common among the majority population and this loss of employment niche drove some Roma into illegal activities, such as drug dealing (Marushiakova and Popov 2003: 304–307). This tendency has also been observed in Latvia (Lukumiete et al. 2003: 55). With the change to capitalism in Estonia during the 1990s many Roma, along with the majority, started working at markets selling different goods. Nevertheless it should be noted that unemployment after 1989 affected a large number of Roma in Eastern Europe (Barany 2002: 174). The closing of state factories and kolkhozes affected Roma in Latvia, who today consider the Soviet period a time of greater ethnic equality in education and the labour market with more freedom of choice even if during the same period what has been viewed as the traditional lifestyle (including travelling during summers and traditional occupations such as selling and exchanging horses) disappeared (Garda-Rozenberga and Zirnīte 2014: 118). The change of the social and economic system has not been easy to accommodate for all Roma, and this had a bearing on their religious choices during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

1.3. Missionary activities among Roma after Estonia and Latvia regained their independence

As discussed earlier the 1980s and 1990s were a time of great societal and economic change in Estonia and Latvia, including what has been called a religious boom. The high time of this religious or church boom in Estonia was 1988–1992, but it did not have longlasting effects as the membership of the Lutheran Church has been declining again (Altnurme 2007; Plaat 2000; Ringvee 2014). During the time of the boom many (re)discovered religion, from which they had become estranged during the Soviet period of atheism and secularisation (Plaat 2000). During this period, which can also be considered the period of national reawakening, church attendance on holidays, holding baptisms and getting married in church, became common (Plaat 2003: 57–58). In Estonia during this period people became interested in all types of religious and spiritual teaching, which had been banned previously. This applied not only to traditional churches but also free churches, New Age groups and various new religious ideas (Altnurme 2005: 81). With the fall of the iron curtain and the opening of borders the influence of charismatic movements also grew significantly (Altnurme 2007: 7).

With the transition from a totalitarian regime to democracy in the 1990s, the legal status of churches and congregations changed and they could again function freely (Altnurme 2007: 7). In 1945, Baptists, Revivalist Free Churches, Evangelical Christians with Pentecostals, despite their noticeable differences in ritual practice and teaching, had been forced to join into an alliance called the Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptists of Estonia, which was subordinated to the All Union Council of the Evangelical Christians and Baptists in Moscow (Plaat 2000; Plaat 2003: 55; Ringvee 2015: 57, 59; Teraudkalns 2001: 100). This drove Pentecostals to find ways to continue religious practice secretly and illegally at home.

After 1965, when the regular ferry link between Tallinn and Helsinki was established, the Finnish connection played an important role in the emergence of a charismatic Pentecostal revival in the evangelical Christian churches and amongst the Baptists in Tallinn (Ringvee 2015: 57, 60). Valdus Teraudkalns (2001: 101) points out that during the 1970s when persecution decreased after the intense persecution of churches at the end on 1950s and beginning of 1960s, Latvian Baptists had again more contact with foreigners, including Pentecostal-oriented preachers who often came from Finland through Estonia, or from the USA. St. Olaf's Church (Oleviste kirik) in Tallinn, where in 1950 eight different churches of Baptist, Evangelical Christian, Pentecostal and Revivalist Free Church traditions had been forced into one congregation, became a place of pilgrimage for many believers from the Baltic states and even elsewhere in the Soviet Union (Pilli 2008: 40–41; Ringvee 2015: 57, 59; Teraudkalns 2001: 102).

During the 1980s, some earlier illegal Pentecostal churches managed to register with the state institutions (Plaat 2000). Some of the Pentecostal congregations left the Union of Free Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia while others joined the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church, which was created at the beginning of the 1990s and which has remained the largest Pentecostal church (Plaat 2000; Ringvee 2015: 57). During this time period the number of new

Pentecostal congragations also increased (Plaat 2003: 58). Foreign connections and missionaries were also important for the Pentecostal and charismatic movements in Estonia from the late 1980s onwards; since the 1990s they have been connected to the global networks (Plaat 2003: 58; Ringvee 2015: 57, 65;).

The timeline of mission among Roma in Estonia fits into the general trend of the religious revival of 1980s and 1990s. The mission groups that included the Finnish *Kaale* together with ethnic Finns arrived at the beginning of 1990s, which was also the mission's high point in Estonia (Gripenberg 2022; Lutt et al. 1999: 337; Roht-Yilmaz 2020a). The start of mission activities among the Roma in Estonia took place during the same time period as in other post-Soviet and post-socialist countries (Marushiakova and Popov 2014; Roht-Yilmaz 2020a: 95). In the case of Estonia, it was nevertheless Roma, the *Kaale*, from another country together with local churches who played an important role in this revival.

In 1991, Olli and Seija Gronförs, *Kaale* missionaries, arrived with ethnic Finns at Võru Baptist church when the Free Church of Iisalmi in Finland was invited by the church in southern Estonia (Gripenberg 2022: 120–121). The *Kaale* were interested in inviting local Roma to mission events and from that time started their mission activities among the Roma in Estonia. Estonian Baptist congregations also asked *Kaale* to help them reach local Roma (cf. Gripenberg 2022: 123). Shortly after the initial mission event in Võru, mission groups of Finnish *Kaale* started coming to Estonia to missionise among the Roma, for instance in the abovementioned St. Olaf's church, an event of larger scale was held by *Kaale* missionaries together with the converted Roma from Estonia (Gripenberg 2022: 121).

Both the *Kaale* missionary activities and local Roma missions in Estonia were most intense during the 1990s and 2000s (Roht-Yilmaz 2019: 95). This was also the period when the local Pentecostal Roma pastor Georg Vinogradov had his own Pentecostal congregation in south Estonia was actively proselytising in Estonia and in Latvia close to the Estonian border. He and his family had first converted to Baptism during the earlier mentioned mission event in Võru in 1991 where he had met *Kaale* missionaries (see also *Mission of a Rom*; Gripenberg 2022: 121). This most active period was again followed by large scale deconversions among the Roma in Estonia. Similar in timeline, a religious revival uniting Roma from different denominations including Pentecostals, Lutherans and Catholics, took place in the Kurzeme region of Latvia, also after Latvia regained its independence (personal communication with Mareks Ignats, March 29, 2023).

The 1990s can be characterised as having great political uncertainty and economic difficulties. It is sometimes argued that Pentecostalism in this postsocialist context proved successful because it offered hope as well as practical ways to fight drug abuse, alcoholism and the corruption that accompanied the political and economic changes of the period (Pelkmans 2009: 9). One feature of Pentecostalism is its effort to empower the poor and create possibilities for social mobility, often also among ethnic minorities (Peel 2009: 191–192). For instance, Pentecostal and other evangelical missions arrived in both Bulgaria and Slovakia during the economically difficult period after 1989 and became successful among the Roma in particular (Podolinská 2014: 89–90; Slavkova 2007: 221).

An important role in *Kaale* missionary activities is played by their de-marginalisation narrative (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a). The topics of marginalisation and poverty have continued to hold an important place in guiding the evangelising directions of the Finnish *Kaale* in Estonia and Latvia from the start of their mission trips (Gripenberg 2022: 120). Currently mission focus is more on Latvia as the Roma community there is both bigger and considered by the missionaries to live in economically more difficult conditions (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; see also Gripenberg 2022: 120). Nevertheless, activities continue in south-eastern Estonia close to the Latvian border as converted Roma who are involved with the *Kaale* mission have kin on both sides of the border, which affects the mission trajectory. The general economic and social conditions have been affected by the political and economic changes that were accompanied by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the regaining of Estonian and Latvian independence. This was the context in which the mission was conducted, differing considerably from the economic and social conditions present where the missioning *Kaale* came from.

Today differences in economic conditions in Finland and post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia remain and therefore humanitarian aid plays an important part in *Kaale* mission trips. The social and economic situation of the Roma in general can both in Estonia and Latvia be considered worse than that of other ethnic groups. Both in Estonia and Latvia, Roma have significantly lower education levels and higher unemployment rates than among the main population. This is considered a continuing serious issue among the Roma (Karabeškin and Derman 2018; Raudsepp and Roosalu 2013: 105; Roma in Latvia 2015: 3–5; Ross manuscript; Statistics Estonia 2021; Roma Civil Monitor 2019). For instance, in 2019 15.6% of the Roma population were employed compared to 66.7% of the general population (Statistics Estonia 2021).

Together with the majority population Roma have benefited from free movement inside the European Union since 2004, enabling them to look for better paid work in Western European countries. The economic crises of 2008 in Latvia considerably affected the long-term emigration of Roma from Latvia to the UK, and since 2011 short-term emigration has also been common (Roma in Latvia 2015: 18). In the UK several active Pentecostal Roma from the Kurzeme region in Latvia have become pastors after moving there during the emigration wave of the 2000s and have formed new congregations consisting mainly of Roma from Latvia (personal communication Ieva Vīvere August 2, 2023; Mareks Ignats March 29, 2023). The emigration of Roma to find work in the UK, Sweden and Finland has also been common for the Roma in Estonia. These emigrations have also changed the dynamics of the community. The Roma in the Vidzeme region of Latvia live in small towns and villages with high rates of unemployment. Valga county has the lowest median income of all Estonian counties. In addition to emigrating to work in the UK, many have started working in bigger cities such as Tallinn and Riga. In recent years Roma have moved from Latvia to Valga, that is the Estonian side of the border town Valga/Valka. It is the town with the highest number of Roma in Estonia. This trend is often explained by my interlocutors as being because of the better social support system in Estonia compared to Latvia and already having relatives in Estonia.

The history of missionising among the Roma in Finland goes back to the beginning of the 20th century. This might be influenced by the idea that Roma should be assimilated into majority society through religion (see Marinov 2019a: 363). During the 19th century, Roma were generally portrayed as lacking religion while researchers concentrated on the folktales of the Roma and simplified and overemphasised the "folkloristic" aspects of their traditions (Marinov 2019a: 363; Thurfjell 2009: 182). The Roma were even depicted as "the counter-images of Christian civilisation" (Thurfjell 2009: 182). Since the end of the 18th century and early 19th century evangelical communities started to be interested in educating the Roma as Christians, although this involved making them settled (Marinov 2019a: 380).

In Finland, the first organisation focusing on the mission among the Roma was established in 1906 by non-Roma under the name of the Gypsy Mission (*Mustalaislähetys*). It was of a free church background and was part of the Finnish Lutheran state church's revivalist movement (Thurfjell 2013: 37). Its goal was the evangelisation of Roma in Finland, but between the 1940s and the 1980s, the organisation was influenced by Finnish state assimilation policies, that aimed to make Roma into fully fledged Finnish citizens by eliminating their cultural distinctiveness. This included repressive practices such as placing Roma children in children's homes (Roman 2016: 26–27; Thurfjell 2013: 38). The organisation is today led by *Kaale* themselves as it was thoroughly restructured during the 1980s and 1990s and renamed Romano Missio in 1996 when Henry Hedman became the first Roma to be appointed as the managing director (Hedman 2012: 254–255; Roman 2016: 27; Roman 2020: 369; Thurfjell 2013: 38). It cooperates not only with Lutheran but also with other Christian churches and Romani organisations and organises religious, education and social support-related activities for the Roma (Thurfjell 2013: 38).

The other mission organisation, the Finnish Free Romani Mission (*Suomen Vapaa Romanilähetys*) was established in 1964. It was founded during the Pentecostal revivalism in cooperation between the Pentecostal, the Baptist and the Free Church. Later it was associated to the international Romani revival, founded by Clément Le Cossec in France (this will be discussed more in detail in section 3.2.), and its name was changed to Life and Light (*Elämä ja Valo*) (Roman 2016: 28; Thurfjell 2013: 42). The *Kaale* have become more active as they have taken a leading role in their ethnically mixed Pentecostal congregations including proselytisation activities from the 1960s and 1970s, the time when also the Roma rights movement started in Finland (Roman 2016: 26; Thurfjell 2013: 42–43). Furthermore, the *Kaale* including Romano Missio and Elämä ja Valo, are also active in contributing to policies and practices relating to Roma in Finland (Roman 2016: 26).[7] The Pentecostal *Kaale's* interest in Roma-related social issues and involvement in activism also influenced the development of Roma activism in Estonia from the 1990s. I will come back to this topic in more detail in the last section of the chapter on the theoretical framework of the thesis (3.8).

[7] The *Kaale* and their mission activities in Romania have been researched by Raluca Bianca Roman (2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017, 2018a; 2018b).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Field sites and research methods

My ethnographic fieldwork among the Roma in Estonia began in 2009 for my MA thesis, titled "Self-Identification and Self-Presentation of the Estonian Roma: Media, Human and Minority Rights, Kinship", which I defended in 2011 at the University of Tartu. Some of my Roma interlocutors, whom I interviewed in 2009 and 2010, had converted to Baptist and Pentecostal churches and expressed this identity rather explicitly, therefore I included the topic of conversion in the thesis. By chance, the time of the writing my MA thesis coincided with the premiere of Vahur Laiapea's documentary *Mission of a Rom* (2010) about the Pentecostal pastor Georg Vinogradov in Estonia. This event enabled me to meet more converts and interview them for my thesis. This way the topic of my current dissertation grew out of the findings of my MA thesis. From 2014, I continued with my fieldwork by focussing on the topic of religion for my PhD thesis. The initial fieldwork for my MA thesis had created a solid base as I had connections as well as friendships. This let me continue my research on the religious and cultural identifications of Roma in Estonia and Latvian Vidzeme region in connection with conversion to Pentecostal Christianity.

My fieldwork mainly relied on participant observation at prayer meetings and mission events, and in non-formal communication situations. I had mainly informal conversations and conducted some semi-structured interviews with converted and unconverted Roma, the Finnish *Kaale* missionaries, and also with some non-Roma involved in the mission. In addition, I also used the aforementioned documentary film *Mission of a Rom* by Laiapea as source, watched YouTube videos of Roma conversion stories and worship songs that my interlocutors suggested, read mission magazines, and followed the Finnish Roma mission's social media pages. I was using social media both for communication and as a source material as the missionaries shared live videos of their mission trips and events to the mission's public social media page, primarily directed at their fellow believers and members of Life and Light in Finland.

My fieldwork consisted mainly of participant observation and quick notes made during conversations and events followed afterwards by noting down the content and my reflections in more detail. I also conducted semi-structured interviews that were inspired by a biographical approach and had conversations to get to know the person based on their life story, talked about Roma customs and history and asked questions concentrating on the topics of religion, conversion and mission. I enquired about how my interlocutors had converted and tried to find out what it means for them and whether and how it affects their relations with unconverted Roma. I listened to conversion narratives (so-called testimonies) during public mission events and prayer meetings. In some cases, mainly with people who had been doing mission work, I recorded interviews, but in many cases communication situations that involved several people didn't seem a suitable place to ask interview questions or make recordings. Therefore, I often chose to stay with more natural conversations and take notes. This proved for me the most

practical and fitting way to gather the data as it enabled me to participate in and experience more of the environment and the everyday world of my interlocutors and to gain more knowledge in a more relaxed communication situation.

The fieldwork materials, in the form of fieldwork notes gathered during participant observation and recordings of semi-structured interviews, are kept in my personal collection. I have maintained my interlocutors' anonymity by using pseudonyms, for the sake of continuity and coherency also for those people who did not mind whether their name is used publicly or not. I have mentioned *Kaale* missionaries and an Estonian Roma pastor by name when giving factual information that has been previously published. In addition, the pastor did not mind me using his name but was also not against anonymising it. Nevertheless, as the interviews and conversations sometimes touch on sensitive information and may include reference to other people, I have decided to anonymise all my interlocutors when I refer to our conversations. I took photos during the public mission events and during other meetings when my interlocutors had given their oral permission for this. The photos were mainly taken to serve as a visual aid when remembering fieldwork situations and events and I have not included them in the thesis.

While for my MA thesis I conducted fieldwork in Estonia, for my PhD research I extended my geographical field site to the other side of Estonian border into the Latvian Vidzeme region. The area of my fieldwork is relatively far away from the capital cities Tallinn and Riga. Although the countries do not have large surface areas, the density of population in the border area is rather low. The towns and villages are scattered and apart from each other and are most easily accessible by car, to a lesser extent also by public transport, which mainly connects the towns to bigger cities and to a lesser extent to some villages. The employment possibilities in these areas are rather scarce and some Roma in Latvian villages work in a factory in Tallinn, Estonia.

My fieldwork mainly took place in Valga/Valka,[8] situated on the border between the two countries, and to a lesser extent in other towns and villages on both sides of the border. The Estonian town Valga in central southern Estonia has the largest Roma population in Estonia due to cross-border movement. The town served for me as the main field site as it was where the regular prayer meetings organised by the active believer Roma women took place. They had invited a Roma pastor from Riga to join the weekly prayer meetings in the hope of bringing more Roma to these gatherings. Unlike in many central eastern and south-eastern European countries, there are no mono-ethnic Roma churches in this region and Roma believers attend either Estonian- or Russian-speaking churches in Estonia and Latvian Vidzeme according to their language skills and preference (see also Marushiakova and Popov 2014: 41). The Roma believers I met during my fieldwork often practiced religion privately by gathering at homes using several languages including Romani depending on the participants' language skills. These meetings were generally attended by Roma but were not closed to non-Roma.

[8] Both towns are the administrative centres of their respective municipalities. Since 2005 Valga and Valka have cooperate in education, culture, sport, health, environmental issues and tourism (see also the official joint webpage of Valga and Valka towns https://visitvalgavalka.com).

Figure 1. Map showing the area of my fieldwork: south Estonia around Valga/Valka, Tallinn and Tartu, and in Latvia the Vidzeme region near the Estonian border.

The map is approximate and based on the map of the Member States of the European Union (Council of the European Union 2020). The Latvian part uses the currently agreed cultural–historical division of Latvia. Latvian regional boundaries are manually drawn based on the Historical Latvian Lands Law adopted in 2021 and the map in its appendix.[9]

[9] Link to the document on Historical Latvian Lands Law with the map is as follows https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/saeimalivs13.nsf/0/f60c7a07597992d2c22587020033db29/$FILE/71884513.pdf

During my fieldwork I used Estonian for communication with Roma who knew it, Russian – which can be considered the most widely spoken language after Romani in Estonia and Latvia – with Roma who did not speak Estonian, and Finnish with the Finnish *Kaale* who spoke Finnish. During the mission events that were held in Latvia, Latvian, Russian and Finnish were used in public speeches and were translated either from Finnish to Russian or the other way around. As I do not know Latvian, I had to opt to speak in Russian and listen for translations to Russian or Finnish at the mission events. When communicating with *Kaale*, the Roma from Estonia also use a mix of Estonian and Finnish as the languages are closely related, both belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2020b). The *Kaale* generally used the help of interpreters and used very little Romani with Roma in Latvia and Estonia; their attempts to communicate in Romani were well received. My knowledge of Romani is very basic, and this can be considered a limitation in communication, even though virtually all Roma use some other languages on a daily basis with non-Roma; during the prayer meetings Russian was the main communication language. In Estonia, teaching the Romani language to non-Roma has generally not been encouraged, and for instance the preparation of materials in Romani language for Roma children's education has started to be discussed by Roma activists only recently.

The reason for the geographical scope of the research is also because the Roma community in Estonia, similar to many other Roma communities in various geographical locations, is not confined by state borders as relatives and members of extended families live on both sides of the border (as pointed out earlier). For the Roma in Estonia and in the bordering areas in Latvia, having connections, visiting relatives and attending events in the other country is common. Another reason to extend my field site across the border to Latvia was because when I started my fieldwork, the *Kaale* missionaries were more active in Latvia than in Estonia, where their mission had started earlier and was most active during the late 1990s (see also Gripenberg 2022; Roht-Yilmaz 2020a). The first mission event organised by *Kaale* that I attended took place in Latvia in the summer of 2015. (I heard about it from my interlocutors in Estonia, see also Roht-Yilmaz 2020b). As my previous fieldwork encounters and connections were based in Estonia, and as my interlocutors were in contact with their relatives and other converted Roma across the Latvian border, I decided to conduct my fieldwork in both countries, mainly in the border areas. The cross-border movement of the community forced the mission to transcend the borders in this region, therefore so did I as a researcher. In other words, I followed my field. Interestingly, during the last years of my fieldwork, the mission became more active again in Estonia, so I moved back to the Estonian side of the border with the Finnish *Kaale* missionaries.

The missionary trips of Finnish *Kaale* to Estonia and Latvia are part of the Pentecostal Finnish Roma mission's outreach project oriented towards Eastern Europe. I attended several Light and Life events in the Latvian Vidzeme region and in Estonia. A sub-organisation Life and Light Latvia (*Dzīvība un gaisma* in

Latvian) was also established during the time of my field research. While previously the Finnish Mission has worked with Baptist churches in Estonia, the current mission group mainly works with Pentecostal churches (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a). Both Roma pastors who (had) work(ed) in Estonia and Latvia started their careers as pastors in local Pentecostal churches although one of them had first converted to Baptisim and the other is now non-denominational. The international Pentecostal networks and Baltic School of Ministry in Latvia offers Roma support getting an education and becoming a pastor (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a). Through the contacts and trips abroad of the Pentecostal church in the Vidzeme region, Roma believers from Ukraine visited Roma believers in south Estonia during my fieldwork period and I was able to attend the event they held in the homes of Roma believers. The translator of the Bible into Belarus-Lithuanian Romani, Valdemar Kalinin, who himself is of Romani background, told me that the Baltic Romani Missionary Society was set up in March 2015 after the Baltic Romani Bible was printed with the aim of helping the Romani people in Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland. I have been in contact with Kalinin, meeting him at a seminar for researchers of Latvian Roma in Riga in 2017, although I did not meet any missionaries from their society during my fieldwork.

