

SHIKOKU: Japan's Authentic Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuit

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Abstract– Cultures and heritages are any country's unique properties, attractions, and identities. Cultures and heritages hold great importance for communities around the world. The history of modern tourism is not as old as pilgrimage tourism- the oldest concept or original art of travelling. The ideal pilgrimage is an expression of the human aspiration for perfection, and those myths and legends associated with sacred journeys define the ideal and structured symbols for its enactment. Pilgrimage is a moving meditation. On pilgrimage, you walk; however, it is the process of spiritual purification in your body and mind. The ascetic wanderings of individuals took the form of pilgrimage routes, which were then adopted by the aristocracy and, later, the common masses. In early modern Japan, many sacred places lured pilgrims from near and far by claiming that they were sanctuaries where familiar deities manifested to the human world. Pilgrimage visit to multiple sites has been widely practised for a long time in Hinduism (e.g. four dharma visits in India are supposed to be completed by the final visit of Pashupatinath in Nepal). Likewise, the Buddha mentioned four places that a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. It is, for instance, a common practice for pilgrims doing multiple-site routes in Japan, and Shikoku is the one. The Shikoku, 88 Sacred Places pilgrimage (henro) is one of Japan's authentic, most prominent, evocative and photogenic pilgrimages with a highly developed pilgrimage culture. Kōbō Daishi (774–835), a miracle-working figure with origins in the Japanese Buddhist tradition comprised of several ancient local pilgrimages and developed this pilgrimage route. The beginnings of the Shikoku pilgrimage date back to the ninth century when the Buddhist priest Kukai, later to be canonised as Kōbō Daishi, made a journey around the Shikoku Island in his search of enlightenment. The pilgrims may fulfil their wishes, gain an inner feeling of

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something missing in their lives, experience Japanese culture, self-improvement and personal satisfaction, broaden their understanding of Buddhism, improve mental and personal health, and more in Shikoku. The government and tourist organisations should promote the Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan and worldwide.

Keywords Buddhism · Heritage · Culture · Enlightenment · Self-improvement ·

1. Background

Geographically, Shikoku is one of Japan's four main islands, and it is located in the southwestern part of the Japanese archipelago at a latitude of 34°N. Shikoku comprises four prefectures, Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime and Kochi. Shikoku has a mild and warm climate with successive seasonal beauty (Ghimire, 2017). The Shikoku pilgrimage is the most famous type of pilgrimage and most frequently referred to as *henro*, a term specific to this pilgrimage or *meguri*, which means 'to go round. Perhaps the most famous pilgrimage in Japan -around the island of Shikoku - appears in chronicles of the Heian era (latter half of the eleventh century), when it developed as an ascetic practice involving religious sites. A more structured route had developed by the seventeenth century, involving the eighty-eight temples still visited today. It seems that, in the latter part of the Muromachi period (1338-1573), the trip to Shikoku became "a widespread practice involving participants other than religious specialists and ascetics" (Reader 1987: 116).

Cultures and heritages are any country's unique properties, attractions, and identities. Cultures and heritages hold great importance for communities around the world. Heritage is the symbolic embodiment of the past, reconstructed and reinterpreted in contemporary societies' collective memories and traditions rather than perceived as a mere apotheosis of bygone times. Cultures and heritages include their originality, especially tradition and other valuable aspects. Culture displays social traditions, activities, values, beliefs, religion. Japan's religion and culture reflect a long history during which various religious beliefs and practices - some indigenous, some "imported" from other places - have been adopted and adapted to Japanese culture. The ancient indigenous folk religion, later formalised as Shinto, was based on awe toward the sacred powers (*kami*) that brought life to the earth and human community. According to *Nihon Shoki* (the Chronicles of Japan), Korean monks introduced Buddhism to Japan in 552 AD. Sutras were later brought from China, temples and shrines were built, and monastic communities were established (Ghimire, 2020a). Japanese pilgrimage studies have concentrated more on the historical and folkloric dimensions than anthropological

and fieldwork-based studies. There are very few exceptions focused on examining pilgrimage within the boundaries of Japanese culture and religion, rather than on using the topic to make any broader comparative studies or to use such studies of Japanese pilgrimage to help further any wider-ranging theoretical positions, impacts analysis of pilgrimages (Ghimire, 2017). Japanese people are highly influenced by Buddhism's five precepts (pañcaśīla in Sanskrit). They constitute the basic code of ethics to be undertaken by followers of Buddhism. The precepts are commitments to abstain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication. Japan is Japan because of its unique cultures, traditions and heritages. These Japanese traits should not be at risk. It should be preserved, and the youngsters have to take ownership of it. Cultures and heritages of Japan are the nation's pride and a matter of interest for the people around the globe (Ghimire, 2020b).

Postdoctoral research had uncovered the Buddhist pilgrimage practices with a particular focus on Shikoku in Japan, compared with Lumbini (the birthplace of the Buddha) in Nepal under the Japan Foundation fellowship. This paper is the partial outcome of that research.

2. Research methodology

This research is exploratory and primarily analytical. The research has adopted qualitative and quantitative inquiries based on primary and secondary sources and self-collected data. Primary data were obtained from field visits, questionnaire surveys and formal and informal interviews in Shikoku and the secondary data and information were collected from publications such as journals, books, documents and reports from the library; bulletin, reports, plans published by Government and non-Governmental organisations, different seminar papers; and Internet search.

On-site surveys were conducted with visitors/pilgrims at Shikoku, at the entrance gate to the temple complex, at souvenir shops and hotels, pilgrimage trails and a train in the Shikoku area; some stakeholders such as owner and/or managers of hotels, restaurants, travels, souvenir shops, and experts about Shikoku and pilgrimage tourism. To draw a representative sample of tourists, days and sites were randomly selected.

Using concepts and data from my previous research about Buddhist pilgrimage and Lumbini (the birthplace of the Buddha in Nepal), I utilised my time to study, observe, and interact with various people and concerned organisations in Japan.

By alternating fieldwork at Shikoku and residence at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, I benefited from regular discussions with Paul Swanson, an expert in Japanese religion, culture, and pilgrimage. I also met other experts and researchers in Japan who helped me contextualise and analyse material and guide the research.

