Chapter 2

What if There is No Elephant? Towards a Conception of an Un-sited Field[1]

Joanna Cook, James Laidlaw and Jonathan Mair

A group of Brahmins is engaged in quarrelsome dispute about the nature of reality. The Buddha tells them a story – the parable of the blind men and the elephant – as follows (*Udana* 6.4; see Masefield 1994, 128ff). A king orders all the men in his kingdom who have been blind from birth to be brought together and led before him, each having been partially introduced to an elephant, by each being given just one part of the elephant's body to handle. The king then asks each of these people what kind of thing is an elephant. Those who had felt its head replied that an elephant is like a pot. Those who had held its ear said it resembled a winnowing basket. Those who had held only the trunk likened it to a plough, and so on. Then, just like the Brahmins, the blind men began to quarrel. The parable is used in the Buddhist text to warn against trying to reach conclusions about the nature of reality on the basis only of the partial view of the unenlightened.

The original idea behind multi-sited research was that the partial perspective afforded by a single research site was insufficient for understanding local phenomena such as trade and ethnic identity, because these things are part of systems that operate on a much larger – specifically, on a global – scale. The contention was that a full understanding of those larger systems, and therefore of the conditions of possibility of any single local site, required one to combine the views gained from a sufficient number of different perspectives. This prescription rests on certain suppositions that are similar to those underpinning the parable of the elephant: that there is a hidden truth, available only to those who achieve a holistic, global view by transcending the particular; that this truth will explain and tie together all the partial perspectives of those who only know one point of view; and that what is seen from those different vantage points, though apparently diverse, is all really part of the same coherent, integrated phenomenon.

In his influential 1995 paper, George Marcus listed a number of appropriate topics for multi-sited field research, including the media, science, and the global political economy. Religion was absent from his list, perhaps because whereas the fields that were listed were aspects of the supposedly novel situation of

'late capitalism', the globalization of religion was nothing new. In any case, its absence from the multi-sited research agenda was conspicuous in view of the attention anthropologists of so-called 'world religions' had already devoted to conceptualizing the relation between on the one hand the various beliefs and practices of Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and so on, which they observed in the different local settings they had severally studied, and on the other the trans-local cultural systems (Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and so on) of which they conceived these to be part. They had proposed various kinds of relationship in order to address this problem, from that between great and little traditions through hierarchical encompassment, syncretism, dialogue, and so on.

In other words, when Marcus's paper was published, anthropologists of religion had long been wrestling with some of the same conceptual problems that multi-sited research was designed to address, specifically, the relationship between the global and the local and the consequences of this relationship for ethnographic research. In addressing these problems multi-sited research replicated the implicit holistic assumption that anthropologists of religion were beginning to throw off, namely, that accounting for local ethnographic phenomena must involve locating them within an encompassing trans-local 'system' located theoretically at a 'higher' level.

But what if there is no elephant? There are powerful reasons, as we shall outline below, not to take for granted the existence of any such higher level, and to reject the idea that accounting for or explaining specific 'local' practices should consist in locating them within a wider system. These arguments are intended as a challenge not so much to the practice of multi-sited research – which in some form or another is as old as anthropology itself – as to the way the advantages and objectives of multi-sited research have been conceived and canvassed in the last few decades. If our arguments are accepted, then the now conventional rationale for multi-sited research – that it makes possible the piecing together of the 'wider systems' that account for local phenomena – also falls away. If this is so then what, if anything, does multi-sited research offer? If, in particular, we abandon some of the assumptions that have underlain much avowedly multi-sited research about the relationship of ethnographic research to space, how do we establish new, less problematic relations? This chapter offers one possible answer to these questions. We propose that by conceptualizing the ethnographic field in a way that detaches it from the concepts of space and place, and thus making available the concept of an un-sited field, we can rescue the possibilities of comparison across theoretically relevant boundaries in space, the possibilities that multi-sited methods have so productively opened up.

An Obviously Multi-Sited Project?

We have developed these arguments in the course of planning an ongoing collaborative project into the new forms of Buddhism that are being adopted across

Asia. Our project is conceived as an exercise in the anthropology of ethics. We are interested in practices of self-cultivation and self-transformation – what Foucault referred to as techniques or technologies of the self (1988; 2000; 2005). These are practices through which people seek to transform themselves and which form part of historically located, more or less institutionalized ethical projects. Techniques described and analysed by Foucault include various forms of confession and self-examination, as well as dietary and other bodily regimes. Through such practices, individuals make themselves objects of their own considered reflection. This requires a developed idea of exactly what the self that must be transformed is: body, soul, mind, thoughts, conduct, character, some combination of these, or something else. It also requires a developed idea of the state of perfection towards which the self-cultivation is working (Foucault 2000, 177). These techniques or practices of self-cultivation are thus means available in particular historical circumstances and particular intellectual and cultural traditions, by which, 'the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion' (2000, 291).

Foucault's writings, of course, are concerned almost exclusively with eras and locations which he explicitly regarded as part of the genealogy of the modern Western subject, even if latterly, in his studies of the Hellenistic period (1987; 2005), this included roads not taken and possibilities that have disappeared from view in the course of that history. But practices of self-cultivation are also prominent in other traditions; in none more so than in Buddhism. The ethics of self-cultivation – especially practices of study, meditation, and ascetic discipline – have been central to all main schools of Buddhism. The last century has seen the invention and development of new forms of meditation and mindfulness, their adoption by mass followings of women and lay men as well as male monastics, and their incorporation into avowedly 'modern' forms of life as techniques of psychological therapy and even 'life-style'. There has also been an extensive traffic in such techniques and their adaptation across sectarian and national boundaries, and this has been accompanied by innovations in forms of religious organization and authority as well as new forms of organized Buddhist participation in public civil and social life. New Buddhist organizations have appeared, built on teaching and propagating their own distinctive practices and regimes of self-cultivation. There are some excellent studies of several of these organizations (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Queen and King 1996; Chandler 2004; Learman 2005; Levine and Gellner 2005) and the fact that they influence and interact with each other has been noted. However, neither the internationalization itself, nor the fact that this takes place crucially through traffic in sometimes-innovative techniques of self-cultivation, has been the subject of focused research.

Our project will involve fieldwork on Buddhist ethics of self-cultivation in at least three different Asian states, in each of which at least one of us has conducted fieldwork previously. Our interest is in how techniques of self-cultivation, as we find them embodied, taught, and promoted, relate to specific conceptions of the person and so to philosophical and psychological thought, and also to forms of associational and civic life. Our intention is to develop an ethnographic

description of the teaching and practice of Buddhist self-cultivation. What kinds of pedagogical relationships are involved? How are the elements of the self that compose them, and the alterations in states of mind or character at which they aim represented, both discursively and cognitively? How are success and failure identified, understood, and explained? What, if there are any, are the concepts that might roughly correspond to concepts of responsibility, agency, autonomy, duty, freedom, and enlightenment? How, that is to say, are the substance on which ethical work is done, and the telos towards which subjects direct their efforts, conceived? How do participants in self-cultivation evaluate themselves and others? How do they seek to identify, register, and perform the desired effects of self-cultivation?

A major concern of the research will be to explore the ways in which sectarian and national boundaries are established, observed, evaded, and crossed. We know already of many examples of Buddhists in one country consciously adopting and adapting, or seeking to influence and change techniques of self-cultivation practised by people in other places (see examples in Learman 2005); and in both kinds of cases pursuing these ambitions is seen as part of what it is to make oneself a good Buddhist. So, direct concern with what others do as Buddhists 'elsewhere' appears from the outset to be an intrinsic part of the ethnographic reality.

