The City as a Stage: Flamenco in Andalusian Culture

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Abstract Recent studies on performance theory have turned their attention to the process of constructing social identities. This article proposes to examine the case of Gitano and non-Gitano relationships under this light. The field research in Jerez de la Frontera of Andalusia, has shown that 'objective' differences between the two groups seem to be minimal, although the members of the two groups recognize and present themselves as different. Relevant literature on Gitanos and their relationship to flamenco argues for a biological affinity of Gitano 'race' with flamenco singing and dancing. In a similar vein the indigenous discourse among Gitanos and among non-Gitanos justifies one group or the other as cultural owners and natural heirs of flamenco. Thus flamenco becomes a contested measure of social identity. This research attempts to reveal the power of the emic discourse on flamenco debate and to understand it under a constructivistic point of view. Based on the modern turn of Gypsy studies the present article re-examines the Gitanos/non-Gitanos relationship by focusing on the ways people negotiate their differences from the other group. Moreover, it attempts to observe and understand how these negotiated identities are performed on the social stage either on everyday life occasions or festivities. [Keywords: oral history, flamenco, Gitanos, identity construction, performance]

This research based on a fieldwork (1) in Jerez de la Frontera, a western Andalusian city of about 200,000 inhabitants offers new insights in the relationships between the Gitanos and the rest of the population mainly those involved with flamenco activities. The rich network of professionals, amateurs, and live performers of flamenco song, dance and guitar, situated in the cultural context of a highly performance oriented Andalusian society invited an anthropological analysis based on the new stream of performance studies. This kind of approach has not yet been used in any relevant sociological or anthropological literature of the topic. Gitanos were mainly presented from a sociological point of view, i.e. as a minority suffering under difficult historical and social circumstances (Gronenmeyer 1988; Sanchez Ortega 1993). The romantic trend in folkloristic and/or historical studies has had a permanent influence since the last century (Machado y Alvarez 1975[1881]). In addition to this came the very vividly discussed debate of the flamenco origin and its cultural bonds with the Gitanos or the Andalusians (For a critical view see Steingress 1993; Washabaugh 1995a, 1996).

This research aimed to readdress the debate on the flamenco origin from the emic side, the “native point” of view. Both time and space has been given to Gitanos and non-Gitanos to express their thoughts and feelings, to articulate their arguments and to claim their thesis about the Gitano or Andalusian origin of flamenco. The purely discursive sources have been placed in the performative context of everyday life and celebration occasions, something which has helped the return of the speech/narration to its natural place of production, always a social setting (2) and has prevented the de-contextualization of the emic point of view (3). In the course of exploring the debate on flamenco origin from the Gitanos’ or non-Gitano’s side, it has been evident that the argumentation from both sides is based on the same logic: if there is a possibility to prove who created “flamenco” then we are able to recognize/accept its ‘owner’. If it has been created by the Gitanos, then flamenco is theirs and vice versa something which implies the invitation for an etic point of

The challenge to explore the relationships of Gitanos and other Andalusians in the flamenco context of South Spain has been strong enough to attract the interest of several researchers ranging from historians, folklorists, musicologists, ethnomusicologists and lately anthropologists as well. Coming from various cultural contexts all these persons had to get involved, one way or another, with the Andalusian everyday life. A full commitment to it could only be expected from a fieldwork-trained anthropologist, who would devote and expose themselves totally to the research, i.e. bodily, mentally, emotionally for a certain period of time. Given the fact that a well organized setting of the relationship between fieldworker and informants determines the quantity and obviously the quality of the gathered data, the role of an anthropologist amongst Gitanos has been proved very delicate (Diagiacomo 1983), especially in a highly commercialized world like the flamenco world.
interpretation that considers the overlapping of the discourses of history, ethics and aesthetics.