I did not do any so-called long-term fieldwork with continuous presence in the field. Instead, my fieldwork consisted of reoccurring visits over years. They were most intense during the summers. This was partly because the bigger mission events took place during the summers, but also because of other practical considerations such as the difficulty of travelling and finding accommodation during the cold period, as in the summer I had the chance to use my family summer house located in Valga county. As a consequence, the design and methodology of the fieldwork can be considered the "back and forth", meaning that I did my fieldwork during shorter periods over several years (Brkovic and Hodges 2015: 108). Periodical fieldwork allowed me to have time to reflect and think of follow up topics and questions, while also enabling me to have an overview of the evolution of the mission over the extended period under study. To some extent my fieldwork followed the schedule of the mission trips conducted by Finnish *Kaale* with whom I travelled and stayed in Latvia. After the first mission event I was able to stay at the church overnight with the *Kaale* missionaries thanks to their friendliness, trust and support. I travelled with them in their van to more remote villages to visit Roma homes, taking aid in the form of clothes and food and informing them about mission events and maintaining relations. I spent whole days with a *Kaale* couple, especially the lady, who was my main interlocutor, chatting about different topics. This extended to leisure time, with Finnish style coffee breaks with *pulla* (a sweet pastry) when not preparing or taking part in the mission activities or events (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2020b).

As mentioned, my fieldwork mainly took place during the summers, with occasional trips during winter and at Christmas. I also attended weekly prayer meetings and gatherings in Valga/Valka and visited various church services according to the preference of the converted Roma with whom I was in contact

during my fieldwork. In addition, I made also more spontaneous visits and attended special mission events and both public and private gatherings in different locations in south Estonia and in the Vidzeme region. As the mission activities and religious practice took place not only in the churches but also, or perhaps even more often, at small private domestic gatherings (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; 2020b) I often paid visits to people's homes, which was enabled by the great hospitality of the (converted) Roma I had befriended. Both the great hospitality, which was common among the Roma and the mission-orientation of Pentecostal community, together with the friendliness of individual people, have allowed me to be welcomed and well received.

My research is based in a way on so-called "fieldwork at home", meaning that I did not move to a faraway country for an extended period, nor to a completely new and unfamiliar context. I stayed in Estonia, where I am from, and travelled over the border to Latvia, which even with a different cultural context and language, still has many similarities in history and environment to Estonia. "Anthropology at home" had already become a normality in anthropology several decades ago, and despite entering the field being easier it nevertheless poses somewhat different challenges (Jackson 1987). In this case "getting out" instead of "getting into" a new culture can be more problematic, as demonstrated by the European ethnologists who previously studied their own countries by concentrating on peasant culture and who today, influenced by the theoretical perspectives of anthropology, are focusing on contemporary Western societies as well as pre-industrial Europe (Löfgren 1987: 74, 76).

There are many meanings to the expression "anthropology at home"; one way to distinguish them is by looking at variations in the notion of otherness (Peirano 1998: 107). In a way I am still studying the Other, a minority in society, but at the same time the minority lives in the same larger societal context that I share with them. Judith Okely, who has studied the Roma ("Gypsies") in England, points out that when researching at home, the anthropologist remains connected to the people they studied and cannot seclude themselves from them. Instead profounder questions of political commitment can arise in addition to professional ethics (Okely 1987: 70). Similarly to the case of Magdalena Slavkova (2012), who studied evangelical Roma in Bulgaria, I also stayed in contact with some of my interlocutors after the fieldwork, which provided the possibility to observe the dynamics and changes in their lives over a longer period. During a few car trips to prayer meetings in Estonia and Latvia, my husband also accompanied me, which blurred the line between home and field even more. I developed friendly relations with my interlocutors and was involved in other research- and activism-related projects and activities. I will elaborate more on this in the next section of this chapter.

Although I was (mainly) conducting "fieldwork at home", I did not stay in familiar settings. It should be noted that there were quite a few different contexts in which I was participating and observing. I spent time, travelled, and had conversations with both the converted and unconverted local Roma and the Finnish *Kaale* missionaries, as well as with non-Roma converts. I was geographically in

two neighbouring but still different countries, mainly out of my hometown Tallinn and, as mentioned earlier, I used three languages (Estonian, Russian and Finnish) in communication.

I do not belong to any groups that I was studying, I am neither Roma/*Kaale* nor Pentecostal. When I started my fieldwork among the Roma in Estonia in 2009, I knew close to nothing about the community, there was not much information available and I did not have any Roma friends. I had only seen a few people on the streets, for instance offering fortune telling service. By 2014, when I continued my fieldwork for my PhD, I had both friends and acquaintances among the Roma who were also my interlocutors. I had spent time with them, worked with them in an NGO (both while not being and being a member of it) and learned about, and with, them.

During my fieldwork I visited places and towns in south Estonia some of which I already knew as from childhood as I had spent my summers in Valga county. I had also lived and studied for a short period in Helsinki, Finland and had visited the Latvian Vidzeme region before, although during my fieldwork I learned to know these places from a different perspective. I had my own experiences of similar locations although at times from somewhat different social and cultural contexts. Now I tried to see, understand, experience and feel the everyday worlds of my interlocutors. I visited churches I had not visited before, and both public and private events that otherwise would not have been part of my life. By doing research in one's home society in another community the anthropologist becomes used to "double knowledge", which gives the ability to see familiar things in a new way without losing the ability to see those things in the "old" way (Okely 1996: 20).

As mentioned above, my fieldwork took place in different locations at mission events, churches and people's homes in two different countries, while at the same time I was learning about the *Kaale*, who came from a third country, through conversations, mission literature, social media content and academic literature. In addition to doing fieldwork at home my research can be considered multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) as I used the technique of following the people and the trajectories of their activities and mission. I was interested in how the mission accommodates different locations and people and how the different social and cultural contexts are perceived and used by both missionaries and the missionised. At some point I felt closer to one environment and 'culture' due to my previous experiences and encounters and at times to another; certainly with time, as I became more immersed in mission events and the lives of believer Roma, my initially limited and theory-based knowledge of Pentecostal Christianity also changed. An ethnographer doing multi-sited ethnography will inevitably meet people who know or want to know the same things as he or she, and together with the change of context that takes place between sites, the ethnographer needs to renegotiate his or her identity (Marcus 1995: 112).

2.2. The position of the researcher, ethics

Doing multi-sited ethnography places the ethnographer in a difficult situation because of the several, and also contradictory, personal commitments that can be resolved by becoming an "ethnographer-activist" who renegotiates different identities and positioning at different sites (Marcus 1995: 113). As research cannot and should not be completely separated from general issues in society, and the researcher with his or her research is not isolated, reflection on the larger context is crucial for an ethical research. Instead of the study of culture or cultures, in the contemporary world ethnography deals with the study of knowledge-making processes (Marcus 2008: 52). Ian Hancock (2007: 22–23), a renowned scholar and activist of Romani background, has suggested that Roma and non-Roma need to find new ways for cooperation as the non-Roma are often still in the position of power and control the ways Roma are depicted and that needs to change. Researchers of both Roma and non-Roma background working closely together with Roma activists interested in discussion and finding common grounds is of great importance to me. I have always found it necessary to balance my position of researcher, pro-Roma activist, and someone in a mediating position between institutions, for instance museums and Roma NGOs (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2023).

Kristen Hastrup (1987: 105) has argued that the anthropologist belongs to "a third culture" regardless of fieldwork taking place in one's own (or close) culture or in exotic communities far from the anthropologist's home country. During my fieldwork with the Roma I have felt that lessening the role of being myself allows me to become a kind of mediator as well as creating the feeling of being in-between (Pajula and Roht 2011: 100; Roht 2011: 15). I also value cultural relativism, which is typical of anthropological research as it relies on the critical self-awareness, encouraging the researcher to understand that his or her own terms of analysis, understanding and judgement are not universal and cannot be taken for granted, and that understandings are local and not universal (Engelke 2017: 16–17).

I agree with Carol Silverman (2018) that non-Roma researchers should be especially reflexive about the way they produce knowledge about the Roma as historically non-Roma have held more authority because their voices have been heard in public, including academia. In Latvia, as I mentioned in subchapter 1.1, prior to World War II there were activists and folklore collectors among the Roma, and collaboration between Jānis Leimanis and the Archives of Latvian Folklore (see Tihovska 2022). During the Soviet era scholars of Romani background mainly published in the field of linguistics, although in Estonia where the community was considerably smaller there were no scholars of Roma ethnicity who could have added an insider view to the study of Roma. Nevertheless, Ariste, although a non-Roma linguist, was in contact with Roma scholars and activists from neighbouring countries. For instance, Ariste exchanged letters with Mānušs and Kochanowski discussing each other's work on Roma linguistics and topics of Roma history and culture (see Ariste 1964b; Kalinin 2020; Roht-Yilmaz and

Ross 2022). When looking at the time period after the collapse of Soviet Union we see that it is only in recent years that researchers and activists from both non-Roma and Roma backgrounds have started to network more actively in order to increase awareness of each other's work and participate in common projects between the three Baltic states.[10]

Engaged anthropology claims that instead of only producing knowledge, anthropologist should collaborate with the people they study, make communities partners in research, in order that the researched people also achieve their goals (Beck and Maida 2013: 1; 13; Silverman 2018: 83). Although non-Roma researchers should constantly negotiate their positionality and be aware of contexts where they should step back in order not to silence the voice of the Roma, engaged non-Romani scholars can nevertheless contribute both to research and advocacy while remaining reflexive (Silverman 2018: 93). This does not mean that research relating to the Roma should only concentrate on topics connected to their marginalisation as this focus might stem from the researchers' desire to integrate the Roma, whom they view as essentially different from non-Roma in their home countries as this could connect Roma ethnicity directly to poverty (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019; Marushiakova and Popov 2005). The Roma should not be approached only as a marginal or exotic community (Marushiakova and Popov 2011: 102). For instance, I suggest that although at mission events the *Kaale* missionaries argue that the improvement of the material well-being of Roma life is possible through conversion, the wish to get out of their marginal position is not the main reason for conversion (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a; cf. Gripenberg 2022).

As in many other countries the Roma in Estonia and Latvia can be considered an exoticised community that has been seen as the 'mysterious and exotic Other'. This view was strengthened by the effects of World War II, including the Roma genocide during the German occupation, and the Soviet mass deportations that affected the entire populations of the Baltic States during the Soviet occupations of 1941 and 1949 to 1991, which led to disruption of the previous personal relations between the Roma and non-Roma populations. The Roma are an ethnic group who have often been perceived in mainstream society through strong stereotypes. In Estonia these can be either directly negative (mainly depicting Roma as stealing or cheating and not wanting to work or being too pushy when offering fortune telling or products for sale) or positive when romanticised via high and popular culture depictions of Roma by non-Roma (depicting Roma as free spirited, active in dancing and singing and telling fortunes, performing magic rituals). For example, an Adventist Roma woman who is a chef by profession explained to me jokingly how her boss at first used to follow her around at work as if she would run off with the whole kitchen. Stories about job offers "disappearing" after the employer realises that the interested person is a Roma were also a common topic that has come up in conversation. Even in cases where Roma

[10] In 2017 to my knowledge the first international event to bring together (Roma and non-Roma) researchers working on topics concerning *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma, *Seminar for Researchers of Latvian Roma* was organised in Riga by Ieva Vīvere (*née* Tihovska).

are not personally marginalised or discriminated against, they can still be vulnerable through discrimination against the community on the whole. This is known as anti-Gypsyism[11], which is present in society either tacitly or explicitly. For this reason, attention to ethics is especially important when doing research in Roma communities.

It is necessary to take into account how Roma often have unequal access to resources and might be silenced by mainstream society. This can be done either willingly or unwillingly by policy makers, politicians, researchers, etc. The disruption brought on by the Roma genocide during World War II, the change from the previous seasonal travelling lifestyle, practiced by many *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma, and to a lesser extent by more sedentary *Lajenge* (Laiuse) Roma in Estonia, and the perceived otherness in mainstream society, which contributes to negative stereotypes and discrimination based on ethnicity, all affect the situation of the Roma in contemporary society and should be reflected upon by scholars when doing research on Roma-related topics.

These conditions often lead Roma to remain in unfavourable positions in power relations with mainstream populations. The level of Roma participation not only in various integration and social projects, but also in artistic and research projects, has been a problematic issue in Estonia. For instance, general knowledge about Roma history and culture in Estonia is very modest. Roma NGOs often go unnoticed in the media, and instead of Roma representatives, non-Roma groups performing Roma dances are often included in events relating to Roma culture (Roht-Yilmaz 2023: 135). Constant reflection on these issues is necessary especially when taking into account the organisational problems of social, art and research projects about and with the Roma community, which can be considered controversial because of a low or only symbolic level of Roma participation (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2023).

While investigating Romani communities, researchers should be aware of the pitfalls that come with the spread of the image of Roma as the mysterious and exotic Other, as these can lead to essentialisation. When researching religion among the Roma there is also a risk of either over-ethnising or, on the contrary, of rendering differences invisible (Zachar Podolinská and Hrustič 2021: 145). Anti-Gypsyism is kept alive by the use of essentialised narratives that present ethnic borders between the Roma and the non-Roma as fixed while simultaneously treating all members of a Romani group as homogenous (Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2018: 12). Critical Romani studies advocates the position that activist-scholars of Roma background, who can bring the voice of the Roma into academia and thus change the way knowledge is produced, should do research on Roma communities. This approach is against the strict scholar-activist division that can

[11] Anti-Gypsyism or anti-Roma discrimination is a specific form of structural and institutional racism against Roma powered by prejudice and stereotypes. See for instance the Council of Europe webpage (https://www.coe.int), the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance webpage (https://www.holocaustremembrance.com), and the online platform against Antigypsyism webpage (https://antigypsyism.eu)

contribute to inequalities and discrimination against Roma in academia (Bogdan et al. 2018). However, neither Roma nor non-Roma researchers should be automatically considered apt to study topics related to Roma communities. For instance, the outsider–insider boundary line is not always clear, as Roma researchers originating from the country where they carry out their research can be still considered partly insiders due to their membership of different Roma sub-groups (Marinov 2019b; see also Mascarenhas-Keynes 1987). In addition, different levels and ways of being an insider or outsider give researchers different strengths in their data collection and analysis that can complement each other by offering different insights to the researcher.

For instance, to the researcher who is an outsider some aspects and topics can be explained in more detail than to the researcher who is an insider, as it is presumed they would not know (cf. Marinov 2019b). Each should be aware and reflexive of their own position. In the case of Estonia, which is a relatively small country with a population of 1.3 million, and where the Roma community is also rather small, the few Roma activists have always been in close contact with the few researchers who are of non-Roma background and are interested in improving the situation of Roma in cooperation with Roma NGOs. The involvement of non-Roma researchers in pro-Roma activism is likely to make us/them reflect and think more about research in a wider context for the communities we/they study. It has been a general principle that anthropologists should not attempt to "go native" as keeping a critical distance helps the anthropologist to approach the research topic in a balanced way as expected from a professional researcher (Engelke 2017: 14). Nevertheless, we should also keep in mind that anthropologists themselves cannot be entirely neutral when encountering social problems in their fieldwork and, furthermore, the way they do research, conduct fieldwork and interpret the data, is already taking some kind of a moral position (Fassin 2012: 6).

Doing research on Pentecostal Roma who emphasise the need to become "born-again", while not belonging to either of the communities makes me a double outsider. My research inevitably presents the results of my fieldwork from my – even if self-reflexive – viewpoint that has also been shaped by my training as an ethnologist. Therefore, it does not show the 'whole' spectrum of the life of Roma believers as it is not possible for me to grasp it fully. However much I, as a researcher, try to show the complexity of the cultural life of Roma believers and the conditions affecting it, the interpretation will always be partial and can be flawed to a certain extent. In addition, the findings and conclusions of this study should not be over-generalised and adapted to other Roma communities, but should be viewed only in this specific context. Nevertheless, knowing my main interlocutors and keeping in touch with them over ten years by organising follow up meetings and interviews, and the friendships that have developed along with involvement in Roma NGO activities have given me in-depth understanding of the topic. Therefore, I hope that my research gives enough of a nuanced picture, allowing others, including Roma scholars, to find it useful now and in the future.

During my fieldwork I was taking up the time of my interlocutors, benefitting from their trust and hospitality so that I could do my research, and so I have tried to give back to the community in both direct and indirect ways. I tried to be helpful to my interlocutors in practical ways, for instance, I helped *Kaale* missionaries with small-scale translations in everyday communication situations or by writing small texts, handing out leaflets and doing small chores when staying and travelling with them. This was from one side a natural thing to do, although at the same time it involved me in their mission project without being a Pentecostal believer. This, at first, made me feel some discomfort as I questioned if it was appropriate to allow myself to become a 'tool' for their mission. Nevertheless, I sensed that it was important to be of help for the people who were willing to aid me with my research. This also enabled me to observe their activities in detail and experience the everyday life of their mission trips, which was also part of my research focus.

Taking something sweet, or tea and coffee, with me when visiting people in their homes was common courtesy just as I was always received with great hospitality and offered food and coffee or tea. On my part, I shared some books about and by Roma in the Baltic region as well as my own popular science writings (see below). For instance, I gave a Bible in Belarus-Lithuanian Romani, which I was able to obtain from the translator Valdemar Kalinin, to a believer Roma woman whom I had visited on a regular basis. I was trying to do the same things as the people with whom I was sharing my everyday life during my fieldwork, for instance I found it a good possibility to donate some used clothes together with my interlocutors to less well-off Roma whom they wanted to help.

In a less direct method of giving back to the community during my studies and research I have always done some voluntary work on my own initiative for international and local NGOs, for instance I have translated a Roma advocacy handbook and subtitles for a short film about the Roma Holocaust, and have helped Roma NGOs with translations, correspondence, giving presentations, etc. (for instance at Roma Holocaust commemoration events in 2019 and 2022). Moreover, I have helped the Roma Estonian Roma Forum Estonia (ERFE) NGO with the final editing of a civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Estonia in 2022. I have also been involved in Estonian Roma activism for over ten years, participating in NGO activities mostly when they have asked me to contribute and help and sometimes proposing ideas on my own initiative. For me it is important not to deprive Roma of their self-expression and agency but to offer my involvement when both they and I find it appropriate.

As mentioned, I have written popular science articles, some with linguist Anette Ross and ERFE chairperson Zalina Dabla. These have been about Roma culture and history, including the Roma genocide in Estonia (Roht-Yilmaz 2017; Roht-Yilmaz 2018a; Roht-Yilmaz and Ross 2022; Roht-Yilmaz et al. 2021; Ross and Roht-Yilmaz 2019), and about documentary films on the Roma (Pajula and Roht 2010; Roht-Yilmaz 2018b). I have also written an interview article with the Polish Roma artist Malgorzata Mirga-Tas (Roht-Yilmaz 2021). In addition, I have

explained my PhD project in an interview article published in Estonian popular science and research news portal ERR Novaator (Harrik 2021).

During my fieldwork it has been important for me not to overexpose own my position and not to declare my personal viewpoints. Instead I have tried to listen and understand my interlocutors' positions. And yet there is still sometimes a need to explain my own views when asked to or when I feel that there is an expectation that I would share my thoughts with others. Sometimes it has been natural to give details about myself, my family and opinions: we should not forget that communication during fieldwork takes place between people who all belong to various groups, have fragmented lives and many identities (Caputo 2000: 27–28; Hastrup 1987). Therefore, even if I work in the field as an ethnologist and I am mainly interested in my interlocutors as Roma who are evangelical Christians, although this does not mean that I would not try to take account their more complex identities. In other words, my research brings the identity of the Roma as believers more to the foreground, while still trying to give a few glimpses into their wider world. Conversations with my interlocutors circled around their lives as believers, but we also discussed topics relating to Roma customs and history in a broader sense. Also, moments of shared everyday life, whether it be the relaxing coffee pauses with *Kaale* between mission events, or visits to people's homes, or using social media to catch up and socialise while concentrating on research topics and religious events, shows how different layers of connection and intertwined identity are formed.

During my fieldwork I have been someone who has shown interest in both Roma cultural traditions and practices, customs and history for over a decade and who is trying to show respect for the customs Roma themselves uphold. For example, during my fieldwork I chose to wear clothes such as long skirts as this is seen as appropriate dress for Roma women, especially in the presence of older people. At the same time, I was aware that I am not expected or required to follow the same rules as a member of the community. Most of the interlocutors with whom I spent time were women, which evolved naturally during the fieldwork as communicating with people from the same gender was easier and more appropriate according to cultural values among Roma in Estonia, Latvia and Finland. However, I also communicated with male pastors and missionaries, which was probably easier for me as a non-Roma scholar. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that conversion can alter gender roles, promoting less strict boundaries and more direct communication between men and women. For instance, Raluca Bianca Roman (2016: 161) describes how during prayer meetings, *Kaale* believers could deviate from the behaviour that is expected from them in the *Kaale* community according to their gender and age, or at least criticise these rules.

This effort of becoming close to my interlocutors, of course, did not make me part of the Roma community. I can consider myself to be in the position of a person who is perhaps more trusted and who is more aware of Roma realities than someone with no personal connections with or knowledge of Roma history and customs (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2019). As discussed earlier, the line between Roma non-Roma is not black and white, rather it is more of a gradient. A non-Roma who enters the community through family and takes up customs and fol-

lows proper rules of conduct can become a member of the community, even if some differences remain. A person born to Roma parents can, by not following the proper rules of conduct, customs and way of life, be considered no longer part of the community. This kind of evaluation depends on many aspects and the individual and his or her relations inside the community (see also Tihovska 2014).