A topic then for which multi-sited research seems ideally suited? It is indeed for this reason that we first conceived of our project as a collaborative one, and first thought to work in several locations. But from the outset too we have doubted that it would make sense to regard our proposed fieldwork locations – or indeed any set of locations we might propose – as parts which we could aim to piece together in order to arrive at an adequate description of some greater whole, the understanding of which would in turn contextualize and explain the several instances we observe. There is no serious room to doubt that what is happening in these different sites profoundly and intricately influences and affects the others, and that some similar processes are at work in different sites. But this does not mean there is one whole of which they are all parts. While something like a multi-sited approach seems called for, we have had to rethink the rationale and the proposed objectives of multi-sited research.

World Religions, Global Systems, and Multi-Sited Research

Anthropologists and other students of religion often conceive of so-called world religions as existing trans-locally, on national, continental, or global scales, and as persisting through time. They notice that religious adherents themselves imagine spiritual or confessional kinship or community with unknown millions of others, past, present, and future. They notice that these communities are often imagined in terms of large and systematically conceived entities – a body for example – and they often more or less directly assimilate such imagery to their own conception of trans-local structure or system. Questions asked by religious authorities and reformers of whether this or that community or individual, this or that institution,

belief, or practice, is an authentic or legitimate part of the religion likewise closely resemble analysts' questions of whether or in what sense particular beliefs of practices are 'really' Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, or whatever.

Such imaginings of trans-local systems – both adherents' and analysts' – have been enabled by the movement of ideas, practices, people, and objects: the transmission of texts along trade routes and the learning and use of them in pedagogic practice and in rites, the activities of missionaries (see Hovland this volume), the travels of pilgrims, the search for and trade in relics, and so on. Such movements have of course characterised Buddhism for a very long time. As we have already remarked, these are all exactly the kinds of movements that Marcus recommended multi-sited researchers should follow, in their studies of globalizing scientific research, labour markets, media empires, and so on, and it is therefore at first sight surprising that Marcus in his 1995 programmatic article did not consider the merits of this body of literature in proposing his method for the ethnographical investigation of globalization.

But if we now pursue the parallel between recent anthropology of globalization and more long-standing attempts to conceptualize 'world religions' anthropologically, some interesting points emerge, because in recent years the assumption that guided much of this latter literature – that what Buddhists, for instance, in any particular local context believe and do could be made sense of *as Buddhist* only insofar as it could be seen as being derived from a pre-existing and underlying system – has been subject to radical challenge, in the form of historical contextualization.[2]

As scholars of religion and in particular historians of religious studies have emphasized, the idea of plural religions in general, and 'world religions' in particular, is a relatively recent historical product, as is the consciousness among so many of the adherents of the various 'world religions' of their own religion as one of a range of formally equivalent, and therefore rival, universal systems. Masuzawa (2005, 200), who persuasively documents these developments, puts the matter as follows.

> 'World religions' as a category and as a conceptual framework initially developed in the European academy, which quickly became an effective means of differentiating, variegating, consolidating, and totalizing a large portion of the social, cultural, and political practices observable among the inhabitants of regions elsewhere in the world.

This is not to say that there were not ideas and images of trans-local religious community in earlier times, nor that the world-religions discourse is present even

---

2 Important contributions to this contextualization, from several disciplines, on which we draw freely here, have included Ruel (1982), Southwold (1983), Asad (1993), Harrison (1990), James (1995), Lash (1996), Saler (2000), Asad (2003), Masuzawa (2005), and important works in the recent anthropology of Christianity, notably Engelke and Tomlinson (2006), Cannell (2007), and Keane (2007).

now in all religious activity, nor that its premises are the same in all cases. But just as trans-local political communities have been imagined in modern times in distinctive ways, using distinctive media, and this has given us the distinctively modern nation-state (Anderson 1983), so the imaginary of a finite number of world religions, each a formally equivalent cultural system, is a product of a specific history. In the centuries of European and therefore Christian world hegemony, a particular model of 'world religions' has spread, under whose influence adherents of previously loosely affiliated local cults have sought or have been encouraged or compelled to conform to the prescriptions of some 'great tradition'. At the same time, 'great traditions' themselves have been modified to fit the requirements of the template provided by the world religion model. Diverse religious traditions have seen selection and codification of canonical texts, attempts at doctrinal homogenization and reform, new forms of organization and lay participation and empowerment, and so on.[3]

Buddhism was the first extra-European 'religion' to be conceived and consolidated on this model, derived from post-Reformation Christianity. It was in the nineteenth century that Buddhism came to be recognized as a distinct religion by educated Europeans. Various strands of religious practice in diverse regions of South, Southeast, East, and Central Asia, were recognized as being part of the same tradition. In the scholastic and monastic traditions, lineage was of paramount importance, and such diverse and scattered institutions had not previously been thought of as constituting one religion in this sense, by either European observers or native practitioners. 'In early modern times, then, there was no "Buddhism" to consolidate disparate observations gathered in and about Asia' (Masuzawa 2005, 122). The identification of Buddhism as a world religion began with a recognition of the links and genealogical relations among assorted and seemingly separate occurrences of cultural practice in a range of countries. European scholarship embarked on a massive collective exercise which it conceived as the reconstruction of a shattered whole.

> With the proper critical skills, those highly trained, monumentally devoted scholars would be in the best position, if not to say an exclusive position, to grasp Buddhism's essential character ... One might say that Buddhism as such came to life, perhaps for the very first time, in a European philological workshop (Masuzawa 2005, 126; see also Almond 1988 and Lopez 1995).

The specifically Indian origin of Buddhism was understood as having been transcended through Buddha's rejection of Brahmin priesthood and Vedic authority. This break with the prevailing society and order meant that Buddhism was thought to have risen above any national belonging that it might have had at its inception.

---

3 A classic and exemplary study for Theravada Buddhism is Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988).

Its doctrines, claims, and prescriptions had a potentially universal validity. Thus, Buddhism was rediscovered as a non-national world religion.

While this conception of world religions, and of Buddhism as a world religion, may have begun as an exercise in intellectual history and European scholarship, it soon became much more than this. From the early twentieth century especially it became a matter of social and institutional history (Masuzawa 2005, 308). The discourse was appropriated and reacted to by those who now identified themselves as Buddhists in a new way, now understanding this to mean that they were followers of one world religion among several. Reform and missionary movements arose to purify popular practice in the light of what was now understood to be its underlying essence, and to propagate and defend it against what were now understood as other, formally equivalent, rival systems.

For such self-images to have become influential in this way is historically consequential. People acting as if this were somehow essentially and necessarily how things are do try to impose uniformity, interpret differences as variations on a theme, prohibit divergence or innovation, or create consensus, and their attempts have variously significant effects. But this does not mean that the self-image is any more than partially self-fulfilling. People believing that behind the multifarious things Buddhists, Christians, or Muslims think and do there is in all cases and necessarily an original and authentic coherent system, does not in itself make this so. It is importantly possible that no such single system exists, and that there is nothing which in this sense makes it true that particular beliefs or practices are or are not 'really' Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, or whatever.[4]

Incontrovertibly, people who regard themselves as Buddhists in many parts of the world share the same or similar ideas, representations, and practices. The kinds of intensification and acceleration of cultural flow and exchange that played such a part in motivating the formulation of multi-sited research on ideas of globalization are also conspicuously evident here (although any attempt at quantification of that intensification would require conceptual clarification to which this paper can only make an initial contribution). For example, distinctive Chinese organizational forms of Buddhism, originating in Taiwan, offer examples of cross-cultural movements that make use of and are shaped by globalization. The transcendence of traditional boundaries, such as those of nation states and sectarian distinctions, has been occurring within Asia and extending beyond it. Learman lists some obvious links:

> The extension of Chinese Mahayana *bhikkhuni* [female renouncer] ordination to Theravada nuns, the influence of Sri Lankan Theravada on Buddhism in Nepal and Vietnam, and the financial support offered by Japanese Buddhists to Sri Lanka and elsewhere (Learman 2005, 15, our parenthesis).

