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2 Pilgrimage in China

Marcus Bingenheimer

Terminology

Abstract nouns such as ‘religion’ or ‘philosophy’ assume categories that are not easily mapped onto non-European cultures. The same is true when asking for ‘pilgrimage/pèlerinage/Pilgerfahrt’ in China. The closest equivalents in literary Chinese are *chaoshan* 朝山, literally ‘to have an audience with a mountain’¹ and *jinxiang* 進香 ‘to offer incense.’² *Jinxiang* is also used for pilgrimage processions, in which an effigy of a deity is carried back and forth between temples.³ In modern Mandarin, *chaosheng* 朝聖 ‘to have an audience with the sacred,’ is frequently used where one would write ‘pilgrimage’ in English, and especially when writing about pilgrimage outside China. Another term, *chaojin* 朝覲 is reserved for the *hajj*, the most significant pilgrimage for the more than 20 million Chinese Muslims. For the travels of Chinese monks to India the texts mostly speak of *qiufa* 求法, ‘searching for the Dharma’. Still another word that can be translated as ‘pilgrimage’ is *canxue* 參學 ‘to visit and study (with a master),’ which has been used for monks travelling to different monasteries in search of instruction.

The central terms *chaoshan* and *jinxiang* already indicate two characteristics which are germane to traditional Chinese pilgrimage. Irrespective of whether a site was associated with Buddhism, Daoism, a regional deity, or the imperial cult—mountains played a central role. Furthermore, the practice of offering incense to resident spirits, ancestors or deities was universal across traditions. Offering incense has been called ‘the most fundamental religious act in Chinese culture’ (Ter Haar, 1999: 5).⁴ Accordingly, lay pilgrims to sacred sites are called *xiangke* 香客 ‘incense (offering) guest.’⁵ In late imperial China these often travelled in organized pilgrimage ‘incense groups’ (*xianghui* 香會⁶). At the site itself pilgrims insert their incense sticks into incense burners (*xianglu* 香爐), which are placed in front of images.

Revealing is the difference to the most frequently used term in Japanese: *junrei* 巡礼 ‘to circuit and worship.’⁷ The Japanese term emphasizes a pilgrimage route that consists of an itinerary of linked sites that are to be visited in order, while in China pilgrimage was more often seen in terms of its destination. Japanese Buddhist pilgrims tend to follow a circuit that connects

several shrines and temples, whereas pilgrimage in China is usually perceived of as a visit to a single mountain or temple site, even where the visit includes a circuit of famous places at the larger site. Thus, on the Shikoku pilgrimage pilgrims are called *henro* 遍路 (appr. ‘making the round of the circuit’).

Characteristics

Below we will focus on pilgrimage in China mainly in terms of pilgrimages to mountains and famous temples. Neither the travels of Chinese monks to India in the first millennium, nor the *hajj* by Chinese Muslims today can be covered in detail here. Accounts of the Chinese India pilgrims have long elicited intense interest, because they offer unique eyewitness reports about early medieval Indian history, a period for which we have otherwise little information. Especially the travelogues of Faxian 法顯 (d. c. 420), Xuanzang 玄奘 (d. 664) and Yijing 義淨 (635–713) have been scrutinized in great detail.⁸ Their travels can be understood as pilgrimages, as they did indeed visit the sacred Buddhist sites in India. However, the number of those monastic pilgrims was small and their goal was not merely to see the sites, but also to study with Indian masters and to acquire new texts. Whereas pilgrimage in a narrow sense leads pilgrims on well-known paths to well-known places, the Chinese monastic pilgrims to India rather resembled explorers, venturing into the unknown. In spite of their importance for the transmission of Buddhism and the communication between India and China, their mode of ‘pilgrimage’ was never an option for the majority of Chinese Buddhists, and moreover was limited to the period from the third to about the 8th century. Whereas the last of the famous India pilgrims returned to China in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the stream of unnamed *xiangke* who visit sacred sites within China has been a constant in Chinese history until today. No one has ever counted the millions of pilgrims who went on *chaoshan*.⁹ In the context of a comparative discussion of ‘pilgrimage’ the focus should therefore be on *chaoshan/jinxiang* pilgrimages to mountain or temple sites.

Mountain Worship

Mountain worship began early in Chinese history, long before the advent of Buddhism and the formation of religious Daoism. The earliest dictionary of folklore and customs, by Ying Shao 應劭 (fl. 190 CE), already asserts a religious geography in which mountains figure prominently.¹⁰ Ritualistic travel to sacred mountains was certainly part of the imperial cult of the Han and even earlier, but it was probably not yet widely practiced.¹¹ After the Han, however, mountain worship assumed such an important role in Chinese religion that Édouard Chavannes, began his work on Mount Tai categorically: ‘Les montagnes sont, en Chine, des divinités’ (Chavannes, 1910: 3).