Flamenco and the discourses of history, ethics and aesthetics

Next, I will argue that these three discursive levels meet in the case of flamenco and frame the debate of native interpreters about the flamenco puro and flamenco jondo. The discourse of history meets of ethics in two senses: 1) the past is always better that the present and 2) the past can legitimate the very existence of the present. The last is taken almost biologically, since there can not be any "I" if there was no creator of the "I", i.e. parents, mother and father, ancestors in general. The agony to find legitimate traits of the past in the present can be seen in the birth of a child. The whole family gathers around the newborn and disputes who it resembles. Generalizations though are not satisfactory, there is always the need to refer to distinctive features of the appearance. Discussions whether the eyebrow of the child looks like the one of his father or of his mother's sister, or whether the child has the smile of his grandfather or of his first cousin are very common. The placement of the newborn in a kinship network determines its identity, which is legitimate because of its past evidences. Without a past there can not be a present, and the kind of past determines the kind of present.

The same schema of thinking is activated in the case of the flamenco origin debate. The talks and words, the phrases and metaphors used by both sides, Gitano and non-Gitano, to legitimate the creator of flamenco are very similar to those used in the case of a child. Flamenco 'is born' (flamenco nacio en Jerez /flamenco sale a la luz), has a soul (alma) has a 'cradle' (Jerez es la cuna del cante) which can be a gitana or an andaluza one, 'evolves' (se desarrolla) and can die (el flamenco: vida y muerte) exactly like a human being. The analogy between culture and nature is apparent. The belief of biological affinity of the people with flamenco comes more to light, when both Gitanos and non-Gitanos informants start talking about their relationship with art. Flamenco, lo tienes en tu sangre, en las veinas (runs through your blood, through your veins) is a biological part of the people -lo tienes con tu nacimiento- (you are born with it) and can be naturally inherited to the next generations exactly like the color of the eyes or the way of smiling. The logical result of this argumentation is that both groups try to prove flamenco as their own biological characteristic and hence their own cultural tradition using the same argumentation. This is understandable in the sense that the discourse of history, and in this case of family history, holds its bonds to the discourse of ethics. The traceable trajectory of the past and its crystallization in the present legitimates the present as it is. So, if flamenco is born in a cuna gitana (a gitana cradle), and flows in the blood of Gitanos, then it is their cultural property. On the other side, if flamenco is born en esa tierra (in this place), it belongs to the local people, i.e. the people of Jerez de la Frontera. The majority of non-Gitanos does not deny the role of the Gitanos in the enriching and developing process of the flamenco art, but they are very absolute when it comes to the origin. The birthplace of flamenco, according to them is Andalusia and especially Jerez de la Frontera. In order to intensify their thesis they often refer to a non-Gitano flamenco singer of the town of the last century, Don Antonio Chacon as the father of flamenco. As a miracle figure, Gitanos always mention a famous Gitano singer of the same period, Manuel Torre. Interestingly, the city of Jerez has placed two statues in central squares of the old town, where the 'most' active flamenco neighborhoods are situated.

The first point mentioned earlier, where the discourses of history and ethics meet again, is the ethical priority of the past. The past bears morally higher qualities than the present. En aquellos tiempos todo era bueno (those times everything was good), is a very common generalization that characterizes the relationship of the local culture with time and is an admission shared both by Gitanos and non-Gitanos. The past has always been highly praised for its qualities in life style, people's honest relations, and authenticity of feelings and behaviors. Lo puro, meaning purity, genuineness, authenticity can be seen as a moral quality characterizing positively a number of different situations, persons, objects, or places. The adjective puro can be used in a variety of cases: gitano puro, vino puro, Santa Maria Purissima, raza pura, Jerez pura, Triana pura y pura! (People, wine, Goddess, animals, places). In all these uses the defined noun becomes positive and undisputed for its high qualities. The moral power of the notion puro lies in its affinity to the discourse of history. As seen, if the course of history and the clear consequence of events are evident, then the present is justified for its very existence, so there is no need for any further clarifications. This clear presentation of the course of time speaks of, we could say, a transparency of history. If the history of a person, of a group of people, of an art or of an object is transparent, evident, and clear, then it is automatically justified. The transparency of the discourse of history makes it moral.

