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Pilgrimage = Transformation Journey

During the two past decades, scholars in religious studies and social anthropology have frequently reconsidered Turner's theoretical model of pilgrimage (Turner 1973; Turner 1974; Turner and Turner 1978). Some have only vaguely expressed their discontent with it (Skar 1985; Aziz 1987; Pace 1989), others have more explicitly called attention to its inapplicability (Sallnow 1981; Morinis 1984; Bowman 1985). Although most scholars have come to the same conclusion as Morinis, who states that "no study of a place of pilgrimage tradition by a social scientist has confirmed what Turner has postulated as a universal process of pilgrimage" (Morinis 1984: 258), none of them have been able to point to any fundamental error in Turner's reasoning. For this reason, unfortunate as it may be and despite convincing field-tested proofs of its incorrectness, Turner's model is curiously enough still the one presented under the entry on pilgrimage in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* published as late as 1987. This is extraordinary — it is in fact a real blunder that calls for correction.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to scrutinize Turner's propositions, to point out the errors in his reasoning and to argue and illustrate that pilgrimage should be conceived of and defined as a *transformation journey*.

The Errors in Turner's Reasoning

Victor Turner's (1920–1983) interest in pilgrimage was more theoretical than ethnographical. It was guided primarily by his pretentious eagerness for the comparative study of ritual symbols and social processes, "not only as they exist at a given time but also as they have changed over time, and of the relations into which different pilgrimage processes have entered in the course of massive stretches of time" (Turner 1974: 166). His model,

which he built up principally from the statements of officiants, is based on two propositions: (a) Pilgrimage is a process of moving from the familiar (or structural) to the anti-structural "other" and back, and (b) the period of being away from structure, the liminal period, is characterized by the existence of a *communitas* mood of relationship among participants (See Morinis 1984: 257).

Pilgrimage forms an ellipse, but is not a transition rite. The notion that every pilgrimage begins in a familiar place, proceeds to a far-off place, and ends at a familiar place led Turner to picture the route of a pilgrimage as an *ellipse*. He argues that pilgrims may return by the way they came, yet ellipse is still the apt metaphor for the total journey, because "the return road is, psychologically, different from the approach road" (Turner 1974: 195; Turner and Turner 1978: 22–23). This ellipse metaphor of pilgrimage is also acclaimed by Morinis (1984: 258), Skar (1985: 92) and Osterrieth (1989: 147–149). Morinis, for example, states that "every instance of pilgrimage must have a journey from home to sacred centre and return to home" (Morinis 1984: 258). Although this is of course an inevitable condition of any travel, it is not such a trivial observation after all, as will be pointed out later on.

Moreover, Turner argues that the peripheral nature of pilgrimage centres — Mecca being an exception — relates to van Gennep's theory of *rites de passage* (henceforth transition rites). He reasons that this distinguishes them from the centrality of state and provincial capitals, from other politico-economic units and from centres of ecclesiastical structure such as the sees and dioceses of archbishops and bishops (Turner 1974: 195–196).

When Turner shifted his attention from African tribal societies, and the study of mid-transition in transition rites in particular (Turner 1969), to the phenomenon of pilgrimage, he was naturally immediately struck by the *similarity in the sequence structure* between tribal transition rites and pilgrimages. The pilgrimages, he asserts, "have attributes both of the wider community, 'earth shrine', types of ritual we have glanced at in Africa and of the liminal stage of transition rites" (Turner 1974: 197). Thus — as Morinis perceptively remarked (Morinis 1984: 255, 259–260) — he imposed the model elaborated in the African tribal context, i.e. the concepts liminality and *communitas*, on his pilgrimage material, which contained data principally from Roman Catholic Mexico spiced with a few selective examples from Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Bowman has quite rightly remarked that in Turner's writings on pilgrimage there is "an alarming absence of pilgrim statements and a preponderance of

secondary elaborations by social scientists and religious propagandists" (Bowman 1985: 5).