---

4 For an important discussion of the distortions introduced into the anthropological study of Buddhism by concerns and questions of this form, see Gellner (1990).

In addition, organizations have appeared in many Asian countries promoting social welfare, egalitarianism, and/or environmentalism, all clearly influenced by each other as well as Western exemplars, and all invoking an interpretation of the true, underlying, essential teachings of Buddhism as simultaneously scientific and politically engaged (see for example Queen and King 1996), an interpretation of the distinctiveness of Buddhism among world religions that derives directly from the mission encounter and the modernist reformers who were the first self-declared Buddhists to articulate the idea of Buddhism as a world religion.

What this history means for us, as researchers of Buddhist ethics, is that we must be careful not to attribute explanatory power to an authentic, homogenous Buddhism. Insofar as Buddhism is or is becoming systematic, its always-incomplete systematicity is an effect whose production must be explained, not a cause that explains the diverse beliefs and practices in different places or such similarities as there are between them. The widespread assumption by adherents of self-consciously world religions that there *must be* a coherent whole of which they are part is itself a religious commitment, and one that is framed in distinctively modern terms.

A pair of assumptions strictly parallel to those in world-religions discourse – namely, that local phenomena are part of global systems, and that the explanation of local features lies in the existence of that global system – are evident in the classic formulations of multi-sited research. As Candea (2007) has argued, much multi-sited research hides an implicit holism; it suggests that by studying something in many places one can somehow encompass a totality that would escape us if the study were limited to a single place, and that it is this systematicity, located at a global scale, that explains the particularities of local phenomena. The classic holist commitments – the notion that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and that it precedes them and explains them – are evident in much of this literature, in suggestions that the existence of a big 'system' out there (for example the world-system, a diaspora, or a trans-national network), beyond the site, renders the perspective afforded in a given site only partial (and therefore 'not good enough'). As Marcus and Fischer write:

> Pushed by *the holism goal of ethnography* beyond the conventional community setting of research, these ideal experiments would try to devise texts that combine ethnography and other analytic techniques *to grasp whole systems*, usually represented in impersonal terms, and the quality of lives caught up in them (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 91, emphasis added).

In Marcus's 1995 paper, for example, it is taken for granted that the world's political economy is structured as a single 'global system'. The methodological challenge for anthropology is conceived to be that of providing a more detailed and nuanced description of 'it'. And it is further assumed that the general outlines of that system, as a whole and as seen, so to speak, theoretically 'from above', are already available to us in the form of the neo-Marxist conception of 'late

capitalism'.[5] The anthropologist's task is to fill in the gaps by describing local instantiations of the various parts of the system, and in that way to describe the system 'from the bottom up'.

It is presupposed that the research will reveal 'the system' and that discovering this larger, hidden, 'social' reality is the purpose for the research. Thus, while fieldwork sites emerge in the course of research, as they are discovered (at least to some extent) in the following by the researcher of multiple flows of persons, objects, and so on between locations, from another perspective they are conceived as being always-already determined by the nature of the larger system, even if, these being recent and 'revolutionary' global forces, they are also represented as always having-just-arrived. Thus particular sites, and the connections between them, are explained just to the extent that their place in the larger system is discovered. In his contribution to the present volume, Marcus remarks that multi-sited research, conceived in this way, depends upon the idea of

> a map that is already understood and relied on by being expressed in some scholarly or academic literature (for example, economic or sociological models of migration, Marxist conceptions of the flow of global capital, or the proliferation of neo-liberal markets) (this volume, 187).

In 1995 Marcus cited with partial approval the Copper Belt studies carried out by anthropologists of the Manchester School in the 1960s, but criticized them for lacking a conception of an overarching and encompassing system in which their various specific empirical studies might be contextualized. Such contextualization would provide a dimension of explanation that Marcus found lacking in those studies: the particular circumstances in individual locations would be explained by identifying their place in the system.

This idea of social explanation as identifying unseen forces exerted by a distinctive kind of unseen entity – a social structure, social order, social relations, the social realm, and so on – is of course a widespread one. Bruno Latour (2005), Marilyn Strathern (1992; 2004), and others (for example Barth 1992; 1993) have pointed to the way the social sciences have fallen more or less routinely into the postulation of such special kinds of entities or processes, as if for phenomena to be 'social' was for them to be composed of or caused by a special kind of entity, material, or substance – as if 'social' were equivalent to words such as 'wooden', 'mental', or 'linguistic'. Since there are no such special 'social' things or materials – because for phenomena to be 'social' is instead just for them to be intrinsically interactive, to result from processes of assemblage or arrangement of entities, of whatever kind – the postulation of special entities such as 'social structures' and

---

5 We note in passing the distinctly millennial quasi-religious character of this concept. For those who first coined the expression, the capitalism in question was 'late' because its end was seriously expected to be nigh. The continued use of the term now must either be essentially frivolous or testimony to a very interestingly persistent faith.

so on is at the very best a short cut for the more laborious process of tracing and describing those processes of assembly and disassembly, arrangement and rearrangement. At worst, it is to mistake *explanandum* for explanation. To say that a phenomenon is social is really to pose a set of questions – what kinds of processes of assemblage, interrelation, and so on, are involved? – but in these conventional formulations it appears as if to say something is social is to invoke a force or entity that can explain something else.

So we regard as persuasive Latour's insistence that when social scientists invoke the 'social' in this sense, and postulate 'social' entities or processes, the impression that what they are doing is explanatory is essentially illusory. Latour argues that the conjuring up of such entities, alleged to exist on a higher plane or sphere and therefore on an intrinsically greater scale, appears to be explanatory because it appears to lend the picture the social scientist paints an impression of 'depth'. He argues for the virtues, instead, of eschewing this optical illusion and instead making our observations 'flat'.

> It's as if the maps handed down to us by the tradition had been crumpled into a useless bundle and we have to retrieve them from the waste basket. Through a series of careful restorations, we have to flatten them out on the table with the back of our hand until they become legible and usable again. Although this ironing out may seem counterintuitive, it is the only way to measure the real distance every social connection has to overcome to generate some sort of tracing (Latour 2005, 172).

Only thus, Latour maintains, can we observe the ways in which practices of switching scale to achieve depth and invoking entities located on imagined scales are among the activities of the people we study; if we are to understand, that is, how the effect of there being different dimensions is generated and maintained. Imagining 'Buddhism' on a trans-local and trans-historical scale is something Buddhists themselves do – in different media and with different contents and connotations – and if we are to describe and understand how they do this, we cannot take the short cut of appearing to explain their practices by ourselves employing the very same device.

So on this view, if the Manchester School's Copper Belt studies lacked a concept of overarching structure, and therefore lacked an overarching 'social explanation', this makes them 'flat' descriptions in Latour's terms. This we regard as a virtue, and one to which we aspire.

