This paper proceeds in five sections: the first on pilgrimage in action; the second on pilgrimage in religious literature, that is, pilgrimage as a precept; the third on Buddhist pilgrimage is separated from the more general pattern of pilgrimage, as Buddhism is no longer “Indian” in the sense the other constituent themes in this study are, and as most Buddhist pilgrims in India today are non-Indian. The fourth section deals with pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition in general, but as the tantric element is uniquely important in the peripathetic scheme of Indian religious culture, it has been dealt with separately in the sixth section of this paper, which is preceded by a topographical survey of Indian pilgrim centers.

The sections are uneven in bulk: the first section is brief, as the pragmatic angle of Indian pilgrimage has been dealt with in a fairly exhaustive manner although with regional limitations.¹ Literally thousands of pamphlets in the Indian vernaculars are available at Indian pilgrim centers and in nearby cities, travelogues, pilgrims’ guides, sanctuary manuals, etc., abound² and even the Indian state govern-

¹ C. G. Diehl, Instrument and Purpose in South Indian Ritual (Lund, 1956).
² S. C. Gupta, Bhāratiya tīrth-yātraon kā bhakt-darpan (“A Devotee’s Mirror of Pilgrimages in India”) (Lucknow, 1950).
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ments publish guidebooks to holy places as part of their tourist canvassing program.3

1. PILGRIMAGE IN ACTION

Hindus, as well as all other religious groups in India, hold that pilgrimage is highly meritorious, though not essential to spiritual welfare. To the latter clause, Muslims may be an exception—several Muslim divines in India told me that they do not regard their spiritual duties completed until they have performed the hajj.

I do not know whether W. Crooke's somewhat glib account of the origin of pilgrimage in India could stand contemporary anthropological criticism; but there may well be some truth in his statement: "pilgrimage in India is the result of the animistic basis of the popular beliefs, reflected in the higher forms of Hinduism and even in the local developments of Islam. Nothing strikes a newcomer to the country more than the crowds of pilgrims travelling by road or rail towards some holy river, the local abode of some god or godling, the tomb of some saint or martyr."4 The Census of India for 1911 had a similar statement, which Crooke seemed to accept: "it seems not unlikely that the virtue of a pilgrimage arises mainly from the sacred character attaching to the place itself and not so much from the desire to honour the deity whose shrine it is. If this is so, the feeling which prompts the undertaking of the journey is not a very great advance on the primitive reverence for certain places as the abodes of spirits."5 Crooke adds that the purificatory powers of water are believed in by all Indians. This is certainly true, the analogy between physical dirt and moral impurity being ubiquitous in perhaps all religion on the ritualistic level.

The merit of traveling per se, not of the more specified traveling for pilgrimage, appears to be first mentioned in Vedic times. The God Indra says to King Harischandra, "There is no happiness for the person who does not travel; living amongst men, even the best man frequently becomes a sinner; for Indra is the traveller's friend. Hence, travel!"6

3 I.e., the Government of Uttar Pradesh issued a guidebook, Uttar Pradesh tathā samīp prāṇān ke tīrthānān kā sankhalan ("Survey of Places of Pilgrimage in Uttar Pradesh and Adjacent Regions") (Lucknow, 1953). Diehl (op. cit.) gives a good account of guidebooks and pamphlets at South Indian shrines in his book.

4 Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (hereinafter cited as "ERE"), X, 24.


6 Aitareya Brahmana, VII, 15. Traveling and the protection of the wayfarer is one of Indra's many portfolios.
Yet it appears that pilgrimage proper is not mentioned in Vedic literature; Yāska’s Nirukta does not list pilgrimage among the meanings of yātrā (Skr. for “travel”), although this word became the most frequent term for pilgrimage in later times, and is now, in all Indian vernaculars. Though the sanctity of certain places is ancient, pilgrimage to these places does not seem to have been considered as particularly meritorious in the Vedic days. Even much later, Manu does not regard visits to the Ganges or to Kurukshetra—a very ancient sacred site—as meritorious.  

The law-teachera Gautama (ca. 200 B.C.), however, declares “all mountains, all rivers, holy lakes, tirthas (places of pilgrimage) the abodes of seers, cow-pens, and temples of gods are sin-destroying localities.”

Medieval and modern pilgrimage is certainly due to the Brahmin revival, and to the ruralization of religion in the Hindu Middle Ages through its partial absorption into local, non-Brahmanic cults.

The most interesting part of pilgrimage as practiced in India seems to me the highly diversified motives of the pilgrims. One never just goes on a pilgrimage because it is a pleasant pastime or because one “wants to get away from it all”—I could not imagine any Hindu making a pronouncement to this effect. Every pilgrimage has a strictly defined purpose and scope; and the procedure is exactly prescribed, with rather little leeway for the individual’s ingenuity in matters relating to travel. The dates and times at which bathing has to be performed—the auspicious moment for the dip—are laid down in pertinent manuals, but in practice they are fixed by the local priests and depend on various local considerations. For example, the mukhyasnānam (the chief bathing fair) is held on the new-moon day of the month Māgha (January–February), and at Hardvar on the upper Ganges, at the beginning of the Hindu year (in October). At both these places and at Nasik (Bombay State) particularly important assemblies recur after six years, and after twelve years, when Jupiter enters the sign of kumbha (Aquarius); these are the kumbhamelas, at which monks from all parts of India and of all orders assemble and take out a long procession, meeting the lay Hindus on a large scale. In fact, these kumbhamelas are the one great monastic event, where communication between all orders is established. The seniority of a monk belonging to any

7 A. Barth, Die Religionen Indiens (Leipsig, 1879); and Manu, Laws, VIII, 92, quoted herein.

8 Gautamiya Śāstra, XIX, 14, quoted in Sacred Books of the East, II (1879), 276.
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order is counted by the number of kumbhamelas which he has attended.9

Bathing at religious centers is always meritorious except on certain inauspicious days, which are few; but there are some dates of astro-
logical significance which confer particularly great merit.

Pradaksinā (circumambulation) is an invariable observance during pil-
gramage, and it often figures as the central event of the journey.
The sacred object is circumambulated clockwise.10

The various points of religious significance along such prolonged circumambulation routes as the one at Banaras along the pañcakosī or
at Mathura, where the various events of Kṛṣṇa's life have to be brought to the pilgrims' minds as they pass along their route, are shown to the pilgrims by a Brahmin whose specified job is this sort of pilgrim's guidance. He usually chants a mahātmya, a "hymn of greatness" or a panegyry of the particular spot, from the local religious
guide book. These Brahmins form a special caste with local variants;
there are the Gangāputras ("Sons of the Ganges") and the Chowbe at
Mathura—the latter are also famous as professional wrestlers—the Gayāwāl at Gaya and the Prayāgwāl at Allahabad. Their more re-
spected counterparts are the Pāṇḍā at Banaras and other places.

These, apart from showing the pilgrims around the various places of
worship and instructing them what exactly to do at the various spots (i.e., what ablutions, what offerings, and what sort of ritualistic move-
ments are to be made on each individual site), enter the pilgrims' names into big ledgers which are kept at the temples, being listed in
which adds to the prestige of an individual as well as to his descend-
ants. The Chowbe and Gangāputra have a somewhat dubious prestige
and their occasionally ambiguous dealings with unwary pilgrims have
been mentioned in ancient texts and reported in some modern ac-
counts.11 Most of these groups run guest-houses for pilgrims, and there
is an elaborate system of touting for pilgrims, the most conspicuous
being at Jagannāth (Puri) for pilgrims to the car-festival.12

Many holy places are associated with the śrāddha ceremony, that is,
the obligatory obsequies for the dead. For a twice-born person's
father, for example, the śrāddha is performed 11 days after death, and
then every year for 11 years consecutively, that is, if the survivor

9 The revolution of Jupiter around the sun takes 11 years and 314.92 days and
has great ritualistic significance in India; see The Dying God (London, 1911), p. 49.
10 See Sir Monier Williams, Brahmanism and Hinduism, p. 68, n. 2; p. 145.
11 ERE, X, 26; Kalhana, Rājatarangini, "Introduction," I, i, 20; Crooke, in
12 See W. Hunter, Orissa (London, 1872), I, 140.
cannot travel to one of the pilgrim centers where a single śrāddha absolves him from the duty of performing any further obsequial rite. The most important śrāddha center is Gaya (not Buddha Gaya, but Brahmā-Gaya, about fourteen miles from the Buddhist shrine); the others are Hardvar, Banaras, and Siddhpur. The ashes of the relative are preserved until the time when the obsequial pilgrimage can be made; they are then consigned to the water at any of these places, and the “mental” observances constituting the actual śrāddha are performed. The ashes can be mailed by parcel post to the temple authorities of any of the said places, and the immersion as well as the śrāddha are made vicariously, for a fixed fee, on behalf of the person or persons who cannot afford to make the pilgrimage; it has the same ritualistic validity, and no relative’s physical presence is required.

There are several “shaving” rites (mundanam) which can be performed during pilgrimages; boys between nine and eleven get their heads shaved at the Subbaramanya Temple in Palni, Madras State, either in lieu of the sacred thread ceremony (in case of non-twice-born castes), or some time previous to the sacred thread investiture (upanayanam) in the case of the twice-born. In the Panjab, Kṣatirīya boys are taken to Jvalaṁukhi near Jullunder and get their heads shaved by a special attendant at the shrine of the Goddess Jvalāmu-kī, a tantric deity of great popularity.