Hillary Crane (2013: 11) explains that usually anthropologists are unlikely to become members of the groups they study: they cannot "go native", even if they adhere to local ways and learn the language and even if they can go through some personal transformation as a result of their field experiences. However, as Crane argues, it could be possible when researching missionising communities as the anthropologist's interest is often interpreted by such communities as will to convert. Even if the anthropologist explains his or her interest as only professional, the community may still include the anthropologist in their prayers, expect the researcher to convert and give religious meaning to his or her actions (Crane 2013: 11; Harding 1987: 178–179). I have experienced several conversion attempts, as proselytising has been directed also at me, in a way putting me in a similar situation to the Roma towards whom mission work is directed.

Sometimes these attempts have taken place despite the fact that the believers are not meeting me for the first time and are well aware that I am there for research. I have explained my research topic and goals to my interlocutors, although not all the details were always of relevance to Pentecostal believers as they have their own vision and goal for their mission activities. Often my reluctance to participate in activities such as sharing a testimony, praying together and – as the local discourse has it – "accepting Jesus into my heart" was reasoned and explained as me not being ready "in my heart", or as the need to let me to "find my own way".

When asked about my religious belonging I always explained that I am not a "born-again" Christian and pointed out that my interest stems from my research, nevertheless I have admitted to having a Lutheran background, which I think was perceived rather positively and perhaps placed me in the position of someone who is already a seeker. My interlocuters' questions made me think how my previous knowledge and experience of Christianity influence my attitude towards Pentecostalism as something close but quite different with which I had previously had rather few encounters. At the beginning of my fieldwork the intense experiences of believers were for me quite surprising and alien, although over time I started understanding how they constitute normality for "born-again" believers. I became much more accustomed to encountering these moments during the gatherings of believers and I started to understand the perspective of my interlocutors better. Even though I did not share several moral principles and ideas with my interlocutors, I became more empathic and impartial towards their views by seeing them in context of their value and belief system. The language and specific vocabulary of the believer community can also unintentionally become parts of the anthropologist's speech. If conversion is seen as acquiring a specific language then this starts the process of conversion, as Susan Harding (1987: 169) has described among American fundamental Baptists. I noticed how, through my empathy for my interlocutors, I had started unintentionally sometimes using their

vocabulary and thinking immediately how they would interpret certain events, even though I was not planning to convert or work towards conversion.

Crane (2013: 12–13) explains that when doing her research in a Taiwanese Buddhist monastery, using an approach of trying to sincerely show respect for the beliefs and practices of the people she studied, she ended up sending mixed signals as she was both showing interest in conversion and at the same time not converting. Performing a balancing act between being an objective researcher and an open-minded potential believer, Crane (2013: 13) explains that she had to decide which ritual actions she would participate in as she tried to let the community know her "carefully considered fieldwork position". Similarly, I found myself in this slightly awkward position, trying to participate as much as possible, but not wanting to cross a boundary that would cause my actions and participation to be seen as dishonest or insincere. This feeling was probably also influenced by my (societal) Protestant (Lutheran) background. Furthermore, I have been aware that the concept of sincerity as reflecting one's inner intentions in speech and otherwise is especially important for Protestants, including Pentecostals (see for instance Keane 2002; Bielo 2011). As I observed in the field, believers also have their doubts and some of them go through de- and re-conversions as they "keep working on themselves" (cf. Luhrmann 2012: xiii). Nevertheless, the constant work on themselves is what differentiates believers from the unconverted. I found understanding what felt right to me to be a continuous testing of boundaries. The testing itself seemed to me an honest way to go as far as made sense for the research while not becoming an attempt to become an insider. Nevertheless, as part of participant observation I found it beneficial at least to some extent be open to experiencing the affective states created by the gatherings of believers. This led me, even though very superficially, to experience what it means to be a target of conversion.

Researchers can, to some extent, allow themselves to feel the affective states without interpreting them according to Pentecostal ideas, while still understanding how they are interpreted by believers. Even if experiencing something similar though not the same, my believer interlocutors and I give different meanings to these affective states. In a way this was necessary in order that I 'take seriously' the converted Pentecostals and their lived experiences (see Vallikivi 2017). Jensen (2011: 44), discussing the insider–outsider debate in the study of religion, argues that difference between insiders and outsiders lies in the way they interpret the same things. Crane (2013: 18) explains that her experiences differed from those of Buddhist nuns because of the difference in personal and cultural backgrounds, although having these experiences helped to connect belief and disbelief, and also aided her in understanding the teachings of the religious community. In drawing conclusions for my research, I do not consider it necessary that I try to "feel" what the believers are feeling, as that would be impossible as a researcher; however, I think it does help when analysing how affective states and religious language become part of converts' self-expression. Together with the accounts of my interlocutors I have been better able to understand the conversion process from the perspective of those towards whom the missionising is targeted.

3. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Anthropology of Christianity and research on Pentecostal Christianity

The current thesis contributes to the field of anthropology of religion. More precisely it is part of the anthropology of Pentecostalism and is an addition to the growing body of literature on conversions and mission by and among different Roma groups. The thesis also contributes to understanding of Roma Pentecostal Christian identity formation around the world. The anthropology of Christianity is no longer a new subfield of anthropology, although we can consider that anthropologists have shown interest in Christianity as a central research topic recently (see Bialecki et al. 2008; Cannel 2006; Robbins 2007). A comparative anthropology of Christianity can be considered to have emerged from the 2000s (Bialecki et al. 2008: 1139; Coleman and Hackett 2015: 13; Robbins et al. 2014: 559). The reasons for anthropologists' lack of interest in studying Christianity as a cultural logic on its own could be explained by an awkward relationship, or as Joel Robbins (2003: 192) notes that Christians "appear at once too similar to anthropologists to be worthy of study and too meaningfully different to be easily made sense of by the use of standard anthropological tools." Fenella Cannell (2006: 3, 8) suggests that Christianity causes anxiety among researchers of social sciences because as these sciences had developed mainly within the European philosophical tradition, giving the impression of being boringly familiar from one side, and threatening from the other, causing Christianity to become the last major area of religious activity to be studied ethnographically. In the 1990s Christianity started to move more to the central stage in the discipline, with the works on Christianity that were previously excluded from mainstream anthropology becoming more widely read again (Cannell 2006: 4–5). Robbins (2007: 5; see also 2003; Coleman and Hackett 2015: 13) claims that the anthropology of Christianity has taken longer to develop than for instance the anthropology of other world religions such as Islam or Buddhism, and only recently has a community of researchers who are aware of each other's work and perceive themselves as contributing to the same area of research started to develop, as opposed to anthropologists simply writing ethnographies of different Christian communities.

Neither the Christian practice at home, in various European or American contexts, nor the Christianisation of colonial populations in other continents, were in focus (Cannell 2006: 8–9). The study of Catholic rural and peasant communities proved an easier topic due to the possibility to maintain analytical distance from academia than Protestantism in Europe or the United States (Cannell 2006: 10). In the non-European colonial and post-colonial contexts Christianity was more likely to be considered by anthropologists as a layer on top of the traditional religions brought by outsiders such as missionaries (Cannell 2006: 12). However, currently the anthropology of Christianity is a flourishing subfield in anthropology (Bialecki et al. 2008: 1140; Coleman and Hackett 2015: 1).

There has also been a reluctance to study converts as anthropologists considered it not a worthy topic. Part of the problem is that long-standing cultural continuities have been preferred in anthropology over recent cultural changes, and therefore anthropologist have been doubtful of the converts' claims that their lives and societies have been transformed (Bialecki et al. 2008: 1140–1141). Nevertheless, the anthropology of Pentecostalism has become one of the main branches of anthropology of Christianity (Anderson et al. 2010: 1). Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity includes such forms of faith that consider the gifts of the Holy Spirit (for example speaking in tongues, healing, prophesy) available to all believers (Robbins 2015: 246).

Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett explain that various changes in anthropology over time have influenced the interest of anthropologists towards Pentecostalism and evangelicalism. For instance, the boundaries between home and the field are not as distinguishable as they once were, the understanding that the anthropologist should be a Western scholar doing research in non-Western cultures has changed. Furthermore, anthropology's own cultural and intellectual history, with its influence on the concepts of culture, humanity, religion, all significantly influenced by Christian heritage, is now taken into consideration (Coleman and Hackett 2015: 3). Nevertheless, Coleman points out elsewhere that studying Pentecostal Christians can still be considered, even by other anthropologists, to need justification. The topic is not considered worthy of research interest as the people studied are institutionally and culturally too close to the researchers' own everyday lives (Coleman 2015: 276).

3.2. Pentecostal Christianity among the Roma

Pentecostalism can be considered as the fastest growing forms of global Christianity in general as well as among the Roma/Gypsy communities around the world (Podolinská 2021: 146; see also Peel 2009: 191). The Pentecostal revival among the Roma is part of the general resurgence of Pentecostalism during the 20th century, with specifically the Romani revival starting when, during the early 1950s, French pastor Clément Le Cossec began missionising among the *Manouche* Roma group in France (Marsh and Thurfjell 2014: 11; Thurfjell 2009; Thurfjell 2013: 5–6). Since then the Pentecostal movement has spread rapidly among Roma in different countries in Europe and beyond (Marsh and Thurfjell 2014: 7, 11; Pentecostal missions among Roma communities originated in Western Europe, also becoming successful in the post-socialist countries and other parts of the world.

The different cases of Roma conversion in different post-socialist countries provide useful comparisons because of the similar socio-political changes that occurred in these countries. At the same time, these comparisons enable demonstration of the specifics of each country and Roma group, it is evident that the influence that conversions have on Roma communities varies between countries, although Pentecostalism is the most successful religious movement among the Roma (Marushiakova and Popov 2014: 72). In fact the Pentecostal movement

among the Roma can be seen as a unifying force of considerable influence as it can be considered both an ethnic and a religious movement that is impacting identity politics and changing Romani social organisation (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019: 4). While possessing the power to unite transnationally Roma communities from different countries and with different group identifications, conversion also brings about changes in value systems and rules that regulate community life (Cantón-Delgado 2010; see also Marsh and Thurfjell 2014; Roman 2017; Roman 2018a; Slavkova 2014). At the same time, it must be noted that the appeal of Pentecostal Christian mission depends on the particular Roma group and on each specific case. This is why, although Roma conversions have been studied in different countries and have some similarities, I consider it necessary to study the specific cases separately, without abandoning the advantages of comparison.

Research on Pentecostal Christianity among different Roma groups is a rapidly growing topic in Romani studies (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019: 4). For instance, in 2014 a book titled *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity*, edited by David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh, was published and in 2021 the *Romani Studies Journal* published a special issue on religiosity and spirituality among the Roma, with most articles concentrating on Roma and Pentecostal Christianity.

3.3. The ethical turn in anthropology

More broadly the current thesis is influenced by the ethical turn in anthropology that took place at the beginning of the 2000s (see Fassin 2014a: 420; Klenk 2019; Laidlaw 2014a; 2018; Lambek 2010; Mattingly and Throop 2018). This turn focused attention on moral subjects and therefore it resulted in a "shift from the collective to the individual, but also from the social to the experiential" (Fassin 2014a: 430). Although it might seem that anthropologists had previously avoided the topics of ethics and morality, it can also be argued that they have actually never stopped studying them (Fassin 2013; 2014a; Howell 1997: 6; Laidlaw 2014a: 10, 14). As James Laidlaw has shown, the anthropology of ethics is concerned with many problems that have for a long time been of interest to anthropologists of religion, who are trying to understand the moral foundations of social life in ritual, taboo, and the sacred, themes that have been an important part of much classical research on anthropology of religion. Although anthropology of ethics does not concentrate only on the study of religious forms, nevertheless it still tackles the same problems that have concerned anthropologists of religion (Laidlaw 2013: 172). The (re)discovery of morality by anthropologists has resulted in research on morality and ethics becoming one of the fastest growing research areas in anthropology (Fassin 2012; 2014b; Klenk 2019).

Similarly to the anthropology of Christianity, which emerged quite recently as a comparative and theoretical subfield on its own, even if there were separate ethnographic studies about Christians before (Bialecki et al 2008; Robbins 2003), with the ethical turn anthropologists view ethics as central to human life and it

therefore needs to be researched theoretically, instead of considering morality and ethics merely subjects that are touched upon in anthropological research (Lambek 2010: 5). In addition, in contrast to previous treatments of morality, the ethical turn calls for a more nuanced conception (Klenk 2019: 335). In other words, the ethical turn does not content itself with comparisons of value systems, and can therefore be regarded as contradicting the Durkheimian view of morality as rules for behaviour set by society which individuals then adopt (Klenk 2019: 336). Laidlaw explains that morality can become invisible when it is equated with the collective and people are viewed as acting according to moral rules imposed on them (Laidlaw 2013: 173). In this way the moral is viewed as reproduction of social norms and religious discourse, with practice and ritual playing the main role in producing and maintaining sociality as morality (Zigon 2014b: 6). The new paradigm, on the other hand, considers human beings to be free ethical subjects even when they seem to be constrained by their group's or religion's moral code (Fassin 2014a: 429; Laidlaw 2014a).

Signe Howell (1997: 7) has pointed out that while anthropologists have not concentrated on discussing the theoretical problems connected with the empirical study of moralities and have therefore not been influenced by works on moral philosophy, at the same time considering the moral subjects inside the social and cultural contexts, as the anthropologists do, has not been of interest to philosophers. Cecilie Eriksen and Nora Hämäläinen (2022: 3) point out that in recent years a change has taken place and anthropologists and philosophers have started to be interested in each other's approaches to morality and have started to engage in conversation to understand moral transformations at both individual and cultural levels. Similar process of rising interest in each other's approaches can be noticed among anthropologists and theologists (Robbins 2020). While the thick empirical approaches and local changes in moral conceptions have started to be of more interest to philosophers, anthropologist have taken gradual interest in thematising morality and seeking inspiration from philosophy (Eriksen and Hämäläinen 2022: 3). The ethical turn has therefore provided the foundation for anthropology to have interdisciplinary conversations with other disciplines, especially philosophy and psychology (Mattingly and Throop 2018: 478).

Cheryl Mattingly and Jason Throop (2018: 478) point out that although currently most anthropologists who are researching ethics agree that viewing morality as strongly collectivist is an outdated approach, the question of how to move beyond this view is not yet answered. Three philosophical frameworks have been most influential thus far in the ethical turn: (a) ordinary language philosophy and a focus on ordinary ethics, (b) phenomenology and an emphasis on moral experience, c) Foucauldian and neo-Aristotelian traditions of virtue ethics (Mattingly and Throop 2018: 478). In the next section, I will explain which of these approaches are relevant and useful for the theoretical framework of this thesis and explain how I combine them in order to analyse the complex nature of conversions among the Roma in Estonia and the Latvian Vidzeme region from different perspectives.

3.4. Different theoretical approaches towards morality: morality as self-formation and morality as ordinary interaction

I will discuss how in the process of conversion to Pentecostalism a new moral code starts to compete with the earlier moral code related to ethnic and cultural identification, i.e. being a Roma. While discussing the ethical self-formation among Roma who are proselytised or have recently converted I am mainly concerned with the anthropology that defines morality through conscious reflection, such as presented by Robbins (2004b; 2007) and Laidlaw (2002; 2014a). In a similar way to Robbins and Laidlaw, I differentiate moral codes from ethics, inspired by Michel Foucault (1990 [1985]; 1997). Foucault's (1990 [1985]: 25–27; 1997: 263) moral code is considered a set of rules to follow, while acts can be seen as people's real behaviours, and ethics can be seen as one's "relation to oneself". I am analysing the ways converted Roma create their Pentecostal moral selves through the ethical work they execute on themselves and point out the role of ethnicity in this. According to Foucault, moral codes are rules either "imposed, followed, or resisted", and ethics is the creation the self in accordance with these "ideals and values" (Laidlaw 2013: 179–180). According to Foucault (1990 [1985]: 27), ethical work is performed on oneself with the aim of acting according to the moral code and involves making oneself "the ethical subject of one's behaviour". It should be noted that for Foucault the distinction between ethics and morality is not connected to a distinction between the individual and "society" (Laidlaw 2014a: 116, original quotation marks).

As Foucault (1997: 284) explains, "freedom is the ontological condition of ethics", but "ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection". He uses the term "subjectivation" (*assujetissement* in French), which refers to the "interactive processes" through which "subjects are formed in social relations, and the practices of reflective self-constitution and self-formation" (Laidlaw 2013: 179–180). Laidlaw (2014b: 501) explains that the concepts of character, freedom and responsibility all become into being in the interaction between people.

The concepts of morality and ethics are relevant for all three of the thesis articles. I use the concepts of moral codes and ethical work or ethical self-formation throughout article I ("A Constant Border-Crossing"), where by analysing the moral challenges that conversion brings to the Roma, I explain the (non-)efficiency of the de-marginalisation narrative and its usage in the ethical self-formation of converts. In addition to Laidlaw and Robbins the works by scholars such as Saba Mahmood (2001; 2005) and Charles Hirschkind (2001), who argue that morality entails unconscious dispositions, are also important for me when discussing the role of the sensory and embodied practices of Roma converts in Estonia and Latvia in article III ("God Is My Bosom Buddy"). The concept of morality is also relevant in the discussion of the differences that become apparent in the interaction between the local Roma in Estonia and Latvia and Roma and

Kaale missionaries who also belong to different Roma groups. Morality is also relevant in discussing the role of embodied and sensed practices of faith in the ethical self-formation of converted Roma.

This thesis is most of all influenced by the virtue ethics approach as I analyse the Pentecostal converts' ethical work on themselves, in a domain of an institutionalised religion where ethics and morality can be more easily distinguished (Fassin 2014a: 432). According to the virtue ethics approach inspired by Aristotle, Foucault, and Alasdair MacIntyre, virtues are considered to be the way people engage in practices (Fassin 2014a: 431; see also Klenk 2019: 337). Ethics here is considered a process, as "the subjective work produced by agents to conduct themselves in accordance with their inquiry about what a good life is" (Fassin 2012: 10). Ethical subjectivation means that the ethical subjects are considered to be formed by their own reflexive work and engaging in practices according to a moral discipline (Fassin 2012: 9; cf. Lempert 2013: 376; Zigon 2014b: 7).

Although my thesis draws greatly on the virtue ethics approach, I also rely on the interaction-focused approach inspired by J. L. Austin and Paul Grice (see for instance Klenk 2019: 337). I find the ordinary ethics approach useful in discussing the role of language in conversion and in the process of fortune telling. In situations that involve exploring everyday life, i.e. the social relations and activities that are conducted out of habit without much reflection, the moral or ethical are more intertwined with other aspects of life and therefore it becomes empirically more difficult to delineate them (Fassin 2014a: 432; Keane 2016: 17). The concepts of morality and ethics remain directly relevant for article II ("Fortune Telling Is a Curse on Your Children") which concentrates on a specific example of conflict in competing moral codes when fortune telling as a practice that is both a traditional way of earning a living for the Roma and a valued skill, needs to be re-evaluated in the light of a new moral code created by conversion. In the analysis of fortune telling the interaction-based approach that is based on ordinary language philosophy, as represented in the works of Veena Das (2014) and Michael Lambek (2010) (cf. Fassin 2014b; Laidlaw 2018), becomes relevant for my research. Ethics is naturally linked both to speaking and action, and it should be taken into account that speech can also be seen as action (Lambek 2010: 5; see also Austin 1962). So, interaction is inherently linked to morality and ethics (Sidnell 2010: 124). For instance, Webb Keane (2016: 31) uses the concept of ethical affordances to denote "the opportunities that any experiences might offer as people evaluate themselves, other persons, and their circumstances." Therefore, I also pay attention to how interaction influences the evaluation of both conversion narratives with their miracle stories, and fortune telling and how ethical evaluation becomes apparent in interaction.

3.5. Ethical self-formation through language practices and through practices embodied by sensory experience

In this section I shall look at conversion narratives Roma converts tell to both other potential converts and to themselves, and at their embodied practices of faith. I will discuss in detail both of these aspects of Pentecostal Christian conversion and ethical self-formation among the Roma in Estonia and Latvia. To that end, I observed mission events, prayer meetings and the everyday life of Roma converts. I analyse the role of language and uses of speech in conversion and in fortune telling, which is a traditional Roma job and becomes one re-occurring element in the conversion narratives as well as in oath giving/taking, which is a traditional practice among Roma in Estonia and Latvia. I also bring together religious language and language used in fortune telling and non-Christian rituals, which can be considered connected to magic, by looking at them through their performative nature and the importance of interaction in them.

3.5.1. The use of language in the ethical self-formation of Roma believers

It has been argued that language plays a central role for Pentecostal Christians both in their conversion and their religious practice (see for instance Bielo 2009; 2011; Coleman 2004: 117; Harding 1987; Stromberg 1993; Vallikivi 2009; 2014; 2017; 2018). One way this becomes evident is the sharing of conversion stories. The converts demonstrate their commitment to their new lives as "born-again" by telling their conversion narratives. The experience of commitment to Christ through a personal conversion experience is considered of great importance in practice as is demonstrated with the telling of a conversion narrative, as conversion itself is not something that can be publicly observed (Stromberg 1993: 5). As these narratives are often told in public, they are therefore fairly easily accessible to the researcher. Such verbalisation itself acts as a performance that allows a person to construe their identity and keep transforming him- or herself (Stromberg 1993: 15).

In conversion stories people use language to create a connection between the new symbol system based on the Bible and their own personal experiences, so they learn to speak about their lives using religious language (Stromberg 1993: 6). "Effects of linguistic form are likely to seem especially persuasive and realistic because they are not derived from explicit doctrines, which one might doubt or deny, but seem to come directly from experience." (Keane 2005: 438) Citations from the Bible become so deeply part of the speaker's consciousness and language that it becomes difficult to distinguish them in speech (Keane 2005: 440). Converts tell their stories not only to themselves and other believers, but also as witnessing statements to possible new converts in hope of inspiring them to convert (Coleman 2004: 119).

