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Ca'ripalit Sangh: Jain Group Pilgrimages on Foot. Defining Sacred Territory and Religious Community

Summary

Jain pilgrimages are an important event of communal identity since the Jains, an Indian merchant caste, do not have a territory of their own. The annual pilgrimage, for the most part on foot, assembles hundreds or even thousands of pilgrims who are prepared to confront bodily pain, hunger and thirst in order to celebrate the founders of their religion. After having walked on foot for days through the sparsely populated countryside pilgrims head for the Shatrunjaya mountains with 108 temples and about 1000 smaller shrines. This temple complex is conceived of as one of the few places of eternity within a vast and constantly changing universe. The article will discuss the composition, organisation and ritual performances during the pilgrimage, its underlying conception of the universe and the constant re-affirmation of Jain identity through the veneration of their ancestral spiritual founders.

Keywords: Sacred landscape; organization and composition of pilgrimages; bodily suffering; identity

Pilgerfahrten sind ein wichtiger Bestandteil der gemeinsamen Identität der indische Händler-Kaste der Jains, da diese über kein eigenes Gebiet verfügen. Die größtenteils zu Fuß stattfindende jährliche Gruppenpilgerschaft versammelt Hunderte oder sogar Tausende von Pilgern, die bereitwillig körperliche Schmerzen, Hunger und Durst auf sich nehmen, um dem Gründer ihrer Religion zu huldigen. Nach tagelanger Wanderung durch spärlich besiedelte Landstriche, machen sich die Pilger auf den Weg in das Shatrunjaya Gebirge mit seinen 108 Tempeln und ca. 1000 kleineren Schreinen. Dieser Tempelkomplex ist konzipiert als einer der wenigen Plätze der Unendlichkeit in einem sich immer wandelnden Universum. Der Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit dem Aufbau, der Organisation und rituellen Performanzen während der Pilgerfahrt, mit der Frage, welche Vorstellungen vom Universum ihr zugrunde liegen, und mit der ständigen Bestätigung der Jain Identität durch die Verehrung ihrer Vorfahren und spirituellen Gründer.

Keywords: Heilige Landschaft; Organisation und Aufbau von Pilgerfahrten; körperliches Leiden; Identität

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I Introduction

As recently pointed out by Jacobsen, “religious processions [are] a phenomenon of great importance in South Asia [...]. South Asia it distinguishes itself in terms of the number of religious processions that take place and their sizes.” In his enumeration of religious processions, he also mentions “Jain processions” though his volume does not provide a contribution devoted to the ethnographic distinctiveness of Jain pilgrim processions.¹

However, Jain pilgrim processions in India are all the more interesting for the issue of our volume as their performances are deeply entrenched in the vibrant religious practice of the contemporary Jain pilgrimage to supra-regional sacred centers, such as Shatrunjaya, Sametshikhara and Girnar. Moreover, pilgrim processions are important tools for marking the group identity of contemporary Jain communities.

This contribution will first introduce the mythological and historical backgrounds of Shvetambara Jain pilgrimage in Western India before connecting these rather indological findings with a contemporary ethnographic example of pilgrim processions to the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya in Gujarat.²

Unlike other religious minorities, such as the Sikhs in Punjab,³ the Jains, in general, and the Shvetambaras, in particular, never claimed a clearly defined territory as their homeland. The religious and social core value of non-violence (*ahimsa*) of the Jains implies unconditional respect for all forms of life. It not only leads to the strictest form of vegetarianism, but also prohibits armed struggle and historically led to the clear opposition of well-off Jain merchants towards rulers and their respective ideals of the local warrior caste of Western India, the Rajput.⁴ Moreover, a politically defined territory, which is to some extent always connected to the idea of agricultural land and its output, had a highly ambivalent meaning for the Jain merchants, who might be landowners, but due to their religious prescriptions refrain from farming or any other agricultural activities.⁵

Nevertheless, we cannot deny that in general, territory defines boundaries and therefore, territorial definitions often play a crucial symbolic role for the imagination of religious, ethnic and political groups.⁶ This is also true in regard to the Jains, even though in a somewhat modified sense. Elsewhere I have argued that the Shvetambaras establish

1 Jacobsen 2008, 1.

2 The respective ethnographic data were mainly collected during my long-term PhD fieldwork in Palitana from September 2001 to June 2003 and during earlier and later short-term research periods (1997–1998, and 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013). For a more detailed description of the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya see Luthle-Hardenberg 2011.

3 For a reflection on the demands for Sikh autonomy in ‘Khalistan’, see for example Das 1995 and Jodhka 2001.

4 Babb 1996, 138; Tams-Lyche 1997, 229–232, 252.

5 Luthle 2003, 357; Jaini 1979, 171–172; J. Jain 1992, 15–16; Nevaskar 1971, 196.

6 This interrelation is uncontested in contemporary social and cultural anthropology and dates back to Anderson 1991.

the space dimension of their identity in the collective performances at supra-regional pilgrimage centers.⁷ In the same way as the local Jain communities, Jain sacred centers are spread across the West, South and East of the Indian subcontinent, where contemporary and historical heartlands of Jainism can be found.

Repeatedly – from early colonial period until today – the Jains have legally fought in Indian courts for the ownership of their sacred places.⁸ Up until now, this ownership empowers the Jains to determine the ritual code of conduct within their sanctuaries. This is crucial because only under the condition of ritual purity is the power and effectiveness of their sacred centers guaranteed.

According to the Jain doctrine, the sacred places preserve the potency of the 24 Jinas, the ascetic saints and prophets of the Jains, whose exemplary ascetic life form the foundation of Jain doctrine and practice. They are generally known as 'fordmakers' (*tirthankaras*) as they had appeared in mythological and historical times to lay out the ford, *tirtha*, across 'the ocean of rebirths' (*samskara*) to humankind before they attained spiritual salvation.⁹ Because the Jinas are released from action and rebirth and are therefore thought of dwelling in the remote eternal realm of Siddhashila, strictly speaking, they cannot directly interact with the devotees.¹⁰ However, sacred centers are particularly suitable to connect the devotee with the blissful presence of one or more Jina(s), who might have attained omniscience, preached and/or reached to spiritual salvation at/from a particular place – often times located in a remote area, preferably a mountain, which is difficult to reach, if not inaccessible for average humans or even sealed (this interconnection of the sacred with the wilderness is also important for the further understanding of Jain pilgrim processions, as will be displayed below).¹¹ Eventually the crucial events in a Jina's life resonate into the present when the pilgrims venerate him at the sacred center and thereby the Jina's blessings transcend the dimensions of time and space.¹² Therefore, most of the sacred places of the Jains are referred to as a *tirtha*, 'crossing' or a 'ford'¹³, as created by a Jina or *tirthankara*.¹⁴ Conversely, this implies wherever a Jina has appeared and preached, and wherever the eternal doctrine is remembered and kept up by the pilgrims, a *tirtha* is established.¹⁵

7 Luithle-Hardenberg 2010a; Luithle-Hardenberg 2010b.

8 Banks 1992, 105–106; Luithle-Hardenberg 2011, 133–152.

9 Babb 1996, 5.

10 Banks 1991, 249; Banks 1992, 17; Jaini 1979, 130, 133, 159, 273.

11 Luithle-Hardenberg 2014.

12 Luithle-Hardenberg 2011, 58–72.

13 For the somewhat different roots of the term *tirtha* in Hindu contexts, see Eck 1983, 34.

14 In addition, there are pilgrimage places for clan goddesses and protector deities, venerated by the Jains; for studies in Osia, Rajasthan, see Babb 1999, Babb 2004, and Cort 2000. Those kinds of places, however, are not exclusive to Jains.

15 On the roots of Jain *tirtha*, see Williams 1991 [1963], 235–237; Granoff 1992; and Granoff 1995. In addition to the meaning of the word *tirtha* in the sense of a spatially fixed pilgrimage site, there exist other meanings of the word which emphasise the central role of the religious community. Even the four-fold

Founded on these mythological and cosmological concepts, these *tirthas* – sacred centers – enable the religious minority of the Jains to overcome limitations of territorial and historical demarcations in the same way as they support the mythological and linear dimensions of time to transcend. Thus, they are able to unify the scattered local communities of the religious minority into one.

2 Pilgrimage as a procession – historical and mythological roots

This concept is all the more impressively illustrated by the ideal performance of collective pilgrimage to sacred centers. References to the extensive Jain scriptures show that the ideal performance of pilgrimage in a group is rooted in the ritual obligation for both public processions and the pilgrimage to sacred places. The pilgrimage to sacred places (*tirtha yatra*) is already prescribed as a ritual performance of the Jain lay people in the early commentaries to the canonical scriptures, which date back to the 5th century AD.¹⁶ The obligation for pilgrimage is also included in the traditional eleven annual duties of the ideal Shvetambara Jain laypeople (*shravakna agiar varshik kartavya*). These prescriptions are enlisted by the Tapa Gacch abbot, Acarya Ratnashekarsuri in his *Shrad-dha Vidhi Tirtha Yatra* of 1450 and they show an intimate interrelation of processions and pilgrimage within the ritual observances of the Jains.¹⁷ Three kinds of processions are prescribed within these eleven annual duties: *ashtabnika yatra*, *ratha yatra*, and *tirtha yatra*.¹⁸ Whereas the *ashtabnika yatra* is no longer of vital importance for the contemporary ritual practice of Shvetambara Jains, the second type, the *ratha yatra*, is performed up until present times and mostly during important yearly festivals.¹⁹ This kind of procession through the streets of a Jain neighborhood involves the drawing of a chariot (*ratha*) with an image of a Jina. By carrying the image of a Jina through the streets of their neighborhood, local Jain communities regularly represent their religious distinctiveness as a religious minority in public. The third type, *tirtha yatra*, the pilgrimage to sacred places, emphasizes this role of a group procession even more by establishing a direct terminological link to the Jina's achievements. Technically, the *tirtha yatra* is a combination of the first two older processions and is observed even more regularly than the *ratha yatra*. Like in the *ratha yatra*, a group of Jains – mostly of a common local origin – assembles in a public procession and an image of a Jina is carried in the heart of the procession, which as a final point leads to a sacred center.²⁰ This procession can imply several days or

community (*caturvedha sangha*) is referred to as *tirtha*;
see Cort 2001, 97.

16 Granoff 1995, 63.

17 Williams 1991 [1963], 235.

18 Williams 1991 [1963], 233–243.

19 Cort 2001, 142, 144, 161–162, 177, 181–182.

20 J. Jain 1979; J. Jain 1980.

even weeks on the trail when proceeding to a more or less remote center of pilgrimage (*tirtha*).

At the same time, the pilgrims' processions themselves are actively presenting the fourfold community (*caturvidha sangha*), the ideal religious congregation, which is formed in a circle around any preaching Jina. This congregation is still reproduced today by male and female ascetics (*sadhu* and *sadhvi*) and by male and female lay people (*shravak* and *shravika*). All ascetics imitate the lifestyle of the Jinas for a lifetime once they are admitted into one of the ascetic orders (*gaccha*) by rigorously following five vows: (1) To abstain from violence (*ahimsa*), including unconditional respect for all life forms, resulting in strict vegetarianism, (2) the love of truth and the care of the language (*satya*), (3) not to take what is not given (*asteya*), implying that the ascetics are dependent on the lay practitioners who provide them with food, clothing and shelter, (4) the renunciation of ownership (*aparigraha*), which also results in perpetual wanderings of the ascetics (*vihar*) and (5) the renunciation of sexual relations (*brahmacarya*), which causes strict avoidance of the opposite sex.