3. Pilgrimage: The oldest travel culture

The history of modern tourism is not as old as pilgrimage tourism- the oldest concept or original art of travelling. Pilgrimage is one of the well-known phenomena in religion and culture, and it exists in all the main religions of the world (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2006). The ideal pilgrimage is an expression of the human aspiration for perfection, and those myths and legends associated with sacred journeys define the ideal and structured symbols for its enactment (Kunwar, 2006: 245). Barber (1993: 1) defines pilgrimage as: "A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding". The origin and evolution of the *tirtha yatra* (pilgrimage) - a tradition of Hindus seems to be as old as their civilisation or perhaps older than that (Kaur, 1985: 27).

Pilgrimage is a fundamental part of many religions; from the Hajj in Islam, the Kumbha Mela and pilgrimage to *char-dhama* (four sacred places) in Hinduism, four sacred sites in Buddhism, pilgrimages to Santiago and Rome in Christianity. They allow the pilgrim to fulfil a commitment to their religion and free up time to reflect on life. The Shikoku pilgrimage fills the same need for the people who subscribe to the Shingon sect of Buddhism in Japan (Ghimire, 2017). Pilgrimage is a moving meditation. On pilgrimage, you walk; however, it is the process of spiritual purification in your body and mind. This spiritual practice is for concentration and awareness. That is what the Buddha had said. Pilgrimage allows you to discover who you are and where you stand. It develops your mind and beliefs. It becomes a memory and a history (Schmidt, 2016 on a personal interview at Koyasan). Pilgrimages serve as a means for ordinary people to enter the religious specialist's world, even if temporarily. It is a recurrent feature of pilgrimages worldwide. It has been seen as a means of acquiring merit that could enable people to overcome bad karma and ensure better rebirths for themselves and their kin. In Japan, for example, it is widely believed that performing the Shikoku pilgrimage will bring the pilgrim exceptional spiritual merit that can either help the pilgrim attain entry into the Buddhist Pure Land at death or be transferred to one's deceased kin to facilitate their journey to the next realm (Reader, 2012).

Pilgrimage visit to multiple sites has been widely practised for a long time in Hinduism (e.g. four dhama visits in India are supposed to be completed by the final visit of Pashupatinath in Nepal). Likewise, the Buddha mentioned four places that a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. Thus a salient characteristic of multiple-site routes is that they contain a set number of places that have to be visited in the context of the pilgrimage (Ghimire, 2017). It is, for instance, a common practice for pilgrims doing multiple-site routes in Japan to carry a scroll or pilgrim's book that they have stamped at each site and that serves as testimony, as it is filled with stamps, to the pilgrim's progress and when complete, to the completion of the pilgrimage. Thus each site on multiple-site routes is equally essential in completing the route (Reader & Swanson, 1997: 240). The Shikoku Eighty-Eight Sacred Places Pilgrimage is the most famous type of pilgrimage. It is one of Japan's most prominent, evocative and photogenic pilgrimages with a highly developed pilgrimage culture, one of the most prominent elements in Japanese religious structure (Reader, 2005: 9). The Shikoku pilgrimage has become an international pilgrimage destination. People with other religious faiths than Buddhism also make pilgrimages in Shikoku.

4. Buddhist pilgrimage

The Buddha was the first Buddhist pilgrim, and his life story is one of pilgrimage, in which he leaves home to travel in search of the truth. Indeed, critical places were associated with his life and significant turning points in Buddhist history. Pilgrimage has been an especially conducive concept as its focus on the notion of life as a journey toward higher goals and because of its emphasis on transience in the Buddhist tradition. The Buddha himself enshrined pilgrimage as an essential act in the life of a practitioner (Reader, 2012). After the *parinirvana* (physical death) of the Buddha, the relics of His body were collected from the funeral pyre and divided into eight parts. These were distributed to the claimants and *stupas* erected on the relics. The practice of pilgrimage in Buddhism probably started with visits to these places, and the purpose could be to achieve personal advantages such as rebirth in a good location and honour the great master. Thus the custom of pilgrimage has been widespread among Buddhists for many centuries. Buddha had emphasised the importance of pilgrimage (Buddhanet, 2010). The Buddha advises for the pilgrimage without which there is no release from grief unless the end of the world is to be reached. So let a man be a world-knower, wise, world-ender (Kunwar, 2006). The early Buddhist pilgrims endured tremendous hardship, and some of them changed the course of history (Szostak,

2007). In answer to Venerable Ananda's concern that the monks would no longer see the Buddha and pay their respects after His Mahaparinirvana, the Buddha mentioned four places that a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

They are:

- Lumbini: "Here the Tathagata (the Buddha) was born!
- Buddhagaya: "Here, the Tathagata became fully enlightened, in unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment!
- Sarnath: "Here the Tathagata set rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Law!
- Kusinagara: "Here, the Tathagata passed away into Nirvana.

In visiting those places, early Buddhist pilgrims not only walked in the Buddha's footsteps, thereby metaphorically treading the same path to enlightenment while being in his presence, but did so alongside fellow pilgrims walking the same path and hence experienced a sense of community (Reader, 2012). The Buddha said, "... And whosoever, Ananda, should die on such a pilgrimage, with his heart established in the faith, he at the breaking up of the body, after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness" (Mahaparinirvana Sutra Chapter V; in San, 2002: 15). There are other influential sites where the Buddha performed his great miracles and where he and the *sangha* held their rain retreats. Pilgrimage to the holy places mentioned by the Buddha is a once-a-lifetime undertaking by Buddhists. In this text, the spiritual value of pilgrimage to these sites, which have a significant connection to the Buddha's life, is stated, even claiming that if one died on such as pilgrimage, one would be reborn in *sugatim saggam lokam*, 'a good destiny, a heavenly world'—in other words, a heavenly rebirth. The wording of the above quote shows that the critical thing is that people believe a site to have a particular significance. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place as an act of devotion and faith (*shraddha*). A strong desire stems from one's devotion to undertaking a pilgrimage to heed the Buddha's advice. In the course of visiting the sacred places, pilgrims feel the need to be in the Master's presence, and this fullness of faith conduces to joy and the observance of morality and the foundation of all merit. After the journey is over, one should always try to recollect the joyful moments spent at holy places to keep them vivid in one's memory (San, 2002: 11). Reader (2012) writes that as Buddhism spread across Asia, it also created new places of pilgrimage in every region that Buddhism permeated - from sacred mountain sites in Tibet to places such as the Shwe Dagon Temple in the Burmese capital of Rangoon, which according to famous belief houses relics of the Buddha's hair, and the Temple of Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka,

which also houses a reputed relic of the Buddha. In such places, it was believed; pilgrims could thus "meet" the holy figure at the centre of their religion and acquire his spiritual grace.