A special type of ceremony is that of atonement, or expiation, prāyaścitta, where ritualistic impurities due to all kinds of pollution (as travel across the sea, the conscious or unconscious eating of impure food, etc.) are to be expiated. These often require pilgrimage to shrines “specializing” in prāyaścitta rites unless the penitent can afford to have pāṇīts from those places come and perform the ceremony at his own home. The penitent’s hair is shaved (not because “it is supposed to hold his sins,” as ERE, p. 26, puts it, but because shaving is a pervasive feature in all vyatirikta [“negative”] ceremonies, as in the śrāddha), except for the stīkha or central tuft, which is left standing at any rite except monastic induction. He bathes in ten different manners—that is, immersing himself in different directions and with different accompanying mudrās or gestures, and the appropriate text is chanted with each of these baths, either by himself or by a guiding Brahmin of the place of pilgrimage. He then puts on fresh clothes, worships his tutelary deity, and as the Brahmin performs the homa (the Vedic oblations of melted butter, etc., into the sacrificial fire), presents ten kinds of gifts, the last of which being the chāyádānam or “shadow gift,” a cup of melted butter in which he has seen the reflection of his own face. He then says to the functioning Brahmin: “This
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atonement of mine has to be rendered valid by you,” whereupon the priest replies, “It is now valid.” Should he die without having performed this ceremony, his descendants have to perform it; if they do not, father and son descend to hell.13

Apart from the secular austerities undergone by the pilgrims, such as are shared by all travelers—third-class Indian railway traveling, ox-cart transportation, and boarding at the dharmaśālās or other pilgrims’ rest houses—certain special austerities are often undergone by pilgrims. The most frequent one—getting less frequent, though, in these days, meant for atoning any of the four most grievous sins (i.e., goha, strīhā, brahmahā, gurutala-paga—-the killing of a cow, the killing of a woman, the killing of a Brahmin, and adultery with the teacher’s wife) is the measuring of his body’s length by the pilgrim through successive prostrations on part of the way, or even all along the route. Waddell notes a Buddhist parallel in Lhasa, where some of the more enthusiastic pilgrims circumambulate the Circular Road in this manner; a distance of about 6 miles, inculcating about 4,000 prostrations. In some cases the pilgrims’ hands are protected by padded wooden clogs, the soles of which are studded with hobnails.14 According to the historian Rashid-ud-din, at Somnath: “Many of the more deluded devotees, in performance of their vows, pass the last stage crawling along their sides; some approach walking on their ankles, never touching the ground with the soles of their feet, others go before the idol upon their heads.”15 Emperor Akbar, imitating the Hindu practice, is reported to have walked from Agra to Ajmer several times (about 200 miles) to visit the shrine of the saint Mu’in ud-din Chishti.16

After due performance of all the rites at the center of pilgrimage, a clay or vermilion mark is put on the pilgrim’s forehead; in earlier days, the pilgrim was occasionally branded with the symbol of the deity. There are one or two places where this somewhat gruesome custom is still practiced, despite a municipal injunction at at least one of them. In South India, among the followers of Madhava and the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, pilgrims to the head-matha or monastery at Udipi (South Karnāra) used to be branded on both shoulders.17 Also exclusively South Indian is the custom of piercing one’s cheeks and tongue with silver needles on going on a pilgrimage; this is usually done when the vow

16 Ibid., p. 328.
17 I have seen a person thus branded, at Bangalore in 1952; see also E. Thurston, Ethnographic Notes in South India (Madras, 1906), pp. 403-4.
is taken, that is, before the actual pilgrimage begins. Also in South India, some pilgrims keep a kerchief tied over their mouths to show that they are subject to a vow of silence (maunam) during the pilgrimage; variations of this are a mouth lock, available for a nominal sum at some big temples as at Kāmākṣī in Conjeevāram, and at Brijādīśvara in Tanjore; or else a silver band with a skewer piercing both cheeks.

The 'Ain-e-Akbarī tells us about Nagarkot in the Panjab: “pilgrims from distant parts visit the shrine and obtain fulfillment of their desires. Strange it is that in order that their prayers may be heard favourably, they cut out their tongues. With some it grows again on the spot, with others after one or two days. Although the medical faculty allow the possibility of growth in the tongue, yet in so short a space of time it is sufficiently amazing.” At certain shrines, the joints of the fingers were sacrificed.

At the pilgrimage to the temple of Sāstā (Āyappan, Hariharaputra—the god who was the offspring of Viṣṇu and Śiva, when Viṣṇu took the guise of the beautiful Mohini in order to cheat the demons of their share of the immortality drink; Āyappan is a purely Malayali and Tamilian deity, and is not even worshipped by other Dravidian groups), the “Āyappans” (the pilgrims take the name of the God himself, during the pilgrimage) have to subject themselves to a preliminary course of forty-one days of austere diet and complete sexual abstinence.

As to Muslim pilgrimage in India and Pakistan, it goes without saying that regional pilgrimage has necessarily secondary prestige for the Muslim; every Indian and Pakistani Muslim regards the hajj as his chief pilgrimage. However, there are literally thousands of tombs and graves of Muslim saints (pīr-s, ṣauliyā-s) mainly of the sūfī tradition, all over northern and central India and in Pakistan, most of them martyrs for the faith (sahīd), and they attract large crowds of pilgrims all the time. In the past ten years, this has had a salutary effect on the relations between the two countries, as Muslims from both sides can freely move to visit the shrines located on the other side of the “faith curtain.” There is quite a bit of literature on Muslim centers of pil-

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The neighborhood of former Muslim capital cities (Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, Lahore, Patna) is replete with such sites, and they are visited by Muslims and certain low-caste Hindus; on principle, every Hindu would pay homage to a Muslim saint, or, for that matter, to a saint of any religion—but making a pilgrimage to them would not be good style and would probably even incur some disfavor on the side of the caste-mates. The most famous shrines visited by Muslims and low-caste Hindus are the tomb of Mu'inuddin Chishti at Ajmer, that of the Martyr Ghazi Miyan at Gorakhpur (Eastern Uttar Pradesh), Shah Madar of Makanpur. A most interesting sanctuary is that of Baba Qalandar Shah in Mysore, South India, the only one to my knowledge which is visited by high-caste Hindus, probably because it has a parallel Hindu mythological significance. Now the erection of tombs and a fortiori their veneration is against the Ulema law of orthodox Islam, and the Wahabis prohibit any such pilgrimage. However, hardly more than 5 per cent of the Indian and Pakistani Muslim population would pay heed to such stricture. The Muslim practice is clearly a copy of the Hindu model, and the observances hardly differ from those of Hindu pilgrimage: the pilgrims circumambulate the shrine clockwise, enter the tomb chamber if there is any sort of access into it to inhale the breath of the pir which is thought to linger around his relics; on paying a special fee, at some places (as at the Juma Masjid in Delhi) they are allowed to touch the clothes or sandals or the turban, or any of the articles he had allegedly used. Many of these tombs are believed to have iatric powers, for instance, the tomb of Hanwant Naik at Sangamner (District Ahmedabad, Bombay State), where wooden legs or arms are offered to secure relief from arthritis and similar afflictions. Two shrines in the Panjab are thought to be efficacious in the cure of leprosy and leucoderma.

Some modern Hindu sects oppose the worship of tombs and shrines, and pilgrimage itself, very much like orthodox Islam. It is an interesting phenomenon that contemporary Hindu movements which thrive geographically close to Islamic areas tend to adopt the rigor of orthodox Islam. It is simultaneously the shrine to Dattatreya and Anasuya. See the chapter, "On Mantra," in my forthcoming book, The Tantric Tradition (London: Rider & Co., 1963–64).


26 See Bombay Gazetteer, XVII, 737.

dox Islam, whereas more recent Islamic sects (Ahmediya, Baha’i, etc.) have become much more lenient about borrowing or emulating observances of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition. For this, several reasons might be found. The one that concerns us here is the syncretizing influence of tantrism in various parts of India, and its rejection of any caste difference. Thus, some of the Hindu-Muslim patron saints of northern India show marked traces of tantric affiliation in their poems as well as in the sādhanās (yogic practices) ascribed to them by their followers; Kabīr is said to have been born from a lotus; and to have conquered the yaksas and other demons by his siddhis (occult powers). Tradition has it that when Kabīr died, the Hindus and the Muslims fought for his corpse, as both of them regarded him as one of their saints, each of them desiring to conduct the funeral according to their specific custom.

The Ārya Samāj, the most fundamentalist school of contemporary Hinduism, disallows in effect the practices of bathing at sacred places, pilgrimage, the use of beads and ascetic marks, and gifts to mendicants that were always part of the pilgrims’ observance en route and on the spot. Earlier, the founder of the Sikh religion had said: “Religion does not consist in wandering to tombs or cremation grounds, nor of sitting in meditative postures.” Guru Amar Dās, one of the ten preceptors of Sikhism, tried to prevent the Sikhs from visiting Hardvar, Banaras, Allahabad, etc. However, Sikhs—especially women—frequent the Hindu’s pilgrim centers, particularly Hardvar which is close to the Panjab. Guru Nanak himself visited the tomb of a Muslim saint (Shaikh Farīd of Ajodhan), and Sikhs today visit Guru Nānak’s birthplace Kartarpur (in West Pakistan) and, of course, the Darbār Sahib, the great temple of Amṛtsar. The beardless Sikhs of Sindh, the “Sahajdhārī,” worship the bhagats (lit. just “devotees”—which in Sikh parlance has become the equivalent of a Muslim pīr) at their shrines.

The monotheistic Liṅgāyat Sect of Mysore teaches as one of its main tenets that there is no need of a mediator between man and God, and that there is no need for sacrifices, penances, pilgrimages, and fasts. Actually, this is a stereotype thesis in almost all schools of Hinduism and in Vajrayāna Buddhism—of the form “if there is true devotion, etc. . . . then pilgrimage, fasts, and other observances are redundant”; yet those who feel the benefit of these observances do not

28 Quoted from the Adigranth; see Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion (Oxford, 1909), I, 60.
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feel rebuffed by these instructions. On the contrary, they feel that going on pilgrimages, keeping fasts, and other vows in spite of these instructions, are supererogatory rather than superfluous. There were very few schools in medieval India which forbade pilgrimage outright (I am aware of one only, namely, the Kāndalas, a Viṣṇuite sect now almost extinct). The more tantric the background, the more there is indirect encouragement of pilgrimage and other outward observances, even though the above stereotype “There is no need . . .” occurs in tantric treatises as frequently as elsewhere in medieval Hindu lore. Desire for emulation of the preceptors’ total way of life provides a psychological clue for a paradox which is really but apparent: all the saints who have minimized the importance of pilgrimage have constantly been on pilgrimage themselves, most of them having spent their lives as mendicants and minstrels who sang their songs at places of pilgrimage for the benefit of the pilgrim. Thus, it has become customary for the pious Hindu to go on pilgrimages, to believe in their merit, and yet to state that pilgrimage is not important—just as their preceptors kept doing.