When the discussion comes to the flamenco then the word puro becomes an aesthetic criterion of the art. And exactly here lies the meeting point of the discourses of ethics and aesthetics. When a flamenco song is characterized as puro, cante puro then it has reached one of its highest aesthetic qualities. Additionally to this, could be also mentioned the uses of the phrases flamenco de...
The two basic aesthetic criteria used in the flamenco art, _lo puro_ and _lo jondo_ are so powerful and meaningful exactly because they comprise values of the three discourses mentioned above, of history, ethics and aesthetics. This meeting is not coincidental, it roots in the local culture and is shared by all, Gitanos and non-Gitanos. This common cultural reference of the two counter groups in the terrain of flamenco art is what makes the discussion even more interesting. When it comes to the flamenco origin debate or to its temporary interpretation, as we shall shortly see, the flamenco performance is judged by the same cultural and aesthetic criteria but for different aims. Gitanos want to keep the flamenco art to themselves, and claim the Gitano historical and cultural roots. On the other side the other _Jerezanos_ artists or aficionados of flamenco art can not accept the Gitano claim so they promote the Andalusian origin of flamenco and their equal competence to perform flamenco _puro_ y _jondo_.

The modern turn in Gypsy Studies

The Gitano claim to appropriate the whole flamenco art is not a coincidence either. In order to understand their insistence on flamenco, some clarifications need to be made about the Gitanos as a social group in Jerez de la Frontera. According to the relevant literature on Gypsies, this group of people forms a distinct sociocultural unity, which in the course of history since the first migration waves (Fraser 1992; Kenrick 1995) 1100 AC throughout Europe, was confronted with different policies depending on the host populations. Since the formation of nation states in Europe in the 19th century Gypsies have been treated as an ethnic minority dispersed in different European countries. They have faced discrimination and, mainly during the Second World War, persecution and holocaust. Traditional gypsiology/Gypsy studies offered descriptions of the different Gypsy groups from a cultural-holistic point of view (see for example Webb 1975; Clebert 1976; Djuric 1980). The linguistic arguments of the common origin of their language, resembling new(modern)-Indian dialects have led to the assumption of a common ethnic origin and consequently a common culture of all Gypsies throughout the world. The nomadic way of life of many Gypsy groups and their occupation as blacksmiths, clothes traders, vendors, musicians and showmen has formed the gypsiologist argument of a shared Gypsy culture. Critiques of this cultural homogenized approach of the traditional gypsiology began around the 1960s in the social sciences (Barth 1969; Sutherland 1975; Okely 1985; Streck 1996) and continues today (Willems 1997; Stewart 1997; Lucassen et. al. 1998). A new stream of sociological and anthropological studies proposed a change in the theoretical focus on minorities in general. The formation of minority-identities is, according to them, strongly tied with the relation of the minority group to majority norms and values (Giere 1996).

I have approached the Gitanos of Jerez de la Frontera in this light and tried to understand their interaction with the local population and the role of it in the formation of the 'Gitano' identity (Papapavlou 2000). In contrast to
the relevant literature on Spanish and Andalusian Gitanos (Quintana and Floyd 1972; Vaux de Folletier 1973; Heredia et al. 1980; Leblon 1985; Liegeois 1994; Maclane 1996), the case of Jerez de la Frontera presents another profile of the Gitan group. The Gitanos in Jerez are not nomadic, they have settled down, live together with the local population in the same neighborhoods, and often in the same house. Since endogamy is not so much the case, intermarriage is a quite common practice. The Gitanos in Jerez do not speak a distinct language, they communicate in the Spanish dialect of Jerez. They do not practice traditional “Gypsy” occupations, they belong rather to the underclass and are often unemployed like many non-Gitano members of the same class. They do not share a common myth of origin, they all believe that they come from Jerez de la Frontera, neither do they share different religious practices from the local population. They are all Catholic, go to school and raise their children together with the non-Gitano children of the neighborhoods. At first glance, we can not talk about a separated cultural group of Gypsies in Jerez de la Frontera, since they seem to live in harmony with the locals, not suffering from open discrimination and being integrated into the broader society legally and socially. If this is really the case, why do they insist on the Gitano identity (yo soy gitano puro y verdadero)? On what ground do they build their difference from the rest of Jerezanos? This central question could only be answered if the existence of flamenco is appraised. Flamenco is not simply an art, a kind of common entertainment and a way to celebrate but something more than that. It is a realm of existence of flamenco is appraised. Flamenco is not simply in Jerez de la Frontera. For both approaches, Cooley’s (1962[1902]) argument about the interactional dimension of social identity, came the idea of the “mirror self”. According to the him, the content of a person’s identity is the reflected image of the self in the eyes of the other. The reflected image is the identity of a person. If we may now turn to the recent developments in the field of anthropology, in the so-called performance studies, we could find an additional aspect that would enrich the idea of the ‘mirror self’.

