Modern Transport and the Shikoku Pilgrimage

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The changing infrastructure of a spiritual journey

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1 Introduction

Pilgrimages have a long heritage in human history. Often tied to religious practices, they exist throughout different cultures, societies, and beliefs. Whether it is the Camino de Santiago for Christians, the Hajj for Muslims, or the journey to Lumbini for Buddhists, just to name a few, pilgrimages have attracted people for centuries. Why each person chooses to take on one of these paths varies greatly. As mentioned, religion has always been a major factor. However, many pilgrims have other motives, such as completing a personal challenge or simply visiting the region. The routes of these pilgrimages have also changed over time, due to socio-cultural, political, religious, or geographical reasons. Particularly modern transport methods like trains, buses, cars, and planes, have impacted how each pilgrim reaches their destination. Additionally, new infrastructure has made physically gruelling pilgrimages much more accessible. This has also been the case in Japan. The Shikoku pilgrimage 四国遍路 (*Shikoku henro*) is one of the most popular pilgrimages in the country and is located on the island of Shikoku, in southwestern Japan. As the Organization for Promotion of Tourism in Shikoku describes it, it is "one of the few circular-shaped pilgrimages in the world". The route surrounds the island, crossing all four prefectures (Ehime, Kagawa, Tokushima, and Kōchi),[1] is over 1200 kilometres long, and includes eighty-eight temples or sacred sites. Although the temples are numbered and many pilgrims complete the route clockwise, there are no set rules regarding the order. Its origins are not precisely defined, but the prominent Buddhist monk Kūkai 空海 (774-835), posthumously known as Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, is often credited as the "founder" of the pilgrimage.[2] Originally done on foot, pilgrims have increasingly used modern transport to complete the journey. As Reader indicates, organised bus tours have been particularly successful in the 20th and 21st centuries.[3] The development of infrastructure has altered how pilgrims move, the speed at which they travel, and how they interact with the landscape. Mobility is a key component of pilgrimages. Considering this shift in dynamics, I will analyse how modern transport has impacted the Shikoku pilgrimage. How it challenges preconceived notions of what constitutes a "traditional" pilgrimage, whether it affects how pilgrims are perceived, and which role these developments have played in the commercialisation of the pilgrimage are just some of the questions I intend to answer.

[1] Formerly the provinces Iyo, Sanuki, Awa and Tosa.

[2] "Shikoku Henro", Organization of Promotion of Tourism in Shikoku, accessed June 13, 2021, https://shikoku-tourism.com/en/shikoku-henro/shikoku-henro.

[3] Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 7.

2 Methodology and literature review

To answer my research question, I will rely on a critical analysis of pre-existing literature. Since much of the thesis deals with theoretical concepts, my focus will be on qualitative data. However, in relevant cases (such as commercialisation), I will use quantitative and statistical data to bolster my argument. Although there is abundant literature on the Shikoku pilgrimage, especially when considering primary sources, much of it centres around its Buddhist history and the figure of Kūkai. Another popular approach to study the Shikoku pilgrimage has been through the analysis of first-hand accounts of pilgrims. However, outside of these personal experiences, there is comparatively little academic literature on the current state of the pilgrimage, even less concerning the impact of modern transport. A major exception is Ian Reader, whose vast work on all aspects of the Shikoku pilgrimage will serve as the core of this thesis. His book *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (2005) mentions critical aspects of the pilgrimage such as the influence of modern infrastructure on the landscape (Chapter 2), the development of mass transport during the 20th century (Chapters 4 and 5), and the experiences of walking pilgrims (Chapter 6) compared to bus pilgrims (Chapter 7).

To differentiate my work from his and provide a proper contribution I will focus on two facets. First, I will expand on different modes of transport. Reader focuses almost exclusively on walking and bus pilgrims because "these are the two dominant modes of pilgrimage practice" and they are also the ones he is most familiar with.[4] Including more transport methods in my thesis will provide a wider understanding of the effect of modern transport on the Shikoku pilgrimage. Second, I will include a distinct theoretical framework to use throughout my thesis. The Organization for Promotion of Tourism in Shikoku describes the pilgrimage as "an important Japanese heritage site" and "a unique cultural treasure that significantly represents the soul of both the nation and its people". I will refer to Hobsbawm and Ranger's concept of "invented traditions" to discuss what, if anything, constitutes a "genuine" or "traditional" pilgrimage, and how these topics are perceived and represented currently. I will also refer to Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" when analysing the Shikoku pilgrimage as part of a "national tradition" and its relation to a "national identity". On topics such as walking and bus pilgrims, Reader often relies on his personal experience, on accounts of people he met during his journeys, as well as the journals of other pilgrims. Although these experiences are extremely valuable qualitative data, by applying the previously mentioned

[4] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 188.

theoretical framework, I intend to distance my work from Reader's. I will be able to provide a conceptual analysis of the relationship between modern transport and its effect on the "traditions" of the Shikoku pilgrimage. This will also allow me to avoid falling into the dichotomy of "tradition" versus "modernity".

My thesis will be divided into four main sections. The first section of the thesis will provide a historical background of Kūkai, Shingon Buddhism, and the Shikoku pilgrimage. It will include the works of Ian Reader, Matsuo Kenji, and Nathalie Kouamé, among others, to show the origins of some pilgrim practices and how they shaped the currently perceived traditions. It will also include an overview of how the infrastructure changed over time. The second section will delve a bit deeper into the concept of invented traditions proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger, as well as the works of Stephen Vlastos and Benedict Anderson. These concepts will be especially useful when analysing different pilgrimage practices and their "tradition" in subsequent sections. These two sections are meant to provide both the historical context of the Shikoku pilgrimage and the theoretical models I will apply throughout the thesis, creating the foundation for my work.

The third section will deal with the presumed ascetic nature of walking the pilgrimage and issues of accessibility. I will analyse the work of Jason Danely to study the role of walking and its relationship with the landscape, John A. Shultz's concept of "walking asceticism" and the importance of temporality, as well as Ryofu Pussel and the rituals of the Shikoku pilgrimage. Naturally, I will also include Reader's analysis of the so-called "fast pilgrims". It will include issues of spirituality related to the speed at which the pilgrimage is completed, the values associated with different modes of transport, and how these modes of transport have affected the locals' relationship with pilgrims. One of the main tensions presented will be the importance of the journey in contrast to the importance of the ritual practices mentioned by Reader.

The fourth section will analyse the impact modern transport had on the commercialisation of the pilgrimage. I will focus on the tourist industry surrounding Shikoku and issues of secularisation and religion, as well as the relationship between religious and tourist organizations. An important aspect will be the commodification of religious practice and how religious tourism has been promoted in Shikoku. I will circle back to the topic of slow pilgrims and analyse the concept of slow tourism, as opposed to mass tourism enabled by modern infrastructure. To conclude, I will summarize my findings to accurately answer my research question.

3 History of the Shikoku pilgrimage

3.1 The life of Kūkai and his ties to the pilgrimage

According to the Reijōkai 四国八十八ヶ所霊場会 (*Shikoku Hachijūhakkasho Reijōkai*), an organisation representing the temples of the pilgrimage that has been operational since 1958, it is thought that Kōbō Daishi trained on the island and selected eighty-eight temples to form the route. The association claims that it is a "pilgrimage to journey through the 88 sites of the sacred ground, the sites of the master".[5] While Kōbō Daishi is a prominent figure, central to the history of the pilgrimage, the exact origins are much more unclear. Particularly the relationship between all eighty-eight sacred sites to establish a formal circuit is assumed to be a later development. The oldest reference to "eighty-eight places" is an inscription in a small temple in the Tosa district from the year Bunmei 3 (1471). However, this inscription cannot be verified, and some have suggested that the date might be Tenmei 3 (1783).[6] Consequently, the earliest certifiable references to the number "eighty-eight" only appear after 1677.[7]

Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi) was born in 774 in present-day Zentsūji, on the island of Shikoku. He was born into the house of Saeki, a branch of the prominent Ōtomo clan. In 788, at the age of fifteen, he began studying the Chinese classics and moved to the capital (Nagaoka-kyō) to enter college. Kūkai, dissatisfied with the Confucian teachings, began practising asceticism and became a Buddhist novice after turning twenty years old. After leaving college, he turned away from the capital and began his life as a wandering hermit. He travelled begging for food, occasionally going to Nara to further his studies. Little is known about Kūkai between the ages of twenty-four, when he completed his work *Indications*, and thirty-one, when he set out for China.[8] This gap was filled with an extensive number of legends and myths surrounding the figure of Kūkai. As Ian Reader puts it: "In the legends, Kōbō Daishi travels the countryside in the guise of an itinerant priest or pilgrim, dispensing miracles, curing the sick, bestowing benefits on the good and virtuous, especially those who help him and display charity, and punishing the greedy and the mean".[9] It is very likely that the idea of Kūkai as the founder of the Shikoku pilgrimage stems, at least in part, from these myths and tales.