Strangely enough, no secondary accounts I have seen seem to take cognizance of the functionaries who preside over Hindu pilgrimage, the pāṇḍā or pāṇḍe; the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics makes but casual mention of pilgrims’ guides like the Prayāgālās, Gāṅgāputras, etc., but the author does not make it clear how importantly the pāṇḍā figures in the pursuit of pilgrimage. The institutionalized pāṇḍā belongs to the Kāṇyakubja, Sarayūparī, or Gujarati (Nāgar) castes of Brahmans, which are considered among the noblest Brahmin groups, and an enumeration of his duties should provide the transition into our second section. The pāṇḍe30 issues annual manuals (pañjikā) stating the auspicious dates and times for pilgrims to worship at his sanctuary; he ushers the pilgrims into the temple and instructs them how to perform the worship in accordance with the rules laid down by his specific traditions; after completion, he enters the names of the pilgrims into the nāmakosā, the ledger referred to earlier; finally, he gives the pilgrims prasād (i.e., food and other sacrificial ingredients offered to the deity; that includes floral garlands [hār, mālā], incense, and vermilion paste of powder [kunkum], which the pāṇḍe or his delegate puts on the pilgrim’s forehead, applying it with the middle finger or the thumb of his right hand). In the South, a small quantity of lustral

30 Pāṇḍeya or pāṇḍe, alternative spellings—see Viśāl Śabd Sāgar (Delhi, 1958), p. 810.
water (tīrtham) is also poured into the pilgrim’s hand, which the latter drinks.\textsuperscript{31}

II. PILGRIMAGE AS PRECEPT

All Indian scriptures, canonical and semicanonical, as well as almost all commentaries, make ample mention of pilgrimage. As an observance it has been ubiquitous, but never compulsory. If we are to show a hierarchy of important observances, this would be one in descending order: (1) meditation—pious attitude to the world in general and to religious things and persons in particular (śraddhā, Tib. dad pa, and bhakti, Tib. gus pa); (2) tapasyā (austerity, in general and through specific observances such as fasting); (3) dānam (charity); (4) yātṛā (pilgrimage); (5) śuddhi (physical and mental purity). This order might well be challenged by many Hindus; yet I do not think that yātṛā would get a higher place with many.

Vedic references are sparse, as indicated earlier; and to my knowledge there are no pilgrimages enjoined, nor even recommended, in any literature earlier than the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. The Purāṇas, and then of course the Tantras (both Hindu and Buddhist) are full of references and instructions pertinent to pilgrimage; apart from them, all these texts have abundant topography, and although the enumeration of holy places is not itself one of the purāṇa-paṅca-lakṣāṇas,\textsuperscript{32} it is subsumed under any of the five topics constituting a purāṇa.

As always when the injunction for an observance is given, the account or recommendation of a particular center of pilgrimage, and of the pilgrimage itself, is followed by phalāsṛuti, that is, the account of the merit which accrues through them. It is of the general form “the place X . . . when visited at the time t . . . together with the performance of observances a, b, c, d, . . . yields the following results”; they are almost always both secular and religious, as the curing of a disease and securing a better existence in the next life. The exuberant accounts of some tīrhas (places of pilgrimage) often read like archaic

\textsuperscript{31} All these are given by the pāṇḍā with his right hand, except when the pilgrim happens to be a monk, in which case the prasād is given with the left, and the lustral water poured over to the left side of the pāṇḍā’s hand into that of the monk pilgrim, whose status is that of the manes, not of living persons.

\textsuperscript{32} The five thematic criteria of a purāṇa are: ārthi or emanation of the universe; pralaya-puṇarvīraṁāṇa, destruction and re-emanation; mānasakalpaḥ, or the reigns and periods of the Manus, preceptors of the human race; devaguru-parāmpard, or the genealogy of gods and patriarchs; and finally māṁśa, or the history and genealogy of the solar and lunar races of kings.
advertisements. This is enhanced through such literary devices as an additional, derivative phalasruti (account of merits) for the meditation on, or even the mere thinking of, a particular tirtha. Thus, the Matsyapurana has a section “tirtha-mahātmya-pāthana-śravana-phalam” (“the fruit of reading and listening to the account of the greatness of the place of pilgrimage”)33 which follows some ninety verses of topographical enumeration. The final phalasruti is pronounced by the sūta, the bard, whose business is that of the recordkeeper in purānic literature. The passage reads: “he who hears or listens to this eulogy (anukṛttanam) wholly related in the Matsyapurana, which (eulogy) is meritorious, pure, bestowing longevity, destroying all sins, such a man becomes a possessor of Śrī [lit. the Goddess of Wealth—meaning affluence and well-being in general].”

The Matsya Purāṇa may be assigned to the third century A.D. A much later text, the Brahmāṇḍamaḥāpurāṇa, which Kirfel assigns to the ninth century, has a highly systematized section on the merits of pilgrimage, ranging over several pages.34

It was obviously in the Purānic period also that terms for “pilgrimage” were used in a metaphorical sense, that is, the pilgrimage of the soul between two births; these portions are fairly reminiscent of the Tibetan Bardo accounts;35 if the Bardo had any Hindu source as its inspiration, it might well have been purānic.

The Matsya Purāṇa devotes four consecutive sections to the internal sequels of pilgrimage.36 The sections are indexed by these captions: (240) “section on pilgrimage (yātrā) : thoughts on the means and proper time of a yātrā according to the Matsya Purāṇa”;37 (241) “account of body-vibrations caused by the pilgrimage”;38 (242) “account on the interpretation of dreams caused by the pilgrimage”;39 this refers to the dreams of persons other than the deceased—in other words, the deceased one’s yātrā causes living people, mainly his loved ones, to

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33 Matsya Purāṇa, 23, 90-93 (Bombay ed., 1897).
34 Brahmāṇḍamaḥāpurāṇa (Bombay, 1936); 4/3/13, and in the Lalitopakhyaṇa, V., contained in the Purāṇa; in this, the God Indra himself asks the seers “saṁsāro-tirtha-yātayoh kim jyāya”—“what is expedient in all-over-the-world pilgrimage”—upon which there follows a very exhaustive account of the merits of the yātrā in general, and of yātrā to a large number of specified places in particular. See also W. Kirfel, Das Purāṇa-paścalakṣaṇa (Bonn, 1957).
35 See Evans Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead (London), passim.
36 Matsya Purāṇa, 240-43; it is not very much compared with the total bulk of the Purāṇa which has 291 sections (adhyāyas), varying in length from 20 to 100 verses.
37 “Yātrā-nimittaka-kāla-yaśya-cintanam.”
38 “Yātrā-nimittaka-deka-śravana-kathanaṃ.”
39 “Yātrā-nimittaka-smāśānayya-kathanaṃ.”
dream things which can be interpreted (the Bardo contains an almost exact replica of this particular notion); (243) "account of auspicious signs in explanation of the pilgrimage."  

There is an important digest of the late eleventh or early twelfth century, the Kṛtyākalpataru ("the wishfulfilling tree of general duties"), which was compiled by Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara, and which has exercised a great influence on early writers of Mithila, Bengal, and northern and western India. This work was composed in accordance with a finely conceived plan, and its different topics follow the sequence of the different stages and duties of the Hindu's life as ordained by the Śāstras (codes). A. D. Pusalker avers that "no other digest attempts such a logical and comprehensive presentation of the smṛti material." The book has fourteen parts, and teaches how to discharge properly the "threefold debt" (ṛṇatraya), for example, to the seers, the manes, and the gods. The introduction says that the book deals with the entirety of the Aryan's duties, and that nothing which is not herein contained is obligatory for him. Here, pilgrimage forms one of the incumbent duties, and the eighth chapter is wholly devoted to its performance. From this it becomes evident that at that important transitional period at least, some teachers did regard pilgrimage as an obligatory observance.

I am now singling out three partially overlapping themes under which the origin of Indian pilgrimage could be examined. They are mythology, hagiography, and object topography.

The most important myth—of tantric stock—relevant for pilgrimage is no doubt the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice; it is told, in many minor and major variations, in most of the major purāṇas. It is imperative to pursue this particular myth in some detail; valuable information about its development has been furnished by D. C. Sircar. In the tantric tradition, a center of pilgrimage is called a pīṭha, a "seat" of

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40 "Yātrāpravartane-mangalādhya-kathānām."
41 Pusalker and Mehendale, "Language and Literature" in The Struggle for Empire, Vol. V of the History and Culture of the Indian People (Bombay, 1957), p. 332; smṛti is the termīnus technicus for all semicanonical literature which includes the law books; this is opposed to śruti, i.e., the revealed texts, the Vedas, Upaniṣads, and the Brahma Śūtras.
42 The other sections deal with the duties of a brahmācārya, a student; the duties of a grhaśātra, or a householder; the daily rituals (ahṣaṇa); obsequial rites (śrāddha); almsgiving and other charities (dānaśārvasva); the consecration of images (pratiṣṭha); formal worship (puja); various vows (vṛata); purificatory rites (āuddhi); propitiatory rites (śanti).
43 For this Wundt once suggested the term "physocharismatics"; see "Völkerpsychologie," Part 3.
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the Goddess; tantric literature rarely uses the more general word tīrtha; probably the distinction itself depends on the mythological relevance of the center: shrines of the Goddess are pīthas, sanctuaries of gods, or mixed shrines (i.e., where a god and a goddess are worshipped) are called tīrthas just as non-tantric worshipers would call them. Pītha seems to be a purely tantric term in the first place, although it has gained currency in other, not necessarily religious contexts in the last two centuries; thus, several colleges teaching classical subjects in the Indian tradition are called pīthas, quite literally "seats of learning," as for instance the Kashi Vidyapitha, one of the best institutes of higher education at Banaras.

