BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE – AN INTRODUCTION

MAX DEEG

I'm a traveler, a pilgrim.
No one can hold or stop me,
not the bonds of joys and sorrows,
not the room I live in.
My load of cares pulls me down;
it too will be torn loose, will fall away.

(Rabindranath Tagore)[1]

Pilgrimage clearly is in. And this is not only true in the sense of a recent global "touristisation" of religiously, or otherwise ideologically relevant or inspired travelling (due to faster modern means of transportation and improved infrastructure and a "re-enchantment" of the world – as is demonstrated by the interest shown in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Europe[2]), but also in other places[3] and ways. The increased interest is also observable in the academic discourse about pilgrimage in the modern world and in the past, which becomes evident through the publications, general and specialized, on specific religious traditions or historical periods, as well as the sociological and anthropological interpretation of pilgrimage, and even on the blurred boundaries of the sacred and the profane in modern "pilgrimages" that have been published in the last two decades or so[4]. Even Anglican Christian theologians, themselves belonging to a religious tradition that did not really involve pilgrimage as a religious practice, made it a subject of theological reflection[5].

---

1 Tagore 2002: 117.

2 See, for instance, popular publications on Christian pilgrimage like Harpur 2002, or on major pilgrimage sites in different religious traditions, Westwood 2002.

3 Cp. the articles in Eade, Sallnow 1991; see also Hopper 2002.

4 See e.g. the comprehensive encyclopedia edited by Davidson & Gitlitz 2002. Examples for mostly anthropological and regional studies of pilgrimage are Crumrine, Morinis 1991.

5 Bartholomew, Llewelyn 2004; although the editors acknowledge pilgrimage as a transreligious phenomenon their definition at the beginning of the introductory chapter clearly emphasis their monotheistic and spiritual point of view: "Pilgrimage is a journey to a special and holy place as a way of making an impact on one's life with the revelation of God associated with that place." (p.xii) The editors emphasise that the book was motivated by a lack of "theological analysis" in the face of the growing interest in pilgrimage (p.xiv). Another theological attempt to redefine pilgrimage in a protestant context is Post, Pieper, Van Uden 1998. Another aspect of pilgrimage

Indeed, scholars concerned with pilgrimage more generally acknowledge the fact that it is a trans-religious phenomenon.

Although not reflecting the same degree of increase in publications on pilgrimage as in the Christian context[6], Buddhist Studies has also produced a decent amount of work on pilgrimage[7] and connected topics, such as sacred topography, relic cult, etc. A recent exhibition (and catalogue) on Buddhism and pilgrimage in a trans-traditional context[8] shows that this tradition is no exception when it comes to the importance of pilgrimage in its religious practice. The present collection of articles, resulting from a conference held at one of the most auspicious and sacred sites of Buddhism, Lumbinī, will certainly contribute some more facets to the enquiry into Buddhist pilgrimage by bringing together both specific expertise and general discourse on the topic.

Pilgrimage is a powerful concept and metaphor, not only in the Western world, but also - as the first stanza from a poem by the famous Bengal poet and Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) quoted above illustrates - in other cultures. Images and symbols of pilgrimage have influenced masterpieces of world literature[9] and shaped whole literary genres. Its metaphorical usages include individual quests of a spiritual nature ('life as a pilgrimage'[10]) or the forging of communal identities. Its pragmatic usages include the gaining, or preservation, of social status, as is the case of the *ḥājj* or Catholic "Wallfahrt", as well as, once again, broader communal functions, which may have ideological and/or political – in some cases even extremist[11] – undertones. The metaphorical use of pilgrimage to express the fundamental, existential, journey of life towards a soteriological goal is clearly the one that Tagore intended when writing his poem. An example of the communal

---

is – one is tempted to say – gender, but there has been remarkably little work done concentrating on this aspect: see e.g. on women's pilgrimage in late Medieval Christianity Craig 2009, and on modern Greek pilgrimage Dubisch 1995.

6 To name just a few publications: Nolan, Nolan 1992; Coleman, Elsner 2003 (see others in the bibliography).

7 This is especially true for Japanese pilgrimage (see, e.g., Davies 1983 & 1984; Drummond 2007; MacWilliams 1995 & 2000, Moerman 2005, Reader 2005; Rodríguez del Alisal, Ackermann, Martinez 2007, Nicholoff 2008), and Tibetan pilgrimage: see e.g. the work of Toni Huber (Huber 1999a & b, 2003, 2008), Dowman 1988, and the article by Katia Buffetrille in this volume.

8 Proser 2010.

9 On a comparison of Dante's *Divina comedia* and the Chinese Ming novel Xiyou-ji 西遊記, "Record of the Journey to the West" (popularized in the West by Arthur Waley's *Monkey*), see Yu 1983.

10 See, for instance, in the title of the the autobiography of the Chinese monk Zhenhua 真華 (1922-): Mair, Yü 1992 (the original Chinese *Canxue suotan* 參學瑣談 has no connotation to pilgrimage; the title of the German translation, "Zhenhua – Lehr- und Wanderjahre eines chinesischen Mönches", draws on the literary motif of Goethe's educational novel "Wilhelm Meister": Günzel 2000). Applied for the biography of the missionary-scholar, James Legge by Girardot who seems to have in mind the luminal aspect of pilgrimage when he calls Legge's life story a "transcultural pilgrimage" (2002: xxvii).

11 For instance, in the case of Devi 1958 it is Aryan-Nazi ideology.

function is, for instance, reflected in the saying "Europe is born on pilgrimage, and Christianity is her native tongue."[12], which is attributed to the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832, though it is still to be found, however, in his published writings). In a public context, the borders between the political and the religious aspects of pilgrimage may become blurred; for example, in the case in the mausoleum of chairman Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893-1976)[13].

It must be asked, however, if the opening of the term pilgrimage in academic discourse to the analysis of all kinds of travelling to 'special places' (such as football stadiums, residences of living or deceased celebrities)[14] will do it any favours. The Christocentric nature of the term pilgrimage has led to a critical refusal to adopt it in other religious contexts, as has been pointed out, in the context of possible continuity between Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Christian pilgrimage, by Elsner and Rutherford who state: "... the denial of the term pilgrimage (over)emphasizes difference (and hence change), while its employment (over-)emphasizes similarity and hence continuity."[15] My impression is rather that the opposite is true: we find a very wide and loose use of the term for all kinds of different phenomena by sociologists and some anthropologists[16]. I therefore am rather hesitant to yield the power of definition and application of the term to either "believers" or theoreticians only, and stride the middle way of keeping pilgrimage in the sphere of religion as a communal and socially-constructed category.

The papers in the present volume focus on the observable and traceable aspects of pilgrimage in mainly, but not exclusively Buddhist Asia (see James Hegarty's article on Hindu pilgrimage, which features Buddhists, but only as characters in Hindu pilgrimage narratives). They are the result of a workshop on Buddhist pilgrimage

12 "Europa ist auf der Pilgerschaft geboren, und das Christentum ist seine Muttersprache."

13 See the contribution of Rudolf G. Wagner, "Reading the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall in Peking: The Tribulations of the Implied Pilgrim", in Naquin, Yü 1992: 378-423. For another example of an entanglement of religious and political aspects of pilgrimage (Taiwan-South China) see Hatfield 2010.

14 See, for instance, most of the articles collected in Reader, Walter 1993, and Margry 2008. The re-conceptualisation of pilgrimage only works if religion is defined in a substantialist way and is left to the "subjective" emic self-perception: "all notions and ideas that human beings have regarding their experience of the sacred or the supernatural in order to give meaning to life and have access to the transformative powers that may influence their existential condition." (Margry 2008: 17). While this may work on the emic level, the fuzziness of terms and concepts like "sacred", "supernatural", "transformative powers" indicate the danger of shaping the term "religion", and in consequence "pilgrimage", into an empty cartridge that can be filled with almost everything. It seems useful to remember that some emic categorization makes clear distinctions between different types of travelling, e.g. *ḥājj* ("pilgrimage"), *hijra* ("migration"), and *riḥla* ("travel"): Netton 1995.