In contrast to this austere life the lay people are usually entertaining a life of well-being, due to the fact that their minor vows are lessened in comparison to those of the ascetics, but force them to traditionally earn their living in trade and entrepreneurship, instead of investing in agriculture. Moreover, the lay people focus their ritual activities on venerating the living ascetics together with the Jinas, while limiting their own practice of an ascetic lifestyle to periods of outmost religious importance such as pilgrimage and important festivals. Whereas the ascetics are dependent upon receiving material support from the lay people (such as food, clothing and study material), the lay people depend upon the spiritual supervision of the ascetics in order to fulfill a broad range of ritual obligations.

In general, this mutual interdependence is clearly presented in Jain processions. As already pointed out by Jain and Cort, the structure of Jain processions as manifestations of the fourfold community (of ascetics and lay people) is always remarkably consistent and uniform.²¹ This applies also to the practice of contemporary pilgrim processions: behind a red and white flag or a banner tower (*dharmadhvaja*), the symbol of the Jain doctrine and musicians parading either with traditional instruments, or, alternatively, a car is carried along with electronic amplifiers and speakers with the sound of devotional songs at full volume in the manner of Hindi films. Next in the procession is a group of male lay pilgrims who – inspired by the music – dance in honor of the ascetics who follow behind them, determining the pace of the procession with measured steps. Occasionally, the group of ascetics is led by a horse-drawn chariot with a large portrait of their deceased leader, the Acarya. However, the center of the procession is always formed

21 J. Jain 1977; Cort 2001, 161–162, 181–182.

by a larger chariot with at least one image of a ford maker in a miniature temple. The chariot can be either drawn by young men or by elaborately decorated white bulls. The group of female ascetics (*sadhvis*) follows behind, merging with female lay practitioners (*shravikas*) who join them in singing devotional songs in honor of the ford makers and the ascetics.

3 Shatrunjaya, the eternal mountain

This form of procession is also of crucial importance for the contemporary practice of pilgrimage to the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya, a sacred center of utmost supra-regional significance for the ‘image worshipping’ (*murtipujak*) Shvetambara Jains who form the majority of Jains in India.²² Every year at least 400 000 and up to 1.5 million pilgrims undertake the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya.²³ In accordance with the obligation for pilgrimage (*tirtha yatra*) as inherent to the traditional eleven duties of the ideal lay people, many pilgrims travel regularly, even several times a year. Today, the majority of pilgrims travel by plane, car, train or bus to the pilgrim town Palitana, which is adjacent to the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya. However, in this paper I will focus on pilgrimages on foot.

In fact, at least once in a lifetime, the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya has to ideally be performed on foot and in a ‘group of six restrictions’ (*cha’ri palit sangha*). Therefore, even today about one fifth of the pilgrims travel every year by foot and partake in pilgrim processions performed in a ‘group of six restrictions’ (*cha’ri palit sangha*). Before we can extensively cover this particular variation of group pilgrimage to the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya through a contemporary ethnographic example, we first have to understand how Shvetambara Jains define the importance of their sacred center in Western India. As noted by Sax, the special power of the Himalayan pilgrimages to Nandadevi (and pilgrimages in general) are often times explained by the devotees in terms of the particular qualities of the place and in terms of powerful effects of a particular deity’s actions.²⁴ This of course reminds us of the above mentioned Jain concept of a *tirtha*, which is always attached to a Jina’s potency. Thus, rather than pointing to the simple dichotomy of sacred and profane²⁵ at this point the question should be where and how do the Jains

22 It is very difficult to give exact numbers for the Jain population of India as many Jains claim that the last two Census’ of India (2001 and 2011) represent a gross miscalculation of their community (of round about 5 million people) and estimate their numbers as high as 30 million.

23 According to an oral statement of an officer employed by the trust in charge of the pilgrimage place Shatrunjaya, Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi in Palitana.

24 Sax 1991, 12.

25 As introduced by Turner 1995 [1969] and Turner 1973 into the pilgrimage discourse.

locate the sacred nature of Shatrunjaya within the Jain cosmology, and which myths, legends and narratives are attached to it?

The sacred mountain of Shatrunjaya stands at about 600 metres above sea level at the southern end of the adjoining pilgrim town and market place of Palitana, 40 km away from the district capital, Bhavnagar (Gujarat). In contrast to other similarly important pilgrimage places of the Jains, such as Sametshikhara in Bihar, Girnar in Gujarat and Abu in Rajasthan, Shatrunjaya is considered to be one of the few places of eternity within a vast and constantly changing universe.²⁶ The most important place in this category is *siddhashila*, 'the place of salvation', where according to Jain doctrine all liberated souls dwell, freed from the cycle of rebirth and are in perpetual bliss. In the inner part of the 'middle world' (*madhya loka*), in the center of the hour-glass-shaped Jain cosmos – that is, in the realm of mankind – only very few islands of eternity exist where time has little to no impact. Among these, Shatrunjaya is the only eternal place accessible to human beings in our 'dark age' (*kali yuga*) and in our part of the world, identified as *Bharata Kshetra*. Shatrunjaya is therefore considered to be *shashvat*, literally meaning 'eternal' and indestructible, even if it expands and contracts in accordance with the ups and downs of the never-ending cycles of time. Some other eternal pilgrimage places, such as the mountains Meru and Ashtapad, and the temples of Nandishvara Dvipa, are not part of the Jain cosmos to which average humans have access to.

Due to this special quality, Shatrunjaya is perceived as a place with a unique link to salvation. As frequently stated by many ascetic leaders during my fieldwork, no other place in our realm of the world is considered comparable to this sacred mountain and countless souls have attained spiritual salvation on this mountain, including important protagonists of Shvetambara myths and legends.²⁷ As a consequence, pilgrimage to this place is believed to bring a hundred times more spiritual merit to the devotee than pilgrimage to any other sacred place. Shatrunjaya is therefore referred to as *tirthadhiraja*, 'the King of pilgrimage places'.

26 For a comprehensive summary of the Jain cosmography see Glasenapp 1984 [1925], 214–243 and Caillat and Kumar 1981.

27 Some of these legends are referred to in the medieval Shvetambara literature and some are not. The few available translations of primary sources are the aforementioned Weber 1901, and Cort 1993. However, the main sources of my analysis are oral references to mythology and legends from the pil-

grims in personal communication. Moreover, I carefully studied contemporary pilgrimage guides, for example: Dhami 2000; Gunaratna Suri 1997; Gunaratna Suri 1998; Gunaratna Suri 1999; Pedhi 1976/V.S. 2031; Varaiya 1980/V.S. 2035. A version of Adinatha's life story in English, although making only occasional reference to Shatrunjaya, can be found in Johnson 1931–1954, vol. I.

4 Adinatha and his heirs

Although all Jinās, except for the twenty-second, Neminatha,²⁸ are said to have come to Shatrunjaya, the sacred mountain is particularly important in connection with the life of the first Jina, Rshabha or Adinatha, who, according to the pilgrims' frequent claims, came here ninety-nine *purva*²⁹ times and delivered sermons on every occasion. In Jain mythology, Adinatha ('the first Lord') plays the vital role of a cultural hero who first established the Jain community and Jain kingship before renouncing it upon becoming the first Jain ascetic of our time.³⁰ After many years of ascetic practice, he attained omniscience, enabling him to teach the Jain doctrine on how to overcome the mundane order he himself had founded. In the context of pilgrimage, devotees always refer to *Rshabha* as 'Adinatha' or 'Adishvara,' thereby stressing this Jina's role as the 'first,' that is, the founding father of the Jain community.³¹ As such, he is also responsible for having started the pilgrimage to the eternal mountain Shatrunjaya.³²

According to myth, Adinatha attained spiritual salvation on another eternal mountain: Ashtapada, a mountain which today is usually associated with Mount Kailash in Tibet, yet the original sanctuary is considered as inaccessible after Adinatha's son Bharata protected it with a seal to make sure that it would not be polluted. As a consequence, Shatrunjaya has become the foremost pilgrimage place for the worship of the first ford-maker.³³ Nevertheless, it is his grandson and first ascetic disciple (*ganadhara*), Pundarika, who is worshipped on the full moon in Caitra (March/April) for having attained salvation on Shatrunjaya as the first human being of our ages.³⁴ Therefore, the sacred mountain is also frequently called Pundarika Giri.

28 According to the legend, Neminatha, too, came to Shatrunjaya to perform the pilgrimage but turned back at the foot of the mountain, as he was afraid to pollute the sacred place. However, Mount Girnar (close to Junagadh), the *tirtha* where Neminatha attained salvation, is also considered to be a part of the sacred Shatrunjaya ranges.

29 The measurement *purva* is characteristic for the Jains' general preference for big numbers to classify time and space. A *purva* is equal to the multiplication of 8 400 000 by 8 400 000, which is equal to a number with 14 digits. For the purpose of this paper, it is enough to say that Adinatha visited Shatrunjaya very frequently and he had enough time to do so because he lived for 8 400 000 *purva* years before reaching salvation.

30 Folkert 1993, 152. – For a comprehensive account see Luithe Hardenberg, J. Cort, and Orr 2014.

31 Mahavira, who is frequently regarded as the historical founder of 'Jainism' by scholars (but not by the Jain themselves), does not play a vital role for the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya.

32 This mythological foundation corresponds with the findings of Indology as Shatrunjaya is the only pilgrimage place mentioned in the canonical scriptures of the Shvetambara. Therefore, Dundas 1992, 190, holds that the pilgrimage to this sacred mountain was established at the latest in the 5th century, even though archaeology can prove pilgrimage activities only as early as the 11th century.

33 In addition, the fact that only the site of Adinatha's spiritual salvation is considered inaccessible, speaks for the central significance of this ford-maker as a cultural founder.

34 See Weber 1901, 249, for an early reference in the *Shatrunjaya Mahatmyam*.

However, it was also Adinatha's son Bharata who is said to have contributed considerably in starting the pilgrimage tradition for the lay people. According to the myth, Bharata was the first to bring a group of pilgrims to the place of the preaching assembly of Adinatha on the summit of Shatrunjaya.³⁵ Moreover, he built the first temple on Shatrunjaya in remembrance of his father on the same spot where the Jina had delivered his sermons. In this way, he set the mythological foundation of the current temple town, consisting of about 108 temples and about 1000 smaller shrines. Thus, he can be seen as the founding father of *group* pilgrimage.

According to the legends, the first temple and its main image of Adinath are supposed to be hidden in an unknown place within the Shatrunjaya mountain. In order to substitute it on the surface of the sacred mountain sixteen renovations of the main temple took place and on all occasions were accompanied by large pilgrim's processions. The last renovation by Karmashah Osva around 1525 CE also included the installation of the main image, which stands at the center of worship till today. This image, called 'Dada Adishvara' ('Grandfather Adishvara') by the pilgrims, is believed to be work miracles (*camatkari*). Many legends narrate the miracles experienced by pilgrims as a result of this image in the past as well as in contemporary times. Some examples are of ill people being cured of physical and mental diseases, wealth being regained, and families being reunited after the pilgrimage to 'Dada'. Even though pilgrims often maintain that the only goal of pilgrimage is striving for spiritual liberation, stories about miracles generated by 'Dada' are an important aspect of the attractiveness of Shatrunjaya as a pilgrimage place. Most of these stories show how pilgrims miraculously gained enough strength to endure fasting, without even drinking water for an extended period of time – a type of renunciation viewed as a precondition for serious spiritual progress. Such miracles, which strengthen a pilgrim's determination to seek spiritual merits and may even bring about the pilgrim's spontaneous decision to take ascetic initiation (*diksha*) are considered to be the main work of 'Dada' (Adishvar).