I shall now quote from Sircar's excellent account so far as it is relevant to us; it can hardly be improved upon.45

The earliest form of the legend of Dakṣa-yajñanāśa is probably to be traced in the Mahābhārata (XII, chapters 282–83; cf. Brahmanda Purāṇa, ch. 39) and a slightly modified form of the same story is found in many of the Purāṇas (Matsya, ch. 12; Padma, Śṛṣṭikhanda, ch. 5; Kārma, I, ch. 15; Brahmanda, ch. 31, etc.) as well as in the Kumārasambhava (I, 21) of Kālidāsa who flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries and adorned the court of the Gupta Vikramādityas. According to this modified version of the legend, the mother-goddess, who was the wife of Śiva, was in the form of Sati one of the daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati. Dakṣa was celebrating a great sacrifice for which neither Sati nor Śiva was invited. Sati, however, went to her father's sacrifice in order to show her husband, Dakṣa, his impertinence in disregarding the great god; but she is neither said to have been Dakṣa's daughter nor to have died at Dakṣa's house as a result of the latter's ill-treatment.

... In still later times, probably about the earlier part of the medieval period,46 a new legend was engrafted to the old story simply for the sake of explaining the origin of the Pīthas. According to certain later Purāṇas and Tantras (Devi-bhāgavata, VII, ch. 30; Kālīkā Purāṇa, ch. 18; etc.), Śiva became inconsolable at the death of his beloved wife Sati, and, after the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice, he wandered over the earth in mad dance with Sati's dead body on his shoulder (or, head). The gods now became anxious to free Śiva from his infatuation and made a conspiracy to deprive him of his wife's dead body. Thereupon Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śani entered the dead body by yoga and

45 Ibid.
46 The Brahmanda Purāṇa, an old work known to Albiruni, contains interpolations of a date later than the Muslim occupation of eastern India where the Purāṇa was modified; cf. 1, 10, 121 referring to the caste called Jola (from Julāhā, weaver) said to have originated from Mlecha (Mahomedan) father and a girl of the Indian weaver caste. Op. cit., IV, 43, 25, referring to Siddha-pīthas associated with Sati's limbs should be similarly assigned to a date not earlier than the fourteenth or fifteenth century.
disposed of it gradually and bit by bit. The places where pieces of Sati’s dead body fell are said to have become Pithas, i.e. holy seats or resorts of the mother-goddess, in all of which she is represented to be constantly living in some form together with a Bhairava, i.e. a form of her husband Śiva. According to a modified version of this story, it was Viṣṇu who, while following Śiva, cut Sati’s dead body on Śiva’s shoulder or head piece by piece by his arrows or his discus. The story of the association of particular limbs of the mother-goddess with the Śākta tirthas, which may have some relation with the Tantric ritual called Pīṭhanyāsa, belongs, as already pointed out, to the latest stage in the development of an ancient tale. But the story may have some connection with Buddhist legends regarding the worship of Buddha’s corporeal relics and the construction of Stūpas in order to enshrine them (cf. Select Inscriptions, I, pp. 84, 102 ff., 120, etc.) as well as with those concerning the various manifestations of Buddha in the Jambudvīpa (cf. the list of 56 countries in the Condrugarbhasūtra; I.C., VIII, pp. 34–35; BEFEO, V, p. 261 f.).

The sites connected with the lives, and especially with the tapasyā (austerities) of saints, seers, magicians, and other persons of charismatic impact have been the center of pilgrim attraction ever since the days of Mahāvīra and Gautama, but the tendency is probably much older. Whether the pilgrimage to physical, sartorial, or other remains is a Buddhist innovation or older than Buddhism cannot be decided at present; but I would assume that the custom is older, if an aboriginal proto-Indian customs extant to this day, which display some sort of relic worship, can be used as a pointer; the more so if such a custom is peculiar to an ādīvāsi (aborigine) group surrounded by caste Hindus who do not practice a similar custom. As an example, I would mention the Santhals in Chota Nagpur, who deposit little pebbles and pour oblations of buffalo milk over the burial site of some of their revered ancestors to which they make individual pilgrimages at least once in their lives.48

There is a paradoxical feature which seems fairly pervasive in India: monastery sites or temple ruins are not visited by pilgrims except inci-

47 See Sabdakalpadruma, s.v. nyāsa; cf. anānganyāsa (touching limbs with the hand accompanied by appropriate mantras) and śodhanyāsa (six ways of touching the body with mystical mantras) from which the pīṭhanyāsa seems to have later evolved. Originally certain limbs were mentioned in connection with a Tantric ritual in which the names of the Pithas were afterwards introduced. In explaining pīṭhanyāsa, the Vācaspatya says, “pīṭhadvātānāmādhūrāsaśaktipraṇātvarānam, pranavādina-mantrena hrdaye nyāsabhede tantrasārāh.” “After pronouncing the formula) beginning with ‘OM’ and ending with ‘namah’ pertaining to the pīṭhadeities, the basic ‘Sakti-s’ and natures, in one’s heart, differentiating the ‘nyāsa’—this is the essence of tantra.” The association of the limbs of the sādhu-s with certain localities may have given rise to the belief regarding the Pithas arising from particular limbs of the mother-goddess.

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dentally. One would expect that a site where not one but many saints assembled or lived together in the pursuit of yogic practices should offer increased attraction to the pilgrim, more than the place of some individual saint's memory. I believe I can offer a hypothesis: The Indian religious mind is averse to any sort of institutionalization; apart from the Buddhist and Jain monastic orders, and their later emulators in medieval Hinduism, there has been no ecclesiastical framework for the Hindu. He follows an individual guru as an individual, and he does not derive spiritual guidance from any formally installed clergy. Sacerdotal functions are vested in the hereditary Brahmin, but the Brahmin per se is not a spiritual guide, unless he deinstitutionalizes himself voluntarily, either by retreating into vanaprastha, the "forest-dwelling" stage (which in contemporary India means just retiring into a less approachable part of his house, abandoning all ritual except his own individual observances), or by entering monastic life (which means abandoning all observances for the sake of full-time yogic contemplation). Centers of pilgrimage become institutions, no doubt, in due course, but it is the institution that encroaches on the place which was originally sought for the merit the individual hierophant bestowed upon it.49

I would adduce two almost contemporary cases of intensified "pilgrimage" due to the one-time presence of a saint. The one is half an hour's bus ride from downtown Calcutta, the temple of Dakṣiṇeśvara; it is officially a Kāli Temple, but then there are hundreds of Kāli Temples all over Bengal. The increasing number of pilgrims to the site—from all over Bengal, from other parts of India, and more recently from the United States and Europe as well—is not due to the shrine but to the memory of one particular priest who functioned there toward the end of the last century. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the reknown Bengali mystic, lived in a garden which belongs to the temple, and he used to meditate under the huge pañcabati—a pippal tree (ficus Indica religiosa), or rather five trees clustered into one. It is this pañcabati which attracts the pilgrims, and also his simple little living-room close by. The pañcabati in its turn has always been an attraction to the yogi who seeks it out as a site conventionally conducive to contemplation.

The other paradigm is perhaps even more interesting, and illustrative of a typical dichotomy in the purpose of pilgrimage: the fire-

49 There is voluminous literature on the hagiolocial order in all Indian vernacular literature. The Sanskrit precursor of this genre are the sthala-purāṇa's, books about, and kept in, the great temples of Southern India, in which, apart from the usual guidance to the official ritual conducted in the shrine, there is prolific description of the lives and deeds of saints who lived in the vicinity of the temple.
linga at Arunācala, District North-Arcot, in the State of Madras, has been a center of pilgrimage for many centuries—it is one of the five bhūtalīngas or natural representations of Śiva—the others being the earth-līṅga at Conjeeveram, the wind-līṅga at Kalahasti, the water-līṅga at Jambunāth, and the (invisible) ether-līṅga at Chidambaram. The Arunācala shrine is as old as its name (aruna-acala, “dawn-colored mount”). Around 1880, a Tamilian saint, Ramana Mahārshi (the title “great seer” was given to him by his early devotees around the turn of the century) settled at the foot of the hill, and in time an āśrama congealed around him—it is now one of the internationally known spiritual hermitages of India. It is to this place that hundreds of pilgrims come every week to pay their homage to the master who died in 1951. Now the interesting fact is that this influx of pilgrims into the Tiruvannāmalai region (Tiruvannāmalai is the Tamil for Skr. Arunācala) has doubled, but the number of pilgrims visiting the Arunācala shrine on top of the hill has increased only by about 25 per cent since 1900.50 The reason seems to be this: unsophisticated people who vow a pilgrimage to the shrine will not usually visit the hermitage of the late Ramana Mahārshi, except incidentally—they might, for instance, be told about the sage’s powers when they worship at the Arunācala shrine; and pilgrims to the hermitage are of a more sophisticated brand, due to the fact that Ramana’s teaching was the austerest form of advaita-monism the Hinduism of this century has yet offered. I talked to two pilgrims visiting the hermitage, one of them a lawyer from Mysore, the other an affluent cloth merchant from Gujarat, Western India. I asked them if they would go to see the sacred hill and the temple, they answered in the negative: the lawyer said he had come to pay homage to the master’s memory only, and that there were many Śiva temples all over Southern India; and the Gujarati merchant did not even know there was a famous shrine on top of the hill. Some other visitors, to Ramana’s hermitage—Tamils in particular—did and obviously keep visiting the temple on the hill—this may account for the 25 per cent increase in less than sixty years, but they do so with an almost apologetic mien, for visiting a temple is a low-brow observance compared to visiting a hermitage of so sophisticated a frame. “I shall go up because Ramana went up to worship when he came here,” a visitor from metropolitan Madras told me.

This shows how very well defined the purpose of pilgrimage is: Arunācala and the Ramana-āśramam offer different goods—they have

50 Personal information from Sri Muruganathan, caretaker of the old shrine, in 1952.
a different phala-śruti; Arunācala pilgrimage grants much the usual boons—the curing of disease, especially lung troubles (this belief might be connected with the fire that erupts from the mountain which is an active, though harmless minor volcano), and remedy from barrenness; the Ramana hermitage, on the other hand, ushers the image of the highest achievement—supreme wisdom, self-realization, but offers nothing else. The Hindu has a very keen sense of theological domain: one has to appeal to the proper authority for any particular boon. When a person loses his money, a Bhojpuri-Hindi proverb says Śivā kī pūjā kari—“he must have worshipped Śiva,” that is, the deity of asceticism and of the monastic virtues, for example, rather than Viṣṇu and his spouse Lākṣmi, the givers of wealth. The same holds for places of pilgrimage, though in a lesser degree—some of the great centers are supposed to give virtually all the benefits from affluence and health to salvation; and yet pilgrims would, if they have the choice, rather go to a Viṣṇuite center like Tirupati in the south or Brindavan in the north, if they want wealth, and to Kāśi (Banaras), the town of Śiva, if they want spiritual emancipation.

III. BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE

The Pali canon did not make pilgrimage incumbent on the votaries of the dhamma. The Pali Buddha neither recommended nor prohibited any of the observances which were customary with the Brahmins and Hindus around. Yet it seems that his attitude in this matter was much the same as in matters of other customary observance—soothsaying, mantra and yantra use, etc. are not condemned by Gautama, but they certainly are connived at. There seems to be some evidence61 that soon after the parinirvāṇa (the Buddha’s decease) the practice arose among followers and sympathizers of the dhamma, and perhaps among the Buddha’s personal friends, of paying visits to places where relics of the preceptor were kept. The desire to keep and perhaps display the Buddha’s relics cannot be explained from any known Hindu precedence—nothing of the sort is mentioned in any pre-Buddhist literature. The building of memorial stūpas over them, following the distribution of the relics, cannot be traced to anything older—in fact, the Buddhist stūpas and caityas are the oldest instances of relic worship in India.62

61 A. S. Geden, ERE, X, 13.

62 The object of Buddhist pilgrim interest par excellence is the stūpa and the caitya; Monier Williams declares the two as partly synonymous; caitya (MW p. 402) “a funeral monument or stūpa or pyramidal column containing the ashes of deceased persons, sacred tree, esp. a religious fig-tree, ficus religiosa, growing on a mound, hall or temple or place of worship, esp. with Buddhists and Jainas, and
It may be held that one of the central ideas of Buddhism the “going forth” (Skr. pravrajya, Pali pabbajja) did rest on some previous notions connected with a form of pilgrimage. In canonical usage, pravrajya is a technical term for admission to the first grade of Buddhist monasticism (upāsaka), that is, for the first ordination. The Dhammapāda defines the pabbajita (pilgrim, lit. the “one who has set out”) as one who has abandoned the world. In an earlier verse, however, it says that the aimless pilgrim (using the word pabbajita) not only fails to secure his spiritual merit, but only scatters more widely the dust of his uncontrolled passion. It seems certain that pabbajita did remind the early Buddhist of some sort of (spiritually inutile) stray pilgrimage, though as a technical term it never meant anything except ordained retirement from worldly affairs, that is, acceptance into the Sangha.

The instruction for the Buddhist monks to lead a peripatetic life, without settling in a home, and all the vinaya-sections which deal with the bhikkus’ demeanor en route must have added to the ease with which the Buddhists assimilated the Hindu practice of pilgrimage to holy sites. The verse constantly chanted in the Theravāda office is “Go ye, O bhikkhus, wander for the gain of the many, for the well-being of many, out of compassion for the universe, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of gods and men.”

There is only the rule of vassa (Skr. varṣa), that is, the observance of the rainy period during which mendicancy has to be interrupted. The same holds for all Hindu monastic orders in which long tours and pilgrimages are generally containing a monument”); stūpa (MW p. 1260) “a heap or pile of earth or bricks, etc., esp. a Buddhist monument, dagoba generally of a pyramidal or dome-like form erected over sacred relics of the Buddha or on spots consecrated as the scenes of his acts; any relic-shrine or relic-casket made of various materials, such as terra cotta, clay, elaborately formed brick or carved stone; often very small and portable, and enclosing a fragment of bone or a hair . . . ”; Edgerton gives “relief mound, tope”—BHS Dictionary, p. 608—for stūpa, and for caitya “any object of veneration”—note BHS Dictionary, p. 232—here he says “seems to be used more broadly than in classical Skr., like the ornament on a stūpa, the monastic robes, cf. caitya-bhûta” “of the nature of an object of veneration,” said of a place where a particular sūtra is to be proclaimed.” This approximates Skr. tirtha in semantical width.

The Siamese form cedi (phra cedi) both for stūpa as also for the designation of that part of the temple (wat) where the ordinations take place, contrasted with the bot derived from bodhi (tree), the second large building within the wat, which is used for the more general functions.

63 Dhammapāda x. i. 89.
64 Ibid., i. 75.
65 “Carata bhikkhave, cārikam bahujanahitâyā bahujanasukhāya lokānekampāya atthāya hitāya sukhabhāya devamanussanām . . . ,” Mahāvagga 1, 10 (Marakatha) (Nalanda ed.), p. 23; Geden gives a wrong reference in ERE, p. 14, the passage is not 1, 11, 1, but 1, 10. This passage is so very close to Indian religious sentiment even today that the late Dr. Ambedkar selected it for recording on his two HMV Pali phonograph records (78 rpm).
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Pilgrimages are incumbent on members. Yet it does not seem that the vassa period was rigidly adhered to, as Chinese pilgrims recorded long journeys where there is no remark about such interruption due to the observance of the vassa rule.

In later Buddhist works of both the schools there is frequent reference to pilgrimage in the narrower sense (i.e., as tirthayātrā). The Buddha-Carita uses Hindu phraseology and states that purification from sin may be achieved by living or bathing at sacred places. Such tirthas are "ladders to heaven." Another passage says that the Buddha created millions of mendicant ascetics whose peregrinations are pilgrimages from shrine to shrine. Sacred rivers and tirthas are acknowledged partly by assimilating Hindu scenes of interest, but most of them are connected with early Buddhist hagiology. The same text says: "those who bathe and offer worship in the sacred river and revere the caitya . . . become bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas, and reach nirvāṇa." A canonical text says that right-minded followers of the doctrine cherish their places of pilgrimage.

As is the usual procedure in India, any statement which is felt to be in need of preceptoral sanction is gradually put into the mouth of the founder. Thus, the Buddha himself is said to pronounce the sacred character of shrines and other places associated with the lives of arhants, and to extol the merit of pilgrimage to these places; "There are four places which the follower should visit with feelings of respect and awe . . . the place at which the follower can say, 'Here the Tathāgata was born' . . . 'Here the Tathāgata attained supreme bodhi' . . . 'Here the Tathāgata set foot making the spot into a kingdom of dhamma' . . . 'Here the Tathāgata passed away into the traceless passing away' . . . and there will come to that spot followers, brethren and sisters of the order, or devout men and women, . . . and they who shall die while they, with trustful heart, are journeying on such pilgrimage shall be reborn, when the body shall dissolve, in the happy realms of heaven."

It is evident that the number of Buddhist Indian places of pilgrimage is limited, and in no way comparable to the Hindu and Jaina tirthas scattered profusely over the country; the Buddha is felt to have been an historical personality, and the area of his personal preaching is pretty well defined. There is no unequivocally Buddhist tīrtha any-

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56 Th. Watters, On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, passim.
57 Buddhacaritam, ii. 37.
58 Ibid., vii, 40, svarga-sopāna.
59 Ibid., xxvii, 24.
60 Ibid., x, 2, xv, 78.
61 Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, v. 16 f.
62 Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, v. 16-22.

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where in South India, and the tirthas connected with the Buddha’s own life are limited to Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh (Gorakhpur District), the Nepalese terai and the Banaras area. The most important centers, from the oldest times on up to this day, are the places traditionally associated with the life of the founder. Kapilavastu and Kuśinagara (Gorakhpur District, Eastern Uttar Pradesh), Buddha Gayā (Central Bihar), and Sārnāth (near Banaras, Uttar Pradesh, the deer park Pali Isipatana) rank as the foremost. On these places, the Chinese pilgrims have reported at length. Today more than in the past centuries, these sites are being constantly visited by pilgrims from the Buddhist countries, and many different denominations have built monasteries in these areas. Thus, the Burmese Sangha has a beautiful monastery at Rajgir (Rājagṛha) in Bihar; the Thai are building a large wat with Thai and Indian Government subventions at Buddha Gayā—it is to be a center not only for Siamese, but for Buddhist pilgrims from all Theravāda countries; at Buddha Gayā, the bka‘a rgyud pa sect (the Red-hats) of Lamaism has a monastery; at Sarnath, the Mulagandhakuti Vihaṇa, built by J. K. Birla, a Hindu merchant, offers shelter to all Buddhist pilgrims, and is administered by highly educated, English speaking Ceylonese monks and some Indian convert-bhikkhus. At Nalanda, on the site of the ancient Buddhist Academy, the government of Bihar has built the “Nalanda Institute of Postgraduate Buddhist Research and Pali” whose guest-houses shelter learned pilgrims from all Buddhist lands. The Japanese Nihonzan Myohoji sect has a monastery at Rajgir (Rājagṛha), frequented by Japanese pilgrims. At Sarnath, there is also a Chinese Buddhist temple, large and very well kept by a Chinese monk. In the last two decades quite a few new pilgrims’ rest houses have been built for Buddhists, at places directly or indirectly connected with Buddhism; thus, the Indian Government built a rest house at Sanchi (Gwalior), the stūpa connected with the Buddha’s main disciplessāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna; and a Buddhist Vihaṇa has been built as part of the (Hindu) Laksṇī Nārāyana (Birla) Temple in the midst of New Delhi, attracting numerous pilgrims who visit the Indian capital.

I observed an interesting phenomenon at Amṛtsar in the Panjab. Amṛtsar contains the central sanctuary of the Sikhs, who have certainly nothing whatsoever to do with Buddhism; in fact, hardly anyone in religious India is quite so antagonistic to it as the martial Sikhs. The Baṛ-Darbār-Sāhib (referred to as the Golden Temple by tourist agencies) at Amṛtsar is surrounded by a large cemented tank. Among the pilgrims, I often noticed Tibetans, many of them in monastic
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garb. When I asked the Sikh headpriest about them, he gave me the somewhat fatuous information, “They also come here to pay respect to Guru Nānak Dev” (the founder of the Sikh religion, born 1469). Of course, they do nothing of the sort. I had a hunch that their pilgrimage might have something to do with the pond rather than with the temple. Padmasambhava is said to have been born in Zalphor, and though Tucci identified it with Udādīyāna (Urgyan) locating it in the Swat Valley, we should not dismiss the possibility that some sectional Tibetan folklore locates Padma’s birthplace in this very pond—both his legendary birth and his name imply his birth in the midst of an expanse of water.

