

Ethnography is a Heavy Rite
Studies of Comparative
Religion in Honor of
Juha Pentikäinen

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CONTENTS

<i>Veikko Anttonen & Nils G. Holm</i>	
Juha Pentikäinen – The Man with a Northern Mind	i
Tabula gratulatoria	v
 RELIGION AND ITS COMPARATIVE STUDY	 1
<i>Katja Hyry</i>	
Luonnos tutkijan kuvaksi	3
<i>Ilkka Pyysiäinen</i>	
No Limits? Defining the Field of Comparative Religion	31
<i>René Gothóni</i>	
Religion: an Analogical Category of a Phenomenal Complexity ..	41
<i>Eric J. Sharpe</i>	
Andrew Lang and the Making of Myth	52
<i>Michael Pye</i>	
Participation, Observation and Reflection: an Endless Method ..	64
<i>Robert A. Erickson</i>	
Ethnography and the Theater of the Body	80
<i>Helena Helve</i>	
The Implications of Postmodernism for World View Research ..	101
 SMALL PEOPLES AND GREAT MYTHS	 125
<i>Ninian Smart</i>	
The Twenty-First Century and Small Peoples	127

PARTICIPATION, OBSERVATION AND REFLECTION: an Endless Method

Michael Pye

This paper offers some reflections on the methodology of field work which is carried out for the purpose of developing comparative perspectives in the study of religions. When invited to contribute to this volume, I first conceived the goal of presenting an account of *civil religion* in the wider context of Mexican religiosity, based on some observations which I carried out recently in various cities. In other words, I intended to report some *results*. And in all brevity, I will indeed do so below. However, I am neither a specialist in Mexican studies, nor an *americanista*. While developing the presentation therefore, I realised that a methodological reflection is needed on the relation between field observations in an area where one is a specialist and field observations in an area where one is not a specialist. As far as I know this has not been thought about very much. It is important, however, because the way in which the relation between these two is understood relates to the general question of balance in the study of religions. Without achieving some balance, comparative perspectives cannot be reliably or interestingly developed. Without comparative perspectives general questions about religion cannot be sensibly formulated or answered. I decided therefore to concentrate here on the methodological aspect, with some illustrative examples, and to present a fuller account of the extremely complex Mexican materials at a later date.

"Fieldwork is a hard rite", they are saying. And so it is, not least, for the comparativist in the study of religions. We are commonly sup-

posed to have command of a specialism in relation to a particular country or region such as Siberia, Japan, Greece, Brazil or Nigeria, with knowledge of a relevant language or languages, and years of experience in the field. We are supposed to have made various attempts at reporting back, wherever "back" is, once we have really lived somewhere different from where we started! On the other hand we are also supposed to develop our knowledge more widely in order to be able to put specialised knowledge into a comparative perspective. Of course there are also those specialists who do everything backwards, being experts about the field within which they themselves were born and formed, and seeking the comparative perspective elsewhere as far as time permits. But then, in these cases, quite often time does not seem to permit. Obstinate, the comparative perspective fails to materialise.

Provocatively, I have just used the word "backwards". In the course of studying subjects such as Mahayana Buddhism or astronomy, it is possible to learn that the apparent difference between forwards and backwards may be deceptive. This is instructive, metaphorically, for understanding the methodology of the study of religions. Field research in the study of religions consists of a pattern of three key elements, namely participation, observation and reflection. Participation may be more or less intensive, ranging from mere attendance to playing a full role in some religious practice like meditation. Observation may be quantitative or qualitative. Reflection may be discursive or take the form of compact models of analysis. However all these variations do not need to be pursued now. What I wish to emphasise here is that while the sequence "participation, observation and reflection" might seem at first sight to stand in a logical order, in real life and work the three elements may be learned and put into practice in various sequences.

For example, a person might be born into and grow up and participate in one society, more or less without reflection, and then through study and experience learn to participate, to observe and to reflect *elsewhere*. This may lead, in a later development, to greater observation and reflection on the initial society, and thus to a different kind of participation. But it is also possible to put all three elements into practice within the society into which one was born. In one's own society of origin participation will inevitably occur before reflection, which in turn may occur before observation in any sustained and intended sense. In a society beyond the society of origin, however, it is quite possible that observation will occur first, reflection second and participation only

later, leading in turn to more observation and more reflection. In other words, it is maintained here that experience in "field research" relevant to the study of religions can be gained in varying sequences, both in the society into which one is born and in societies of which one becomes aware only later.

