Buddhism[i] and Film

Luc Schaedler

The vast majority of films made about Buddhism are *documentaries*. Almost without exception they come from Western filmmakers and concern themselves chiefly with *Tibetan* Buddhism, which has experienced a true boom since the early 1980s. Among the "Buddhism films" they are the most successful — but most of them remain stuck on the surface. The documentaries are mostly mere *depictions* of particular religious rituals: LORD OF THE DANCE: DESTROYER OF ILLUSION (1985), of vanishing customs: DIE SALZMÄNNER VON TIBET [THE SALTMEN OF TIBET] (1997), of Buddhist phenomena such as reincarnation: DAS GOTTKÖNIGTUM TIBET (1989) or they deal with the Buddhist way of confronting death: THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD (1994). A few attempt to give an integrated overview: WELTRELIGION: DER BUDDHISMUS or LE MESSAGE DES TIBÉTAINS (1965), yet they treat only the esoteric aspects of Buddhism and slide off into the occult. The filmmakers fail to portray Buddhism as it is actually lived today in the *everyday life of people*.

One attempt to place precisely this everyday life at the centre of his films was made by Clemens Kuby with his Tibet trilogy: DAS ALTE LADAKH (1985), TIBET – WIDERSTAND DES GEISTES (1989) and LIVING BUDDHA (1994). Yet even he does not get beyond an *idealisation* of Tibet and Buddhism. His core message can be reduced to the following (simplified) point: the Buddhist Tibetans have preserved their cultural identity over millennia (sic!) and have always lived in harmony with their environment. What is now under threat in China has survived intact in Ladakh and in the Tibetan exile community in India.

The criticism levelled above at these films, with regard to their portrayal of Buddhism, is not meant as a judgement on their aesthetic qualities. They are often beautiful and moving films. DAS ALTE LADAKH was for me, in 1988, the main reason for travelling to India and Tibet and stands at the beginning of my engagement with Tibet and Buddhism. And DIE SALZMÄNNER VON TIBET is an ethnographic masterpiece of poetic beauty. But very few films really engage with Buddhism; they remain at the level of uncritical *depiction*. The Dalai Lama's advice to Western Buddhists to use their reason and not to believe everything they are told about Buddhism remains unheeded. This leads to grave misunderstandings: the specialised knowledge of a small monastic elite is sold as common cultural property; Buddhism is presented as static, devoid of inner dynamism; a simple *opposition* is constructed between East and West — there cultural identity and *inner* views, here alienation and *outer* views.

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Buddhism becomes a *projection screen* that ultimately says more about us than it does justice to the complexity of the subject matter.

There are exceptions, however, a few of which I would like to mention here by way of example. RAID INTO TIBET (1966) showed back in the 1960s how Buddhist monks pray for the success of a raid on a Chinese convoy planned by Tibetan guerrilla fighters. A serious blow is dealt to the myth that Tibet was non-violent for millennia. In A BUDDHIST TRILOGY [EINE BUDDHISTISCHE TRILOGIE] (1979) the prayers of the monks are actually translated rather than summarised in a commentary. This represents the first step within the "Buddhism films" towards giving the depicted subjects their own voice rather than speaking on their behalf.

A genuine *paradigm shift* comes with THE REINCARNATION OF KHENSUR RINPOCHE (1991). This is the first film by Tibetans about their own culture. The detective story of the search and the esoteric aspects of reincarnation are dropped in favour of a portrayal of everyday life. What is of interest is not the phenomenon of reincarnation but the relationship between the former servant and his teacher, to whom he must now be a father. This "reversal" of the relationship allows a deep insight into the daily life of Buddhist clergy. A different — and no less interesting — approach is taken by an American ethnologist in FILMS ARE DREAMS THAT WANDER IN THE LIGHT OF DAY (1989). The filmmaker juxtaposes different constructions of Tibet (and Buddhism) in order to develop her own multilayered picture. The *construction of "the Other"* is not concealed but is the very starting point of the film.

What in documentary film is still epic in character and takes its time is, in *advertising*, further sharpened and brought to a point. All the features of Western appropriation and wishful projections concerning Buddhism reappear here in concentrated form: Buddhist monks levitate so that one can vacuum beneath them: ELECTROLUX WIDETRACK; Buddhist scholars who are reincarnated as cars: XSARA COUPÉ or the Zen monk who finds redemption from (Japanese) everyday stress through green tea: TSCHAÉ LIPTON. What these advertisements share is their use of exotic Buddhist iconography: monasteries, monks, Buddha statues, occult practices and, not least, the colours. Quite naturally so — for they have a product to sell.

