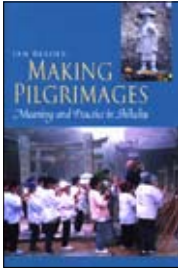


REVIEWS



Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku*

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005, xv + 350 pp. \$55.00 cloth, ISBN 0-8248-2876-3.

IT GOES WITHOUT saying that Ian Reader, the author of this book and professor at Lancaster University, is among the top academic experts in the field of Japanese religions.¹ He has finally, after many years of research, published his work on the Shinkoku *henro* pilgrimage. If this book had been published in Japanese, it would undoubtedly prove to be an extremely stimulating study on pilgrimage and the Shikoku *henro* for the Japanese, but unfortunately (for the Japanese) it is written in English. Not only is it written from a broad perspective beyond the limited world of the Japanese language, but it introduces pilgrimage in Japan and discusses the issues on a plane that is accessible to those who live and breath outside the Japanese cultural sphere.

The title of this book, significantly, is “Making Pilgrimages.” I thought long and hard about how this title could be expressed in Japanese, but could not come up with a satisfactory rendering. In any case, what is significant is that the main title is not “A Study on Pilgrimage” or “The Structure of Pilgrimage,” let alone merely “Pilgrimages,” but deliberately “Making Pilgrimages.” The author is saying that the theme of this book is not merely about “studies on” or “the structure of” pilgrimage, or merely pilgrimage in general, in which one stops and gazes at a static noun, but focuses on actively “doing pilgrimage” or “going out on pilgrimage,” reflecting his attempt to capture phenomena in which people are continuously active. I hope someday, if I have the chance, to ask the author directly about the title, though it may remain an eternally unresolved issue. Did he consider other ideas while thinking about the title? What standards or sensations did he have in mind when choosing the term “making”? Only the author knows for sure. On the other hand, maybe not. Perhaps a gerund in English does not have the nuances of a verb? Or the title may be just part of the marketing strategy of the publisher to reflect a certain style (though this is unlikely, since the publisher is the University of Hawai'i Press). In

1. This review appeared originally in Japanese in *Shūkyō kenkyū* 宗教研究 70/3 (no. 346, December 2005): 223–28. It was translated (with some modifications) into English by Paul L. Swanson with the author's approval and advice.

any case, when a term is chosen from among numerous possibilities, it carries a certain significance, even if one was not conscious of the reasons for it at the time.

The book, apart from the Introduction and Conclusion, consists of eight chapters, which the author “broadly divides into three sections” (5). Each chapter is divided, with subtitles, into over ten (and sometimes over twenty) smaller subsections. Glancing quickly through these subtitles gives a good idea of the flow of the “story” of this book.

The first section includes the first three chapters and presents a general overview of the Shikoku pilgrimage and its general form as a religious custom and practice. Reader, however, is not satisfied with a general presentation of the practice of pilgrimage, but provides an in-depth theoretical discussion of pilgrimage. He crosses smoothly back and forth between the presentation of data and theoretical discussion.

Chapter 1. Pilgrimage, Practice, Meanings: Making Pilgrimages in Shikoku

The first half of this chapter is an “orientation” to the Shikoku *henro*. Basic items of the pilgrimage—Kōbō Daishi Kūkai, *reijō* 霊場 (“spirit place”), *osamefuda* 納め札 (pilgrim’s card), *nōkyōchō* 納経帳 (pilgrim’s book), *nōkyō kakejiku* 納経掛け軸 (pilgrim’s scroll), *tsue* 杖 (pilgrim’s staff), and so forth—are introduced and explained. In the second half the diversity of the pilgrimage is explained, and how a single experience of it is insufficient. Reader, for example, shows how the Shikoku *henro* is both an (inter)national and local pilgrimage.

2. Making Landscapes: Geography, Symbol, Legend, and Traces

This chapter discusses the “making” of the Shikoku pilgrimage in its various facets, starting with the legends of Kōbō Daishi as the “founder” of the pilgrimage; the mapping and cosmology of the circuit involving the process of enlightenment; the conception of Shikoku as the “land of the dead” and other symbolism of death; and other diverse layers of meaning. In this chapter Reader discusses landscape and other “geographical” issues, but these are not limited to the scenes that are visible to the eye, but also refer to “emotional” landscapes. This becomes a key term throughout the book, with frequent references to “emotional terrain,” “emotional landscape,” and “emotional power.”