Central to the development of mountain worship was the system of the five marchmounts (*wuyue* 五嶽) that can be traced back to the first written

texts in China.¹² The set was not fixed in the beginning, but after the 2nd century BC generally comprised the following five mountain ranges: Mount Tai 泰山 in the east, Mount Heng 衡山 in the south, Mount Hua 華山 in the west, Mount Heng 恆山 in the north, and Mount Song 嵩山 in the centre. The five marchmounts, with the centre surrounded orderly at the four cardinal points, were thought to define the empire as a whole. As part of the imperial cult the mountain gods were likened to ministers, who administered the periphery and centre of the state. As local deities in their own rights, they were venerated in temples and shrines just like other members of the Chinese pantheon. The marchmounts were more strongly associated with Daoism than Buddhism, but most have a Buddhist presence as well. This mingling is true for most pilgrimage sites. Daoist and Buddhist sites are discussed below in different sections only for the sake of convenience. The identity of most sites was rarely constructed exclusively; there often was a Daoist shrine or even 'grotto-heaven' at a Buddhist mountain, and Buddhist temples gave shelter to pilgrims at a Daoist site.¹³

Daoist Mountain and Temple Sites

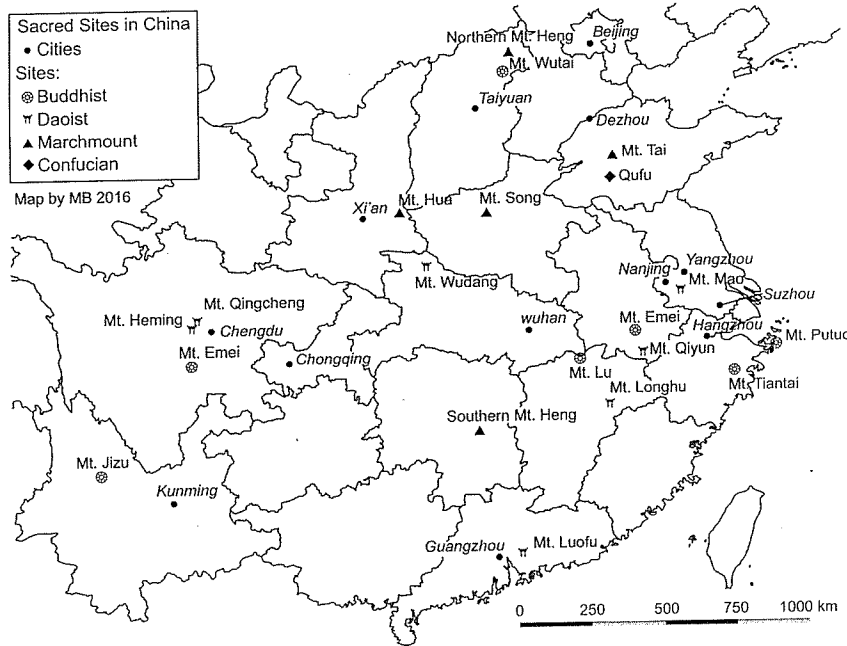
Sacred geography has been part of religious Daoism since its inception in the 2nd century CE when Zhang Daoling (trad. 34–156) organized his Sichuan domain in twenty-four 'dioceses' (*zhi* 治) (see Verellen, 2003; Olles, 2005). In the Tang, Daoists created a systematic Daoist geography of China and its deities.¹⁴ They listed ten major and thirty-six minor grotto heavens, and seventy-two blissful lands in locations throughout the empire. The 'heavenly grottoes and blissful lands' (*dongtian fudi* 洞天福地) had been an important trope in the Daoist *imaginaire* even before the Tang. Heavenly grottoes and blissful lands were generally associated with mountains and continued to play a role in the literati perception of sites even after popular belief in them had faded. Besides the marchmounts there were a large number of other Daoist mountains. Some were connected to important historical developments within Daoism, such as Mount Heming 鶴鳴山 and Mount Qingcheng 青城山, where Zhang Daoling had had visions of Laozi, or Mount Mao 茅山, where the Shangqing school originated. Others were centres of monastic Daoism such as Mount Longhu 龍虎山, where the Zhengyi school had its headquarters. The most popular Daoist pilgrimage sites were associated with prominent deities, such as Mount Wudang 武當山, believed to be the residence of the martial god Zhenwu 真武. In spite of the concern with religious geography, however, there was no developed discourse on pilgrimage. On the contrary, many Daoist sites derived their prestige from being remote and exclusive. Only the few that were able to combine deity worship with strong monastic institutions and imperial support became popular pilgrimage centres (e.g. Mount Wudang).