15 Elsner & Rutherford 2005: 2f.

16 A more traditional approach of keeping pilgrimage in the context of religion is taken by the papers collected in Morinis 1992.

held at an auspicious site, one of the four Great Places of Buddhist pilgrimage, Lumbinī, the birth place of the Buddha, in the confines of the Lumbinī International Research Institute (LIRI) between the 11th and 13th of January 2010. The aim was to bring together scholars working on different Buddhist cultures and traditions and in different disciplines like anthropology, archaeology, art history, religious studies and text philology. Unfortunately, due to personal and organisational difficulties some colleagues invited could not participate.[17] Their inability to participate and to contribute to this volume has created an unfortunate "gap", since it was the organizers' original intention – in the full awareness that it would be an impossible task to cover all the facets of Buddhist pilgrimage – to include Japanese pilgrimage and archaeological perspectives on Buddhist pilgrimage from early and medieval South Asia in the discussion.

If we speak of Buddhist pilgrimage, some questions arise quite naturally: What kind of characteristics, features, criteria, aspects, actions, terminology entitles us to apply the term pilgrimage to historical or contemporary phenomena? What is it that allows us to speak of Buddhist pilgrimage? What are the specific characteristics that distinguish Buddhist pilgrimage from other types of pilgrimages? Can we establish different types of pilgrimages in Buddhist tradition and how do they relate to the ones in other religious traditions?

It is interesting to see how the approach to pilgrimage in the study of religions has changed in roughly a century: from a rather uncritical acceptance of some general concept of pilgrimage, which is more or less shaped and influenced by the notions of the Muslim *ḥājj* or the Christian journeys to the Holy Land in Medieval times, to a more elaborated and defined theory. In James Hasting's famous *Encylopædia of Religion and Ethics*, for instance, no definition of pilgrimage is given at the beginning[18] and the presentation of the phenomenon is made in a kind of hierarchy, which seems to be based on the importance of pilgrimage in a given religious system: starting with the *ḥājj* in Islam[19], its regional predecessor in Babylonia, then

17 Janice Leoshko, University of Texas at Austin (art history of South Asia), Sherry Fowler, University of Kansas (Japanese art history).

18 Although the second subarticle "Pilgrimage (Babylonian)" by T.G.Pinches starts with an attempt at a definition: "By this word [pilgrimage] most people understand a journey to a holy place or shrine, either in the pilgrim's native land or abroad. The object of a pilgrimage is to obtain some benefit, material, moral, or spiritual, which the sanctity of the chosen spot is thought to transfer. It is true that pilgrimage may be undertaken because such a journey is regarded as meritorious, but the idea of the acquisition of divine favour, either directly or through a saint, is seldom absent. All kinds of benefits may be asked in return for the labour and travail, from the healing of a bodily infirmity to the gift of everlasting life." (in Hastings 1919: 12a).

19 For a more discussion of the *ḥājj* see, for example, the entry *ḥadjdj* in Lewis, Ménage, Pellat, Schacht 1986: 31b-38b., s.v.

Buddhist[20], Christian, Jewish, Indian, and Japanese[21] examples.

Over time, Cultural and Religious Studies have developed their own definitions of, and theories on, pilgrimage, which are meant to be generic and applicable to, if not defining of, the phenomenon. The most prominent one, though not undisputed, is Victor and Edith Turner's[22] theory and interpretation of pilgrimage as a movement from one's usual everyday-life environment to a "centre out there", which is demarcated by liminal departure and return[23]. Turner, basing his work on van Gennep's model of "rites de passage", assumes that all pilgrimage is a "social process", in which the pilgrim leaves his home in order to undertake a journey in a kind of social "liminal state", to a "sacred place", also called "the center out there", which is out of the sphere of the pilgrim's home community[24]. During the journey pilgrims – Turner, as a rule, sees pilgrimage as a communal experience of people moving to the same place – are positioned outside of their usual social context and form a (new) community of pilgrims, an "egalitarian, undifferentiated, and open-ended 'communitas'". Personally and internally transformed, the pilgrim finally returns to his own social context and community[25].

Despite its popularity and its compellingly clear structure, the shortcomings of Turner's model, when it is applied to other pilgrimage phenomena / realities, are obvious[26]: it was developed mainly in the context of Saint Mary pilgrimages in

20 The article by A.S.Geden (in Hastings 1919: 13b-18a) reflects the common knowledge and assumptions about Buddhism at his time: pilgrimage, not found as a religious "duty or advantage" in the Tripiṭaka – by which the Pāli canon and the "original" Buddhism of the Buddha himself is meant – is a "popular practice" – represented by the later Mahāyāna – by which the Buddhist mimicked an ancient Hindu practice. It is interesting to see how Japanese pilgrimage is treated in a separate sub-article "Pilgrimage (Japanese)", written by the Japanese scholar Masahiro Anesaki who recognizes the Buddhist origin and nature of Japanese pilgrimage but also, almost in an attempt to justify the separate entry, lists what he thinks are very specific Japanese forms of pilgrimage like "poetic" (aesthetic) traveling or the pilgrimage in search of revenge to be taken of an enemy, probably in order to emphasize the warrior-like nature of Japanes culture (in Hastings 1919: 27a-28a).

21 Hastings 1919: 10a.-28a., s.v.

22 Edith Turner's introduction to the lemma "Pilgrimage" in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol.11, 327ff., from the year 1987 has been reprinted (with an updated bibliography) in the second edition Jones 2005: 7144a-7148a. The lemma "Pilgrimage" by Friederike Hassauer in Stuckrad 2006: 1452-1456 (a translation of the German *Metzler Lexikon Religion*, published 1999-2002), reflects the influence of Turners' theory but disappointingly narrows the presentation completely on pilgrimage in the Latin Christian world.

23 Turner 1969, 1973, 1974, 1978.

24 Turner has elaborated on his conceptualization of liminality and community in two of his early articles "Liminality and Communitas", and "Communitas – Model and Process" (reprinted in Turner 1995).

25 A comprehensive and accepting description of Turner's theory can be found in Naquin, Yü 1992: 6f.

26 For a critique of Turners' concept see, e.g., Elsner, Rutherford 2006: 5.

Europe and Mexico, where the pilgrims do indeed depart from a home community and actually form, at the sacred place and for a short period, a new *communitas*. Although clearly applicable in some of the cases that are discussed in the present volume, there are other examples where there is no newly-formed community (see Buffetrille) and no distinct liminal phase, as clear as Turner would have it. Chinese monastic travellers, if we can call them pilgrims, at least on certain sections of their journey (see Deeg), for instance, travel mostly on their own (e.g. Xuanzang, Yijing) or in small groups (Faxian, Song Yun, Huisheng), and there is no indication of a specific liminal period or a preparatory phase or rite.