Moreover even this is over-simplified. Significantly increasing numbers of people, and this includes some of the small number who study religions, are not born and bred in one single society at all, but are aware from an early age of the plurality of societies and cultures. To illustrate, my own eldest son was born in Japan, both parents being European but of differing nationality, so that for almost the first three years of his life he was regarded, in Japan, as a foreigner, that is, in colloquial Japanese, a *gaijin*. The literal meaning of this word, for which there are equivalents in other East Asian languages, is "outside person". When, shortly after birth, he was first registered as an alien at the "alien immigration office", one of the questions to be answered on the form was where he had immigrated from! A metaphysical puzzle indeed. On the basis of an *ad hoc* decision he had already been granted a British passport, following the father's nationality. So the bureaucratic solution was to return the false answer "Britain", as country of origin. Nearly three years later he arrived in Britain for the first time, at the sea port of Southampton. After a few days of bemusement, he concluded, speaking Japanese, that the country was full of *gaijin*. The right wing politician of the day in Britain, Enoch Powell, was at that period running a vicious campaign against immigration into Britain which included his notorious "rivers of blood" speech. The statistics which he constantly quoted, raising the level of anxiety among the population, were based on the numbers of "persons born abroad of foreign mothers". This included our son, the *gaijin*. Such experiences contain all the above-mentioned elements of participation, observation and reflection, and illustrate the complexity of the relationship between them.

Naturally these complications play havoc with any simple view of the so-called "insider-outsider" problem. How do we know, when engaging in theoretical discussions, who is "inside" and who is "outside"? And what are they inside or outside of? There is of course a simple answer to these questions. Usually people are trying with such terminology to refer, distinctively, to the participant on the one hand and to the observer on the other hand. This is important. Moreover the century old work of distinguishing the study of religions from "being religious",

doing theology, or promoting a religious point of view requires this or similar distinctions to be made. The abiding virtue of the so-called phenomenological tradition in the study of religions, now unpopular with younger writers, has been to emphasise the self-understanding of believers (or participants, as I have always added) and to regard this as being of significance for the study of religious systems. This approach has to be distinguished from theories, or indeed very often theologies, which from the start would inflict an alien interpretative scheme on to systems of religious behaviour or thought. Unfortunately, as has often been pointed out, the work of the very representatives of the phenomenological school who pleaded for this was itself often structured, if unconsciously, by theological perspectives. Nevertheless they led the way. There is no need whatever to turn the clock back on this well-worn discussion, which has been an important factor in the emergence of a discipline of the study of religions which is independent of religions themselves.

Nevertheless, a simple view of the opposition between outsider and insider will not do, as the attraction of the equally well known phrase "participant observation" has also shown over many years. Valuable though this concept has been, not only in ethnology, but also specifically in the study of religions, it needs to be adjusted or complemented in an important respect. This correction is needed because the *sequence* may be more complex than is often realised. When people refer to "participant observation" they are usually talking about the idea of going out of one system into another system, participating in that "other" system and thereby putting themselves into a position to observe it. But this oppositional approach is not really adequate for an inclusive study of religions. Not only "participant observation" should be recognised as a normal feature in the study of religions but also, to use a phrase of my own coinage, *observant participation*. This phrase is intended to suggest that for some people, in particular those who seek sensitively to study religions, that in which they already participate provides a basis for the development of observation and then for further reflection. This is because, by simple reflection, they have already observed that they are participating. This is not really difficult. Indeed I would claim that I discovered it for myself during adolescence, although I only later knew that I had done so. No doubt others have done the same. But it is desirable, for the study of religions, to become conscious of it. The importance of this variation in the methodological models available lies

in the fact that it enables the specialist in the study of religions to escape from the traditional and still rather strong idea that he or she is expected to study what are known as "other" religions or even "foreign" religions (suggested by the dreadful German expression *Fremdreligionen*). Any religions can be studied by means of participation, observation and reflection, and the order of these may be varied. The results will depend to a varying extent on all three. Participation may be relatively low. For some enquiries it may not be necessary, and for others it may be indispensable to some extent.