Buddhist Mountain and Temple Sites

For Daoists, correspondences between landscape, the stars, parts of the body and various deities played a central role in doctrine, ritual and practice. In Buddhism on the other hand, mountain worship is not an integral part of the teachings. The pan-Indian *axis mundi* of Mount Sumeru is part of Buddhist cosmography, but it would be hard to argue that Indian Buddhist doctrine was overly concerned with the sacredness of mountains. It was in Buddhist China, doubtless inspired by indigenous notions of sacred geography, that there evolved a set of sacred mountains that attracted large numbers of pilgrims in the last millennium.¹⁵

The Buddhist mountains, however, are not ruled by autochthonous mountain gods, but understood as the residence of Bodhisattvas. Since the Qing dynasty a set of 'four great and famous mountains' of Buddhism has enjoyed great popularity. The four are Mount Wutai 五台山 (associated with Mañjuśrī), Mount Emei 峨嵋山 (associated with Samantabhadra) Mount Putuo 普陀山 (associated with Avalokiteśvara), and Mount Jiuhua 九華山 (associated with Kṣitigarbha). Mount Wutai and Emei were already Buddhist sites before the Tang, Putuo became a pilgrimage site in the Northern Song, and Jiuhua was firmly associated with Kṣitigarbha only in the Ming. Today sometimes Mount Jizu 雞足山 in Yunnan is added as a fifth sacred mountain. Next to the 'great and famous mountains' there are many other Buddhist mountain and temple sites which have attracted pilgrims. Traditionally, information about these has been collected in mountain or temple gazetteers, of which at least three hundred are still extant (Bingenheimer, 2012: 58).¹⁶

As sacred mountains became popular in Chinese Buddhism, and more and more temples were built on mountains, the two were conjoined in the religious *imaginaire*. Large monasteries came to be perceived as 'mountains' irrespective of their geographic setting. Both mountains and temples were seen as numinous places, and the metaphorical use of the word 'mountain' (*shan* 山) for temple, became common in late imperial times (Goossaert, 2000: 125). Both in Daoism and in Buddhism larger monasteries were thus seen as mountain-like and a 'mountain gate' (*shanmen* 山門) marked the temple entrance. Entering the precincts of a sacred mountain or a temple one stepped 'outside the world' (*fangwai* 方外) into a space of reclusion, but also divine presence. In the Ming and Qing, when the construction of new temples and monasteries was proscribed by law, temples had to be built outside of towns, further removing them into 'numinous' (*ling* 靈) mountainous landscapes. This continued a trend that started in the late Tang and further contributed to pilgrimage travel. In this way, the temples in the Wulin 武林 Hills east of Hangzhou or the Miaoxiang 妙香 Hills near Beijing developed into pilgrimage sites. They were just remote enough to be seen as outside the city, but close enough to be reachable without the cost and the perils of long distance travel.



Map 2.1 Sacred Sites in China.

Pilgrimage versus Literati Travel

Considering that mountain paths are arduous, what moved Chinese pilgrims to undertake their ‘audience with the mountain’? As in other cultures, the hope to meet and communicate with a deity—be it a mountain god, an immortal, or a bodhisattva—provided one rationale. Deities could be encountered in the flesh as well as in visions or dreams. Another manifestation of divine presence was numinous images (*ruixiang* 瑞像) which draw visitors. Like for Christianity in Europe, relics (*sheli* 舍利) played a crucial role in the spread of Buddhism in both India and China (Bingenheimer, 2006). Again like in Christianity, relics also were among the attractions that brought pilgrims to a site, e.g. at the famous Aśoka Temple near Ningbo. Like in Hinduism, devotees could pledge a pilgrimage to a saint’s temple in exchange for supernatural help. Fulfilling such promissory vows was called ‘to return a vow’ (*huan yuan* 還願).

In general, pilgrimages were considered virtuous acts that created merit (*gongde* 功德), a concept that was imported into Chinese religion from Buddhism. Pilgrimage by Buddhist monks and nuns too was motivated by all of these reasons, even if their pilgrimage travel was often framed as educational visits to elder masters at different monasteries. Monks, who travelled

as part of their monastic education, were not called *xiangke*, but ‘Water and Cloud Monks’ (*yunshui seng* 雲水僧).¹⁷