Arbitrary Locations and Un-sited Fields

So what were expected to be the most significant profits from multi-sited research – global structures that will explain local phenomena – turn out to be false coin. And there are no intrinsic reasons why a wide-ranging, multi-sited study should be richer in information than a study that is limited to a traditional, small site. We

do not change the quantity or detail of the data we encounter merely by changing scale; we simply encounter different details (Strathern 1995; 2004). If these hoped-for benefits are not, as has been thought, guaranteed by the use of multi-sited research, then the fact that pursuing research questions over great distances and across national and linguistic boundaries incurs significant extrinsic costs might prompt anthropologists to conclude that there is no good reason to do multi-sited research at all.[6] They might retreat to the traditional bounded field site, retaining from the recent multi-sited adventure only the knowledge that the bounds of the site are, as Candea argues, arbitrary. But this was not Candea's intention in his defence of the bounded field site (2007, 180), and nor is it our intention here. Candea convincingly shows that acknowledging and embracing an arbitrarily delimited fieldsite allows the fieldworker to preserve an important insight from the multi-sited programme – that the world is seamlessly interconnected – without falling into the trap of re-naturalizing a different set of 'larger' but equally bounded 'cultural forms', and trying to discover their 'contours' by following them around 'on the ground'.

Instead, argues Candea, anthropologists need to choose the boundaries of their field sites, and, recognizing this, to take responsibility for the analytical (and political/ethical) decisions this involves (2007, 172). In 2007, Candea contrasted this recognition of the necessity of bounding as anthropological practice with the desire he finds expressed in much multi-sited research to find ready-made entities existing out there and waiting to be discovered. He has since acknowledged (forthcoming, and this volume) that this formulation fails to distinguish clearly enough between the methodological principle ('assume no wholes') and an *a priori* account of the world itself ('there are no wholes'). We might also express this as a distinction between aiming at 'flat description', so that the processes through which contours are created and maintained might be captured analytically, and assuming the world actually is flat, or that all networks are equally and homogeneously dense. It is important to make these distinctions precisely because the former

---

6 All else being equal, a researcher who stays put ought to have more time, money and energy to expend on face-to-face research. Weißköppel's account of fieldwork spanning several different sites describes the consequences that spending a relatively short period of time in each site had for her ability to form trusting relationships with informants (this volume). Marcus addresses similar problems in his chapter (this volume). Bureaucratic difficulties also multiply as field sites cross national and other boundaries. Several visas may have to be sought. The space encompassed by the mobile ethnographer may not conform to the regional, national, or cultural interests of any single funding body, as Karen Leonard discovered when conducting her impressive eight-country study of Hyderabadi diaspora communities (2007, and this volume). The extra work required to attract funding from different organizations for each phase of the project will further undermine the efficiency of the anthropologist in gathering information, not to mention the problem of securing funding for what will almost certainly be a more expensive project. Where studies cross the boundaries of traditional 'culture areas', they are also likely to require more training, for example in order to learn additional languages.

– the methodological asceticism of abjuring assumed entities – is a precondition for bringing ethnographically into view the always-incomplete, contested, and overlapping practices by which boundaries are maintained and networks cut or blocked.

Thus we endorse Candea's critique of what he calls the 'multi-sited imaginary'. We also maintain that notwithstanding those arguments there can still be good reasons for undertaking the kind of spatially extended study proposed by the multi-sited research programme, even if they are not the reasons originally envisaged. Specifically, we suggest that the boundary of a field of study can be drawn to incorporate – by design – contrasts and comparisons that are germane to the theoretical questions that drive the research. So our field, like Candea's village, remains arbitrary with respect to the untidy, multi-vocal and endless networks of people, things and ideas 'on the ground', but is non-arbitrary with respect to the theoretical concerns motivating the research. Actively reflecting on the boundaries of a field can enable ethnographers to get our theoretically relevant comparisons where we want them: within a single ethnography rather than only between ethnographies. Thus we can overcome the disjunction inherent in the original multi-sited programme, with theory existing at the level of the postulated system, and each ethnographic site being theoretically significant not in itself but only insofar as it is imagined to be part of that imagined whole.

However local any ethnographic study appears to be, it must in fact proceed along just these theoretically motivated lines. The ethnographer chooses a base, has certain research questions in mind, finds points in networks of people and places whose comparison promises to shed light on those questions, and then visits some of those points (people, events, and so on) in a sustained and concerted way, in the process, of course, revising the questions with which he or she began. It is only by means of a persistent (if productive) fiction that this activity could be construed as an attempt at a complete description of a bounded site. The enduring contribution of the original multi-sited research critique was to expose the conceit of holism that sustained that fiction (cf. Thornton 1988).

We should recall, however, that anthropologists never had been restricted, in practice, to small-scale, bounded field sites (from Malinowski on the *kula* ring onwards). It was always a rhetorical exaggeration to claim otherwise, a critique that like so many others reproduces the simplification it sets out to criticise (Strathern 2004, 20; cf. also Falzon 2005, 10).

What was so productive in the original multi-sited research programme was the opportunity to liberate ourselves not so much from a bounded site, as from the idea that the field of ethnographic research could ever be coterminous with, or the same thing as, a geographically bounded location or area. Abandoning such an idea of a necessarily sited field makes it possible to admit that it never was possible to achieve a complete description of any area or group of people; but in exchange for acknowledging that fields are always constructed out of a too-rich reality, we would gain the freedom to determine their boundaries explicitly, in relation to our research questions. This is a difficult idea and it will help at this stage to specify

precisely what we mean by 'field'. We propose a three-fold distinction of terms that are apt to be conflated: *space*, *place* and *field*.[7]

Space, Place, and Field

The distinction between space and place has been elaborated since the 1970s in human geography, which has generally understood place as meaningful space.[8] An area of 15 square miles on the surface of the earth is a space; a named city that occupies that space, with its history and political struggles, is a place. Places are experienced, subjective, and cultural, whereas space is abstract and impersonal. Places have a complicated relationship to locations in space; their location may be over- or under-determined, or they may have no fixed location at all, as in the case of a ship at sea, which, though it is always on the move, is no less a place for its crew (Cresswell 2004, 22 – as Cresswell explains, this example originates in the work of Susanne Langer).

If anthropology were to follow the lead of human geography in making this distinction, as we suggest, its topology would include villages, 'culture areas', 'cultural formations', territories, and states.[9] Just as nations are one relatively distinctive set of the larger class of imagined communities, all communities being imagined, and what makes the difference between nations and other forms of imagined community is *how* they are imagined (Anderson 1983), so places are *imagined* spaces and they likewise come in myriad forms. In the nation, language, territory, ethnicity, culture, and polity are imagined to coexist within common and clear boundaries that match the boundaries of the national territory. In places in general, a variety of different phenomena that are said to characterise a place are imagined to share a boundary. Like imagined communities, imagined spaces could

---

7 A related distinction between *field* and *site* has been made by Weißköppel, who formulated it as a response to the difficulty of translating the English term 'field site' into German (2005).

8 This of course is a simplification of an ongoing discussion with points of controversy. Key theorists who have written about the distinction between space and place, or about related distinctions include Tuan (1974; 1977), Relph (1976), Lefebvre (1991), and Massey (2005). A useful summary of the genealogy of the distinction is given in Cresswell (2004).