5 Jain pilgrims: ascetics and patrons

In the same way as many other pilgrimages, the journey to Shatrunjaya is a complex phenomenon which needs to be tackled on at least two different levels. On one hand, this pilgrimage is the journey of an individual aspirant, who strives for gradual spiritual progress. This first level corresponds with Morinis' general definition of pilgrimage as an individual journey from the imperfect everyday world of the profane to the extraordinary experience of the perfect and sacred spheres of life.³⁶ On the other, the pil-

35 Also: Cort 1993, 246; Johnson 1931–1954, 362–365.

36 Morinis 1984, 2–3; Morinis 1992, 4, 25.

grimage to Shatrunjaya is a socio-cultural institution which leads the individual to the sacred center of the community and therefore can only be understood in the context of religious tradition. In the Jain doctrine of salvation, both aspects of pilgrimage are deeply interconnected. Elsewhere I have argued that the individuality of the spiritual aspirant is of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Jain community and its *raison d'être*.³⁷ These findings are also crucial with regard to the main actors of the community of a group pilgrimage.

When asked about the purpose of their pilgrimage, many pilgrims offer an interpretation, stressing the individual spiritual striving by referring to the very name of the sacred mountain. Shatrunjaya literally means 'the conqueror of enemies'. For the pilgrims, this metaphor alludes to the difficult fight against the so called 'inner enemies', namely the four cardinal passions (*kashaya*), which are the main cause for karmic bondage and the major obstacles to the ascetic command of non-violence: greed (*lobh*), fury (*krodh*), ego (*man*), and hypocrisy (*maya*). Thus, pilgrims generally claim univocally that their pilgrimage was nothing but an effective way of striving for spiritual purification by getting rid of *karma* and thereby getting a little closer to the salvation of rebirth.³⁸ Moreover, as in many other Jain contexts, the purification of the pilgrim's soul is considered to be both a highly individual and a material process.

The idea of individualization of the spiritual aspirant has a long tradition in cultural anthropological research on South Asia. As already stated by Dumont in the general characterization of the South Asian religions, the spiritual seeker becomes an individual outside of the world: "whoever seeks liberation must leave the world and adopt an entirely different mode of life."³⁹ In the same way, the Jain pilgrim temporarily leaves his mundane place within society in order to devote himself to his individual spiritual progress. Moreover, the spiritually motivated individualism of the pilgrim is even emphasized in the particular Jain doctrine of salvation. While in the Hindu traditions the redeemed soul rises to the united, non-dualistic world soul (*brahman* or *paramatma*), in the Jain doctrine, the redeemed souls (*siddha*) exist in complete isolation from each other. Moreover, Jain doctrine considers spiritual purification as a material process because the karmic matter (*pudgala*) is believed to be a substance attached to the soul (*ajiva*) by the cardinal passions (*kashaya*).⁴⁰ Consequentially, it is necessary to take physical measurements against the karmic matter.

In accordance with that premise, the motto of many pilgrims is: "The bigger the physical efforts during pilgrimage, the greater the spiritual progress and the closer one comes to salvation," as a twenty year old pilgrim once paraphrased while walking to Palitana in a larger group. Since the average lay pilgrim usually resides in a comfortable

37 Luthle 2003, 319–358.

38 Luthle-Hardenberg 2011, 97–90.

39 Dumont 1980 [1966], 273.

40 Banks 1992, 17; Dundas 1992, 83, 88; J. Jain 1979, 112, 114, 151.

urban home and avoids walking longer distances in his or her everyday life, every pilgrim has to endure unfamiliar strains when walking barefoot to Palitana and climbing the hilltop of Shatrunjaya.

In contrast to the urban lifestyle of the lay people, the ascetic vows imply homelessness and perpetual wandering. Thus, we can see the role model of a pilgrim in every ascetic. These pilgrims par excellence are copied by lay people who also become ascetics for the time of pilgrimage, as clearly indicated by the 'six austerities' of the *cha'ri palit sangha*, which are strictly observed by all participants. These include:

- (1) the strict observance of the purely vegetarian Jain diet,
- (2) the limitation to only one meal a day (usually after having completed the day's stage),
- (3) walking barefoot,
- (4) sleeping on the floor,
- (5) celibacy, and
- (6) the daily performance of the ritual of forgiveness (*pratikramana*) shortly before sunrise and shortly after sunset.⁴¹

Thus, all participants of a group pilgrimage on foot follow a collective routine.⁴² Pilgrims from lay communities seek instructions from ascetics in order to adhere to the strict discipline during the course of their pilgrimage. In general, I perceived a strong sense of the pilgrims holding each other accountable in observing these rules and rituals. They frequently explained this behavior by referring to the idea of *sat sangha* – 'true companionship' – which requires reciprocal support. In their view, the strict observance of a rule or the meticulous performance of a mandatory ritual inspires others to do the same and guarantees the success of the pilgrimage. Breaking a rule or neglecting a ritual is, on the other hand, considered to be a temptation for other pilgrims to do the same. Such behavior is therefore not only believed to reduce or destroy the karmic success of the pilgrimage, but is thought to bring bad *karma* (*pap*) to the wrongdoer. In this sense, mutual accountability serves to ensure one's own as well as the others' spiritual progress. Accordingly, most of the pilgrims are convinced that the observances of a pilgrimage are much easier to follow when they are performed in a group.

This crucial aspect of pilgrimage as a group performance leads us to the key role of the patron (*sangha pati*) within the Jain pilgrimage tradition. Only at initiative and

41 Cort 2001, 123–124; Luthle-Hardenberg 2011, 191–195. – To be precise, the term *ca'ri palit* must be translated as: 'six austerities with the letter r': (1) *sacitta parihari*, (2) *ekal anhari*, (3) *pad chari*, (4) *bhumi santhari*, (5) *brahmacari*, (6) *avakshat pratikramana*. For the historical development of the six austerities it is interesting to note that Ratnashekar (15th century) identified five of the six restrictions whereas

Dhaneshvara (7th century) was limited to the general term "fasting" (Weber 1901, 249).

42 It should be mentioned that this routine serves also as a general guideline for the majority of pilgrims, who use other modes of transport to reach Shatrunjaya and who limit the six restrictions to the period of their stay in Palitana.

with the fortune of a wealthy community leader, can a pilgrimage group be formed that ensures mutual support for the pilgrims, who strive for spiritual progress individually. Moreover, by establishing the pilgrim group, the patron is able to transform his worldly power and his mundane wealth into spiritual merit. However, rather than acting for his individual benefit, it is crucial for the *habitus* of a *patron*, to not act as an individual but as a representative of his family and the local community. Thus, the costs are borne by the family fortune. Likewise, relatives often decide to jointly organize and finance a group pilgrimage on foot, where a senior relative would act in the role of the main patron, the *sangha pati* or leader of the group. Otherwise, young leaders of a group pilgrimage on foot usually host it on behalf of deceased relatives, for example their late parents, elder brothers or father's elder brothers (*kaka*).

This key task of the patron is also convincingly reflected by the mythological figure of the 'universal king' *cakravartin* Bharata, as exemplified above. He provides a role model for all well-off lay people who in the course of centuries led large groups of pilgrims to the wilderness of Shatrunjaya.

6 Experiencing wilderness: imitating historical obstacles to reach the sacred center in a marginalized space

Even today Shatrunjaya mountain is located in a quite remote area in the south-eastern part of the peninsular Saurashtra. Even by modern modes of transport, such as car, bus, train or plane, it takes at least half a day to reach the town from the urban centers in which most of the Jains live today. Moreover, the temple city on the top of Shatrunjaya can only be reached by an exhausting ascent by foot on a path which is considered to lead across the wilderness of the mountain. Thus, the most sacred is conceptualized and actually located in a marginalized space, which is difficult to access.⁴³

On one hand, it can be stated that the ritual experience of pilgrimage may involve a general idea of refraining from the every-day world during the liminal stage of pilgrimage and this retreat is expressed by stepping out of urban life.⁴⁴ On the other, the exposure to wilderness is taken as a sometimes dangerous challenge that the pilgrims have to welcome as an extra-ordinary experience. This is usually an integral part of the pilgrim's quest and must be considered in relation to different concepts that apply to Indian religions in general and for the Jain asceticism in particular. In fact, the wilderness or the 'forest' is a central element of the ascetic escape from the social world and it is the preferred place of meditation, wandering, the complete fasting and of spiritual enlightenment. In the Hindu traditions, two ascetic lifestyles in the wilderness are particularly

43 Granoff 1999.

44 Morinis 1985, 159.

strongly connected to the last life stages of the Brahmins: the forest hermit (*vanaprasthin*) and the renouncer (*sannyasin*). Both stages are more likely to be chosen as final life stages of elderly people, but they can also be chosen earlier in life by spiritual seekers.⁴⁵ This form of asceticism is convincingly represented by the god Shiva.⁴⁶ Likewise, in Jainism each of the 24 Jina attained enlightenment – paraphrased by the term ‘omniscience’ – after months of roaming in the wilderness of a forest. In imitation of them, the Jain ascetics are still today committed to roaming in the wilderness.

Moreover, as in the case of Shatrunjaya, the wilderness is a preferred location to install sacred objects. Here they can be sealed and deliberately hidden away in order to preserve and protect them from pollution or defilement. In the words of Phillis Granoff, Shatrunjaya can be described as “esoteric holy object[s]”.⁴⁷ Therefore, the path to it must be arduous and difficult to access.⁴⁸ Last of all, the relative seclusion of the accessible sacred realm can be taken as a symbol for the ultimate goal of the even more difficult to achieve Jain pilgrimage: spiritual salvation.

These findings must be connected to contemporary group pilgrimages on foot on different spatial and ritual dimensions. The remoteness of the sacred place is further accentuated by the hardships of the journey to Palitana, which are deliberately strengthened by re-enacting historical pilgrim processions. Well into the late 19th century, the pilgrimage to Palitana was a major undertaking for all Jains who did not belong to the local communities of the Bhavnagar District and it was almost exclusively organized as a group event. In a long procession of several hundred or even a thousand pilgrims, the participants marched on foot for days or several weeks and sometimes even months, across the borders of the kingdoms and chieftains.⁴⁹ These group pilgrimages on foot required enormous financial investments and logistical skills and were therefore hardly undertaken more than once in a lifetime by devotees from outside Saurashtra. Even though travel opportunities as well as the traffic connections today have considerably improved, group pilgrimages on foot remain the most beneficial means of proceeding to Palitana in terms of spiritual merits. This is despite the fact – or rather because of the fact – that other modes of transport are faster and less exhausting. Thus, during my long term fieldwork many pilgrims claimed it was their explicit wish to lead a group of pilgrims as a patron (*sangha pati*) at least once in their lifetime. Others are less ambitious, but nonetheless wish to be invited and to partake in such an exceptional event.

45 Burghart 1983, 638; Hausner 2007, 101, 115; Michaels 2004, 71, 95–98, 101–109; Olivelle 1992, 44–45; Tilak 1989, 24, 37.

46 Doniger O’Flaherty 1981.

47 Granoff 1999, 168.

48 Luthle Hardenberg, J. Cort, and Orr 2014 and Luthle-Hardenberg (forthcoming).

49 S. Jain 2012.

7 Investing family assets into the joint venture of group pilgrimage

Not much different than in the past, the group pilgrimages on foot are outstanding and rare events in the life of a local community. It usually takes a patron more than a year to organize the journey, which includes about 300 to 1000 pilgrims, if not more. During the time of my fieldwork, 37 groups of pilgrims from six restrictions (*cha'ri palit sangha*) traveled to Palitana on foot with a varying number of 200 to 1000 pilgrims per group.⁵⁰ On the basis of this same data it can be estimated that an average number of 9000–15 000 pilgrims travel to Palitana in such a 'group of six austerities' every year.