[5] "What is a pilgrimage?", Shikoku 88 Sacred Sites (Inc.), accessed June 14, 2021, https://88shikokuhenro.jp/en/pilgrimage/.

[6] Bunmei 3 and Tenmei 3 refer to the third year of the Bunmei (1469-1487) and Tenmei (1781-1789) era.

[7] Matsuo Kenji 松尾 剛次, *A history of Japanese Buddhism* (Folkstone: Global Oriental, 2007), 241.

[8] Hakeda Yoshito 羽毛田 義人, ed., *Kūkai: Major Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 13-26.

[9] Ian Reader, "Legends, Miracles, and Faith in Kōbō Daishi and the Shikoku Pilgrimage", in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 361.

In 804 Kūkai travelled to Chang'an, the capital of the Tang dynasty. There he met and studied under Master Huiguo 惠果 (746-805), where he received the *abhiṣeka* ritual, was ordained master of esoteric Buddhism 密教 (*mikkyō*) and became the eighth patriarch. He returned to Japan in 806 with the objective of transmitting his teachings, but it took three years for the Japanese court to grant him a response. The court had already acknowledged Saichō 最澄 (767-822) and his Tendai Lotus school 天台法華宗 (*Tendai hokke-shū*) as an authority on esoteric Buddhism. Only in 809, after the accession to the throne of Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 (*Saga tennō*, 786-842), did Kūkai gain prominence. He then spent the next twenty-six years of his life promoting the Shingon school 真言宗 (*Shingon-shū*) of Buddhism, gaining official recognition and fully integrating it into the "religio-political world" of the early Heian period (794-1185).[10]

Despite his association with the Shikoku pilgrimage, it is Mount Kōya 高野山 (*Kōya-san*), located south of Ōsaka, that plays a central role in Kūkai's life. In 816, he requested permission from the court to build a temple complex on Mount Kōya. In this petition, Kūkai remarks on the importance of Buddhist ascetic practice in the mountains. He was granted the land and received imperial permission to build the temple the same year. Kūkai conceived the temple as a mandala, implementing the landscape of the mountain. He completed a zone-demarcating rite, expelling malevolent spirits and welcoming benevolent ones. Interestingly, Kūkai requested assistance not only from buddhas and *devas* (divinities), but also from mountain spirits and *kami* 神 (spirits or deities).[11]

Towards the latter stages of his life, Kūkai often travelled between Mount Kōya and the capital Heian-kyō (present-day Kyōto, it was made the capital in 794). He published several texts and completed one of his most important works, the *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind According to the Secret Mandalas* 秘密曼陀羅十住心論 (*Himitsu Mandala Jūjūshinron*) in 830, before passing away in 835. Nevertheless, some adherents to his faith have stated that Kūkai did not die, instead, he "sat in the lotus position, formed the ritual hand gesture of the Great Sun Buddha (Mahāvairocana), and peacefully entered the state of eternal meditation". In 921, eighty-six years after his death, the court posthumously awarded him the title of Kōbō Daishi (Great Master and Propagator of Buddhist Teachings).[12]

[10] Elizabeth Tinsley, "Kūkai and the Development of Shingon Buddhism", in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 696-700/707.

[11] Ethan Buschelle, "The Mountain as a Mandala: Kūkai's Founding of Mt. Kōya", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 47, no. 1 (2020): 68/71-76.

[12] George J. Tanabe Jr., "The Founding of Mount Kōya and Kūkai's Eternal Meditation", in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 358-359.

3.2 Shingon Buddhism

As already mentioned, Kūkai introduced the Shingon school of Buddhism to Japan based on the teachings he received in China. His position on esoteric Buddhism and its supposed superiority over exoteric Buddhism 顕教 (*kengyō*) was heavily influenced by Master Huiguo. Consequently, Kūkai attempted to differentiate both schools of thought. He stated that esoteric teachings contain the final truth and, by practising esoteric Buddhist methods of meditation, one can reach enlightenment. He claimed that esoteric Buddhism was a direct approach and even those that had been denied salvation by exoteric teachings could be saved by reciting mantras. Furthermore, Kūkai criticised the ineffective practice of reciting sutras without meditation and stated that only esoteric Buddhism had systematic methods aiming at enlightenment. Kūkai concluded that all other varieties of Buddhism were steps towards the highest expression of Buddhist teaching, Shingon Buddhism.[13]

As a result of his work, Kūkai became an essential figure in the systematisation of esoteric Buddhism. At the centre stood Mahāvairocana, whose body, speech, and mind encompassed the entire universe. He identified two models, both hierarchical, which later would be known as the vertical and horizontal perspectives. The vertical model has ten divisions, which he described in the *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind*. The first one represents an "animalistic human consciousness concerned only with sensual needs". Abodes two and three represent "religio-ethical orientations" to improve one's life. These are equated with the level of mind of Confucianists (second abode) and Daoists (third abode). Abodes four to nine represent different Buddhist perspectives, "with six through nine indicating Mahāyāna schools of thought".[14] Lastly, as previously mentioned, Shingon Buddhism is located at the tenth and highest abode. Kūkai also refers to the "Womb World" and the "Diamond World" mandalas. For him, the former represented principle 理 (*ri*), while the latter represented wisdom 智 (*chi*). Practising these mandalas was necessary "to transform one's mode of being in the world such that one no longer experiences individuality as an absolute fact but only as a relative description of one life as a part of a whole network of being". To accomplish this process, Shingon practice highlights the three secrets 三密 (*sanmitsu*) of mantra (recitation of prayer-like utterances), mudrā (ritual hand gesture), and mandala (envisioning self and world), corresponding to Buddha's body, speech, and mind.[15]

[13] Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Works*, 61-66.

[14] David L. Gardiner, "Kūkai's Shingon Philosophy: Embodiment", in *The Dao Companion to Japanese Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Gereon Kopf (Dordrecht: Springer, 2019), 339-341.

[15] Gardiner, "Shingon Philosophy", 342.

3.3 Origins of the pilgrimage

Based on the information about the life of Kūkai, it is difficult to designate him as the founder of the Shikoku pilgrimage. There is no direct evidence that Kūkai demarcated the eighty-eight sites that are currently part of the official route. Other than being born on the island of Shikoku, much of this myth relies on folktales and legends surrounding his ascetic travels and his miraculous work between the time he left college and his journey to China. As a result, not much is known about the pilgrimage until the Edo period (1603-1868). There are, however, three main theories based on the works of prominent Japanese scholars Kondō Yoshihiro 近藤喜博, Shinjō Tsunezō 新城 常三, and Gorai Shigeru 五来 重.

Kondō relies on the *Konjaku Monogatari* 今昔物語, written in the 12th century, to make his argument. He states that the coastal path linking the bay of Shido with the capes of Ashizuri and Muroto would later form the Shikoku pilgrimage. These places were gateways between Shikoku and the Kumano pilgrimage 熊野古道 (*Kumano kodō*), associated with the bodhisattva Kannon 観音. As such, Kondō argues that the Shikoku pilgrimage was created by Kumano ascetics as an extension to the Kumano pilgrimage. Shinjō, on the other hand, attributes much more importance to Kūkai. He claims that a cult formed around the figure of Kōbō Daishi after his death. These ascetics, mostly followers of Shingon Buddhism, would often start their journey at Mount Kōya and travel to his birthplace, the island of Shikoku. There, they would walk around the periphery of the island to visit locations associated with Kūkai, until the definitive route of the pilgrimage was eventually formed in the Muromachi period (1336-1573). Gorai offers yet another explanation. He argues that the Shikoku pilgrimage predates Kūkai. Instead, the pilgrimage was created by adherents of an ancient "religion of the sea" 海洋宗教 (*kaiyō shūkyō*), completing a series of ascetic practices while following the coast.[16]

Determining the "true" origins of the Shikoku pilgrimage proves quite difficult, as it is likely a combination of geographical features, local belief systems, and the influence of Shingon Buddhists that moulded the pilgrimage into its current form. However, Reader points out flaws in Kondō and Gorai's theories. Although the natural landscape is important, Gorai does not provide empirical evidence to prove his theory. Kondō's argument is also difficult to substantiate. Of the eighty-eight temples, only thirty-nine have ties connecting them to Kumano beliefs and practices. If Kumano pilgrims were the ones who established the Shikoku

[16] Nathalie Kouamé, *Pèlerinage et societé dans le Japon des Tokugawa: le pèlerinage de Shikoku entre 1598 et 1868* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2001), 15-17.