Different from the Chinese India pilgrims of the first millennium, the *xiangke* of the second millennium rarely left first-person accounts of their travels. Instead, the majority of eyewitness reports by visitors to sacred sites in China were written by members of the literati. The literati of late imperial China were men that had learned to write according to occasion in the literary idiom. Their early education consisted almost exclusively of Confucian texts and was aimed to allow them to participate in the highly competitive civil examinations. The default attitude of literati culture toward folk religion was to maintain a tolerant distance, but this was just one section of a wide spectrum that ranged from strident opposition to modest participation. Literati were often members of the land-holding gentry and had the means to travel for leisure. Besides visiting historical and scenic sites, literati also followed pilgrimage routes, which had a developed infrastructure to accommodate travellers. The rise of the genre of the informal travelogue (*youji* 遊記) in the Ming and Qing resulted in a large number of first-person accounts of sacred sites.¹⁸ However, the literary conventions of the time did not encourage the expression of religious sentiment, and the literati had been trained to see themselves as a class apart from commoners and their religious concerns. In fact, literati authors rarely mentioned the presence of pilgrims, and where they are mentioned they are usually described as a bother to the gentleman traveller and his friends. Therefore, in spite of a large number of *youji*, first-person accounts of religiously motivated pilgrimages are exceedingly rare. To be clear: literati have at times visited sacred sites out of religious fervour, and surely many commoners went on pilgrimage merely to enjoy the scenery at Mount Emei. Nevertheless, there was a class divide in the attitude towards the sacredness of the place. The studiously relaxed posture of the literati in the religiously charged atmosphere of the pilgrimage site asserted Confucian superiority in the face of popular religion. There were even some conservative Confucians who were opposed to any kind of popular pilgrimage. Especially when it came to women.

Women on Pilgrimage

The Ming and, based on it, the Qing law codes strictly regulated religion. Even if there was a considerable leeway in its enforcement, the legal code severely limited religious institutions and organizations. One of the vectors of control was based on gender. In late imperial China women actively participated in pilgrimage. Indeed, for all we know, female pilgrims were the majority at most sacred sites. However, women went on pilgrimage in spite of a cultural current that was opposed to travel by commoners in general and female travel in particular. Ming and Qing law explicitly prohibited women from visiting Buddhist temples and sacred sites, and the laws were echoed in administrative handbooks. For instance, the chapter on ‘Prohibiting women

from visiting temples' in the *Complete Book Concerning Happiness and Benevolence* says:

The magistrate should post notice to the effect that no women do visit temples on the pretext of burning incense. If the violator belongs to a gentry family her followers or servants should be arrested and punished. If she belongs to a commoner family, her husband should be arrested and punished. Buddhist monks or Taoist priests who harbor these women should be punished by wearing the cangue for public exposure. (Huang and Chu, 1984: 608)

As Vincent Goossaert has remarked such rules were 'on first glance comical,' because obviously the temples were frequented and supported by women throughout these eras (Goossaert, 2002: 118; see also Yü (1981: 151). Nevertheless, female pilgrimage existed in a tension with certain strands of Confucian orthodoxy. Where women went on pilgrimage outside of their hometown, they had to organize themselves in pilgrimage groups, as individual pilgrimage was illegal for them (Brook, 1998: 630).

The Canadian missionary Virgil C. Hart (1840–1904) has left a lively description of female pilgrims on Mount Emei:

Every person carries an umbrella, for the weather in July and August is most fickle. Of the pilgrims fully one half were women, and they, as a rule, were above forty years of age; some were quite young and in care of chaperones. I also observed a curious custom they have of travelling in companies of seven. The rich and the poor walk together, and kneel in the same circles around the altars of their honored gods. But how differently they dress! Here comes a queenly dowager, with staff and a retinue of servants, her head adorned with gold and pearls, and heavy gold rings in her ears . . . The poor are clad in homespun blue, green, or red cotton stuff; their dresses are shorter and more convenient for climbing. All kinds of headdresses are represented, and all devices in jewelry; for even the very poor wear jewelry, and are as proud of their silver and pewter ornaments as the rich are of their jewels. Nearly all have small feet, and to make the journey over rough stones at all comfortable, they tie corn husks around the small shoes, and then attach sandals to these. The ascending pilgrims have bundles of incense and many pounds of copper cash, but those on the descent are not burdened with either.

(Hart, 1888: 201f)

'Incense and copper cash' were the currency of Chinese pilgrims, the former offered to the deities, the latter donated to the monastic institutions which maintained the infrastructure of inns, temples, mountain roads, wells and bridges. Next to this, pilgrims often would wear special outfit, pennants, hats or coats. For orientation, pilgrims from the 19th century

onwards were able to buy shorter illustrated guidebooks or pilgrimage maps.¹⁹

Thus pilgrimage, both lay and monastic, was widely practiced in late imperial China. In spite of Confucian misgivings, there existed countless local networks of pilgrimage groups and a developed infrastructure along the routes to the major sites. Traditional pilgrimage ended when the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) and the ensuing civil war (1945–49) made travel difficult. Pilgrimage in Communist China stopped, as far as we can know, completely during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Since the 1980s, however, travel to religious sites has revived and is again flourishing, now promoted and researched as part of the domestic tourism industry.²⁰

Studies in European Languages

Pilgrimage in China in the last four decades has been studied less intensively than pilgrimage in Japan. There are two main reasons for this, one historical, the other structural.