The attempts to define the meaning of a ‘role’, either in a theatrical/performative context or in a sociological approach, started systematically with Erving Goffman (1959). He spoke of everyday performers, of people playing different ‘roles’ in their normal life without even realizing it. In this sense the whole world could be seen as an open theater where amateur actors ‘act’ their lives. The very idea of a teatrum mundi is of course not new at all. Plato spoke in his Πολιτεία of people’s life as a puppet-theater played by the gods. Petronius in his Satyricon showed the same notion. During Christian times the world-theater had only one spectator and that was God. In recent times, the identification of theater and society found further elaboration in Balzac’s Comedie Humaine, later by Baudelaire, Thomas Mann and others (Sennett 1986: 55). Similar metaphors could be found in the language as well. In English we find phrases like “to fulfill a role” in the sense of doing something successfully, an object can “perform well” in the sense that it works, “something can happen behind the scenes” meaning something happens secretly, or the following phrase can be heard in a sense of an argument “please, don’t make a scene now!”. These and many other expressions offer the metaphor of life as a theatrical play not only in English, but in other languages as well.

According to performance theory we could look at 1) the individual and social behavior as a genre of theater and 2) theatrical or dance performances as a form of individual and social interaction (Schechner 1990: 255). The existence of spectators is an absolute condition in order to give a performance. Either in a social setting or in an organized show there can not be a performance if there is no audience to watch. Actors and spectators are equally important, since without them there can’t be a performance. In a social setting one sees and in the same time can be seen. The ancient Greek verb for ‘to see’ is θεαομαι – theoamai (theama), from which the nouns θεατρο (theatro) and θεαμα (theama means show) derive (Der kleine Pauli, Band 5, 1975:660). This involvement of the visual in its interactive sense between actors and spectators illustrates clearly the quintessential condition of a performance. Here we have again the self and the other, exactly like in Cooley’s sense of the ‘mirror self’. Thus there is no such thing as identity per se, it can exist only in interaction with the other, i.e. others. This brings us back to Barth’s insistence (1969) that social groups can be formed and build their value systems and behavior norms only in interaction with other groups. For both approaches, Cooley’s or Barth’s, there is an underlying condition for this individual or social interaction between the self and the other: The difference.
between them. We can not talk about identities if we do not value the significance of difference. This is what activates the whole interaction play, either on stage or in the streets. The distance between spectators and actors has to be spatially and visually there. In other words the difference between the self and the other, between 'we' and 'they' has to be clear or made clear. Quoting Barth: “The differences that are taken into account are not the sum of objective differences, rather the differences that the actors themselves regard significant” (1969:17). These “significant” differences between Gitanos and non-Gitanos have been of vital importance for this study and led the theory one step further: the differences do not exist in an abstract sense. They are real for the actors and have to be performed. The case study of Jerez de la Frontera has shown that we can not talk about 'a' Gitan identity, without considering the play of interaction between majority and minority, which can be seen as a ‘theatrical play’ where the Gitanos perform their role in the public of the other Jerezanos.

According to Victor Turner in Anthropology of Performance (1987), methodologically there can be a division in the study of performances: there are the so-called social performances (including social dramas) and cultural performances (including aesthetic or stage dramas). Examples from both kinds will be used in order to illustrate the case. Two spring events, one religious, the Semana Santa, the Holy Week and one secular, the Feria del Caballo, the feast of the horse, offer a grand opportunity for the Gitanos in Jerez de la Frontera to display their difference from the local population. For both events the key point for the Gitanos is their effort to associate themselves with flamenco and to perform their identity basically in the flamenco context.

Semana Santa
As well known as the Semana Santa is for Spain and especially for Andalusia the major religious event of the year. The celebrations last six days beginning late in the afternoon and ending after midnight. The famous pasos, a kind of staged wooden image depicting mainly Jesus Christ and the Holy Mary (5) are carried on the shoulders of men of the neighborhood to which each paso belongs and follow some defined routes around the city to show them in public.