How, then, do matters stand with the *feature films* that engage with the subject of Buddhism? From the 1980s onwards the number of "Buddhism films" rises sharply. On the one hand this can be explained by the increase in Asian filmmaking and by its growing reception in the West. On the other hand the leap goes back to a Western phenomenon I shall here call the "Dalai Lama effect". The Dalai Lama as an international figure of identification made Buddhism, as a mass phenomenon, socially acceptable in the 1980s. But

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where does this fascination with Buddhism come from? The romanticisation of the Orient has a long history in the West[i], which is based on a central *opposition*: the West senses an inner lack (alienation) and fantasises the answer through a process of projection onto the East (here: Buddhism).

On the cinematic level, SIDDHARTHA (1972) represents the turning point. The visually opulent adaptation of Hesse's classic offers no deep insights, but it says a great deal about the state of the hippie movement. The politicised protest movement, influenced by existentialist thought, increasingly turned towards spiritual themes in the 1970s. In Eastern philosophies — including Buddhism — many found an answer to their questions: the collective and political were replaced by the individual and spiritual, for change in society could only take place if the individual was also willing to change. The importance Buddhism attaches to personal responsibility and the ideal of the Bodhisattva (Tibet) — in which the enlightened being renounces nirvana in order to be reborn into the world so as to help others — encouraged many in their hope that they had at last found the right way. Moreover, with its successful method of meditation, Buddhism provided a certain guarantee for Western sceptics. It is telling in this connection that almost all Western filmmakers who have engaged with Buddhism in recent years come precisely from this generation: Bernardo Bertolucci, Martin Scorsese, Herbert Achternbusch and Doris Dörrie.

The "Buddhist" *feature films in the West* are shaped by the opposition between East and West. Most clearly perhaps in LITTLE BUDDHA (1994), which builds the entire formal level on this difference. The shots in Seattle (USA) are kept in cold blue, while the Tibetan monks, and later in the film the scenes in Bhutan, are kept in warm oranges and yellows: Western materialism versus Buddhist spirituality. Although the story is touching, it is too simple to provoke any deeper discussion of Buddhism. Above all, the biography of the Buddha follows only his mythologised legend, told as a bedtime story. In HEAVEN AND EARTH (1993) Oliver Stone pushes the aforementioned opposition to extremes. Studded with Buddhist half-truths, a parable is told about the fall of paradise. What begins by showing the Vietnam War as a murderous catastrophe for South-East Asia (and *not* as a catastrophe for the USA) ends in (Western) mourning for the lost paradise. Buddhism and old Vietnam serve merely as colourful illustration. A very different approach to the subject is taken by the films ERLEUCHTUNG GARANTIERT [ENLIGHTENMENT GUARANTEED] (2000) and AB NACH TIBET! (1993). Here too the opposition is at issue — disoriented Germans seek their salvation in the East — but with a healthy dose of self-irony. Achternbusch remains faithful to his anarchic and Dadaist humour. AB NACH TIBET! shows in a witty way that his (Bavarian) thoughts on life are not so far removed from Buddhist insights: the world cannot be grasped by means of preconceived and

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conventional categories. In an interview, Dörrie (ERLEUCHTUNG GARANTIERT) answered the question of where the fascination of Buddhism lay for her: "(…) it sometimes seems to me as though it is easier for me to learn a foreign language and then to grasp what grammar is (…). I recognise it much more easily in the foreign language. And so it is with Buddhism too."[ii]