9 The correspondence of these places to spaces depends on the nature of the place and how effectively and authoritatively its borders are policed. The village of Crucetta as Candea (2007) describes it as a good example of widely recognized place that does not correspond to a clearly defined space and to think of it as an arbitrary location is to endeavour to treat it not as a place (the village, a face-to-face community) but as a space (an arbitrary window onto complexity). Great effort is expended in ensuring that the borders of nation states are well known and universally observed, so that the state as a place might correspond uncontroversially to the space circumscribed by that state's borders. Nonetheless, the fact that many borders and territories are contested reminds us that in no case is consensus automatic.

be imagined in other ways and they require work to make them consensual, work that is never conclusive.

Just as a ship can be a place while it is on the move, some anthropological entities, for example Appadurai's 'scapes' (1996), do not have a simple relation to spaces. Diasporas for example are mobile but are said to have roots in the homeland; the culture of capitalism might be thought of as fundamentally universalist and international but simultaneously to retain the traces, in its nature and distribution, of its origins in northern Europe. In fact, if we take the insights of the first generation of multi-sited research theorists seriously, then we should also include under the rubric 'place' any community for which borders are imagined, regardless of whether those borders are spatial, including doctrinal and vocational communities. Even groups such as men, women, the young and the old, and communities of all sorts would qualify as places in our terms insofar as those groups are specifically imagined as sharing certain characteristics that they do not share with members of other groups, that is, insofar as they are found inside a boundary, whether or not that boundary is a spatial one.

We should emphasise that this is not an attempt to impose a new and counter-intuitive use of the English word 'place'. We are simply taking the technical use of the term developed by geographers to its logical conclusion. Though communities may often be imagined through space or spatial metaphors, these may include at the logical extremes both the image of being global or universal and that of being virtual or in cyber-space, both these extremes being still certain specific relations to space.

What we wish to distinguish from both *space* and *place*, as the *field*, is the direct object of the ethnographer's experience. It is the sum total of all the points in the network (in the broad sense – including people, spaces, events, ideas, and so on) examined by the anthropologist in the course of research. Though it seems initially to be a fine one, it is important to take the distinction between the ethnographer's field on the one hand, and the spaces and places it relates to on the other, into account. Just as places are clusters of elements imagined as spaces, so the ethnographer's field is a set of points that may be imagined as a space – as a site.

The original proposals for multi-sited ethnography were formulated in explicit contrast to a representation (simplified and rhetorical, to be sure) of 'traditional' anthropological fieldwork. In order to explain our own proposal, and how it differs from both that model of multi-sited research and the classical single-sited methodology those authors criticised, we shall begin by recapitulating and extending that auto-genealogy, using our own three-fold distinction between space, place, and field.

According to the traditional anthropological view, or so at least the multi-sited critique asserted, space, place and field could be studied simultaneously: the anthropologist studied a geographical area (space) which, as a territory, was coextensive with a place (the culture, or village, or tribe, or caste, or cult, or class structure, or nation). By going there to study the social structure and/or culture of a place/space, the traditional ethnographer claimed it for science and made the space into a field (see Figure 2.1).
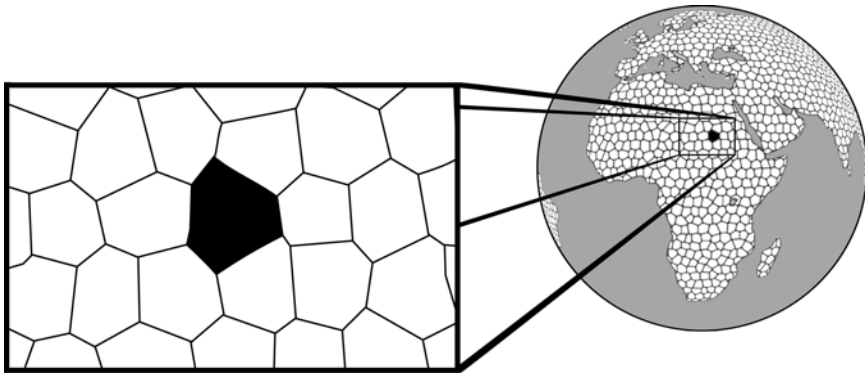
Figure 2.1   'Traditional' ethnography, as represented by proponents of the 'multi-sited' model

According to this critique, the 'traditional' complex saw the world as a mosaic of cultures. Cultural units have natural spatial boundaries on various scales (village, tribe, culture area and so on). The role of the researcher is to study all aspects of a culture within those boundaries; in the unitary fieldsite (represented by the shaded area) the boundaries of the field, the place and the space all coincide.

The critique pointed out that this model rested on two questionable assumptions: first, that places, cultural formations, and so on, have clear boundaries and correspond to clearly bounded tracts of space; and, second, that there is a high degree of homogeneity within places and a high degree of heterogeneity between places such that observation made inside the borders of a place can be said to stand for that place in general and can serve as terms in comparison with other places. The imperative for multi-sited research was established by claiming that while adequate in the past, these assumptions no longer held in a radically new era, as 'forces' of post-modernity, globalization, and transnationality, somewhat breathlessly being discovered in quick succession by anthropologists at the time,[10] rendered the study of a village or town, a people, a culture, and such, in the supposedly Malinowskian tradition, increasingly misleading (see the lucid discussion in Falzon 2005, 10–11).

What held space, place and field together in the traditional scheme was the concept of cultures (in the plural). Consequently, the loss of confidence in the idea of cultures in the 1980s was bound to cause a re-evaluation of the relation between these three terms, and through the 1990s we saw a good deal of soul searching concerning the implications of globalization for the conditions and possibilities of anthropological knowledge (for example Abu-Lughod 1991; Gupta and Ferguson

---

10 Synoptic statements that were especially influential on and among anthropologists included Harvey (1989), Jameson (1991), Appadurai (1996), Hannerz (1996), Sassen (1998), and Ong (1999). Salutary sceptical notes were sounded, among others, by Strathern (1995), Mintz (1998), Tsing (2000), and Englund and Leach (2000).
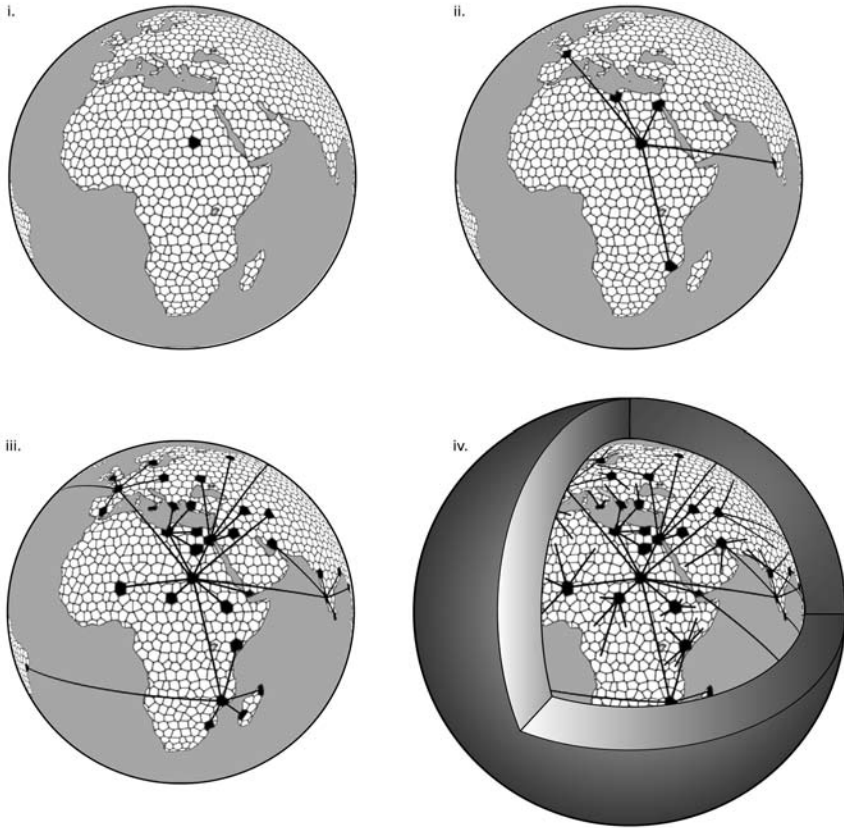
Figure 2.2   Space, place and field in the multi-sited research imaginary

Local spaces are subject to increasing interaction due to the action of universal global forces. 'Cultural formations', represented by the black lines in the diagram, burst out of the traditional fieldsite (i) and spread around the globe. (ii–iii). Dark sectors through which the cultural formations pass represent fieldsites to be aggregated to form the multi-sited field. As research proceeds, through following persons, objects and so on, more sites are added, and the 'cultural formation' that is reconstructed tends to become coterminous with global space, which encompasses all local spaces and in which global forces are at work (iv).