The Lumbini Grove at Kapilavastu, the Buddha’s birthplace, is represented by the mound now known as Rummin-dei, that is, “goddess of Rummin.” This mound is located in the Nepalese terai, about 6 miles northeast of Dulha in the Indian Dt. Basti, in a location locally called Tappa Rummindei, about 2 miles north of Bhagavanpur, headquarters of the Nepalese tahsil (subdivision), 1 mile north of the village Padaria. The Tilar River mentioned by Huen Tsang flows a short distance to the east of the mound. The nearest railway station is Uska.

It is interesting to note that as yet this region has not attracted as many Buddhist pilgrims as would be expected, that is, in comparison with the number of visitors to Gaya, Banaras, or even Sanchi. The reason is not far to seek: the site was laid bare in 1895 only, and was hidden in the thickest terai; it is barely accessible even now, and it emerges only gradually from the oblivion of the ages. That a place is traditionally connected with a sacred event does not necessarily imply pilgrim attraction in India; it appears that it is the fact of being established as a pilgrim center that enhances its popularity. I asked some Burmese Buddhist pilgrims about it, and they rationalized the matter by saying that the place of the physical birth of the Buddha is after all not so important as the place where he turned the wheel of the law, that is, the site of his first sermon at Sarnath. Similar rationalizations are made by Hindus when the center of pilgrimage connected with the activities of a particular person is more frequented than his place of birth. Many more Vaiṣṇavas visit Tirupati in the South than Brindavan in Uttar Pradesh, the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa. However, whenever the birthplace is a well-frequented site, no such argument is held out. It seems to me that the pilgrimage frequency at a particular site is often based on expedience more than on hagiographic or mythological conscience. Gayā and Sarnath are well established as centers of Bud-

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61 See Taranatha, Geschichte (Schiefner).
The two most popular places, however, are still Buddha Gaya in Bihar and Sarnath near Banaras in Uttar Pradesh. They are now visited by pious Hindus just about as much as by Buddhists; the Hindus worship the Buddha as the ninth, that is, the last, bygone incarnation of Viśnu.

At Buddha Gaya, Asoka had built a large temple of eleven stories and about 160 feet high, each of which originally contained golden images of Šakyamuni. This building was said to have been erected on the site of what must have been the first monument on the spot where he attained bodhi. The ancient edifice had been rebuilt many times, and the famous temple with its many images which now occupies the site is constantly being visited by Buddhist pilgrims from everywhere. The shape is gopura-like, that is, trapezoid, and as there is no similar ancient structure anywhere in North India it seems possible that the form is ancient, and that the reconstructions did not diverge in important details from the Asokan temple. The temple is really the main sanctuary of Buddhism, and there are replicas of its structure in other regions far apart; the Chamadevi Temple in Lampun, near Chiengmai, Northern Siam, struck me as a perfect miniature edition of the Bodhagaya shrine; the temple in Pegu (Burma) shows close resemblance.

The most important feature inside the stāna (the border,—i.e., the temple grounds) at Gaya is the ancient Bo-tree, the pīpal (Ficus Indica religiosa), mentioned earlier; its arborial ancestor is supposed to have shadowed the Šakyamuni's seat. There are many other pīpal trees surrounding the temple, all of them possible descendants of the historical one. The pilgrims place their offerings and pour their libations of oil, scents, and lustral water at the foot of the oldest, which they regard as the very same under which Gautama sat; some stick obla-

65 Description of Hiuen Tsiang, see Watters, op. cit., passim.
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tions of gold leaf to its trunk or else to the low stone stairs which

Sarnath near Banaras (the deer park, isipatana, Sanskrit रिपताना
is the site of the dhammacakkhapavassana, "the setting in motion the
wheel of the Dhamma," that is, the Buddha's first sermon to the five
Brahmin ascetics. The ancient stūpa on the site, visible from over a
mile and fairly well preserved up to this day, may well be the one seen
by Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century. The government of India
keeps conducting excavations in the vicinity of the great stūpa, which
resulted in unearthing quite a number of smaller stūpas. The place is
full of pilgrims at all times, and Tibetan pilgrims in particular do cir-
cumambulation of the great stūpa, as also of two smaller stūpas re-
cently excavated. Not only that, they often circumambulate the mu-
seum built by the government of India's Department of Archaeology,
obviously thinking it to be a part of the sanctuary. Unsophisticated
pilgrims in India do not distinguish between museum-type objects and
objects of veneration, if the former be of an iconic type.

Pilgrim history of Sarnath is extensive, and there is quite a bit of
secondary material on it.66 From the account of the Chinese pilgrims it
would seem that centers of Buddhist pilgrimage were much more nu-
merous in olden days—as would be expected, for India was partly
Buddhist at that time. Asoka allegedly built eighty-four stūpas near
Pāṭaliputra (the present Patna), which he is said to have erected over
relics of the Buddha, and the town is said to contain monasteries and
hostels with thousands of pilgrims visiting them.

According to Fa-hsien, at Śrāvasti (identified with the extensive
ruins at Sahet-Mahet in the Gonda District, (Uttar Pradesh) the first
sandalwood image of the Buddha was erected; there also was the
monastery at Jetavana said to have been built by an early lay fol-
lower, on the site of many of the Buddha's discourses. Later, in the
time of Huen Tsang, both of these were already in ruins.67

Around Rājagṛha (present-day Rajgir, Bihar), some of the most
popular pilgrim sites must have been located.68

The Nalanda monasteries were destroyed by Bakhtiar Khilji in the
twelfth century. The government of Bihar began to build the new in-

66 There is a lot of Hindi literature on Banaras, and although it is chiefly of
Hindu interest, the Buddhist sites are always mentioned, the story of the “setting
in motion of the wheel” being given in most of these manuals; I am thinking of a
book printed by the Sarasvati Press at Banaras "Kāṭi Tīrthon kā sangrah," "synopsis of the pilgrim centers of Banaras," where I remember having seen a large
chapter on the Buddhist sites.

67 Watters, VI, I, 377 ff.

68 Note on the Buddhist Council of Rājagṛha, ERE, IV, 182.
stitute (see above) about fifteen years ago, and it is now the one institution in India where monks from all Buddhist countries reside studying Sanskrit, Pali, some Tibetan and Buddhist canonical subjects in a modern fashion. The place was not intentionally visited by pilgrims until recently, though some pilgrims took it in on their way to Rajgir, from where it is less than 7 miles away. During the last few years, however, pilgrims have been going there more frequently, and they do now circumambulate the ruins of the old monastic university; there is no doubt that the presence of the institute and the monks were the original impetus for this renewed pilgrimage, and it is likely that Nalanda will be a regular Buddhist pilgrim center again very soon, just as it had been in the Middle Ages.

Buddhist pilgrimage conducted largely by non-Indian travelers is thus very much in evidence in northern India today. In the Pali Tripitaka, there is no mention of any merit or advantage of pilgrimage, nor any sanction given to the practice. Gautama obviously neither encouraged nor forbade any outward observances, and it appears evident that he tolerated all the customs that were prevalent among his contemporaries, so long as he did not think them detrimental to the dharma taught by him: he expressed direct disapproval only where he felt they did, as in the case of caste observance. It is certain, however, that very soon after his death the practice arose among his followers to visit the places consecrated by his presence or by the presence of his relics, which had been distributed among devotees at various places, who began to build stūpas probably right after the founder's death.

IV. PILGRIMAGE IN THE HINDU TRADITION

There is a distinction in India between general sanctuary topography and purely tantric topography. In the first place, I repeat, the Hindu (Brahmin and orthodox) word for a place of pilgrimage is tīrtha, the tantric word is pīṭha "seat," though tīrtha is also used generically in some tantric texts. The tantrics refer to their specific shrines, ponds, and other sites as pīṭhas. The word is loaded; in the sandhābhāṣā (intentional language) of the tantras it connotes the female organ, and the Śiva-Liṅga is always represented as imbedded within the pīṭha, never alone.69

As to the locations themselves, there is a very radical difference in accent; the orthodox Hindus enumerate seven places as the most important, though there is no single tradition as to locations making up this number; but the great majority of the Hindus accepts these as the

most important tirthas: Kāśī (the canonical name for Banaras, spelled Varanasi in official records since 1947); Prayāg (the area around the Triveni, the confluence of the Ganges, Yamunā, and the mythical Sarasvatī near Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh); Mathura, the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa, eighth and most popular incarnation of Viṣṇu, in Uttar Pradesh halfway between the Indian capital and Agra; Hardvar (“Gate of Śiva”; Vaiṣṇavas, however, as well as many Hindi-speaking North Indians who are not necessarily Vaiṣṇavas, pronounce and spell Haridvar, i.e., “Gate of Viṣṇu”) on the upper Ganges, about 20 miles from Dehra Doon and 50 miles from Delhi; Ayodhya, birthplace of Rāma, seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu and hero of the Rāmāyaṇa epic, in Uttar Pradesh, near the present Faizabad; Dvāraka in the State of Gujarāt, the city where Kṛṣṇa ruled as king; and Kāñcī-puram, the present Conjeeveram, about 50 miles south of metropolitan Madras. In place of Mathura and Dvaraka, Nisik in the State of Maharashtra, one of the sites for the kumbhamela, and Avantika, the present Ujjain in Rajasthan, are sometimes listed. In this most frequent enumeration, be it noted, that there is only one South Indian shrine. It is a strange fact that all Hindus, even the southerners themselves, regard the North as the more universally important pilgrimage area. The southern shrines and bathing places, especially in Tamilnad, have local reference more often than not, and their mythology is based on the writings on and by the Tamilian saints, particularly the sixty-four preceptors of southern Śaivism.70