Through the simplification mentioned above, Buddhism almost offers itself as a substitute religion. One variant of the opposition discussed above is *purification*: contact with the "Other" (here: Buddhism) is supposed to have a healing effect. In the film SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET (1997) — quite differently from the book of the same name — the purification of the egocentric European (Harrer) through contact with the foreign culture is portrayed. Tibet and Buddhism become a spiritual fountain of youth. The way in which wise sayings flow from every Tibetan is unbearable. The relationship to the Dalai Lama is also turned into a spiritual one in the film, although in the book it was shaped mainly by the "scientific" curiosity of the young Dalai Lama, who wanted to hear about the world outside which was foreign to *him* — and not the other way round. In the Hollywood film LOST HORIZON (1937), too, purification is the central theme: Tibet and Buddhist philosophy degenerate into a projection screen for our fantasies, shaped by the wish that somewhere in Tibet, in a remote valley (Shangri-La), the salvation of humankind lies hidden — though entirely in the service of *Western humanity*. Apart from the fact that there is talk of equanimity and of the middle way, the "philosophy" preached has precious little to do with Buddhism. It stems rather from the Western — mildly social- and civilisation-critical — tradition. In the adventure film STORM OVER TIBET [STURM ÜBER TIBET] (1952) too, contact with the foreign world leads to a rethinking on the part of the protagonist — although less in order to find salvation than out of fear of the magical powers of Buddhist monks. In the recent film NAMGYAL – DIE GESCHICHTE EINES BUDDHISTISCHEN MÖNCHES (2000), which is based on a true story, a Western journalist is *purified* through the life story he is told by a Tibetan doctor. The various stages in the life of the doctor and his engagement with Buddhism (he was supposed to become a monk) form the dramatic arc. The film also addresses, however, how Western patterns of behaviour, values and consumer goods are changing Buddhist culture.

Other Western filmmakers attempt to present a *view from within*. For me the most prominent example here is KUNDUN (1997) by Scorsese, which is treated more extensively elsewhere in the book. Suffice it to say here: Scorsese shows the life story of the Dalai Lama exclusively in a spiritual light. Everything the Dalai Lama says becomes a Buddhist message — and one wonders whom it is addressed to. Scorsese consistently avoids the question of the conservative Buddhist currents within Tibet whose intrigues unfolded in the immediate

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vicinity of the Dalai Lama. It is not *what* he shows in KUNDUN but what he *leaves out* that is interesting.

Three films fall outside the framework of Western "Buddhism films" described above, and could hardly be more different from one another. PREM SANYAS [THE LIGHT OF ASIA / DIE LEUCHTE ASIENS] (1925) is not only the oldest among the films, but also the only one explicitly devoted to the *biography of the Buddha* (with LITTLE BUDDHA as an exception). What is interesting is the narrative frame chosen: a group of German tourists hire a local guide who accompanies them on their pilgrimage through India and tells anecdotes about the life of the Buddha — in the film via flashbacks. At the centre of the film is not the truth about the Buddha but the *curiosity* of the foreign tourists. Not to the life of the Buddha but to *reincarnation* turns the American comedy GROUNDHOG DAY (1993). In the film a weatherman finds himself in the unpleasant position of waking up again and again on the same morning. First frustrated, then delighted because he can turn his predicament to profit, he finally learns that only love can break this cycle. Unfortunately, analysed from a Buddhist perspective, the story falls down on one essential point: Phil *knows* of his rebirths.

In Buddhism, however, it is not granted to us human beings to know, in our "new" life, what we did wrong in our "old" one. Paradoxically, it is an American *action film* — THE MATRIX (1999) – that takes up one of the most complex discussions within Buddhist philosophy (the Yogācāra school)[iii]. This is based on the idea that objective reality, as we perceive it, is ultimately a product of our mind — an illusion. In the film a hacker realises that the world is in truth a sophisticated computer simulation — the Matrix — created in the past by machines with artificial intelligence in order to deceive human beings about their true existence. For human beings have become batteries for the machines. A few "enlightened" ones have recognised the deception and founded an anti-illusion guerrilla in order to liberate humanity. Their leader describes the illusion: "You like everyone else are born into bondage. You are being kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. It is the prison of our mind." Since, as "enlightened" ones, they stand *above* the illusion, they are no longer bound by the laws of gravity but are *free* — strikingly visualised in the film through unprecedented fight scenes[iv]. They fight the Matrix. How strong the lure of the Matrix (the illusion) is, however, shows itself in the traitor, who delivers his guerrilla comrades to the machines in order to be able to return to the pleasant life of the illusion.

At the *interface* between Western depictions of Buddhism and the self-representation that will follow in the Asian films stands the Russian revolutionary film POTOMOK CHINGIS-KHANA [STORM OVER ASIA / STURM ÜBER ASIEN] (1928). One of the oldest "Buddhism films" ever, its critique of the Buddhist religion — which is not always in the service of the people — is at

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the same time a precise depiction of Buddhist everyday life in old Mongolia. Unique for a long time (and never undertaken in Western films), is its treatment of Buddhism in a *social context*.