It is fundamental even to the classic idea of participant observation, though not always noted, that "reflection", the third element referred to above, is also essential for the endeavour to remain scientific. In a formally conceived research process, reflection should involve both analysis and report. Without these, participant observation is scientifically useless, though it may be interesting as a way of life. I have personally lost sight of not a few promising students who did not quite understand this. They went off to participate and observe, but never came back. They are probably living to this day on various sunny islands, participating. But let us return to the question of the *sequence* of the three elements which, I have suggested above, does not necessarily always have to be understood to be the same. Reflection, too, may well occur at various moments in the whole complex process. By applying flexibility in our understanding of the sequence, we can arrive at very useful and appropriate variations in our understanding of the relations between "insiders" and "outsiders", "participants" and "observers", "starting point" and "field", without giving up the conceptual independence which has been gained over the decades for the discipline of the study of religions.

On the basis of these fundamental considerations my argument now progresses to a consideration of the relationship between research in fields for which specialised knowledge is already available to the researcher and research in fields where this is not the case. In view of the above arguments it should be noted that a sub-question arises about how to position research in a field which is quite familiar (in my case some of the counties of England, for example) but concerning which no specialised academic knowledge is claimed. In the interests of keeping the argument simple enough to follow, this sub-question will not be addressed in detail.

Let us presuppose, then, a certain depth of experience in either quantitative or qualitative research in the context of one particular society, so that the main problems of field research have been resolved in some way or other. These questions are not my subject just now. What I want to suggest is that the extension of methodological experience to other, less well known fields is not only possible but also desirable, and may be consciously pursued in the interests of achieving a more broadly based comparative perspective. Moreover the argument is that this extension is of particular importance in the discipline known as the study of religions (or *Religionswissenschaft*, etc.). It may not have the same importance in some other disciplines. I do not assert that archaeologists, for example, should go around digging all over the place. It may be that archaeologists should restrict their digging to sites in regions in which they have specialised knowledge. Here we would see, therefore, one of the distinctive features in the "methodological clustering" characteristic of the study of religions.

In the study of religions fieldwork never ends. Yet it can become easier. How relaxing it is, on such a basis, to pay visits to countries less well known to the researcher than the area of his or her main specialism, still mysterious, fascinating, where one has the great advantage of a certain *naïveté*. Relative *naïveté*, however, may be combined with a much higher degree of reflection, which is informed through comparisons, than is brought to the subject matter even by intellectuals residing within the country itself. To illustrate from personal activities, although the success level and the documentation are uneven, I have tried it out to some degree in Korea, China, Siberia, Poland, Finland, England, Germany, South Africa and most recently Mexico.

In such situations one can discover things which are only half known to the intellectuals of the country itself. It may seem that such discoveries occur by chance. Partly it is by chance, but partly it is by intention. In South Africa, for example, I investigated the overwhelming Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria with an Afrikaaner colleague, who out of sheer liberalism had not been there himself for decades. He was reluctant to go there, and only his personal kindness and liberalism permitted him to agree to my request. Now it was most unfashionable, in 1994, even to mention this astounding example of civil religion (centred on the idea of "Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika!", etc.). Participants at a conference in Pretoria were visibly shocked at the mere mention of the Voortrekker Monument at the beginning of a plenary address. It seemed

best to compare it to the Stalinist Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw (which I have also observed from without and from within during the communist period). The comparison lies in the Polish joke that it is *from there* that one has the best view of the city at large. However even this was barely understood in South Africa, for few South Africans at that time had visited Poland during the communist period. Nor would the comparison have made sense in Poland, for very few Polish people visited the Voortrekker Monument during the apartheid period, I believe. And since Poland has also changed, it is now too late for the two populations to share their jokes. It seemed prudent therefore to omit this reference in my own contribution to the South African publication entitled *Religion and the Reconstruction of Civil Society*. Notice in this very title the interest in "civil society", the central recognition that it needed to be reconstructed, and the idea that this problematic complex has something to do with religion. And the Voortrekker Monument was there all the time, in its dramatic studiability, raising the reflective questions, at least for this observer, as to what should be done with it, or how it should be presented, in the post-apartheid era. Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science, another embarrassing attempt to insist on a civil religion, was also still there, raising the same questions for the future. What should the construction or the "reconstruction" of civil society be like, and what could or should religion have to do with it, if anything? In the meantime we have seen some of the developments in both countries. Observers of Polish culture during the communist period will know that an alternative civil religion was also being encouraged, namely a nationalist one. I observed the workings of this directly, by participating in activities organized by the lay association Pax, which provided a syncretistic context for the dynamic correlation in tension (which is how I understand syncretism to function) of Catholicism, Communism and Patriotism. A more straightforward symbol of the alternative civil religion, however, evident to any visitors, was the precise restoration of the old square in Warsaw including the "Royal Palace". It was worthy of note that the People's Republic of Poland, without a royal family, should at that time require a "Royal Palace". Unfortunately the English designation "palace" obscures the difference between *pałac* (with a hint of the French *palais*) and *zamek* (more like the German *Schloss*). To use a more recently popular term, there was a lot of "negotiation" going on in Poland in those days. The methodological point here is that only field observation carried out in each of these two