In a more general way pilgrimage is, as Stoddard upholds, "a journey to a sacred place motivated by religious devotion"[27], which is a definition that opens the scope of pilgrimage to individual religious journeys. It also makes pilgrimage more goal- and purpose-oriented than in Turner's concept, which very much emphasizes the processal character of pilgrimage and has relatively little to say about the pilgrimage sites, their structure, function or purpose. In this way, the concrete objects of veneration and the narrative or conceptual origins of local "sacredness", or the importance of a *locus*, are re-included in the discussion. Pilgrimage sits at a point between religious residency and itineracy: without movement there is no pilgrimage; without leaving somehwere there is no pilgrimage, but it is also the case that without an element of 'return' there is no pilgrimage. It has been argued that Buddhist monastics – and those in other religious traditions in similar contexts – left, at least ideally and ideologically, one community, the worldly one, to join another one. In this view monks are therefore engaged on a lifelong pilgrimage[28]; the Chinese expression for becoming or being a monastic, *chujia* 出家, "having left the house(hold)", clearly reflects this[29]. Buddhist monks (and nuns), however, are not pilgrims as such, not even when they assumedly were, in some distant past, roaming

27 Stoddard 2010: 2. On the metalinguistic level – "pilgrimage" used as both descriptive and analytic term in Religious and Cultural Studies – it does not make sense to open it up to much to metaphorical or generalized meaning as, for instance, in Davidson & Gitlitz 2002: xvii: "In its most basic sense, we conceive of pilgrimage as a journey to a special place, in which both journey and the destination have spiritual significance for the journeyer.", where also nothing is gained when the dimension of spiritual experience is introduced since the latter is only seizable in its linguistic or rhetoric shape.

28 Dietz 2005 emphasizes the itineracy of early Christian asceticism and monasticism, "travel as a practical way of visiting living and dead holy people, and as a means of religious expression of homelessness and temporal exile" (2f.). This could also be suggested for early Buddhist monasticism. The other notion of "perpertual pilgrimage ... in an allegorical form" does certainly not apply to early Buddhism, especially its use in early Christianity was certainly facilitated by the semantic conotation of "homelessness and foreignness" in the Latin term *peregrinus*.

29 The semiotic similarity of the Buddhist ordination (Skt. *pravrajyā*, Pāli *pabbajjā*) and monastic lifestyle have already been highlighted by Geden in his article on Buddhist pilgrimage in Hastings 1919: 13b.f.

mendicants. This is because the concept of a spatial destination and of veneration is not crucial for this lifestyle. Arguing from another angle, monks and nuns can go on pilgrimage, just as any other layperson can, and they normally do so in the same way and with the same rules and customs.

Both definitions, Turner's more specific one and other broader ones along the lines of Stoddard, refer to two important aspects of pilgrimage, which could be called temporal and spatial[30]. Using these terms and concepts at the same time breaks through the sequential analysis of the phenomenon as consisting of a period of movement[31], a period of arrivedness, and another period of movement, as suggested in Turner's model, in favour of a more dynamic understanding of pilgrimage, according to which the borders between these three phases become blurred, but at the same time interactive.

As is well known, the term pilgrimage – and its cognate and correspondent terms in other Western languages e.g. German *Pilger(fahrt)*[32], French *pèlerinage*, etc. – is derived from Latin *peregrinus*, "foreigner, stranger"[33]. It reflects the general view and the self-understanding of the pilgrim as someone travelling through a foreign land, which is (far) away from home. It does not indicate any religious goal or purpose in itself, The word clearly reflects its medieval context, in which making a pilgrimage to the sacred sites of Christianity indeed meant to visit places outside of one's normal cultural and social environment.

There is a general agreement that pilgrimage is a phenomenon found in almost all religious traditions[34]. In the Christian tradition, pilgrimage is practiced since the

30 On the relation between time and space in Thai Buddhist pilgrimage cp. Keyes 1975.

31 On this aspect of pilgrimage – although pilgrimage is taken there in a very broad way – see Coleman, Eade 2004.

32 German is, as far as I know, the only language with two words for pilgrimage: "Pilgerfahrt" and "Wallfahrt". The word "Pilger" is derived from a Middle-Latin loanword *pelegrinus*, dissimilated from Latin *peregrinus*, "foreigner", and "Wallfahrt" is a derivation of the Old High German verb *wallôn*, "to roam (abroad)". It should be noticed that the German word "Wallfahrt" generally seems to refer to institutionalized travelling, often in group, to a sacred site, but can also mean an individual journey. See also Brückner, s.v. *Pilger, Pilgerschaft*, in Kirschbaum 1968: 440: "Der Wallfahrer gehört größeren Gemeinschaften an, auch wenn er seinen kurzen Weg allein zurücklegt." ("The 'Wallfahrer' is part of larger communities although he pursues his short path on his own."), who admits, however, that "P.[ilger] u. Wallfahrer bisw.[eilen] Synonyma sind." ("Sometimes p[ilgrims] and 'Wallfahrer' are synonyms.") Exactly – and, I am afraid, incorrectly – the opposite explanation for Wallfahrt being a more distant journey and "Pilgerfahrt" referring to a more "local pilgrimage" is given in Davidson, Gitlitz 2002: 476b, s.v. "Pilgerfahrt". Too much focus on length and frequency of the journey is put in the differentiation of Naquin, Yü 1992: 3: "German differentiates between short and more frequent pilgrimages (Wallfahrt) and longer, rarer ones (Pilgerfahrt)."

33 Georges 1913-1918: 1582, s.v. *peregrinus*; 1581, s.v. *peregrinatio*, "travelling, staying abroad"; 1580, s.v. *per-egrē*, "outside of town, outside of the country".

34 On pilgrimage in the different religious traditions see Chélini, Branthomme 1983 (Christianity); Chélini, Branthomme 1987 (other religions and regions); Chélini, Branthomme 2008 (a slightly

fourth century[35]. Except from the pilgrimages to the Holy Land[36], to the sites in and around Jerusalem connected with the life of Jesus, to Rome as the See of the pope, and to Santiago de Compostella in Northern Spain, which became trans-regional for pilgrims, there were locally limited pilgrimages to regional sitesm, which developed quickly over time[37]. A similar tendency of the establishment of trans-regional – in the sense of referring back to the origin of the religion or its founder – and more local pilgrimages is found in other religious traditions, including Buddhism[38].

Pilgrimages are necessarily linked to a *locus sacer*[39], or, in some cases with a whole system of such places (see Hegarty), which can develop into a structure and sequence reflected in pilgrimage itineraries. These sacred sites are usually connected to a numinous or sacred being or entity, or, in the case of founder religions, with the biography of the founder or an eminent saint, be it trans-traditional[40] or more local, of the religious tradition[41]. Mary Campbell, in relation to Christian pilgrimage, has aptly emphasized this role of places for pilgrimage: "Places are referred to as witnesses of those events and people, and pilgrims in turn are witnesses of those places seen *as* events."[42] Buddhist pilgrimage can equally be interpreted as "a journey to see the Buddha" (Strong), or some other important personality or event incorporated

unbalanced collection of papers in regional terms, with only one contribution on Asian – Japanese – religion); Coleman, Elsner 1995; Stoddard, Morinis 1997; Naquin, Yü 1992: 1ff. "Introduction".

35 See Angenendt 1997: 208ff. On the debate on pilgrimage in late antiquity see Bitton-Ashkelony 2005.

36 See Chareyron 2005.

37 On pilgrimages to Santiago, Rome and Jerusalem see Von Saucken 1995 and 1999; for Christian pilgrimage in general see Chélini, Branthomme 1982; on crusades and pilgrimage see Dupront1987: 239ff. On the different aspects of Medieval Christian pilgrimage see Sumption 2003, Webb 2001 & 2002.

38 In the Nepalese context of the Kathmandu valley, the so-called Nepāla-maṇḍala, Nick Allen has made a distinction between transregional and purely regional pilgrimages; see also Gellner 1992: 189ff.