Every paso has its own band that usually plays a march in the minor scale. People of the neighborhood from which each paso comes follow the paso in its entire route. In Jerez de la Frontera all pasos have to pass from the Cathedral where crowds of people are gathered to watch and applaud them, then they must enter the church from the side door and reappear very theatrically from the huge front door. After that every paso returns to its home church followed by its believers. The Semana Santa is very beloved in Jerez de la Frontera and almost everybody except for the ill and very old people, who watch nevertheless, everything on T.V. - goes out on the streets to attend the procedures and be a part of the occasion. They get dressed up and some women of the middle and upper class can afford to have dresses and hats made for them, usually in black. At the end of the week all are very tired from six days walking and standing to see the processions. In other words Semana Santa is a public event that gives the opportunity to everybody to see and be seen, either as a person or as a member of a bigger group, such as the core family, the extended family, neighbors and friends.

In the case of the Gitanos this becomes even clearer. Since the majority of Gitano families live in two specific neighborhoods of the old town, the barrio del San Miguel and barrio del Santiago, they form the two main groups of believers that follow the paso of its barrio.

The Gitanos of San Miguel identify with the paso of el Cristo de la Expiracion, a wooden image depicting the dying Christ, and the Gitanos of Santiago with the paso of Cristo del Prendimiento, depicting the captive Christ. Several interpretations have been given to explain these different identities. As for del Cristo de la Expiracion, both Gitanos and non-Gitanos claimed that this is because this wooden image (Figure 1) is the only one that bears real hair not and not wood like all other images. This hair is black, long and curly and resembles, as they said, the hair of the Gitanos. The image of Cristo de la Expiracion has as an ornament behind its back a piece of cloth that resembles a fishing net. According to informants this reflects the traditional occupation of many Gitanos of the neighborhood who were fishermen in older times. Finally, the music that the band of this paso plays, although a march is composed by a famous Gitano flamenco guitarist of the barrio de San Miguel.

The case of the paso of the neighborhood of Santiago the Cristo del Prendimiento (Figure 2) is even more illuminative for the identification of the Gitanos with this image and their presentation as a distinct group of people in public. First, non-Gitano informants argued that this paso is identified with the Gitanos because of the scene it presents. The captive Christ resembles the history of the Gitanos as a group of people who suffered discriminations, arrests and persecutions. The Gitanos themselves present the Cristo del Prendimiento as their Christ, el Cristo de los Gitanos or el rey de los Gitanos (the king of the Gitanos) and display this very clearly during the procedure. From the moment the paso leaves its home church in Santiago till the moment it returns, it is followed by a lot of Gitanos, mainly women and children. Although at the front of the parade the band is playing one of the typical marches of the Semana Santa, the gathered Gitanas back of the paso are clapping their hands in the buleria rhythm - a kind of...
flamenco music, and cry phrases like the following:

"Prendi, prendi! Que guapo, que bonito!, Bonito, bonito, bonito!" (The captive Christ! How beautiful he is, how handsome!), "Prendi parece Gitan! Que bonito!" (The captive Christ looks like a Gitano! How beautiful!), "Prendi, prendi! El es de nosotros! El es de los Gitanos" (The captive Christ, he is ours, he belongs to the Gitanos).

Sometimes these cries and the strong claps of the hands tend to cover the music played in front. As the crowded walks through the narrow streets of the old town the image of the paso stands above all heads and moves with them along the road. At such moments, some followers commented: "Mira como baila pro buleria! Que guapo!" (Look how he dances bulerias! How beautiful!). The light movement of Christ's beard on the shoulders of the costaleros is interpreted as a flamenco dancer for whom the believers clap the buleria rhythm. The identification of the Gitanos of Santiago with their wooden image is articulated in a flamenco-aesthetic vocabulary. This statement is performed in front of the eyes of the gathered people of Jerez de la Frontera during an occasion that for all is sacred and important. The highlight of all pasos as we have seen is the moment that they appear to the public from the front door of the majestic Cathedral (Figure 3).