pilgrimage, this number appears to be too low.[17] Reader concludes that the pilgrimage was a result of the fusion of Shingon and Kumano practices and customs, with Kōbō Daishi serving as a central organising focus. This is in line with Joseph Mitsui Kitagawa's assessment of the Shikoku pilgrimage. He distinguished three types of Japanese pilgrimages, namely pilgrimages to sacred mountains, pilgrimages based on faith in certain divinities, and pilgrimages based on faith in charismatic people or holy men. He classified Shikoku as the latter, stating that it is "based on faith in the memory of the charismatic holy man, Kūkai". This is exemplified by the concept of *dōgyō ni-nin* 同行二人, an inscription often written on the hats of pilgrims, indicating that Kōbō Daishi is always accompanying them during their journey.[18]

3.4 Developments since the Edo period

Despite its slightly obscure origins, the Edo period (1603-1868) marked a dramatic shift for the Shikoku pilgrimage. Information about pilgrim practice during this time became readily available through a variety of texts such as legal and administrative documents, journals, inscriptions, and votive (or name) slips 札 (*fuda*). Many of the items and rules associated with the Shikoku pilgrimage stem from this era. Especially important were the guidebooks that started appearing in the late 1600s. One of the most famous guides is the *Shikoku Henro Michishirube* 四国遍禮道指南 (1687), written by the ascetic Shinnen 真念 (dec. 1691). He based his work on his own experiences, having completed the pilgrimage over twenty times. He included not only a detailed route, but also distances, lodges to spend the night, administrative requirements, and temples to place one's votive slips 札所 (*fudasho*). Importantly, he also included a list of items necessary for a pilgrim's journey, such as a hat, a walking stick, gaiters, half-soled straw sandals, a straw bag, votive slips, and a bowl.[19] The meaning and usage of these items will be described in subsequent sections.

Another guidebook was written by a Shingon priest from Mount Kōya named Jakuhon 寂本 (1630-1701). The book was titled *Shikoku Henro Reijōki* 四国遍礼霊場記 and was published in 1689. Notably, this version included over ninety sacred sites and commenced at Kūkai's birthplace Zentsūji. It shows that, even towards the end of the 17th century, there was no unanimous consensus as to which temples formed the "official" Shikoku pilgrimage. Here I

[17] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 109.

[18] Joseph M. Kitagawa, "Three Types of Pilgrimage in Japan", in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on His Seventieth Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Efrayim E. Urbach et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 155-164.

[19] Kouamé, *Pèlerinage*, 32-33.

must mention the terms *bangai* 野夕 and *oku-no-in* 奥の院. *Bangai* refers to "extra" sites, while *oku-no-in* are secluded sub-temples. Both terms define locations that have a deep connection with Kōbō Daishi yet are not part of the official Shikoku pilgrimage. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to discern how the number eighty-eight was reached, and why some of these unofficial sites were not included. There are several suggested explanations, such as eighty-eight being a multiple of eight, representing the eight Buddhist sacred sites in India, or standing for the eighty-eight evil sufferings from Buddhist teachings, but these are rather speculative interpretations.[20] Another option is suggested by Matsuo, although much less symbolic than the previous ones. He states that pictorial guides (or guide maps) determined the temples of the pilgrimage and remarks that the first of these, the *Shikoku Henro Ezu* 四国遍路絵図 (1763), included all eighty-eight sites as they are recognised today.[21] It would appear that the final route was a consequence of a variety of publications and illustrations being published throughout the Edo period, rather than a premeditated decision at a specific point in time.

What can be said with certainty, however, is that the work of Shingon Buddhists like Shinnen and Jakuhon enabled the development of the Shikoku pilgrimage and increased its popularity. One of the first "booms" occurred while Shinnen was still alive, during the Genroku era (1688-1703). Political stability and rapid economic growth at the time increased the number of pilgrims taking on the journey. It also allowed for infrastructure developments, such as improved bridges and ferry services, making the island of Shikoku more accessible and cutting the duration of the pilgrimage in half. As a result of these rapid changes, participating in pilgrimages was increasingly infused with tourist motifs, although this occurred at a slower rate in Shikoku than in the rest of Japan.[22]

The trend of pilgrims increasing due to infrastructure developments and economic growth would continue during the Edo period. Roads were improved, pirates from the Seto Inland Sea (separating Shikoku from the main island Honshū) were dispersed, new toll barriers did not actively hinder pilgrims, and more shelter opportunities were constructed. Pilgrims could even make use of the five great highways 街道 (*kaidō*), designed to facilitate the passage of feudal lords 大名 (*daimyō*) on their processions to Edo (now Tōkyō).[23] Blacker notes that the

[20] Hoshino Eiki 星野 英紀, "Pilgrimage and Peregrination: Contextualizing the Saikoku *Junrei* and the Shikoku *Henro*", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, no. 3-4 (1997): 289-291.

[21] Matsuo, *Japanese Buddhism*, 242.

[22] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 128-129.

[23] Carmen Blacker, "The Religious Traveller in the Edo Period", *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 593-594/605.

Tosa Domain 土佐藩 (*Tosa-han*) in Shikoku was particularly restrictive, and that these improvements do not provide a full explanation of the popularity of pilgrimages at the time. However, the impact of new infrastructure cannot be understated, as it provided the foundation for later developments. Additionally, while there may have been regulations for travellers, pilgrims were generally still able to go on their journeys. This is proven by the spike in numbers in the early 1800s. Kouamé goes as far as describing the period between 1800 and 1850 as the "golden age of Shikoku pilgrimage", in which some tolerance and flexibility were shown to pilgrims by the Tokugawa shogunate 徳川幕府 (*Tokugawa bakufu*).[24] In a subsequent work, she specifies further, marking the Bunka era (1804-1818) and the Bunsei era (1818-1830) as periods with continuously high pilgrim activity.[25]

The development of the Shikoku pilgrimage since the Meiji Restoration (1868) until today can only be described as meteoric. The Meiji era (1868-1912) was a time of change for Japan. The forced opening of the country 開国 (*kaikoku*) in 1853, after centuries of being closed off 鎖国 (*sakoku*), led to unrest and the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. Exchange and trade with the international community increased, and the Meiji government was focused on "modernising" the country. One way they attempted to do so was by separating Shintō [26] from Buddhism and displacing the latter. Many Buddhist temples in Shikoku were attacked or destroyed, and pilgrim numbers dropped. However, this approach was not popular and was abandoned quickly. By the 1890s pilgrim numbers had recovered.[27]

After these initial struggles, the Shikoku pilgrimage "boomed" once again during the 20th century. Japan's rise as a global power was accompanied by rapid industrialisation and the introduction of new technologies such as the combustion engine. Infrastructure developed at blinding speeds, shifting from horses and carts to trains, buses, and cars in the span of a few decades. This had a major impact on the landscape of Shikoku, most notably the demolition and relocation of Hōjū-ji 宝寿寺 (Temple 62) to make space for a new railway line.[28] Shikoku was one of the slowest regions in Japan to implement these changes. Initially, privately owned railroads were only developed around the ports of Tokushima and Takamatsu due to

[24] Nathalie Kouamé, "Shikoku's Local Authorities and Henro during the Golden Age of the Pilgrimage", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, no. 3-4 (1997): 413-414.

[25] Kouamé, *Pèlerinage*, 52-53.

[26] Shintō is a Japanese religion that incorporates several indigenous, nature-based and Buddhist beliefs. Although *kami* stand at its centre, Shintō is highly syncretic, coining the term *shinbutsu-shūgō* 神仏習合. Imperial Japan attempted to integrate it into its nationalistic ideology, forming the concept of "State Shintō".

[27] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 138-141.

[28] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 143-144.

Shikoku's comparatively few resources.[29] Nevertheless, the transport networks expanded dramatically during the 1920s. In Shikoku, companies like Iyo Tetsu, Dōgo Tetsu, and Takamatsu Electric stood at the forefront of railway construction. Road infrastructure also improved after the Road Law 道路法 (*dōro-hō*) was enacted in 1919, nationalising roads and subsidising their maintenance. By the first half of the 1930s, Shikoku's major cities were connected and pilgrims were encouraged to use these new modes of transport. Steamships offered discounts for pilgrims and bus companies published advertisements aimed at them. Walking the pilgrimage became increasingly uncommon and transport facilities completely transformed movement patterns.[30]

Other major developments were the construction of four airports, namely the Matsuyama, Tokushima, Takamatsu, and Kōchi airports, allowing quicker access to the island. Important are also the Great Seto Bridge (1988), the Kōbe-Awaji-Naruto Expressway (1998), and the Nishiseto Expressway (1999), which increased the number of pilgrims travelling to Shikoku via bus and private car. Interestingly, even though there are trains connecting Honshū to Shikoku, it is the last of Japan's four biggest islands that has no links to the Shinkansen 新幹線 (high-speed railway) network. On a regional scale, roads have been built to facilitate access to several temples. Also constructed were a cable-car to Yakuri-ji 八栗寺 (Temple 85) and two ropeways to Unpen-ji 雲辺寺 (Temple 66) and Tairyū-ji 太龍寺 (Temple 21).[31] The effect of this modern infrastructure and new technologies on the tourist industry of the Shikoku pilgrimage will be analysed in more detail later.