There is one interesting phenomenon which has so far evaded occidental writers on Hindu observances. It seems that certain shrines are believed to have a joint purpose, and that they fall into a pattern of worship and mythology, guided not by any particular mythological event, but by some specific quality in the represented deity. It is an iconographical pattern. The places are often far apart, and the distance seems to be no consideration. Thus, the Devi (i.e., the magna mater in the Śaivite and Śākta traditions, and in all specifically tantric traditions) is worshiped at three different places with reference to the shape of her eyes: the Goddess Mīnākṣī, the “fish-eyed” one, is worshiped in the large, magnificent temple of the same name as Madura. She is a purely Dravidian goddess, the word “mīna” for fish, though used in classical and later Sanskrit, being definitely a Dravidian loan;71 the Goddess Kāmākṣī, that is, “with libidinous eyes,” who has her

70 For a very good survey of the southern pilgrimage complex, refer to Diehl, op. cit.

71 I am indebted to Professor Emeneau of the University of California at Berkeley for this information.
shrine in Southern Kāñci (Conjeeveram); and the Goddess Viśālākṣī, “of huge eyes,” whose shrine is at Banaras. Now Madura and Conjeeveram are not more than about 200 miles away from each other, but Banaras is over 1,500 miles from both; yet, South Indian devotees group the three shrines together, in spite of the fact that the Goddess Viśālākṣī at Banaras has a very small, indeed almost what I would call a theoretical, temple—a little hutlike sanctuary located in the midst of the former Muslim mahalla (municipal district) of the city; there is not even a regularly appointed priest in charge of the shrine. I could not find out if there has ever been a proportionately large temple of Viśālākṣī at Banaras, at the present site or elsewhere. North Indian pilgrims are not conscious of this “triangle”; I asked the head priest of the Viśvanāth Temple, the most important shrine in Banaras, and perhaps in Saivite India if he knew about the Goddesses Mīnākṣī and Kāmākṣī. He knew about them indeed, and told me they were located somewhere in the South, but he knew nothing about the connection pattern with the local “Viśālākṣī.”

V. PILGRIMAGE TOPOGRAPHY

1. Sacred rivers.—Although almost every river, or for that matter most of the small rivulets, in India have some sort of religious fame, the large streams are tīrthaś for all Hindus. However, river confluences have always had the highest prestige—perhaps a sort of additive fame attaching to a place where more than one river can be bathed in at the same time. Thus, there are the seven sacred confluences, the most important being that of the Ganges and the Yamuna at Prayāga; the site is called trivenī, meaning “a confluence of three (rivers),” the third being the mythical Sarasvatī river, which is believed to join the two through a subterranean approach. This is the site of the most impor-

72 In Bengal, there is an interesting confusion not noted before; it might provide a precedence for explaining certain similar confusions in the realm of pilgrim-interest. The Bengali pronunciation of Viśālākṣī is “Biśālākhi”; but as “lakhi” is close to their pronunciation of “lakṣmi,” i.e., the Goddess of Prosperity, spouse of Viṣṇu, “Śrī,” the Bengali tradition confuses the “lakhi” of “Viśālākṣī” with “lakṣmi”; and as there is no distinction whatever between the palatal and the cerebral sibilant (in fact there is only one phoneme in Bengali for the three sibilants s, ś, and ʂ, namely, “ṣ”) folk etymology misspells Viśālākṣī as “Viṣalakṣmi,” and carrying the error to its logical conclusion, the Bengali devotee worships the (Banaras-dwelling) “Viśālakṣī” (i.e., “the one with huge eyes,” viśāl + akiṣṭ) as “Viṣa-lakṣmi,” i.e., as the Lakṣmi who cures snake-bite and other poisonings! They are not aware that Viśālākṣī is not Lakṣmi at all, but the equivalent of the Bengali Kālī or Durgā, and that she has nothing to do with snake—or any other—poison.

73 The Sarasvatī is not entirely “mythical”—there certainly was a small river flowing into the Ganges up to the early middle ages, but its merging with the two at Prayāga is almost definitely a myth. The Bhisma Parvan of the Mahabharata mentions a river Sarasvatī which joins the Ganges near Banaras, which is about 80 miles east of Prayāga.

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tant of the three Kumbhamelas, the assembly of up to a million lay and monastic Hindus every six years. This site is the confluence par excellence, and all other sacred confluences are called "Prayāga" after it; as such, it is also called "Bhātṭa-prayāga," that is, the Prayāga of the Brahmmins. The next in importance is the Viṣṇu-prayāga, the confluence of the Alaknanda and the Leti in Garhwal, in the western Himalayan terai. Then about 80 miles to the southeast from there, there is Nanda-prayāga, the confluence of the Alaknanda and the Nanda; then of the Pindar and the Alaknanda near the Pindari glacier in the Almora district of Uttar Pradesh, called Karṇa-prayāga; of the Mandakini and the Alaknanda, the famous Rudraprayāg, in Tehri Garhwal; of the Bhāgirathī (i.e., the upper Ganges) and the Mandakini, that is, Deva-prayāga, less than thirty miles from Rudraprayāg; and finally the confluence of the Krishna and Vena rivers in the State of Andhra, the Dakṣiṇa-Prayāga (i.e., Prayāga of the South). With the exception of the main Prayāg (Allahabad and the Uttar Pradesh) last, all of the acknowledged confluences are situated in a small area along the Alaknanda, that is, in the districts Tehri and Pauri Garhwal, which is a veritable cluster of sacred places, and the classical assembly line of the Himalayan teachers of yore.

All sources and estuaries of the sacred rivers are highly esteemed places of pilgrimage; Gangotri, close to the Tibetan border, located in the District of Dehra Doon, is hard to reach and involves quite a bit of climbing; yet it is visited by thousands of pilgrims every year, and I have seen old women slowly ascending with the aid of staffs. I asked several of them, and their answers were quite stereotyped to this effect: "We have nothing more to do in the world, our children and grandchildren are married, old people are not really wanted or needed, so we walk toward the source of the Ganges, and if we die in the effort, that is the most desirable death we can meet." Deaths, however, are far less frequent than one would expect, and during a whole summer—1951—which I spent at Gangotri there was only one pilgrim reported to have died from strain and exposure. There is no built sanctuary at Gangotri, and the pilgrims' observance consists in bathing in the ice-cold river which is less than 5 yards in width at this spot. Gangotri has some twenty monastic establishments, and some of India's most renowned saint-scholars have their dārāma in the forest around the site, for example, the late Swami Tapovanam, one of the most celebrated contemporary commentators on Vedānta philosophy. Pilgrims went to him and to other famous monastic personages for dārsan, charismatic vision, which confers blessing and spiritual strength. Other famous sources and estuaries are Amarakantak, in the Vindhya mountains,
the source of the Narbada; Mahabalesvar in Bombay State, of the Krishna and Vena rivers; and, of course, Ganga-sagara, the estuary of the Ganges, in West Bengal.

2. Dhāma's and other non-aquatic pilgrim centers.—Places mythologically ascribed to specific deities or divine forms are called dhāma's (abodes) and almost every Hindu has heard their names; votaries of the deities regard it as an office of high merit to make a pilgrimage to the dhāma of their chosen or tutelary deity (iṣṭadevatā) at least once in their lifetime. Thus, the dhāma's of Viṣṇu, especially in his form as Kṛṣṇa, are the famous Jagannāth ("Juggernaut") at Puri, Orissa; this is the place of the famous rathayātra “car-procession” festival held in August. The current notion that pilgrims threw themselves under the wheels of the ratha (chariot) to find death and salvation is largely incorrect. There have been, and are accidents—over five hundred people get hold of the ropes to pull the huge vehicle, on which the three deities of the shrine (Kṛṣṇa, his brother Balarāma, and his sister Subhadra) are carried in procession, and it did happen that some pilgrims got pushed under the wheels.

In spite of its Vaisnava provenience, there are strong tantric features in the worship of Jagannāth at Puri. It is not known to most Hindus—and it is certainly not made known to the pilgrims who come to the place, for fear of losing the more orthodox among them—that the “prasāda” (food distributed among the devotees after it has been offered to the deity as an oblation—thought to be food touched by the god and returned to the devotees for their benefit) is sprinkled with wine on certain occasions; it is then referred to as mahāprasāda, that is, the “great” prasāda. This term has strange connotations in different traditions. Among the Sikhs, mahāprasāda is simply a euphemism for meat—as the Sikhs refer to all food as prasād,74 among Assamese tantrics, mahāprasāda is the sandhī—term for human meat. It seems to me that the epithet mahā- prefixed to -prasāda is the same crypto-derogatory sememe as in certain other words whose derogatory sense as codified by Panini.75 In the context of religious observance, the analogy might have been felt at times when tantrism began to flourish as something distinct from conservative religion.

Some other dhāma’s of Viṣṇu are Dvāraka in Gujarat (mentioned earlier as one of the seven great tīrthas); Badarināth the only Viṣṇu-temple of importance in the Himalayas—about 50 miles from Gango-

74 The Panjabi (and Hindi-Urdu) word for a roti or chappati, i.e., the staple wheat cake, is prasāda, even in completely mundane parlance.
75 Cf. Mahāvaidya, lit. “great doctor” euphemism for death; Mahāpandita—a poor or phony scholar; Mahājyotī— an inefficient astrologer, i.e., one whose predictions turn out to be false.
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tri, and Tirupati in the District of North Arcot, 80 miles from Madras.

Badrināth is one of the most intriguing places of pilgrimage. In the first place, it is very difficult to reach, as the bridle path from Gangotri is even steeper and much more erratic than the path leading up to Gangotri from Uttarkashi and from the plains. Next, there is a large magnificent temple at Badrināth, built in the fourteenth century. It remains totally uninhabited during eight months of the year, and is covered completely with snow during a larger part of these eight months. The head priest is a Nambuthiri, that is, a Brahmin from Kerala, the southwestern corner of India, an intensively tropical area. He belongs to the caste of the great Śaṃkarācārya, preceptor of the Daśanāmi Sanyāsī order of monks. He died about A.D. 780 and is said to have vanished into the mountains either here at Badrināth or else at Kedārmāth (see below) about 100 miles due west from Badrināth; it has been the greatest ambition for the Kerala Nambuthiri Brahmans for many centuries to be appointed head priest at Badrināth. During the cold season, the priest either returns to South India, or else he stays at Hardvar or at another religious center in the Himalayan regions which are inhabitable throughout the year.