3. Making Pilgrimages: Pilgrims, Motives, and Meanings

The focus of this chapter is on the pilgrims: what kind of people are they? It is estimated that tens of thousands of pilgrims come to Shikoku every year, with a variety of motives, and Reader attempts to draw a profile (or “cameos”) of many individual pilgrims. In his introduction, Reader claims to have interviewed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of informants. Out of these appear images of people who participate out a sense of leisure, pilgrimages of ascetic practice, pilgrimages for healing disease (or out of gratitude for such healing), and even pilgrimages motivated by lost love and a broken heart. Pilgrims travel by various means: by bus, by taxi, in their own car,

on public transportation, or by walking; in any case, the long, 1400-kilometer route gives a sense of urgency to the travels. These various conditions make it difficult to make any statistical analysis through the use of questionnaires. In order to grasp the diversity of motives and methods of individual pilgrims, one must devote time and trouble to a steady accumulation of personal encounters, something that clearly the author has done.

The second section shifts its attention to historical developments:

4. History, Footsteps, and Customs: Making the Premodern Pilgrimage

As the subtitle shows, this fourth chapter traces the history of the pilgrimage up to 1945. This is an area that has been covered in the greatest detail by previous research, and the author shows a great familiarity with the available studies.

5. Shaping the Pilgrimage: From Poverty to the Package Tour in Postwar Japan

It is in this fifth chapter, which discusses postwar developments in the Shikoku pilgrimage, that the author's original perspective appears most clearly. There is no doubt that fundamental changes in the Shikoku pilgrimage occurred in and after the 1950s. Reader calls this the era of the "commercial" pilgrimage (152). Along with the postwar recovery, not only did the number of pilgrims increase greatly, but there was also the introduction of the "package tour" by bus companies, and the birth of "agents" who organized groups of pilgrims. The pilgrimage sites, which until then had acted more-or-less independently, came together to organize the Shikoku Reijōkai 四国霊場会, and even a system of official *sendatsu*/guides. As a result the pilgrimage as a whole has taken on the form of a sort of artificial religious organization. It should be noted that after these developments, there has been a steady increase in the number of pilgrims who walk the route. Though the actual number of "walkers" is much smaller, it can be said that the "walking" pilgrims and "bus-riding" pilgrims each form one wing that makes the so-called "pilgrimage boom" fly.

The third and final section, consisting of chapters 6 and 7, is the true heart of this book. By contrasting the "walking" and "bus" pilgrimages already discussed in chapter 5, Reader is able to depict these different pilgrimage experiences.

6. Walking Pilgrimages: Meaning and Experience on the Pilgrim's Way

This chapter—undoubtedly much influenced by the author's own experiences—depicts the various material and psychological incidents experienced among walking pilgrims "on the road." The author himself, for example, shows a great interest in the phenomenon of *henro boke* 遍路ぼけ ("pilgrimage senility" or "pilgrimage immersion") (191–93), which he takes to be a kind of immersion in a world of simplicity and selflessness, and as a universal experience among walking pilgrims. Again, though Reader is not interested primarily in interpretations along the line of theories of ritual, he finds that while walking, one focuses on dealing with simple, actual problems—walking, eating, sleeping, going to the toilet—which turns into a

routine of self-absorption. In the past walking was the main form of movement, but in the present time where roads for long-distance travel are all built for automobiles, the danger from and noise of traffic (and the occasional tunnel) are sources of suffering for the pilgrims. The experience at the pilgrimage stations may, at times, be a source of frustration for the pilgrim, such as when one approaches the temple in order to have one's scroll inscribed only to discover that a large group of tour pilgrims is already in line waiting with a mountain of their own scrolls, forcing a long wait, and sometimes finding no room in the temple inn. Despite these unpleasant aspects, adds the author, many walking pilgrims return often to Shikoku. This discovery becomes the theme of the final chapter in the book.

7. Making Bus Pilgrimages: Practice and Experience on the Package Tour

Although the "bus pilgrims" can be seen as antithetical to the walking pilgrims, Reader does not blithely dismiss them. Rather, his interest in this form of pilgrimage allows him to highlight many of the themes of the book. This chapter is a description of a bus tour taken by the author himself. The pilgrimage was precisely organized and efficiently executed, so there were no unexpected and dramatic experiences or trouble, such as one finds during a walking pilgrimage. The greatest danger seems to be tedium, and sometimes the author himself seems to find it more than he can handle. However, he does not dismiss this form of pilgrimage as "mere" tourism. The author does not make the mistake of reducing pilgrimage to the two opposite poles of "faith" and "tourism," and this reviewer has often made the same point (see, for example, SHINNO 2002).

8. A Way of Life: Pilgrimage, Transformation, and Permanence

The author's interest extends beyond the point where the pilgrims reach the end of their pilgrimage. He takes up the idea of a "Shikoku sickness" (Shikoku-byō 四国病), an "addiction" to the pilgrimage, and expands on his examination by taking into account how the experience of the pilgrimage changes people's lives. In other words, he attempts to find a universality to the pilgrimage which cannot be limited to the single experience of a small ritual world of pilgrimage as an aspect of folk religion.