4 Notions of tradition and identity

The Shikoku Henro World Heritage Inscription Council is an umbrella organisation established in 2010. Its mission is to list the pilgrimage as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and to coordinate and maximize the efforts to preserve and transmit the culture of the Shikoku Pilgrimage, as it is a "representative example of Japanese cultural heritage".[32] To be inscribed, at least one of UNESCO's ten criteria for selection must be met. Comparable routes that have already been included are the Camino the Santiago and the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage

[29] John P. Tang, "Railroad Expansion and Industrialization: Evidence from Meiji Japan", *The Journal of Economic History* 74, no. 3 (2014): 868.

[30] Mori Masato 森 正人, "Kindai ni okeru kūkan no hensei to Shikoku henro-me hen'yō" 近代における空間の編成と四国遍路め変容 [Spatial formation and change in the Henro pilgrimage in Modern Japan], *Jinbun Chiri* 人文地理 54, no. 6 (2002): 539-543.

[31] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 157-158.

[32] "About the Council", Shikoku Henro World Heritage Inscription Council, accessed June 17, 2021, https://88sekaiisan.org/en/council/.

Routes in the Kii Mountain Range. Both fulfilled criteria two, four, and six, while the latter also included number three. I want to highlight the third and sixth criteria. Number three states that a site needs to "bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared", while number six demands a site to be "directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs".[33]

Although I will not evaluate the legitimacy of Shikoku's bid, the concepts "cultural tradition" and "living tradition" are of note. Organisations like the Council, the Reijōkai, and Shikoku's tourist boards have continuously used similar terminology to define and promote the pilgrimage. In some cases, as previously mentioned, even classifying it as a representation of the "soul" of the nation and its people. However, pinpointing what constitutes "tradition" can be extraordinarily difficult. This is particularly true for the Shikoku pilgrimage. As shown, the ties to Kōbō Daishi are not certifiable, and it is not until the 17th and 18th centuries that the route was standardised. Additionally, the path itself has experienced major changes in terms of infrastructure and modes of transport during the 20th century, changing the landscape of the route. While individual temples and sacred sites can be traced back more precisely, the idea of a "traditional" Shikoku pilgrimage in its entirety is rather elusive.

This is why the framework of "invented traditions" is essential. Hobsbawm defines them as a "set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past". He distinguishes "traditions" from "customs", remarking invariance as a key factor for the former. He also states that networks of convention and routine are not "invented traditions" if their justification is technical instead of ideological. He argues that "invented traditions" may occur more frequently when social patterns are weakened due to a rapid transformation of society, or when "old" traditions and their institutional carriers prove insufficient and "old" materials can be used to form "novel" traditions. Lastly, Hobsbawm identifies three types of "invented traditions", those establishing or symbolising social cohesion, those legitimizing institutions and relations of authority, and those whose main purpose was the socialisation and the inculcation of beliefs and value systems.[34]

[33] "Criteria", UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed June 17, 2021, https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/.

[34] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Canto Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1-14.

This leads to the concept of "imagined communities" proposed by Benedict Anderson. He argues that nations are imagined political communities, both inherently limited and sovereign. "Imagined" because there is an image of communion even though most members of a nation will never meet. "Limited" because nations have finite boundaries, and "sovereign" because the concept was born during a time when the legitimacy of the hierarchical dynastic realm was being destroyed. Finally, Anderson claims that nations are imagined to be a "community" because of a shared sense of fraternity and horizontal comradeship, regardless of actual inequalities.[35] One method to build the idea of a nation is by using the aforementioned "invented traditions". *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (1998) is an excellent work that applies these frameworks to analyse how current "traditional" Japanese values came to be, with many originating from Imperial Japan.

As pointed out by Vlastos, there are issues with Hobsbawm's concept of "invented traditions". It could be argued that all traditions are socially constructed, making them "invented" to a certain extent. Another criticism is that the binary classification of traditions and customs is too limited. Lastly, there is the question about the existence of non-invented traditions, and how they would be different from customs.[36] However, in the context of modern transport and its influence on the Shikoku pilgrimage, Hobsbawm's original framework will suffice to study the discourse on tradition. On the other hand, Anderson's work will be useful when analysing the pilgrimage as a national heritage. I must mention that I made a conscious decision not to refer to Turner's concept of *communitas*. I concur with Reader's statement that neither contest nor *communitas* provide adequate means to analyse the Shikoku pilgrimage on their own. Instead, issues of community and tensions between pilgrims based on transport will be incorporated into the wider argument of "invented traditions".

Reader also remarks that he does not differentiate between categories of pilgrims. He states that he does not find it useful to claim one form of travel as more "authentic" than another, and he disregards the distinction between "pilgrims" and "tourists".[37] Although Reader notes that problems arise when making these categorisations, I slightly differ. I agree that the term "authentic" makes little sense in this context. Nonetheless, when looking at the issue from an institutional perspective and how organisations represent the pilgrimage, isolating "traditional" practices becomes a useful tool to identify narrative inconsistencies.

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[35] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 6-7.

[36] Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History", in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 4.

[37] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 30/36-37.

5 Mobility and associated values

5.1 Asceticism and walking pilgrims

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of "asceticism" is twofold. It is "the practice of strict self-denial as a measure of personal and spiritual discipline" but can also be understood as "austerity in appearance, manner, or attitude". The change in how people complete the Shikoku pilgrimage is very recent. Questions on how to travel were redundant because, for centuries, most pilgrims had no other choice but to walk. If we consider the myths describing Kūkai's ascetic travels across Shikoku, walking the pilgrimage would be the most "accurate" way to complete it. Yet this interpretation is not as widespread as one may assume. I have shown that, early in the 20th century, using modern transport was actively encouraged. Of course, rapid development led to some backlash, with pilgrims and locals complaining about the loss of the pilgrimage spirit.[38] Even then, the attitude towards motorised transport has been generally positive.

At first glance, this can feel counterintuitive. Popular imagery of ascetic pilgrims, particularly in media outlets, would suggest that a degree of physical pain is inherent to the journey. This association is nowhere to be found in the definition of "asceticism", and it is not only a matter of semantics. In Shikoku, Kūkai's austerities were tied to "locations of natural power" rather than the itinerancy around the island. While the concept of walking asceticism ended up becoming popular regarding the Shikoku pilgrimage, ascetic practice can take a variety of shapes. For example, extensive mantra recitation and chanting exercises are certainly asceticism. There are also issues concerning the social aspect of the pilgrimage. One perspective is that a "true" ascetic pilgrim must be solitary, with little to no interaction with other people. A different stance is that social interface is essential to the pilgrimage. How uncomfortable ascetic practice should be is yet another contentious point.[39]

Considering that even Shingon Buddhist priests do not have a standardised framework for walking pilgrims 歩き遍路 (*aruki henro*), I would suggest that the decentralised understanding of asceticism is one of the reasons why using modern transport did not receive more pushback. A different, yet equally important aspect of walking is the relationship between pilgrims and the landscape. It is undeniable that the perception of a walking pilgrim will vary immensely from that of bus or car pilgrims. During his research, Danely found that many people spoke about walking as "having a deep, psychological and somatic relationship

[38] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 183-184.

[39] John A. Shultz, "The Way to *Gyō*: Priestly Asceticism on the Shikoku *Henro*", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 43, no. 2 (2016): 278-280/292-293.

with the landscape and the community". Importantly, he notes that the orientation of walking was not between the origin and the destination, but between the body and the ground. Walking embodied humility and evoked a feeling of nostalgia for the "values of an imagined Japanese past".[40] Although Danely's work centres around the bodhisattva Jizō-sama 地蔵様, many of these associated values can be found among the accounts of Shikoku's walking pilgrims. The idea of walking to create a moral self and interacting with nature through an "aesthetic sense of the sights, smells, and feelings" is something that many pilgrims identify with. However, this idealised self-depiction is not always grounded in reality. As Reader remarks, many pilgrims are focused on their goals and the next site they will visit, which can lead to self-absorption and, in some cases, to an obsession with speed.[41]

Indeed, time is central to any pilgrimage. It is also one of the biggest differences between walking and motorised pilgrims. According to Shultz, walkers view distance with regard to time rather than kilometres, calculating if their pace will allow them to reach their destination at an appropriate time. "Where" pilgrims spend their time also changes drastically. Walking pilgrims spend most of their journey on the paths between temples. As a result, many claim that the meaning is to be found on the trail, not at the sacred sites. On the other hand, motorised pilgrims are able to cover the distances between temples quickly, which allows them to spend more time there. For them, meaning tends to correlate to the time spent at the sacred sites.[42] Additionally, there are several modes of transport and potential combinations that do not fit this binary classification and will be expanded on in the next section.