39 On holy places in different religious traditions see Tworuschka 1994. One of the earliest Western overview on pilgrimage places in the three main Indian traditions, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain, is Helmut von Glasenapp's book (von Glasenapp 1928). Bharati 1963 discusses Hindu pilgrimage in general, and Bhardwaj 1973 is a sociological study on Hindu pilgrimage places; on a case study (Hardwar) see Lochtefeld 2010. Studies of religious sites and areas have become more prominent in recent years;see for instance the study of one of the Chinese sacred mountains, Nanyue 南嶽, by Robson 2009.

40 A pilgrimage site or a network of places may be claimed and used by more than one religious tradition – without necessarily leading to violent competition or appropriation as in the well-known case of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhyā by Hindu fanatics claiming it to be Rāma's birthplace in 1992 – which may or may not share a common narrative. See e.g. Jerusalem as a sacred Muslim place: Elad 1999.

41 Except sacred sites in the so-called tribal religions which are thought to originate themselves in a resident *spiritus locus*.

42 Campbell 1991: 19.

in a place. What is "seen" then is often a place to which a constitutive narrative is linked, be it from the beginning of *post ex facto*, and this narrative is very often, but not exclusively, the stabilizing element of a pilgrimage site (Hegarty). In some cases pilgrimage, can even be defined as the "ritual re-enactment of religious narratives"[43] on the basis of "narrative maps".[44] Narratives – and historical local names connected to them – can be so powerful that pilgrimage sites may shift when a new identification is made or becomes authoritative.[45]

Turner's "centre out there" therefore bears more aspects than just spatiality; one could even say that the spatial function of a pilgrimage site, a centre, to which all pilgrims and visitors are orienting themselves and are striving toward, is constituted – "empowered", as it were – by its connection with a narrative, which makes it what it is. The narratives linked to a sacred place may have a tendency to concretisation in the sense of "anthropomorphisation" or "euhemerisation" of the rather abstract idea or divine basis of a sacred place: Vrindāvana in Mathurā reflects the places where Kṛṣṇa acted like a young charming boy, and the story of the Svayaṃbhūnath *caitya* in the Kathmandu valley only gets its meaning, I would claim, through the involvement of human or semi-human beings like Mañjuśrī, or the anonymous people who constructed a *caitya* around the primordial and abstract *svayaṃbhū*. This is without excluding other, earlier, layer of religious meaning, what can often be traced, but is not always documented[46].

The stability of a site – the spatial aspect of pilgrimage – and its connection with a narrative – the spatio-temporal aspect – often depends on "materialisation" in the form of an object or several objects. It seems as if there is a hierarchy of "objectivation" of a pilgrimage site; the most basic factor of stability is the erection of an architectural structure, like a temple or a church *in situ*. These architectural structures mark the places as "sites of memory"[47], and in some cases this underlying concept distinguishes

43 Elizabeth A. Castelli in "Editor's Preface" of Feldhaus 2003.

44 Huber 1999a: 6.

45 The mountain Pañcaśikhaparvata as the abode of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī became identified as mountain Wutai-shan 五臺山 in China and caused pilgrimages of even Indian Buddhists to the Middle Kingdom: see Sen 2003: 76ff. The modern archaeological discovery and identification of Buddhist sites like Bodhgayā, Sārnāth, and Lumbinī linked with the major events in the life of the Buddha did not only cause their reestablishment as pilgrimage places for the Buddhist oikumene in the 19th and early 20th century, but also led to a reorientation of Tibetan pilgrimage from one site to a new one: see the discussion in Huber 2008.

46 For instance, in the case of the Svayaṃbhūnāth *caitya*, one of the most prominent religious sites in the Kathmandu valley, Alexander von Rospatt has argued that the Buddhist complex of architecture, ritual and narrative superseded an earlier, pre-Buddhist religious site: see von Rospatt. This is also possible in other cases, especially when the narratives are "conversional", i.e. reflecting the defeat of an earlier religious stratum like in the case of the so-called oak of Donar by the Christian missionary , etc. On the transformation of a pagan temple, the Parthenon, into a church and centre of pilgrimage in the Medieval period see Kaldellis 2009.

47 "Stätten des Gedenkens": see Greschat in Tworuschka 1994: 139.

them from other religious buildings or structures, such as is the case for Buddhist *stūpa*s or *caitya*s, or the sepulchral shrines of Muslim saints, which are, in whatever form they may have developed, containers of the relics of a religiously significant individual, which then represent his or her presence. More concrete are the "traces" of the narrative or of specific events mentioned in it. These may be natural features of the landscape (a rock, a tree, etc.), the origin of which is related in the narrative. The most concrete object linking the narrative's *in illo tempore* with the present of the pilgrims is an object that represents the sanctifying action in the past. This can be an artifact like a statue (the giant Jain Gommaṭeśvara statue at Śravaṇabelgoḷa, or the Jagannātha at Puri) or symbol (e.g., a Śiva *liṅga*[48]), or a painting (like the one of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa in Poland[49]). More "convincing" are relics since they do, to a greater extent, represent the physical aspect of the narrative: its protagonist and his or her actions.

In the more general context of Buddhism, the visit to a sacred site does not lead to the final goal, liberation, but it is considered to provide religious merit (Skt. *puṇya*, Chin. *gongde* 功德, *fu* 福) and may serve as a "catalyst" for final emancipation by causing a rebirth in "pole position". In the past, Buddhist pilgrimage has been ascribed as a typical activity of laypeople (*upāsaka*s and *upāsikā*s)[50] not least because in the *locus classicus* - the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra - the Buddha only recommends the visit of the sacred places for laypeople. Indeed, the oldest report of a concrete religious journey is the one of the layman, king Aśoka (reported in the Aśokāvadāna). It should not be overlooked, however, that pilgrimage was nonetheless an important means of acquiring merit through contact with a sacred place, a sacred object, such as, as discussed above, the sacred "trace", which is to say, the relic (Skt. *śarīra*) etc. The acquiring of merit by visits to sacred sites, often marked by a *stūpa* or *caitya*, is reflected in donation inscriptions, where the donor makes a gift to the site and, more specifically, either to the local *saṅgha* or the *stūpa* itself. Inscriptions at the oldest known Indian *stūpa* sites (Sāñcī, Barhūt) indicate that these places were important pilgrimage sites and document some of the activities pilgrims were engaged in. Inscriptions – sometimes in the form of graffiti – are also important sources for the existence of pilgrimages in areas where no direct records of these activities are extant (see e.g. Porció's paper on Uighur pilgrim inscriptions).

48 There are, of course, also examples of natural objects as *liṅga*s like the famous ice *liṅga* of Amarnath (Jammu and Kashmir).

49 Between artifact and relic is the "shadow of the Buddha" in Nagarahāra which the Buddha is said to have left behind in a cave in order to tame a violent *nāga*: this picture is at the same time created but also, like a relic, a physical remainder of the holy agent, the Buddha. It was famous enough in the Buddhist world of the first half of the first millennium to even have an impact on Chinese Buddhists: see Zürcher 2007: 224f. and 242f.

50 The view that for Buddhists pilgrimage only constitutes an option and not a duty is undoubtedly correct but this is true for all religious traditions – even for the *ḥājj* in Islam. A differentiation of pilgrimage practice between popular religion (lay religion) and monasticism cannot be construed in the light of the historical sources.

Reports on, or records of, pilgrimages can only be expected to come from scriptural cultures, but even in this case they do not necessarily exist: in the Hindu context (see Hegarty), even in Islam, despite the fact that pilgrimage (*ḥājj*) is a religious duty, not to speak of the ancient cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, etc., no real (individual) pilgrim records can be found[51]. One of the reasons for this may be that the "actors", i.e. the pilgrims, did not belong to the strand of society who could write. In a lot of cases the ones capable of writing, the religious specialists or "priests", were responsible for the administration of the pilgrim sites and, at best, produced ritual manuals of the schemes and structures of pilgrimages and rites at the pilgrimage place, which normatively followed the more general rules prescribed by the tradition for these occasions.