5. Pilgrimage in Japan

Pilgrimage in Japan developed gradually. The ascetic wanderings of individuals took the form of pilgrimage routes, which were then adopted by the aristocracy and, later, the common masses. Pilgrimage became popular in the Heian period among the aristocracy, who visited places like Ise Shrine, Hasedera and Shitennoji. During the Edo period, pilgrimage became famous for all classes of people (Kodansha, 1983). Shinno Toshikazu has described pilgrimage as "one of the great pillars" of Japanese religion. Pilgrimages are essential in Japanese spiritual development and play specific and crucial roles within the functioning of the various religious organisations with which they are associated. It has been voluntary pilgrimages such as the Ise pilgrimage and multiple-site types such as the Saikoku *junrei*, the Shikoku *henro*, and the various regional "copied" pilgrimages that have tended to attract the most extraordinary levels of mass participation and to have had the most significant influence in the broader development of Japanese pilgrimage culture. These pilgrimages, in particular, are focused on in this volume, and it is to these, and the typological differentiation that may be made between them, that we now turn (Reader & Swanson, 1997: 238). In Japan, pilgrimages can be classified into two general types: (1) multi-site circuits and (2) single-site pilgrimages. Multi-site circuits involve several sacred places linked together numerically, with each location devoted to the same single deity or a group of related deities. It is known as *honzon junrei*. Single-site pilgrimages involve a journey to one particular sacred site.

Several aspects of the pilgrimage are rich in symbolism - particularly its association with death. The clothing worn and items carried by a pilgrim indicate that he or she is 'dead to the world' (Reader, 1993: 107; in MacGregor, 2002: 11). What attracted pilgrims were temples known for their miracle efficacy in Japan. Kannon was the most popular deity venerated at these miracle temples. Furthermore, the most popular pilgrimage temples belonged to three sects in Japan: Tendai, Hmgon, and Hosso (Ambros, 1997: 304). Schumacher (2013) writes that pilgrimages were first undertaken in the Nara Period (710-794 AD), but the custom did not become popular until the Heian Era (794-1185 AD). In southern Wakayama Prefecture, Kumano became a prominent centre for adherents and pilgrims of the Shugendo sect during the Heian Period. Other famous pilgrimages were Hasedera (Kyoto), Shitenno-ji (Osaka), and Mt. Koya. In the

Edo Period (1600-1868 AD), the number of people making pilgrimages to both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines increased rapidly, especially to Ise Shrine, Kotohira Shrine (Kagawa), the 88 temples of Shikoku and Western Japan, to Zenkoji (Nagano), Kiso Ontake (Nagoya), and Mt. Fuji (Shizuoka). One phenomenon of the Edo era was Okage Mairi お蔭参り - the special pilgrimage to the Ise Jingu Shrine. The Okage Mairi tradition continues unabated today, with approximately six million people visiting Ise Jingu yearly. Okawa (2009) spotlights that the three shrines of Kumano in the Kii Peninsula, Nachi, Hongu, and Shingu, were arguably the most important religious institutions in medieval Japan. They dispatched shugenja to the regions throughout Japan, including Shikoku, to (1) spread the worship of the Kumano shrines, (2) transplant Kumano shrines to regions, and (3) cultivate and maintain parishes (kasumi ft.). In these parishes, they monopolised certain prayer rituals and took the role of the *sendatsu*, or pilgrimage guide, who facilitated the journey of earthly pilgrimage to Kumano. They were also instrumental in funnelling income for the Kumano shrines.

Many sacred places lured pilgrims from near and far in early modern Japan, claiming sanctuaries where familiar deities manifested to the human world. These were deemed access points of the merits dispensed by those deities by extension. In many respects, the success of a pilgrimage centre depended on the ability of its managing institutions (i.e., temples and shrines) to stir a public discourse on the potency of its deity in delivering practical merits that resonated with the concerns of the people. To this end, they would weave legends and miracle stories that highlighted the deity's value in dispensing merits to the pilgrims at the pilgrimage space (Okawa, 2009). In Japan, as Pye (2014) writes that pilgrimages have been turned into considerably less arduous ordeals than they were in the past thanks to public transport, comfortable lodgings, good food and an ample supply of vending machines.

6. *Shikoku* pilgrimage and authenticity

Authenticity is conventionally defined as originality, genuineness or sincerity, and the heritages and cultures must be unique and authentic. Belhassen et al. (2008) illustrated that three interrelated components shape the search for authentic experiences during the visits to the holy sites: the the opolitical ideology underlying the pilgrimage, the places visited, and the activities undertaken by the pilgrims. One way to view the relationship between these three elements is to consider place, belief and action as the physical and social contexts through which individual pilgrims negotiate meaning regarding their touristic activities, and then

to view this sense of meaning as the foundation that gives rise to experiences of existential authenticity (Kunwar & Ghimire, 2012).

Reader (2005) elicits that the *henro* was one of several pilgrimages that emerged in the later Heian period linked to the activities of religious mendicants and wandering proselytisers known as *hijiri*, whose seminal role in popularising folk Buddhist faith in Japan has been widely discussed by Japanese scholars. The *hijiri* promoted the virtues of Buddhist figures of worship and emphasised pilgrimages to essential temples and other holy places as a way of deepening faith, attaining salvation in this or the next life, and gaining merit and worldly benefits (107). Likewise, Shinnen was the seminal figure in the development of the *henro*, making the pilgrimage more widely known through his stones, guidebooks, and miracle tales. It is a striking example of how individuals can help make the pilgrimage and create a series of footsteps for others to follow (121).