The paso of the Cristo del Prendimiento presents at that very moment the Gitano identity in a glorious context. Flamenco is there, kept in the rhythm of the hands and the mouth of the Gitano believers. All must see and hear who the Gitanos are. And this is a perfect occasion to do so. Everybody is there, everybody is watching, this is a great chance to show who the Gitanos are. It is they to whom flamenco belongs. The performance of Gitano identity is based on the difference they try to present between themselves and the local population. And this is nothing else but the flamenco.

Feria del Caballo

A reversed version of this difference is to be seen at the Feria del Caballo (the feast of the horse), that takes place one week in May. Jerez de la Frontera is famous not only because of the fine wines it produces but also for the horses it raises and the Riding School, Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre. This spring feast is devoted to horseraces that are presented during the day in a place especially arranged for the occasion. The feast lasts seven days and seven nights, during which time the local people and visitors have the chance to admire the horses in the morning and to celebrate together with relatives and friends from late afternoon of one day till the dawn of the next. Small wooden houses are built for the feast, where the guests can meet, chat, eat, and dance the famous sevillanas, a traditional music genre of Sevilla (Figure 4a). Every little house is prepared by different groups of people, like clubs of motorcyclists, football fans, photographers, people working in newspapers, bars, bodegas (wine cellars), barrios (different neighborhoods), penas flamencas (flamenco clubs) and others.
The most impressive thing during the Feria is the way the women are dressed. Almost every woman from little baby-girls, young girls, single or married, wear the traje de gitana or traje de flamenca (the dress of the Gitana or the dress of the flamenca woman, see figure 4b). It is a beautiful, colorful dress tied in the vest and loose around the feet, typical for a flamenco performance. Curiously enough, despite being named “the Gitana’s dress”, everybody wears it. Some Gitanas wear it as well, but a lot of them do not claiming that it is ridiculous to call it so, since the real Gitanas never wore such a thing, meaning that a real Gitana does not need to wear a special dress in order to be one as this is proved by her everyday way of life. In addition to this reversed image of Gitana, comes also the fact that during the feast some Gitanas walk around the area and sell flowers or other small toys wearing a plain cheap dress that can’t be compared to the impressive and beautiful traje de gitana (Figure 5). Informants answered that either these women were not the Gitanas they pretended to be, or they meant that they were Gitanas from other towns and not from Jerez de la Frontera.

In attempting to analyze this confusing picture, it could be said that, from the side of mainstream society, the Gitana image is manipulated according to the needs and context it has to present. The majority seems to accept and even imitate the “nice” image of the Gitana, according to which she is beautiful, attractive and inevitably connected with flamenco. On the other hand, this majority refuses to accept the other one image, the “ugly, poor” and cheaply dressed Gitana denouncing her as a foreigner, an outsider, somebody out of town who will definitely go back. In other words, the society of the majority accepts in the occasion of this feast the connection between flamenco and Gitano, because they love and admire flamenco very much but goes one step further to appropriate symbolically the flamenca Gitana image. On the other side, Gitanos try in various ways to resist this mass acceptance that in a sense ‘swallows’ their difference from the majority. Either they don’t get dressed in the supposed traje de Gitana or, in the performative level, they insist on celebrating during the feast with flamenco music and not with sevillanas.

The difference between sevillanas and bulerias (a festive flamenco music genre) is very clear for everybody. There is no doubt that sevillanas are not flamenco while bulerias are. The Gitanos make this clear not only by dancing mainly bulerias in the Feria, but also by preferring to spend their time in the small houses of different penas flamenca (flamenco clubs) or of the barrios del Santiago or barrio de San Miguel (in particular the caseta del Cristo de la Expiracion or the caseta del Cristo del Prendimiento). Thus, either by appearance, location or performance the Gitanos try to present and keep their difference alive from the rest of the population even in such a context like the Feria del Caballo where flamenco as dress or as music is present and suitable for both groups. To sum up, we could say that both festive occasions are highly performative and give the minority group the chance to negotiate and present its identity in the line of the context defined by the majority. In this sense, the content of the identity is certainly not inherent or biological but is formed by the significant difference that gives the minority group enough space and distance, spatially and symbolically, to remain ‘the other’ in public.
Directing and performing the Gitano identity