Due to the length of the pilgrimage (even by bus it usually takes at least 10 days), several formats to complete it have appeared. One of the most prominent is the *ikkoku mairi* 一国参り format, popular amongst both walking and motorised pilgrims, which refers to the act of breaking up the pilgrimage into different stages. In this case, *ikkoku* means "one province" (alluding to the four provinces of the island), while *mairi* can be roughly translated as "visit to a sacred site" or "pilgrimage". Particularly for walking pilgrims who do not have the time or the physical ability to complete the pilgrimage in one go, the *ikkoku mairi* format provides a useful solution.[43]

[40] Jason Danely, "A Watchful Presence: Aesthetics of Well-Being in a Japanese Pilgrimage", *Ethnos* 82, no.1 (2017): 168-169/183.

[41] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 187-191/194.

[42] John A. Shultz, "Pilgrimaging Through Time: The Theoretical Implications of Continuing Journeys on the Shikoku *Henro*", *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 8, no. 1 (2020): 52.

[43] Ian Reader and Paul L. Swanson, "Editor's Introduction: Pilgrimage in the Japanese Religious Tradition", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, no. 3-4 (1997): 241.

In terms of symbolism, direction stands out as a major factor. It does so in two ways, spiritually and physically. According to popular belief, the pilgrimage is a path to enlightenment with four stages. The first stage represents the "awakening of the mind to the possibilities of Buddhist faith" 発心 (*hosshin*), the second stage is the "religious practice to polish that faith" 修行 (*shugyō*), the third is the "opening of enlightenment" 菩提 (*bodai*), and the fourth represents "total and unending enlightenment" 涅槃 (*nehan*).[44] In physical terms, direction is related to the issue of asceticism. Not only are there different formats regarding the time a pilgrim can take to complete the route, but there are also a number of options regarding the geography of the pilgrimage. Naturally, walking the path in stages affects the spatial perception of the journey, but direction changes both the spatial perception and the associated values of the pilgrimage.

I have mentioned before that the numbering of the temples has a merely advisory function, rather than being a strict order. Theoretically, pilgrims could zigzag across the island to visit the sacred sites. Of course, this would be rather impractical and inefficient due to the layout of the pilgrimage and Shikoku's geographical features. Consequently, most people travel in a clockwise 右繞 (*unyō*) or counter-clockwise 逆打ち (*gyaku uchi*) direction. Moving clockwise is "a style of veneration widely used in Japanese Buddhist rituals". Although there are myths suggesting that this form of ritual practice existed in Japan before the introduction of Buddhism, it can be traced back to India. In Hinduism, clockwise circumambulation is related to concepts like happiness, sanctity, and purity. However, in contrast to Hinduism, where counter-clockwise circumambulation has a negative stigma, completing the Shikoku pilgrimage in reverse is perceived positively. This is because the counter-clockwise route is more difficult and austere, hence more meritorious.[45] Once again physical challenge, which has often been represented as a key ascetic practice in Shikoku, is associated with the merit of a pilgrim.

5.2 Slow and fast pilgrims

I have touched upon a few of the values and symbols associated with walking the Shikoku pilgrimage. Nonetheless, walking pilgrims have become a minority since the irruption of modern transport. While making use of new infrastructure has been widely accepted by pilgrims and religious organisations, as well as being actively encouraged by the local government, it does raise some questions. As Olsen and Wilkinson quite provocatively put it,

[44] Reader and Swanson, "Editor's Introduction", 245.

[45] Hoshino, "Contextualizing", 280-281/288.

are fast pilgrims true pilgrims? In their article, they argue that Western views of pilgrimage tend to equate speed with authenticity, hence slower meaning more authentic. They state that this is not the case in Shikoku, where a faster pace has occasionally been described as the more virtuous way to complete the pilgrimage.[46] There have indeed been disagreements regarding pilgrims and their mode of travel. Reader explains how some priests expressed concerns over walking pilgrims and their lack of engagement in acts of worship. These walking pilgrims were compared to bus pilgrims who, particularly when guided by a *sendatsu* 先達,[47] focused more on prayers and acts of devotion.[48]

To clarify, opinions vary greatly on what the most "spiritual" way to do the pilgrimage is. For example, Shultz mentions that the "pinnacle of ascetic experience appears to be the sensation of time as *samadhi,* where a sense of effortless flow overtakes […] and the experience becomes akin to walking meditation".[49] This state is one that many walking pilgrims fall into. Even Reader describes the "feeling of simplicity" he experienced while completing the pilgrimage by foot,[50] and many walking pilgrims interpret this state as the essence of the pilgrimage. I do not intend to say that everyone is concerned with this question, however, this rift in stances serves as an example to illustrate the tension between the importance of the journey and the importance of ritual practice. At the core of this tension is each individual's understanding of the Shikoku pilgrimage. This may seem obvious, and it is the main reason why defining "authenticity" is futile, but it does have some consequences when analysing it through the framework of invented traditions.

Looking back at the history of the pilgrimage, the current route may be considered invented as a whole, since proving its historicity is virtually impossible. However, there is a crucial difference, that being the role of the Reijōkai. As the coordinating organisation, it sets out formal recommendations on how pilgrims should behave. On their website, they provide a list of items pilgrims should wear or carry with them. A few of these items are the white shirt 白衣 (*hakue*) representing purity and death, a stole 袈裟 (*kesa)*, a rosary 念珠 (*nenju*), a sutra book 経本 (*kyōhon*), the aforementioned name slips (*fuda* 札 or *osame-fuda* 納札), as well as the usual incense sticks 線香 (*senkō*) and candles ローソク (*rōsoku*). Especially important are

[46] Daniel H. Olsen and Greg Wilkinson, "Are fast pilgrims true pilgrims? The Shikoku pilgrimage", *Annals of Tourism Research* 61 (2016): 228-229.

[47] *Sendatsu* are guides who have completed the pilgrimage at least four times, regardless of how they did it. The system was created by the Reijōkai and is intended to promote Shingon Buddhism.

[48] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 189.

[49] John A. Shultz, "The '*Gaijin Henro*': Outliers, Discrimination, and Time Variability with Pilgrimage in Shikoku", *Journal of Inquiry and Research* 107 (2018): 9-10.

[50] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 191.

the sedge hat 菅傘 (*sugegasa*) with its inscriptions, the walking stick 金剛杖 (*kongō tsue*) representing Kōbō Daishi himself, and the book to collect the seals from each temple 納経帳 (*nōkyōchō*).[51] Pilgrims are encouraged to follow all the rituals using these items. They offer candles, incense and their name slip at the main hall 本堂 (*hon-dō*), recite sutras, and engage in silent prayers, after which they continue to the Daishi Hall 大師堂 (*Daishi-dō*) with the walking stick to repeat the same rituals.[52]

These processes are, by definition, invented traditions. Perhaps except the act of praying in and of itself, they are a set of practices seeking to inculcate (mostly) Shingon values by repetition. Particularly for motorised pilgrims, who spend most of their time in buses, cars, or inside buildings, items like the hat or the walking stick serve little to no functional purpose, they are purely symbolic. This is further evidenced by the *sendatsu* system, which is hierarchical in nature. Value is associated with the number of times a person has completed the pilgrimage. Although unofficial, the colour scheme of the name slips also reinforces this notion, where different colours are used depending on the number of successful pilgrimages. Additionally, the Reijōkai has continuously established supposed links with the past by narrating and advertising myths and legends related to Kōbō Daishi, even though little is known about the pilgrimage before the 17th century. I argue that modern transport has facilitated the construction of a "tradition" in which, due to the ability to move quickly between temples, acts of worship are increasingly represented as the core of the Shikoku pilgrimage by religious organisations like the Reijōkai.

The focal point is not a direct comparison between the "authenticity" of walking and motorised pilgrims, as this is highly subjective, and I would define both as "invented traditions". Rather, the focal point is how modern transport has influenced what the official representatives of the eighty-eight temples identify as "traditional". Of course, this process is accompanied by several issues. Most important, as Reader points out, is "the ambivalence of Kōbō Daishi as a sectarian founder and figure of worship within one established Buddhist tradition and as a sacred figure within the broader folk tradition".[53] Promoting the legendary stories of Kōbō Daishi and his itinerancy around Shikoku may lead pilgrims to determine walking as the more "original" way to take on the pilgrimage.

[51] "Henro supplies", Shikoku 88 Sacred Sites (Inc.), accessed June 19, 2021, https://88shikokuhenro.jp/en/basic-knowledge/henro-supplies/.

[52] Ryofu Pussel, "Ritual and Well-being in the Contemporary Shikoku-Pilgrimage: The 'Spectrum of the Sacred'", *Paragrana* 22, no. 1 (2013): 92.

[53] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 169.

To conclude this section, I must highlight two aspects. First, not all pilgrims make their choice of transport based on their perception of "tradition" or "authenticity". In many cases, it is simply a matter of efficiency and practicality. Working adults may only be unoccupied during their holidays so their time to complete the pilgrimage is limited, while elders could find walking too physically demanding. Even though the Shikoku pilgrimage is more lenient than others in terms of methods of completion, as shown by the *ikkoku mairi* format, it does not exist separate from its environment. Countless personal and societal conditions influence each pilgrim's decision. This is part of the wider discussion on "slow travel" or "slow tourism", which I will expand on later.

