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According to sacred texts, the historical Buddha encouraged his disciples to make pilgrimages to sites associated with his life. As sacred images of the Buddha proliferated over time, it is said that his relics were divided among 84,000 South Asian sites of Buddhist worship, or stupas. This abundance of sacred sites in turn rendered pilgrimage and worship increasingly prominent influences on Asian culture and daily life.

Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art employs sacred objects, textiles, sculpture, manuscripts, and paintings to discuss the relationship between Buddhist pilgrimage and Asia's artistic production. Accompanying an exhibition of approximately 90 extraordinary objects, many of which have never before been displayed publicly, this book addresses the process of the sacred journey in its entirety, including discussion of pilgrimage motivation, ritual preparation, and worship at the sacred destination. Exceptional and visually stunning examples of painted mandalas, reliquaries, prayer wheels, and traveling shrines demonstrate that pilgrims and pilgrimage inspired centuries of artistic production and shaped the development of visual culture in Asia.

Through insightful essays by a team of scholars, Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art illuminates artwork's complex role in Buddhist culture, in which art serves as a form of memory and a bridge to the spiritual world as well as a functional tool with temporal purposes.