The Shikoku pilgrimage is the most famous type of pilgrimage and most frequently referred to as *henro*, a term specific to this pilgrimage or *meguri*, which means 'to go round,' but 'is most widely used in cases where the sites on a pilgrimage route are not united by their dedication to a single figure of worship,' (Reader & Swanson, 1997: 233). The typical Japanese word for pilgrimage is *junrei*; however, the pilgrimage is called *henro* in Shikoku. Spirituality is a safety valve, and the '*henro*' is an opportunity to use it (Jopson, 2016). Statler (1983: 97) notes that the Japanese people are optimistic. In Japan, over the centuries, Buddhism was transformed into an optimistic creed. Kobo Daishi's contribution to this was his insistence that man and women too, for whom earlier Buddhism held out no hope, had within him the seed of Buddha; by hard practice following strict precepts, anyone could find and nurture that seed manifest his innate Buddha-nature –could achieve enlightenment. In pilgrimage typologies developed by Japanese scholars, Shikoku is classified as a *seiseki* pilgrimage- one associated with a holy person's sacred traces or presence. In Shikoku, this figure is Kobo Daishi, a miracle-working figure with origins in the Japanese Buddhist tradition whose presence permeates the pilgrimage and binds it to the island of Shikoku (Reader, 2005: 10).

Okawa (2009) writes that there have been pilgrimage practices of the ascetics and the religious specialists since ancient times—long before an eighty-eight-site pilgrimage that we now call Shikoku *henro* emerged. These traditions were different from Shikoku *henro* in many respects, such as the scale and route of the pilgrimage and the object of worship. They were essential factors in the development of the pilgrimage, shaping the sacred geography of Shikoku. Since

then, symbols and themes have become ingrained in the landscape of Shikoku *henro*. Thus, they provided a rich repertoire of traditions for the evolving pilgrimage culture in Shikoku to draw from, which reached a milestone in the early modern period with the establishment of the eighty-eight-site pilgrimage. Some pilgrims also went to Shikoku in search of a Buddhist Pure Land. The spread of Amida worship in the late Heian period also rendered the image of Shikoku as the gateway to Amida's Western Pure Land, similar to how Shitennoji in Osaka was perceived.

The beginnings of the Shikoku pilgrimage are said to date back to the ninth century when the Buddhist priest Kūkai 空海, later known as Kōbō Daishi (774–835), made a journey around the Shikoku Island in search of enlightenment. Kūkai developed the Shikoku pilgrimage route comprising 88 main Buddhist temples and numerous additional temples and shrines with several ancient local pilgrimages. By the 17th century, the fame of the *henro* had spread and become popular among ordinary Japanese (Ghimire, 2017). Iannarone (2013) writes Kōbō Daishi, founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, is one of the most influential people in Japanese history, and he still holds considerable sway and respect in Japan today. Aside from being a priest, he was also a master calligrapher, poet, scholar and advisor to the emperor. In his early years, he turned away from his aristocratic upbringing and became a wandering ascetic in the mountains and valleys of Shikoku; the 88 temple pilgrimage recreates his journeys around the island. However, there are *henro* pilgrimages in other parts of Japan, namely those transplanted or copied from Shikoku (i.e., the *henro* pilgrimage in Shōdoshima). *Henro* also refers to the pilgrims who are making this pilgrimage. The designated stops in this pilgrimage are commonly called *fudasho* (札所), literally meaning a place to offer pilgrims' calling cards, or *reijō*, (霊場) meaning a sacred place (Okawa, 2009).

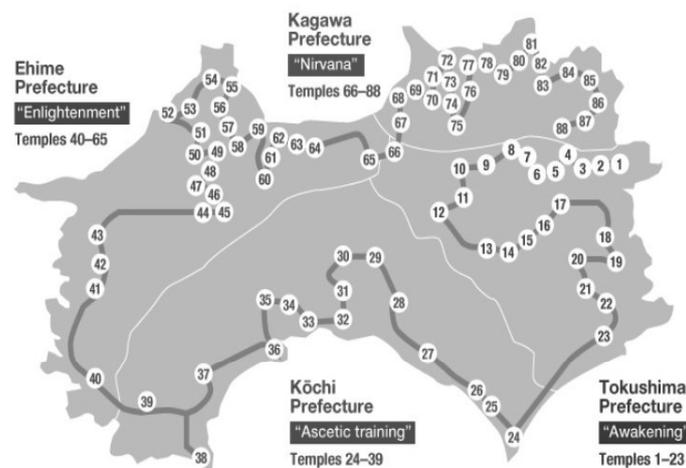
The popularity of the Shikoku pilgrimage between 1800 and 1850~the period can be considered the golden age of the Shikoku pilgrimage. It can also certainly be considered as a characteristic of the evolutionary development. The basic principle of the Shikoku pilgrimage circuit in the Tokugawa period was, like today, to walk around the island of Shikoku to visit eighty-eight sites traditionally associated with Kōbō Daishi (Kouame, 1997). The aim of the pilgrimage can be to remember dead family or friends or to meditate on your life's progress as you walk the route, much of which is through the countryside or along the coast.

Shikoku was both a sacred domain associated with Kōbō Daishi and the realm of death, where pilgrims consciously or subconsciously weaved through the

symbolic boundary between this and the other world through the act of pilgrimage. The liminality of Shikoku was strengthened by its inevitable geographical feature; as an island surrounded by the sea, it evoked the sense of a different realm and, in particular, as Reader (2005) notes, the Buddhist notion of the "other shore" associated with the afterlife.

6.1 Numbering of temples in Shikoku

Figure 1: Shokiku island and location map of 88 temples



Shikoku means "four provinces", and the pilgrim's journey through 88 temples in four provinces is considered a symbolic path to enlightenment. The theme of the Tokushima province (temples 1–23) is *Awakening*; the Kōchi province (temples 24–39) is *Ascetic training*; the Ehime province (temples 40–65) is *Enlightenment*; the Kagawa province (temples 66–88) is *Nirvana*. The numbering of the temple had become the "framing device" of *henro*. Unfortunately, we do not know the rationale behind selecting this number with certainty. However, there is no shortage of explanations (Reader, 2005). One influential theory is that eighty-eight represents the number of evil passions (*bonno*), in Buddhist terms, which must be eradicated before one can attain salvation. This theory was offered in *Kudokuki* as a possible explanation (Shinnen, 1690; in Okawa, 2009). The numbering system of the *fudasho*, beginning with Ryozenji in northeastern Awa, hints that the pilgrimage circuit was likely initially designed by those who entered Shikoku from the Kii Peninsula, because the port of Muya (present-day Naruto), near Ryozenji, was a convenient entry point to Shikoku from the Kii Peninsula, where Koyasan is located. Since ancient days, the main sea route that connected

the Kinai area to Awa was Kada in Kii to Muya, connecting between Yura in Awaji (Ishiodori, 2006; in Okawa, 2009). However, Eiki (1997) has a different opinion. The numbering system had more to do with the organisation of the pilgrimage route than with the actual practice of the pilgrimage.