Although a lot of emphasis is put in modern research on the aspect of experience of the pilgrimage reports on this very aspect from historical periods are rather rare. What one can find are manuals for the practical and infrastructural sides of pilgrimages, as well as descriptive itineraries, which describe how to reach certain places and what is to be found there. Medieval Christian pilgrimage texts of travelling to the Holy Land were written as a kind of travel guides and as a literary genre conveying knowledge or spiritual guidance[52]. In Europe, Christianity had been consolidated as the only accepted faith for centuries, but the Holy Land was paradoxically - although partly under European control for some time during the Middle Ages - heathen territory. Still, for a long time, a Christian *geographia sacra* was established by means of the information contained in the New Testamant; other than the well-known places, where Jesus lived, there were no other sites to be discovered or described. This may explain the "topicalisation", "literarisation", fictionalisation or "epicisation" of the extent genre of pilgrimage literature, which continues through the whole Middle Ages up to the Reformation[53] – one of the paradigmatic examples being John de Mandeville's fictive "report" of his pilgrimage. A clearly delineated sacred topography or geography, which was extended, legitimized by legends, and structured by a network of *stūpas*, while of key importance in the Buddhist context, obviously did not exist in the Christian context[54].

---

51 It is striking that the first report of a *ḥājj* claiming individual and personal experience comes from a Westerner, the notorious-famous Richard Burton (Burton 1857). A modern Buddhist individual pilgrimage report is the Nevārī Theravāda monk Dharmaloka's record of his journey to Mount Wutai 五臺 in China in order to see the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī (Dharmaloka 1980).

52 These itineraries have been studied more by Western medievalists in recent times; cp., for example, Huschenbett 1985, 1987, 1991. For the projected landscapes in these itinieraries which can be compared with the one created in the legend of king Aśoka (in the Aśokāvadāna: see Strong's article in the present volume) see Leyerle 1996.

53 On the rediscovery or reinvention of Palestine as a goal for Christian pilgrimage in the 19th century see Rogers 2011, and on its representation in (mainly Protestant) American litareture see Yothers 2007.

54 Cp. Brückner's article *Pilger, Pilgerschaft* in Kirschbaum 1968: 439ff., who distinguishes between three kinds of concrete spatial pilgrimage in the Christian context: the *peregrinatio ad*

Places of pilgrimage – despite all the popular emphasis on natural "places of power" – are created by humans and receive their legitimation through narratives of origin and of their effectiveness through miracles and the soteriological advantages ascribed to them[55]. Beside the social aspect of pilgrimage, the individual goal is definitely the direct or indirect benefits gained by it, such as: the accumulation of merit; the hope of a better position in the afterlife or upon rebirth; or more mundane and inner-wordly reward, which might include such things as: relief from disease; the conception of a child; or the attainment of wealth and happiness, etc. The attractiveness and therefore continuity of a pilgrimage place is very much dependent on its functionality, which can be described as a combination of accessability, infrastructure and proof of efficacy.

The process of travelling – Turner's liminal phase – to the pilgrimage places is dependant on socio-economic conditions. Claims have been made that the boundaries between pilgrimage (as a religious phenomenon) and tourism[56] (as an originally profane and mass-oriented way of travelling) have become blurred[57] – and they certainly have and may never, except for the sheer quantity of travellers, have been as distinct as some have assumed.[58] In modernity, through faster and more convenient and safe ways and means of travelling, it is difficult to qualify such a distinction since it depends on parameters like "spirituality", "truth", etc.[59], which can neither be quantified nor located concretely beyond the rhetoric of texts in historical contexts. So, although a distinction between these parameters does not seem possible and useful from a descriptive and analytic point of view, a too open concept of pilgrimage, which 'buys into' the use of the term in clearly non-religious – or "quasi-religious" – contexts

---

loca sancta, pilgrimages to Palestine and the sites ascribed to the life of Jesus, starting with Constantine and fully established from the sixth century; journeys of and praying ("Buß- und Betefahrten") to places outside of Palestine such as Rome and Santiago de Compostella developed as alternatives and sometimes in a kind of competition with these "Ur"-places; the third form then is the *concursus populi*, das eigentliche Wallfahrtswesen *"an Gräber-, Gnadenbild- od. Wunderkulten, Heiltums- u. Ablaßkonkurse, Rogationsfeiern u. Pflichtprozessionen"*. One can argue that pilgrimages in other religious traditions, including Buddhism, can be categorized in a similar way, as has been done by Allen 1996.

55 This is also true for recently formed or forming pilgrimage phenomena: see Dubisch, Winkelman 2005.

56 On the different aspect and connection of "religious travel and tourism" see Rajand, Morpeth 2007, and also Swatos, Tomasi 2002, Swatos 2006.

57 See Badone, Roseman 2004.

58 This would render the Turners' often-quoted dictum "a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist" almost a truism.

59 No one will, for instance, doubt the fact that the origin and propagation of pilgrimages and pilgrimage places have a political dimension as well – e.g. Aśoka's pilgrimage though we can only speculate about what the real motifs were – without becoming less "true" or authentic. For the Islamic context cp. Bianchi 2004, but similar motivation can, of course, also be found in, e.g., the revival of the Buddhist pilgrimage places like Bodh Gayā and Sārnāth through the Buddhist "ecumenical" movement in the 19th century.

as well as in metaphorical ways, does not seem to help to come to terms with it on an academic level. Here "religious" is, of course, not to be taken in a substantialist way but in the sense of socio-cultural practice and contextualisation; whether a person or a group of people travelling along the pilgrimage route of Santiago di Compostella or paying visits to the sacred places of Buddhism in Northern India may be called pilgrim(s) or not is as much determined by their inner and outer motivations and intentions as by the historically and culturally defined *via* and *locus*. Offering obeisance to the memorial or grave of a celebrity does (not yet?) combine these two aspects and is only pilgrimage in a metaphorical sense[60]. The examples discussed in this volume all reflect, without doubts, these two dimensions.

Relics and *stūpa*s, as the central points of pilgrimage sites, are, as John Strong notes, contradictory in meaning and feelings they rouse in visitors: they are the visible symbols and signs of "the present absence" of the Buddha. In this function they may evoke the feeling of, and insight into, the impermanence (*anityatā*) of the worldy "reality". Relics in all religious traditions have, however, another important capability linked to their mulipliety and transportability: they can create new pilgrimage places by being "discoverd" or relocated.

This "expansion" or "mulitplication" of pilgrimage sites also clearly happens in due course of historical development of Buddhism. Kōichi Shinohara has distinguished three ways of "constructing Buddhist sacred places" which are all relate to the life (or lives) of the Buddha: 1. "converted local deities", 2. "movable objects (relics and objects) used by the Buddha", and 3. "previous Buddhas and previous lives of the Buddha"[61]. In the wider context of the establishing of Buddhist sacred topography and potential pilgrimage places, these categories of the "sanctification" of a place, which partly overlap (e.g. in relics left at a place of visitation or of a particular action, such as the many hair and nail relics), can and, indeed, must be extended.

While the established pilgrimage places in the heartland of the religion, the sites connected to the life of the Buddha (and his major disciples) preserved their prominence[62], other regions also claimed their share of sacred sites. This was achieved either through the creation of narratives of a visit of the Buddha to the region; examples for this are the Buddha's three visits to the island of Laṅkā according to the Pāli *vaṃsa*s, or his visit of, and activities in the Northwest as reported in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya e.g. the conversion of "local deities" like the *nāga*s Apalāla and Gopāla. The visit, action, or residency of an eminent Buddhist saint is also very often claimed as sign of the sacredness of a place, especially if the place in question was distant from the Buddhist heartlands. A substantial number of foundation legends certainly established pilgrimage places in the respective region in this way

60 According to this definition cases like some of the ones discussed in Reader, Walter 1993 may be called "pilgrimage" in a metaphorical way at best.