In order to discuss even briefly the other level of the performance analysis of our data we need to turn to the so-called cultural performances (stage dramas) which represent the main case of flamenco. Flamenco in Jerez de la Frontera is performed in a great variety of occasions, places and different contexts (academias de baile, penas flamencas, tablao, festivals) and the flamenco performances are divided in the officially organized and the non-official ones. The latter are usually the so-called juergas flamencas and take place in a pena flamenca (flamenco club), in a house yard —patio— the typical Andalusian courtyard placed in the inner part of the building, or in the narrow streets of the old town. The juergas are spontaneous little feasts that attract the interest and participation of people who happen to be around and are not officially scheduled. They can last from a few hours to entire days, or, as the informants said, as long as there is wine. The question of who takes part in a juerga and how, is very crucial for the performance of difference.

The flamenco setting is highly performative because of its very nature. The main performers, be they a guitarist and a dancer, or a guitarist and a singer form the minimum interaction schema required in order to have the quintessential condition of a performance, an actor and an auditor or spectator. Usually, the flamenco performers—singer, dancer and guitarist being the actors—need to be watched by a group of people that forms the audience or spectators. In the case of flamenco, the audience is an active rather than a passive one and takes part in the whole event by clapping their hands (hacer palmas) and making noise (jaleo). The words and phrases known as jaleo are encouraging and animating for the actors. For example one can hear: anda, vamos (let’s go), venga (come on), asi se baila (this is the way to dance), baila bien (dances well), bien hecho (well done), eso es (that’s it), que arte (what an art), que guapa (how beautiful). The palmas also require a good knowledge of flamenco rhythms and different kinds of song and dance, like bulerías, soleas, and seguirijas. The active participation of the audience is essential for a performance. Therefore, even in official settings of professional performances in a concert hall or in a theater every cuadro (a flamenco group consisting of a guitarist, a singer and one or two dancers at least), needs to have its palmeros. In this case the palmeros are well trained to make “good” palmas meaning that there is a variety in the clapping rhythm—not all clap the same rhythm in the same time— and with good knowledge of the different kind of palmas. There are palmas sordas (“deaf” palmas, gentle, quiet) and palmas claras (loud and clear often faster than the sordas). All these, palmas and jaleos require a good feeling of the interaction between actors and audience and guarantee the quality of the flamenco performance. Therefore, famous flamenco artists always have their palmeros in order not to risk the quality of the artistic result of their show by allowing the ignorant audience to ruin the performance. The importance of the active audience for a flamenco performance, either official or not like the above-mentioned juergas, reveals the highly performative character of the flamenco art. Performance inevitably means social and interactional.

Figure 4b. Women dressed up with the traje de gitana o traje de flamenca

Figure 5. Gitanas from other towns selling flowers and toys during Feria
If we now turn to the relations between Gitanos and non-Gitanos directly observed in a flamenco performance, we could easily understand the importance of the role of the audience for a successful performance. Informants themselves spoke of the “others”, being Gitanos or non-Gitanos, as “ruiners” or “spoilers” of an occasion by making “bad” and “false” palmas, in other words by disturbing and nerving the actors rather than animating them. If the majority of the occasion are Gitanos and one non-Gitano wants to sing they can make “false” palmas. Supposing that the Gitanos are the minority and one of them comes on stage —that is in the center of the formed circle— to sing or to dance, the others try as much as possible to make loud and good palmas and jaleo to help them perform well. In those moments the Gitanos act as a group of performers and the non-Gitanos are the audience. Here again is demonstrated the performance of Gitano identity with the use of flamenco art.

In order to illustrate the case even further, our attention will now be turned to a particular flamenco performance in Jerez de la Frontera that took place in April 1997. A well known Gitano flamenco dancer of Jerez de la Frontera, Antonio “el Pipa”, presented a piece named “Vivencias” (experiences) at the Teatro de Villamarta. The show was dedicated to his aunt, a famous Gitana dancer (Tia Juana la del Pipa). All the artists who took part, even the palmeros, were Gitanos. Antonio, himself, along with being the leading protagonist dancer, was the director of the show as well. In the leaflet advertising the performance he wrote a paragraph, which is particularly illuminating for the arguments, raised in this article:

“Aun recuerdo, por suerte para mí, cuando me hablaba mi abuela de sus tiempos, de aquellos tiempos (...)Esos donde la mayor diversión era una fiesta por bulerías, cantar y bailar en medio de la calle, en el patio o en la ganancia, lugar donde se daban citan tantas vivencias después de la larga jornada del día, cuando el azote del trabajo duro del campo solo podía ser aliviado por el agua fresca y el arte, el arte de esos gitanos, que veces te quitaban hasta el hambre (...)”.