According to Turner, pilgrimages, then, have the following attributes of liminality in their transition rites: temporary release from the mundane structure that normally binds; release from the burdens of stress, anxiety and guilt; movement from the mundane centre to a sacred periphery; homogenization of status; simplicity of dress and behaviour; reflection on the meaning of basic religious and cultural values; the ritualized enactment of correspondence between religious paradigms and shared human experience; and experience of human brother- and sisterhood (Turner and Turner 1978: 3, 34).

In a recent study on van Gennep, Lévy Zumwalt eloquently brought into focus the way Turner's interpretation of the liminal stage differs from van Gennep's. Turner conceives the liminal phase to be outside the ordered universe, "a period betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life" (Turner 1974: 273; Turner and Turner 1978: 2), while van Gennep, strictly speaking, intended the liminal rites to denote the transition from one social status to another. His focus was particularly on the patterned relationship *between* the stages and not on the lack of order *during* the liminal period (Lévy Zumwalt 1988: 25). The interpretation "during a liminal period" is Turner's and not van Gennep's.

van Gennep used the concept *passage* to denote a transition rite in which there is (a) a shift of social status, which (b) coincides with life cycle transitions: birth, social puberty (sexuality), initiation to various age groups, admission to monastic institutions or secret communities, marriage, fatherhood/motherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization and death — more or less predetermined transitions which are (c) publicly confirmed. Moreover, the transition rite is (d) a one-way passage, i.e. irreversible as there is no return, and because it is (e) inevitable, it is in that sense obligatory in every tribal society (See Lévy Zumwalt 1988: 24–26 and Bianchi 1986: XIII–XV).

It is of course true that there is a similarity in sequence structure between a transition rite and a pilgrimage. Turner was, however, deceived by this, because from a similarity in sequence structure, it does not automatically follow that a pilgrimage is a transition rite, which he erroneously seems to have concluded. The difference in function and motive is fundamental. Whereas the function of the transition rite is to facilitate the *transposition* of the "passenger", or "liminar", to his new social status and to *integrate* him without violent social disruptions into society (Gennep 1960: 48), the function of the pilgrimage, again, is to

facilitate *detachment* from mundane concerns and *reunification* between the pilgrim and God — Buddhism being an exception (see further on).

The attributes of a pilgrimage are in fact the opposite to those of a transition rite. In a pilgrimage, there is no publicly confirmed shift of social status that coincides with predetermined life cycle transitions. Nor is there an irreversible one-way passage — there is a return! Furthermore, a pilgrimage is not inevitable or obligatory. It is the spontaneous and voluntary choice of an individual pilgrim to travel, often *incognito*, to a *terra incognito* (Osterrieth 1989: 150).

The aspect of travelling anonymously is one of the essential meanings of ‘pilgrim’ and ‘pilgrimage’, because originally the word ‘pilgrim’ — a Middle English word that comes from the Old French *pèlerin*, derived from Late Latin *peregrinus*, meaning ‘foreigner’, from *peregre* ‘abroad’, from *perger* ‘being abroad’, from *per* ‘through’ and *agr-*, *ager* ‘land’, ‘field’ — meant a foreigner who lived in an alien land, outside the territory of Rome (*ager Romanus*), and who travelled around (*incognito*). It denoted someone who passes through life as if in exile from a heavenly homeland, or in search of some higher goal, such as truth. Thereafter it came to mean one who travels to a shrine or holy place as a devotee, one who realizes the ideal of every devout pilgrim, and especially a person who travelled to the Holy Land. Later the meaning was extended to include those who travelled to Rome, for example; later still it came to apply to anyone who travelled to a shrine or a sacred place, a centre of religious worship. A pilgrimage, then, simply means the ‘journey of a pilgrim’, especially a journey to a shrine or a sacred place. Its wider meaning is the course of life on earth (See Webster’s 1976: 1715 and Schmutge 1979: 22).