Second, and perhaps more relevant to this paper, is that the distinction between walking and motorised pilgrims is too binary. Cars, buses, and trains are likely the first things that spring to mind when thinking about "modern" transport, but there are many more options with greatly varying degrees of physical difficulty. An interesting example is the helicopter. The Tokushima Central Area Union published a suggested four-day tour including flights over important sightseeing spots and the eighty-eight temples.[54] It combines ground visits with the curious concept of aerial worship 空中参拝 (*kūchū sanpai*), stating that both an alms box and a sutra box will be provided during the flight above the temples.[55] I decided to point out the helicopter because it raises several questions. If acts of worship are at the core of the pilgrimage, as occasionally argued by the Reijōkai, "aerial pilgrims" could, in theory, be exemplary pilgrims. Alternatively, the fact that helicopter pilgrims do not access each temple in person may automatically disqualify them as "true" pilgrims.

Naturally, it is not only the Reijōkai that has to readjust its discourse depending on contemporary transport developments. New technologies like electric bicycles bridge the gap between walking and fully motorised pilgrims, further complicating the issue of asceticism when understood as physical exertion. Several towns in Shikoku have begun promoting e-bikes to improve the flow of pilgrims and tourists in the area.[56] Quantifying how much physical effort is necessary to have an "authentic" or "traditional" experience is completely arbitrary. The last example I want to highlight, challenging the idea of walking and the idea of

[54] According to the Union, the tour is provided by Shikoku Air Service Co. Ltd. upon inquiry. However, I was unable to confirm whether this option is still available as of 2021.

[55] "Herikoptā de iku kūchū sanpai" ヘリコプターで行く空中参拝 [Aerial worship by helicopter], Tokushima Central Area Union, accessed June 20, 2021, https://www.tcu.or.jp/kaigo/topics/ohenro/01_heri/index.html.

[56] Mainichi Shinbun 毎日新聞, "Reijō ya kankōchi meguri, dendō baiku de GO Tokushima de rentaru jigyō kaishi" 霊場や観光地巡り、電動バイクで GO　徳島でレンタル事業開始 [To visit sacred sites and sightseeing spots, GO by electric bicycle – Rental business launched in Tokushima], *Mainichi Shinbun* 毎日新聞, April 9, 2021, https://mainichi.jp/articles/20210409/k00/00m/040/118000c.

praying as the "core" of the pilgrimage, is the "Ohenro Walking" application. This application was created in 2020 and constitutes what I would call a "virtual mode of transport". It uses the street view function and a pedometer to allow the user to virtually walk along the Shikoku pilgrimage.[57]

"Ohenro Walking" may seem like a trivial example at first, but it illustrates how complicated defining "tradition" can become. A person using the application and exercise machines could come close to the physical strain a walking pilgrim experiences. Similarly, by using a virtual reality headset and the street view function, a person could spend more time practising rituals "at" the temple than a "true" pilgrim. Determining which of these two ways to use the application is more "traditional" is an interesting thought experiment, although currently few people would describe a "virtual pilgrim" as traditional at all. To summarise, modern transport has allowed the Reijōkai to build a "tradition" in which walking is no longer essential to the Shikoku pilgrimage. Simultaneously, new transport technologies will continuously challenge the boundaries of what is perceived as more or less traditional, influencing how the pilgrimage is represented by the Reijōkai, the local government, and pilgrims themselves.

5.3 Impact on social relationships

A less theoretical way in which modern transport has impacted the Shikoku pilgrimage is in the aspect of social relationships. New infrastructure has massively improved the accessibility of the temples and the pilgrimage, a development represented by the shift in demographics. By the 1980s and 1990s, over 50 percent of pilgrims were above the age of sixty, often retirees. Additionally, due to the improved infrastructure network, pilgrims arrived from different parts of Japan, making the pilgrimage a "national" one. The gender distribution of pilgrims was also influenced. In the 1930s and 1940s, roughly 65 percent of pilgrims were male, while by the 1980s an estimated 60 percent were women.[58] This development is not exclusively linked to modern transport, as gender roles in Japan have changed during the 20th century. However, considering that almost 73 percent of Japanese walking pilgrims are

[57] Connie Sceaphierde, "Enjoy a virtual Shikoku Pilgrimage experience with the 'Ohenro Walking' App", *Japan Today*, December 2, 2020, https://japantoday.com/category/features/travel/enjoy-a-virtual-shikoku-pilgrimage-experience-with-the-%E2%80%98ohenro-walking%E2%80%99-app.

[58] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 77-79.

male,[59] and that walking pilgrims became a minority during this time frame, it is clear why Japanese women are the biggest demographic group.

Another way in which transport has affected social relationships can be seen through the acts of almsgiving 接待 (*settai*), mendicancy 托鉢 (*takuhatsu*), and begging 門付け (*kadozuke*). Almsgiving is the most well-known form of interaction between pilgrims and locals (or other pilgrims). It is based on the myth that each pilgrim could be a representation of Kōbō Daishi. Consequently, being generous to pilgrims will bring good fortune, while causing them harm will lead to great misfortune. Legends such as the one of Emon Saburō 衛門三郎, whose eight children died one by one after he refused to give alms to a pilgrim (Kōbō Daishi) and broke his bowl for food, reinforced the idea of almsgiving as a local "tradition". However, it is not until the 17th century that the aforementioned Shingon priest Shinnen popularised the concept of *settai*.[60]

Almsgiving usually took place in the form of food or money donations, as well as by offering a place to stay. New infrastructure has meant that help may come in the form of a hitchhike to the next temple. Modern transport has also changed who receives alms, with walking pilgrims being more likely to receive *settai* from several parties, while motorised pilgrims often receive alms mainly from within their travel group. Just like Reader mentions, this is a natural consequence of the different modes of transport pilgrims use. Walking pilgrims simply have more opportunities to interact with locals due to the space they occupy and the time their journey takes. Additionally, walking is perceived as more meritorious, increasing the likelihood of receiving alms.[61]

Transport has also changed the interaction with beggars and mendicants. *Kadozuke* is often represented in a more positive light and refers to begging as an ascetic practice. A way to perform *kadozuke* is by reciting sutras from door to door to receive alms. *Takuhatsu*, on the other hand, refers to the act of standing, often in front of temples or supermarkets. *Takuhatsu* is generally perceived in two ways, either as an ascetic practice or as a beggar's behaviour. Interestingly, the Reijōkai has forbidden begging in temples, attempting to differentiate between beggars and "true" ascetic pilgrims. This is notable because bus pilgrims (particularly organised groups) used to be the main source of donations for these mendicants.

[59] Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai 四国経済連合会, "Shin-jidai ni okeru henro ukeire taisei no arikata: Henro shukuhakushisetsu no genjō – kadai-ra chōsa" 新時代における遍路受入態勢のあり方 遍路宿泊施設の現状・課題等調査 [Readiness to receive pilgrims in the new era: Survey on the current status/issues of pilgrimage lodging], *Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai* 四国経済連合会 (2019): 64.

[60] Kouamé, *Pèlerinage*, 148-153.

[61] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 203-206/233.

By implementing these restrictions and asking the *sendatsu* (guides) to discourage donations, the Reijōkai attempted to "eliminate the action of begging around temples".[62] In this case, modern transport plays a central role in the life of "permanent pilgrims" and their source of income, yet the Reijōkai interfered with the almsgiving process of bus pilgrims, once again redefining the "official" rules of the Shikoku pilgrimage.

Mass tourism (enabled by modern transport) along with media depictions of the pilgrimage have also affected how pilgrims are perceived, although I will develop this point in a subsequent section. However, what must be mentioned is the nationality of pilgrims. Modern transport has not only allowed pilgrims to visit from all across Japan, but also from across the world. While foreigners are still a minority, their number has steadily increased throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Their impact is particularly significant among walking pilgrims, with foreigners going from representing nearly 0 percent in 2004, to representing 16.6 percent of all walking pilgrims in 2017.[63] Their travels to Shikoku have increased the amount of literature available in languages other than Japanese. As Shultz points out, their narrations often include the goodwill they experienced, but also issues of negative stereotyping, communication troubles, and discrimination.[64] While the accuracy of these stories may be questioned, the impact of modern transport here is twofold. On one hand, foreigners travelling to Shikoku have a unique social relationship with locals, one that is quickly transforming. On the other hand, their representations of the Shikoku pilgrimage influence how it is perceived outside of Japan.