fields gives rise to comparative reflection on the role of the above mentioned monuments in the changing fortunes of civil religion. The "insiders" at the time did not notice or reflect on these things in the same way. Possibly, they just "knew" them. As to "outsiders" there are probably few researchers in the study of religions who happen to have *specialist* field knowledge of, specifically, just these two societies, Poland and South Africa. In any case there are certainly not enough researchers in the study of religions to cover all possible combinations of countries and regions as specialists.

Or consider the beautiful Finnish city of Turku, or Åbo, where inside the cathedral a most interesting juxtaposition of protestant hymns in Swedish and Finnish can be experienced. Of course the inhabitants *know* about this, as one congregation makes way for another. But do they *think* about it? I suspect that the large majority know about it, without even noticing it, not to mention "observing" it, or "reflecting" upon it. Indeed, no colleagues or acquaintances ever drew my attention to it on my various visits to Turku/ Åbo! Probably they thought I was just giving some lectures, taking part in an examination, or attending a conference, and did not realise that I was also doing field observations. Thanks to Grimm's law and various orthographic decisions, the Swedish hymns are easier to follow with regard to the meaning, but from the point of view of phonetics, the Finnish hymns are easier to "participate" in than the Swedish ones. This has to be done very quietly of course. One has to pretend to be an old man with a small voice and an uncertain sense of music, so that any small mistakes might pass as normal behaviour by such a helpless old fellow. Which congregation cares most about the singing? To what extent do people care, or do they care at all, about the meaning of what they are singing? In most of my informal enquiries about this the majority of people do not care about the meaning of what they are singing. However the question has not been sufficiently explored in the study of religions. The relation between knowledge of the content, commitment to the performance and whether people are good or bad singers would be interesting factors to investigate.

These are just a few simple illustrations of the practice of participation, observation and reflection. The fundamental point, important for a good understanding of method, is that there are so many practical aspects to the discovery of all the subtly interconnected aspects of religion in societies, large or small, pre-modern or modern. Of course not all of these are to be found in buildings such as those referred to

above. Suggestions to beginners in fieldwork may very profitably begin with instructions like "Ride around on the metro" or "Switch on the television". But perhaps there is no television and no metro, the reader may object, for example if you are afloat on the river Ob or Irtysh in the Siberian summer. This too provides a valuable opportunity for checking over the relative delapidation or state of repair of some local churches along the shoreline. So here the suggestion would be: "Get out there and see how tough the mosquitoes are, and don't forget your *repellentni*". Juha Pentikäinen is also aware of this problem, as I know from a common acquaintance in Novosibirsk. Yes, fieldwork is a hard rite.

In September 1999, mainly as a result of a very kind invitation by a colleague, I was able to travel around for some time in Mexico. After a short while, in search of civil religion and related matters, I left the Ciudad de Mexico (Mexico City) and took a first class bus to the harbour city of Veracruz. That was the easy, comfortable part. After that, the walking, the looking, the asking, the listening, the uneven paving, searing pains in my left foot, the endless fascination of the people. In Veracruz the whole new, old world is there to discover, the immense secularity of a vulgar harbour city, Catholicism, El Señor de la Viaje, the architecturally impressive customs office and post office, the lack of religion, the religion where there is no religion, the civil religion of the museum of the naval college. After Veracruz the journey took me back inland to the cities of Puebla and Tlaxcala, and then back to the impossible City of Mexico itself.

So where is the civil religion of Mexico? What are its main elements? And how does it relate to the wider spectrum of religion in the country? In fact it is quite possible for the non-specialist observer to discern it, if naively, for the simple reason that civil religion itself is essentially naive. In Puebla for example, in September 1999, a festival with much loud music was in full swing at the Zócalo (central square). The official banners proclaimed: "Puebla: una ciudad para todos" (Puebla: a city for all), while others displayed the slogan of an ethnic identity organisation stating: "Nuestras raíces viven" (our roots are alive). It appears that the distinctively ethnic element had sought, and had been given a place under the overall civic idea of "a city for all", though the relation between the major and the minor civil religions was not quite resolved.