Communitas is not the specific quality of a pilgrimage. The nature of the social bond in pilgrimage situations is characterized by Turner as *communitas*. It is a Latin word for social relationship, fellowship and social bond which he defines as a spontaneously generated relationship between levelled and equal total and individual human beings, stripped of structural attributes. *Communitas* constitutes a sort of anti-structure. It is the *fons et origo* of all social structures and, at the same time, their critique. It represents striving towards universalism and openness (Turner 1974: 202).

As an analytic concept, *communitas* denotes one part of two major social modalities in the concept of community, the other being structure — the English translation of the German term *Gemeinschaft* as coined by Ferdinand Tönnies. *Gemeinschaft* (community) includes ‘social structure’ in the sense of *bonds* between members of tightly knit, multifunctional

groups, usually with a local basis. It may, however, refer to a direct personal egalitarian relationship, *Gemeinschaft*, in which case there is a connotation of *communitas*. One example is in Tönnies, who considers *friendship* as expressing a kind of *Gemeinschaft* or 'feeling of affinity'¹ that is tied to neither blood nor locality (Turner 1974: 201).

Turner distinguishes three types of *communitas* or modalities of social relatedness: *existential* or *spontaneous*, where the participants experience mankind as a homogeneous, unstructured, and free community; *normative*, the original spontaneous *communitas* organized into a perduring social system; and *ideological*, the utopian variety of *communitas* (Turner 1974: 169).

The *communitas* character of pilgrimage makes it democratic. The secular distinction of rank and status disappear or are homogenized. In this sense, pilgrimage presents a living model of human brother- and sisterhood. Pilgrims travel in fellowship; there is a strong tendency among them to develop an intense comradeship and occasionally even life-long friendships. The pilgrims become like brothers and there is fellowship with the like-minded. Thus *communitas* is a concept used to denote cohesion in a group of pilgrims, which is based on the immediate and total feeling of affinity, solidarity and togetherness.

The hypothesis that these *communitas* moods are characteristic features in (all) pilgrimages, however, has been incontrovertibly disproved by scholars who have field-tested the proposition. Morinis, who reviewed all the relevant empirical findings on the subject in his chapter on the theoretical perspectives of pilgrimages, explicitly points out that "the quality of *communitas* that Turner considers an essential feature of pilgrimage is not *universal*" (Morinis 1984: 259). Sallnow, who studied sponsored group pilgrimages among Peruvian highland peasants, arrives at the same conclusion: "On the journey the various parties of pilgrims from different communities *maintained* a ritualised distance from one another which accentuated, rather than attenuated, the boundaries between them. At the shrine itself they each *maintained their separateness*, and never coalesced into a single unified congregation . . . the concept of *communitas* is of little value in explaining the essentially divisive quality of Andean pilgrimage . . . It would be more appropriate in such circumstances to see community, not *communitas*, as the hallmark of pilgrimage" (Sallnow 1981: 176-177).

¹ Turner translates *Gemeinschaft* as 'community of feeling', which to me is, if not totally wrong at least, quite inadequate. *Gemeinschaft* simply means 'feeling of affinity or togetherness' and even 'feeling of solidarity'.

Skar for his part conducted field research among pilgrims going to a non-Christian shrine, a local mountain top called the Copisa ritual centre, located roughly in the same geographical region as Sallnow. At the pilgrimage centre, which might be expected to reflect the culmination of the mood of *communitas* experienced during the journey, he discovered a *distinctive confrontation* between social groups from both the high and the low areas in the Andes. The tension between the groups is frequently symbolized by two different and opposed dancing groups, which occasionally engage in whipping contests, lashing out at each other's legs until someone is forced to retire. Sometimes the dancers become embroiled in violent fights.

Thus the Andean pilgrimage does not follow the classical three-phase sequence in the Turnerian model: structure-*communitas* (or anti-structure)-structure. Instead there is a fourth element, one of hostility and competition at the pilgrimage centre. Skar considers that this element occurs because Andean everyday structural reality is highly flexible and variable. Therefore, he argues, the pilgrimage ritual incorporates an element of the ritual expression of structure versus anti-structure, a definition of structure, i.e. the mood of equality, communality and *communitas* experienced during the journey is counterbalanced by a redefinition of the social structure at the pilgrimage centre before the return journey begins (Skar 1985: 97-99).