Nevertheless, it has made a lasting impact on the pilgrimage culture since, even in the present era, it is common for the pilgrims to refer to the *fudasho* simply by their designated number rather than by the actual name of *fudasho* institutions. Ghimire (2017) writes that since pilgrims have to visit all 88 temples to complete the pilgrimage, they are equal; however, some may be more equal than others in the pilgrims' eyes. Temples with dramatic physical settings or powerful historical connections tend to have a more significant effect on pilgrims.

6.2 Ohenropractices at temples

Before departing for the Shikoku pilgrimage, pilgrims were required to obtain a passport known in the Tokugawa period as an *oral tegata* 往來手形 which was issued by local officials or temples. The content of this document was relatively standardised: name and address of the pilgrim, information about his/her family's temple and sectarian affiliation, the definition of the purpose of the trip, and various clauses relating to the treatment of the pilgrim in case of illness or death (Kouame, 1997).

Mostly, the pilgrimage starts from Ryozenji (Temple No.1) at Tokushima and ends from Okuboji (Temple No. 88) at Kagawa. Many of them believe that the Shikoku pilgrimage is completed after the final visit of Koyasan, the headquarter of Shingon Buddhism in Japan. The pilgrims are given the Buddhist Ten Commandments to follow at least during the pilgrimages at temple number one. They are: Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not commit adultery. Do not tell a lie. Do not use flowery language. Do not speak ill of others. Do not be double-tongued. Do not be covetous. Do not be angry. Do not be perverse.

Traditionally, the pilgrims (*Ohenro*) perform the following steps; however, optional actions at each temple in Shikoku.

- At the main gate: The pilgrim's bow once faces the main hall to ward off evil spirits.
- At the washbasin: To purify themselves, pilgrims wash one's hands and mouth.
- Pilgrims rang the bell to mark one's arrival at the bell tower.

- At the main hall: The principal deity can be seen here. First, pilgrims light incense and a candle, ring the bell once and declare to the main deity you have come to worship.
- At the Daishi hall: A figure of Kōbō Daishi can be seen as a hare. Pilgrims worship in the same way as at the main hall.
- At Stamp Office: Pilgrims receive the temple stamp in their stamp book.
- Pilgrims again face the main gate and bow once at the main gate.

The main hall, which is dedicated to one of the Buddhas of the Buddhist pantheon, and a separate hall dedicated to Kōbō Daishi are located at every one of the eighty-eight temples along the route. In front of these halls, pilgrims usually light candles, incense, chant sutras and prayers. The pilgrim drops name-slips, or *fuda*, inscribed with the pilgrim's name and his or her prayers or requests in the special boxes in front of these halls.

6.3 Shikoku Ohenro costumes

Ohenro is free to wear whatever they please on their pilgrimage. However, the pilgrim's traditional costume (unique symbolic clothing) comprises a white shirt with a Japanese script indicating a pilgrim, a conical sedge Chinese hat, a shoulder bag, and a walking stick. By choosing those items, one will be identified and respected as a pilgrim by those you meet along the way. Foreign pilgrims gain a sense of belonging to a privileged group in Shikoku. Once you start walking in the white 'Ohenro' costume, you are no longer treated as a foreigner but only an 'Ohenro-san' like everybody else. It is a unique experience that you cannot experience anywhere else. *Ohenro* crosses boundaries of languages, culture and nationality (Moreton, 2016).



Figure 2: Pilgrim's attire

It is believed that Kukai is embodied in a five-foot-long walking stick called a kongo-tsue. In this form, he travels with every pilgrim as a spiritual guide. The

stick serves as a support for navigating steep paths or slogging up mossy temple steps in the rain, but it can also be used as a grave marker if the pilgrim drops dead en route – a not uncommon or unwelcome outcome of the pilgrim's goal to leave the present life behind. The white garb – the colour of mourning – is a perpetual reminder of transience. A bell, tied to a stick with a silken cord, chimed the rhythmic sound of emptiness with each footstep (Christy, 2016).

6.4 Belief in Shikoku pilgrimages

All of the pilgrims - in a vehicle or on foot - consider themselves travelling alone with Kōbō Daishi as their companion and guide. This spiritual presence is expressed by the words *dōgyō ninin* (two travelling together) written on the pilgrims' hats during pilgrimages. We can see essential differences between those who took buses or private cars from temple to temple and those walking pilgrims. At the temples, bus and car pilgrims diligently go through the rituals and devotional rites. They are attentive to the worship because being at the temple was the whole point of their pilgrimage. Ugolnik (2004) writes that the space between the temples exists only about vehicles for those who travel via bus or car. The vehicle acts as a transporter from one temple to another, whereby the pilgrim only occupies its space. Understandably, the temples become the focus and purpose of their pilgrimage. The temples played a different role within their pilgrimage experience, and the temples gave the walkers a much different meaning. Amidst walkers, three characteristics of the temples are highlighted: as sacred space, as secular space, and as 'negative space', which serves as markings for the space between them. Through these models of the temples as *either* sacred *or* secular, or *both* sacred *and* secular (as in this latter category), it is evident that walking pilgrims' understanding of temples transcend the standard meaning which non-walking or static persons' attribute to them. For many walking pilgrims, the temples maintain their traditional sacred nature. Pilgrims largely ignored the temples; however, they performed the obligatory rituals. Moreton (2001: 81) writes that walking the pilgrimage is much safer today than in the past, but the danger is still present. Ancient gravestones with the simple heading "*henro*" remind the pilgrims of those who went before them. The death of pilgrims while on their journey was common up until the early nineteenth century. Many travels to memorialise relatives who have passed away. The spirits of the recently deceased are said to be unstable in Japan, even dangerous, and the pilgrimage can help to calm them (Jopson, 2016).