In present times, the group pilgrimages of the six austerities (*cha'ri palit sangha*) show very clear similarities with the organization of historical group pilgrimages on foot and thereby also refer to their similarities with pre-modern trade caravans and military trains. Many obstacles and difficulties that all travelers in India were exposed to until the mid-nineteenth century no longer exist today. Some examples are of raids by predatory bands, inadequate protection during extreme climate conditions, untraceable paths and consequent aimless wanderings, a shortage of supplies and deadly diseases. However, many of the logistical details for a group pilgrimage by foot have hardly changed for centuries. Other aspects may even be more challenging than in the past, such as dangers that occur to pilgrims traveling on foot by road traffic (see below). For all reasons that any lay man who wants to fulfill the honorable task of a *sangha pati*, a "leader of the group,"⁵¹ must have, substantial financial resources, high skills of logistics and persistence are essential.

To date, it still belongs to the meritorious obligations of the patron (*sangha pati*) to cover all costs of travel, accommodation and catering for all participants whom he has personally invited (with personalized and costly invitation cards!). During the entire period of the pilgrimage, the patron must supply three meals for the invited participants (regardless of the fact that the majority of the pilgrims would eat only one meal a day due to the dietary restrictions).⁵² The patron also provides night shelters for all pilgrims of his groups, usually in the form of tents, at least during their journey to Palitana, as well as room and board in one of the pilgrim hostels of Palitana before and after the ascent to the top of the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya.

Moreover, according to ritual prescriptions, the patron also has to conduct elaborate rituals (*pujas*) for the veneration of Adinatha and the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya on all days of the pilgrimage: He must shower gold and silver onto the sacred mountain as well as organize devotional music to be played. The patron must also take care of the

50 The Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi maintains full lists of larger groups of pilgrims, which I was permitted to see.

51 Sangave 1959, 277; Dundas 1992, 187.

52 Weber 1901, 249; Williams 1991 [1963], 235.

renovation or the new construction of temples at the sacred site or on the road to Shatrunjaya.⁵³ Last but not least, the *sangha pati*'s family leads the procession of pilgrims.⁵⁴ Special attention is given to the wife of a patron, who becomes the *sanghavi ma*, the 'mother(s)' of the [pilgrim] group. Together with her spouse she assumes a central role in all rituals of the group of pilgrims. Only the *sangha pati* and the *sanghavi ma* may ride an elephant or a horse, sit in a chariot, sometimes accompanied by their children, or be carried by his relatives, especially when the procession enters Palitana and leads to the foot of Shatrunjaya. Thus, on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya, the *patron* not only presides the pilgrim processions, but he also has a crucial role in displaying and re-enacting the four-fold community (*caturvidha sangha*): the ideal religious community of the Jains, in public. Thus, the patron is the key figure of the pilgrim procession and is explicitly linked to the by and large strong conviction of the pilgrims that he only benefits the group pilgrimage on foot in underlining the importance of the community for the spiritual quest of the individual pilgrim.

My focus now turns to illustrating the general features of a *ca'ri palit sangha*. In order to illustrate and highlight important features of a group pilgrimage on foot, I will occasionally refer to a case study I observed in January 2002. I will denote this particular case study (in the mode of the Jains themselves) as Shantilalbai's⁵⁵ *sangha* ('group'). I selected this particular case study out of a number of similar samples since I was able to accompany the group and notably the patron's family from the very beginning to the very end of the pilgrimage.

Shantilalbai started to outline his *ca'ri plait sangha* as early as 1998, when he was in his mid-70s. During his lifetime, he spent most of his efforts on the family business in Mumbai⁵⁶ and funding and organizing a group pilgrimage of the six restrictions (*cha'ri palit sangha*) to Palitana was meant to be the grand finale of his fruitful life. Ultimately, this wish was not granted to him: As the preparations for the *cha'ri palit sangha* was gaining momentum in 1998, Shantilalbai fell ill with cancer and died shortly after. Only three years later, in the spring of 2001, his son Ratilalbai and his nephews Harshantbai and Arvindbhai carried on with Shantilalbhai's project and thus continued the organization of the *cha'ri palit sangha* on behalf of the deceased father and uncle. The all had grown up together as a joint family in a large house in Mumbai.

In my view, it is crucial to understand that the planning and organization of these group pilgrimages are always a joint venture – even if the initial impetus comes from a senior relative (deceased or alive) who might stand in front (or might not). Thus, the importance of the family business and its assets must be the emphasis over individual

53 For the social realization of that requirement during the 19th century see also Hawon forthcoming.

54 Weber 1901, 249; Williams 1991 [1963], 233–235.

55 All names have been changed into pseudonyms.

56 To date, the family enterprise produces plastic components for industrial use.

possessions in order to understand the transformation of shared wealth into shared spiritual merits. This interpretation must be understood in a marked contrast to the idea of merit transfer as claimed by Granoff for similar roles of patrons of temple foundations.⁵⁷ Strictly speaking, a merit transfer is contrary to the principle of Jain doctrine according to which spiritual merit can only be attained by personal effort (see above and below). However, since income from the family business is always shared between all family members (who, one-by-one, invest individual efforts to take part in the family business) a patron/sponsor, who acts in his own name but in fact spends the family's fortune into a group pilgrimage does, strictly speaking, never act alone.

This can clearly be seen in all stages of the group pilgrimage. From the first preparations to the actual performance of the pilgrimage, the patron and his close kinsmen are constantly supervised by ascetic preceptors in order to guarantee a spiritually effective group pilgrimage.⁵⁸ Thus, the patron seeks consultation with a senior ascetic, mostly the leader of a larger ascetic group (Acarya) to whom he feels particularly devoted to for personal reasons. For instance, just before his untimely death, Shantilalbai had already asked Acarya Narendrasagarsuri of Sagarandisuri Samuday to act as the spiritual leader of the pilgrim group (he particularly appreciated his spiritual advice after he had met him on the grand occasion of consecrating a temple, which was donated by an affinal relative). In accordance with Narendrasagarsuri's advice, the patron (*sangha pati*) must first specify the route and the dates of the pilgrimage, including an auspicious starting time. For that purpose, the itineraries of the leading senior ascetic and his group have to be considered and fixed as the route of the pilgrimage has to be coordinated with them.

8 The starting point of a group pilgrimage on foot: linking places of origin with ascetic routes and sacred space

At the beginning of the planning stage, the starting point of the pilgrimage is chosen by the patron and his close relatives. In general two options are possible: Either they decide for another pilgrimage site (see below) or the family's place of origin (*mul vatan*), which nowadays rarely corresponds with the actual place of residence. Whereas the great majority of contemporary Shvetambara Jains live in metropolitan centers outside Gujarat (e.g. Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata), the place of origin (e.g. the birthplace and home of the grandfathers of the patrilineage) is mostly located in the rural part of the Saurashtra peninsula, in Gujarat or in Marwad (Western Rajasthan). In general, the houses are abandoned by the families and often stand empty or only maintained by servants, but relations to the former clients are still nurtured over the years through occasional visits.

57 Granoff 1992, 184.

58 Weber 1901, 249.

If the patron originates from Saurashtra, it is more common that he chooses the birth place of his forefathers as the starting point of his *sangha*.

For instance, Shantilalbhai decided to start the *ca'ri palit sangha* from the village of his ancestors, Akolali, only about 15 km in linear distance westwards of Palitana, which has less than 2000 inhabitants today, none of them being Jain. Many of the trading communities of Saurashtra Akolali Jains started to move out of the village to Mumbai in the late 19th century, among them Shantilalbhai's grandfather. However, the family maintained their ancestor's house and kept returning for family gatherings and Shantilalbhai was liked by the villagers and acted as a benefactor for many decades by supporting anyone who needed financial help.

However, in many other instances of group pilgrimages, the patron's family is from mainland Gujarat or from Marvad in Rajasthan – where the distance to Palitana exceeds 200 km. In these cases, the place of origin is rarely chosen as the starting point of a *ca'ri plait sangha* and a pilgrimage place in close distance from Palitana might be chosen as an alternative.

The most popular are Talavdhja, Hastagiri or Kadambgiri (about 25 to 35 km from Palitana) with a travel time on foot to Palitana of two to three days. A pilgrim procession starts in Vallabhipur (55 km) almost as frequently, which results in about a week's walk. All four pilgrimage sites are considered as integral parts of the sacred geography of Shatrunjaya. Occasionally, pilgrimage sites at a further distance are selected as starting points, especially Shankheshvar (Mahesana District, 225 km) and Girnar in Junagadh (175 km). Pilgrim processions starting from there to Shatrunjaya usually take 14 days to three weeks.⁵⁹

Independent of the pilgrimage starting point, the local origin of the patron corresponds with the local origin of the majority of pilgrims whom he invites to accompany him on the group pilgrimage. These are for the most part his consanguineous and affinal kinsmen, who mostly also belong to the same local caste. The shared local origin of pilgrims in a group also implies that the majority of pilgrim groups are associated with ascetics of the Tapa Gaccha, the largest Shvetambara order, whose ascetics prefer to choose (but not exclusively) their wandering routes across Shaurashtra, mainland Gujarat and Maharashtra. Moreover, all lay participants of a group pilgrimage on foot are usually committed to the same ascetic leader and his particular subgroup of the order (*samuday*), to which their personal guru belongs to.

59 In equally rare cases, longer distances are covered if the residence of the patron is consistent with the place of origin of his ancestors (mostly in mainland Gujarat). In this case, the group of pilgrims may also start from there, even if it implies longer distances. This applies usually for medium-sized or

larger cities in Saurashtra or mainland Gujarat with a considerable Jain population such as Rajkot (161 km), Ahmedabad (220 km), Jamnagar (252 km), Patan (318 km), Vadodara (238 km), and Surat (378 km). As a result, the group pilgrimage on foot may take up to three weeks.

Compared to the Tapa Gaccha, the two smaller orders, Khartar and Ancala Gaccha, start out less frequently for group pilgrimages on foot. They need to cover even larger distances from places in Marvad or Kucch respectively – regions which are crossed by the traditional migration routes of the Kharatara and Ancal Gascha's ascetics. In case they start from the native place of the patron, such as the districts of Jalod (527 km) or Bhuj (400 km), the pilgrimage to Palitana takes at least a month. The longer distances from the Kharatara and Ancal Gaccha's heartlands make a *cha'ri palit sangha* from these areas even more exceptional and usually these are jointly sponsored and organized by a board of trustees who lead groups of pilgrims up to 5000 members and may reach Palitana once in five years.

9 Fixing the time, mapping the route and planning the tent cities

Since the ascetics have to interrupt their perpetual migrations during the four months of ritual rainy season (*comasu*) from approximately July to November, a group pilgrimage on foot can only be performed afterwards. Moreover, the ascetics have to organize their itineraries in order to reach the particular starting point on time. After the general schedule has been delineated, the leading senior ascetic fixes the beginning of the pilgrimage up to the day, hour and minute with an auspicious astrological constellation.

In the case study of Shantilalbai, his son and his nephews first had an informal discussion with the leading senior ascetic Acarya Narendrasagarsuris about their general ideas in spring 2001. Afterwards, the Narendrasagarsuri discussed their request with other ascetics of his Tapa Gaccha sub-group (*samuday*), who were to accompany him on pilgrimage. Eight male and fourteen female ascetics were selected. At the next, more ritualized meeting the senior ascetic announced the auspicious starting day and time as determined by him to be January 30, 2002 at 3:48 pm. Next, the patrons formally invited his Guru and his ascetic disciples to accompany and instruct the lay pilgrims on the pilgrimage and they sought his blessings by performing the ritual of *guru vandan* ('venerating the Guru').