6 Commercialisation of the Shikoku pilgrimage

6.1 Mass tourism, nostalgia, and cultural identity

The Meiji period (1868-1912) was a time of great change for Japan's travel industry. Japanese citizens no longer needed a passport to travel domestically, and infrastructure projects became a priority for the national government. Travel agencies, as well as railway, bus, and taxi companies, flourished in the early 21st century. These developments had a lasting impact on Japan's tourist industry. In the 1930s, when the government intensified its nationalist and militarist agenda, state media increasingly focused on the "uniqueness of Japanese culture and hospitality". Travel for purely religious reasons became less popular, while "cultural and

[62] Hamaya Mariko 濱谷 真理子, "Living in Pilgrimage: An Ethnographic Study of Permanent Pilgrims in Shikoku, Japan", *Journal of Religion in Japan* 10, no.1 (2021): 70-74.

[63] Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai, "Shin-jidai", 8-9.

[64] Shultz, "*Gaijin Henro*", 5-7.

natural heritage" was being promoted more and more.[65] Naturally, this had consequences for the Shikoku pilgrimage too. The Dōgyōkai 同行会 was an organisation formed in 1928 that portrayed the pilgrimage as an "example of the allegedly national spirit of mutual assistance, equalitarianism, and self-sacrifice". It criticised using modern transport to complete the pilgrimage and launched a magazine to highlight the religious nature of the journey. At the same time, media representations of the pilgrimage shifted. Previously, the Shikoku pilgrimage was associated with poorness and sickness. Many pilgrims were impoverished and often walked the pilgrimage due to the "tradition" of *settai* and its alleged healing properties. However, the rise of domestic tourism because of modern transport attracted, according to the media, a new form of pilgrim stemming from the middle and upper classes.[66]

Media depictions also had a strong influence on the construction of a national identity. As indicated, during the 1930s nationalist imagery increased dramatically, with the discourse about landscape being particularly relevant. This trend continued throughout the latter half of the 20th century, when local cultures and rural landscapes were "re-interpreted as the national culture" through cultural heritage policies. Mori argues that landscape and nationhood are visualised through elements such as tourism, and that nature was inscribed with "special values for modern Japanese society". Nature was presented by the travel industry as a cure for those affected by rapid modernisation and, in the 1970s, the focus was on the rediscovery and nostalgia of natural landscapes.[67] This is supported by Reader, who states that the contemporary growth of pilgrimage has been partly facilitated by the search for a national and cultural identity. He argues that globalisation has "increased fears of cultural erosion" and "spurred interest in cultural and personal identities". Reader shows that the "reaffirmation of Japanese cultural identity" has become a prevalent factor for Japanese pilgrims since the 1980s and that many view the pilgrimage as a representation of Japanese tradition.[68]

As shown, transport has been a fundamental catalyst for a series of developments in the past century. It enabled the growth of the current travel industry, which in turn has been repeatedly used by the government to evoke a shared sense of national identity. It also changed how the

[65] Carolin Funck and Malcolm Cooper, *Japanese Tourism: Spaces, Places and Structures* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 31-37.

[66] Mori Masato 森 正人, "Mobilising pilgrim bodily space: The contest between authentic and folk pilgrimage in the interwar period", in *Understanding Tourism Mobilities in Japan*, ed. Endō Hideki 遠藤 英樹 (London: Routledge, 2020), 172-174.

[67] Mori Masato 森 正人, "The Localness, Materiality, and Visuality of Landscape in Japan", *Japanese Journal of Human Geography* 66, no. 6 (2014): 523-527/534.

[68] Ian Reader, "Pilgrimage growth in the modern world: Meanings and implications", *Religion* 37, no. 3 (2007): 217-218.

Shikoku pilgrimage is perceived by the media, being portrayed as a desirable destination for the middle and upper classes. Most importantly, modern transport has severely affected which values are instilled into the pilgrimage. For instance, in opposition to new infrastructure, the Dōgyōkai attempted to invent a tradition in which walking was the foundation of the journey. I have already mentioned how the Reijōkai currently does the opposite. Also, the landscape of Shikoku has been used to create an imagined community centred around the "Japanese cultural identity" of the pilgrimage. The idea of nature as an antidote to "modernisation", as marketed by the travel industry, has deepened the associated values of the Shikoku pilgrimage as a cultural and national tradition. Ironically, the same industry promotes the use of modern transport to travel to Shikoku and complete the pilgrimage, demonstrating how important the narrative surrounding modes of transport is, rather than the role of transport itself.

These representations do not only affect how Japanese citizens perceive the Shikoku pilgrimage. Notions of Japanese "tradition" and "heritage" also influence how foreigners view and travel the pilgrimage. This is important because tourist agencies and the Japanese and regional governments have increasingly targeted international tourists, as exemplified by the ALL SHIKOKU Rail Pass.[69] This is happening because the number of pilgrims in Shikoku has decreased in recent years. The Shikoku Economic Federation estimates that, between 1998 and 2002, an average of 135.000 people visited the pilgrimage yearly. For the years 2014 to 2018, this average stood at 78.000 people per year, down nearly 42 percent.[70] However, infrastructure and transport opportunities have only improved in the 21st century. This demonstrates that transport improvements, while certainly correlated, do not directly cause an increase or decrease in pilgrim numbers.

6.2 Religious tourism and secularisation

The relationship between religion and tourism is complicated. Pilgrimages, even if done for purely religious reasons, could be described as a form of tourism. On the other hand, different motivations can become a source of conflict. Timothy and Olsen state that religious routes are used as "brands" for economic development, and that the historically "new" multipurpose characteristics of pathways (that used to be exclusively religious) result in confrontation between users. Those seeking spiritual, religious, and commercial experiences all occupy the

[69] The Pass is only available to non-Japanese nationals and provides access to most train lines on Shikoku for a certain number of days.

[70] Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai, "Shin-jidai", 5.

same space.[71] In this matter, the Shikoku pilgrimage presents a unique situation. I have noted that modern transport enabled an increase of international tourists. While their motivations are varied, most of them do not adhere to Shingon Buddhism. Based on a survey of walking pilgrims, the four main motivations for international pilgrims are "Interest in culture/history", "Tourism/Trekking", "Interaction with local residents" and "Spiritual training". For Japanese walking pilgrims, "Spiritual training" was first, followed by "Interest in culture/history" and "Memorial service for the deceased". Yet, when asked regarding the increase of foreign pilgrims unfamiliar with Kōbō Daishi and Buddhism, 27.3 percent of locals answered that this change should be positively accepted, 68.2 percent took a neutral stance, while only 4.5 percent did not want this number to increase.[72] While the sample size is too small to reach a sweeping conclusion, it does suggest that the religious identity of tourists is not one of the main concerns of local residents and other pilgrims alike.

According to Reader, the first bus package tour was organised by the Iyo Tetsu company in 1953. The experiment was a success and within a year two other companies offered bus tours. In the following decades, the number of bus, car, and taxi pilgrims rapidly increased. Reader notes that the formation of the Reijōkai in the 1950s resulted from the improved communication infrastructure and the temples' need to coordinate to face the development of the travel industry.[73] Since then, the Reijōkai has been closely collaborating with companies like Iyo Tetsu, with their employees often being granted the title of *sendatsu*. Consequently, the tension does not lie directly between religious institutions and commercial transport companies. More interesting is the reframing of the meaning of "tradition" regarding the pilgrimage. The media has often avoided religious rhetoric when referring to the route, instead focusing on sightseeing and nature. Shikoku's UNESCO bid, which aims to heighten public interest in the island and aid local economic development, has also led to a distancing from religious heritage in favour of cultural heritage. This has happened in collaboration with temples and priests who "worry that the broader turn away from religious engagement and from other pilgrimage sites might […] affect Shikoku". This non-religious portrayal intends to heighten its appeal as a "cultural and tourist phenomenon".[74]

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[71] Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen, "Religious Routes, Pilgrim Trails: Spiritual Pathways as Tourism Resources", in *Tourism and Religion: Issues and Implications*, ed. Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul (Bristol, UK and Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Channel View Publications, 2018), 224/231.

[72] Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai, "Shin-jidai", 33-35.

[73] Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 152-154/168.

[74] Ian Reader, "Turning to Tourism in a Time of Crisis? Buddhist Temples and Pilgrimage Promotion in Secular(ized) Japan", in *Buddhist Tourism in Asia*, ed. Courtney Bruntz and Brooke Schedneck (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020), 167-169.

To summarize, modern transport is not directly contributing to the secularisation of the Shikoku pilgrimage. The influx of foreign non-Buddhist pilgrims, made possible through fast and affordable air travel, could be understood as a factor contributing to the secularisation of the pilgrimage, but their number is too small to have a noticeable impact yet. Instead, the driving force in the shift away from religious tourism is the marketing of the pilgrimage as a cultural heritage to reinvigorate the regional economy, reinventing Shikoku's "traditions" once again.