61 Shinohara 2003: 91.

62 And were re-established to this status from the 19th century onwards; see e.g. Chan 2001.

(Madhyantika in Kaśmīr, Śāriputra in Khotan, Śāntikaradeva in Nepal). The third of Shinohara's categories consists of two subcategories: locating existing but yet unlocalized narratives about the earlier lives of the Buddha (*jātaka*); the Indian Northwest, Greater Gandhāra, was a prominent region where former births of the Buddha were localized. Historically older, obviously, were sites ascribed to, or linked with, Śākyamuni's predecessors, the various Buddhas of the past; this is reflected in the form of the *stūpa*s of the Buddhas Kanakamuni and Krakucchanda (which were located by Chinese visitors near Śākyamuni's hometown, Kapilavastu, or Kāśyapa near Śrāvastī, but historically substantiated and brought back to a period quite close to the lifetime of the Buddha by the Aśokan pillar inscription of Nigalisāgar near Kapilvastu and the *stūpa* and pillar stump of Gotihawa nearby).

Shinohara's third category, 'objects', are clearly the most transportable and translocatable resource for the establishing of new sacred sites endowed with miraculous powers, which may consequently become pilgrimage places[63]. They are normally taken to be corporeal remainders of, or items left behind by, a religiously eminent person – they are thus 'relics' (Skt. *śarīra*, Chin. *sheli* 舍利, Tib. *sku*). Relics are clearly more prominent in Buddhism and Christianity[64] than in other religious traditions, and this may well be linked to the important role that the "founder" of the tradition, and his successors, played in the development of the religion. Relics are the most tangible representation of the presence of the sacred past in the present and are therefore treated with considerable respect (as well as being very much an economic concern) in the two traditions. Both Christian and Buddhist reliquaries provide ample enough testimony of this.[65] Relics and a given place are normally connected by means of a narrative explaining how and why the relic came to that particular location and what meaning it has for it.

Relics may claim that they were left at the place where they are venerated by the person, from whom they originate, but in order to provide for places of pilgrimage considerably beyond the region of the religion's origin they have to be divisable and movable. In Christianity, the dividing of relics into smaller portions was not seen as

63 Fontein 1995: 21, correctly points out that the exploration of Buddhist relics and miracle tales could benefit from research done on Christian relic and miracle belief. In this respect still important is Pfister's two-volume monography *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum*, Gießen 1909-12, and Beissel's 1976 book *Die Verehrung der Heiligen und ihrer Reliquien in Deutschland*, but also the more recent works by Legner 1995, and Angenendt 1994. Comprehensive and extensive discussion of the Buddhist relic cult in general is found in the articles in Germano, Trainor 2004 (including a comparison between Buddhist and Christian relic veneration by John Strong); on specifically the Indian Buddhist cult of relic see the books by Trainor 1997, and Strong 2004; on relics in Chinese Buddhism see Kieschnick 2003: 29ff.

64 Cp. Strong's article *Relics* in EoR, Bd.12, 275b.ff. On relics of Christ see Nickell 2007.

65 On early Christian reliquaries see Noga-Banai 2008; Chaganti 2008. Buddhist reliquaries from India are presented and discussed in Willis 2000, and more specfically from Gandhāra in Jongeward, Errington, Salomon, Baums 2012.

problematic and *translatio*, the moving of a relic from one place to another, from its place of origin e.g. from Jerusalem to Europe[66], was a normal ritual procedure. This is well known in Buddhism as well; the Ur-legend of dividing relics in the Buddhist tradition is, of course, the division of his corporeal relics, the ashes, the bones, and the teeth, after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and cremation, which is then extended and expanded in the story of Aśoka's opening of the original *stūpa*s and the distribution of the relics found therein in forty-eight thousand *stūpa*s over the whole of Jambudvīpa.

Another way of transferring a relic is theft, known as *furta sacra* in the Christian context[67]. There are examples of relic thefts in the Buddhist context as well, such as of the tooth relic in Śrī Laṅkā as reported in the *vaṃsa*s, or the attempted theft of the Buddha's almsbowl recorded by Faxian in his travelogue which finally led to the translation of the object to Puruṣapura. The multiplication of relics and therefore of potential pilgrimage places is connected with the growth of hagiographical legends and literature[68], and this is specifically true for the so-called "secondary relics", i.e., for objects which were in the possession of sacred persons or were used and touched by them ("relics of contact")[69]. This kind of relic was obviously easier to get hold of than the so-called "primary relics", i.e. corporeal parts of an authoritative person. It was in the interest of regions and areas that did not originally belong to the original or "orthodox" sacred geography to incorporate themselves (and to participate in the economic benefits of being a pilgrimage place[70]) by claiming such relics.

Relics are, of course, too precious to be kept and displayed without proper protection, and it is not only the reliquary that enshrines and holds the precious item or substance. Already in the Mahāparnirvāṇa Ur-legend, it is the sepulchral mound of a world-ruling king, a *cakravartin*, in which the relics should be enshrined, a *stūpa* (or *caitya*), which fulfils this function. The architectural form of the *stūpa* (Pāli *thūpa*, Chin. *ta* 塔, Tib. *chos rten*) indicates that the relic was not necessarily meant to be physically touched or seen. The importance of the *stūpa* was such that it could become an object of veneration or representation of the presence of the sacred itself[71]. Whether or not a *stūpa* contained a relic could become secondary, as the famous examples of

66 Cp. v. Dobschütz in Kirschbaum 1968: 538f., s.v. Reliquien; Legner 1995: 11ff. On *translatio* of relics in Early Christianity see Noga-Banai 2008: 130ff.

67 On the theft of relics in Medieval times see Geary 1978.

68 John Mandeville, for instance, reports – against the testimony of the New Testament – that Jesus wore several crowns; he also mentions that the German emperor have the shaft of the spear with which Christ was stabbed when hanging on the cross and that the Byzantine emperor and Paris claimed to be in possession of the spearhead of this very spear (Bale 2012: 11).

69 Term by Dobschütz: a.a.O., 538.

70 John Mandeville, for instance, speaks of the miraculous grave of the apostle John on the island of Patmos (Bale 2012: 14), not to mention the many tombs of earlier Biblical figures (e.g. Adam's, Abraham's, etc.; Bale 2012: 36) and later saints in different regions of the Christian oikumene.

71 See the importance given to the construction of the *stūpa* or *caitya* in the Laṅkan *vaṃsa*s (Berkwitz 2007), or the Nepalese Svayaṃbhūpurāṇa.

Sāñcī and Bārhūt[72] show – and this seems to be a difference to the Christian relic cult, where the reliquary or the architectural structure containing (or purported to contain) the relic does not become the object of veneration. In any instance it is, however, almost insignificant – or is not questioned – if a relic is "genuine" or "true"[73].

Relics and their *stūpa*s may constitute the oldest centres of pilgrimage in Buddhism, but they do not do so exclusively. There are cases in which pre- or non-Buddhist sites were appropriated as Buddhist pilgrimage places, and in some instances places were deliberately declared new places for pilgrimage (before a narrative can develop)[74]. Natural sites, routes of traffic and commerce may become pilgrimage sites or routes.