Further Comments on Studies of Pilgrimage in Japan

Research on pilgrimage has a long history in Japan. A major work by Shinjō Tsunetzō 新城常三 on the socio-economic-historical aspects of pilgrimage was published in 1964, which provided researchers with a broad historical perspective of the topic. Many scholars have built on this foundation with studies in their own fields such as religious studies, folklore, sociology, and so forth. In the meantime there have been new developments in the pilgrimage practices themselves. It can be said that the Shinkoku *henro* has experienced one of its golden ages of prosperity. When I began to study pilgrimage almost thirty years ago, it was still not unusual for people to walk the pilgrimage, and the group bus tours were also very popular. According to

Satō Hisamitsu—though the basis for such a claim is not clear—participation in pilgrimage has grown fourfold in the quarter-century between 1978 and 2002 (see SATŌ 2004). In the academic realm, not only have a number of individual studies appeared in the fields mentioned above, but there are a number of large-scale research groups and projects on pilgrimage, such as the long-term project at Waseda University on “Contemporary Society and Pilgrimage: The Sociology of the Shikoku *henro* and the Pilgrimage Route” 現代社会と巡礼——四国遍路と遍路道の社会学, which has been going on for more than five years.

Nevertheless I cannot help but feel a sense of stagnation in the field. There is no sense of advancing beyond the issues and points of discussion delineated during the early days of research on pilgrimage, even though many historical details have been unearthed. What is the basis for this sense of ennui? A full discussion of this problem would take us beyond the boundaries of this book review, but I would like to point out one factor, that is, researchers have unconsciously fallen into accepting a certain hierarchy of values. In other words, there is the assumption, among those that are involved in the pilgrimage, that the walking pilgrimage is somehow superior to that of the bus tour/automobile pilgrimage. Researchers also seem to accept this value judgment, and so their interest tends to lean in favor of the walking pilgrimage. In fact, however, as is reflected also in the book under review, we are now in an age where the pilgrimage is conducted more and more by bus or automobile. If researchers focus overly on the walking pilgrimage, they will become increasingly out of touch with current realities. It is important to realize that one can find many pilgrims who experience a sense of fulfillment through a bus-tour pilgrimage (see, for example, ISHIMOTO 2005).

Or one could look at this from another perspective. A very traditional view is to consider the aspect of helping (*settai* 接待) the pilgrims—the free favors that local residents provide to pilgrims—in terms of a kind of religious act based on faith in Kōbō Daishi. However, according to results of surveys concerning the availability of free lodgings (*zenkon-yado* 善根宿) for pilgrims in recent times, there were many people who felt that feelings of thankfulness on the part of pilgrims should be matched with concrete action, such as offers to help with the cleaning at the lodgings. It is interesting to note that many of the informants who replied in this way were people from outside of Shikoku. Again, there is the story of the restoration of a local Buddha hall due to the strenuous efforts of pilgrims, but eventually, due to problems of management, pilgrims were denied use of the hall.² Both of these cases illustrate the fact that the relationships between pilgrims and the local people are not always harmonious. Of course, tensions between pilgrims and the local people is not something that started in recent years. But the fact that these tensions arose within the context of *settai* and free lodgings indicates that it is of a different type of tension than that in the past. It is necessary to investigate whether these incidents

2. Both of these points were brought to my attention in reports and an MA thesis by one of my students.

are just happenstance, or whether they reflect new developments in the pilgrimage situation.

One area that should be considered carefully is the use of personal automobiles to undertake the pilgrimage. Compared to the twofold pattern considered so far—walking or bus-guide pilgrimage—it must be admitted that studying this form of pilgrimage presents difficult challenges. In the past the researcher could take part in, interview, or observe the pilgrimage of those walking or on a bus tour, but it is not possible to do such research on those traveling in their own cars. Nevertheless I think it is important to find some way to take this kind of pilgrimage into account.

As I suggested at the beginning of my review, Reader has created a methodology that avoids as much as possible the inflexible perspectives mentioned above. It is ironic yet suggestive that the examples of tensions connected with *settai* and free lodgings—matters that do not match the perspectives and structure of established pilgrimage research—were discovered not by professional researchers but by surveys conducted by students for their graduation or MS theses. In his Conclusion, Reader discusses the various ambivalent images and tendencies of the Shikoku pilgrimage, and refuses to reduce pilgrimage to general theoretical structures. As a reviewer, I would like to affirm and applaud Reader's stance. The gradual accumulation of direct experience—to walk the pilgrimage oneself, and/or take part in bus tours—is the only way to overcome the stagnation and clinging to traditional perspectives in the study of pilgrimage.

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