In recent history, pilgrimage in Japan has hardly ever been interrupted by outside events. Parallel to an uninterrupted tradition of practice there is a strong tradition of scholarship studying 'folk culture' in the post-war period. Thus, Ian Reader can start a discussion on pilgrimage studies in Japan with the words: 'Japan has both a highly developed network of pilgrimages and a rich academic tradition of studying them' (Reader, 2015: 23). Compared to this, the study of Chinese pilgrimage in the 20th century—as indeed the study of Chinese religion as a whole—faced great political challenges, even, or perhaps especially, after the end of World War II. The actual practice of pilgrimage was interrupted, in some places for longer than one generation, and the burgeoning pilgrimage-tourism of modern China has a much more troubled and complicated connection with its past than do the pilgrimage circuits in Japan. This situation is different for Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore and, not incidentally, much of the anthropological work on pilgrimage was done in these regions.

Structurally, Chinese pilgrimage was generally oriented towards a single destination, rather than towards a pilgrimage circuit along an ordered set of shrines. This made scholars of religion often focus on the pilgrimage site and its history, economy or architecture, instead of the dynamics of pilgrimage which sustained the site. In the study of Chinese religion pilgrimage so far has not emerged as a central category, as it did in the study of Japanese religion. In this, modern scholarship has tacitly followed the view of Ming and Qing dynasty literati, who recognized *chaoshan* as a practice, but one in which they were not overly interested.²¹ *Chaoshan* was never endorsed and at best tolerated by the hegemonic Confucian discourse and literati travellers only rarely mention pilgrims in their travelogues.

For the past hundred years scholars of Chinese religion have produced a good number of studies on sacred sites that were frequented (and supported)

by pilgrims. There is Édouard Chavannes (1910) and Brian Dott (2004) on Mount Tai, Michel Soymié (1956) on Mount Luofu, Florian Reiter on Mount Lu (1978) and on Mount Qiqu (1993), Michel Strickmann (1981) on Mount Mao, Susan Naquin (2000) on the temples in and around Beijing, Olles (2005) on Mount Laojun, James Hargett (2006) on Mount Emei, Meir Shahar (2008) on the Shaolin Temple, James Robson (2009) on Nanyue, Michael Walsh (2010) on the Tiantong Monastery, Pierre-Henri De Bruyn (2010) on Mount Wudang, Ernst Boerschmann (1911) and Marcus Bingenheimer (2016) on Mount Putuo, and María Elvira Ríos Peñafiel (2015) on Mount Nanwutai. Not surprisingly, the site that has attracted most attention is Mount Wutai, which is not only one of the oldest sites, but also the most internationally famous of the sacred mountains (Ono and Hibino, 1942; Tuttle and Elverskog, 2011; Andrews, 2013; Cartelli, 2013; Lin, 2014).²²

In spite of this wealth of research on sacred sites, dedicated studies of pilgrimage are still rare. Among the numerous monographs cited above only Dott's work on Mount Tai privileges pilgrimage as the main heuristic perspective from which to understand the site. Dott not only discusses the agency and organization of common pilgrims visiting the goddess of Mount Tai, but also considers the intermittent visits by emperors and literati as pilgrimages.

The most detailed ethnography of pilgrimage in modern China is Ríos Peñafiel, who reports on the actions, festivals, music, infrastructure and the lore of contemporary pilgrims to Mount Nanwutai.²³ Another exceptional work dedicated to pilgrimage in China is the widely-cited collection of essays edited by Naquin and Yü (1992). It contains papers by Glen Dudbridge and Pei-yi Wu on Mount Tai, Robert Gimello on Mount Wutai, Bernard Faure on Mount Song and Caoxi, Chün-fang Yü on Mount Putuo, James Cahill on Mount Huang, John Lagerway on Mount Wudang, Susan Naquin on the Miaofeng Shan pilgrimage, and Rudolf Wagner on the present-day 'pilgrimages' to Mao Zedong's Mausoleum. The introduction by Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü is still the best overview of pilgrimage in China that is available in English.²⁴ It concludes with a long list of questions for future research on pilgrimage, only few of which have, so far, been followed up.