6.3 Slow tourism as a sustainable model

The decrease in pilgrims from 2002 onwards is not spread uniformly across different pilgrim categories. When asked about the evolution of pilgrim numbers by mode of transport over a period of ten years, responses indicate a clear trend. Most respondents (81.8 percent) believed that bus pilgrims had decreased drastically, with another 13.6 percent stating that their number had decreased somewhat. Less extreme, but still significant, is their perception of car pilgrims. In this case, 72.8 percent thought that car pilgrims had decreased slightly or drastically. For walking pilgrims, the trend was the opposite, with 59.1 percent of respondents stating that they had increased somewhat or drastically. The biggest change was the perceived increase in foreign pilgrims, with 61.4 percent seeing a drastic increase, while another 31.8 percent saw a slight increase in numbers.[75] There are many factors that could have led to this development, such as the economic stagnation of Japan since the 1990s inhibiting domestic tourism, but I want to focus on the concept of "slow travel" or "slow tourism".

Lumsdon and McGrath identified three main categories that define slow travel, those being "slowness, travel experience and environmental consciousness". Categories such as destination and modes of travel were designated as secondary. Slow travel determines that the travel experience is shaped by the "outward journey, destination and return". Slowness is associated with notions of tranquillity and serenity, outside the realm of everyday life. Travel experience refers to the imbued "meaning" of the journey, increasing the opportunities to interact with the environment, and the issue of speed interfering with the ability to engage properly. Environmental consciousness is the goal of reducing carbon emissions while travelling, which is why slow travel is often equated with sustainable tourism. However, Lumsdon and McGrath also note that sustainability was not always the prime motivation for travellers. Additionally, which modes of transport constitute slow travel is debatable. Air

[75] Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai, "Shin-jidai", 7.

travel was widely rejected by slow tourists, but opinions differed on topics like cars and trains.[76]

This is rather similar to the debate on the ascetic nature of the Shikoku pilgrimage. Just like it is difficult to define how much physical exertion is necessary to be "truly" ascetic, determining which modes of transport are "slow enough" is not straightforward. Nevertheless, what can be said with certainty is that the label of slow tourism, while not widespread, has found increasing acceptance in Japan. During the post-war period, Japanese employees rarely took time off due to the socio-cultural context. Leisure was seen as a luxury, which led to a travel culture focusing on speed. With the stagnation of the 1990s came a shift in perspective. The values of Japan's "speed society" were questioned, particularly by the younger generation, and the countryside reappeared as an alternative to the fast-paced urban lifestyle. This also affected how tourism is represented. Slow tourism, also called new tourism in Japan, is viewed as a tool for the economic revitalisation of rural regions.[77]

The Shikoku pilgrimage is a perfect example of these processes. After the Second World War, motorised transport enabled tourists to travel around the island quickly. Completing the pilgrimage (or part of it) within days rather than weeks fit in with the travel culture of the time. Simultaneously, nostalgia was a core marketing element during the heyday of Japan's "fast society". With the subsequent stagnation and lack of domestic travel, the idea of slow tourism has become more relevant to the pilgrimage. The Shikoku Economic Federation suggests that Shikoku should be transformed from a "running pilgrimage" 駆け足遍路 (*kakeashi henro*)[78] into an "experience/stay type pilgrimage" 体験型・滞在型遍路 (*taikengata/taizaigata henro*). To do so, the Federation states that efforts should be put into improving accommodation facilities, reinforcing the cultural values of the pilgrimage, and promoting the areas surrounding the temples and sacred sites.[79]

Sustainability in relation to pilgrimages has also received increased attention. Katō and Progano argue that spiritual (walking) tourism heightens the awareness for sustainability and environmental impact. Walking, as slow tourism, allows pilgrims to support regional

[76] Les M. Lumsdon and Peter McGrath, "Developing a conceptual framework for slow travel: a grounded theory approach", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 19, no. 3 (2011): 270-274.

[77] Murayama Meiko 村山 めい子 and Gavin Parker, "'Fast Japan, Slow Japan': Shifting to Slow Tourism as a Rural Regeneration Tool in Japan", in *Slow Tourism: Experiences and Mobilities*, ed. Simone Fullagar, Kevin Markwell and Erica Wilson (Bristol, UK and Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Channel View Publications, 2012), 171-176.

[78] *Kakeashi* can also be understood as being in a hurry or rushing, most likely referring to the fast-paced way in which most pilgrims travel the pilgrimage.

[79] Shikoku Keizai Rengōkai, "Shin-jidai", 48.

communities while benefiting from the "healing qualities of the natural environment at a time and pace".[80] While Katō and Progano's work does not centre around the Shikoku pilgrimage, the perceived values and attitudes towards sustainability are comparable. Additionally, the parallels to the promotion of nature and rural landscape in the 1970s and 1980s are striking. Still, viewing slow tourism in Shikoku through the lens of modern transport raises issues.

As shown, interpretations of slow tourism differ heavily. One position is that walking, or at the very least avoiding motorised transport, stands at the core of slow travel. Others argue that several modes of transport can be considered "slow", although there are disagreements about where to draw the line. Yet another stance is that slow tourism includes not only the method of travel, but also the mindset and interaction with the environment at the destination. It differentiates between trips to a single location and journeys to multiple locations. Nonetheless, time stands at the core of slow travel, and transport is the main factor defining the duration of a journey. For the Shikoku pilgrimage, this means that modes of transport will continue to be a focal point of the debate. Notions of sustainability, rural revitalisation, meaning, and engagement, associated with the emerging concept of slow tourism, will enter the wider discourse on transport, religion, tradition, and cultural heritage in Shikoku.

7 Conclusion

The history of the Shikoku pilgrimage is long, and its exact origins are shrouded in mystery. Representations of Kōbō Daishi as the founder of the route, as well as legends and folk tales loosely based on his birthplace have influenced the development of the pilgrimage and its public perception. However, I have shown that transport has played (and continues to play) a fundamental role in the creation of the contemporary Shikoku pilgrimage. Throughout history, and especially in the 20th century, infrastructure and modes of transport have acted as a catalyst for the invention of tradition and the creation of a national identity in Shikoku. The Dōgyōkai reinforced the "tradition" of walking during a time of rapid modernisation and growth. Alternatively, modern transport enabled the Reijōkai to shift the meaning of the pilgrimage by inventing a tradition in which worship at the sacred sites stood at its core.

Contesting interpretations like these can be found throughout different themes. For example, the rise of railway and road infrastructure helped the pilgrimage to gain national recognition. Pilgrims would travel to Shikoku from across Japan, which the government used to promote a shared sense of national identity. At the same time, media representation of modernisation has

[80] Katō Kumi 加藤 久美 and Ricardo Nicolas Progano, "Spiritual (walking) tourism as a foundation for sustainable destination development: Kumano-kodo pilgrimage, Wakayama, Japan", *Tourism Management Perspectives* 24 (2017): 250.

led many to search for Japanese "traditions". Travel agencies actively catered to the nostalgia towards Japanese values and an imagined shared past, all while encouraging the use of modern transport to visit Shikoku. By aiding the growth of the domestic tourist industry, transport has also changed how pilgrims are perceived. The pilgrimage stopped being a destination for poor and sick people, becoming an attractive location for the growing middle and upper classes instead. Additionally, modern transport and commercialisation are not juxtaposed to religious institutions. Quite the opposite, Shikoku presents an instance in which temples and priests have worked hand in hand with companies and the government to advertise the pilgrimage. The distancing from religious motifs stems from a need to represent the pilgrimage as a cultural heritage, not necessarily because of modern transport.

I have also shown that transport improvement is not the main factor determining pilgrim numbers. Presumably, elements such as the political and economic situation of Japan take precedence. Due to the decrease of pilgrims in the 21st century, several organisations are focusing on attracting international tourists and modifying the notion of the Shikoku pilgrimage from a "running" to an "experience-based" one. This process, in conjunction with the appearance of slow travel, is merely the latest reincarnation of the supposed conflict of values between fast and slow mobility. Nevertheless, defining the limits of concepts like "slowness" and "asceticism" is further complicated by the wide range of transport opportunities available. Consequently, what constitutes "tradition" and "authenticity" is constantly being reshaped and reframed according to the narrative needs and preferences of each organisation and each pilgrim. I also found the concept of "virtual pilgrims" particularly interesting, as these "virtual modes of transport" may challenge how we understand pilgrimages in the future.

To conclude, viewing the Shikoku pilgrimage through the lens of invented traditions and imagined communities demonstrates that the values associated with walking and motorised transport are invented traditions originating from the Edo period. The impact of transport is twofold. First, the physical changes affect the perception of time and space of all pilgrims, as well as influencing demographic changes due to improved accessibility. Second, and I would argue more crucially, is the impact of transport on the discourse around the Shikoku pilgrimage. The appearance of modern modes of transport has strongly influenced how values of tradition, religion, heritage, culture, and identity are assigned to the pilgrimage. These values are constantly being adjusted and reinvented. Contemplating the current strategy of those representing the pilgrimage, discourse on modern transport and tourism will continue to mould the boundaries and interpretations of tradition in Shikoku.

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