To conceive of the pilgrimage process as a shift from structural to anti-structural and back is both reductionistic and irrelevant. It is reductionistic, in that it reduces pilgrimage to the phenomenon of festal solidarity and *communitas*, although the meaning of pilgrimage lies beyond the movements of the pilgrims (Bowman 1985: 4). It is true that pilgrims occasionally experience a feeling of affinity among themselves, but they nevertheless maintain a distinctive social structure as Sallnow, Morinis and others have pointed out. To use the Latin word *communitas* for that temporary feeling of affinity does not make the observation more scholarly and is in fact beside the point, because the feeling of solidarity is not inherent in pilgrimage, but it is a by-product. The nature of the social bond between the participants, i.e. the feeling of brother- and sisterhood, originates in shared religious values, which provide the pilgrim's cosmological frame of reference and in many cases is the reason behind the pilgrimage in the first place.²

² In many cases, the pilgrimage experience in fact heightens the pilgrim's sense of individuality, see Aziz 1987: 260.

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The specific quality of a pilgrimage. In his study on pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition, Morinis came to the conclusion that “the variety of analyses (theories) reflects the variety of forms pilgrimages take” (Morinis 1984: 263). He complains, however, that “while the journey to the sacred place occurs in all pilgrimages by definition, no qualitative factor is similarly recurrent” (Morinis 1984: 260). And he summarizes: “Pilgrimage practice in West Bengal takes many forms, so many, in fact, that it is difficult to identify any universal behaviour or ideas common to all cases of Bengalis journeying to sacred places” (Morinis 1984: 276). Morinis was asking the Socratic question, i.e. he was in search of the *quality* which distinguishes pilgrimages and which is characteristic of them.³ He was unlucky. Although he had the answer at hand, he did not find “the single unit in hidden likenesses” in his Indian material (See Bronowski 1956: 23).

It has been clearly stated that the one thing in common in *rites de passage* is the transition from one social status to another, i.e. *transition* over a social threshold. It has been equally clearly stated that this is not the case with pilgrimages. What, then, should we call the quality which distinguishes pilgrimages and which is characteristic of them?

Before an answer to this question is addressed, it might be useful to examine how scholars have conceived pilgrimages on the basis of their own empirical findings. Turner, for example, states that “the pilgrim is confronted by sequences of sacred objects and participates in symbolic activities which he believes are efficacious in changing his inner and, sometimes, outer condition from sin to grace, or sickness to health. He hopes for miracles and *transformation*, either of soul or body” (Turner 1974: 197; Turner and Turner 1978: 6).

Morinis concludes, contrary to what he has said earlier, that “a common idea that journeying to the sacred place where the divine is accessible can (and indeed does) bring about a *transformation* in the life of the individual *underlies all this variety*” (Morinis 1984: 282).

Skar uses his own field experience and what van Maanen (1988) termed a confessional tale to testify that “we had gone from a sedentary situation into a nomadic one, and inwardly we were beginning to feel a *transformation* of spirits and personality” (Skar 1985: 92).

³ For the Socratic question, see Plato’s discourse on Meno (Plato 1977).

Finally, to quote one pilgrim, this is how a Greek student of medicine described his pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain of Athos in northern Greece: "Walking was incredible, first of all tiring, physically very tiring. We walked from Megisti Lavra to Karakallou for about twelve hours. The eye could see a long way the sky, virgin nature, the mountain, the valleys. The spirit soars in these parts. You get a splendid feeling. We had many rests. Drank only water. We climbed about 1,000 meters. Athos was right over our heads and then from 1,000 meters down to the sea and then from the sea up about 200 meters to Karakallou. I felt there, at 1,000 meters on Athos, between the trees — it is impossible for me to translate my thoughts into words, it was the kind of experience you can live, not explain — I found myself there, I returned to my roots as a human being. My mind became peaceful. *I found myself as a human being*" (Gothóni 1991: 300–302).