Puebla has a number of famous churches, beginning with the Cathedral. Here there is a prominent alms box near the door surmounted

by the torso of a male person of most desperate appearance. Who is this sad figure who requires our support? The text indicates that these alms are destined for masses for deceased bishops and priests (*los señores obispos y sacerdotes difuntos*). The priests and bishops are expected to join the heavenly population in the end, but may need assistance in between times. Out in the streets of Puebla on the other hand, volunteers are organising relief parcels for the *damnificados*, i. e. the victims of the recent extensive floods. In short, the chantry principle remains firmly present in the religiosity promoted by the cathedral, but outside there is competition from a charity principle which appeals to civil solidarity and civil virtue. Such elements of civil religion often go unnoticed, except to the inveterate observer, suffering from uneven pavements, unaccustomed noise and all those other things which make fieldwork a hard rite.

Further illustrations may be drawn from the underground metro system in Mexico City itself. Metropolitan transport systems provide excellent opportunities for getting to know the symbolic orientations which the population of the city take for granted, as I learned years ago through thousands of rides in Tokyo. While mainly not "religious", my various friends in Mexico City were extremely well informed about the remarkably named metro stations in Mexico City such as "Insurgentes", "Revolución", "Niños Heroes" (meaning "Boy Heroes") and even "Indios Verdes" ("Green Indians")! On this basis, we considered how very significant the map of the Mexico City metro might be for reflecting on civil religion. This map however, is very hard to acquire. It cannot be bought. Rather, it is given away free of charge. From this we can at least deduce that *citizens* have a right to get it. Unfortunately however there were none left. A few days later there were also none left. In fact it became quite interesting to discover how many information stands there were at which it was impossible to acquire this map. In the end I managed to acquire a commercially offered metro plan in a little plastic wallet, for about five *dolares mexicanos*. It should be noted that *dolares mexicanos* are more correctly known as *pesos*, but by calling them *dolares* a statement is made on behalf of all Mexicans, rather like building Tokyo Tower to surpass the Eiffel Tower by a few metres.

Not a few of the metro station names are important symbols in Mexican civil religion, suspended in a state of institutionalised revolution, like "Insurgentes", memorialised in a major traffic route. The "Niños Heroes" are young men who romantically laid down their lives in a hopelessly lost war against "the north". An intellectual, atheist friend

was, thankfully, able to explain the historical associations of almost all the metro stations which we passed through, though it was hard to hear him speak above the noise of the train. Moreover he fully appreciated the civil force of many of these names. Only at the reference to "Indios Verdos" did he resist firmly. This really had no particular meaning, he argued, plausibly. In one sense the informant is always right, of course. Yet after all the years of talk about Mexican independence and identity, overcoming the ethnic contradictions etc., which are not entirely overcome, the question remains how there can possibly be any such thing as "Green Indians"! I wanted to go there. However, when the metro held still for a moment or two I was informed that "Green Indians" is nothing more than a rather boring sculpture in the middle of a very noisy traffic concourse, so that going there would be a complete waste of time.

This reminded me of Bloemfontein in South Africa, which was so boring, I had been told in 1994, that I was more or less forbidden to go there too. In fact, however, Bloemfontein is rather interesting. It all depends on what one is interested in. My own informal report on the matter was entitled "The battle of Bloemfontein", on the basis that I had to battle to get there, and that if the *new* South Africa could emerge at all, the decisive battle would have to be won in places like Bloemfontein, a classic city in the apartheid tradition. For example the local museum would need revision to make sure that all the varieties of *homo sapiens* get into the same part of the exhibition. At the time of observation, models of black humans were shown together with other high mammals, while whites did not appear until the next room. Outside the museums, it is in cities like Bloemfontein that the poor will have to be brought in to the university from the outlying shanties (a process which had already begun in 1994), and the rich will eventually have to live without their fences and their hidden guns.

But to return to the "Green Indians" of Mexico, it has to be revealed to readers not familiar with Mexico that they are no more and no less than a group of sculptured *Indios* who have oxidised and turned *green*! And after they had turned green, a metro station was named after them! What we can see from this is that they are so integrated in the overall pattern of symbolic names in the City of Mexico that they can be referred to by anybody as "Green Indians", indifferently, and yet so easily and affectionately, even while underprivileged persons of mainly "Indian" extraction are running up and down the trains trying to sell matches, electric batteries, or leaflets calling for political *change*! Although the

sculpture had no specific religious intention when it was created, I regard the "Indios Verdos" of Mexico City as an item which has been unconsciously and successfully incorporated into Mexico's civil religion. How would it be possible to observe and reflect upon this without the benefit of a comparative perspective?