1992; Fardon 1995; Miller 1995; Strathern 1995; Moore 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; 1997b). The new position proposed by the original multi-sited research theorists – and this was how they sought to differentiate their methodology from what had gone before – was that traditional village field sites do not correspond to 'cultural formations', and that they do this ever less as the 'forces of globalization'

distribute formerly more-or-less emplaced networks further and further into 'scapes' and diasporas.[11]

Let us put the arguments of the pioneers of the multi-sited methodology in the terms of our three-fold distinction (see Figure 2.2). First, they recognized two kinds of space: plural, bounded local spaces; and a unitary, 'seamless' global space. The former were said to be in constant, intense, and increasing interaction. In the latter, global forces (globalization, capitalism, trans-nationalism, and so on, soon to be replaced by 'neo-liberalism') were said to be 'at work'.

In contradistinction to what they saw as the traditional view, multi-sited theorists argued that cultural formations, places in our broad sense, spill out of bounded local spaces. They retained, unspoken, the assumption implicit in the 'traditional' view, as they themselves represented it, that in order to be valid the ethnographic field must correspond to a *real* cultural formation, or in our terms here, a place. So, since places now spill out from spaces, the ethnographer ought to follow carriers from local space to local space and the boundaries of the ethnographer's *field* ought to come through assiduous following of connections to correspond to the sum of all the connected spaces – in this sense it would be a *multi-sited* field. The territory of the cultural formation will be some subset of all local spaces; the field should correspond to that area as closely as possible. So in order to study a diaspora, for instance, the field should aspire to contain all the spaces to which the diaspora has spread; in order to study a market the field ought to encompass all the *loci* of the commodity's production, trade, and consumption, and so on.

Since the explanatory entities – globalization, global capitalism, and so on – whose effects were credited with dissolving 'traditional' places and thus with the general circumstances that necessitated multi-sited research, were located in unitary global space (see Figure 2.2), there was an unintended homogenization built into the method. Although authors talked of following connections in order to establish the real shape of transnational multi-sited cultural phenomena (formations, scapes, and so on), they all tended ultimately to be seamlessly global in size and shape. [12]

One of the important consequences for the distinctions we have been proposing is that whereas spaces (or sites) and places (or cultural formations) are or may be imagined as areas in two or more dimensions, the field is not an area, but a collection of zero-dimensional points, or, perhaps better, of one-dimensional lines of comparison that connect such points (see Figure 2.2).

---

11 Subsequently the idea of globalization itself was criticised (for example Tsing 2000) for preserving, in the notion of hybridity, the stubborn idea of bounded, whole cultures with borders; now permeated, but borders nonetheless.

12 Important refinements to the multi-sited research methodology include the recognition, first, that the global is also local, and, second, of the importance of place-making and scale-making and the fact that the work they do is never complete, so there can be no consensus on the 'contours' of a 'cultural form' 'on the ground'. See for example Riles (2003), Falzon (2005), and Green (2005).

Conceiving the field erroneously as an area (whether a static 'culture area' or a mobile 'cultural formation') therefore requires some kind of sleight of hand, to make those lines and points swell enough to fill the area they are supposed to represent. This can be done in at least three different but combinable ways. The most common tactic used by social scientists in order to stretch the lines and points of observation into areas of space is to explain them in terms of social forces (secularization, development, hyper-capitalism, globalization, neo-liberalism, and so on), forces that are held to permeate the space. The ethnographic observations and the postulated forces are thereby established in a reciprocal (and therefore circular) relation of explanation. We have explained above why this kind of explanation is essentially empty. Another tactic that tends towards the same effect, as Marilyn Strathern has shown (1992; 1996), is based on the notion of plural cultures, according to which any part of cultural practice is interpretable as 'the culture' in microcosm, and so can stand for the culture as a whole. In relation to her fieldwork in Mount Hagen, Strathern observes, 'The stereotype says that what I can learn about a cluster of clans I can (more or less) replicate for the entire population, and talk of Hagen in the singular. This demographic simplicity is an illusion' (1996, 24). As she goes on to note, it is an illusion that can only be sustained across a distance – its problems become apparent when it is applied close to home. A third and final method of passing from points and lines to a field of spaces and places is the application of statistical reasoning. Although rarely used by social anthropologists, statistical methods of generalization depend on assumptions of normal distributions and correlations within borders that are apparently identical to the pluralism model just described.

If one recognizes that the field need correspond neither to a *space* in two dimensions nor to a *place*, a 'whole' cultural formation imagined in relation to space, how might and should an ethnographical field be related to space? How are anthropologists to draw the boundaries of their field? What we suggest is that rather than seeing the spatial discontinuities in the networks anthropologists study – whether they be the edges of a village or national borders or whatever – as boundaries of our field within which we are obliged to suck up as much information as possible in an attempt to describe a whole space in two dimensions, such borders may be productively *encompassed* by the field. By crossing borders we can use them as dividers that will make comparisons between nodes on either side possible. So whether the field is a single village or ranges over continents, there is no fundamental difference in the way ethnographers, based on their research agendas, make choices to talk to particular people, visit specific spaces, and witness specific events *within the field* (See Figure 2.3).

The way then to avoid the implicit holism Candea identifies in the original multi-sited research agenda, and to avoid the appeal to unseen global forces that such holism enabled, is research in which the field is importantly *un*-sited
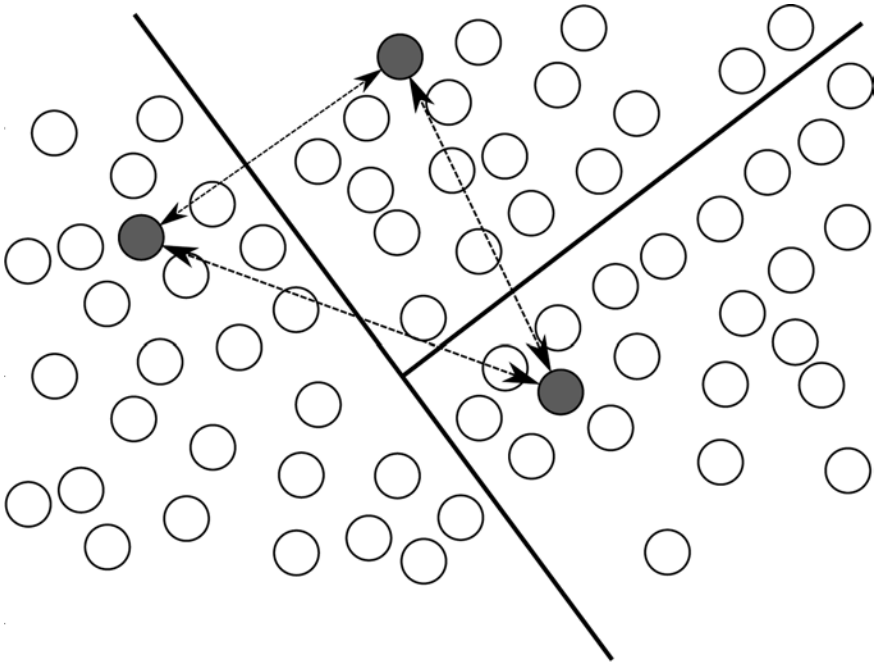
Figure 2.3   An un-sited field