The pilgrims chant Heart Sutra twice at every temple throughout the pilgrimage. According to Kukai, the Heart Sutra distils the entire essence of Buddhist teaching

into fourteen lines. The core of the sutra is a meditation on emptiness: "No form, no feeling. No thought, no volition, no consciousness . . . No world of sight. No world of consciousness. No ignorance and no end to ignorance. No old age and death and no end to old age and death. No suffering, no craving, no extinction. No path, no wisdom, no attainment. Indeed, there is nothing to be attained." These words become ritual footfalls on the pilgrim's pathway to "no path," building spiritual muscles when our physical muscles flagged (Christy, 2016).

6.5 Empathy and Settai costume

The Buddha said that life is suffering. Empathy for another person's pain is probably the most accessible form of identification, and it is likely a considerable force behind the phenomenon of outsiders helping pilgrims. It also forms the foundation for how walking pilgrims relate to one another. Whether one pilgrim meets another once or travels the entire trip side by side in companionship, the physical and mental hardships of the shared experience provide an accessible medium of communication. Whether or not the pilgrim attributes sacred or recreational value to these experiences, a connection can still have made. Though one may lean more towards thinking of him or herself as a *yamabushi* and the other may be a recreational athlete in understanding these hardships, both have symbolically and experientially endured the challenges contained in the role of a pilgrim.

The pilgrim's material world consists of the possessions on his or her back, things consumed, and gifts and services received. This latter category affects the pilgrim's relationship to the former two throughout the pilgrimage. Through experiencing hardship, these gifts and services begin to take on profound meaning for pilgrims. The Japanese use several words for charitable giving, including *segyo*, *fuse*, *kanjin*, *kisha*, and *hosha* (Moreton 2001: 20). However, the act of giving to the pilgrims of Shikoku is singularly identified by the term *settai*. Shikoku is one of the few remaining places where pilgrims are offered *settai* (alms). By accepting *settai*, pilgrims become a human landscape of reciprocity and karmic potential – a field of merit known as *fukuden*. This custom developed from belief in Kōbō Daishi as a deified figure and continues to be manifested in many forms today.

The giver is thought to receive merit from Kōbō Daishi for his or her acts of kindness. The *Settai* offering is a fundamental aspect of the *Henro* Pilgrim experience. Offerings and services of all kinds are given to the Pilgrim as he makes his way along the island paths. Meals, snacks and cups of tea, items

necessary to the *Henro* such as incense sticks and candles and coins, and places to spend the night are donated by the kind people of Shikoku. It is not something that should be taken lightly by the *henro*. When offered *settai*, you are under an obligation to accept. People offer you *settai* because you are a *henro* and, for whatever particular reason, that means something to them. You, as a *henro*, are a symbol to the giver, and in giving you something, they are giving something to your pilgrimage. They are giving something to the pilgrimage in general. By giving you *settai*, they are, in some way, now participating in your pilgrimage. Moreover, through your pilgrimage, they are participating in the pilgrimage itself. You, the receiver, are only an intermediary in their vicarious participation in your journey and the pilgrimage itself.

Though some attribute the origins of *settai* to the Buddhist tradition of giving alms to monks, Tekada Akira, an author of many Japanese books on the Shikoku Pilgrimage, proposes a different theory. He states the exchange originated from the offerings made to Japanese shrines throughout the pilgrimage route. Through the legends of Kōbō Daishi, this motive has come to be associated with gaining merit. Sachiko Kanai suggests: "People in the old days were not very charitable, but as the Daishi legends grew and wishing to accumulate merit for oneself, one's family and relatives or even one's community, the custom of *settai* grew and became important in the Daishi belief" (Kanai 1980: 25; in Moreton 2001: 27).

Numerous historical materials from the Tokugawa period provide evidence of hospitality of local's authority and people to the pilgrims. Many sick pilgrims were repatriated to their provinces with the assistance of local authorities. The term *mum okuri* 不送 was often used to designate the escort of a person from village to village. When Shikoku authorities helped a sick pilgrim return home or bury a dead one, it is conceivable that they were following the rules for ordinary travellers that the Tokugawa bakufu had established since the end of the seventeenth century (Kouame, 1997).

6.6 Temple stay and participation in rituals

Temple stay and participation in the rituals and prayers could be essential parts of pilgrimage. Through this, the pilgrims may fulfil their wishes, gain an inner feeling of something missing in their life, experience Japanese culture, self-improvement and personal satisfaction, broader understanding of Buddhism, improve mental and personal health, and more. Figuring out where to stay the night is one of the most challenging parts of planning as a walking pilgrim in Shikoku. Some temples offer ryokan-style lodging to the public within temple

grounds and are similarly priced to *minshuku* or *ryokan*, but not all provide meal options. The meals are vegetarian (*shōjin ryōri*), and visitors may sometimes be invited to watch or partake in daily prayers and rituals. Pilgrims may book ahead of time by calling the temple or simply as a temple staff when they receive their stamp, although the latter might be risky at famous temples. Prayers and rituals are scheduled mainly in the morning and evening in the temples, and Pilgrims can attend services and chant with the priests before breakfast. Sitting on the floor with legs folded, pilgrims would have been mesmerised by the triangular saffron figures sitting motionlessly before an altar crowded with candles, flowers, and swirling incense. The basso drone of the Heart Sutra, its staccato syllables chanted like the rosary of an endless chain of causation, creates a hypnotic euphoria.

Iwamotoji temple in Kochi is one of the sacred temples in the Shikoku 88 temple pilgrimage. This particular site has opened its doors to anyone who wants to participate in the *homa-mandala* (fire altar) ritual common within Shingon Buddhism. Pilgrims can spend the night in the temple guest house and awaken early morning hours for the ceremony. A Buddhist priest will perform the ritual where fragrant wood or grains are offered to the burning fire to deliver a prayer to *Vessavaṇa*, one of the four heavenly kings. Often the fire can grow up to 1 meter in height and is meant to purify the mind and body of worldly desires. The ceremony includes copying a Buddhist sutra (prayer) in Japanese or English.