This brings us briefly back to the beginnings of Buddhism. Its birth 2500 years ago coincides with a period of social and societal change in India. Out of a fragmented and semi-nomadic culture, an agrarian, increasingly settled society took shape with developing state structures, which found in Buddhism *their* religion. But the new religion also attracted poorer strata, since Buddhism did not base its philosophy on the existing caste system of Hinduism and was thus open to *all*. The possibility of enlightenment inherent in Buddhism was understood as a hope of being able to change one's immediate life circumstances (poverty) in the here and now. The social and societal heritage of Buddhism seems to be more consciously perceived in Asia than in the West. And it is precisely the medium of film that demonstrates its strength where the confrontation between religious tradition (here: Buddhism) and modern reality becomes unmistakable.

Film becomes part of the *construction of cultural identity* in countries undergoing a process of change. This is illuminating in the film ARGAMSHAA [THE ROPE / DAS SEIL] (1991) from Mongolia. In the style of Italian neo-realism, it describes the *identity crisis* of modern Mongolia through the figure of a young thief. Only contact with an older man reveals to the boy new values shaped by the Buddhist tradition. A connection between the new and the old takes place — but too late. During his final break-in — the boy betrays his gang — he is killed by his former friends. The Chinese film HERZKLOPFEN (1990) uses the microcosm of the family to point to the wider social whole, which is marked by the conflict between tradition (here: Buddhism) and modernity. Reflection on one's own cultural roots becomes an important part of the search for identity. The Taiwanese film YI YI [一一] (2000) also uses the family in order to point thereby to life — the great is mirrored in the small. And it is the little boy who raises central "Buddhist" questions, which he immediately tries to answer empirically himself: "Why are we only allowed to see half the truth?", he asks his bewildered father, and adds: "We can only see what is in front of us." From then on he begins to photograph people from behind, in order to show them what they (do not yet) know of themselves. A very different approach to the theme of cultural identity is taken by A wholly different approach is taken by RAN SALU [THE YELLOW ROBE / DIE GELBE ROBE] (1967) and DADAYAMA [THE HUNT / DIE JAGD] (1983) from Sri Lanka. The two women's turn towards Buddhism serves to overcome the *alienation* they experience in Sinhalese society and within the conventions that constrain them. While the woman in RAN SALU becomes a Buddhist nun, the protagonist of DADAYAMA dies at the

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hands of her tormentor, who runs her over with a car (a symbol of modernity?) several times. The optimistic image of 1967 gives way to the pessimistic image of 1983.

The discussion becomes more difficult in the case of the Japanese filmmaker Yasujirō Ozu, who vigorously resisted the (Western) attribution of being a Zen-Buddhist filmmaker: "They don't understand a thing — that's why they speak of Zen or something like that!"[v] This attribution annoyed him because it carried with it the claim that he was a traditionalist. Ozu rightly saw himself, however, as a *modern* filmmaker whose films take place within the field of tension of societal change. Most multilayered in BANSHUN [LATE SPRING / SPÄTER FRÜHLING] (1949). Full of references to Japanese-Buddhist iconography — tea ceremonies, Zen gardens, Buddhist temples and the landscape around Kyoto, the Buddhist "capital" of Japan — the film shows that the demands of modernity, expressed in social change, can be brought into harmony with cultural heritage.

That Buddhism does not have only a religious significance but also a *responsibility in everyday life*, is shown by PHAI DAENG [RED BAMBOO] (1979) from Thailand. A communist village activist and a Buddhist monk are constantly at loggerheads over the building of a village school. Only by joining forces do they bring the village the school they had hoped for — monks and villagers collect money and drive the corrupt gangsters off the building site. The funniest scene is the dialogue of the monk with his Buddha statue: the statue suddenly begins to speak, and the Buddha turns out to be incomparably more progressive than the monk. A Buddhism in everyday life is also shown by the controversial Chinese film DAO MA ZEI [THE HORSE THIEF / DER PFERDEDIEB] (1986). In intense images it depicts the harsh living conditions of Tibetan nomads. The film critically traces the possibilities, but also the limitations, of the Buddhist religion, which pervades and determines everyday life: on the one hand it gives cultural identity, but loses its meaning when one is excluded from the community. With PRATIDWANDI [THE ADVERSARY] (1970) Satyajit Ray creates a radical counterpart to the historical Buddha. His "adversary" (as the film's English subtitle has it) is an urban Indian. Ray shows what it feels like to be young, aware, but also indecisive in modernising and politicised Calcutta. Like Siddhartha of old, the young unemployed man too sets out on a quest, not only for work but also for the meaning of life and his place within it.