During the following weeks glossy invitation cards were sent to 600 potential participants, mostly consanguineous and affinal relatives, but also to a smaller number of (Jain) friends and close business partners. Moreover, in order to attract additional prospects, announcements were posted in the temples of the Shvetambara Jain neighborhoods in Mumbai.

The next planning stage generally involves mapping of the exact route from the chosen starting point to Palitana. For that purpose many ritual aspects along with some practical analysis need to be considered. The minimum duration for a pilgrimage on foot

to Palitana is three days, and depending upon its starting point, can be endured for up to three weeks. With the exception of the ascetics, only a few pilgrims are accustomed to getting around on foot, so usually an average of about 10 km is planned for a day's stage. Consequently, a *ca'ri palit sangha* will have to cover at least 30 km. Moreover, the pilgrims are marching in a fixed formation with a chariot in the center of their procession. As a result, their pace is slow and the procession of several hundred people takes up a large proportion of the road. Therefore, main roads and highways tend to be avoided in order to escape the danger and chaos of dense traffic, which usually occurs in India due to a large number of trucks. Zoned sidewalks for pedestrians are rare, would not provide the necessary capacity for a larger procession of pilgrims, and therefore would provoke hazardous overtaking maneuvers, of which quite a number of pilgrims have already been victims.⁶⁰ If highways cannot be avoided, the procession has to be adequately shielded by energetic young men who serve as traffic guards with colored flags.

In addition, the image(s) of the Jinas carried along in the procession must be protected from ritual pollution and high traffic roads always involve greater risks to commit ritual transgressions or sacrilege (*ashatna*), for instance, by accidents which involve injuries of men or animals. Furthermore, as exemplified above, the wilderness or the forest is of a considerable conceptual importance for the implementation of pilgrimage and the ascetic *habitus* of the lay pilgrims. For the same reason, remote country roads are also preferred. Nowadays tracts of land that could be actually designated as wilderness or forest are rarely to be found in western India – not even in the country side – but the area crossed by pilgrim processions is often times barren and deserted and as such marked in contrast to the urban every-day-life of the majority of pilgrims. In the case of Shantilalbhai's *sangha* all these factors and considerations led to the decision for mapping a zig-zagging route from Akolali to Palitana on rather remote roads. Thus, three major goals could be pursued: walking a sufficient distance, having the sensation of 'wilderness' and maintaining a high standard of safety.

Once the route is fixed, the next step of planning must be devoted to designing the tent cities, which serve as accommodation for the pilgrim group. The general favor for remoteness leads again to preferring villages instead of towns or cities for setting up the night quarters of a *ca'ri palit sangha*. Moreover, in order to daily assemble a tent city serving as a mobile hostel for several hundred participants, large pieces of raw land are needed and these can rather be found in the less populated areas.

Above all, the organization of the tent site represents the largest logistical task for the patron. Though the size of a tent city can vary considerably according to the number of participants, they can be characterized by the following general features: In accordance

60 This serious issue is frequently discussed by alarmed lay people, who seek to protect the ascetics in particular, who are too detached from every day concerns

and are not rarely affected by incidents, mainly when travelling in smaller groups of their peers.

with the vow of celibacy, a U-shaped structure is formed by two rows of smaller tents – one side for men and one for women. Usually the tents of the male and female ascetics are situated at one end of the respective row. They are protected by large pieces of cloth from onlookers and are located in immediate vicinity to the large and central assembly tent, which connects both rows and serves as a gathering place. It also includes a purified and separated zone for hosting the mobile temple of the procession and for collectively performing elaborate image-worshipping rituals (*puja*).

A little outside of the closed row of U-shaped tents another large tent is set up for the lay pilgrims to take their meals, which are prepared in the adjacent field kitchen three times a day: before and after the daily processions and before sunset. While the pilgrims decide individually which meal they take (with most of them strictly following the restriction to eat only once a day) the patron has to offer the facilities on every occasion.

In order to ensure the smooth operation of the tent site, the patron also needs to provide the equipment for two tent cities as the dismantling and setting up of the tents takes longer than the day's stage of the pilgrim procession. Consequently, the tent city of the previous night is dismantled immediately after the departure of the pilgrims and transported by trucks to the second to next destination in order to be hurriedly reassembled. This ensures that the tent city is fully set up and meals are prepared for the pilgrims once they reach the next milestone.

After completing the initial planning process of designing the route of procession and fixing its stopping points in tent quarters, at least several months but often times more than a year will pass until to the pilgrimage is actually performed. During this time, all members of the patron's family, the *sanghavi parivar* and their affinal relatives put tremendous efforts into organizing the pilgrimage down to the smallest detail. Above all, the following services must be engaged and tested for quality, involving lengthy negotiations and extensive bargaining for prices:

- tent equipment rental and recruitment of paid and volunteer auxiliary workers who take over the setting up and dismantling of the tent cities
- cooks, kitchen assistants and mobile kitchens with cooking utensils for the respective number of participants
- rental of transport animals (elephants, camels, bulls, horses) and a chariot for the pilgrim procession
- professional photographers
- musicians
- bus operators, who provide transport from the residence of the participants to the starting point of the pilgrimage and back

Apart from the professional service providers, a patron seeks to find a ritual specialist (*vidhikar*) from his own local community, who accompanies the group of pilgrims and takes care of coordinating the details of the rituals that take place during the procession, in Palitana and on the top of Shatrunjaya mountain. This task also includes transactions with the managing trust Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi, which has to provide space, utensils and ingredients for the elaborate rituals at the foot and on top of the sacred mountain. Moreover, village chiefs have to be visited to receive their permission for setting up the tent cities.

10 Getting started in Akolali

A few days before the pilgrim procession is about to begin, either the patron himself or a close male relative travels by car to the starting point of the pilgrimage for the first time in order to supervise the construction of the first tent city and to formally receive the gradually incoming ascetics as well as lay pilgrims. In the case of Shantilalbhai's *sangha*, two of his grandsons were assigned this task. However, according to a warning from the senior ascetic, Shantilalbhai's son and his cousins had to avoid Akolali shortly before the commencement of the group pilgrimage since the astrological constellation was considered inauspicious. For this reason, they only arrived by car on same day, as the pilgrimage began. Once all participants were present, the pilgrims gathered to perform a festive procession for the first time, but moving just a several hundred meters through Akolali, only to reach the first tent city, which was set up to host 800 pilgrims and another 150 auxiliary workers.

This event must be taken as the actual and typical beginning of the group pilgrimage. It is celebrated by all pilgrims of the group, but also by the locals of the town or village, which tremendously profits from this occasion through selling large quantities of food and other raw materials to the group of pilgrims. In particular during the first chariot procession at the start of the group pilgrimage, the patron is cheerfully praised as a benefactor by carrying him through the streets at the head of the procession and by throwing colored rice on him. On this occasion, all cognatic members of the patrons' family are equipped with a princely idiom, dressed in festive, bright clothes, turbans and heavy gold jewellery.

In our case study, the honor of leading the procession was given to one of the three patrons, Ratilalbhai, Shantilalbhai's son. Meanwhile, the other two patrons handled the task of throwing coins and sweets into the crowd of onlookers, mainly villagers from Akolali. This can be perceived as another display of the patrons' royal idiom and his duty to give ceremonial gifts to the pilgrims as well as to people of the transit villages.

What is less obvious is that this kind of procession also implies an ascetic idiom since it is very similar in appearance to the *varshi dan*, the procession of a future ascetic where he publicly renounces all worldly possessions. We must bear in mind however that the patron incorporates both characteristics of a pilgrim as exemplified above.⁶¹

Shortly after the processions' arrival in the tent city, the pilgrims gathered for the first time in the central assembly tent by strictly observing the formation of the fourfold community. The senior ascetic, Narendrasagarsuri led the assembly surrounded by the other male ascetics of the group, altogether seated on a wooden throne (*gadi*). Lay men sat on the right of the ascetics, the women to their left with the female ascetics in front and the lay women in the back rows. The usual seating arrangement of a fourfold community also implied that those present formed a semi-circle around the image of the Jina (Adinatha) placed on a three-tier mobile shrine (*trigadu*) and later carried in the procession. After a short prayer and after blessing of the assembly (*mangalik*), the senior ascetic delivered a sermon,⁶² which again praised the patrons who enabled such a large group of pilgrims to undertake the meritorious pilgrimage (*yatra*) Shatrunjaya. He continued with inciting the pilgrims to make use of the unique chance that was provided by the patron for the period of the group pilgrimage on foot: to focus on the one and only goal to strive for in a human life – spiritual progress (*sadhana*). Everyone who was born as a human being should lead a group pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime lead to Shatrunjaya in order to burn harmful *karmas*. As a result, spiritual merit (*punya*) was gained and the redemption of rebirth (*moksb*) was palpable. The patrons treated each participant as a VIP and accepting this generosity was the best way to honor the patrons. The patrons and the ascetic leader (viz., he himself, Narendrasagarsuri) share the responsibility for guiding the group. The patron on the one hand, assumes the role of Bharat, who was the ruler of the world (*cakravartin*) and was therefore decorated with the attributes of a prince: a turban, precious jewelry and magnificent robes. The Acarya, on the other hand, is the spiritual leader and thus represents the tradition of the spiritual kingdom of the Jina. The money and gifts (*dan*) of the patron's family to the assembly and even more the devotion (*bhav*) of all participants make the *cha'ri palit sangha* a success. In order to strengthen the devotion and keep up the morale, the strict adherence to the six austerities is crucial (which were exemplified in detail).

After the sermon, the patron stood up in front of the assembly to invite all pilgrims of his group together with the village elders and the whole village (!) to a common feast, thereby again doing justice to his princely duty of feeding his community. However, as

61 Banks 1992, 80–82; Cort 1991, 653; Dundas 1992, 104–143.

62 As ascetics do not allow to record their voices for ritual reasons (e.g. strict abdication of electric devices) the content of the sermon could not be quoted/translated word-by-word.

repeatedly shown below, his duty to spend a fortune in ceremonial gifts to all participants of his *sangha* and the bystanders was just beginning and far from being fulfilled.

II Going to extremes in mutual support: away from the every-day-amenities of urban life

Usually a group of pilgrims set out for the first day of the pilgrimage to Palitana only on the morning after their arrival to the respective starting point. However, due to the particular astrological circumstances, Shantilalbhai's group of pilgrims started shortly after the patrons' ritual obligation to their ancestors was fulfilled, e.g. without having spent a night in the shelter of the tent city. Some lay man took care that it was commenced exactly on the fixed hour of 15:48. They started pushing their fellow pilgrims to partake into the procession in the typical formation a little bit in advance.

Upon first sight it was amazing that this procession was much less opulent when compared to the grand processions of its first formation in the morning. However, this feature applied to all subsequent days and it was also shared by all other group pilgrimages I observed before and afterwards: during an extended foot march from one stopping point of the procession to another the pilgrims – including the patron and his family – were generally focused on the physical strains. This implied that most of them continued walking largely in silence, even if some were performing a mantra meditation with prayer beads (*jap*). Moreover, they preferred simple white or pastel colored clothes and only a small number of traditional musicians accompanied the moderate devotional songs. According to their own statements, the pilgrims were engrossed by the experience to be aloof of their every day urban lives.

Even though these endured foot marches were not marked off ritually, they formed the larger part of the group pilgrimage on foot. In fact, the pilgrims themselves discerned these rather unspectacular periods as the 'actual pilgrimage' (*yatra*), which implies innate contemplation of the individual pilgrim's spiritual quest. This characterization of the interim stages of the pilgrimage are very similar to the circumstances of the steam climb to the summit of Shatrunjaya at the very end of the group pilgrimage described below.