The most important dhāma of Śiva is Somnāth in Kathiawar (Gujarat), which had been razed by Muslim chieftains in the fifteenth century and which was reinstalled only about twelve years ago, with the president of India presiding over the function. To my knowledge, this was the only instance in independent India where pilgrims were “organized”; religious organizations—both of a monastic and a lay character—collected funds to send pilgrims in impressive numbers to the spot.76 I had the impression that the Government of India, otherwise somewhat averse to public denominational worship, condoned the event in the pursuit of “cultural, secular efforts.”77

Other dhāma's of Śiva are Mallikārjuna on the Śrīśaila mountain in Mysore; Mahakāleśvara in Ujjain, north of Indore; Omkāra, on an islet in the Narbada river; Kedārnāth in the Himalayas; Bhūmasāmkara at the source of the river Bhīma, near Poona (Bombay State); Tryambakānāth “the three-eyed lord,” near Nasīk, on the Godāvari; Vaidyanāth (Bajnath) in the Santhal Parganas, Bihar;78 Nāgasānāth

76 The All India Arya Hindu Dharma Sewa Sangha in Delhi, the Devavam Board of Travancore and Cochin, and the Sanātana Dharma Pratinidhi Sahā of Nagpur, to mention a few.

77 This phrase is often used by Sd. K. M. Pannikar, who believes that the perpetuation of religious observance can be the business of a secular government also, albeit only sub specie culturae.

78 Monier Williams wrongly identified it with the Vaidyanath Temple in Ahmednagar, in the former state of Hyderabad; the dhāma is in Bihar, and is
(Nāgeśvara, Lord of the Nāgas), beyond Ahmednagar; Rāmeśvara, on an island about 1 mile from Dhanushkoti, Madras State off the Indian mainland; and Ghrinesvara at Ellora, near Aurangabad.

Of these, Kedārnāth and Rāmeśvaram are the most interesting for our purpose. Kedārnāth (like Amarnāth in Kashmere) in the Himalayas does not have a temple, the object of worship being a natural linga, that is, a stalagmite in a cave (Amarnāth in Kashmere is also a linga of ice). At Banaras, there is a large, beautiful temple controlled by the Thampi sect of southern Śaivism, and the merit accruing through a visit to this shrine is said to equal that of doing the tedious pilgrimage to the mountains. This is a frequent phenomenon in India: important and meritorious place of pilgrimage have a sort of regional substitute in far-off places, saving pilgrims the toil of physically visiting the original site. Thus, the Ekāmbaresvara Temple at Conjeeveram (Madras) has a little low corridor which is closed by a small metal gate; the corridor is said to be a subterranean connection to Kāśi (Banaras), 1,500 miles away. The gate is not opened at any time nowadays, but the priest told me that if a person insisted on creeping into the passage, circumserpeting the sanction, he would acquire the same merit as from a pilgrimage to Banaras and the circumambulation of the paṅcakōśi (the circumferential path of about 25 miles around the city of Banaras 1,500 miles away). However, he added, it has not been known that anyone dared the feat. Other vicarious shrines also offer to the pilgrim the merit of Banaras, that city being the pilgrimage center par excellence. “The place is a veritable Kāśi”—is an idiom found on many blurbs of less illustrious shrines and centers.

Rāmeśvaram (“the Lord of Rāma,” i.e., Śiva) is the ideal distant target of North Indian pilgrims; its distance (almost 2,000 miles from the Panjab) is an additional attraction, if not in fact, at least ideally so. Even the extant temples are large and very old. The sanctum is a linga which is said to have been installed and worshiped by Rāma himself when he was on his way to Laṅkā to recover his wife. There is a belief current among the pilgrims that if water drawn from the Ganges at the Manikarnikā Ghat in Banaras, part of which has been offered to Lord Visvanāth in that city, is poured over the lingam at Rāmeśvaram, the latter grows in size! I have met at least two persons who undertook this long-distance ritual, one by train, the other by air.

79 Built by the Pallava rulers in the sixth or seventh century.

78 Probably the most popular Śaivite center of pilgrimage in northeastern India. The Vaidyanatha Temple in Ahmednagar is of purely local importance and does not have the status of a dhamma (see Monier Williams, “Hinduism,” p. 178).
VI. THE TANTRIC ELEMENT IN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

The purely tantric tradition of four pithas was not known to occidental scholars until recently. Monier Williams seems to have had a vague idea about four shrines dedicated to the Goddess. He wrote: “there are also four celebrated shrines of goddesses: Mahālakṣmī at Kolapur, Bhavānī near Sholapur, Reṇukā at Mātāpura, Yogēśvarī about 80 miles from Ahmednagar.” 80 But these are random minor shrines.

Most of the early tantras, both Buddhist and Hindu, refer to four pithas. Sircar thinks that the conception of the four pithas may have been associated with the Buddhist tantric notion according to which the adept can rise to mahāsuṣkha (“the great bliss”) through the esoteric practices involving sex. 81 He quotes a Buddhist tantric text called Catuspīthatantra (“the tantra of the four pithas”) and its commentaries, one of which was copied in A.D. 1145. 82 This text speaks of the four pithas as ātmapiṇḍa (the “shrine of the self”—strange sounding Buddhism indeed, but not infrequent in Sanskrit Buddhist terminology), para-piṇḍa (the shrine of the transcendent), yoga-piṇḍa (which is self-explanatory) and guhya-piṇḍa (the secret, i.e., esoteric shrine) and it deals with the various kinds of Vajrasattvas (tantric Buddhist divinities) and their intercourse with the Yoginis, with Prajñāpāramitā and others. “This philosophical concept,” D. S. Sircar avers, “of the Catuspītha was either the cause or the effect of the early recognition of four holy places as pithas.” 83 He adds, “it is difficult to determine what relation the Catuspītha could have with the Catuspītha Mountain near Jaipur in Orissa, and with other Sahajayāna conceptions of “four,” for example, the caturānanda, “the fourfold bliss.” 84

The Hevajra Tantra, composed around A.D. 690 enumerates the four pithas, and to my knowledge this is the earliest enumeration: (1) Jalandhāra (definitely near the present Jullundar, East Punjab); (2) Odḍiyāna (or Uddiyāna, Urgyan in Tib., misspelled Udyāna, viz., “garden” in the Bengali Dohākosa ed. Shahidullah) in the Swat Valley; 86

80 See “Hinduism,” p. 179. None of these shrines are identical with one of the classical tantric pithas; and on this count, there are at least two hundred shrines of goddesses in India, of equal importance as the ones mentioned here.


82 Note H. P. Sastri, “Cat. Palmleaf and Selected Paper Manuscripts belonging to the Durbar Library, Kathmandu, Nepal.”

83 Ibid., p. 11. This, of course, ties in with the important problem of the hypostasisation of centers of pilgrimage; on this crucial theme see M. Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), passim.

84 Ibid. The mountain is a purely tantric shrine, and Orissa in general is a “tantric” region par excellence.

(3) Pūrṇagiri (the location is doubtful), and (4) Kāmarupa (Kamrup in Assam—at present the only pīṭha of the four actually visited by institutionalized tantrics.

The same tradition is followed in the Kalikā (chap. lxiv, 43–45) Purāṇa, which calls them (1) Oḍrā, “seat of the goddess Kātyāyani and the god Jagannātha, (2) Jalasaila, seat of the goddess Cāndī and the God Mahādeva, (3) Pūrṇa or Pūrṇasaila, seat of the goddess Pūrṇesvari and the god Mahānātha, and finally (4) Kāmarūpa, seat of the deities Kāmesvari and Kāmesvara. These four pīṭhas are allocated to the four directions, but this is pure theory, and stands in accordance with the tradition to allocate every ritualistic locale to a direction of the compass, and hence to group them either in fours or in tens, sometimes in groups of eight (i.e., omitting the zenith and the nadir). In reality, however, even the alleged locations of the four main pīṭhas are very irregular indeed: Oḍḍiyāna, in the Swat valley, is the only far-western site—Kāmaūapa and possibly Pūrṇagiri are in the extreme east, and Jālandhara again in the middle northwest (Panjab). None of the four pīṭhas is situated in the south, in spite of the fact that the Kerala region has a strong tantric (Sākta) element in its culture; in one form or another Śakti is the tutelary deity of Kerala.86

86 Although D. C. Sircar’s list in “The Sākta Pīṭhas” is very elaborate and possibly almost exhaustive, he does not list three extremely interesting tantric pilgrimage centers. They are shrines dedicated to Śakti in her three forms as “... mother,” Mukhāmbikā in North Cannanore on the Malabar Coast. She is the “mouth-mother,” i.e., the idol shows the lower portion of the head only; then there is Hemāmbikā, the “golden mother”—the name has no bearing on the shape of the idol, which is probably quite unique in India; it consists of only two female hands protruding out of a little artificial well. The legend says that the officiating priest once cast lewd glances at the goddess when he was administering her ritualistic bath, and she sank into the water with shame, and has been concealing her full form in the water ever since, holding out her hands only for the benefit of the devotees. The third “ambika” is the famous “Bālāmbikā” “girl-mother,” a synonym of Kanyā Kumārī, the goddess of Cape Comorin—“Comorin” being a Portuguese corruption of “Kumārī”; there is a convent of Belgian nuns at the place—India’s southern tip; Christian missionaries have been there since the early eighteenth century; a Tamilian nun told me that the Christian belief was that “Kanyā Kumārī,” i.e., “Virgin Goddess” is actually “Kanya Mary.” Until 1920, when the temple authorities barred non-Hindu entrance into the shrine, Christians entertained the notion that the goddess was none but the Virgin, usurped by the heathens for their purpose. To my knowledge, there is no secondary literature whatever, so far, on these three Kerala shrines, in spite of the fact that South Indian tantrics—by no means only Kerala tantrics—hold the shrines in high esteem and that they have been well-frequented centers of tantric worship and pilgrimage for centuries.