The most refreshing film that combines the theme of cultural identity with that of social change is the first Tibetan feature film ever: PHÖRPA [THE CUP / SPIEL DER GÖTTER] (1999). The director, himself an important Lama, staged the film in his own monastery. It is the story of football-mad novices, who do everything they can to be able to follow the World Cup on television. Their great role models are not the Dalai Lama or the Buddha but Ronaldo and Zidane. With an astonishing lightness and much humour the film describes Buddhist

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monastic everyday life in northern India and addresses the situation of the Tibetan exile community: the old abbot of the monastery packs his cases every evening so that he can return to Tibet at any time; the problems of newly arriving refugees from occupied Tibet; or the boredom during the monotonous prayers, which the novices shorten with mischievous pranks. In the monastery and in Buddhism things are more prosaic than one can imagine as a Westerner.

Other films detach themselves from everyday life and turn to philosophical themes. The *ideal of the Bodhisattva*, who selflessly renounces nirvana in order to be reborn into the world, is found in two Japanese classics. In AKAHIGE [RED BEARD / ROTBART] (1965) by Kurosawa, Akahige tries to do good, which leads others to do the same: a Zen-master figure who confronts others with situations from which they grow. More explicitly, with unmistakable visual references to Buddhism, works BIRUMA NO TATEGOTO [THE BURMESE HARP / DIE BIRMANISCHE HARFE] (1956). In war a Japanese soldier is saved by a Burmese monk. The Japanese steals the monk's robe in order to return to his unit. Disguised as a monk he sets out and sees terrible images of the raging war. On his way the power of the Buddhist robe overwhelms him. He becomes a "Bodhisattva" who will remain in Burma until the war is over. To reincarnation the Japanese film WANDAFURU RAIFU [AFTER LIFE / NACH DEM LEBEN] (1998) devotes itself.After their death a group of people spend their time determining the decisive moment of their lives. Each soul must choose a memory from its past life that it wishes to keep as "eternal identity". The chosen moment is to be filmed as a short film. The films of the others are supposed to help one make one's own decision. Important elements of the Buddhist conception of death and rebirth are contained here: the soul comes into an intermediate state, where the deceased is once again confronted with "life" (their fears, wishes and hopes). What is decisive for rebirth is not only the deeds of past lives (karma) but also how one reacts to this confrontation. The theme is treated more pessimistically by BUYANI NIGUUD [AN UNFORTUNATE FORTUNE / GLÜCKLOSES GLÜCK] (1991) from Mongolia. A boy becomes convinced that he is the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. The idea turns into an obsession and he loses his mind over it. His mother, unable to cope with the situation, wants to kill both herself and him; in front of a frozen lake they begin to pray.

To the play of *perception and illusion* two very different films turn. In the Japanese classic RASHOMON [羅生門] (1950) a murder is investigated; the contradictory testimonies of the witnesses do not bring any clarity. A "Buddhist" film insofar as it shows that our perception is selective. According to our position (and interest) we perceive what has happened differently. Only the stories combined yield something like the "correct" perception. Truth is not to be found at the surface, it lies deeper.

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In the kung fu classic KONGSHAN LINGYU [RAINING IN THE MOUNTAIN / Regen in den Bergen] (1979) by King Hu the contending parties lose themselves in the labyrinth of a Buddhist monastery. They are all chasing a Buddhist text (sutra) that promises omnipotence. But the search and the dispute over the coveted scroll prove to be an illusion, for a former convict — as an outsider freed from social conventions — has long since destroyed the text. The dying abbot installs him as his successor because he has shown wisdom. From the same director comes another kung fu classic: XIANÜ [A TOUCH OF ZEN / EIN HAUCH VON ZEN] (1971) is a ghost story, historical political thriller and metaphysical treatise in one. Above all the impressive closing scene is shaped by Buddhist signs. A Zen monk intervenes in the fight against evil. Through treachery he is killed; his blood flows in a golden stream from his body. The fiery red ball of the setting sun shines behind his head as he attains enlightenment and, with raised hand, can still show the good the way. The fight scenes in the film are unique; they bear witness to an elegance and *weightlessness* that symbolically refer to the state of "enlightenment". This image of lightness, beyond the laws of physics, recurs in many Chinese kung fu and Japanese samurai films. The hero — usually an outsider not bound by social conventions — attains an inner freedom that enables him to perform "superhuman" feats. Representing the entire genre, the Hong Kong classic SHAOLIN SANSHILIU FANG [THE 36TH CHAMBER OF SHAOLIN / DIE 36 KAMMERN DES SHAOLIN] (1978) and the samurai film YOJIMBO [YOJIMBO – DER LEIBWÄCHTER] (1961) by Kurosawa may be mentioned.

