A few small temples, as we saw in Chapter V, because they had income from land or patrons, did not depend on rites for the dead. Their residents were free to devote themselves to scholarly pursuits. The owner might be an eminent monk who used the premises as a school for his disciples from which he went forth on lecture tours. Such a temple was often called a "hermitage" (*ching-she*).[2]

The real hermitage was the "thatched hut" (*mao-p'eng*), usually built with the hermit's own hands in some remote spot where he would not be interrupted in study and religious exercises. The life of the hermit had roots in China that go back at least five hundred years before the introduction of Buddhism.

Still other kinds of life were to be found in the great public monasteries like Chin Shan and the Kao-min Ssu. Sitting on the western side of the meditation hall were the *lao hsiu-hsing*, the "old papayas," who spent their days in the yogic pleasures to which they had become addicted. Out in the kitchen and service area were the menial officers who eschewed both the difficulties of meditation and the cares of higher office, preferring to cook rice and boil water, perhaps for a few semesters or perhaps until they died. Other monks, after beginning to work up the administrative ladder turned instead to study and teaching, which they could pursue at the public monastery under a retirement system that will be described below.

Let it be emphasized that these different kinds of life were alternating rather than alternative. A monk might wander about China for a few years, then save up a little money from performing rites for the dead, then live as a hermit, then take office for a while at a large monastery, and then begin to wander again. In theory, on the other hand, there was a proper sequence. The first five years after ordination were supposed to be spent in study of the monastic rules. There was a saying: "Until the fifth summer specialize in perfecting yourself in the Vinaya. Only after the fifth summer may you listen to the doctrine and take part in meditation." Study of the monastic rules could best be carried on in a Vinaya center like Pao-hua Shan. This was because the average tonsure master was unqualified to instruct his disciples in the finer points. As one informant said: "If you just went back to live in your hereditary temple after ordination, you had no hope of learning the rules well." In practice, however, very few monks spent the first five years in a Vinaya center. The unambitious

(probably in a majority) returned instead to their hereditary temples to earn a living by the wooden fish. Those who were more serious about their vocation entered a meditation hall or took up the life of a wandering monk.

WANDERER AND PILGRIM

Wandering was a most important phase in a monk's career. In the first place the hardship that it entailed wore away his attachment to comfort and security. Even in the Republican period he had to travel much of the time on foot, either because he did not have the money for a ticket or because there was no public transportation along his route. If he was going to a country monastery, the last few miles of his journey were almost sure to be on foot, since such monasteries lay back in the hills. All his possessions were in a bundle (*i-tan*) that he carried on his back. It was wrapped in a special way, and tied to it was a yellow "incense bag" (*hsiang-tai*) embroidered on each corner with the characters of the four elements (symbolizing the four quarters of the land) and in the center with the character "buddha." In his hand he carried a pilgrim's shovel (*fang-pien ch'an*), which he could use to bury the bodies of men or animals that he found along the road, and which also served as a weapon of self-defense. It was not always easy to find lodging. Public monasteries, which offered hospitality to any ordained monk, were few and far between and they would not admit him if he was accompanied by an unordained novice.[3] He might not have the money for an inn, and in any case the rules did not allow him to spend more than two nights under the same roof as laymen.[4] Small, hereditary temples would give him three nights' lodging if they chose to do so, but they did not always so choose. In 1902, for example, when Hsü-yün was on his way back to Yünnan from a pilgrimage to Omei Shan, he fell in a river and reached the next town toward evening, soaking wet. He found that the inns there would not take in monks and that the one monk in town was equally inhospitable. Finally this inhospitable monk agreed to let Hsü-yün and his companion spend the night outdoors near his temple under a platform which was normally used for giving theatrical performances. They wanted to light a fire and gave him money for straw, but what he

brought them was wet straw that would not burn. "We put up with it and sat waiting for sunrise."[5]

But wandering monks had a higher purpose than "roughing it." The usual expression for wandering was *ts'an-fang,* which may be translated as "traveling to every quarter of the country." But the word *ts'an* also suggests *ts'an-hsüeh,*[6] "to engage in training and in study," not only of books, but of meditation (*ts'an-ch'an*) and all other religious exercises. Wandering monks wanted to study and to practice religious exercises under the best possible guidance. Wherever they found such guidance, they would interrupt their travels to enroll for a term in the meditation hall (usually the winter term, when the brisk weather favored the work) or to hear a course of lectures on the Tripitaka (usually in summer). This was in accordance with the adage "in winter meditation, in summer study" (*tung-ch'an, hsia-hsüeh*). In the course of many years of wandering a monk would hope to have sat in the best meditation halls and studied the important texts under the leading authorities on each. Among the eminent masters with whom he came in contact, there might be one with whom he felt a special affinity (*yu-yüan*) and whose follower he became (*ch'in-chin*).