The sensation of wilderness and loneliness was largely cherished by the pilgrims – at least in the beginning of a day's stage – in expressing feelings of euphoria while walking through the most remote areas of Saurashtra. However, after having completed the first five kilometers or so the mood slightly changed to first experiences of exhaustion, especially for those who were not used to walking barefoot and/ or longer distances at all and for those who already started in a rather worn condition due the general excitement of the long bus journey on the previous night.

Moreover, since the pace of the pilgrims varies considerably, the four larger groups of a procession – lay men, male ascetics, female ascetics and lay women, are often clearly fragmented. According to their sex, age, stamina and pace the pilgrims form smaller units, which often stay together for the whole period of the foot march to Palitana and they are formed again on the next day. Here, the idea of mutual support is again put in the fore. In general, the fastest units are formed by young ascetics who are trained to walk long distances at a speedy pace, only equaled by the sporty young men of the respective group. The opposite end of the procession is usually taken by a horse- or camel-drawn wagon which carries the smaller children and people with walking difficulties.⁶³ Pilgrims of the spontaneously formed units would constantly motivate each other, never allowing their mates to take a rest alone or to drop behind. If someone becomes tired, he or she is encouraged, or even firmly taken in the middle of the group, holding his/her hands and telling him/her to go on. This is particularly important for those pilgrims who include additional ascetic observances into the pilgrimage on foot, e.g. a complete fasting (with or without taking water) for up to four days. As claimed by the pilgrims taking up this kind of fierce asceticism during a pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya will guarantee salvation after three rebirths, a privilege, which is usually attributed to outstanding ascetic leaders only. Despite the high motivation for achieving that goal, this practice regularly leads to extreme exhaustion and many pilgrims collapse while performing it. In many instances the exhausted pilgrims have to be constantly supported by others, who fan air into their faces, put wet napkins on their heads and constantly push them physically and verbally to complete the day's stage.

Though from the very beginning of my fieldwork I regularly heard of people who had died during a group pilgrimage, I never witnessed any of the exhausted pilgrims giving up or interrupting the pilgrimage (or to be encouraged to do so). Instead, any pilgrim who had successfully gone through an extraordinarily exhausting experience enjoyed all the more approval and respect from others. Thus, physical exertion was also rhetorically and explicitly welcomed by all the pilgrims and without exception. In the case of Shantilalbai's group, this ascetic spirit and the unusual physical hardships even led to the serious consequence of an untimely death. One of the brothers-in-law (*sala*) of the three patrons collapsed already on the first day's stage and died on his way to the hospital in Palitana. Despite the loss, the three patrons were at pains to observe the day's program, as they felt even more responsible for the success of the pilgrimage and held it as their honourable duty to lead the group of pilgrims to the end. In order to not transfer inauspicious grief to the whole group of pilgrims, the widow agreed to tell all other pilgrims that her husband was still alive and in hospital. The death rituals were held the next day but with as little attention as possible.

63 The personal baggage of the pilgrims is transported to the next destination in cars.

A few days later, one of the senior ascetics of Shantilalbai's group was reflecting upon this untimely death by conceptualizing it in terms of the spiritual goal of pilgrimage: only because the patron's *sala* had acquired sufficient spiritual merit (*punya*), his soul (*jiva*) was able to leave this life and this particular body while performing pilgrimage, a religious activity (*aradhana*) by which his soul got rid of plenty of bad *karmas*. Consequently, a favourable rebirth was certain to him, an interpretation which was accepted with relief even by his closest relatives.

12 Taking night quarters in the tent city

Having completed a day's stage and arriving at the respective day's stopover destination, the patrons are formally welcomed by the elders of the hosting village. Immediately afterwards, the majority of pilgrims would turn to the canteen tent to take the only meal of the day. The subsequent program is mostly consistent and uniform: a short sermon from the senior ascetic would normally again refer to the consciously applied austerities and physical strains of pilgrimage, including eloquent praises and motivating but also humorous reprimands for those who were too exhausted. On every alternate day, the sermon might be followed by an elaborate and prolonged communal ritual, which lasts for at least three hours and is mostly devoted to Adinatha, Shatrunjaya or one of the protector goddesses. The day's end is marked by the ritual of forgiveness (*pratikraman*),⁶⁴ which is celebrated in gender segregated groups immediately before night's rest.

It must be noted however, that the accommodation in tent cities poses another ascetic challenge for most of the lay pilgrims who are used to urban comfort and a more leisure lifestyle. In the tent cities, they must abandon running water and electricity, moreover, they have to stay in larger groups of 10–15 people in a tent and therefore lack any room for privacy. To ensure the strict observance of the vow of chastity, members of the opposite sex are not allowed in the tents of the ascetics and one also has to leave the tents of the lay pilgrims of the opposite sex before nightfall. Cross-gender relations within families are interrupted and compliance with these directives is strictly monitored, mostly by the ascetics.

This routine is continued for the next days. It implies for the anthropologist that the only chance to talk to pilgrims occurs after sunset – when pilgrims take quarters in their gender-segregated tents. Whenever I paid visits to the tents of female lay pilgrims at the end of a day, I usually found them spread out on their mattresses, where they had dropped. Even though they looked very tired, they were obviously very excited and proud of having successfully finished the day's stage. They used to complain jokingly

64 For further details see Luithle-Hardenberg 2011, 190–195.

about their aching feet which were swollen and pierced by thorns because they were not used to walking barefoot. However, these complaints were always mixed with the obvious and outspoken satisfaction to provide a visible proof of the physical strains that ultimately would lead to the spiritual goal of pilgrimage. In the same mood, the pilgrims might complain about not getting sufficient sleep, suffering from sore muscles and of losing weight. In the evenings our conversations often came to an end when a maid appeared and offered to massage the pilgrim's legs for a small payment. In contrast to that, other body treatments, which are usually part of the every-day-routine of an Indian middle class women, such as oiling the hair, are denounced as an evidence for vanity, which is an aspect of ego (*man*) and therefore not in accordance with the code of behavior of ascetics and pious lay people. For the same reason, many lay pilgrims abstain from using mirrors during pilgrimage.

13 Proceeding through the pilgrim town: integrating historical with mythological space

The group pilgrimages on foot are always scheduled to reach Palitana one day in advance of the ascent to the summit of Shatrunjaya – the eagerly awaited climax of the pilgrimage (*yatra*). Once again, a vibrant chariot procession is formed by the pilgrim group to enter Palitana. On this occasion all pilgrims of the *cha'ri palit sangha* wear festival clothes and opulent jewelry. However, the crucial and outstanding role of the patrons(s) as the leader(s) and sponsor(s) of the group is again highlighted by several princely attributes, including turbans and extremely expensive clothes. After a welcome of the patron and the ascetics by officials of the managing trust, the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi at the outskirts of Palitana, the procession moves for several hours on a fixed route through the town. The patron and his closest kin lead the procession while usually being seated on elephants, thereby once again stressing the royal idiom. Sometimes patrons may prefer to go by foot in order to display their attitude of humility and this was also done by the three cousin brothers of Shantilalbai's group. However, other lay pilgrims of their group would not allow them to do so, but carried them most of the time, even though the patron accepted this kind of special treatment only reluctantly. In several other respects, the procession of Shantilalbai's group through Palitana very much resembled general features of all processions, which I could witness in Palitana: female members of the patron's family as well as children followed the main patrons at the forefront in horse-drawn carts. From their raised positions, they threw coins, sweets, rice and small gifts to the spectators. A large number of professional musicians, dancers and acrobats (usually of the local shepherd's caste, the Bharvad) were integrated into the procession

and were creating an ecstatic mood among the pilgrims. Also, the image of Adinatha, which was carried in the procession, was very carefully presented by a particularly elaborate decoration of flowers (*angi*). Moreover, two pilgrims were indicating their devotional dedication by sitting at each side of the image and constantly swinging a fan of yak hair (*camar*).

Another key element of the grand final procession is the constant pouring of a milk-water mixture in front of the mobile shrine in order to cleanse the earth ritually in front of the car.⁶⁵ If procession bulls drag the mobile temple they are particularly festively decorated, else wise (as in Shantilalbai's *sangh*) young men of the pilgrim group compete and at the same are cheeringly encouraging each other for performing the honorable duty to jointly pull it.

The route of the procession through Palitana not only leads to important Jain temples and shrines of the old town, but it also includes prominent places of general interest, e.g. the main bazaar (1), a large square in front of the destroyed royal palace (2) and, opposite to it, the central mosque (3). As already pointed out by Jain, Jain processions in general are instrumental in conceptually creating a Jain city in a space that is not a priori inhabited by Jains.⁶⁶ However, Palitana is considerably influenced and also economically dependent upon the Jain pilgrimage culture. Moreover, even if Palitana is not dominated in numbers by permanent Jain inhabitants, the Jain pilgrims who come to the town to perform their pilgrimage clearly outrun the total number of inhabitants (approx. 52 000) according to the census of 2011.⁶⁷

Therefore, I suggest to interpret the three main breakpoints of the pilgrims' processions to the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya as symbolic milestones of a dialogue, integration and competition with the non-Jain environment. This social and mundane space has to be crossed by the pilgrim procession in order to finally reach the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya. In fact, all of the first three places passed by the pilgrim processions represent important aspects of the Jain community's historical and contemporary efforts to self-assert themselves as an influential religious minority within the society of Western India: the bazaar can be taken, *pars pro toto* for the arena where the Jain traders to date are among the most successful businessmen, where they earned their wealth and where they communicate as patrons with members of almost all other communities.⁶⁸ The Darbar Chowk, a central square in front of the former palace of the local rulers, the Thakurs of Palitana (burnt down in 1999) still stands for the political authorities, who were for a period of about a hundred years the main opponents of the managing trust of Shatrunjaya, the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi (serving as the representative of the Jain community). During this period, a substantial revenue was repeatedly demanded

65 See also: Cort 2001, 161; J. Jain 1979, 16–17.

66 J. Jain 1977, 37.

67 Census of India 2011.

68 Bayly 1983, 176, 232, 451.

by the local princes from the Jain pilgrims who, in turn, defended their ownership of the sacred mountain.⁶⁹ It is interesting to note that the judicial argumentation of the Jains at British courts against a fixed pilgrimage tax was considerably fueled by a donation of Shatrunjaya Mountain to a prominent leader of the Jain community, Shantidas Jhaveri (hitherto the major (*nagarsheth* of Ahmedabad) which dates back to the 16th century Moghul emperor Akbar, who was famous for religious tolerance and strived to integrate the Hindu majority with the former Muslim ruling elite. Therefore most of the pilgrims pay respect to representatives of the local Muslim community and until today most of the pilgrims' processions stop chanting, playing music and dancing while passing the central mosque (opposite of the former Thakur's palace), in order to not disturb the worshipers.⁷⁰

About fifty meters behind the palace and the mosque a small alley leads to the third milestone of the procession: the oldest Jain temple, Motu Derasar. The patron quickly leaves the procession for a short temple ritual, mostly in the company of his ascetic Guru and his disciples.⁷¹ A few hundred meters further the procession makes a short detour to a dead end off the main road. Within a small walled-in yard the patron performs a short ritual for the footprints of Adinatha under a Rayan tree. This place is called Juni Taleti ('old foot') of the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya. This fourth milestone is a palpable topographical expression for cosmological concepts of the sacred and eternal mountain Shatrunjaya, which is conceived as constantly growing and shrinking in accordance with favorable and unfavorable periods of our world age, but never vanishing completely.

Behind the next corner, the procession turns into the broad alley of Taleti Road, the 'foot road' which connects the bazaar with the northern, contemporary foot of the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya and which is lined by about a hundred and thirty pilgrim hostels (*dbarmashala*). From there, quite a number of bypassing pilgrims (both lay and ascetic) usually join the pilgrim processions for a while or they stop and prostrate on the road in order to venerate the senior ascetics.