Buddhist folklore of a different sort is to be found in an old Chinese animated film: TIESHAN GONGZHU [PRINCESS IRON FAN / DIE PRINZESSIN MIT DEM EISENFÄCHER] (1941). The Monkey King sets out with a Buddhist monk and his disciples, the pig and the cleric, on a pilgrimage to India. They are in search of sacred scriptures (sutras). To this end they must cross the flaming mountains, whose fire can only be extinguished with the iron fan of the princess. A fierce battle with mythological beings ensues over said fan, which stands as a symbol of human beings' capacity to overcome the flames of passion and break the cycle of rebirth (samsara). Despite its Buddhist reference, the film is full of allusions to the Japanese occupation of China. In the title song a call to resistance is encoded.

The most multilayered films on the subject of Buddhism, however, come from South Korea. Their central theme is the *metaphor of the way*. The Buddha's path up to his enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya (India) 2,500 years ago was itself a way and tells of plunging into life, of his ascetic withdrawal from it, until in the middle way he could find his enlightenment. Only in exposing oneself does the possibility of attaining knowledge and experience lie. The South Korean films succeed in connecting this symbolic *inner* way in the *outer* world with the social problems of their own country. Not only the spiritual

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development of the protagonists is thematised but also the necessity of social change is depicted. This comes through most strongly in AJE AJE BARA AJE [COME, COME, COME UPWARD / KOMM, KOMM HÖHER] (1989). The film is set in 1980s Korea, which was marked by militant student and trade-union confrontations with the government. Two Buddhist nuns are shown on their "way": one in the monastery, taking the traditional, ascetic path, while the other exposes herself to the world. It is no coincidence that her deceased boyfriend was an underground activist of the student movement. At the end of the film the nun returns to the monastery — apparently having failed in her quest. But only the abbess recognises that she has found her way and admits her back into the monastery. AJE AJE BARA AJE is the feminist counterpart to the masterpiece MANDALA [만다라] (1981) by the same director. *Being on the way* is the starting point of the film. Convincing is its visual treatment of the subject. Again and again the streets, the paths that the monks take, in any weather, in sun, rain and snow. The two monks indeed meet during a bus journey. The more recent film HWAEOMGYEONG [PASSAGE TO BUDDHA / HWAOMKYUNG] (1993) also uses the metaphor of the way back: Sonje, abandoned by his mother, grows up with a thief. After his death he sets out in search of his mother. At the stations of his search he encounters different people, who embody different aspects of life: a monk seeking enlightenment; a truck driver chasing women; a doctor helping others; a pimp and a political activist. Gradually Sonje realises that the search for his mother was, ultimately, the search for the Buddha within himself. The best-known film from Korea, however, is DHARMAGA TONGJJOGEURO GAN KKADAGEUN? [WHY HAS BODHI-DHARMA LEFT FOR THE EAST? / WARUM BODHIDHARMA IN DEN ORIENT AUFBRACH] (1989), which is treated in detail elsewhere in the book. DHARMAGA TONGJJOGEURO GAN KKADAGEUN? is not a portrayal of a *hermetic* Buddhism, as is often claimed. The film is integrated into present-day South Korea, which finds expression in a short but significant scene. The student leaves the monastery in the forest in order to gather alms in the city. There he stands with his bowl amid people. The camera slowly tracks back, the monk becomes ever smaller, until his image is lost in the crowd.

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[i] *E. Said: Orientalism. Vintage Books 1979. (New York).*
P. Bishop: The Myth of Shangri-La. Tibet Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape.n Athlone 1989. (London).

[ii] *Gespräch mit M. Prott in: eurogay (6.1.2000).*

[iii] *Z. L. Ford in: The Journal of Religion and Film: Buddhism, Christianity and The Matrix. Vol.4, No.2, October 2000.*

[iv] The theme of the suspension of gravity as a visualisation of a higher state of consciousness also recurs in kung-fu and samurai films. See below.

[v] *D. Bordwell: Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema. bfi Publishing 1988. (Princeton).*

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