When the wandering monk arrived at a monastery where he had no friends or connections, he would be lodged in the wandering monks hall (see p. 13). There he might find many kinds of people—not only Buddhist monks from different regions of China, some virtuous, some rascally, but also Taoist priests and Tibetan lamas (only nuns were absolutely excluded). Thus the wandering monks hall was an interesting place to be, a place where he had lots of time to gossip and interesting people to gossip with—all part of his education. When he felt that he had exhausted its possibilities, he simply gave notice of his impending departure to the head of the hall and left. No permission to leave was required, and no record was made of his visit.

If, on the other hand, a visitor arrived who had some connection with the monastery, he would not be lodged in the wandering monks hall, but given superior accommodations and exempted from the normal requirement to attend devotions and meditation. In some cases he might even be presented with a courtesy rank. In 1947 one of my informants, when he was guest prefect of a Hunan monastery, had been particularly kind to a visiting monk from Kwangtung. The next

year he went to Kwangtung himself and stayed at the latter's monastery. Their positions were now reversed, for his friend was guest prefect there, and, to repay the kindness he had received, arranged that the Hunanese monk should be given the rank of junior instructor as well as an apartment to live in. Some monasteries (Ku Shan, for example) are said to have had dozens of honorary rank-holders, some on the basis of courtesy, and some out of the desire to cement a useful connection.

It was the hope of devout Chinese monks to visit all the "four famous mountains," each sacred to a bodhisattva, as tabulated below:

		Bodhisattva	
*Mountain**	*Province*	*Sanskrit*	*Chinese*
Omei	Szechwan	Samantabhadra	P'u-hsien
Wu-t'ai	Shansi	Manjusri	Wen-shu
P'u-t'o	Chekiang	Avalokitesvara	Kuan-yin
Chiu-hua	Anhwei	Ksitigarbha	Ti-tsang

The bodhisattvas of these mountains were believed to take the form of men and show themselves to devout pilgrims who came to worship them. For example, one of my informants, together with the party of lay pilgrims whom he was leading to the island of P'u-t'o Shan, spied an old monk sitting in a cave by the beach. When they looked again his appearance had changed, and finally he disappeared. This was seen clearly by all but one of the party, and they knew that they had been vouchsafed a glimpse of Kuan-yin. Similarly, when Hsü-yün made a pilgrimage to Wu-t'ai Shan in 1882, he was helped out of difficulties along the way by a beggar, who gave his name as Wen-chi. Later Hsü-yün realized that it had been an avatar of Wen-shu, Wu-t'ai's presiding bodhisattva.

The purpose of Hsü-yün's pilgrimage deserves notice. He wanted to get Wen-shu's intercession on behalf of his deceased parents "so that they would be delivered from suffering and reborn in the Pure Land as soon as possible." Hence he made a prostration, touching his head to the ground, every three steps along the road from P'u-t'o Shan to W'u-t'ai Shan, a thousand miles as the crow flies. It took him two years.[7] This sort of penance was known as "burning the prostration incense" (*shao pai-hsiang*), although, in fact, no incense was neces-

* P'u-t'o Shan is an island. The others are mountains.

CHINA

- • Cities and towns with well-known Buddhist monasteries
- ▲ Mountains with well-known Buddhist monasteries
- 卍 Some other well-known Buddhist monasteries

