

tea. After two hundred years it is surely high time to show that Britons can both recognize the importance of tea and translate Tang Chinese as well.

T.H. Barrett

SOAS, University of London

MICHAEL PYE:

Japanese Buddhist Pilgrimage.

xvi, 315 pp. Sheffield and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2015.

£19.99. ISBN 978 1 84553 917 7.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X15000725

Michael Pye's "general account of the Buddhist pilgrimages of Japan in modern times" (p. xii) draws on his travels there and on artefacts – from scrolls to pamphlets – he has collected and uses as textual sources. It is a richly descriptive survey, from major pilgrimages such as Saikoku and Shikoku, to smaller-scale pilgrimages modelled on these routes, to numerous other multi-site pilgrimages. The descriptions of visits to pilgrimage sites around Japan also make it into something of a travel guide.

Pye defines pilgrimage as "the deliberate traversing of a route to a sacred place which lies beyond one's normal habitat" (p. 16). His main points are that Japanese Buddhist pilgrimages are circulatory, involving a process of going round to sites linked together usually through associations with a Buddhist figure, and that they have three main themes: route, transaction and meaning. Such themes will be familiar to anyone aware of developments in the study of pilgrimage in recent decades. Pye expounds them through what he terms a "study of religions" approach, through which he brings out, via discussions of Buddhist texts, some of the transcendent elements he perceives in pilgrimage.

His discussions of pilgrimage artefacts and texts are highly commendable, although scant attention is paid to areas such as the historical social, political and economic issues (widely discussed by Japanese scholars) that have impacted on the nature and shifted the meaning of pilgrimages over the ages. Likewise there is no discussion of the links between pilgrimage and tourism; Pye seems bemused about why tourism is seen as an interesting area of discussion in the field (pp. 12–3) and disregards it, although he does designate some visitors to pilgrimage sites as "tourists" (p. 177).

Pye has developed his model of pilgrimage "inductively" from his Japanese experiences (p. 6), thereby concluding that there is a "final stage" of meaning – a spiritual dimension – that pilgrims can attain beyond the transactional stage of seeking worldly benefits. Yet, although he states that "it is perverse not to take seriously what the performers of the rites themselves think they are doing" (p. 208), he provides little evidence for such conclusions. For instance, the huge corpus of pilgrim writings in Japan is not examined, and although he has talked to pilgrims we hear little of why they are doing pilgrimages. Instead, Pye comments that "in fieldwork it is not advisable to ask 'why' something is done, and better to elicit any conceptual accompaniment to actions in indirect ways" (p. 208, fn. 2). Surely taking seriously what performers think they are doing would involve asking the "why" question – something I found works rather well in fieldwork. Some Japanese scholars have produced significant answers to "why" (see Hoshino Eiki, *Shikoku henro no shūkyōgakuteki kenkyū*. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001). While Pye claims that the meanings outlined in guidebooks (often produced by pilgrimage temples) that pilgrims

carry are “evidence for the meanings which pilgrims see in their pilgrimage” (p. 244), he provides little to substantiate such assumptions.

This approach flounders elsewhere, as when Pye tells us that one pilgrimage based on the Shikoku model – Settsukuni – is a “genuine alternative” to Shikoku and “intended to be a pilgrimage in its own right” (p. 95), whereas another, the Shōdoshima pilgrimage, is just a “stand in” for Shikoku rather than having a separate identity (p. 93). In fact the Shōdoshima pilgrimage has existed since the eighteenth century as a genuine alternative to Shikoku among its clientele, and is certainly seen as a “pilgrimage in its own right” by the numerous pilgrims and priests I have interviewed there.

Sometimes references would have helped. Pye mentions a guidebook advocating visits to twenty Shikoku temples, and calls these a “selection” from the eighty-eight Shikoku pilgrimage temples (p. 96). He does not cite the guidebook so we cannot be sure, but this sounds the *Bekkaku Reijō* pilgrimage, an independent twenty-temple pilgrimage that tried to link itself to the separate eighty-eight stage pilgrimage. Occasionally there are mistakes, such as the claim that all but five Shikoku temples are Shingon (p. 82). There are eight non-Shingon temples on the route.

Pye appears disengaged from the general pilgrimage studies field. His comment that most Japanese publications on pilgrimage are guidebooks and journalistic accounts (pp. 16–7) poorly misrepresents the very extensive Japanese scholarship on the topic, which is rarely consulted. This leads to misapprehensions throughout. For instance, Pye speaks of the “almost unchartable denominational allegiance of the pilgrims” (p. 71), when Japanese scholars have examined this extensively, for instance in the work of Osada Kōichi and Sakata Masaaki on Shikoku, and in Satō Hisamitsu’s charting of sectarian allegiances among Saikoku, Chichibu and Shikoku pilgrims.

While Pye mentions Victor Turner’s pilgrimage theories from the 1970s, he pays little attention to later developments in the field. Although Pye speaks of “the general theory of pilgrimage” (p. 263) scholars have long recognized that there is no such unitary thing. Pye offers two “correctives” to this apparent “general theory” by placing less emphasis on the goal and more on the route, and portraying pilgrimage as a process of spiritual meaning and progression. These are themes that have long been discussed in pilgrimage studies. The route/goal issue is evident in many works, from Nancy Frey’s work on the Santiago Camino, to Simon Coleman and John Eade’s examination of movement in pilgrimage. Pilgrimage as a mode of spiritual progression was central to theories developed in the 1980s as a counter to Turner by scholars such as Alan Morinis. Hoshino’s (2001) aforementioned volume (which is nowhere cited by Pye) focuses on the route and on concepts of spiritual meaning among pilgrims.

Knowing the field is surely important before supplying it with “correctives”. The result is a descriptively rich book with plentiful information about texts, artefacts and pilgrimage routes in Japan that will be more helpful for undergraduate courses on Japanese Buddhism, pilgrimage and religion, than for those interested in the social contexts of pilgrimage or theoretical developments in its study.

Ian Reader

University of Manchester