It is clear from the above quotations (the italics are mine), that the one thing in common is the word *transformation*, which comes from the Latin word *transformare* and denotes change of character or condition. This is indeed what takes place in a pilgrimage. Osterrieth, for example, states that "at the pilgrimage site, the pilgrim completes the process of *spiritual transformation*. This last leg of the quest is characterized both by performance and glorification. The quest ends with the establishment of the new identity — *spiritual rebirth* . . . Indeed, a great pilgrimage is a struggle against space, a sheer effort to overcome distance, and it is this struggle which has *transformed* the man" (Osterrieth 1989: 154).

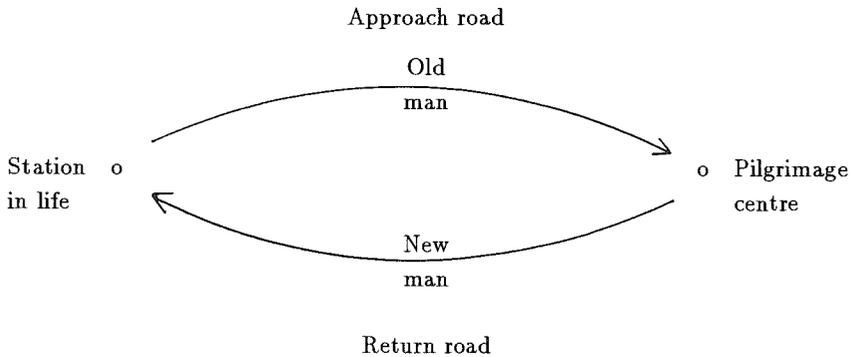
If pilgrimage is considered not as a social process, as Turner saw it, but as an individual pilgrim's journey to a shrine or a sacred place, listening to what the pilgrim says and what he experiences makes it obvious that, during the pilgrimage, the pilgrim experiences *transformation from one level of spirituality to another*. It is thus logical to conclude that this transformation is the specific quality by which pilgrimages do not differ, but are all alike, just as transition was the specific quality of *rites de passage*.

Pilgrimages as transformation journeys. Of all metaphors for life, the most evocative is that of the departure, the journey and the return: the departure, so full of the sadness of separation and excitement about the adventures to come; the journey, a series of hazards and transitions, of setbacks and triumphs; the return, marked by final transformation, fulfillment and completion. The longing for this adventure seems to underlie all journeys, both inner and outer, all ventures into scholarship and literature,

music and art, all self-imposed trials and ordeals (See Stevens 1990: 64–65 and Pace 1989: 231–233).

It is therefore not surprising that Turner was struck by the similarity in the sequence structure between transition rites and pilgrimages. His notion that all pilgrimages form an ellipse — the return road is, psychologically, different from the approach road — is, however, a very significant observation, because the ellipse metaphor of pilgrimage contains binary oppositions such as departure: return, deficiency: deficiency made good, old man: new man, death: rebirth, impure: pure, illness: cure, lost: found (ref. the statement by the Greek student of medicine: “I found myself as a human being”). These lines of thought can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 1. Pilgrimage presented as an ellipse



Every pilgrimage begins in a familiar place, i.e. at the pilgrim’s station in life. Although the motives for going on a pilgrimage vary as do the moments of departure regarding the pilgrim’s stage of adult life, the underlying sentiment for departure seems nevertheless always to be that of perceived deficiency. Osterrieth distinguished three deficiencies in medieval Christian pilgrimages, namely, the sinner who seeks salvation, the sick who seeks for a bodily cure and the lonely who seeks revelation (Osterrieth 1989: 146). In other cultural contexts, it may be possible to distinguish other types of deficiency, such as the cured who goes on a pilgrimage to fulfil a vow, but that is not relevant here. The point is that the motivation for departure in all cases seems to be some kind of deficiency and that the aim of the pilgrimage is to make good or eliminate that deficiency, a “discovery” confirming the binary character of a pilgrimage.