Roma converts, similarly to other "born-again" Christians, execute their ethical work on themselves in order to become believers with new morals by talking in their testimonies about the changes they went through. Conversion stories usually contain standardised elements of first living in sin and being lost and afterwards being saved and found (Gooren 2010: 93). Harding (1987: 170) explains that the conversion to evangelical Christianity begins with a crisis that becomes "a kind of inner rite of passage", coming to fruition when a conviction emerges that the sinner is "saved" or "born-again". The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the later Paul the apostle, serves as the paradigmatic example of a conversion that arose from an extraordinary mystical experience, transforming his life through a short intense crisis (Rambo and Farhadian 1999: 26). The emotional tension he experienced followed a total break between the old and the new life (James 2013 [1929]: 229).

The testimonies of Roma converts depict their previous lives as sinful and unhappy. These lives can include habits like smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling, drugs, involvement in illegal activities, as well as physical illnesses, emotional trouble, tense relations with others, and also practicing fortune telling, a service that has traditionally been provided by Roma women to non-Roma customers. Often conversion narratives describe the life before conversion as full of emotional distress and personal conflict, negative states that are interpreted as conditions that led to conversion (Stromberg 1993: 27). The change from the previous pre-conversion life is mainly depicted in the Pauline way as sudden, "happening overnight". This involves abandoning habits that are considered vices, then being healed of psychological and physical symptoms and starting a new life as a believer. For instance, Lydia, a Roma woman from Estonia, explains that, among other positive effects like improved emotional balance, good temper and physically being cured of illness, she had been afraid of the spirit of a relative who had died recently, and that after conversion this fear disappeared.

The testimonies often include miracle stories about being healed and other divine interventions that demonstrate the "workings of the Holy Spirit" in the lives of the converts. Miracle stories play an important role in the conceptualisation of the good life events that occur after conversion (Pelkmans 2015: 186). For instance, pastor Gregory tells several stories of how, at the most unexpected time, divine intervention changed things in his life for the better (see article II). For the miracle stories to be true, divine intervention should be present to cause a positive unexpected outcome and the miracle should have been prayed for and they should not be explained in other ways (Pelkmans 2015: 184). The topic of truth is important both for converts when they tell about divine interventions in the form of miracles and for Roma women when they talk about the practice of fortune telling.

In article II, I demonstrate that "telling the truth" is used by Roma women as a category that allows them to identify fortune tellers who are not only skilled in the craft, which they have learned from their family members at an early age, but also who perform magic. When the fortune told is considered to be "true" or "telling the truth" then the women seem to consider it as connected to magic. Magic is either interpreted as black or white. While protective magic is con-

sidered white magic (see also for instance, Hiiemäe 2016: 35) fortune telling is more likely to be considered black magic, especially by converted Roma as they consider the power to predict the future as coming not from God but from Satan. For instance, in article II I point out that a Roma deacon from Latvia explains the need to specifically work among Roma because Roma including women in his own family (have) practice(d) fortune telling and "witchcraft". Fortune telling is condemned both as satanic, so it becomes a feature of the Pentecostal dualism, and because it involves cheating the customer. However, as customers willingly agree to this service, condemnation as cheating is not that directly expressed. Either way fortune telling is considered morally wrong according to Christian principles and should not be practiced. If the fortune told comes true, then it is considered satanic, and if it does not come true it can be considered by believers as cheating. The Roma women themselves also differentiate fortune tellers according to their skills in "telling the truth" and the efficacy of the fortune telling (article II).

I suggest in article II that the communication in fortune telling and in sharing and listening to conversion narratives both create realities because they have a performative nature. Both in sharing testimonies, which can include miracle stories, and in the performance of fortune telling the concept of truth becomes important as its production takes place in the communication process either between the fortune-teller and the customer or the believer and the possible new convert. In this way truth is produced in these performances with words that create the necessary context for the creation of new realities (article II). Both of these communication situations can be likened to ritual, where ritual words possess power but need to be accompanied by the proper context and ritual acts (see Tambiah 1985: 18). Keane (2005: 443) claims that for an action performed as part of a rite to be effective it has to be possible to repeat it, and not only from the intentions of the person speaking the words. Appropriate linguistic forms and social context play important roles in religious language (Keane 2005: 444).

For believers the context for a shared reality comes from the Bible. For fortune telling the customer should be convinced that the fortune teller is able to give a truthful prediction (article II). While readiness to listen to witnessing can be thought of as being on the path to conversion as a shared experienced between the "born-again" believer and the listener is induced, starting to share your own story is already believing (Harding 1987, see also Harding 2000). Keane (2005: 443), when discussing religious language, points out that Austin had suggested all statements have a performative (or illocutionary) dimension. The context in which the words are said should be appropriate, and other physical or mental actions should accompany the uttering (Austin 1962: 8). Giving a promising should also entail the intention to keep one's word, although even if this does not happen a promise still is not void (Austin 1962: 11).

Lambek (2013: 146) explains that Roy Rappaport ([1999] 2004) further developed Austin's argument, applying it to ritual, stating that the heart of ritual is performative utterances. "The formal characteristics of ritual rise the chances that the performatives they include will be successful and ritualised performatives are

less likely to be faulty as rituals are performed by eligible people under proper circumstances and with proper procedures" (Rappaport [1999] 2004: 115–116). Rappaport ([1999] 2004: 116) claims that "the association of the sacred and occult with performatives in magical and religious rituals may mystify their conventional nature" and can make them more prone to succeed. Performatives are self-fulfilling, they make themselves true as "they are in a relationship of conformity to the state of affairs they are concerned", therefore the performativeness or factiveness of ritual acts and utterances are the basis for occult efficacy, especially the magical power of words (Rappaport ([1999] 2004: 117).

This idea becomes relevant when looking at the common custom of Roma in Estonia and Latvia of wearing of a red ribbon with knots for protection against the evil eye (see also Dundes 1992), which is considered to come from ill-wishing envious people. Luck also entails using the "right" words, which are said with fitting thoughts and wishes. These words and wishes are considered the most important feature when making the ribbon. Although magic rituals become considered satanic by the converted, in some cases some rituals may be continued, while others are reinterpreted. For instance, in article II, I demonstrate that wearing such red thread with knots around wrist or a glass bead in the shape of a blue eye against the evil eye or "the bad eye", as Roma express it, can remain simultaneously in use with "God's protection" for the converted or the idea that God gives believers a similar protection may be to replace these previous practices. This way the individual creates his or her own hybrid interpretation combining earlier religious and folk belief including belief in protective magic with the new religious views.

Drawing on Austin's classification of speech acts, Stanley Tambiah (1985: 80–81), explains that most ritual and magical acts use both actions (manipulation of objects) which are performative, and words, in which both "predicative" (referential, information-carrying) and "illocutionary" (performative, changing the social reality) frames exist together. The magical rites as performative acts involve bringing about change through the use of speech and cannot be verified as true or false (Tambiah 1985: 81). Performatives are not subject to truth claims contrary to referential speech, instead they require proper context to be effective (Bielo 2011: 635).

The act of fortune telling also involves a compulsory exchange. Most of the time it is performed as a service that should be paid for by the customer, but in the conversations with my interlocutors it became apparent that even in cases when it is performed among Roma themselves, a few symbolic coins or something else should be given to the teller (see also article II). Exchanging fortune telling for money as payment creates a connection between the participants and so the potentially dangerous "taking on the burden or responsibility" connected to the other person's "fate" has to be reciprocated. The participants can be seen as entering a frame where they both participate in the creation of a new reality. The co-dependent relationship of giver and receiver can be connected to Marcel Mauss' (2002 [1925]) analysis of gifts using the example of the Māori, where what the receiver receives is not only an object, but also something spiritual that

can even be part of the spirit of the giver. Lambek (2010: 18–19) suggests that ritual acts like giving or receiving gifts "initiate or cancel particular ethical criteria, conditions, or states, minimally of living under a promise, obligation, or debt but usually also connected to the production and circulation of value and to transformations in social status, relationship, honour, and the like".

Oath giving/taking, which is a traditional practice of Roma in Estonia and Latvia (see Ariste 2012a [1940]: 165), is also connected to the topic of truth as its aim is to regulate community life by determining who among the people in conflict is lying (cf. Fosztó 2009: 117–120 on oath taking practices among the Romungre group in Hungary). Some of the rituals, which Ariste (2012a [1940]: 165; 2012 [1959]: 33) also mentions and which include the use of candles blessed by a priest, also concentrate on the need to determine who is telling the truth and who is lying, and to bring about justice according to this determination. James S. Bielo (2011: 635–636) explains that promises are especially powerful performatives because of the way they affect the status of the speaker and the relationship between the speaker and the listeners, therefore a promise is something to be taken seriously. Bielo also points out that keeping promises shows the moral character of the speaker, as claimed by Jane Hill (2000). In this way the rituals that are concerned with truth and lying are a central part of the moral system that regulates Roma community life.

3.5.2. Bodily and sensory experiences in the ethical self-creation of Roma believers

In addition to concentrating on conversion narratives and testimonies, rituals and performed, embodied, practices are the other important aspect when researching and understanding Pentecostal Christian conversion in my thesis. Although the spoken word plays a central role in the self-formation of Pentecostal believers, bodily and sensory experiences are also of great importance in the Pentecostal believer's self-creation as demonstrated by much ground-breaking research (e.g. Bialecki 2014; Bialecki 2015; Bialecki 2018; Coleman 2004; Luhrmann 2004; Luhrmann 2012; Luhrmann 2018; Meyer 2010a: Meyer 2010b). Robbins (2010: 165) explains that as ritual is an embodied practice and as Pentecostalism ritualises daily life, the body is another important aspect of Pentecostal lived religion for anthropologists to study. Pentecostals create their believer selves through bodily experiences such as raising their arms to worship, falling onto the ground ("being slain in the Spirit"), or praying for other believers while placing their hands over the person (Bialecki 2015: 97). This kind of participation with the whole body helps people have intense religious experiences (Meyer 2010b: 122–123) that show the person has contact with the Holy Spirit. These bodily experiences are often achieved through worship music and the persuasive rhetoric of preachers, so although experienced by individuals, the effect is produced socially (Meyer 2010a: 742; 754).

According to Birgit Meyer (2010a: 742) a common religious aesthetic is needed so that the presence and workings of the Holy Spirit can be sensed by believers.

The sensational forms, a term coined by Meyer, play an important role in inducing religious experience and forming religious subjects. This gives rise to the formation of religious communities because of the subjects' role in religious communication both with God and other believers (Meyer 2010b: 123). Meyer (2010a: 754) explains that when personal and collective worship practices are seen as sensational forms by the researcher, it aids in understanding of how sensations are socially induced.

Hirschkind (2001) and Mahmood (2001), both representing the virtue ethics approach, demonstrate how ethical self-cultivation in the case of Islamic piety in Egypt involves developing emotional and bodily responses (see also Keane 2010: 80). Hirschkind (2001: 627) points out that the contemporary Muslim practice in Egypt of regularly listening to tape recorded sermons is a way for the men to remember to behave in a virtuous way. Listening to tapes can be considered a technique of ethical self-improvement as the speech has an effect on the heart, while obliging the men to "clean their hearts" by giving up sinful acts (Hirschkind 2001: 627). Listening in this case is an aesthetic engagement with sound that stresses "the moral receptivity of the listener, which is located above all in bodily and affective responses to the spoken word" (Keane 2010: 80). In the case of women in Cairo, Mahmood (2001: 828) explains the women cultivated sentiments and desires according to what was considered moral and pious according to Islam, which shows that the formal and spontaneous became mixed as emotions and spontaneity was rehearsed and the body became a way to realise the pious self. The self in this case is realised by behaviours that are not against convention or rules, meaning that they cannot be seen only as imposed (Mahmood 2001: 828–829).

Roma converts are consciously and unconsciously working on themselves to become "better" believers, to achieve the moral standards that conversion demands both by using the "right words" as well as training their bodies and learning to have the experiences. During my fieldwork the Roma believers often used the image of the heart to refer to the Holy Spirit working in believers, for instance prospective converts are encouraged to "take Jesus into their hearts" (article III). The "real change" is described as taking place in the heart, as are "the real learning" and "finding the right church" to attend, or in general "finding peace in the heart" (cf. Robbins et al. 2014). God could even be considered one's bosom buddy (*südame sõber*; a direct translation from Estonian is "heart's friend") as explained in article III. Nevertheless, the "opening of one's heart" could need time and practice. Believers have to learn to have these experiences (Luhrmann 2004: 522) and need to work actively towards it, accepting the shared techniques of producing the emotions as natural (Meyer 2010a: 753). Committing oneself to God means that one has "to stay on the path", which can be challenging, as it requires constant work and learning to feel God's presence in one's life (Luhrmann 2018: 306).

I suggest in article III that the sensational forms become as, or even more, important than the use of speech. Ethnic elements and a culture-specific mission approach being incorporated into the practice of faith, becoming parts of the

sensational forms, experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit is made easier. Roma pastors and missionaries in possession of proper authority and oratory skills, the usage of *Romanes* in prayer meetings, the way meeting in smaller circles at homes in addition to church setting and keeping gender separation when needed are some features that make up the culture-specific approach.

Roma believers also yearn for the touch of the Holy Spirit, for instance hearing God's voice in their dreams guiding them in their lives (article III). This kind of experience of the presence of God often takes place through music and affects believers physically (Meyer 2010b: 125). Music is described by Roma believers as touching their hearts and therefore pushing them towards conversion. Music helps to create a divine energy that can make ethnic differences unimportant (Lange 2003: 106). At the same time the type of devotional song and music used to create this energy plays an important role. In article III, I explain that devotional songs were important for the Roma pastor, who had either modified them "into a more Romani style" or had translated some into Romani; he had also written new songs while missionising in Estonia and Latvia. These songs are still used by Roma believer women in the creation of a shared way to experience the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. In article III, I propose that these songs and other culture-specific forms of worship offered by some Roma pastors and missionaries helps an energy, that Bialecki (2015: 97, 98) has explained as 'affect', among Roma believers to rise. The concept of affect, according to Bialecki (2015: 97, 98) is the "intensities and energies" that have consequences the people who are in contact with it; in order not to confuse affect with emotion, emotion should be seen as what comes after the flow of affective energy when a person becomes aware of the experience. The concept allows us to analyse language and embodiment in conversion together, without having to choose one of them (Bialecki 2015: 98).

3.6. The two moral codes of Roma believers

Living according to accepted ethical values can be difficult as the values can make conflicting demands causing people to manage tensions that cannot be resolved (Laidlaw 2014a). For instance, lay Jains practice fasting, confession and meditation and worship saints and deities, but they cannot live their lives like monks and nuns who are itinerant, celibate and live without any real possessions, therefore lay Jains try to strike a balance between the two sets of values (Laidlaw 2014a: 42). This means that for Jains ethical values, and living according to them, can differ considerably. For the lay Jains the ideal way of life remains unattainable, which is why they have to manage the irresolvable tensions arising from values that make conflicting demands (Laidlaw 2013: 184; 2002; 2014a: 126). Similarly to Laidlaw, Robbins (2004b: 217) also draws from Foucault's ([1985] 1990: 29; 1997: 263) distinction between two parts of the moral system – the moral code, and "ethics" (or "the forms of subjectivation", or one's "relation to oneself"). Acting according to the two taboo systems of the Urampim is considered

a sin and the Christian converts stop following them; nevertheless they are still influenced by the fear of the consequences of their actions (Robbins 2004b: 219, 222). The way ethical self-formation is understood in the traditional Urapmin system and in Christianity is also a source of conflict. The first aimed to "balance lawfulness and wilfulness" for successfully becoming a "creative social actor", while the second aimed at rejecting acting according to the will in totality (Robbins 2004b: 219). Nevertheless they still need to participate in reciprocal relations with others as they are connected to others through their subsistence economy, and for that they need to express their leadership skills and wilfulness although it is considered sinful after conversion (Laidlaw 2014a: 130). Robbins demonstrates how the Urapmin who have converted to Christianity as individuals need to make choices between values that are irreconcilable (Laidlaw 2014a: 130).

Likewise, with reference to the case studies of Laidlaw and Robbins, I demonstrate (articles I and II) how for the Roma two moral codes start to compete and cause tension with conversion that demands the foregrounding of the new believer identity. In Pentecostalism importance is placed on the abrupt change from previous life, while emphasising dualism and moral ascetism, according to which the "born-again" Christians should re-evaluate the previous moral system and re-arrange their life accordingly (Austin-Broos 2003; Meyer 1998; Ries 2014; Robbins 2004b; Slavkova 2007). For instance, the conceptualisation of fortune telling after conversion is an example of conflict that rises between moral codes. In some cases Roma dance and jewellery, following ritual purity rules and ritual practices connected to conflict resolution inside the Roma community, and the need to maintain solidarity with kin or community members who for instance are involved in occupations that are considered immoral by the converted, can cause conflict. Pentecostal believers are expected to make a "complete break with the past", although this might not be achieved easily and quickly (Meyer 1998: 318, 340). Robbins (2010: 166) explains that morality plays an important role in the daily life of Pentecostals as they view life as a moral struggle between good and bad, and therefore need to practice self-control constantly if they want to avoid regressing to the previous moral code. At the same time, although some parts of the past are completely rejected, other parts can be said to be objectified and used and therefore do not disappear (Eriksen et al 2019: 161). This is also the case with fortune telling, which becomes considered satanic by the converted Roma. In addition, as I have demonstrated in subchapter 3.5.1 and article II, after conversion the protection that was previously achieved through protective magic and connected rituals, can either remain alongside, or be replaced by, the idea of God's protection of believers.

For an analysis of the moral challenges faced by Roma converts when two moral systems, one based on believer identity and the other based on shared values and rules that are important for considering a person to be Roma, start to compete and cause tension, the concept of *Romanipen* (in Romani) becomes useful. *Romanipen*, although it doesn't have one clear definition, can be explained as the set of rules of conduct and customs upheld by the Roma, which differentiates them from non-Roma. I do not just juxtapose these moral systems but look

at ethnic and cultural identity together with the concept of *Romanipen* and combine them in the analysis with the influence of the social-economic and cultural context in which the mission takes place. While analysing the lived experiences of Roma from Bulgaria who migrate to other European countries for work, and demonstrating the way *Romanipen* is changing, Aleksandar G. Marinov (2019b), researcher from Bulgaria and of Roma heritage, explains *Romanipen* as "the set of factors, laws and behaviors that define the Roma people" and differentiate them from non-Roma. Different ethnic Romani subgroups interpret *Romanipen* differently, although for all it is a guide to making sense of the world and acting accordingly (Marinov 2019b). When analysing how two different Roma communities in Poland, *Bergitka* Roma, who have been sedentary for centuries, and *Polska* Roma, who were nomadic until recently, interpret their culture in the contemporary world due to these differences, Tomasz Koper (2020), himself *Bergitka* Roma, shows that the concept of *Romanipen* can be understood on three levels: firstly as ethnic identification, creating a border separating Roma from the non-Roma, secondly as sub-group-specific ritual purity rules, and thirdly as a tool of social control. Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov explain that *Romanipen* can be considered a "specific moral and behavioural code", which although it differs between different Roma communities, involves everything that the Roma consider characteristic of them. As it covers the entire life of the Roma and is not constantly same but can change according to a specific case, it is not to be formalised or essentialised (Marushiakova and Popov 2017: 212).

For the Roma in Estonia and Latvia, both blood relations and living according to the values and rules of *Romanipen* are important in considering one a Roma, in distinguishing them from other ethnicities (called *gadže*, non-Roma) (see also Roht 2011). Today the Roma are sedentary, and were partly so before World War II, nevertheless the Roma consider the (seasonal) travelling lifestyle practiced before the war, and also to a lesser extent during the Soviet period, an important part of Roma ethnic and cultural identity, according to the accounts from my fieldwork. Similarly, professions like that of horse trader and fortune teller are considered traditional Roma occupations, although almost no one has horses anymore and Roma work in various fields, just like other people. Fortune telling, although still a valued skill, is not widely practiced by the younger generation, at least not to earn money. The travelling and the traditional occupations are often associated with what is called "real" Roma life and what is still remembered by the older generations as the traditional way of life. This is what distinguishes Roma from non-Roma when trying to explain to non-Roma what is specific about Roma and their "culture". My interlocuters mention various parts of Roma ethnic and cultural identity as still important for Roma in Estonia and Latvia. For example: social organisation with different family lines having different rank or levels of respect that are considered, for instance, when choosing partners for marriage; the Roma court as an institution that solves disputes within the community; the rules of ritual purity; gender separation at festive meals and gender specific behaviour and roles in everyday life; the requirement for girls' virginity at marriage; respect for elders; kin and group solidarity; funeral celebra-

tions with large numbers of guests from several countries and financial help for the family of the deceased (see also Roht 2011; Roht-Yilmaz 2018a). Social control has lessened so that today rules are followed less strictly as families live further apart and nuclear families live more on their own (Roht 2011).

Although, the distinction between Roma and *gadže* has played an important role in the self-identification of Roma, there has always been interconnectedness to the non-Roma world, the people and also the land where Roma groups live. In Estonia and Latvia until World War II many Roma worked at fairs and in the sale and exchange of horses during the warm seasons. During the cold winters that are typical of the region, Roma often stayed at farms, for instance, in old sauna buildings, therefore they needed to have good trusting relations with the farmers who took them in. Already during that time there were some mixed marriages between Roma and non-Roma, of which some received mention in newspaper articles; at this time different levels of integration into general society existed (see also Roht-Yilmaz and Ross 2022). Although Roma have always been connected to the non-Roma world, and there have always been those who functioned well in both societies, active participation in the life of mainstream society also caused assimilation and the loss of contact with the Roma community for some. The way individuals handle their belonging to both the Roma community and mainstream society is influenced by their individual ability to combine the values of Roma and non-Roma societies and preserve commitment to *Romanipen*.