“I have the luck to remember my grandmother telling me the story of her times, when the best entertainment was a feast with bulerías. Singing and dancing in the middle of the street, in the yard of the house, in places where people experienced so many things after a long hard working day in the fields. This could only be relieved with cold water and the art of those Gitanos, who could even make you forget your hunger (...)».

Here it can be pointed out how the discourse of history is used to justify the identification of the Gitanos with the flamenco not only in a manner of speaking but of acting and directing the performance as well. The reference to the past and the Gitano origin of flamenco was accentuated during the performance with the projection on the background of the stage of a huge slide of Tia Juana la del Pipa. She was Antonio’s grandmother, a kind of representative of those times when the Gitanos were singing and dancing their flamenco after the hard working days. Besides, she was a flamenco dancer herself, something that could also guarantee for the artistic potential of her grandson Antonio. He also had the nickname of his grandfather, “el Pipa” (the pipe), emphasizing his blood bonds to his Gitano ancestors. In terms of the performance itself, it could easily be noticed how the direction of Antonio attempted to put “his” people, the Gitanos, on stage by showing them while working in the fields or making baskets (another traditional occupation of the canasteros Gitanos—canastra means the basket). At the end of the day he presented them singing, dancing and clapping flamenco rhythms as an integrated part of their daily life. This way there was no doubt that flamenco was a part of the Gitano past and consequently of the present, an indisputable component of their life. Art and life are inevitably connected and justified by the present of the past. The discourse of history, lo jondo y lo puro is here again activated to give meaning to a purely aesthetic context like music and dance performance. The story of the Gitanos as Antonio directed and performed it, was presented in a public theater of Jerez de la Frontera for the people of Jerez. The majority attending the show was locals and amongst them were a lot of Gitanos who were fascinated by the performance. The whole event indicates that not only in a social level but also in a purely artistic setting, like a staged performance, the Gitanos present themselves as the cultural owners of the flamenco art and use it to guard their difference from the local population. The ‘significant’ difference is chosen and cultivated by the actors themselves and is performed in public whenever there is a suitable occasion. In this sense the phrase yo soy gitano puro y verdadero is vital and has to be proved again and again. Flamenco does nothing else than define the difference and offer the performative tools to present the Gitano identity. In this sense the case of the Gitanos in Jerez de la Frontera is a good example for the shifting content of the notion of difference and invites research in other contexts too.

Notes
1. The data of this article is part of the Ph.D dissertation (Papapavloou 2000) and was collected during a field research in 1997 in Jerez de la Frontera of Andalusia (Spain). I earned my Ph.D from the Department of Ethnology at the University of Leipzig in Germany.
2. By this is meant the inevitable interaction between narrator and audience or performer and spectators.

3. For a similar discussion about the de-contextualization of a ritual or a social event see Shieffelin 1985, Panopoulos 1996.

4. Some *calo* words are still in use but they do not constitute a language to communicate. For a detailed documentation of *calo* in Jerez de la Frontera see Pasqualino 1998.

5. Beside the *pasos* that are depicting solely the image of Jesus Christ or of Holy Mary, a lot of them portray scenes of Christ’s passions (see Figure 3). As Richardson reports from his field research about the *Semana Santa* in Latin America “these are performances frozen at the moment of their most intense reality” (Richardson 1990:223).

6. The performance of the Gitana or Gitano role in the context of everyday life apart from the flamenco reference could be the subject of another article. The focus then would not be placed on the main domain of presenting the difference, namely the flamenco, but rather on the examination of the small and for an outsider ‘insignificant’ details of appearance, behavior, way of speaking, of walking, of ornamenting the body in a way different from non Gitanos.

References


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