6.7 Pilgrimage season and travel options

The temperature and weather of mid-March to May in spring and October to November in autumn are most suitable for undertaking the pilgrimage in Shikoku. In the normal cycle of yearly weather, there is much rain during the rainy season of June and July. In August and September, the weather is stable, but this is the season when occasional typhoons will make their appearance. Reader (2005: 1) writes a Japanese saying that Shikoku comes alive with the sound of pilgrims' bells in spring. The trail itself is marked by the ubiquitous red arrows and other populating markers. There are many ways to make the Shikoku pilgrimages. Everyone has their circumstances, such as walking, paying capacity, time availability, and interest.

The most outstanding merit is acquired by walking the route, a commitment that can take up to two months, but most modern pilgrims adopt some combination of walking and vehicular transport – buses, trains, taxis, cars, bicycles, helicopters, and even skateboards. Without the time or money to complete the entire circuit, Pilgrims may walk one of several miniature versions of the pilgrimage, made

from stones or soil from each of the eighty-eight sites. Other pilgrims complete the pilgrimage on multiple visits. Regardless of transportation, pilgrimage is a physical and spiritual marathon (Christy, 2016).

6.8 Shikoku and Lumbini connection

Both Lumbini and Shikoku are world-famous Buddhist pilgrimage destinations. Lumbini hallowed by the birth of the Sakyamuni Buddha, one of the most important pilgrimage destinations globally, lies in the southwestern plains of Nepal. Nepal is honoured to have Lumbini (Kunwar & Ghimire, 2012), the birthplace of Lord Buddha, the greatest, the brightest, and the light of peace and indeed the most illustrious son of Nepal (Guruge, 1998: 26). The newly born Prince Siddhartha (who later distinguished as Lord Buddha) took his seven steps and uttered an epoch-making message to the suffering humanity in Lumbini. The famous Indian Maurya Emperor Asoka, guided by his spiritual teacher Upagupta made a pilgrimage visit to this holy site in 249 B.C. Famous Chinese pilgrims Tseng Tsai (4th century), Fa-Hsien (5th century) and Hiuen-Tsang (7th century) visited Lumbini for pilgrimage and study about Buddhism and spirituality. The visits of the Chinese travellers brought more records out about Lumbini. Hiuen Tsang's records are the most informative of all, for he travelled to see Lumbini and other Buddhist sites and maintained a detailed description of his travel.

The Buddha mentioned four places that a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. One is Lumbini, where the Tathagata (the Buddha) was born. The importance of Lumbini is so great that the Buddha himself advised his followers to make the pilgrimage to Lumbini. Lord Buddha explained the significance of Lumbini in words: "Lumbini should be (visited) seen by a person of devotion, and which would cause awareness and apprehension of the nature of impermanence" because Lumbini is the leading Buddhist pilgrimage site in relationship to the other sacred sites. Many scholars designate Lumbini as *an unmatched spiritual destination of the Buddhist world. The visitors are overwhelmed with the sanctity and serenity of Lumbini. The spiritual feeling of being at the holy birthplace of the Enlightened One nurtures devotion and faith in their mind and fills their heart with purity, compassion and wisdom (Ghimire, 2016).*

Spirituality and peace are the fundamental aspects of Buddhism, and they should exist at Lumbini. The Lumbini region encompasses dozens of Buddhist-spiritual sites and houses beautiful flora and fauna, which can evoke spirituality, serenity and satisfaction in the mind of visitors. Lumbini, the world heritage site with

outstanding universal value, is important to be one of the world's top-class spiritual and pilgrimage destinations. Pilgrims and visitors come to Lumbini and express their religious and spiritual sentiments in various ways, often linked to their diverse cultures. They come to meditate, chant, and beat on drums, offer gold leaves, offer coins, incense or milk. They all come with the expectations of peace and harmony (UNESCO, 2013:11). Today, Buddhists from all over the world and other travellers are interested in Nepal's ancient history and culture (Ghimire, 2017).

Lumbini is one of the most sacred places in the world. Over many centuries people have developed visions of where the Buddha was born. When U Thant, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, visited Nepal in 1967, he proposed the development of Lumbini into a major centre of pilgrimage. Kenzo Tange of Japan was assigned to create the Lumbini Master Plan. The U.N. and Government approved the plan of Nepal in 1978. The overall intent of the plan is to reinforce the symbolic entity of the Lumbini Garden in its simplicity and clarity. The plan's detail was based on Buddhist symbolism of geometric shapes and the path to enlightenment. Rai (2010:19) writes that the continuous prayers, meditation, and worship in monasteries help them increase faith and purify their mind. After having a certain level of mental clarity, devotion, and faith, they are now eligible to enter the Sacred Garden, hallowed by the birth of the Buddha, to realise the apprehensive nature of impermanence.

Moreover, one can feel the Buddha's blessing within the tranquillity. Emperor Asoka erected Asoka Pillar in Lumbini that carries the authentic and living history of the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha. The Asoka Pillar with epigraphic evidence testifies Lumbini as the birthplace of the Buddha (Ghimire, 2019).

6.9 Motives for pilgrimage in Shikoku

Instead, this inquiry with experts' respondents understands the situation and strategies for pilgrimage tourism development. In the question "why people go on a pilgrimage?" the experts have different opinions. One of the Shikoku experts says pilgrimage is for self-reflection, in memory of someone who has passed away, to experience a "spiritual" journey, to pray for something, as part of a religious ritual or teaching, to get closer to God or some other holy being or saint (E-5). E (6) explains pilgrimage is a pilgrimage, whether it is Buddhist, Christian, Judaic, Islamic, or anything else. Pilgrimage is a time and place set aside for an inner spiritual quest, a time and place to look for answers to spiritual questions the pilgrim may have brought to the trail with them. Most non-Japanese walkers visit

Shikoku for the physical walk-in rural Japan rather than for spiritual reasons. Overall, though, I think people walk pilgrimage in general because of an inner feeling of something missing in their life.