In his research on Bulgarian Roma migrants, Marinov (2019b) explains that without *Romanipen*, when a Roma person does not follow the necessary norms and cultural identity, that person can become considered a *gadžo/i*, while for non-Roma it is possible to be considered Roma if they have *Romanipen* (Marinov 2019b). For instance, the importance of *Romanipen* also manifests itself in marriages with non-Roma, which for the younger generation of Roma in Estonia and Latvia are no longer rare. By adapting to Roma customs and norms, and learning the Romani language, non-Roma who have been adopted as children or even non-Roma who marry Roma (especially women who marry Roma men) can come to be considered no longer *gadže*. Nevertheless, non-Roma spouses are still known as not Roma by blood and therefore have fewer kinship connections; non-Roma spouses may have less prestige and earn less respect. Tihovska (2014) also points out how in Latvia Roma with higher levels of education, who are successfully integrated and working in the non-Roma society, can be considered "half-Roma" by other Roma, although this is a term used in Latvian. When speaking Romani they are still called *gadže*, in some cases this term applying despite their participation in community life. Nevertheless, these people consider themselves Roma even if that way of being a Roma differs from what is more generally considered and accepted as a Roma way of life (Tihovska 2014). Alaina Lemon (2000: 195, 201–202) claims that contrast between Roma and *gadže* is not always structured rigidly and shifting terms can be used differently in various interactions with different people. Lemon also says that her Lovara Roma interlocutors in Russia used to differentiate between types of *gadže*, and that the classification was not always stable. This does not mean that social boundaries are not real most of the

time as most Roma in Russia do not associate often or freely with the *gadže*, but in some cases they do align themselves with different types of *gadže* (Lemon 2000: 202). There are occasions when keeping Roma identification paramount is challenged, and different identifications need to be managed and balanced. For instance, both marriages to non-Roma, especially for Roma women, and conversion to Pentecostalism are such cases.

The several identities that the Roma have include, for instance, ethnic and cultural, state, group, subgroup, gender and religious. Identities are multiple, fragmented, contradictory, constantly changing and intertwined (Hall 2000; Smith and Watson 2001). Social identities can be shifted, multiple, contested and unstable (Eriksen and Schober 2016: 1). In addition, they are managed by creating boundaries (Panelli 2004). The terms ethnicity and culture should both be regarded as complex repertoires that are experienced and used in everyday lives enabling people to keep making sense of themselves and others (Jenkins 2008: 15). The performative and embodied nature of Romaness or "Gypsyness", stating that it needs to be continuously upheld by being performed in everyday life, has been pointed out by several researchers (Cantón-Delgado 2010; 2014; Gay y Blasco 1999; Gripenberg 2019; Roman 2016; 2017; Slavkova 2007; Theodosiou 2003). Defining Roma identity only by *Romanipen* and considering it unchanging and fixed essentialises the Roma, and in doing so researchers looking for "true" Roma have imposed an identity on them, perceiving them also as inherently different from non-Roma (Hancock 2010a; Kapralski 2007; Marushiakova and Popov 2011; Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2018). By defining Roma identity solely based on *Romanipen* and therefore having fixed ethnic identity, the Roma have also been considered to lack (interest in) history, although the view that history is unimportant to Roma identity deprives them of their place in the history of the countries they have lived in and seems to neglect how the perception of history among the Roma has been based on the oral transmission of knowledge (Kapralski 2007: 3–4).

I demonstrate how conversion adds one more layer of identification, as well as how it is managed and negotiated by Roma believers, to different situations, along with their identification as Roma. Marinov (2019b) demonstrates how *Romanipen* is reinterpreted due to the need to find a balance between what the Roma perceive as the "ideal" or "proper" way of behaving and the reality of contemporary and changing conditions. *Romanipen* should be seen as fluid and constantly changing, as Marinov (2016; 2019b) points out when demonstrating that the Roma identities of Bulgarian Roma migrants are affected by the experiences they have in the societies to which they have moved. Similarly, *Romanipen* has the capacity to change due to the change in religious belief, which itself causes moral and ethical adjustments and re-evaluations.

In the next section I will demonstrate how ethnic, cultural (including *Romanipen*) and religious identifications are negotiated and how different believer Roma find ways to consolidate moral norms and conflicting systems when forming their new "born-again" moral selves.

3.7. The competing moral codes and believer Roma identity formation

Becoming a "born-again" Christian calls for a change in one's self-identification that makes religious identity paramount, although it does not mean that other identities are erased (Hefner 1993: 17). With conversion a new identification layer is added and the believer Roma individual has to find ways to create their new identification that embraces belonging both to the Roma and the believer communities. The converts need to consolidate different identities in order to become a believer and also "stay Roma", in the sense that their belonging to their Roma community is still recognised by unconverted Roma with whom they have family, kinship and social ties. In article I, I show that they need to prove to the unconverted Roma that *Romanipen* is the main driver of their moral code. The consolidation of these different identifications might not always be easy, as I demonstrate in article I. The one moral code based on Pentecostal Christian principles, and the other either based on *Romanipen* or connected to it, might come into conflict. This can result in loss of prestige in the Roma community for the believer, or even call into question their *Romanipen* identity. For instance, the rules of ritual purity come into doubt when discussing how Roma pastor performs the baptism of a teenage girl during winter in a bathtub (see also the documentary *Mission of a Rom*). The converted Roma explain that the practical conditions of cold weather create a context in which for the sake of religion some rules can be modified.

In the following sections I will explain that the Pentecostal Roma need to deal with the tension arising from the two moral codes when they need to prove to converted non-Roma that the Pentecostal moral code is paramount for them. Sometimes the Roma also experience resentment in their congregations towards their traditional customs. Therefore, I will also demonstrate how they are affected by the negative experiences in their multi-ethnic congregations and how they use this in the formation of their new identity as believer Roma.

3.7.1. The example of fortune telling

Although other Christian denominations do not approve rituals that can be considered "magic", Pentecostalism especially reinforces Christian dualism and the personal denouncing of such rituals. Therefore fortune telling is strictly forbidden and becomes a way to show one's personal transformation and the acceptance of the new moral code. It seems that with previous religious belonging, such as Eastern Orthodox Christian and Lutheran, rites could be more easily practiced without sensing a moral conflict. In Pentecostalism local ontologies are preserved but transformed into an aspect of the demonic world (Robbins 2004a: 129–130). This is why fortune telling has reached the conversion narratives of Roma women in Estonia and Latvia. The moral tension that arises between practicing fortune telling and the new "born-again" way of life has been noted among different Roma groups in various countries, although it does not mean that it is in all cases given

up (Kwiek 2014; Laurent 2014; Marushiakova and Popov 2014; Slavkova 2007; Strand 2014; Åberg 2014). Fortune telling has been pointed out as an "ethno-cultural characteristic" that is strongly opposed by evangelical churches, while other traditional values, festivals, customs and rituals usually do not cause conflict with the new religious belonging, instead forming a complex symbiosis (Marushiakova and Popov 2014: 53). Although, some traditional practices and other aspects of the Roma way of life can come into conflict with Pentecostal Christian values, it has been noted that as most pastors do not require the Roma to abandon traditional practices – some even showing support for them –, it is unlikely that conversion will bring about assimilation (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019: 7).

As already explained in subchapter 3.5.1. fortune telling is condemned and considered satanic among the converted. With the example of fortune telling I demonstrate and claim, in article II, that moral condemnation of a practice that is culturally and economically important, such as fortune telling, is often situational, depending on the conversation partner and context of discussion and whether the women feel the need to share their testimonies. I demonstrate, in article II, that although converted Roma stop telling fortunes, condemnation of fortune telling also depends on whether fortune telling was practiced in the woman's family. Material reasons, such as fortune telling is a way to earn some extra money, and more complex reasons, such as considering it a traditional skill that is still practiced by family or community members, make it harder to condemn it fully. Furthermore, condemnation or the lack of it can be connected to a woman's belief in (protective) magic and curses, therefore whether it is part of her own more syncretic belief system. In this way Roma converts constantly find a balance between the two moral codes, trying to maintain their reciprocal relations with kin and community. For instance, pastor Gregory condemns fortune telling, although his daughter explains that he could not always directly tell unconverted Roma women to stop practicing it as he knows its importance both economically and culturally (article II).

In this region fortune telling and performing magic rituals and healing with herbs have historically been the main occupations of Roma women (Anepaio 1996: 115, 117; Bartash 2015: 26; Marushiakova and Popov 2003: 300). Although not as a main occupation, Roma women still practice fortune telling today. It is claimed by my Roma interlocutors that almost all women know how to do it, even if they do not offer it as a service for money. They admit, at the same time, that the younger generation already has less knowledge of how to tell fortunes. There are some women who offer fortune telling on the street, while others at their homes. The ones who offer fortune telling on the street generally read palms (*dikhel vast* in Romani), while those who work at home perform card readings (*chuvel kharti* in Romani) (see also article II). A statement by an older unconverted Roma woman "that she always has cards in her purse" shows readiness to use this portable way of earning a living even if the woman does not offer this service on the streets of the small town where she lives, but rather receives people who wish their fortune to be told at home.

In different contexts and among different Roma groups, the church's attitude towards Romani traditions can vary due to the role that fortune telling plays in the lives of Roma (Kwiek 2014: 189–190). While among the *Kalderash* Roma group, who live in the US, fortune telling is a common livelihood and is harshly condemned by pastors as a sin and witchcraft, while the *Kalderash*, who live in Poland and Germany, practice fortune telling far less and it is therefore more mildly regarded by pastors. In addition, Gregor Dufunia Kwiek (2014: 191) points out that non-believer Roma in the US can consider the converted to be non-Roma, while the converted see fortune telling as a reason for racism and discrimination against the Roma. For the *Kaale* women in Finland fortune telling was also a traditional occupation, as Miika Tervonen (2010: 105–107) looking at the 1860–1925 period explains, stating that it was a way of earning money and presents (rings, scarves, clothes, etc.) and implied a close relationship between Roma and peasant women that included magical beliefs. Nevertheless, fortune telling could also invoke moral condemnation as being unchristian by connecting it to hoaxes and unwillingly giving away valuables (Tervonen 2010: 107).

The topic of fortune telling did not come up in the conversion stories or during the mission talks given by *Kaale* missionaries. Gripenberg (2022: 125) claims that the *Kaale* who made mission trips to Estonia considered fortune telling a positively viewed service "without any connection to spirituality". Nevertheless, at the same time she points out that fortune telling was viewed as "spiritually benign" as it was used to provide for one's family. A distinction was made between fortune telling and what the *Kaale* believers considered "real divination" (original quotation marks), which was seen as scary and inspired by evil forces and was considered an inappropriate activity for converted Roma (Gripenberg 2022: 125). This still seems to be considered dangerous, satanic and possibly "true", and not only as a service similar to psychological counselling. In contrast, the Roma in Estonia and Latvia still tell fortunes as a way to earn some extra money, although this is mainly the older generation, and is valued as a traditional Roma skill. Condemning fortune telling and using it as an example in their testimonies often becomes part of ethical self-cultivation as a Pentecostal believer.

3.7.2. Solidarity networks

As demonstrated in the analysis of Roma women's conceptualisation of fortune telling, an individual's family history and current communication networks play an important role. The solidarity with family and close ties to family and kin, and solidarity and mutual help within the community, that are also typical feature of Roma in Estonia and Latvia as in many other Roma communities (cf. Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 48), can become more complicated when believer Roma are executing the ethical work required by Pentecostal conversion to transform themselves. As they are working on changing their lives according to the new moral code, they need to demonstrate the change that has occurred in their lives together with conversion and the re-evaluation of their previous moral system. The break, typical of conversion stories as described earlier, is often explained as abrupt and immediate with converts giving up what they consider bad and sinful

habits, like smoking or drinking. Often this break occurs overnight, although as I demonstrate in articles I and II the condemnation of all parts of the previous moral system is not always fully achieved, with the new identity layer also being situationally activated. The complex nature of the conversion becomes visible by connecting the de-marginalisation narrative dominant in the mission to the social reality that the converts experience (article I). Converts need to learn and experience the world in a new way, a reorientation that requires time, and therefore the break with their previous social life cannot happen immediately (Austin-Broos 2003: 2). Converting to Pentecostalism is not a one-time decision, it means that the convert needs to make decisions in a new set of ethical choices (Coleman 2015: 280). Coleman argues that this set of ethical stances constantly invokes borders, boundaries to be marked and crossed, and can be significantly effective. Believers constantly (re)construct the borders between Pentecostal and local worldviews, and in this way also recreate Pentecostalism (Coleman 2015: 285).

In some cases, conversion can affect solidarity with family and kin and can appear to be a threat to a way of earning a living. Relations with other Roma, and earning a living, can also be interconnected and bring about the need to choose between, on the one hand one's kin, community and income, and on the other, the new moral code, therefore complicating the situation for the possible future convert or converted person. Believers can find themselves in a position where they need to make a moral choice that deprives them of financial gain, for instance, a believer woman, Maria, explains that she cannot do things "underhandedly", when telling me about how she lost the chance to buy a house because of her moral choice. The possibilities to earn money in a new proper way according to the Pentecostal Christian moral principles may not arise immediately and church-related jobs are often limited to just a few. Often these issues are interrelated. In addition, small cons that were tolerated as necessary to provide for one's family in difficult economic conditions become prohibited by the new moral code.

As a young Roma woman, Helen, expressed it: "It is not easy to become a believer because you become poor" (see article I). For instance, the new moral code does not allow any work connected with alcohol or cigarettes; even less tolerated are gambling and illegal jobs, including selling narcotic substances. The latter, although not traditionally approved by the Roma community either, has reportedly become a problem among some Roma families in south Estonia, who have been put on trial and/or convicted. This has reached the media in Estonia, unfortunately by unethically stressing the ethnicity of the people on trial or convicted (for instance see Õhtuleht 2018; Roos 2023). Such activities themselves are not connected to *Romanipen* and may even be prohibited by it; nevertheless family or kin solidarity might cause conflict when moral choices need to be made and one's family and kin do not share the same moral code as believers. While conversion can result in reduced ways of earning a living – "becoming poor" – it can also affect the way one is perceived within the Roma community. An individual's success in providing for his or her family is one of several factors that give rise to the respect of others. Using the concept of prestige is one way to discuss the constant evaluation of an individual's behaviour that takes place within the Roma community.

3.7.3. Prestige

Pentecostal pastors find themselves in a position where they could either be ridiculed or have greater prestige in the Roma community. According to my fieldwork conversations, in general, priests and pastors of different denominations are much respected, although Pentecostal pastors from the Roma community need to prove themselves. Pentecostal pastors are evaluated by converts according to their "power" or "strength" – their charisma and also by how "dedicated" they are (article I and article III). The pastors' charisma depends on how well they are considered to experience the Holy Spirit (Meyer 2010a: 753). The case of pastor Gregory demonstrates how he came to have a high degree of prestige and respect during the years he successfully performed mission work among Roma in Estonia and Latvia and had his own congregation, although he also lost prestige after relapsing into habits considered unsuitable for Pentecostals and stopping his work as a pastor. Pastor Yuri, who was invited by local Roma believer women in Valga/Valka to preach among the Roma, could not gain enough authority and respect among the "possible converts" and stopped his visits (article I and article III). Slavkova (2014: 66) explains how for the evangelical Roma in Bulgaria, the idea of "prestige" is connected to demonstrating that one's family is doing well and having good fortune as it would be demonstrating that one has been blessed by God as well as the respected pastors who have gained authority and are holders of the greatest prestige.

A similar loss of prestige or respect might befall converts in daily communication situations with their unconverted kin or the wider Roma community. For instance, visible changes in the lives of believers that have occurred with conversion and ethical work and the expression of unconditional love and forgiveness – values important for Pentecostal believers – can be mocked or ridiculed by the unconverted with whom converts already have complicated family relations. The social life and communication within the Roma community can oblige a person to be assertive and persuasive in speech, despite this not always fitting in with the proper behaviour expected of believers. A converted man explains how his parents-in-law, with whom he shares the responsibility of taking care of his children after the death of his wife, speak ill of him, although he tries to refrain from criticising them (see article I). Lydia, whose daughter and her family is also converted despite Lydia's husband and son, and her sister and her family, not being converted, explains that one should discuss topics with other Roma in a fitting way, which includes expressing oneself with self-confidence and having a good command of words, otherwise one cannot make oneself understood, and therefore one can say it makes unconverted Roma doubt the believer's prestige or authority. During the process of constructing a shared reality, people evaluate one another in such a way that small unexpected changes in interaction can greatly affect how people evaluate each other in terms of ethical value (Keane 2016: 102, 104).

3.7.4. The image and identity formation of Roma believers

In article I, I demonstrate that the Roma converts are well aware of the image of the stereotypical Roma held by the majority population. Conversion brings about the creation of the image of "better Roma/Gypsies" compared to the negative image based on stereotypes that the non-Roma hold about Roma (see also Cantón Delgado 2010; Fosztó 2009; Gripenberg 2019; Lange 2003; Marsh and Thurfjell 2014; Ries 2010; Slavkova 2007; 2014). One part of the believer identity involves emphasising their new moral code and difference from this image in order not to be associated with the negative stereotype of "stealing and cheating Gypsies". I have demonstrated in article I how for the converted Roma the legend[12] of the Roma man stealing a nail from Jesus's crucifixion loses its interpretation as a justification for forgiveness for small-scale stealing. The separate believer Roma identity gives converted Roma the possibility to express their Roma ethnic identity more openly and proudly as they disconnect it from the negative stereotypical "Gypsy" image.

The new identity layer also allows believers to stress a moral code that is more likely to be perceived positively by (unconverted) non-Roma. Converted Roma also claim that among unconverted Roma there are those who pray God to help with stealing, which they consider morally wrong. This way they condemn this view that for Roma stealing from non-Roma is not a big sin (see Ariste 2012 [1959]: 33). The more ambiguous view of unconverted Roma about stealing and small cons is often explained by admitting that Roma used to practice this due to difficult living conditions and having no other choice because they needed to feed their families. Converted Roma find it important to stress that refraining from condemning stealing is not based on *Romanipen*. At the same time, they stress that previously their own kin lived more by the rules of *Romanipen*, which is at the same time likened to living in the light of Christian values.

The way Roma perceive Pentecostalism is influenced by their image in the dominant society and their relations with the majority populations (Roht-Yilmaz 2020a: 97). For instance, in the Swedish context, David Thurfjell (2014) demonstrates that for *Kaale,* Pentecostalism helps to increase their self-esteem and helps to solve problems that arise from social marginalisation. Pentecostalism offers the *Kaale* a way to manage the pressure they feel both from the need to act according to the norms of majority society (by getting a good education and an acceptable job) and from the need to comply with the norms of their own community (to preserve their Romani heritage) (Thurfjell 2014: 172). This is also why the *Kaale* missionaries in Estonia and Latvia preach that conversion will better the lives of Roma converts in the society as well as providing the means to stay true to the norms of their own community.

Johannes Ries (2007) explains that in Romania one group of Roma, the *Corturar*, refrains from conversion because they see it as conflicting with their social

[12] The legend is classified in the Aarne–Thompson–Uther Index catalogue of folktale types as ATU 772 (Annom 2015: 630).

and moral norms, i.e. they feel that their "prestige" would be lowered if they mixed with other Roma groups, while another group, the *Tigani*, are more interested in integration into *gadže* society because of their poor living conditions. The appeal of Pentecostalism is connected with the image of the Roma group among the majority society and depends on how their ethnic group identity relates to the ideas central to conversion (Peel 2009: 195).

In the case of Estonia and Latvia's Vidzeme region, I have demonstrated (in article I) that the de-marginalisation narrative, dominant in the mission narrative, is used by converted Roma when creating their believer Roma identity, emphasising their difference from the stereotypical images of Roma present in wider society. The mission, with its de-marginalisation narrative, does not lead to large-scale conversions as converted Roma find themselves in a position where they need to manage the tension between competing moral codes that should both be followed. I demonstrate how individuals handle some of the moral challenges that arise with conversion.

The new community of believers that Roma enter allows them to experience better and closer relationships with non-Roma believers. These positive relations are expressed as unexpected because of the usual distrust that Roma and non-Roma have towards each other. Roma missionaries and converts stress the equality of Roma with majority populations and the love present among "brothers and sisters in Christ" when explaining their own positive experiences after conversion. Moreover, the community spirit of congregation reminds Roma converts somewhat of the solidarity they experience within their Roma community, and hence they expect similar solidarity and support from believers, which is often also the case. As the Roma converts gain new contacts among non-Roma believers they become part of two strongly binding communities (article I).

Although some multi-ethnic congregations have allowed more freedom and are more inclusive, in others the Roma have experienced discriminative and condemnation of their culture and customs. Converted Roma say that *gadže* believers, including pastors, can be still distrusting of them because they still see them through the negative stereotypes connected to Roma. Building up new connections and finding suitable jobs takes an extra effort. Partly due to this, there are no large-scale conversions of Roma in the region, rather they move at a slow pace more through family lines, depending to a great extent on individuals (article I). In many cases converts talk about discriminatory behaviour towards them among fellow believers. Converted Roma explain how, for instance, non-Roma considered the typical Roma dances of the region to be "wild", that is, inappropriate for believers. Some believers from the majority admit that the Roma are marginalised but tend to hold them responsible for their own poverty and problems, considering them "undeserving poor" (see also article I).