Naturally there is a great deal more to civil religion in Mexico than the names of a few metro stations. Moreover some of it is very much more obvious and can easily be documented by means of posters printed for educational purposes. Some of them show the history of the Mexican flag, for example, incorporating all its religious and secular variations into one grand story. Others show portraits of nationally important figures such as Venustiano Carranza, Lazaro Cardenas and Benito Juarez, each emerging out of a glorificatory cloud.

While visiting a superb exhibition of artefacts from the now highly respected, but crushed Maya civilisation with three kindly students the conversation again turned to "civil religion". The subject arose because it was quite evident that an immense pride about Mayan culture has been building up in Mexico, and this pride could be regarded as an aspect of its current civil religion. Naturally, this is debatable. It is a matter for detailed cultural assessment by specialists. Now interestingly, although the concept of civil religion was not well known to the Mexican students, it was readily understood. While explaining it briefly, apart from drawing attention to the writings of Robert Bellah, I recalled the inscriptions around the immensely high ceiling of the Victorian Town Hall of the city of Leeds in northern England, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. Fortunately I had hastily noted them down, one day long ago, and was able to send them to Mexico later by e-mail. Here they are:

"Weave truth with truth / Forward / Goodwill towards men / Magna Charta / Deo Regi Patriae / Industry overcomes all things / God in the highest / In union is strength / Honesty is the best policy / Auspicious Melioris Aevi / Trial by jury / Labor omnia vincit."

In addition we find at the two ends of the hall the Psalmic quotations: "Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it." and "Except the Lord keep the city the watchman watcheth but in vain." Similarly, if with greater secularity, I found civil religion in a poster published by the Electoral Institute of Tlaxcala, advertising and describing in detail the following values:

Pluralidad
 Tolerancia
 Diálogo
 Respeto
 Igualdad
 Libertad
 Patriotismo
 Solidaridad
 Legalidad
 Participación

Above all, civil religion in Mexico is intensely visible in the unofficial, but national cult of the Virgen de Guadalupe as the "Queen of Mexico" and the "Empress of America", the astonishingly successful successor to the pre-conquest goddess Tonantzin. Guadalupanism is based on Juan Diego's visions of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico itself. Without going into any details here on this much documented subject, suffice it to add a quotation from Francisco de la Maza who wrote in his book *El Guadalupenismo Mexicano* (Mexico D. F. 1953):

"Guadalupanism and barock art are unique, authentic creations of the Mexican past, different from those of Spain and the rest of the world. They are the mirror, fabricated by the men of the colony in order to see and discover themselves." (El guadalupanismo y el arte barroco son las únicas creaciones auténticas del pasado mexicano, diferenciales de España y del mundo. Son el espejo que fabricaron los hombres de la colonia para mirarse y descubrirse a sí mismos.)

This quotation was exhibited magnificently at the conclusion of a substantial exhibition mounted by the Museo Nacional del Arte in 1999, directly opposite a painting of the installation of the virgin's *imagen*, the normatively revealed painting, at the sanctuary, in the year 1709. In other words, by means of this quotation the exhibition concludes, in full accord with the cultural tradition, by claiming its subject for the Mexican identity. This exhibition was concerned with the origins of New Spain, and covered the period from 1680 to 1750. The Guadalupan iconography appeared in diverse forms, suggesting quite prominently the correlation of the sun and moon, being male and female principles in the pre-Spanish mythology, and also showing the supporting role of the friars in getting the Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe installed as a focal symbol. This itself was part of a wider pattern of Maries, for example La Virgen

de los Zacatecos, La Virgen del Pueblito, and La Virgen de Loreto or Santa Maria de Nueva España.