Given that "religion" is not as crucial as "spirituality" for many people, a pilgrimage gives them a place where they can focus on their inner spiritual quest while at the same time enjoying the outdoors. Likewise, other expert respondents opined as people are missing something in their lives and seek spiritual help and self-understanding (E-3). Pilgrims visit to reflect on one's life, memorials for ancestors and get stamped on a book from temples (E-2), and pilgrimages help with a troubled mind/spirit (E-1). In another question, "What do you think about Buddhist pilgrimage?", (E-5) explains, 'It is often in a circle with no beginning and end. It matches the Buddhist teaching of life and reincarnation. Christian pilgrimage routes often seem to be a straight line, which matches the Christian teaching of the afterlife that one will go up to heaven or down to hell. I prefer the Buddhist way of thinking and their form of pilgrimages'. People are seeking more spiritual things these days (E-3). Pilgrimage is the process to reflect on mental stress (E-1).

6.10 Influencing factors to visit Shikoku

Pilgrims/tourists revisit a pilgrimage site if it is interesting for them or are not satisfied with one visit or want to do more rituals. There could be various factors influencing pilgrims/tourist to visit Shikoku. The most influencing factors were religious belief and respect for the Kōbō Daishi, honour and memory of the ancestors, rituals, Buddhism and Japanese culture, books, other publications, friends, yoga teachers, travel agents, websites, advertisements, natural beauty and outdoors-hiking. A pilgrim was influenced with a previous visit (p-21); another pilgrim found a picture of Shikoku pilgrimage on Santiago's way (p-15), met a Japanese pilgrim who told about Shikoku while walking Camino, love walking pilgrimages and spirituality (p-78), the voice of the Buddha, respect to the Buddha and will walk for 12 years (p-30). Some others wanted family happiness and better health, relief from work stress and retirement from work.

6.11 Expectation from Shikoku pilgrimage

'Why do people go and what do they expect from Shikoku pilgrimage?' is one of the critical questions. One of the respondents (E-3) noted that people have different expectations and want to gain something from the Shikoku pilgrimage. Expert respondents opined as Shikoku has a unique culture that is very precious. People go

on pilgrimage to reflect on themselves, clear their mind and spirit (E-4), worldly benefits and memorial for ancestors (E-2) and recall old memories, relief from sickness and death of parents (E-1). There seems to be a "pilgrimage boom", and people want to try a not well-known pilgrimage. Some want to experience a lengthy, religious journey in Japan and interact with the Japanese in a countryside setting (E-5). As per a pilgrim respondent, it changed her as a person, from the generosity of the people, the peacefulness of the surroundings and the profoundly surreal way of life that she could have never imagined. It was an experience of a lifetime that she still thinks about today (p-107). Others expectations were to experience the unique culture of Shikoku, improve mental health, spiritual development, interaction and involvement with locals, experience Japanese culture, enjoy reconnect with nature, self-improvement and personal satisfaction, a sense of achievement, discover things about oneself, deep emotional feelings, a chance to escape everyday life, broader understanding of Buddhism, more insight into cultural, religious beliefs in Japan, spiritual comfort, improve mental and personal health, develop a positive attitude, fulfilment of a wish and more. P (41) was expecting time for reflection upon her life so far. She wanted to be on her own and get rid of the past's bad things. She expected to come to terms with her mother's disease. It had changed her life, way of looking at people, and she became a Buddhist. She learned to bear lousy weather and still stay positive. Some others expected to learn about history, culture and Buddhism, tourism and health, gifts and food sold at local shops, sleep outside and remain healthy.

7. Suggestions to improve Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism

A growing local movement is pushing to have the Shikoku pilgrimage route recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its cultural importance to Japan. As one of the few circular pilgrimages in the world, the end of the 88 temples journey is also beginning, but no matter your intentions for doing all or some of the pilgrimage, one thing is sure: you leave Shikoku a different person. Overall, hundreds of thousands of people are engaged in the pilgrimage annually on foot, by automobiles, bicycles or other means in Shikoku. The government and tourist organisations should promote the Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan and worldwide.

In a question, "What are the weaknesses to develop pilgrimage tourism?" (E-5) explains there needs a balance between "pilgrimage" and "tourism." If things become too touristy then the religious or spiritual side of the pilgrimage disappears. Some foreigners have mentioned that they do not want to see the Shikoku pilgrimage turn into a Disneyland type of place. E (6) emphasises that temples and the temple association need to make a concerted effort to make the

walk easier for walking non-Japanese pilgrims. Lodging issues, places to sit out of the rain at temples. I believe that there is a general lack of concern for non-Japanese pilgrims. The temples want the numbers to increase. However, no one is trying to make life easier for them. Likewise, it should be the spiritual journey to fulfil pilgrims' desires (E-3), many travel agencies are interested only in profit (E-2). There is no official policy; most development is from individual interest (E-3), young people have insufficient knowledge (E-1). (E-5) further recommends having a "Cultural or Historical Centre" for the Shikoku pilgrimage near Temple 1. The Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau has done a fantastic job improving "pilgrimage tourism" along the Kumano Kodo. Similar work needs to be done about the Shikoku pilgrimage. Many of the respondents recommended various strategies to improve Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism. A few of the recommendations are as follows:

1. English Language materials, multi-lingual signs, English speakers at hotels and temples, Timetables at the bus and train stops and stations;
2. Shikoku must be listed in world heritage sites;
3. Temple staff needs to be friendly/talk freely with the pilgrims;
4. Younger people should be educated to appreciate nature & Kobo Daishi;
5. Lodging should be cheaper, flexible with arrival time, bath time, meals making it more accessible to walking pilgrims with cheaper hotels like Santiago's way...;
6. Many of the lodge owners are older people; who will run those in future? It should be continued;
7. Improve the roads, road to some temples are narrow and difficult to walk, improve the public transportation system to all the temples;
8. More public toilets, fix roads and infrastructures, safe and clean town and roads;
9. Luggage store in Tokushima for foreigners, more access to DATA and PHONE sim for short term;
10. Organised tourism and pilgrimage is different things, do not forget the meaning and purpose of pilgrimage and just go with economics;
11. Advertise Shikoku, provide subsidies for local businesses and products;

12. Better maintenance and preservation of temples will enhance the future of tourism and pilgrimages; and
13. However, few voices are against commercialisation and bringing UNESCO something in Shikoku that could burn Shikoku out with rampant tourism. Do not kill the 'pilgrimage' spirit, culture and tradition. Reduce garbage and improve services to cater for a more significant number of pilgrims/tourists in the days to come.

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