

a Buddhist devotee, to order a "red service" performed for the occasion. Most important of all, there was nothing like Sunday church attendance. Any devotee who knew the liturgy could stand in the back row and join the monks in morning and afternoon devotions, but very few did so in practice. Thus, while the monastery served also as a parish church for Chinese Buddhists, its role was not comparable to that of the parish church in the West.

This was part of an over-all difference in the nature of religion. The basic religious question in China, I think, was not how man saw himself in relation to God, but how he saw himself in relation to all the events that overtook him. He was part of a continuum of the human, the natural, and the supernatural. There was no dividing line between gods and men, monks and magicians, the sacred and the secular. It would be as true to say that the Chinese were a highly religious people as to say that they were a secular, practical people. In their case it amounted to the same thing.

LAY PILGRIMAGES

The Chinese term for pilgrimage was "journeying to a mountain and offering incense" (*ch'ao-shan chin-hsiang*—often abbreviated to *ch'ao-shan*). The journey might be long or short. City dwellers often spent a night at a monastery on some mountain nearby, perhaps to join in seasonal rites. For example, it used to be customary for female devotees to go to T'ien-t'ai Shan on the birthday of Kuan-ti (the 13th of the fifth month) and pray that while sleeping they would have a significant dream. If they had one and its import was favorable, they would burn incense the next day and recite prayers of gratitude. When Timothy Richard visited T'ien-t'ai Shan in 1895, he found the road crowded with women on their way to spend the night for this purpose.¹⁹

C. B. Day offers a good description of a party of pilgrims that he followed about the temples near Hangchow during the Ch'ing Ming festival. They were peasants who had come by boat from a town forty-five miles up the river. Arriving in the early morning, they visited every shrine, cave, and monastery in the hills by the West Lake and returned to their boat only at dusk. Day surmised that "their friends

Art. 9
in the home village will, on their return, listen with awe to their tales of the wonders of Hangchow's magnificent temples, and secretly form the resolution to go themselves the following spring."²⁰

Longer pilgrimages were made only for special purposes and to special places. One such purpose was to "redeem a vow" (*huan-yüan*). That is, the pilgrim had encountered difficulties—perhaps someone in the family was ill, or perhaps he was worried about business losses or a bad harvest—and he had gone to a temple and vowed that if the difficulties were resolved, he would make a pilgrimage to such-and-such a mountain and perhaps perform such-and-such a penance (if he felt that some former wrongdoing was the cause of his difficulties).²¹ According to D. C. Graham, pilgrims on their way to Omei Shan would usually say they were going there so that "our family may prosper, that we may be protected from disease and calamities, that our crops may be good, that we may grow wealthier, and that we may have many children."²² But there were also more general purposes in making a pilgrimage, as C. B. Day suggests. The Chinese, though normally sedentary, were not immune to the lure of distant, almost legendary places, visiting which was an accomplishment they could be proud of.



61. A pilgrim on her way to the T'ien-t'ung Ssu near Ningpo.



62. Pilgrims entering the outer gate of the T'ien-t'ung Ssu.

Chief among these places were the "four famous mountains" (see p. 307), as well as T'ien-t'ai Shan in Chekiang, the birthplace of the T'ien-t'ai sect; and Nan-yüeh (Heng Shan) in Hunan province, which was one of the Five Peaks that had been originally sacred to Taoism and Confucianism but had gradually become half-Buddhist and half-Taoist. Each of these mountains had dozens of monasteries and temples. They all lay several days or several weeks journey from the

nearest large city and attracted pilgrims from thousands of miles away. Overseas Chinese from Singapore, for example, could be found at Wu-t'ai Shan near the Mongolian border. Usually pilgrims traveled to such distant places in groups for mutual protection and assistance and to lower the cost of the journey. Richer pilgrims could afford to travel in smaller groups, accompanied by servants and bodyguards, for protection against bandits, or, if they had to travel singly, they might wear their poorest, dirtiest clothes or a monk's robe, in hopes that the bandits would find them uninteresting. Larger pilgrim groups would be formed months in advance, partly to allow their members to accumulate the necessary travel money (handled much as in a Christmas Club) and partly so that those in charge could arrange by letter for accommodations and transport. This was important when the size of a group reached one or two hundred persons. Many a monastery at Omei or Wu-t'ai Shan could put up a group of two hundred persons in their guest halls, but if several such groups arrived on the same day, some would have to sleep in the courtyard. This was particularly true during the festival period (usually the birthday of the mountain's presiding divinity) when pilgrims preferred to come.