The fascination with mountains that sinologists have inherited from their literati forebears has somewhat obscured the role of regional pilgrimage processions within temple-networks. Because in the 20th century the networks of temples that worshipped the same deity were destroyed or interrupted in mainland China, much of the existing research on temple pilgrimages is based on data from Taiwan. Pilgrimage processions (*raojing* 遶境) feature prominently in Steven Sangren's work on Chinese religion in Taiwan (1987, 1988, 1991, 1993, 2003 and others), in which he paid special attention to the annual Mazu pilgrimage processions in central Taiwan. A most interesting project that has used GIS technology in conjunction with fieldwork to

map the pilgrimages *in situ* has resulted in the *Atlas of the 2012 Religious Processions in the Tainan Region* (Center for Geographic Information Science, Academia Sinica et al., 2014).

In the late 1980s, Mazu pilgrimage expanded as pilgrims from Taiwan started to visit Mazu temples in Fujian (see Rubinstein, 1995). This development is the subject of a monograph on pilgrimage in Taiwan and Fujian by D.J. Hatfield (2010). Hatfield gives a detailed account of modern Mazu pilgrimage and its place in the contested construction of Chinese folk religion (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰). It is based on data gathered in years of fieldwork and from reports in Chinese media. Here we find a description of pilgrim uniforms, as well as the Chinese equivalent of the pilgrim stamp-books, the 'incense pennants' (*xiangqi* 香旗) (Hatfield, 2010: 186–189).²⁵ A revival of Daoist pilgrimage processions in China, again in Fujian, has also been attested by Kenneth Dean (1993: 131–133), who has remarked on the continuity of his findings with the earliest Western descriptions of pilgrimage processions by de Groot (1886).

Studies in Chinese

Bibliographic control of Chinese scholarship has in recent years been greatly helped by the development of the China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database (CNKI / 中国知网), which claims to represent 90 per cent of knowledge resources produced in the PRC (<http://oversea.cnki.net/> accessed July 2015). This includes journals, master and doctoral dissertations, proceedings, yearbooks, patents etc., but significantly not monographs. CNKI, which was launched in 1996, allows querying the research output of Chinese academia enabling users to not only find resources on a particular topic, but also to learn how a topic has fared over time.

In the analysis below I will trace Chinese publications regarding pilgrimage in China. These must be understood relative to the overall development of research output in China, which has risen spectacularly in recent years. In the sciences alone the Chinese research output almost quadrupled between 2002 and 2012. Consequently, the rise of China in scientific and academic publishing has been described as 'the most significant change during the last three decades' in this field by Thomson Reuters (2014: 22f).

Table 2.1 below shows the number of publications in the Humanities, Social Sciences 1 & 2, and Economics and Management sections of CNKI (哲学与人文科学, 社会科学 I & II辑, 经济与管理) which contain a term for "traditional Chinese pilgrimage" (朝山 or 進香), or "traditional Chinese pilgrim" (香客) in the topic (主題).²⁶

Obviously, pilgrimage studies in Chinese are on the rise. Some 500 papers were published in the four-year period between 2010 and 2014. Although absolute numbers seem to suggest an explosion of pilgrimage studies, it must be remembered that in China the overall output in all fields of research has increased drastically. In the absence of reliable data on the growth of

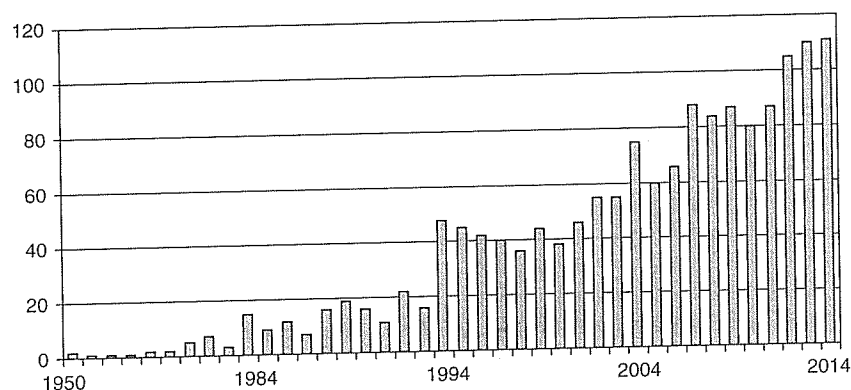


Table 2.1 Pilgrimage-related publications in Chinese (1950–2014).

other fields within the Humanities, it is not possible to say whether the particular field of pilgrimage studies has outgrown or lagged behind the average increase. Nevertheless, and that is the reason I cite these figures here, the sheer mass of recent studies needs to be recognized and addressed. The study of China in the West has had a tendency to overemphasize research done in European languages and Japanese. Historically, this might have been justified. Where it came to the study of Chinese history and religion, academic output in 20th century China was often overwhelmed by political and ideological currents. It is incumbent on Western scholarship to recognize that this has changed in the last twenty years.