The articles collected in the present volume reflect many of the aspects of pilgrimage discussed above and show the value of the study of Buddhist traditions for topics such as the present one. Some of them present new, or newly interpreted, data on Buddhist pilgrimage in different cultural traditions (Wang, Porcio), while others throw new light on well-known sources and themes (Deeg, Strong). Understudied, or rather under-received, areas like Thai pilgrimage (Skilling / Pakdeekham) and traces of pilgrimage in Uygur culture (Porcio) are discussed and can be connected with studies from the rich Tibetan tradition (Buffetrille, Ramble). Different aspects of movement and travelling (the 'liminal' in Turner's model) and the structure and development of the goal, that is to say, of the sacred site or sites (Turner's "center out there'), as they are explored in this volume, give a multilayered picture of Buddhist pilgrimage.

The volume also sets Buddhist pilgrimage in its broader (South-)Asian context and starts with some reflections and considerations of Hindu pilgrimage. James Hegarty discusses pilgrimage in medieval Hindu literature with an eye on its adversarial relationship with other South Asian religions, such as Buddhism. Hegarty investigates the notion of pilgrimage in the great epic Mahābhārata and in the Kaśmīran Nīlamatapurāṇa and duly emphasizes the connection between place (*tīrtha*) and narrative. He points out that the epic and purāṇic visits to pilgrimage places and their recitation / commemoration "are being constituted as functionally equivalent to Vedic ritual activity" – even quantifying the equivalence in terms of merit –, and thereby reflect the high importance of the pilgrimage. Hegarty's remark that the main narrative of the epic is embedded in an account of pilgrimage (of Ugraśravas) may be compared with the account of Aśoka's pilgrimage to the important sites of the Buddha's life in the Aśokāvadāna (see Strong). This highlights the importance of the pilgrimage site as places of the "significant past". Hegarty points out that, in the Mahābhārata, the performative power of a *tīrtha* narrative is almost able to substitute

72 On Bhārhut see now Guyton 2003.

73 See Fontein 1995: 21: "The authenticity of *śarīra*, ..., is largely irrelevant."

74 See, for example, the modern case of the establishment of the Maitreya pilgrimage by the Japanese Buddhist lay-movement Reiyū-kai 霊友会 to a mountain called Miroku-san 弥勒山: Hardacre 1988.

real pilgrimage. In the Nīlamatapurāṇa Hegarty traces the continuity with the established *tīrtha* ideology of the Mahābhārata, but also clearly shows the mixture of trans-regional sacred topography and a regionalisation which is paralleled in the juxtaposition of Vedic ritualism and local *nāga*-cult. With this "localisation" or "regionalisation" a phenomenon is highlighted, which is also the precondition of the establishment of local and regional pilgrimage traditions in Buddhist cultures outside of the Buddhist heartland. In the Kaśmīran source Hegarty also sees a shift from the exclusive ritualism (and perhaps 'narrativism') of the epic to a functional emphasis on the image of the deity, which reflects a new paradigm of pilgrimage practice which renders, one could argue, pilgrimage more "physical" again. He stresses the point that the sources' (re)interpretation of pilgrimage and the narratives linked to pilgrimage places has to be mapped against an engagement and contest with Buddhism (and, in the earliest period, other *śramaṇa* movements) – a reminder that Buddhist pilgrimage traditions also did not develop in isolation from their religious, social and cultural environments.

A historical and conceptual introduction to Buddhist pilgrimage is provided by John Strong's contribution, in which he discusses the four (respectively the extended eight) main pilgrimage sites of Buddhism that are linked to the life of the Buddha: the place of birth in Lumbinī; the place of enlightenment in Bodhgayā; the place of the first sermon in Sārnāth; and the place of the *parinirvāṇa* in Kuśinagara (or: *-nagarī*) all of which are mentioned in a famous passage of the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra. Strong argues that, if this passage is interpreted in a wider context, it may point to an earlier pilgrimage tradition during the Buddha's lifetime, where the monks visited the Buddha, in a way reminiscent of the general Indian form of veneration of an important religious leader or a deity by getting *darśan* ("view"), after the rainy season retreat.[75] He makes a point for reversing the historical development of the four Buddhist pilgrimage sites, suggesting that in the earlier scheme it was the four so-called secondary sites, Śrāvastī, Saṃkāśya, Vaiśālī and Rājagṛha, the places of the Buddha's residence, which were visited, and that the other four were upgraded to distinguish the early Buddhist pilgrimage places from the ones of other traditions, such as Jainism, by selecting places distinctly connected with the biography of the Buddha. At the same time, the pilgrimage places transcend the biographical events of the Buddha's life by evoking certain basic Buddhist concepts: in Lumbinī, the merit of the preceding existences of the Buddha; in Bodhgayā, the supernatural knowledge gained through enlightenment; in Sārnāth, the compassion of teaching the *dharma*; and in Kuśinagara, the permanence of the *dharma*. Strong emphasizes the use of the language of *darśan* and *saṃvega* ("excitement, emotion") when Buddhist texts describe visits to the sites, as in the case of the legend of king Aśoka. He also reminds us that the element of remembrance (*anusmṛti*) plays an important role in bridging

75 The aspect of visiting and seeing is also found in Late Antiquity: see Frank 2000.

the seeming contradiction between the inaccessibility of the Buddha and the attempt at physical representation.

Max Deeg discusses a group of texts which are normally taken as sources for paradigmatic Buddhist pilgrimages: the records of the Chinese Buddhist travellers to India in the first millennium, such as Faxian 法顯 and Xuanzang 玄奘. Deeg questions the notion of pilgrimage reflected in these sources, which are usually termed "pilgrim records". He suggests that such a designation is naïve and uncritical in terms of both the theory of pilgrimage and actual content of the texts. He attempts to subsume these sources, quite different in form and content, under the relatively loose genre of travel writing and points out their 'traditional' descriptive patterns, but also their capacity to innovate new form and content, which was integrated in some of these sources. Although one can find quite clearly demarcated passages in some of the sources that emphasise pilgrimage, the overall purposes and intentions of these texts lay elsewhere. Deeg shows the multi-layered structure and intentionality of the texts, of which pilgrimage forms only a small part. He does not deny the fact that the travellers at some stage were actually pilgrims – though he contends that this designation should be understood in an emic, historically-contextualised fashion. In some of their writing, pilgrimage, as both a motivation and an activity, is obviously reflected (see also Ramble's article), but Deeg uncovers further layers if meaning and contextualizes the texts, and their authors, historically and in the light of other forms of Chinese literature. This helps to interprete the Chinese Buddhist 'pilgrims' in a new light, which goes beyond both the restricted and highly generalised notions of pilgrimage that were discussed above.

Wang Bangwei's article sheds new light on the journey of one of the Chinese travellers discussed by Deeg. He introduces, for the first time in a Western language, new historical evidence for Faxian's possible stay at the famous grottoes of Bingling-si 炳靈寺 in present day's Lanzhou 蘭州, where more than two decades ago a mural painting of a monk was discovered, which was identified by its accompanying inscription as Faxian. Wang discusses the different scholarly opinions brought forward as to the authenticity and identity of this painting. He contextualizes it in the wider historical and archaeological setting and makes a case that Faxian could well have made his first summer retreat on his journey to India at Bingling-si in the historical kingdom of Qiangui 乾歸 in 399. This image would then not only provide a more detailed piece of evidence for Faxian's travel route to the West, which is not specified in the monk's own account, but it would also be the only example of a portrait of one of the great Chinese Buddhist travellers.