Eventually, the procession culminates into an impressive climax of attention when reaching its final goal, referred to as the Jay Taleti ('praising the foot'), a sanctuary at the

69 Finally, from 1926 to 1928, the endured controversy led to a boycott by the Jain community, who abandoned the pilgrimage to the sacred center Shatrunjaya. The boycott led to the effect that the hitherto vibrant market town was threatened with bankruptcy and therefore the Thakur had to withdraw his excessive demands. According to elder members of the contemporary local Jain community of Palitana before (and after) the boycott the patrons of pilgrims' groups were always received by an emissary of the Thakur's court. This practice was discontinued only in the late 30s when Thakur

Bahadursingh moved into a modern palace outside of the city, the Hava Mahal. For details see Luithe-Hardenberg 2011, 141–145.

70 See also Cort 2001, 162.

71 During historical times this integral part of a group pilgrimage on foot was linked to a welcome reception by the elders of the local Jain community who – before the beginning of the 20th century (when many of the pilgrim hostels where started) – were obliged to support any pilgrim and in particular the pilgrim's groups with guidance.

northern foot of the mountain, facing Palitana. Its main attraction is an aniconic piece of rock situated in immediate proximity to the first steps of the ascent and thus also marks the beginning of the ascent to the temple city on the top of Shatrunjaya. This Taleti-rock represents the eternal, sacred mountain itself, considered to be *tirthadiraja*, the king of all pilgrimage places. However, in their worshipping at Jay Taleti, the pilgrims do not only address the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya, but also Adishvar/Adinatha, whose footprints are installed in several shrines around the Taleti rock. Oftentimes, the Taleti rock itself is also said to symbolically represent the feet of the first Jina. Here, the pilgrim group concludes the grand procession through Palitana by entering the Jay Taleti compound under enthusiastic cheers for praising Adinatha. Like all pilgrims, they assemble in front of the Taleti rock for a joint liturgical ritual (*caitya vandana*), 'prostration in the temple'. The ritual at Jay Taleti completes the procession and is again collectively performed by all participants of the pilgrim group under the guidance of the senior ascetic.

Despite the obvious exhaustion of the majority of participants, this ritual triggers another emotional climax of the group pilgrimage on foot: after days and sometimes even weeks of strenuous walking and hardships, the pilgrims have achieved the foot of the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya. The emotionally most important element of this ritual is the devotional, collective singing. At the end of the ritual, the pilgrims are to throw coins and (more rarely) pearls and 'gems' (most likely imitations made of glass or rhinestones) onto the Taleti rock. Then, the pilgrim group moves on to their last tent city, which in most cases is set up in close vicinity to Taleti. In recent years, however, most of the patrons increasingly choose to quarter their group of pilgrims in one of the many pilgrim hostels in Palitana.⁷² Elsewhere I have argued that these hostels are organised in a similar way as the group pilgrimages on foot, e.g according to three aspects: (1) the place of origin of lay pilgrims; (2) the local caste of lay pilgrims; (3) the affiliation of lay pilgrims with a certain ascetic branch or sub-branch (*gaccha* or *samudaya*) and thus can be taken as a more solid representation of the fourfold community (male and female ascetics and lay people).⁷³ As soon as the pilgrims reach their tent city or their hostel, most activities resemble the daily routine after the previous days' stages.

However, later in the evening all lay people of the group assemble to stage a public auction of donations (*boli*). In the course of the auction, the highest bidders will be allocated with the honorable duty of paying homage (*bahuman*) to all members of the

72 Accommodation in a pilgrim hostel for a large group is more costly for the sponsor, but it offers more comfort to the pilgrims than in a tent city. While usually comfort should be avoided during the pilgrimage this detail is quite important as the participants of a group pilgrimage on foot often have no facilities to bath at all. However, access to the sa-

cred mountain requires ritual cleansing, including a full ritual bath. This precondition is much easier to accomplish for a large group while staying in a hostel than in a tent city.

73 Luithle-Hardenberg 2006; Luithle-Hardenberg 2011, 319-405.

patron's family by garlanding and gift giving.⁷⁴ This festive occasion is usually scheduled for the next and final day when the final goal of pilgrimage, the Adinatha temple on top of Shatrunjaya is reached by all members of the pilgrim group.⁷⁵

14 Climbing Shatrunjaya and reaching the final goal of pilgrimage (*yatra*)

The crucial role of physical exertion for spiritual progress and for approaching Shatrunjaya has already been exemplified in the context of the foot march's day stages (see above). It is also the central theme of the ascent to the temple city on the summit of the sacred mountain. The summit can only be reached after climbing at least one and a half hours on a steam path with 3745 steps.⁷⁶ The only alternative to walking is a *doli*, a kind of palanquin often carried by herdsmen (of the Bharvad caste) who are employed by aged or ailing pilgrims for money. However, they are rarely hired by participants of group pilgrimages, who are usually quite persistent walkers after having performed the journey to Palitana on foot and usually claim that physical exertion is instrumental for a successful pilgrimage. The procession usually starts out on the last part of their journey in the early morning, as the sun rises (in order to avoid the hotter periods of the day). To reach Taleti, all participants for a last time move together in the formation of a procession, but this time without any ostentation. Another liturgical ritual is jointly performed at Taleti, but in a meditational mood and not as joyful as upon the arrival of the group in Palitana. Moreover, before commencing the ascent to the summit of Shatrunjaya, the pilgrims must individually ask forgiveness for any possible ritual transgression (*ashatna*) which they may commit on the sacred soil of the entire Shatrunjaya mountain.⁷⁷ These two rituals at Taleti form the liturgical starting point of the ascent which incorporates five obligatory destinations where all pilgrims have to perform the liturgical worship of the respective main image (*panca caitya vandana*).⁷⁸ All of the five obligatory rituals require the recitation of liturgical phrases, ritual prostrations, and the singing of hymns (*stuti*) and devotional songs (*sthavana*). The texts refer to myths and legends related to the

74 In these auctions the highest bids reach up to six-figure amounts (in Euros).

75 The money collected in this auction is the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi's due. The trust will then take care that the money will only be used for the maintenance and renovation of the temples of Shatrunjaya. This category of gift giving is summarized as *dev drauiya*. For the systematic description of the "seven

fields of gift giving" as frequently applied by Jain lay people, see Luithle-Hardenberg 2011, 209–212.

76 All attempts by the Forest Department of Gujarat to build a motorway to the summit have been univocally prevented by representatives of the Jain community.

77 This is repeated at the end of the pilgrimage when the pilgrims return to Jay Taleti.

78 For a detailed discussion of the five rituals, see Luithle-Hardenberg 2011.

sacred mountain and to the first Jina Adinatha. The liturgical worship may also be accompanied by the 'worship of eight substances' (*ashtaparakari puja*), which includes the bathing and decorating of the image.⁷⁹ However, renunciation and the worship with devotion (*bhava puja*), not the worship with substances, is considered to be the main aspect of pilgrimage. To 'burn' the results of their deeds (*karma*), ascetic practices such as fasting, vows of silence, and the meditational repetition of the liturgical rituals are considered to be more effective. Thus, the *panca caitya vandana* forms the core of pilgrimage practices.

Apart from Jay Taleti, the obligatory destinations of pilgrimage are located in the main temple compound on the summit of Shatrunjaya: Shantinath Temple, Rayan Pagla, Pundarik Temple and the main Temple of Adinatha. Therefore, the main route with its five destinations leads straight to the main temple of Adinatha on the south-eastern peak of the mountain without a detour to the equally large north-western summit. Even though the temple city on the summit of Shatrunjaya spreads over eight square kilometres, most of the pilgrims focus on only nine out of ten temple compounds and the rest is largely ignored. Out of one hundred and eight temples and about eight hundred smaller shrines, only the five most important sanctuaries are chosen and a fixed route is followed for completing the ritual obligations at the five prescribed destinations.

After commencing the ascent at Jay Taleti larger groups of pilgrims are usually dissolved in favor of smaller units and – in the same way as during the previous day's stages – the pilgrims adapt their pace to each other in order to offer mutual support. After having achieved the ascent and passing through three of the five gates (*pol*) the second obligatory destination is reached. This site is a small and quite inconspicuous temple dedicated to Shantinath, the sixteenth Jina, who except for Adinatha, is believed to have visited Shatrunjaya more often than any of the remaining 22 Jinas.⁸⁰

About a hundred meters behind the Shantinath temple the pilgrims come up to the last gate, referred to as the 'diamond gate' (*ratna pole*). This gate leads directly to the temple of Adinatha. Before the patron passes through, he and his closest family members must take another ritual bath and don ritual clothing⁸¹ in order to carry out the subsequent, concluding rituals of pilgrimage, that demand an enhanced state of purity. Once the patron and his family approach the main temple of Adinatha through

79 For a detailed description of the Jain temple rituals, see Cort 2001, 61–99.

80 According to legend he is perceived to have spent eight rainy seasons on Shatrunjaya and 15 255 777 ascetics attained salvation under his spiritual guidance. See Weber 1901, 250, for a short reference.

Modern pilgrimage almanacs give Shantinatha's story in detail; see for example Gunaratna Suri 1997, 164–166.

81 Clothes which can be used in rituals (*puja na kapada*) must be unstitched and new.

the ‘diamond gate’, other pilgrims of his group, who have been expecting him, loudly join in their cheers for Adinatha.

For the last time the fourfold community of the pilgrim group form in order to publicly appreciate the patron’s meritorious deeds by performing the ‘ceremony of garlanding at the sacred site’ (*tirth mal ni vidhi*).⁸² Although all pilgrims transform their *ritual* status by having completed the pilgrimage on foot, this is *socially* indicated only in the case of the patron as this ritual entitles all consanguine kinsmen of the patron’s family to change their family name to *Sanghvi* (‘leader of the group’). So unlike most other pilgrims, the patron of a pilgrimage on foot (*ca’ri palit sangha*) clearly and permanently changes his and his family’s ritual and social state and consequently enjoys an enhanced status within his local community. Whereas the ritual details of the honoring ceremony of the patron is mainly of particular interest for Jain specialists,⁸³ I confine myself here to a very general description. After a number of endured liturgical observances, the patron is garlanded with a flower chain in the following manner: it is first blessed by the ascetics and then presented by those particular lay pilgrim of the group who bought the right to do so during the previous night’s auction. This part of the ritual is usually accompanied by outbursts of emotion, such as tears of joy, ecstatic dancing and hopping, loud cheers, repeated throwing of rice with sandalwood powder, hugs and general displays of mutual affection. On many occasions of this ritual, so much excitement ensued that the ascetics – mildly smiling about the lack of self-control of lay pilgrims – had to keep their hands protectively covering sacred manuscripts and other ritual objects.

Only after the communal event of the garlanding, the pilgrims of the group complete the obligatory liturgical rituals of pilgrimage at the third, fourth and fifth destinations. Elsewhere I have exemplified these rituals at length, but again I am confining myself at this point to a summary: the third pilgrimage destination is reached behind the main temple after a clockwise semi-circumambulation. At this place, large footprints of the first Jina, Adinatha, are worshipped under a Rayana tree. This tree is believed to be the place where the first Jina had delivered his sermons when visiting Shatrunjaya ninety-nine purva times. Moreover, the image installed by Adinatha’s son Bharata in the legendary very first temple on Shatrunjaya is said to be hidden in the tree’s roots. Therefore, not only the shrine with the majestic footprints, but also the tree itself is an

82 This public homage of the patron is already mentioned in Shatrunjaya Mahatmyam as an integral part of the group pilgrimage on foot.