Here, I will show only for a single topic—female pilgrimage—how rich secondary literature in Chinese has become. Apart from a translation of two women pilgrims' songs (Yü, 2007), there is no dedicated study on this topic in any Western language. In China, however, a number of studies have appeared in China in recent years. These often treat the subject from perspectives outside the current cultural theory commons of Western academia. Sometimes these perspectives seem overly reductive, such as when Chen Baoliang treats pilgrimage merely as the 'best excuse' to allow women to travel (2010: 123). On the other hand, Chen's work offers a wealth of sources about female pilgrimage in the Ming that include, e.g. an analysis of the folk ballad 'The lady offering incense' (*shaoxiang niangniang* 燒香娘娘), which deplores the cost of the incense, candles, provisions and transport needed by the pilgrims (2010: 121).

Wan and Cao (2007) rely on the depiction of pilgrimage in Ming-Qing novels and their descriptions of pilgrimages. Like Dudbridge (1992) and Mei (2003) before, Wan and Cao mine the description of female pilgrimage to Mount Tai in the 17th-century novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* 醒世姻緣傳. There is little awareness, however, of the intentionally caricature-like quality

that the male author drew for his male audience. The depictions in novels are used as illustrations of actual practice without taking the misogynist intent of the narrative into account.²⁷ Another historical study is Zhang (2010), who investigates why and how women from Beijing went to Taishan in the Ming and Qing. Zhang, too, relies on literary sources, but draws a more balanced picture of the various attractions that a visit to the goddess of Mount Tai held for women of the capital.

An informative anthropological study is Wang (2009). Based on her fieldwork at Mount Tai, Wang outlines in detail how female pilgrims rationalize their practice in the face of the prevailing discourse on religion and are able to argue for and explain their beliefs to outsiders once trust is established. In the post-Marxist discourse of Chinese religious studies 'superstition' (*mixin* 迷信) is still a widely used category and at times applied in the discussion of female pilgrimage. For a practice to be pigeon-holed as 'superstitious' has implications for its legal and academic treatment. It is good to see anthropological work emerging in Chinese that takes care to understand female pilgrims as 'rational actors,' against the condescending ascription that they are merely ignorant followers of 'feudal superstition' (Wang, 2009: 216).

In short, even on a relatively small topic in the wider field of pilgrimage studies, we see a steady output of publications in Chinese. Much of it focuses on the pilgrimage culture at certain sites—especially Mount Wutai, Mount Tai and Mount Wudang, but it is still too early to identify major trends. If current publication patterns continue, however, an overview article about pilgrimage in China will look very differently ten years from now. Its bulk will be dedicated to describe the different approaches realized in the scholarship on Chinese pilgrimage in Chinese.

Notes

- 1 The term *chaoshan* was probably not used before the Tang. One of the earliest occurrences is in the entry on Mount Wudang 武當山 in one of the chapter on mountains (*Shang Luo Xiang Deng Huai Cai zhu shan* 商洛襄鄧淮蔡諸山) included in the *Tai ping yulan* (completed in 983).
- 2 For the offering of incense at a nearby temple the term *shaoxiang* 燒香 is more common (Mei, 2003: 54). There is also the less frequent *canbai* 參拜 'to visit and worship.'
- 3 For pilgrimage processions at times the term *xunli* 巡禮 'to circuit and worship' was used as well. In modern Taiwan pilgrimage processions are generally termed *raojing* 遶境 'to circuit a region.'
- 4 The article includes a bibliography on the use of incense in Chinese religion.
- 5 One of the earliest occurrences of *xiangke* 香客 is in the poem *Xing xiang gui* 行香歸 by the famous Bai Juyi (772–846). Monastic pilgrims were called *xingzhe* 行者 ('practitioner' or literally 'walker'), *yunshui* 雲水 ('clouds and water') *toutuo* 陀頭 (from Sanskrit *dhūta* 'ascetic practice') or *toutuo seng* 陀頭僧 (*dhūta monk*).