This in turn throws up the question of the relationships between civil religion and other forms of religiosity in Mexico, which are extremely complex and interesting. Catholicism is a part of the spectrum, but is itself not monolithic. From the point of view of the study of religions Catholicism is undoubtedly polytheistic, at any rate in Mexico. Leaving aside other evidences, the relationship between Catholicism and Guadalupanism illustrates the point, for it can easily be argued that this particular *virgen* is a goddess in her own right. The matter has been further complicated by the recent visit of the Pope, who was evidently attempting to recoup the loyalty offered to this cult for the benefit of the Church based in Rome. A huge statue was erected on the plaza of the Guadalupe's Basilica, so there he stands himself, now, like a new member of the pantheon. Another significant element is the revival of interest in pre-conquest culture through dance, music and artefacts. This is in part ethnically based, but in part is a wider cultural movement on the part of the mixed urban population, who also have other interests. Guadalupanism plays a key role in mediating between the diverse elements across the whole spectrum, but these intricate relations cannot be explored further just now. For the moment this presentation will be concluded with a synoptic list of the main elements of Mexican religiosity, without regard to their mutual interactions. Any rounded view of Mexican religiosity, with special reference to civil religion would have to include consideration of the following elements:

- Pre-conquest elements
- Assimilated pre-conquest elements
- Resurgent pre-conquest elements
- Reinvented pre-conquest elements
- Evangelising Catholicism
- Architecturally dominant Catholicism
- Catholic polytheism
- Guadalupenismo as a vehicle of pre-conquest elements
- Guadalupenismo as Catholic inculturation
- Guadalupenismo as Mexican identity (Criollos)
- Guadalupenismo in fusion with civil religion
- Secularism (anti-Catholicism)
- Civil religion (including some of the above)
- Amuletism
- New Age themes
- Charismatic movement

No sooner are these elements mentioned than new questions arise, partly about the historical sequence, which could be charted without too much difficulty even by non-specialists in Mexican history. For analytical reasons however the above list does not attempt a historical sequence. Rather, the variations on pre-conquest elements and on Guadalupanism are grouped together for convenience of comparison. Resurgent and reinvented pre-conquest elements are of course modern, and the presence of New Age themes and the charismatic movement is relatively recent. The correlation of all these elements within the pattern is particularly difficult to follow, not least because the overall pattern has undergone various interesting changes from time to time. In some cases the various elements overlap and mediate with each other, while in others they conflict with each other as options. Thus what is going on at any one time, for particular population segments or even for individuals, has to be a matter for detailed study. The various elements may be activated as more or less obligatory features of the primal religious pattern, or they may be denied on intellectual or political grounds. It hardly needs to be stated that socio-economic status, and change in socio-economic status, play a part in determining the positioning of groups and individuals within the whole. *Resurgent* pre-conquest elements are of interest to the relatively deprived while *reinvented* pre-conquest elements are promoted by a mobile urban class. The charismatic movement is attractive to a wide range of people partly because of its direct appeal to the emotions and partly because it is in some cases rather well-funded from without. The thesis maintained here however is that in some sense, whether more or less clearly in consciousness, all the named elements are available within the overall range of Mexican religiosity. Moreover, whatever the degree of affection or disaffection, of involvement or alienation, the whole pattern taken together amounts to a certain cultural force which creates a Mexican identity. For example, the Catholic elements are part of the cultural identity even of those Mexicans who are ideologically anti-Catholic and therefore have a negative attitude towards them.

This extremely brief account of some interesting features of Mexican religion, and in particular of civil religion, is intended here only to illustrate further the methodological considerations which were developed at the beginning of the paper. These considerations, concerning the role of field work in the study of religions, will now be summarised by way of conclusion. There is an intricate relationship between participa-

tion, observation and reflection, and these do not necessarily have to be carried out in that sequence. Participant observation should be complemented, as appropriate, by *observant participation*. Both participant observation and observant participation require reflection in order to reach their completion as a research act. However, reflection may also occur at an earlier point in the sequence. Naturally, field work in this sense may be carried out by a person with specialised knowledge in one particular field. On the other hand, in order to develop comparative perspectives, it is desirable for the same processes to be attempted in other "fields", i.e. in countries and regions other than those in which the researcher has specialised knowledge. Needless to say, such attempts can only complement the researches carried out by specialists in those fields. Yet, as experience shows, unless specialists perform their own comparative work they may not always be sensitised to the same theoretical questions. The increasing irrelevance of a firm ideological or religious starting base for the specialist in the study of religions means that the old paradigm of "home" and "field" or "insider" and "outsider" is seriously weakened. By contrast, the recognition of the intricate relationship between participation, observation and reflection, wherever one is, and the increasing possibilities for mobility between diverse yet comparable fields amount to a new methodological paradigm for the study of religions.