In article I, I demonstrate that both the Roma and the non-Roma consider it more convenient that mission work among the Roma be conducted by missionaries from the Roma ethnic group. This is explained with the stereotypical view, often held by the majority population, that Roma form a closed community with different morals, customs and temperament and are therefore more difficult to

reach. Roma doing missionary work often use the similar reasoning of the need for a different approach due to differences in morality and cultural norms. Nevertheless, Roma also express the negative attitudes of non-Roma believers who consider them "more sinful" because of their customs and the image that they have of the Roma. Helen, who has grown up in a believer family, expresses a view that conversion also complicates the lives of Roma converts because they have to "carry the burden of being Christian" and start to feel that *Romanipen* is in conflict with being a believer. They feel more sinful and "wrong" because of their different "cultural norms", although Helen considers the two moral systems as complimentary to each other. In her view, believer Roma can also interpret *Romanipen* "incorrectly" by considering for instance early marriage or stealing as part of it, a view that is often strengthened by the negative stereotypes the *gadže* Pentecostals hold of Roma. The missionaries preach transnational equality, a typical goal of Pentecostalism that leads to the strengthening of believer identity and creates better relations with (believer) *gadže*. Nevertheless, transnational equality and good relations are not always attained in real life situations and this again leads to the Roma and *Kaale* pastors and missionaries, who offer examples of ways to be a believer Roma, being better received and more successful in their mission (article I and III).

The new religious identification usually does not bring an end to solidarity based on family ties, although it does complicate this solidarity because of the conflicting moral codes and ways of life. The small size of the Roma community in this region means that all the families know each other. Respect and subgroup belonging also affects these relations in the community, although by trying to treat everyone equally the believer Roma are somewhat more open to communication with these Roma, who are considered of lower prestige. This can be frowned upon by their unconverted kin. Believer Roma communicate with each other and form a kind of community among themselves. They support each other and meet for prayer meetings organize events and try to convert their kin and others. The believer community is not large and they remain connected to their unconverted kin and bound to solidarity with them (article I). Therefore, the level of communication between believer individuals can vary and change in time due to the relations between their families.

While many Roma believers in Bulgaria change their definitions of "moral" and "immoral" as they apply to the individual, when it comes to making a decision that will affect other members of the community, for instance concerning financial matters or a conservative cultural practice, evangelical Christianity often strengthens existing norms (Slavkova 2007: 225, 229–230). The believer's relationships and connectedness with their relatives and other community members do not disappear despite the believers changing their lifestyles and views; rather, conversion adds a new aspect to the relations the believer has with his or her relatives and community members (Slavkova 2014: 73). When discussing conversion among the Romungre in Transylvania László Fosztó (2009) points out that conversion can be a burden if the convert needs to manage new and existing relations. The believer Roma community in this region is not big enough

to allow communication only among the converted, and believers can find themselves in the midst of complicated relations due to the need to manage conflicting moral codes. In the next section I will discuss the ways Roma believers deal with these conflicting moral demands.

3.7.5. Dealing with conflicting moral demands

Although Roma individuals seem to follow the moral codes based on either, or both, *Romanipen* and/or Pentecostal Christianity they still make their own personal ethical choices (see Fassin 2014a: 429). They are somewhat free to form themselves reflectively both as believers and as "Roma", creating believer Roma ethical selves (see Foucault 2000: 337–343; Laidlaw 2014a: 102). Some strategies used by believer Roma to deal with these difficulties in making ethical choices include finding similarities between *Romanipen* and the moral code of the "born-again" Christians. For instance, Lydia likens the Roma custom of oaths, which can be part of the traditional Roma court (*Romano sundos*), to Christian morality as both consider telling the truth crucial (article I). The system of customs and practices around truth and lying regulates community relations according to the moral code based on *Romanipen*. Decisions made by the Romani court are considered by my interlocutors to be more effective than those of the state court as the former involves moral punishment from the Roma community. It might mean tackling guilt in a way known to and important for the whole the community, for instance if someone was forced to do something because of another person, the first person should not be punished. Rituals connected to the establishment of justice can include rituals with curses if the guilty party does not admit his wrongdoing. This can affect whole families as choosing not to denounce a guilty family member means the family suffers the guilt and consequences with that person. These rituals are often condemned by churches and can cause moral conflict for Roma believers leading to a feeling that they are not accepted.

With some practices, such as magic, which have become perceived by the converted as satanic, as discussed in subchapter 3.5.1., the syncretism of the pre-conversion time has not always disappeared completely. For instance, the protection that could before be achieved with spells and charms is taken over by the idea of God's protection, while in other cases both systems of providing protection can be considered to function at the same time (see article II). As demonstrated in subchapter 3.7.1. the practice of fortune telling becomes considered morally wrong upon conversion, both because it is generally believed to be satanic and because it can also be considered cheating. For the converted women who cease to practice it, however, condemnation can remain situational because of the role of fortune telling in the lives of Roma women and its interpretation. The woman's family history and solidarity networks among Roma who still practice it, influence the degree of their moral condemnation of fortune telling. The connections and communication with other people, is where much of self-reflective ethical self-formation takes place (see Keane 2014: 445, 451: Laidlaw 2014b: 501; Sidnell 2010: 124).

Although the problems for Roma converts are similar, responses to them differ according to the individual. In some cases, converts can also distance themselves from some unconverted Roma by refraining from close relations or co-operation. In rarer cases this can result in the convert ending solidarity with them, although as relations can change under new circumstances these relations also need to be constantly re-evaluated. Having converted family and kin, and therefore a larger circle of overlapping solidarity within both Roma and believer communities, can reduce the risk of conflict that could come from having several belongings and moralities. Converts also hope for the "saving" of their family and friends by convincing them to convert, which would also help enlarge the Roma believer community. These approaches to the consolidation of two moral codes can also be used by the same individual more or less successfully in different situations.

Different practices exist simultaneously, although in doing so they can cause moral conflict in believers and make their projects of ethical self-cultivation difficult. Converted Roma are still judged according to how well they keep to the practices of both communities if they want to be accepted and respected in both (see Lambek 2010: 26–27). They need to cultivate their ethical selves as Pentecostal Christians, but at the same time retain their position and prestige in the Roma community by showing that they are doing (financially) well and are providing for their family as well as having reciprocal social relations based on solidarity within the community (article I). Converted Roma need to prove themselves. Their success in ethical self-formation in the two communities depends on their ability to combine these two identification layers. Therefore, making and sustaining the changes believer Roma make in their lives with conversion is aided by having good relations in their congregation and by having access to the support networks of other (Roma) believers (article I). Personal connections play an important role in the Pentecostal/charismatic mission (Robbins 2004a: 125). For the Roma the support of other Roma believers has an especially important role as it encourages the resolution of conflict, helps find ways to balance often unachievable ethical demands (real-life attempts to fulfil them are not always successful), and provides moral examples for other believers. Therefore, maintaining personal connections are important in sustaining this support network.

In article I and III, I have demonstrated that the previously active Roma pastor who was working in Estonia and Latvia developed an approach in the mission that incorporated cultural elements and practices (devotional songs in local Romani dialect, Roma dances, using Romani in preaching, etc.), and religious practice. This has resulted in Roma converts creating their personal ways of practicing faith that at the same time enable them to solve some of the moral issues and conflicts that arise from the competing moral codes that can arise with conversion. A culture-appropriate and culture-specific approach that involves not condemning wearing jewellery or the style of Roma dance, includes visiting homes, and a whole family mission with gender separation when appropriate – for instance, the pastor's wife working more with women – has had long-lasting effects in the mission. However, if a Roma pastor does not use such an approach, or his approach and style is not considered fitting, his prestige and personal

charisma not recognised, his dialect considered too different, it can also be – as in the case of the pastor from Latvia who was recently attending prayer meetings in Valga/Valka – that despite being invited by Roma believers, the Roma pastor is not welcomed and is not very successful in mission as he does not offer any solutions to being a believer Roma (article III). In the next section I will look in more detail at the mission encounter between the Finnish *Kaale* and the local Roma of Estonia and the Latvian Vidzeme region and analyse the role and effect of ethnic and cultural elements in mission. I will demonstrate how ethnicity and Pentecostalism are in constant interaction and influence each other.

3.8. The role of ethnic and cultural identity(-ies) and group-specific interpretations of *Romanipen* in the mission encounter between the Finnish *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and the Vidzeme region of Latvia

In this mission encounter different Roma groups, the *Kaale* from Finland (and Sweden), the *Lotfitka* (Latvia) and the *Ruska* (Russia) from Estonia and Latvia, meet. The *Kaale* are active in missionizing among different Roma groups in eastern and south-eastern European countries such as Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Romania, etc. (see Roht-Yilmaz 2019; 2020a; 2020b; Roman 2018a). Powerful "born-again" conversion experiences for Pentecostal believer are thought to be available to everyone, therefore converting others becomes important for believers (Robbins 2004a: 199–120). The call to missionise is taken from the Bible, for instance, in Matthew 28:19–20.[13] Missionising is an integral part of being a Pentecostal believer and the Roma in Estonia and Latvia and the *Kaale* are no exception to this. Although they attend multi-ethnic congregations, both *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and Latvia find it important that they also try to convert Roma. I have explained that the *Kaale* wish particularly to missionise among Roma in Estonia and Latvia is based on the sense of shared ethnic identity as Roma (article III). I claim that although missionising is an essential part of Pentecostalism, for the *Kaale* and Roma directing the mission towards other or their own Roma groups is especially important, and in the case of missionisng among Roma groups other than their own the search for shared ethnic identity is a necessary precondition.

When the *Kaale* missionaries emphasise a common ethnic identity and try to fit their mission to the practical conditions of where the Roma live, there is a higher chance of being accepted than the *gadže* missionaries, at least in first encounters (articles I and III). For instance, the *Kaale* drove to Roma homes to invite them to mission events and were making an effort also in taking notice

[13] "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19–20, the Bible (www.biblegateway.com).

what kind of food the Roma in Latvia and Estonia typically prefer to put on festive tables and preparing the buffet style tables accordingly during events or when taking food to Roma homes. In addition to trying to find common points in their ethnic identity with the Roma in Estonia and Latvia, the *Kaale* also try to educate non-Roma by, for instance, organising short talks and staging Roma customs and cultural traditions such as special food, music and dance in order to create more tolerance and equal attitudes towards the Roma (article I). Nevertheless, these mission strategies do not always make the *Kaale* and their mission work welcome in the homes of Roma in Estonia and Latvia. Even more, this creation of shared ethnic identity functions only when both sides show interest in finding common points, whether it is Romani language, traditions, or similarities in the histories of these different Roma groups.

Both the local believer Roma and *Kaale* missionaries place importance on helping less fortunate Roma, seeing it as their moral duty as believers (article I). For instance, the Life and Light church in England is argued to have strengthened the sense of togetherness among the Roma and this network enables them to provide help to each other (Doležalova 2021: 285–286). An important part of *Kaale* missionary work and proselytising is also humanitarian work, as part of which they stress the need to improve Roma education possibilities (Roman 2018a). The material situation of the *Kaale* missionaries is often better than that of the people whose homes they visit in Latvia and Estonia. A *Kaale* missionary finds similarity between the condition of the Roma in these villages and towns and the situation of *Kaale* in Finland decades ago, therefore considering it important to help the people, whom they consider to be of a different historical background. *Kaale* missionaries stress the need to help the Roma to convert, and in doing so to aid them in becoming demarginalised, as they feel that the Roma have suffered similar problems in many countries, although at different points in history. Despite living in different conditions in a country with a different history the *Kaale* can relate to having similar problems with Roma in Estonia and Latvia. Discrimination in finding employment or housing, economic problems resulting from that and the need to be successful both in the majority society and in the Roma community are considered shared issues. Therefore, solidarity based on the view of shared ethnicity results in a lack of distrust, contempt and discrimination. Positive and successful contacts with *Kaale* missionaries allows for the creation of new bonds for the Roma in Estonia and Latvia and encourages connections based on shared believer and Roma identities. The mission connections between *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and the Latvian Vidzeme region can cause the formation of lasting friendships and new networks, although existing family solidarities need to be balanced with the new ones.

The *Kaale*, who have been involved in both mission, and societal and education, issues have additionally taken the initiative to help the world know more about the Roma Holocaust. In 2007 a memorial stone was erected in Estonia by a Roma NGO led by activist Roman Lutt with the help of Finnish partners (see also Roht-Yilmaz 2023: 128). A documentary film by Finnish *Kaale* director Miriam Schwartz (2006) was also produced at that time. The search for a common

ethnic identity creates or strengthens transnational Roma identity, which on a wider scale has generally been advanced by either Roma activism or Roma Pentecostalism, or both (see for instance Fraser 1992: 317). In Finland both have a long history in which they became intermingled (Roman 2020), which had an effect on the development of the Roma NGO sector in Estonia. For instance, the first seminar organised by a Roma NGO in Estonia, which took place in 1992, was covered in the religious magazine *Arm* and seminars in 1995 and 1997 were jointly organised by Estonian NGOs, Finnish Pentecostal *Kaale*, the Estonian Christian Pentecostal church and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the latter two providing educators for training (Erne 1992; Lutt 2006). The two-month training in 1997 took place at the Suurupi Pentecostal Bible School in Estonia (Lutt 2006; see also Gripenberg 2022).

In addition to formal co-operation, personal contacts between families have also been formed. Currently Pentecostalism and Roma activism are also to a certain degree intermingled. For instance, Roma activism events such as festivals and seminars that are not religious can also be attended by the Finnish *Kaale*, who are invited because of both Pentecostal and activist connections between individual Roma activists. In these events Roma activism, including societal, cultural and political topics, is the main binding theme for both converted and non-converted Roma and *Kaale*. The connections and bonding between converted Roma in Finland and Estonia and Latvia create and strengthen transnational Roma identity. In the mission the differences between Roma groups sometimes become less visible and the transnational Roma together with the believer identity comes to the foreground. For example, for *Kaale* missionaries the Roma in Estonia are all considered Estonian Roma, regardless of their group belonging (Gripenberg 2022).

The *Kaale* and *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma groups differ considerably according to their interpretation of *Romanipen* and the customs and regulations that guide their everyday life when they have chosen to abide to these rules. Gripenberg (2022: 130) even claims that Roma ethnicity in itself is rarely sufficient to make the *Kaale* initiate communication with Roma in Estonia, while Pentecostal identity is the reason to initiate interaction with other Roma groups. At the same time Gripenberg points out that interaction is facilitated by a "feeling of belonging and the perception of a shared ethnic identity", which according to her is not based on common cultural traditions or language. Gripenberg (2019) has also pointed out that the Pentecostal *Kaale* in Finland interact and feel more solidarity with the recently arrived Bulgarian and Romanian Roma, with whom they share Pentecostal belonging. Although the *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma dialects and customs differ from each other, the *Kaale* belong to a more distant group. For instance they traditionally use a different system of conflict resolution, that of avoidance and blood feud, instead of Roma court (*Romano sundos*) typical of *Lotfitka* (Latvian) and *Ruska* (Russian) Roma. The latter use the term *sendo/synod*, from Polish, or *sudo*, from Russian (Marushiakova and Popov 2007: 69). In the case of converted *Kaale,* they avoid blood feud, as according to Pentecostal Christian ethics they should forgive instead of keeping feuds (Gripenberg 2019: 117; 2022: 124). Other behaviours might also be recon-

sidered and applied less strictly situationally as they are reinterpreted through the prism of faith. For instance, at a mission event in Latvia a younger *Kaale* believer woman sits next to a Latvian Roma deacon explaining to him that she should not approach him like this and hoping that he does not mind. She explains that she feels that it is suitable as she's expressing religious thoughts and feelings. Therefore, it can be said that in this situation religious context is more important and religious identity is more to the fore compered to *Kaale* norms and morals. At the same time, interpretations might differ, as I demonstrate in article I. For example believer *Kaale* women dancing during a mission event is not considered appropriate by *Kaale* men while an Estonian missionary with Roma family relations finds it proper as she connects this dancing with different levels of faith and with Roma "culture".

Although the Roma groups concerned share ritual purity rules and gender divisions stemming from the traditional division of the body into the lower body (unclean) and upper body (clean), as well as respect for elders and family centeredness, *Kaale* norms of proper conduct can be considered more conservative, including stricter rules on ritual purity. The Finnish *Kaale* customs and rules, which they refer to as *Kaale kulttuuri*, include respect for elders, the importance of notions of shame and modesty, hierarchy based on age and gender divisions and family centeredness (Gripenberg 2019; Roman 2017; 2018a; 2018b). *Kaale* morality is very much embodied: the body, and the division of it into polluted and non-polluted parts, dictates how a person should relate to oneself and to others, depending also on the gender and age of people interacting (Roman 2017: 258). Some of the differences between proper behaviour for the *Kaale* and local Roma (who are mainly *Lotfitka* (Latvian) Roma) are apparent in everyday communication during the mission trips. In church *Kaale* men sit in the front, while the women sit at the back, which is not the case for the Roma in Estonia and Latvia. The Finnish *Kaale*, for example, do not place a bag with groceries on the ground as it becomes ritually polluted (see also Gripenberg 2019 on the manifestation of different hierarchies (for example considering one's own group purer and more respectable) adopted by Roma groups from Bulgaria, Romania and the *Kaale* based on the example of attitudes towards food preparation and eating at the same event). When comparing the Finnish *Kaale* and Roma groups from Bulgaria and Romania, Gripenberg (2019: 89) points out that the most important aspects for identification as Roma were clothing and purity rules for the first group, while for the second group, these were a good command of the Romani language and keeping various cultural traditions. The Roma in Estonia and Latvia sometimes say that *Kaale* consider themselves superior because of the way they follow ritual purity rules (see also Koper 2020 for a comparison of *Polska* and *Bergitka* Roma interpretations of *Romanipen* and attitudes towards outgroups).

These differences are acknowledged, and at the same time the *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and Latvia do see each other as somewhat similar. When missionising *Kaale* know their dialect (at least to some extent) they find a connection through language. The importance of family and kin relations and solidarity among kin and the larger Roma community is common. Although clothing styles differ, it is

still acknowledged that dress is based on the same principals of ritual purity. The wearing of gold and/or prominent jewellery, although it might differ in style, is also common and accepted for believers (while non-Roma converts might consider this improper for believers, as expressed by a young Roma believer woman from Latvia). Gripenberg (2019) claims that for the *Kaale* and the Roma from Bulgaria and Romania the experience of a shared ethnic identity is mainly based on kinship, language and the perception of sharing basic values (see Hancock 2010b).

In article III, I draw on Coleman (2015: 285), who explains that together with the previous worldview of the converts, Pentecostalism itself also changes and the borders between these two worldviews are constantly constructed and reconstructed. I suggest that Roma and *Kaale* individuals constantly use ethnicity for such border drawing which helps them to find ways of being a Pentecostal Roma believer that suits them. When doing mission, the *Kaale* are more successful in their activities when they are able to work with local believer Roma as they not only speak the local dialect, but are also more aware of the local circumstances and more attuned to local Roma interpretations of *Romanipen* (articles I and III). The *Kaale* employ a de-marginalisation narrative to show how life after conversion changes for the better and brings upward social mobility for the discriminated, marginalised Roma by using themselves, believer *Kaale*, as examples (article I). In this way the *Kaale* also demonstrate a model. They show how being a Roma and a believer is not contradictory, although some moral conflict might arise and some behaviours or customs need to change. They illustrate how there is no need to abandon practices of ritual purity or other important cultural practices (see also Gripenberg 2022: 124). In addition to, or instead of, following moral rules one can also use individuals as moral "exemplars", as discussed by Caroline Humphrey (1997) using the example of Mongolian moralities (see also Laidlaw 2013; Robbins and Williams Green 2018). The understanding of some similar challenges to becoming a believer and being a Roma or *Kaale* person offers Roma and *Kaale* who missionise other Roma a kind of shortcut. The way the *Kaale* are able to understand some specifics, including problems in the relations between Roma and non-Roma and the moral systems and customs, helps local Roma to find their own ways to include their cultural practices in their religious practice. In this way, local Roma compile their own appropriate Roma believer identity, combining both their group specific interpretations of *Romanipen* and "born-again" Christian values.

4. SUMMARIES OF THE ARTICLES

4.1. Article I

Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2020. A Constant Border-Crossing: Conversion and Evangelical Charismatic Christian Identity among the Roma in Estonia and Latvia. – *Journal of Romani Studies* 30 (1): 89–113.

The first article of the thesis focuses on the interplay of (de)marginalisation and identity building among converted Roma in Estonia and the Vidzeme region in Latvia. The article demonstrates the complexity of conversion with its appeal and challenges that arise from competing moral codes and the need to make ethical choices. The central argument of this article is that the de-marginalisation narrative is not the main reason to convert because tension arises between, on one side the de-marginalisation narrative, which gives hope of gaining equality with the majority and a financially better life, and on the other side the possible loss of prestige in the Roma community because the converts' authenticity is comes under scrutiny as they are considered to be acting by a different moral code.

Converted Roma face the challenge of managing the tensions arising from having to follow several moral codes. The mission's narrative, which becomes apparent in the testimonies shared by the missionaries, promises de-marginalisation, to be achieved by converting and accepting Jesus as the convert's personal saviour. Conversion requires one to change one's life according to the new morality, which is supposed to lead the convert out of marginality and improve his or her life financially and practically. In practice, it becomes clear that the life of believer Roma can be harder than that of the unconverted, which can cause Roma to refrain from conversion, or even cause de-conversion. Although the missionaries promise equality with non-Roma, believer Roma attest to this in their conversion narratives, it is not always achieved in practice. The new moral code can instead initially lessen the availability of work and can complicate relations with unconverted kin and the wider Roma community. The convert has to be determined enough to both show his or her determination to make and sustain life changes and have good relations in the congregation and/or the support of other believers and networks. Only when these prerequisites are fulfilled can the de-marginalisation narrative in relation to equality with the majority be achieved.