Dorothea Broeskamp discusses the development of the art historical programme in one of the major Chinese Buddhist pilgrimage sites, the Shang-tianzhu-si 上天竺寺 in present Hangzhou 杭州. This monastery was famous because of its miraculous and self-created sandalwood statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara / Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩. This statue marked a sharp change in the iconography of Guanyin since it is the first "White-Robed" (*baiyi* 白衣) Avalokiteśvara, which is an iconographic

form that gained prominence and popularity very quickly after its introduction. Broeskamp traces the development of the Shang tianzhu si as a pilgrimage place in connection with the White-Robed Guanyin against a concrete historical scenario with the Tiantai monk and abbot Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 at its centre. She shows that the change may have gone hand in hand with sectarian affiliation when the monastery became officially a Tiantai monastery (from having been a Chan institution before). Broeskamp traces the iconographic elements of this new form of representation of Guanyin back to its possible Indian and Central Asian origins (asceticism, purity), and repositions the development of the new form of Avalokiteśvara, which made Shang-tianzhu-si an attractive pilgrimage place and which was part of the complex process of reshaping the religio-sectarian landscape of Chinese Buddhism in the early Song dynasty: the statue of Avalokiteśvara in its new shape became an accessible and tangible representation of the social value of "royal power, ascetic prowess and altruistic compassion" supported by the Tiantai reformers and *literati* officials, as well as a stabilizing force in society. Broeskamp's example clearly shows how an encompassing social and political agenda can shape a specific form of visual and spatial expression, which, in its embodied form as a place (the monastery) and as an image (the Guanyin statue), can become a powerful and influential centre of pilgrimage.

What has been touched upon by Broeskamp, the formation of a pilgrimage place by ascribing to it a special event and meaning in the past, is presented by Peter Skilling and Santi Pakdeekham in the context of Thai Buddhism. They discuss the historical development of the pilgrimage site of Phra Thaen Sila-at. The foundation of this site highlights the already discussed elements of a 'prominent feature' – in this case a stone slab, on which the Buddha is said to have sat in the past – and a narrative explaining the importance and soteriological benefit of the place, which is here presented in a wider story of a prophecy (*byākaraṇa*) made by the Buddha that promised the pilgrim a healthy and long life, a rebirth in heaven and, eventually, a final birth as a human before he or she will finally enter *parinirvāṇa*. The whole story shows a remarkable similarity with other Buddhist foundation narratives and uses the whole register of elements from Buddhist tradition pertinent to the establishment of a complex sacred landscape and a network of pilgrimage places; visits to the place of the stone slab are not only undertaken by the Buddha Gotama (Śākyamuni, Pāli Sakkamuni) but also of the the five Buddhas of the past on the occasion of their enlightenment. Indeed, (hair) relics are distributed and enshrined by king Asoka (Skt. Aśoka). The continuity of the site as a pilgrimage place, in later periods especially for members of the royal family and prominent members of the *saṅgha*, is traced by Skilling and Pakdeekham through a variety of historical sources (archaeological, inscriptional, historiographical, biographical) from the Sukhothai period to the present Rattanakosin era. One could argue that the relative silence of these sources about the legend and the meaning of the stone slab is a proof that the origin of the site was prominent in the cultural and religious memory in different times throughout Thai history.

The previous example, where the narrative of origin is known as well as material documenting actual pilgrimage, may remind us that, even in cases when the origin and meaning of a specific place is not known from any extant sources, we may still assume a narrative and material origin for the site. This is true of the next case study, in which Tibor Porció discusses a widely neglected strand of sources, Uygur inscriptions, often only in graffiti-like form and content from ca. the 13th to the 16th century and distributed across a vast area from Kizil in the Tarim basin to Yulin. Porció makes a point that these inscriptions are not just sillily scribbled notes of bypassers, but reflect a certain pattern that shows their authors' / writers' familiarity with Uygur literary culture. Oddly enough, these inscriptions, although giving individual names, places and dates, seem to document Uygur pilgrimage in Medieval Buddhist Central Asia without revealing much information about the pilgrimage sites themselves and the specific religious practices, except the very general notions of worshipping and burning incense, connected with them. What can be inferred from some of the inscriptions is that the pilgrimages were made to sacred mountains – without giving information why they were sacred – or monasteries - and that one of the purposes was to create and, sometimes, transfer merit (Skt. *puṇyaparināma*). The material opens up questions of the connection between pilgrimage and mobility patterns in semi-nomadic societies, which may be paralleled with similar situations in Tibetan and Mongolian contexts.

Place and space are the focus of Charles Ramble's article on Tibetan pilgrimage. Based on the conceptual distinction of place as being associated and filled with concrete cultural meaning and space as the natural site, Ramble point out the polysemous nature of the latter: it can carry different meanings for different "players" (of different religious belonging, different stages of life, social status, etc.), and the same space therefore can be constituted and described as different places. Ramble illustrates this by the example of two descriptions of Tibetan travellers – pilgrims? – to the Golden Temple of the Sikhs in Amritsar. Ramble also addresses the multi-genre representation of pilgrimage in writing. He makes a similar point to Deeg, albeit from a different angle, which taken together yield a more complete image of pilgrimage: Ramble's examples come from bio-hagiographic and administrative sources and show that pilgrimage, although motivationally and intentionally a religious affair, is entangled with all kinds of other aspects of human life and society, as all other aspects of religion as well.

The importance of pilgrimage in Tibetan culture and religion as indicated by Ramble's article, especially of journeys to and around sacred mountains, is underlined again by Katia Buffetrille's paper on pilgrimage to Mount Kha ba dkar po on the border between Tsha ba rong and the Chinese province of Yunnan. The article emphasizes the position of mountain circumambulances in general, and, based on historical documents and field research, more specifically highlights the obvious relationship between pilgrimage and death and the afterlife in Tibetan traditions. Buffetrille points out the similarities between certain features and aspects of this

pilgrimage with the description of the intermediate stage between death and rebirth (*bar do*), as described in the Tibetan "Book of the Dead", Bar do thos grol, and argues that pilgrimage here can be described as "the physical experience of *bar do* through some features of the landscape" and namely by pilgrimage around sacred mountains; certain features of the landscape (cliffs, dangerous passages) are interpreted, if not directly and explicitely, in the light of the imagery of the text. By the pilgrimage – one could say – the pilgrims pre-enact what will happen after death. In more general terms, the example and history of mountain pilgrimage is a good example of how different religious ideas such as the autochthonous local mountain deity and the Buddhist concept of protective deity can easily merge. Buffetrille's article stresses the importance of the ritual and liminal – although she disagrees with Turner's notion of newly formed *communitas* – in pilgrimage, which in so many other historical cases is not accessible due to a lack of historical sources.

The volume closes with an overview on the most important and frequented pilgrimage places in Nepal with a focus on Lumbinī, Paśupatināth and Muktināth, in which Him Lal Ghimre, an expert on pilgrimage-tourism, explores the overlap between pilgrimage and tourism and reflects upon ways of harmonizing both for the benefit of all parties: both the travellers and the hosting communities. Ghimre introduces these pilgrimage sites from the viewpoint of the developmental, infrastructural and administrative challenges they pose to Nepal. Ghimre favors a trans-religious approach to the creation of pilgrimage networks, which could help to attract pilgrim-tourists and facilitate the economic and spiritual development of Nepal. For Ghimre, Muktināth represents a typical traditional multireligious pilgrimage site since it is visited and venerated by Hindus and Buddhists; he suggests that, although Paśupatināth originally is a Hindu site and Lumbinī a Buddhist one, there is an argument for developing these places beyond their denominational affiliations.

Pilgrimage in general, and Buddhist pilgrimage in particular, are topics too broad to be discussed here exhaustively, but it is to be hoped that the articles collected in the present volume can give an overview of the fascinating variety of Buddhist pilgrimage in the past and at present, but also add new insights into the more general discourse on pilgrimage. In the end, our limitations may not be so very different from real pilgrimage, where only a handful of places out of the many can be visited. Yet, the higher aim must be kept in mind - no matter how many, or how few, of such places we visit and explore (as academics or pilgrims): the coming to a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us.