83 For details, see Luthle-Hardenberg 2011, 280–284. Conspicuously, the awarding ritual for the patron has some significant parallels with the ritual of initiation into the ascetic fold (*diksha*) as well as with the consecration into an ascetic office. Likewise, the cer-

emony of honoring the patron is similar to a ritual which a lay man or lay woman observes after having performed a longer period of temporary asceticism (*updhan tap*). All occasions imply that the protagonist changes his or her social status in accordance with his or her outstanding religious commitment, resulting in ritual a transformation.

object of veneration and is circumambulated three times. More than any other place the Rayana tree is conceived by the pilgrims as a gateway to the hidden sacred and esoteric realms of the eternal mountain to which only a few pilgrims with outstanding ascetic qualities are said to have access to. At any rate it is considered as a place where every pilgrim may conceive the extraordinary spiritual energies of the sacred mountain.

The fourth major pilgrimage destination is dedicated to Pundarika, the grandson and first disciple (*ganadhara*) of Adinatha, who was also the first to attain salvation on Shatrunjaya (see above). The entrance of Pundarika's temple is located exactly opposite the eastern entrance of the main temple of Adinatha, with the effect that the two most important images are facing each other.⁸⁴

The last destination on this prescribed route and the main goal for all pilgrims is the temple of Adinatha, the founding father of the Jain community. The main temple is also called Dadanu Derasar after its miracle-working image Dada Adishvara (see above). The liturgical ritual (*caitya vandan*) for Dada Adishvara is considered to be the climax of the pilgrimage. Close to the sanctum facing the main image, Marudevi, Adinatha's mother, sits on an elephant. By standing behind the image of Marudevi during worship, every pilgrim takes up the same position in relation to Adinatha as his mother, the first human being of our time who attained salvation after having seen her omniscient son.⁸⁵

For the participants of every group pilgrimage on foot, worshipping Adinatha is once again connected to the act of appreciating the merits of the patron. This act includes the rare occasion of giving jewelry to the image of Dada Adishvar, implying entering the sanctum and can therefore only be performed by a maximum of eleven selected members of patron's family. In the case of Shantilalbhai's group, the patrons presented a huge ceremonial umbrella, an object made of solid silver with a diameter of approximately one meter. It was carried by four men and shortly held over the image's head for less than 30 seconds, but accompanied by boisterous cheers of their group. Other kinsmen were simultaneously in charge of replacing the flag of the main temple by audaciously climbing the 40 meter high roof with support of the temple servants, the *pujaris*. Both donations serve as substituting the patron's obligation for (re)building temples as part of the pilgrimage (see above). Immediately after the pilgrim group dissolves, most of its participants start to descend the mountain individually.

84 Pundarika's sanctuary is as remarkable as the Jay Taleti rock for being venerated with a ritual that is somewhat unique for the Shvetambara Jain context (Luithle-Hardenberg 2011, 447-450).

85 To avoid confusion, it should be stressed that according to the myth this event did not take place on Shatrunjaya mountain, but on Ashtapada, where Adinatha had gained omniscience.

15 The 'group ritual' (sangha puja) and returning to residential places

While the majority of the participants of a group pilgrimage on foot climb down the mountain without any particular ritual observances, the patron resumes his role to indulge the participants of his group even before they have reached Palitana. This is accomplished impressively by another 'group ritual' (sangha puja), implying the assessment of the performance of each pilgrim of the group. This is accomplished by symbolically washing his or her feet with a milk-water mix, pressing a red mark on the forehead and presenting a coconut and a coin, altogether gifts of mutual respect. Thus, it is the patron's and his family's turn to show respect to every pilgrim of his group for enduring the strains of pilgrimage.

This *sangha puja* is mostly performed right after leaving the temple city, shortly before arriving again at Taleti or, more rarely, immediately after returning to the hostel (or the tent city respectively). However, the patron's duties to his group of pilgrims are only completed by a last communal meal and another ritual gift for all of his travel companions, the *prabhavna*. For this purpose, one and the same devotional object is given to every participant. This item can be a clock, a piece of jewelry or a miniature image of either Adinatha, his footprints or the temple city on the top of Shatrunjaya. The patron gives this to the pilgrims as a parting gift, while the pilgrims are entering the bus for the return journey to their urban places of residence, shortly after the last communal meal is served. Some male members of the patron's family will also accompany the ascetics of their group as they continue their journey on foot, until they reach the city limits of Palitana.⁸⁶

16 Integrating the community by physical strains of pilgrimage: the outlook for the 21st century

Elsewhere I have shown that the main mythological references of the five progressing destinations on the summit of Shatrunjaya correspond with a regression of a pilgrim to mythological time.⁸⁷ Regardless of which route a pilgrim takes, he or she would never

86 Back at home, the buses of pilgrims will be received by those relatives, who remained at home. Shortly after his return the patron installs his garland either in his home shrine or in a Jain temple of the neighborhood, where the garland is placed over an archway. They also take care of the bureaucratic formalities that are necessary to change their family

name to *Sanghvi*. This includes the printing of new business cards which are of greatest importance in India as they are regularly exchanged and collected on many occasions, including weddings, business meetings and on occasion of meeting friends.

87 Luthle-Hardenberg 2010b and Luthle-Hardenberg 2011.

climb Shatrunjaya by walking around the mountain without a plan, but would always follow prescribed routes, which are part of a mind map, literally and figuratively. With every step, a pilgrim passes an earlier phase of our age until reaching the temple of Adinatha and the origin of the Jain community, Jain doctrine, and Jain practice represented by the first Jina. Moreover, the myths and legends are recalled in the devotional songs and hymns during the obligatory liturgical rituals at all the five major destinations of pilgrimage. In many ways, the rituals of pilgrimage are thus connected to the group's memory and thereby help to construct Shvetambara identity, linking the past with the present.

At the same time, the experience of physical deprivation inevitably makes the pilgrimage a very special, unforgettable event for every individual pilgrim. This role of ritual ordeal has long been recognized as crucial for the ritual process and group commitment (especially for initiation rites and rites of passage)⁸⁸ and has recently been discussed again within the frame of cognitive anthropology.⁸⁹ Pilgrimage hardships as well as routes, destinations, rituals, and restrictions are altogether pressed upon or internalised by every individual pilgrim. The pilgrim remembers the collective values by recalling the personal, mostly painful pilgrimage and by connecting them with the pilgrimage to the first Jina and the sacred center Shatrunjaya. The impression of collective memories on the individual pilgrim is enforced through liturgical rituals and experiences of ascetic deprivation.

Equally important is the fact that these physical challenges are taken up collectively by participants of group pilgrimages on foot. The joint commitment to identical and ritualized physical strains on a prescribed pilgrimage route and during particular collective austerities enables the participants to create a religious community, in which they actively participate. Thus, the physical strains endured by the participants can be observed as an expression of the shared identity as Jains.

This connection of individual physical experience and ritualized social practices can be seen as an example of what Connerton calls "incorporated bodily practices." According to Connerton,⁹⁰ such practices are used as a very effective technique for linking the memory of a group with the memory of an individual. Applying this idea to the group pilgrimages on foot, it can be concluded that the socially important values, rituals, myths and legends of Adishvar and Shatrunjaya are remembered by the individual pilgrim because they are inscribed into the individual memory by the unforgettable sensation of exhaustion.

At the same time, the pilgrimage of Shvetambara-Jains to Shatrunjaya is an example of a phenomenon described in 1997 by Jan Assmann for group memories, which

88 Turner 1995 [1969]; Crapanzano 1981.

89 See for instance Morinis 1985; Jackson 2009; Whitehouse 2004.

90 Connerton 1989, 73-74.

according to him, are particularly persistent when they are attached to special places. Eventually, the respective locality and the group become a *Wesensgemeinschaft*, meaning that the place and the group are completely identifiable with another.⁹¹

In the case of the Shvetambara-Jains of Western India, this connecting experience of pilgrimage can hardly be overemphasized. In fact, mental pilgrimages (*bhav yatra*) with the help of pilgrim maps (*pata*) and images of the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya have a long tradition in the ritual practice of the Jains⁹² and are undeniably important for a large number of diaspora Jains. On the contrary, the active physical experience of the pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya cannot be substituted by any means: in order to keep up the necessity and standard of regular physical efforts, the sacred mountain is preserved in a marginalized space and the summit of the mountain can only be reached by foot. Ideally, this effort must be increased by even reaching the base of the mountain by foot – despite the fact that other modes of transport are possible and much faster.

This insistence on the remoteness of the sacred realm of Shatrunjaya that must be ideally approached in a long and enduring procession is remarkable. In my conclusion, I therefore relate this persistence with recent findings in cultural anthropology as well as with recent events in the Jain community.

In order to understand the meaning of processions in contemporary India, Van der Veer refers to historical processes that form persisting means of mass mobilization in India.⁹³ He argues that during the British Empire processions of various religious movements were crucial to challenge the colonial state and each other. Among other tools, such as pamphlets and posters, processions were instruments to articulate religious issues into the formation of the public sphere, a mechanism still at work in the political arena of contemporary India and its democratic policy of numbers. Likewise, he refers to transnational migration as a defining element of the recent development of religious movements in India.

What does this imply for the Jains in regard to their practice of pilgrim processions on foot? By worshipping representations of Shatrunjaya in mental pilgrimages, the sacred mountain of the Jains is ultimately present in every local Shvetambara community, not only in India but also in diaspora communities in East Africa, North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. Moreover, since the late 1990s, diaspora Jain communities have made intensive use of the Internet for propagating the central importance of this sacred mountain, along with spreading other contents of the Jain doctrine and practice. In the beginning this was started to build a network for the diaspora Jains in order to keep in touch with their religious community in India, including their sacred spaces.

91 Assmann 1997, 39.

92 See Luithe-Hardenberg 2015.

93 Veer 2004.

This approach is also identified by Van der Veer as an important feature of the transnational religious communities.⁹⁴ Though the diaspora Jains took the initiative in starting religious Internet forums, online sources and online journals for circulating the Jain doctrine and its manifold interpretations, it is by now increasingly referred and added to by residential Indian Jains. Moreover, other non-Jain sources are circulating, such as picture blogs of tourists who have visited Shatrunjaya or *Google Earth* (which gives a full view of the sacred temple city from a bird's eye view). Among the most interesting results of the proliferating information and flood of images is a 1:38 hour long video of the ascent to the top of Shatrunjaya on YouTube.⁹⁵ Apparently, this was produced under strict supervision of the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi, the managing trust of Shatrunjaya: remarkably, no images of Jinas are filmed in this video, since displaying the sacred realm to a wider public with the inclusion of a non-sacral sphere would create serious sacrilege (*ashatna*). For the same reason, in October 2013, orthodox ascetic seniors urged the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi to impose a complete ban of photography and video on the entire mountain. In their own reasoning, the aim of this prohibition is to stem the 'flood of images' of Shatrunjaya or its sanctuaries from circulating the Internet. To great dismay of the religious leaders, the large distribution of these images outside the sacred sphere severely threatens desecration of the sacred Shatrunjaya mountain.

In other words: the sacred mountain Shatrunjaya can only remain the religious center of the Shvetambara community if the sacred realm remains well protected in a remote area. The seemingly unlimited scope of the Internet is terminated by the most effective measurement: disconnection. The access of the Jain community to their eternal mountain Shatrunjaya can only be guaranteed as long as physical effort remains the precondition for the spiritual experience. Otherwise it will be sealed to protect it from pollution in the same way as it was done with Ashtapada.

94 Veer 2004.

95 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWYvpta-WjY>, uploaded 08/07/2015 (visited on 24/10/2017).

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