Although the narrative of de-marginalisation turns out not to be the main reason to convert, converted Roma use it in the creation of their identities as believer Roma, along with a new more positive image based on the identity. Believer Roma who adopt Pentecostal Christian morality can stress more easily that they are equal to non-Roma based on their shared moral standards. At the same time the new believer Roma identity is perceived as helping the Roma to be accepted by general society as they can stress their difference from the negative stereotypical Roma image, while also pointing out similar moral values to those of non-Roma society. To achieve this new identification converted Roma have to be able to balance their different identity layers, which makes it more

difficult for them both to convert and to stay converted. The different layers are based on two competing moral codes, as termed by Foucault ([1985] 1990; 1997). One moral code is based on *Romanipen*, or indirectly connected to it, while the other is based on Pentecostal morality. With conversion these moral codes start to compete, meaning that the believer Roma need to combine both identities and continue successfully networking in several communities. They need to prove the change they went through as converts and also demonstrate their positive believer Roma image, as well as proving that they still act according to *Romanipen* and have reciprocal relations with their unconverted kin.

I demonstrate that conversion has both appeal and challenges for the Roma. They have a hope for de-marginalisation, which would make them more equal with the non-Roma while the believer Roma identity provides them with a more positive image among the non-Roma. At the same time, there is a chance of losing prestige within the Roma community. The mission work in Estonia and the Vidzeme region of Latvia has not resulted in large number of conversions. This can be explained by practical issues – finding paying jobs after conversion and new support systems are not easy, but even more by the need for an extra effort to balance the layers of identity. In addition, believer Roma should be able to convince others of their success in combining the two moral codes.

4.2. Article II

Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2019. "Fortune Telling Is a Curse on Your Children": Conversion, Fortune Telling, and Beliefs in Magic among Roma women in Estonia. – *Journal of Folkloristics and Ethnology* 13 (1): 107–129.

The second article discusses how converted and unconverted Roma women in Estonia conceptualise fortune telling and how this is influenced both by their conversion to evangelical charismatic Christianity and by their belief in magic. This analysis of a specific example of the extra challenges converted Roma can face when trying to reconcile both their Romani and believer identities, and the conflicting moral codes these entail, gives an in-depth view of Roma conversion in the area observed.

I first look at the role of fortune telling in the lives of Roma women in Estonia and conclude that although the primary function of fortune telling is to provide an (extra) income, and it was a traditional way of earning money for Roma women in the region, the women also call fortune telling a traditional skill that is passed on from generation to generation. Thus, fortune telling can be said to be valued for several reasons. Not all fortune tellers are considered to possess the same level of skill. I use the concept of truth to understand how a fortune teller's skills are evaluated by Roma women. Skilful fortune tellers are both more likely to be linked to performing magic, and believed more likely to be telling the truth. This means that fortune telling can become more than a service provided to non-Roma in exchange for money, its efficacy becomes connected to belief in (protective) magic.

Next, I look at the change in views on fortune telling that takes place with conversion. I explain how, with conversion fortune telling is considered satanic and is therefore abandoned by converts. Fortune telling is condemned both by pastors and through the religious mass media. Fortune telling enters the conversion narratives of some Roma women, enabling them to demonstrate the necessary break from their pre-conversion sinful lives. Fortune telling is also sometimes considered morally wrong because it is regarded as cheating and therefore morally unfit for believers. I also discuss belief in protective magic and curses that Roma women seem to uphold and propose that with conversion the protection that was before considered achievable with spells and charms, is now considered achievable through God. Additionally, God's miracles play an important role in the narratives of believers, and here again the topic of truth comes up. I point out a parallel between the performance of fortune telling and the way conversion is viewed as the process of acquiring a new religious language, as described by Susan Harding (1987), who proposes that being ready to listen to the gospel means that the process of conversion has already begun. In the creation of a shared believer reality, the Bible creates a context for the creation of truth; in the case of fortune telling, the fortunes told can come true if people believe in the teller's abilities.

I conclude that moral condemnation of fortune telling is not straightforward in less controlled communication situations and is therefore situational depending on the role of protective magic in the women's lives, and on the importance of fortune telling in a particular woman's family history. In this case the two moral codes may both remain relevant for the converted woman. As the converted Roma remain connected to their kin, who practice fortune telling and with whom they need to maintain reciprocal relations, it becomes harder for believer Roma to condemn fortune telling completely. In this way the conceptualisation of fortune telling manages to blur the borders with the dualistic worldview that believers are supposed to uphold.

4.3. Article III

Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2020. "God is My Bosom Buddy": Experiencing Faith and the Role of Ethnicity in Roma and *Kaale* Missionizing among Roma in Estonia and Latvia. – *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 45 (1): 4–28.

The third article looks more closely at mission encounters in which both missionaries and possible converts are Roma. The article tackles the relationship between ethnicity and Pentecostalism in a mission conducted by Finnish *Kaale*, and the local Roma themselves in Estonia and in the Vidzeme region of Latvia. Moreover, in I demonstrate how ethnicity, in the form of ethnic elements and a culture-specific approach in missionising, relates to bodily and emotionally experiencing God's presence among the "born-again" Roma community in this region and how this affects the success of the mission.

I describe mission events organised by *Kaale* and local Pentecostal churches with visible usage of Roma cultural elements. The usage of such elements aims to bring more Roma to the events, and to conversion, and at the same time create awareness and tolerance of Roma so that non-Roma include Roma in their congregations. Although the emphasis is on the ethnic elements, the main message of the events is about salvation. Ethnicity is stressed by the mission in order to reach the Roma because Pentecostal churches often allow local and ethnic traits in both missions and religious practice, a feature that is also utilised by Roma conducting mission work among other Roma. Moreover, borders between Pentecostal and local worldviews are constantly (re)constructed by believers, and both the believers' worldview and Pentecostalism change when they come into contact with the "other" (Coleman 2015: 285). I propose that in this case ethnicity is the "other" for Pentecostalism and the *Kaale*. Local Roma constantly use it when looking for suitable ways to be believer Roma. By combining both identities they allow a culture and ethnicity specific ways of practicing religion.

Both the *Kaale* and local Roma consider it their Christian duty to missionise among Roma. They have also observed that the non-Roma do not usually direct their activities towards the often-discriminated minority due to negative stereotypes dating back centuries. It is important to *Kaale* and Roma missionaries to missionise among the Roma, therefore they do not mind if doing so requires new approaches to mission in order to respond to specific practical conditions. I demonstrate that the *Kaale* and Roma missionaries who emphasise a common ethnic identity, take into account the practical conditions, and use a culture-appropriate and couture-specific approach have a better chance of being received positively. However, as *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and Latvia belong to different Roma groups, their differences and views of accepted behaviour pose challenges for the *Kaale* when looking for a suitable way to reach local Roma. Here, common cultural identity in the form of similar traditions, language and common ethnicity, is emphasised. However, both sides must agree for the missionaries to be accepted and for the cooperation to function.

While problems finding a common language and using translators is not considered a crucial obstacle, the role of sensational forms (Meyer 2010a) of experiencing religion and religious aesthetics (Meyer 2010a) are of greater importance in this multicultural and multilingual situation. I claim that to achieve the rise in energy that can be understood as affect, as described by Jon Bialecki (2010; 2015), during prayer meetings and gatherings culture-specific approaches and suitable sensational forms are important. This means that combing methods and approaches that are considered locally and culturally appropriate (for instance, use of gospel songs in "Romani style" and Romani language, prayer meetings in homes, appropriate gender separation) in religious practice and mission, aids in experiencing the workings of the Holy Spirit. Ethnic elements in religious practice and a culture-specific approach help the mission to reach the Roma, but moreover the way the *Kaale* and Roma use them allows them to create a personally suitable way of being a Roma believer. This appears both to bring more Roma to conversion and provide support for them to stay "on the path" of being active believers.

5. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this thesis I have analysed the ways Pentecostal Roma ethically cultivate themselves in the midst of two, sometimes conflicting, moral codes, drawing on the differentiation between moral codes and ethics made by Foucault ([1985] 1990; 1997). One moral code is based on the Pentecostal faith and the other is connected to *Romanipen*, the set of norms that regulate Roma community life, sets them apart from non-Roma, and is a base for their cultural identity (see Koper 2020; Marinov 2019b, Marushiakova and Popov 2011). I have looked at the two important aspects of Pentecostal Christianity, language practices, and embodied, sensory practices, both of which are connected to the ethical self-formation of the converts. I have tried to understand and explain how Roma converts experience faith and how they create their moral selves while maintaining a balance between the two moral codes and the social ties connected with them. I demonstrate the different aspects of conversion that Roma converts face and need to negotiate.

As explained above, the thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork that I have conducted in Estonia and in the Latvian Vidzeme region, close to the Estonian border, since 2014. My connections with some of my interlocutors and my cooperation with Roma NGOs goes back to 2009. During my fieldwork I spent time with Finnish *Kaale* missionaries during their mission trips to Estonia and Latvia and attended Roma prayer meetings in homes or in church spaces in Estonia and in Latvia during reoccurring field trips.

The start of mission among the Roma fits into the general religious dynamic in Estonia and Latvia. The religious freedom and boom that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the regaining of independence in Estonia and Latvia included Pentecostal mission activities, with humanitarian aid and contact strengthening ties with churches from abroad. Therefore, the mission among the Roma followed a similar pattern as with the majority population. At the same time the conversion and religious practice of Roma in Estonia and Latvia can be likened to cases in other Eastern European countries that also experienced a rise in missionary work during the same period. The mission that was especially directed towards Roma in Estonia started when *Kaale* missionaries came as part of the Finnish mission teams and were also sought by Estonian churches to work with the local Roma. It is typical of the region that Roma communities are rather small and that they live in a geographically scattered manner. The Pentecostal Roma belong to multi-ethnic congregations and practice private worship at home that generally includes Roma believers. The Finnish mission has also resulted in contacts and communication with *Kaale* believers.

I have discussed how the Finnish *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and the Vidzeme region of Latvia look for shared ethnic identity despite the differences in their interpretation of *Romanipen* and other group differences. The *Kaale* mission emphasises the equality of all nations and stresses that Roma can achieve upward social mobility and equal opportunities to those of the majority population. Mission

events aim to encourage non-Roma to become more tolerant of Roma, who are often viewed through negative stereotypes that include the view of Roma as a whole nation of cheats and thieves and are therefore seen by the majority as not moral or as acting according to a different moral code that does not include honesty towards non-Roma. Elements of Romani culture are used in mission events both to attract the interest of prospective Roma converts and to raise awareness of Roma among the majority. The *Kaale* missionaries provide themselves as examples of how their quality of life improved after conversion and how Roma cultural identity can be reconciled with believer identity, suggesting that the two moral codes can function together. I have also pointed out that the Roma (*Kaale*) to Roma mission, and Roma networks, are somewhat intertwined with Roma activism through personal connections between activists who are at the same time Pentecostals.

I have demonstrated (in article I) how although the Roma among whom mission is conducted live in regions with few employment possibilities and low wages, and Roma often experience discrimination in the job market due to negative stereotypes, the material reasons are not as important in conversion as might be expected when listening to mission talks that promise economically better lives. I have pointed out that practical difficulties can (initially) on the contrary become greater with conversion because finding jobs that comply with the new moral code might not be easy, while a person already in an economically secure position might be in a more susceptible position for conversion. At the same time I have shown that the de-marginalisation narrative is still used by believer Roma in the creation of their new believer Roma identities and image, which also gives them a chance to achieve greater equality with the majority population.

Conversion to Pentecostalism creates a moral conflict for believer Roma between competing moral codes. When Roma converts do not want to lose their Roma customs, social ties, solidarity with the Roma community, etc., they need to find ways to re-evaluate some interpretations of cultural customs. Conversion entails fear of losing Roma-ness/*Romanipen* including prestige and respect within the Roma community. For instance, following ritual purity rules can be called into doubt by unconverted Roma, who are either Russian Orthodox, Lutheran or Catholic, and fortune telling is considered satanic and immoral. This abstinence is used in the ethical self-formation of converted Roma, as becomes apparent in the conversion stories. However, because of the economic and cultural importance of fortune telling and because it is a way of earning extra income, its condemnation can still be situational and depend on the communication context and partner (article II).

Pentecostal Roma who wish to retaining moral values based on *Romanipen* need to demonstrate to unconverted Roma that their interpretation of *Romanipen* is valid. At the same time, believer Roma can view the interpretation of some aspects of *Romanipen* by unconverted Roma as "incorrect", while the ways unconverted Roma follow the moral teachings of the Christian faith can in some cases be considered too ambiguous. Believer Roma stress honesty and the prohibition on cheating and lying among the Roma community as fitting with the

Pentecostal Christian moral code. For instance, the oath giving/taking custom is connected by the believers to the Pentecostal morality, and the value placed on honesty is seen as a similar feature in both systems. Although solidarity with unconverted kin is usually retained, in some cases relations can be broken if the conflict between the moral codes becomes irresolvable. Believer Roma individuals use various approaches to find ways to consolidate moral codes that are in conflict when forming their new "born-again" moral selves.

I have discussed how the Finnish *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and the Latvian Vidzeme region look for shared ethnic identity despite the differences in their interpretation of *Romanipen* (article III). Although multinational congregations provide positive experiences with non-Roma believers, and new networks, the Roma can still feel that they are not considered equals and that their cultural customs and practices are viewed as incompatible with being a believer. Therefore, Roma prayer groups and pastors, missionaries and Roma believer networks play an important role in conversion and in sustaining life with the appropriate Pentecostal Christian moral code. Pastors and missionaries of Roma background who use culture-appropriate and culture-specific approaches provide an example of how Roma cultural identity can be reconciled with believer identity, and how the two moral codes can function at the same time.

Although I have observed the mission encounter between *Kaale* and Roma in Estonia and Latvia for a long period, there are several directions for further research that I have not been able to cover because they were outside the scope of the current thesis. I hope they will be followed in the future. One is connected to the geographical scope of the Roma community and extending the fieldwork to both the Kurzeme region of Latvia and to the United Kingdom, where a considerable number of active Pentecostal Roma from Latvia have emigrated and where they have formed several congregations. The emigration adds yet another identity level, providing an interesting foundation for a re-evaluation of pre-conversion morality and how that brings changes to what is considered *Romanipen*.

Another aspect that should be taken into account is the gender aspect of conversion. The role of women in prayer groups and how it affects their relations and roles within the family would certainly add an extra level of understanding of the dynamics of gender and how Pentecostalism either reinforces or weakens them, as well as how this influences the identity of believer Roma. At the same time, paying more attention to the male gender roles and how these are, or are not, affected by conversion would also add an interesting layer of understanding of the effect of Pentecostal conversion. In addition, continuing to compare the approaches of Roma pastors towards combining Roma and Pentecostal identities, and the moral codes connected to these identities, would allow further analysis of the role of pastors in believer Roma identity formation.

I have also touched in this thesis upon the connection between NGO activism and Pentecostalism, although this is a direction of research that could be further developed. Similarly, I have discussed the usage of language/languages in mission. Studying language practices in more detail, and especially concentrating on how concepts in Romani language are used when talking about religion, would

add an extra layer to the understanding of how Roma in Estonia and Latvia perceive and conceptualise Pentecostalism. In addition to researching Pentecostal Roma, the religiosity of Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran and Catholic Roma in Estonia and Latvia, as well as beliefs connected to death and the spirits of the dead, are huge areas on their own in need of further research both in connection with conversion and as independent issues.

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ARTICLES

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Identiteeti ja moraali pöörates: nelipühilus romade seas Eestis ja Lätis

Oma doktoritöös olen analüüsinud, kuidas nelipühilastest romad Eestis ja Põhja-Läti Vidzeme piirkonnas loovad end eetiliselt kahe mõnikord vastandliku moraalikoodeksi vahele sattununa. Töö kuulub religiooniantropoloogia, täpsemalt kristluse antropoloogia valda. Teoreetilises plaanis on doktoritöö mõjutatud eetilisest pöördest antropoloogias, mis seab esikohale indiviidi kui vaba eetilise subjekti (Fassin 2014b; vt ka Fassin 2014a: 420; Klenk 2019; Laidlaw 2014a; 2018; Lambek 2010; Mattingly and Throop 2018;). Analüüsis olen lähtunud ennekõike Michel Foucault' (1990 [1985]; 1997) subjekti käsitusest, milles on keskse kohal moraalikoodeksite ja eetika eristus. Vaatluse all olevate romade puhul põhineb üks moraalikoodeks kristlikul nelipühiluse õpetusel, pöördumisega kaasnevatel uutel reeglitel, ja teine moraalikoodeks on seotud roma kogukonna elu reguleerivate normide kogumiga ehk *romanipen*'iga, mis eristab neid mitte-romadest – eristus, mis on nende kultuurilise identiteedi aluseks (vt Koper 2020; Marinov 2019a, Marushiakova ja Popov 2011).

Nelipühilust on siin töös käsitletud kõige laiemas mõistes kui protestantlikku kristluse vormi, mis eeldab usu isiklikku vastuvõtmist ehk uussündi. Selles on kesksel kohal nii Püha Vaimu annid, sh keeltega rääkimine, tervendamine kui ka Piibli kui autoriteedi järgimine. Olen vaadelnud nelipühiluse kaht olulist aspekti – keelelisi praktikaid ja kehalisi sensoorseid praktikaid, mis on mõlemad seotud konvertiitide eetilise enesekujundamisega. Olen püüdnud mõista ja selgitada, kuidas roma pöördunud kogevad usku ja kuidas nad loovad oma moraalset mina, balansseerides kahe moraalikoodeksi ja nendega seotud sotsiaalsete keskkondade vahel. Analüüsin pöördumise erinevaid aspekte, millega roma konvertiidid silmitsi seisavad ja mille vahel nad üritavad tasakaalu leida.

Peamised küsimused, millele töös vastuseid otsisin on:

- Mis on aidanud kaasa misjoni edule ja ebaõnnestumistele romade seas Eestis ja Läti Vidzeme piirkonnas
- Millist rolli mängivad etniline ja kultuuriline identiteet misjonikohtumise puhul olukorras, kus nii misjonärid kui ka potentsiaalsed konvertiidid on romad?
- Kuidas pöördunud romad kombineerivad oma paralleelseid ja konkureerivaid identiteedikihte?
- Kuidas nelipühilastest romad kasutavad eetilises enesekujundamises omavahel konflikti sattuvaid moraalikoodekseid?

Doktoritöö põhineb etnograafilistel välitöödel, mida olen romade seas läbi viinud Eestis alates 2009. aastast. Kui esimestel aastatel olid välitööd seotud autori magistritööga, siis 2014. aastast jätkusid need doktoriõpingute raames juba uue

uurimisfookuse ja -areaaliga. Minu sidemed osade välitöö vestluskaaslastega ja ka koostöö roma vabaühendustega ulatub 2009. aastasse. Doktoritöö jaoks läbi viidud välitööde raames olen lisaks Eestile suundunud ka Lätti, kuna Soome romade ehk *kaale*'de korraldatud misjoniüritused olid varasemaga võrreldes enam liikunud Lätti. Roma kogukond, kes kuulub peamiselt *lotfitka* ehk nn läti roma rühma, elab mõlemal pool Eesti ja Läti piiri ning suhtleb tihedalt sugulastega mõlemas riigis. Olen suviti viibinud koos *kaale* misjonäridega misjonireisidel Eestis ja Lätis, otsinud ja külastanud roma kodusid ning osalenud kirikuteenistustel. Teiselt poolt olen käinud kohalike Eesti ja Läti Vidzeme piirkonna romade korraldatud palvekoosolekutel kodudes või kirikuruumides. Viisin läbi ka poolstruktureeritud intervjuusid, kuid peamiselt toetusin osalusvaatlusele ning märkmete tegemisele. Roma kogukonda uurides pean oluliseks teha koostööd roma aktivistidega, teha teavitustööd romade ajaloo, kommete ja tavade kohta, osaledes üritustel ja avaldades ühiskonnas aktuaalsetel teemadel populaarteaduslikke kirjutisi.

Kuna Eesti ühiskonnas on üldised teadmised romade ajaloost väga piiratud, näiteks ei ole kooliõpikutes kohalike romade kohta peaaegu mingit infot ja muuseumi väljapanekutele on romade holokaustist ehk genotsiidist teise maailmasõja ajal lisandunud teavet alles viimasel ajal, pean oluliseks doktoritöös anda laiem kontekst ja ajalooline vaade (vt ka Roht-Yilmaz 2023). Kirjeldan kokkuvõtlikult kohaliku roma kogukonna ajalugu, mis on teise maailmasõja ajal toimunud roma genotsiidi tõttu olnud väga traagiline ning katkestanud suhted nii enamusrahvaga kui ka mõjutanud kogukonna sisemist toimimist. Annan ülevaate siinsete romade rühmakuuluvusest ning traditsioonilistest ametitest ja elatise teenimise võimalustest, mis on mõjutanud nüüdisaegset roma kultuurilist identiteeti.