Circles represent possible interactions/observations distributed in time and space. Solid lines represent blockages to networks, which may or may not have a more or less direct relationship to space; shaded circles represent observations made by the anthropologist(s). The field is made up of the aggregate of the shaded circles, designed to encompass distinctions in order to produce theoretically relevant comparisons, represented by broken lines.

rather than being merely multi-sited: research that acknowledges that there is no necessary connection between *field, place* and *space*, that ethnographic fieldwork is something that could be done no less if one were to travel no further than half an hour's walk from one's study than if one were to travel all over the world.[13] Even if working in a single village (more obviously so in a city) a researcher has to make decisions about what to include in the study and what to omit. One makes those decisions on the basis of the questions that are motivating one's research. Of course, one's research questions will be influenced by what one finds, and will generally evolve, but decisions must be made and even the most open of open-ended research must begin with theoretical assumptions that guide those decisions. It is not of course that earlier multi-sited projects have not included comparisons

---

13 Weißköppel acknowledges this in her chapter (this volume) where she sees multiple sites within a single city as well as on different continents.

of the kind we are proposing as the fulcrum around which an ethnographic field may be conceived, but the nature of those comparisons has often been hidden by the rhetoric of holism.

An Un-sited Fieldwork Project

In the academic study of world religions, it has been common to use local cases as illustrations in arguments about the purported true nature or essence of a particular religion, or, conversely, to use theories about the religion as it is imagined to be essentially, to explain data from a local site. For the study of Buddhism, this has meant a long struggle, which several generations of anthropologists have felt the need valiantly to engage in, with the problematic idea that there is a single, authentic Great Tradition by which all placed, historic variants are to be measured (see for example Tambiah 1970; Southwold 1983; Gellner 1990; Spencer 1995). This makes sense as a religious idea, because it is a legitimate religious activity to seek the correct interpretation of a transcendent teaching. It does not make sense for social scientists, who ought to be in the business of observing what people do and reporting on it. Part of the story that we should be telling is how the *effects* of systematicity and authenticity are achieved, to what extent and in what distribution they obtain, how they are contested, and by whom. We cannot do this if a particular position on just those questions, one of many possible positions, is built into our observations.

To avoid this, and to achieve the 'flat' description of an un-sited field that we have argued is required, we must avoid *a priori* decisions about which kinds of practices and beliefs, among those that are observable in any place and time, are part of a supposed great tradition that exists at a global scale. As we have seen, in the case of Buddhism, there are many things that may make world religions seem global: for example, missionaries, translations, and the characteristically modernist idea of the religion as a global community. In dealing with such phenomena, three things should be remembered: first, all of them only happen in a finite number of specific interactions; secondly, they need not occur together (so, for example, the idea of Buddhism as a world religion can spread independently of particular traditions of interpretation which are seen as the contents of the world religion by different practitioners); and, thirdly, not everyone will agree on them.

All of this has important consequences for researchers who need – knowingly or not – to define the boundaries of their field. If we accept, as most believers do, that there is an authentic tradition, then we will expect that some believers, beliefs, practices, and so on will be 'inside' and that others will be 'outside'. Separating the goats from the sheep would then be a matter of studying both the universal, great tradition in order better to understand the conditions of authenticity, and studying the particular, local instantiate, in order to determine whether or not it fulfils those conditions. If, however, we recognize that authenticity and the relative scale of global/local are things that are not given by a trans-historical and universal

system existing somehow behind and beyond observable phenomena but rather are effects that need to be 'staged' (to borrow another term from Latour 2005), and if this staging is one of the things that we want to observe, then the boundaries of the religion are no longer given or in any simple sense there to be discovered.

No 'local' observations can provide the criteria of authenticity that will be used to judge that same locale, without falling into the circularity that has plagued the anthropology of Buddhism. It is all very well to say, 'we will ask the experts', but by what criteria are they recognized as such? The same question could be asked of any attempt to define authenticity by reference to observation.

When it comes to our research on Buddhist ethics and self-cultivation, we have begun by choosing our research questions. The next step is to construct a field that will allow us to research these questions. We are not starting from scratch. There is a degree of both serendipity and pragmatism in choosing to construct a field that includes spaces with which each of us is already familiar (the general point here is made interestingly by Coleman and Collins 2007). We start therefore not so much with a field as a research strategy: to go to certain locations, witness certain events, to seek out certain categories of person, and to do that across important borders that separate the sites in which each of us has worked previously. By combining these sites in a collaborative project we will be able to bring a single theoretical approach (that is, the focus on ethics of self-cultivation) to bear on a different range (not necessarily a greater or more intense range) of comparisons from that encompassed by our individual work. We have a particular interest in doing this because, as we explained above, we believe that the literature on Buddhism would be enriched by focused attention on the question of self-cultivation, and that detailed Buddhist ethnography would deepen and complexify our general understanding of self-cultivation projects and processes. So, because our project has theoretical or generalizing ambitions, and because existing literature, not being sensitive to questions of self-cultivation, is thin on relevant material, we need consciously to include the comparisons in our study.

By combining our resources in a way that is directed by our research interests, we aim progressively to construct for ourselves a field that will enable us to shed some light on some original questions by including comparisons across several kinds of border that are germane to the subject of our research.

One boundary that is *not* a parameter for our research is that between Buddhism and not Buddhism. As in other religious traditions, interpretations of what is essential and authentic to the tradition as such lump together criteria and features that do not bear a necessary relation to each other, and which therefore extend independently and non-coextensively in all directions. The expectation that there is or should be a single boundary around 'Buddhism proper' is, on the other hand, a very interesting aspect of contemporary Buddhist life, as of world religions in general. The Buddhism/not-Buddhism boundary is not effectively policed (less so even than in other world religions) by any power that has the capacity to make its distinctions stick.

Other boundaries, by contrast, are more effectively policed and these provide lines that cut the heterogeneous networks that constitute Buddhism, and such policing makes visible distinctions between points on either side of the boundaries it creates. We can observe this effect without having to imagine bounded homogeneity around those points.

The most important of these borders are the frontiers of nation states. States police borders that stop the flow of networks in many important ways, resulting in sharp contrasts in officially condoned ideas of personhood (citizenship); in pedagogic traditions and practices under the aegis of the institutions of state education; in the conditions under which the institutions of Buddhism relate to state authority, to other religious institutions and to the public; and in the presence and possibility of relations with foreigners. Nation states are also interested in many of the questions generated by self-cultivation – education, personhood, ethics and morality, hygiene, deference to authority, and so on – in other words in what Foucault called biopolitics. The form this interest takes differs radically across the national borders that will crosscut our constructed field.