Many pilgrim groups carried identifying banners. For example, at Omei Shan (which was sacred to the bodhisattva Samantabhadra), such a banner might read "The Hong Kong Samantabhadra Society" (*Hsiang-kang p'u-hsien hui*), or simply the "Hong Kong Incense Society" (*Hsiang-kang hsiang-hui*). Migot gives the following impression of his visit to Omei Shan in 1947. "All along the sacred path I met large numbers of pilgrims, often grouped by villages, under a common banner. They were not tourists but real devotees, and I was struck by their seriousness. They moved forward at a regular pace without idling, without talking, although the Chinese love to hang about and chat. Walking in Indian file, gowns hitched up above the knee, bent under poor bundles of clothes, shod in straw sandals, carrying slung across the back the thermos and umbrella from which the traveling Chinese is inseparable, they left out not one shrine and not one pagoda, passing from statue to statue, prostrating themselves and lighting before each of them a stick of incense."²³

The same sights could be seen at every great Buddhist mountain. The round of shrines and temples could take two days or two months. It depended not only on the size of the mountain, but on the thorough-

ness with which the pilgrims performed their devotions. Many carried yellow pilgrims' bags like those carried by monks. The layman's, however, instead of being embroidered with characters for the four elements, might bear the text: "Journey to a mountain to offer incense."²⁴

Wherever pilgrims spent the night, males and females were lodged in separate halls. Not even husband and wife would sleep together. Monasteries served them only vegetarian food. On the whole of P'u-t'o Shan no animal could be killed and woe to the visitor who was caught with a tin of corned beef! Because Westerners so often tried to evade these dietary rules, they were sometimes refused permission to stay. This was not merely because of the scruples of their hosts, but because of the possibility of losing the patronage of Chinese pilgrims if the monastery's reputation for purity was compromised.

There was no fixed tariff for room and board. What pilgrims gave depended partly on how much merit they wanted to acquire and partly on the accommodations received. The poorer pilgrims slept in a dormitory,²⁵ whereas a rich family might have a whole suite to itself. Hackman describes such a suite at the T'ien-t'ung Ssu. It had two bedrooms, with four beds in each; a large reception room between them, clean and attractively arranged, with heavy chairs and tables, scrolls of calligraphy on the walls, and a quiet courtyard outside.²⁶ The countryside around the T'ien-t'ung Ssu was among the loveliest in eastern China. No wonder foreigners liked to vacation there!

Pilgrims usually made arrangements for their stay with one of the guest prefects. He was the monk with whom they had the most contact. In at least one case, however, the guest prefect in charge of lay visitors was himself a layman. According to an informant connected with the Nan-hua Ssu, lay visitors there in the 1940's were taken care of by a devotee who had the title of *chih-pin*, wore lay clothes, and lived permanently at the monastery. I have not heard of such a thing anywhere else on the Chinese mainland.²⁷ In general, except for the lay "temple owners" in south China and the occasional donor who was consulted on the choice of an abbot, laymen played no role whatever in the internal administration of monasteries.²⁸

Most of the model monasteries of Kiangsu and Chekiang did not welcome pilgrims overnight. At Chin Shan, Kao-min, and the T'ien-ning Ssu and also further north at the Leng-yen and Chan-shan Ssu, lay visitors were only given lodging for some special reason as, for

example, because they were having a plenary mass said or were actual or potential benefactors of the monastery. It was felt that large numbers of lay people in residence would vitiate the religious atmosphere, and therefore few of the better monasteries were located on the sacred mountains. There were, of course, differences in atmosphere even there. It was considered relatively strict at P'u-t'o Shan and relatively loose at Omei Shan. T'ien-t'ai Shan was the strictest of all and pilgrim traffic the lightest.

If the traffic was light enough, the religious atmosphere was unimpaired. There were many monasteries on lesser mountains where pilgrims came in small numbers with serious intent and where religious exercises, while perhaps not as formidable as at Chin Shan, were still the main preoccupation of the resident monks. Even in places like Omei Shan, once the pilgrim season was over, silence returned and it became propitious for meditation and study. Perhaps only in centers of pilgrimage that were a one-day excursion from a large city like Hangchow or Peking could little peace be counted on from one end of the year to the other.

SPREADING THE DHARMA

No less meritorious than pilgrimage was to spread the dharma either in print or through the spoken word. Most of the scriptural publication in China over the past century has been subsidized by lay donors. Sometimes a single rich devotee paid for a very large printing project (like the entire Tripitaka), but more often many donors gave a few dollars apiece to defray the cost of one volume. When such literature was distributed, the price was kept low or it was given out free. I have collected several shelves of books that were pressed on me by kindly Buddhists who were unconcerned by my protests that I would not have time to read them. It would be better, of course, if I could read them, but there was merit in the mere transfer of ownership: merit for the person who received as well as for the person who gave. The printed word had *mana* for the Chinese; witness the societies for collecting any waste paper that had writing on it. The spoken word was analogous. There was merit to be gained by merely being present at