At the pilgrimage centre, there is usually some sort of ritual bathing. In Islam, for example, every pilgrim performs ablutions before performing the rites of *hajj* at Ka'bah in Mecca. Ritual bathing is a very important element in Indian religious behaviour too, as Morinis clearly illustrated.

The following example from everyday life will serve to explain the significance of ritual bathing. A Finn never feels cleaner or more pure than after having taken a Finnish sauna. The man who comes out of the sauna is a new man. The dirtier he was, the cleaner he now is. The contrast counts and marks the difference. The more distinct the contrast is, the more miraculous the feeling afterwards.

This seems to explain why some pilgrims experience an ecstatic transformation at the pilgrimage centre, whereas others experience only a moderate transformation. Those who consider themselves to be heavy sinners feel much greater relief than those who consider themselves to be merely ordinary sinners. The greater the contrast, the more miraculous the feeling. Although there is this difference in intensity in the experience of the transformation from defilement to purity, from the old man to the new man, the transformative feeling is nevertheless the specific quality of the experience at the pilgrimage centre. The feeling of cleanness and purity is not only a mental and spiritual feeling, but very much a physical feeling as well, just like after a sauna. Thus ritual bathing may rightly be apprehended in symbolic terms as a process of death and rebirth. On occasions when illness has been cured at the pilgrimage centre, the pilgrim really feels very certain that a miracle has happened and miracles are indeed expected to happen in pilgrimage centres (Turner and Turner 1978: 6). The agony of toothache is familiar to everyone, as is the miraculous feeling when it stops. The feeling is paradisiac. This shift from the level of suffering to that of bliss seems to be the decisive sign of transformation. Therefore, the man who begins his return journey is a new man. He is symbolically reborn. His rebirth is occasionally "physical" as well, when, for example, he is cured of an illness. The return marks the final transformation, fulfilment and completion of the pilgrimage.

Pilgrimages are universal in form, but unique as to content of beliefs. From fieldwork among pilgrims in various cultures it is known that pilgrimages vary regarding content of beliefs from one religion to another. A Hindu pilgrimage is different from a Buddhist one, which again is different from a Jewish, Christian or Muslim one, and so forth. The pilgrim's (vague) feeling of deficiency is universal, but beliefs about how it can be compensated or eliminated vary. The religions of the Far East, Hinduism

and Buddhism, presuppose a cyclic worldview, i.e. a belief in rounds of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) and in release from these rounds. The religions of the Middle East, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, again presuppose a linear worldview, i.e. a belief in beginning and end, and in the possibility of transcending that end, i.e. in salvation. A god is supposed to have created both the world and man, and the same god judges whether or not a man comes to Heaven.⁴ This fundamental difference in worldview is of course reflected in the way pilgrims conceive their pilgrimage.

For Hindus, a pilgrimage is meritorious by nature. "Visiting sacred places . . . , bathing in holy waters, circumambulating the shrine and the like are generally held to be automatically responsible for an increase in the individual's merit store . . . The merit thus accumulated can be applied to bring about changes in the existential conditions of the life of the pilgrim in the immediate or distant future, and so in this life or the next" (Morinis 1984: 282). Although different sub-groups of Hinduism express this process somewhat differently, all nevertheless share the notion that "the individual, in the course of many incarnations, is involved in a long spiritual journey in search of the godhead. This journey is the cycle of *saṃsāra*, the wandering of the soul until it comes spiritually awake in one life . . .

From this perspective, the terrestrial pilgrimage takes its meaning and its effect by bringing the individual *jīva* closer to the deity, effecting a spiritual *transformation* in the pilgrim" (Morinis 1984: 295–296). The ultimate goal for a Hindu is to bring the individual soul to oneness with the deity, God.

For a Buddhist, visiting sacred places is meritorious as well, because Gautama Buddha is supposed to be "spiritually present" in the religious relics and symbols at the pilgrimage centres (Gothóni 1980: 47–48). Moreover, the monks looking after the pilgrimage site provide a "field of merit" for the laity. By performing meritorious acts, such as paying homage at sacred sites, giving (alms), meditating and keeping the precepts, the Buddhist pilgrim accumulates merit for his future rebirths and finally for *nirvāṇa*, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist, which is release from the rounds of rebirth (Gothóni 1982: 52–53, 195–197).