INNER MONGOLIA

YELLOW RIVER

TIBET

INDIA

BURMA

YANGTZE RIVER

MEKONG RIVER

SALWEEN RIVER

Hsin-tu

Chengtu

K'ai-chiang

OMEI SHAN

SZECHWAN

Chungking

YANGTZE RIVER

CHI-TSU SHAN

Kunming

Kweiyang

YÜNNAN

Yingkow

KOREA

HUNG-LO SHAN

Tatung

Peking

HENG SHAN

WU-T'AI SHAN

Tientsin

HOPEH

SHENSI

Taiyüan

SHANSI

Tsinan

Ling-yen Ssu

TAI SHAN

SHANTUNG

Tsingtao

YELLOW SEA

YELLOW RIVER

GRAND CANAL

SUNG SHAN

Sian

CHUNG-NAN SHAN

HONAN

KIANGSU

HUAI RIVER

Nanking

Shanghai

EAST CHINA SEA

HUPEH

ANHWEI

Hangchow

Hanyang

Hankow

Wuchang

Anking

CHIU-HUA SHAN

Ningpo

P'U-T'O SHAN

Huang-mei

LU SHAN

T'IEN-T'AI SHAN

CHEKIANG

YÜN-CHÜ SHAN

Nanchang

Wenchow

Changsha

HUNAN

NAN-YÜEH

KIANGSI

FUKIEN

Hengyang

KU SHAN

Foochow

Chen-hsien

Taipei

Chüanchow

卍 Nan-hua Ssu

Amoy

TAIWAN

KWANGTUNG

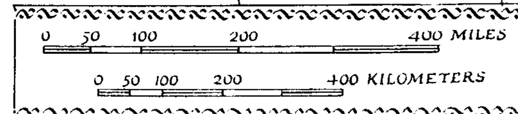
TING-HU SHAN

Canton

WEST RIVER

Hong Kong

SOUTH CHINA SEA



sarily burned. On a less heroic scale than Hsü-yün's, the practice was fairly common. Another of my informants joined a group of pilgrims who journeyed to P'u-t'o Shan from Shanghai in 1941. He and the other six monks in the party prostrated themselves every three steps, while their lay companions did so every nine steps. With each step they recited the words "Homage to the great compassionate bodhisattva, Kuan-shih Yin." In this wise they made the circuit of all the temples and shrines as was the practice at sacred mountains. If nightfall caught them on the road, they would leave a stone to mark the place and then return the next day to resume their prostrations where they had left off. It took them a month to complete the circuit of the island, which is only three or four miles long.

Whereas the ordinary Buddhist institution offered no mementos, centers of pilgrimage like P'u-t'o Shan were exceptional. There the visitor could have the seals of every monastery imprinted on the border of his ordination certificate, and, if he wished, on his yellow pilgrim's bag as well. Some monks considered this in poor taste and preferred to carry a small album (almost like an autograph book) in which the seals could be imprinted page by page. In any form they were tokens of a meritorious journey that would be treasured until death.

STUDENT AND LECTURER

As the wandering monk traveled up and down China, he did not always find that it was "in winter meditation, in summer study." At some monasteries lectures on a sacred text might be held in any season of the year, while at others they were never held at all. They were never held at Chin Shan, for example, because they conflicted with its Ch'an tradition of a wordless teaching. But at many, if not most monasteries they were customarily held during the summer retreat[8] from the 15th of the fourth month to the 15th of the seventh. They would be delivered by the abbot if he felt competent to do so. If not, a specialist would be invited from the outside.

The program varied from monastery to monastery. It might be limited to a single two-hour lecture delivered in the middle of the day. The noon periods in the meditation hall would be cancelled so

that the monks enrolled there could attend. At other monasteries, which placed less emphasis on meditation and more on teaching, there would be a round-the-clock program of lectures and study that turned the premises virtually into a school. According to one monk, this had been an established form of religious instruction since the Six Dynasties. He had often taken part himself in such instruction, first as a student and later as a lecturer, in the years between 1918 and 1950.

First, he said, the monastery would get a commitment from some eminent dharma master to deliver the course, probably on a sutra in which he specialized. Once he had accepted, handbills (*pao-tan*) would be printed on yellow paper, pasted up at the main gate, and sent to other monasteries in the area to be pasted up not only at their gates but in the streets of neighboring cities and towns. If the lectures were to be in T'ai-hsien, for example, handbills might be sent as far away as Chen-chiang (75 kilometers), but not to Nanking or Shanghai (140 and 175 kilometers). The text of such a handbill would read something like this:

> From the nth day of the nth month dharma master So-and-so has been reverently invited to expound the complete text of the *Lotus Sutra*. All good and devout laymen and laywomen will then be welcome to attend at their pleasure and to listen reverently to the principles of the dharma. Those members of the sangha who decide to attend and take part in the study[9] are asked to come to the monastery ahead of time in order to enroll and take up temporary residence (*pao-ming chin-tan*).
>
> Nth day, such-and-such monastery's
> head monk So-and-so.

Monks who saw this notice and decided to attend would immediately pack their bags and take to the road. The monastery where the lectures were to be delivered might lie in the mountains several days' journey away. They would try to get there ahead of time.

Once it began, the daily program of lectures and study consisted of four parts.

1) The principal lecture (*ta-tso*). This was delivered with impressive and exacting ceremony, so that it was ritual no less than instruction. Shortly before 2:00 p.m. all the monks who had enrolled would gather in the lecture hall, which could be any room in the monastery