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- 6 Or *xianghuohui* 香火會, *xiangshe* 香社. Leaders of such pilgrim groups were called *huishou* 會首 or *xiangtou* 香頭.
- 7 In Japan the term was used early by the monk Ennin (794–864) in the title of his famous diary, the *Nittō gubō junreikōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記, in which he recorded his travels to Buddhist sites in China (first entry 836 CE, last entry January 848 CE). In China the term is attested around the same time in the works of Wang Jian (767–830).
- 8 On Faxian and the role of Indian pilgrims in general, see Deeg (2005), which contains a comprehensive 60-page bibliography on the subject. Deeg considers Faxian and others as pilgrims on ‘Pilgerfahrt,’ but also remarks on the differences of their situation to the standard definition of Deeg (2005: 47–48). On Xuanzang the most detailed study is still Mayer (1992).
- 9 Already Virgil Hart, in 1888, uses ‘millions’ to describe the streams of pilgrims to Buddhist mountains (Hart 1888: 199). In 1937, Prip-Møller observed that ‘the big monasteries in the pilgrim centres boast sleeping accommodation for a couple of thousand pilgrims’ (Prip-Møller, 1967 [1937]: 139). Boerschmann mentions the ‘unzähligen Pilger’ on Mount Putuo (Boerschmann, 1911: 13). A hundred years later at Mount Putuo, I was told the island accommodates several thousand visitors every day. For the Mazu 媽祖 cult in Taiwan of the 1980s and 1990s Sangren says that ‘Every year some four to five million Taiwanese (20% of the island’s population) make pilgrimages to Pei-gang, home of . . . the goddess Ma Tsu.’ (Sangren, 1993: 565).
- 10 *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, Ch.10: ‘On Mountains and marshes.’ In a later glossary, Zhai Hao 翟灝 (d. 1788) cites text from the Western Han (206 BCE to 24 CE) to argue that *chaoshan* began in that period (*Tongsubian* 通俗編 (1751), Ch. 19: ‘On Deities and Ghosts 神鬼’, sub voc. *chaoshan* 朝山).
- 11 Robson, in his overview of the formation of the system of the five sacred mountains of the imperial cult, reminds us that mountains in early China were not only home of supernatural beings, but also ‘landscapes of fear’ (Robson, 2009: 18).
- 12 For a concise overview of the historical development of the marchmount system see Kleeman (1994), and Chapters 1 and 2 in Robson (2009). For the role the five marchmounts in the literary imagination of Qing literati see Landt (1994).
- 13 Here and below, ‘Daoism’ is used in the broadest sense, i.e. including all forms of local and regional ‘folk-religious’ practices. Although in other contexts the demarcation of regional religion from organized forms of Daoism is important, it does not matter in a discussion of pilgrimage.
- 14 In works like Sima Chengzhen’s 司馬承禎 (647–735) ‘Chart of the palaces and bureaus of the [Grotto-]Heavens and the [Blissful] Lands’ (*Tiandi gongfu tu* 天地宮府圖), and Du Guangting’s 杜光庭 (850–933) ‘Record of heavenly grottoes, blissful lands, [the five] marchmounts, rivers and famous mountains’ (*Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 洞天福地嶽瀆名山記 (901)).
- 15 Needless to say, there are holy Buddhist mountains outside of East Asia, e.g. in Northern Thailand (Swearer et al. 2004), Mongolia (Wallace 2015), and Tibet (McKay 1998).
- 16 For some of the larger sites, such as the four mountains, ten or more gazetteers were compiled over the centuries, whereas smaller sites might only have one or two gazetteers about them.
- 17 On monastic travel in the early nineteenth century, see Bingenheimer (2016, Ch. 8).
- 18 The authoritative treatment of this genre is Eggert (2004).
- 19 For a specimen of such a late 19th century map for Mount Putuo, see Boerschmann (1911: 15), for Mount Wutai, see Chou (2007:110–111).
- 20 See e.g. Yang, Pan and Zhao (2011: 90–112), who base their analysis of pilgrimage travel in China on a framework developed in Western tourism studies.

- 21 Sangren (2003: 10) speaks of ‘class-based biases.’ It should be noted that Buddhist authors did not make a concerted attempt to defend or legitimize pilgrimage. Faure mentions that the Chan school especially ‘tended to downplay the notion of pilgrimage’ (Faure, 1992: 151).
- 22 A bibliography of recent publications on ‘Temples & Mountains, Pilgrimage’ is maintained by Philip Clart as part of his Bibliography of Western Language Publications on Chinese Popular Religion (1995-present). Available online at http://home.uni-leipzig.de/clartp/bibliography_CPR.html.
- 23 On the subject of pilgrims’ songs see also Yü (2001: 505–510).
- 24 In French there are overviews by Magnin (1987) on Chinese Buddhist pilgrimage and Lagerway (1987) on Daoist pilgrimage.
- 25 The pennants, which at times were used to record a pilgrim’s name and the starting point of her pilgrimage, and other paraphernalia can be traced back to the Qing. See also Hargett on pilgrim associations centred on Mount Emei in Sichuan (Hargett 2006: 180f).
- 26 The set contains a few dozen false positives, because 朝山 is also a place name. They are not significant.
- 27 Another problem might be mentioned here: Mei does not cite Dudbridge, and Wan and Cao do not cite either Mei or Dudbridge. The reception of previous scholarship often seems incidental rather than systematic.

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