Other borders we will be working across include those that separate lineage and sect, the divide between different ways of conceptualizing the relationship between monastic and layperson (in some cases a strong distinction from the time of ordination, in others a weak distinction because ordination is common and can be temporary, in still others weak because the laity has taken up practices once reserved for monks).

Conclusion

Although in this chapter we have expressed dissent from some of the claims that have often been made for multi-sited research, we hope it is clear that our aim has been to build upon and carry forward the project of developing a well-grounded conception of such research. We have sought, indeed, both to provide a vindication, following Candea (2007), of the bounded or 'arbitrary' ethnographic field (if by this we mean one that is explicitly a means of investigating, rather than pretending actually to be, a chosen object of study), and at the same time to set out a rationale for multi-sited ethnographical research (if by this we mean research in which the differences, similarities, connections, and disjunctions between several separate physical locations are analytically central). Our aim has been to specify these two aspects of anthropological research practice in such a way that there is no tension or incompatibility between them.[14] Our distinctions between space, place, and field have been deployed in order to develop the argument that a valid ethnographic field need not correspond to a spatial entity of any kind, and need not be a holistic entity 'out there' to be discovered. This is true regardless of how extensively or

---

14 We do not of course deny that multi-sited research might be differently conceived and deployed for analytical purposes other than those considered here.

not a fieldworker might travel in the course of research; the important thing is the range of theoretically relevant points of comparison that are built into the design of the field. These can be many or few, independently of how 'big', on the ground, the field might appear to be; independently, that is, of whether these points are within a single village (as in Candea's Crucetta) or distributed across several large nation states in Asia (as in our own research on Buddhist practices of self-cultivation).

Unlike the blind men in the Buddhist parable, who were required by their king to try to identify something they could not perceive with the data available to them, anthropologists are free to choose for themselves analytical objectives that can actually be achieved. If there is no elephant, there is no need for us to try to imagine one.

So on this view the great advantage of multi-sitedness – the opportunity to include by design a series of points of connection and comparison – is achievable, depending on the theoretical interests motivating the research, even where the sites that are chosen are not at all far apart or are even coincident *in purely spatial terms*. This is why we have preferred the term *un-sited* to describe this kind of ethnographical research: to carry to its logical conclusion the disconnection of the ethnographic field from space which was the most signal achievement of the first-generation multi-sited research programme, and to lay to rest the holistic assumptions that have haunted and restrained that programme.

References

Abu-Lughod, L. (1991), 'Writing Against Culture', in Fox (ed.)

Almond, P.C. (1988), *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Anderson, B. (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

Appadurai, A. (1996), *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Asad, T. (1993), *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Asad, T. (2003), *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press).

Barth, F. (1992), 'Towards Greater Naturalism in Conceptualizing Societies', in Kuper (ed.).

Barth, F. (1993), *Balinese Worlds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Candea, M. (2007), 'Arbitrary Locations: In Defence of the Bounded Field Site'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13:1, 167–84.

Candea, M. (forthcoming), *Corsican Fragments: Difference, Belonging, and the Intimacies of Fieldwork* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Cannell, F. (ed.) (2007), *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Chandler, S. (2004), *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

Clifford J. and Marcus G.E. (eds) (1986), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Coleman, S. and Collins, P. (eds) (2007), *Locating the Field: Space, Place, and Context in Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg).

Cresswell, T. (2004), *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: WileyBlackwell).

Davis, J. (ed.) (1982), *Religious Organization and Religious Experience* (London: Academic Press).

Engelke, M.E. and Tomlinson, M. (eds) (2006), *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (Oxford: Berghahn Books).

Englund, H. and Leach, J. (2000), 'Ethnography and the Meta-Narratives of Modernity', *Current Anthropology* 41, 225–48.

Falzon, M-A. (2005), *Cosmopolitan Connections: The Sindhi Diaspora 1860– 2000* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Fardon, R. (ed.) (1995), *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge* (London: Routledge).

Foucault, M. (1987) [1984], *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality, Volume 2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Foucault, M. (2000), *Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984. Volume 1. Ethics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Foucault, M. (2005), *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (London: Palgrave).

Fox, R. (ed.) (1991), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press).

Gellner, D.N. (1990), 'What is the Anthropology of Buddhism About?' *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, 21, 95–112.

Gombrich, R. and Obeyesekere, G. (1988), *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Green, S. (2005), *Notes from the Balkans: Locating Marginality and Ambiguity on the Greek-Albanian Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (1992), 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology* 7, 6–23.

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (eds) (1997a), *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (eds) (1997b), *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Hannerz, U. (1996), *Transnational Connections* (London: Routledge).

Harrison, P. (1990), *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Harvey, D. (1989), *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell).

James, W. (ed.) (1995), *The Pursuit of Certainty: Religious and Cultural Formations* (London: Routledge).

Jameson, F. (1991), *Postmodernism: Or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso).

Keane, W. (2007), *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Kuper, A. (ed.) (1992), *Conceptualizing Society* (London: Routledge).

Lash, N. (1996), *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Latour, B. (2005), *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Learman, L. (ed.) (2005), *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space* (Oxford: WileyBlackwell).

Leonard, K.I. (2007), *Locating Home: India's Hyderabadis Abroad* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press).

Levine, S. and Gellner, D.N. (2005), *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-Century Nepal* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Lopez, D.S. (ed.) (1995), *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Marcus, G.E. (1986), 'Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System', in Clifford and Marcus (eds).

Marcus, G.E. (1995), 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, 95–117.

Marcus, G.E. (1998), *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Marcus, G.E. and Fischer M.M.J. (1986), *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Masefield, P. (1994), *The Udana.* Translated from the Pali by Peter Masefield (Oxford: Pali Text Society).

Massey, D. (2005), *For Space* (London: Sage).

Masuzawa, T. (2005), *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Miller, D. (ed.) (1995), *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local* (London: Routledge).

Mintz, S. (1998), 'The Localization of Anthropological Practice: From Area Studies to Transnationalism', *Critique of Anthropology* 18, 117–33.

Moore, H.L. (ed.) (1996), *The Future of Anthropological Knowledge* (London: Routledge).

Ong, A. (1999), *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Queen, C.S. and King S.B. (eds) (1996), *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

Relph, E.C. (1976), *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion).

Riles, A. (2003), *The Network Inside Out* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).

Ruel, M. (1982), 'Christians as Believers' in Davis (ed.)

Saler, B. (2000) [1993], *Conceptualising Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (Oxford: Berghahn).

Sassen, S. (1998), *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: New Press).

Southwold, M. (1983), *Buddhism in Life: The Anthropological Study of Religion and the Sinhalese Practice of Buddhism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Spencer, J. (1995), 'The Politics of Tolerance, Truth and Error in Sri Lanka' in James (ed.).

Strathern, M. (ed.) (1995), *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge* (London: Routledge).

Strathern, M. (1992), 'Parts and Wholes: Refiguring Relationships in a Post-Plural World' in Kuper (ed.).

Strathern, M. (1996), 'Cutting the Network', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2, 517–35.

Strathern, M. (2004) [1991], *Partial Connections* (Walnut Creek: Rowman and Littlefield).

Tambiah, S.J. (1970), *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Thornton, R (1988), 'The Rhetoric of Ethnographic Holism', *Cultural Anthropology* 3, 285–303.

Tsing, A. (2000), 'The Global Situation', *Cultural Anthropology* 15, 327–60.

Tuan, Y. (1974), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold).

Tuan, Y. (1977), *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall).

Weißköppel, C. (2005), 'Kreuz und Quer. Zur Theorie und Praxis der Multi-Sited-Ethnography', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 130, S., 45–68.