This article aims to make a methodological contribution to the analysis of several problems related to the anthropological examination of religions. It reflects on the role of the social scientist in this kind of ethnography, recognising the need to produce critical knowledge regarding the practical conditions that demarcate, limit and thereby produce ethnographical research problems, including difficulties related to places of study and those who participate in fieldwork. It explores the role that reflexive anthropology can play in examining the position attained by non-hegemonic religious organisations within different contexts, in this case that of Spain. The intensity of recent migratory flows into Spain is having a transformative effect on cultural diversity. At the same time, religious pluralism is opening up in a country where the majority of the population is nominally Catholic. I will focus here on a single case: the advent, establishment and impact of Gitano Evangelical communities in southern Spain. Gitano churches began in Andalusia in the 1960s, when French gypsy preachers arrived in a Seville slum. Congregation numbers have mushroomed since then throughout Andalusia. They have increased to the extent that the factor of religion is essential in order to understand key current issues. These include processes of mobility, lineage and ethno-religious belonging; ethnic and gender policies; dialogue between the ethnic minority and public administration; ethnogenesis and cultural reinvention; and the political role played by Gitano associations, whether these are non-confessional or (increasingly) confessional. I will focus on what Gitano Pentecostal Protestantism has come to represent since the start of the 1960s in Andalusia, on problems of theoretical and ethnographic reflexivity, and the experiences of anthropologists in dealing with religious agencies. Such experiences range from sets of stratagems, negotiations and intersubjective games that shape interactive processes and influence (not always consciously) the underpinning of any suggestion to give a theoretical explanation of the processes in question.
I will examine Gitano evangelism within the wider framework of growing confessional plurality and try to explore the relations established in the field with religious agents and church members. These range from regimes of knowledge and discourses that traverse narratives of belonging and identity to the game of scales of action that challenges the often-reifying use of ethnonyms (Díaz de Rada 2008). It includes processes of ethnic self-description, circularity of meaning in fieldwork relations between investigators and ‘experts’, and even the contesting variety of ‘expert discourses’ concerning culture, tradition and ethnic identity. It is about elements of reflection that come from (and this is what they have in common) new epistemological and empirical conditions in which ethnographic work is carried out and that, as some other authors postulate, recommend a redefinition of the conventions of the classic Malinowskian model, which has been an inspiration to us since the mid-nineteenth century and so account ethnographically for the later modern intercrossing of the ‘traditional’, the ‘urban’ and the ‘massive’ (García Canclini 1989: 232–235; Cruces 2003).

In short, I propose a critical approach in relation to the conditions in which we produce our theoretical objects and even the ‘ethnographic encounter’ itself, the ways in which we orient experiences (in the field) and (textual) representations, the theoretical sensitivity with which we generate scientific knowledge about observed and enacted socio-religious realities. I am thinking of a framework of general reflection starting from an ethnographic exploration of Gitano Evangelical contexts in southern Spain, spaces influenced by the historical presence of anti-Gitano and anti-Protestant stereotypes and stigmas that are firmly entrenched in the dominant culture and history, representations of Gitano otherness that are charged with hostility and discrimination, and clichés that fuel the imaginary about what it means to be Gitano and what converting to a Protestant and sectarian religion represents. At the same time we encounter a way of dealing with the ethnic Gitano minority that is conditioned by primordialist ideas or dichotomies of ethnic identity, ideas to which investigators are analytically attached in a more or less refined manner. We should become increasingly aware of the problems that a hard definition of identities introduces to an understanding of the transactions of social life. The organisational experience of Andalusian Gitano churches and the confessional associativism connected to them shows that social life cannot be fixed by entrenching it in the existence of homogenous and stable cultural and ethnic groups with an internal logic – a logic that is often overestimated to the detriment of the flows of interaction between minorities and national