For a Jew, a pilgrimage is an offering of sacrifices. By travelling to holy sites, tombs and shrines of Talmudic and qabbalistic sages, where the Jewish pilgrims pray, make offerings, and sometimes request divine

⁴ The meanings of the concepts "heaven" and "hell" are of course different in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but in this connection there is no need to go into detail.

help on notes left at the site, they hope for good luck and remedies for particular misfortunes. The saint is expected to ask God for mercy on behalf of the pilgrim. The ultimate goal in the life of a Jew is to come to Heaven.

For a Christian, a pilgrimage is a form of ascetic practice. It is a penitential act. The fallen man repents his sins and asks for God's forgiveness and mercy. By going on a pilgrimage, the pilgrim narrows the gap between the life of Jesus and modern life. Through God's grace the pilgrim, the fallen man can come to Heaven, which is the ultimate goal in a Christian's life.

For a Muslim, a pilgrimage (*hajj*) is a ritual act of worship. To perform *hajj* is the fifth of the Five Pillars of Islam. It is the duty of every Muslim to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their adult life. By going on a pilgrimage, the Muslim submits to God's will, which is the very essence in Islam. The ultimate goal of a Muslim is to come to Heaven.⁵

These lines of thought can be charted as follows.

Religion	Immediate aim			Ultimate goal
	This Life			After Life
Hinduism	meritorious acts	→ accumulate merit	→	Oneness with God
Buddhism	meritorious acts	→ accumulate merit	→	<i>Nirvāna</i> = no rebirth
Judaism	offering sacrifices	→ ask for God's mercy	→	Heaven
Christianity	penitential acts	→ ask for God's grace	→	Heaven
Islam	ritual act of worship	→ submitting to God's will	→	Heaven

A pilgrimage is the outer manifestation of an inner journey, often referred to as an allegory of the soul's journey to God. Thus it is cosmologically meaningful. The height of the journey is the arrival at the pilgrimage centre and the encounter with the divine. There the pilgrim perceives the gap between what he should be (according to the religious tradition) and

⁵ For the Jewish, Christian and Muslim pilgrimages, see Shokeid 1987; Sigal 1987; Nolan 1987; Aivazian 1987; Martin 1987.

what he really is, i.e. he suddenly realizes the discrepancy between the precept and the practice. This experience is the very essence of a pilgrimage, because what has been experienced cannot become unexperienced, what has been seen cannot become unseen, what has been realized cannot become unrealized. The old man is dead, a new man is born. The world is seen through newly opened eyes. The pilgrim feels a persistent longing for the “original” religiosity. The mundane values of the previous life-style are abandoned and replaced by values that enhance spiritual development. The pilgrimage is complete.

Conclusions

The findings put forward in this paper give rise to the following propositions:

- a) the *quality* of a pilgrimage is the pilgrim’s experience of *spiritual transformation*, i.e. a shift from worldliness towards spirituality,
- b) a pilgrimage should be conceived of and defined as a *transformation journey*,
- c) although a pilgrim is usually in company, sometimes with thousands of other pilgrims, he nevertheless considers his own endeavour as a private undertaking; the choice to go on a pilgrimage is individual, spontaneous and voluntary; he often travels *incognito*,
- d) a pilgrimage route forms an *ellipse* with the sequence structure: departure-journey-return,
- e) the ellipse metaphor of pilgrimage epitomizes the *binary character* of the pilgrimage route, i.e. departure:return, deficiency: deficiency made good, old man:new man and so forth,
- f) the journey — the transformative phase between departure and return — provides a period of reflection, during which the pilgrim mirrors and reviews his life, perceives the discrepancy between precept and practice and begins to long to bridge the gap, and
- g) regardless of whether the pilgrim experiences an ecstatic or a moderate spiritual transformation when encountering the divine, the result nevertheless usually leads to some change of attitude and life-style.

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