Esitan ka lühida taustapildi üldisest suhtumisest religiooni Eestis ja Lätis, sidudes selle romade nelipühilusse pöördumise spetsiifikaga. Misjonitöö algus romade seas sobitub Eesti ja Läti üldisesse religioossesse dünaamikasse. Nõukogude Liidu lagunemisele ning Eesti ja Läti taasiseseisvumisele järgnenud usuvabadus ja pöördumiste laine kätkes endas ka välismaa kirikute, sh nelipühilaste misjonitegevust (koos humanitaarabi jaotamisega). Romade kokkupuuted erinevate misjoniliikumistega järgisid enamusrahvastikuga sarnast mustrit. Ka teistes Ida-Euroopa riikides toimus samal perioodil romade seas misjonitöö intensiivistumine. Spetsiaalselt romadele suunatud misjon Eestis sai alguse sellest, et siia tulid Soome misjonimeeskondade koosseisus ka *kaale* misjonärid, kes olid huvitatud kontaktist kohalike romadega. Eesti ja Läti Vidzeme piirkonna eripära kohaselt on romade kogukonnad üsna väikesed ja romad elavad geograafiliselt hajutatult. Pöördunud romad kuuluvad paljurahvuselistesse kogudustesse, kuid praktiseerivad usku ka kodus eelkõige romade seas ning soovivad oma rahvuskaaslaste pöördumisele kaasa aidata. Soome roma (*kaale*) misjonärid, kes on aktiivseim misjoniliikumine uuritaval alal, on eelkõige nelipühilased, kuid uskupöördunud romad Eestis ja Lätis on peamiselt nelipühilased ja baptistid. Soome misjonitöö tulemusena on romadel tekkinud kontaktid ja suhtlus Soome usklike *kaale*'dega ka misjoniürituste väliselt.

Teoreetilise tausta peatükis selgitan, kuidas doktoritöö paigutub religiooni-antropoloogia ja kristluse antropoloogia valdkonda ning mil viisil on see mõjutatud erinevatest lähenemistest moraali ja eetika antropoloogilisele uurimisele. Töö on enim mõjutatud vooruseetikast, aga ka suhtlusele keskenduvast moraalikäsitlusest. Kuna töö uurimisfookus on pöördunud romade eetilisel eneseloomel, astun eelkõige dialoogi uurijatega, kes rõhutavad eneserefleksiooni rolli subjekti tekkes. Kasutan Michel Foucault' (1990 [1985]; 1997) moraalikoodeksi ja eetika eristust ning selle teema kajastust antropoloogias. Toon oma materjalis välja paralleele ja näitan erinevusi Joel Robbinsi (2004b, 2007) ja James Laidlaw' (2002; 2014a) käsitlustega, milles analüüsitakse konflikte erinevate moraalikoodeksite vahel. Ühtlasi näitan selliste uurijate nagu Saba Mahmoodi (2005) ja Charles Hirschkindi (2001) seisukohti, kes leiavad, et moraal toimib vahel ka teadvustamatult teatud käitumisviiside tekitamise toel. Viimane on olnud eriti oluline roma konvertiitide kehalise ja tunnetusliku usukogemise uurimisel.

Eetilise subjekti loome seostub tihedalt keelega kõige laiemas mõttes. Vaatlen, kuidas pöördumislugude rääkimise ja usu kehalise kogemuse kaudu loovad pöördunud romad end uute isikutena. Selleks uurin keele rolli ja kõnekasutust romade vandeandmise traditsioonis ning ennustamises, mis on olnud traditsioonilise roma naiste töö ja mis on muutunud oluliseks elemendiks pöördumislugudes, mis näitavad pöördunu elus toimunud muutust. Käsitlen religioosset keelt ennustamises ning rituaalides, mida võib pidada maagiaga seotuks, vaadeldes seda peamiselt nende performatiivsuse aspektist. Seejärel vaatlen ennustamist, solidaarsusvõrgustikke, pöördunud romade identiteediloomet ning konflikti sattuvaid norme osana laiemast moraalikoodeksite põrkumise analüüsist. Viimases alapeatükis käsitlen detailsemalt misjonikohtumist Soome *kaale*'de ja Eesti-Läti romade vahel ning analüüsin etniliste elementide rolli ja mõju selles.

Doktoritöö järeldustena toon välja, et Soome *kaale*'d ja romad Eestis ja Läti Vidzeme piirkonnas otsivad ühist etnilist identiteeti vaatamata erinevustele *romanipen*'i tõlgendustes. *Kaale* missioon rõhutab kõigi rahvaste võrdsust ning et romad võivad saavutada ülespoole suunatud sotsiaalse mobiilsuse ja võrdsed võimalused enamusrahvastikuga. Misjoniüritustel kasutatakse roma kultuuri elemente nii omade seas huvi äratamiseks kui ka enamusrahva teadlikkuse tõstmiseks romadest. Misjoniürituste eesmärk on ka kasvatada tolerantsust romade suhtes mitteromade seas. Romasid nähakse nii Eesti kui ka Läti ühiskonnas tihti negatiivsete stereotüüpide vahendusel, mis kujutavad tervet rahvast kui petiseid ja vargaid. *Kaale* misjonärid toovad endi head ainelist ja sotsiaalset olukorda näitena elukvaliteedi muutusest, mis on kaasnenud konversiooniga. Lisaks pakuvad nad ka eeskuju, kuidas romade kultuurilist identiteeti ühildada uskliku identiteediga, näidates et kaks moraalikoodeksit võivad toimida samaaegselt. Samuti olen välja toonud, et romadelt (*kaale*'delt) romadele suunatud misjon ja võrgustikud on mõnevõrra põimunud ka roma aktivismiga isiklike sidemete kaudu aktivistide vahel, kes on samal ajal nelipühilastest kristlased.

Kuigi Lõuna-Eesti ja Läti väikelinnade ja küladega Vidzeme piirkonnad on suurte linnadega võrreldes väiksemate töövõimaluste ja madalamate palkadega ning romad kogevad tööturul sageli negatiivsete stereotüüpide tõttu diskrimi-

neerimist, siis pöördumisega nelipühilusse võivad moraalselt sobivad töövõimalused hoopis kahaneda. Selgitan, et misjoniüritustel kõlama jääv elu praktilise paranemise lubadus ei ole peamine põhjus pöördumiseks ega uskliku identiteedi hoidmiseks. Samas uskliku roma identiteedi – mis erineb stereotüüpsest roma kuvandist – esile toomisega püütakse luua positiivsem kuvand endise enamusrahva silmis. Kuigi pöördunud romad kogevad oma kogudustes valdavalt positiivseid suhteid mitteromadega, on ka neid, kes on kogenud, et nende roma kombeid ja tavasid peetakse uskliku staatusega kokkusobimatuteks. Seega on romade palverühmadel ja pastoritel, misjonäridel ja roma usklike või kristlaste (nagu nad end tihti ise kutsuvad) võrgustikel oluline roll pöördumisel ja eriti usus püsimisel. Seega mängivad needsamad interetnilised suhted samal ajal olulist rolli, leidmaks viise, kuidas luua identiteeti, mis põhineb nii roma kui ka nelipühi moraalikoodeksil.

Pöördumisega kaasneb ka hirm kaotada romalikkus, sealhulgas prestiiž ja austus roma kogukonnas. Näiteks võivad mittepöördunud romad rituaalsete puhtusereeglite mittejärgimise eest konvertiite halvustada. Kui roma pöördunud ei taha kaotada oma roma sotsiaalseid sidemeid ja solidaarsust laiema roma kogukonnaga, peavad nad leidma viise, kuidas ümber hinnata teatud – misjonäride silmis vastuolulisi – kultuuritavade tõlgendusi. Näiteks Eesti ja Läti roma naiste traditsiooniline ennustamisoskus lisatulu teenimiseks on pöördunute tõlgenduses saatanlik ja ebamoraalne tegevus ning sellest tuleb loobuda. Kuigi ennustamise hukkamõistmine muutub sageli pöördumislugude elemendiks, ei pruugi selle majanduslikult ja kultuuriliselt olulise roma kombe hukkamõist olla absoluutne, sõltuvalt sotsiaalsest kontekstist ja situatsioonist. Ilmne on see, et pöördunud roma naised peavad erinevate moraalikoodeksite vahel pidevalt tasakaalu otsima.

Pöördunud romad moodustavad küll omavahel uue kogukonna, kuid samaaegselt jäävad nad seotuks ka oma mittepöördunud perekonnaga ning peavad nendega säilitama suhted ja teatud solidaarsuse sõltumata usulisest kuuluvusest. Selliste moraalisüsteemide konflikti tõttu harvematel juhtudel suhted siiski ka katkevad, eriti juhtudel, kui usklikud romad ei pea nende vaatest ebamoraalset käitumist õigeks. Üldiselt hoitakse solidaarsust tihedamas pereringis ning teiste pöördunud romadega, aga vähem samas piirkonnas elava laiema roma kogukonnaga.

Näitan doktoritöös seda, kuidas pöördunud romad kasutavad erinevaid lähenemisi, leidmaks viise konfliktsete moraalinormide ja -süsteemide ühendamiseks, kujundades samas oma uut moraalset mina uskliku romana. Nelipühilastest romad peavad mittepöördunud romadele demonstreerima, et nende tõlgendused *romanipen*'ist on legitiimsed. Näiteks rõhutavad konvertiidid romade petmise ja valetamise keelu olulisust, mis sobitub kokku kristliku moraalikoodeksi aususe nõudega. Pöördunud romad kritiseerivad nii mittepöördunute kristlike moraaliõpetuste tõlgendusi kui ka peavad mittepöördunute tõlgendusi mõne *romanipen*'i tahu kohta valeks põhjendades seda nii, et need on välja kujunenud muude tegurite tõttu ja neid ei peaks pidama osaks roma kultuurilisest identiteedist. Samas vande andmise kombe koos vastavate rituaalidega, mida kasutatakse kogukonnasiseste vaidluste lahendamiseks, seostavad pöördunud kristliku moraaliga ning

ususe väärtustamises nähakse mõlemas süsteemis positiivset väärtust. Näiteks ka varastamist mõistavad pöördunud romad rangelt hukka ning nad rõhutavad oma erinevust stereotüüpsest kuvandist, et romad varastavad ja petavad. Pöördunud romade jaoks on oluline, et osa romade leebet suhtumist varastamisesse ning selle vaid osalist hukkamõistu ei peetaks *romanipen*'i osaks.

Kuna pöördunud romad peavad pidevalt balansseerima kuulumise ja solidaarsuse säilitamisega mitme rühma vahel, aitavad moraalikoodeksite konflikte lahendada just sellised roma päritolu misjonärid, kes kombineerivad roma kultuurilise identiteedi elemente nelipühilusega ehk on kultuurispetsiifilise lähenemisega. Kui tunnetuslikud vormid (vt Meyer 2010a), mis viivad nelipühiluses ihaldatud afektiivsete seisunditeni (Bialecki 2015), hõlmavad religioosseid praktikaid, milles on arvesse võetud kultuurispetsiifilist lähenemist, aitab see roma pöördunutel leida viise, kuidas luua oma isiklik viis usu praktiseerimiseks nii, et neil õnnestuks lahendada konkureerivatest moraalikoodeksitest tulenevad moraalsed konfliktid ning seeläbi püsida usklikena. Usklikud romad tõlgendavad nii *romanipen*'i kui ka usklikuks olemise viisi luues end eetiliselt. Sel viisil kasutavad pöördunud romad etnilisust, et pidevalt mõtestada enda jaoks viise, kuidas olla roma usklik (vt Colemann 2015). Teised roma usklikud, pastorid ja misjonärid pakuvad siin nii eeskuju kui ka tuge, kuid uskliku interpretatsioon *romanipen*'ist ja usklikuks romaks olemisest varieerub siiski indiviiditi olenevalt perekondlikust taustast ja suhetest kogukonnas.

Järgnevalt annan lühiülevaated doktoritöösse kuuluva kolme artikli sisust.

1. Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2020. A Constant Border-Crossing: Conversion and Evangelical Charismatic Christian Identity among the Roma in Estonia and Latvia. [Pidev piiriületus: pöördumine ja evangeelne karismaatiline kristlik identiteet romadel Eestis ja Lätis] – *Journal of Romani Studies 5* 30(1): 89–113.

Doktoritöö esimene artikkel keskendub Eestis ja Vidzeme piirkonnas elavate evangeelsesse kristlusesse pöördunud romade ja identiteediloome ja (de)marginaliseerumise protsesside vastasmõjudele. Artikkel näitab usulise pöördumise keerukust ühes selle ligitõmbavuse ja väljakutsetega, mis tuleneb konkureerivate moraalikoodeksite – mõiste, mis pärineb Michel Foucault'lt (1990[1985]; 1997) – erinevatest loogikatest ja kaasnevast vajadusest teha keerukaid eetilisi valikuid.

Selle artikli keskne argument on see, et demarginaliseerimise narratiiv, mis tuleb hästi esile misjoniüritustel, ei ole peamine või ainuke põhjus pöördumiseks. See annab küll lootust saavutada suuremat võrdsust enamusrahvastikuga ja n-ö paremat elu, kuid teiselt poolt toob kaasa ohu kaotada prestiiž ja suhted roma kogukonnas. Üks moraalikoodeks, mis põhineb *romanipen*'il, mida võib pidada roma kultuurilise identiteedi aluseks või on sellega kaudselt seotud käitumise kaudu, mida romad peavad vajalikuks *romanipen*'i ülalhoidmiseks. Teine moraalikoodeks põhineb evangeelsetel kristlikel väärtustel ja põhimõtetel. Konversiooniga hakkavad moraalikoodeksid konkureerima ja usklikud romad peavad edukalt ühendama mõlemad identiteeditahud ja jätkama edukat võrgustumist mitmes kogukonnas. Seega uus uskliku identiteet ja eluviis nõuab lisapingutust

ning ei ole ka alati praktiliselt ja majanduslikult lihtsasti teostatav, kuna uue moraalikoodeksiga kooskõlas olevaid elatiseteenimisevõimalusi ei pruugita leida.

Näitan, et sellegipoolest jääb demarginaliseerumise narratiiv oluliseks positiivsema kuvandiga uskliku roma identiteedi loomise protsessis. Kuid selle uue identiteedi saavutamiseks peavad pöördunud romad suutma tasakaalustada oma erinevaid identiteedikihte, mis raskendab ka nii pöördumist kui ka usus püsimist. Nad peavad tõestama muutust, mille nad on pöördudes läbinud, samuti demonstreerima oma positiivset uskliku-roma kuvandit ja tõestama, et nad tegutsevad endiselt *romanipen*'ist pärit põhimõtete järgi, püüdes alles hoida suhteid oma mittepöördunud sugulastega.

2. Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2019. "Fortune Telling Is a Curse on Your Children": Conversion, Fortune Telling, and Beliefs in Magic among Roma Women in Estonia. ["Ennustamine on needus su lastele": roma naiste pöördumine, ennustamine ja usk maagiasse] – *Journal of Folkloristics and Ethnology* 13(1): 107–129.

Teine artikkel keskendub sellele, kuidas pöördunud ja mittepöördunud roma naised Eestis mõtestavad enda jaoks ennustamispraktikat ja uskumist maagiasse ning kuidas interpretatsiooni mõjutab nende usuline pöördumine. See kujutab endast konkreetse näite analüüsi väljakutsest, millega pöördunud romad silmitsi seisavad, kui nad püüavad ühildada oma roma ja uskliku identiteedikihte ning lepitada omavahel vastuolus olevaid moraalikoodekseid.

Selgitan artiklis, et ennustamine on olnud roma naistele traditsiooniline viis elatise teenimiseks, mis on suunatud mitteromadele. Toon välja eristuse selles, kuidas ennustamisoskust tõlgendatakse – näiteks osa ennustajaid peetakse parematekskui teisi ja seostatakse tõe ennustamisega ning seetõttu ka maagiaga. Mõne evangeelse kogudusega liitumise järel hakatakse ennustamist pidama kuradi teenimiseks ja seega ebamoraalseks ning seetõttu lõpetatakse sellega tegelemine. See aspekt jõuab osa roma naiste pöördumislugudesse, mis peab näitama katkestust oma varasemast patusest ehk maisest elust. Toon esile seda, et pöördumise järel peetakse kaitse, mille saavutamiseks kasutati varem rituaale, mida võib pidada maagiaks, Jumala kaudu toimivaks. Lisaks on Jumala imedel oluline roll usklike jutustustes ja sellega seoses kerkib päevakorda taas tõe teema. Toon välja paralleeli ennustamispraktikate toimimise ja uue religioosse keele omandamise protsessi vahel. Piibel loob usklike jaoks konteksti tõe tõlgendamiseks: nii võib ennustamise puhul ennustamine teoks saada, kui usutakse ennustaja võimetesse. Kui need tingimused on täidetud, saab sõnade kaudu toimuda jagatud reaalsuse loomine.

Järeldan, et ennustamise hukkamõistmine ei ole pöördunud roma naiste puhul alati ühesugune ning on pigem situatiivne. See sõltub (kaitse)maagia rollist naise elus ja ka ennustamise tähtsusest naise perekonnaloos. Pöördunud romade jaoks võib olla raske täielikult hukka mõista nende mittepöördunud sugulasi või sõpru, kes ennustavad ja kellega nad on tihedalt seotud, kuna nad peavad säilitama kuuluvuse roma kogukonda. Nii hägustub see viis, kuidas pöördunud naised mõtestavad dualistlikku maailmakäsitust, mida usklikud peaksid tunnistama.

3. Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. “God Is My Bosom Buddy”: Experiencing Faith and the Role of Ethnicity in Roma and *Kaale* Missionizing among Roma in Estonia and Latvia. [“Jumal on mu südamesõber”: kogedes usku ja etnilisuse roll romade ja *kaale*’de misjonitöös romade seas Eestis ja Lätis] – *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 45 (1): 4-28.

Kolmandas artiklis vaatlen lähemalt misjonikohtumist, kus nii misjonärid kui ka võimalikud pöördujad on romad. Näitan, et *kaale* ja roma misjonäridel on võimalus olla paremini vastuvõetud kui *gadže* (mitteroma) misjonäridel, kuna nad otsivad ja rõhutavad ühist roma identiteeti ja kasutavad kultuurispetsiifilist lähenemist (nt romade kodude külastamine, kogu pere misjon, sooline eraldatus, roma kultuuri elementide kaasamine misjoni ja usu praktiseerimises). Kuid eri roma gruppide ühist etnilist identiteeti peavad mõlemad pooled aktsepteerima ja ka selgelt väljendama, et koostöö toimiks.

Näitan, et religiooni kogemise sensoorsed vormid (Meyer 2010a) ja religioosne esteetika laiemalt (Meyer 2010a) omandavad selles mitmekultuurilises ja mitmekeelses olukorras keskse rolli. Väidan, et kultuurielemendid ja kultuurispetsiifiline lähenemine misjonitööle avaldab suuremat mõju, juhul kui see on kaasatud ka usu praktiseerimisse. Nende ühendamine religioosse praktika ja misjoniga aitab kogeda Püha Vaimu toimimist ja tunda lähedast suhet Jumalaga. Palvekoosolekutel ja koosviibimistel tekib energia, mida võib mõista afektina, nagu Jon Bialecki (2010; 2015) on seda vaadelnud, mõjutatuna kultuurispetsiifilisest lähenemisest ja sobivate sensatsiooniliste vormide kasutamisest. Etnilised elemendid religioosses praktikas ja kultuurispetsiifiline lähenemine on misjoni n-ö tööriist romadeni jõudmiseks, kuid lisaks võimaldab *kaale*’del ja kohalikel romadel neid kasutades luua endile isiklikult sobiv viis olla roma usklik. Kokkuvõttes näib see toovat enam romasid kogudustesse ja toetab neid usklikuks jäämisel.

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2014–	University of Tartu, Institute of Cultural Research and Fine Arts, PhD student (2021–2024 on academic leave for childcare)
2013–2016	University of Tallinn, MA Asian Studies (Turkish and Middle Eastern studies)
2014–2015	Ege University, Turkish Language and Literature (exchange student)
2007–2011	University of Tartu, MA Ethnology
2009–2009	University of Helsinki, Social and Cultural Anthropology (exchange student)
2008–2008	University of Tallinn, EIH, Social and Cultural Anthropology (exchange student)
2003–2007	University of Tartu, BA Ethnology
2005–2006	University of Basel, Department of Ethnology (exchange student)

Work experience

2019–2020	University of Tartu, Institute of Cultural Research and Fine Arts, Junior Researcher in Ethnology (0,50)
2015–2016	International School of Estonia (Eesti Rahvusvaheline Kool) Turkish-English tutor (0,20)
2013–2014	Tallinn City Museum: Guide of Bastion Tunnels
2012–2013	SA AHHAA Science Center Tallinn branch: Guide
2010–2011	Estonian Folk Culture Center: Intangible Heritage Specialist

Selected Publications

Roht-Yilmaz, Eva-Liisa. 2023. (In)visibility and the (Unheard) Voice of the Roma in Estonia: The Depiction of Roma History and Culture in Museum Exhibitions – *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 54(1): 123–143.

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Haridus

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2013–2016	Tallinna Ülikool, MA Aasia uuringud (Türgi ja Lähis-Ida uuringud)
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2007–2011	Tartu Ülikool, MA etnoloogia erialal
2009–2009	Helsingi Ülikool, sotsiaalteaduskond, sotsiaal- ja kultuuri-antropoloogia (külalismagistrant)
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2003–2007	Tartu Ülikool, BA etnoloogia erialal
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2019–2020	Tartu Ülikool, Humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, kultuuriteaduste instituut etnoloogia nooremteadur (0,50)
2015–2016	Eesti Rahvusvaheline Kool (International School of Estonia) Türgi-inglise keelne tuutor (0,20)
2013–2014	Tallinna Linnamuuseum: Bastionikäikude giid
2012–2013	SA AHHAA Teaduskeskuse Tallinna filiaal: giid
2010–2011	Rahvakultuuri Arendus- ja Koolituskeskus: vaimse pärandi spetsialist

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