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Mapping Shikoku: Picturing Buddhist Pilgrimage in Contemporary Japan

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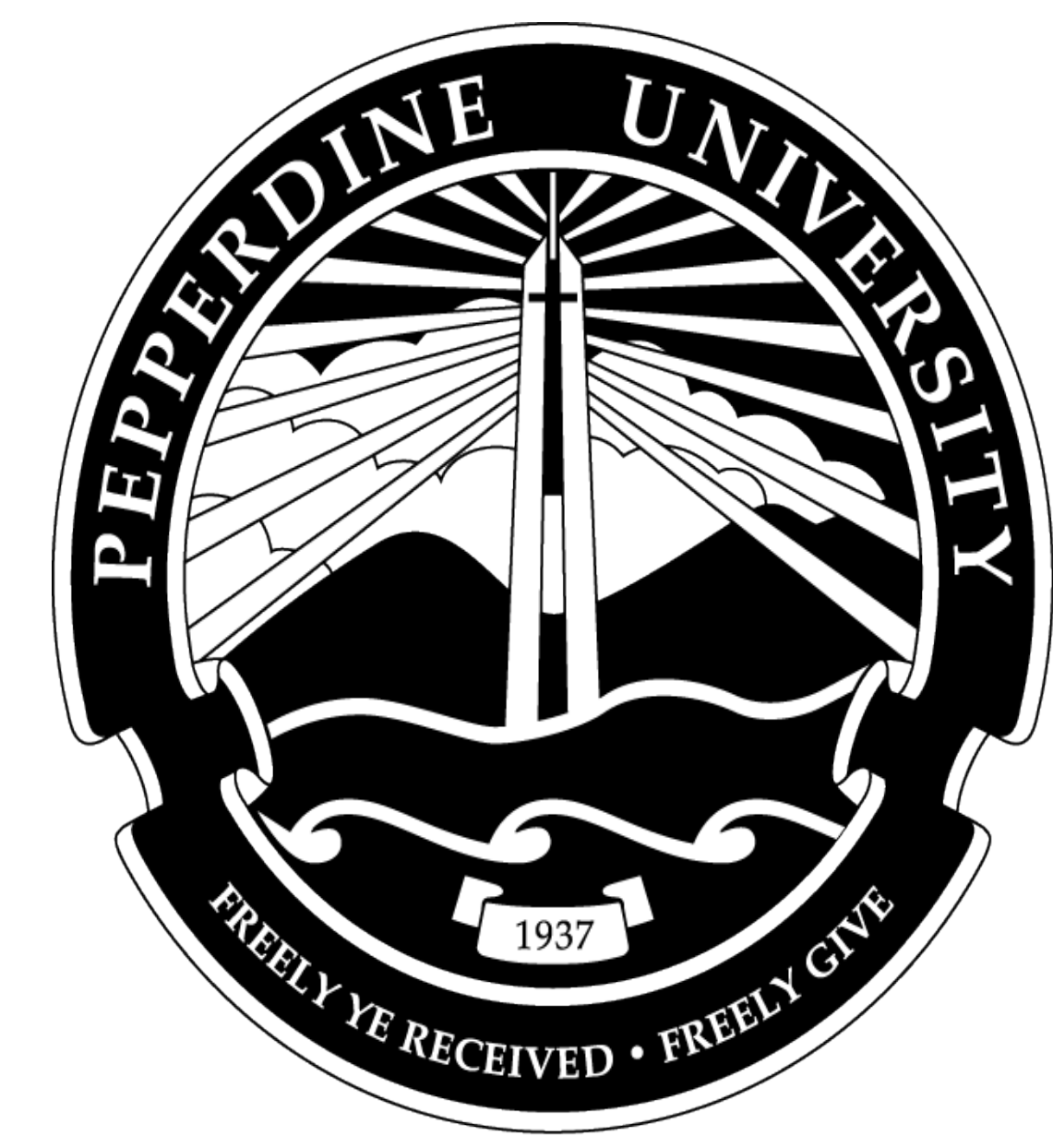
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Mapping Shikoku: Picturing Buddhist Pilgrimage in Contemporary Japan



Anna Maria Ortiz, Chloe Walton, Cody McManus – Pepperdine University

Abstract

In this research, we will address this question: Do the modern methods of practicing the Shikoku Pilgrimage stay true to the ancient intent of the pilgrimage? People who embark on the journey to each of the 88 Shikoku temple sites do so to escape to another world of peace and tranquility that they cannot obtain in their regular daily lives. Unfortunately, there is a large gap in scholarship on the topic of the Shikoku Buddhist Pilgrimage: little is written about how the shift from ancient to modern practices of the pilgrimage has changed pilgrims' experiences. Little is known by Westerners about the art objects that pilgrims encounter along the way to the temples, because some of the available artworks that pilgrims would encounter and view on their route to the temple sites cannot be removed from the route. We will demonstrate how walking the pilgrimage is more fulfilling than experiencing the pilgrimage by modernized transportation.

Introduction

Pilgrimages remain as much a sacred facet of Buddhism as they were in the past, first stemming from the example put forth by the Buddha Sakyamuni when he chose to give up his worldly possessions and wander the world. More specifically, the Shikoku Pilgrimage, which occurs on the island of Shikoku, Japan, is a recreation of the path originally walked by Kobo Daishi, the founder of Shingon Buddhism, in the 8th century AD. The path connects 88 temples, making it the longest pilgrimage route in Japan. The whole path serves as a time capsule, bringing the pilgrim, also known as the henro, into the history of his or her religion by reflecting upon the art encountered along the way. However, the pilgrimage has recently been modernized: travel by bus has become more common than the original tradition of walking. What once was a sacred journey has now become a form of tourism. Without this vital aspect of walking the pilgrimage route, does a pilgrim fail to experience the spiritual atmosphere originally intended for them?

Methodology

The temples and art pieces remain close to their original form, unmoved from their original sites, so that pilgrims may experience them firsthand on the pilgrimage. Since many of these works are unavailable to be analyzed, we gathered most of our information from articles, novels, research essays, and reports from pilgrims about their personal experiences while embarking on this pilgrimage. Our exhibition promotes the necessity to experience this pilgrimage by walking it, as it was originally meant to be done. It consists of a scroll "Illustrated Chronicle of the Great Master from Koya" and Ito Ryuzin's map of Mount Koya, which both give a view of the history of Kobo Daishi, the founder of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Our exhibition also includes an image of stairs near Temple 25 in the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage and an image of a small statue found on a path between temples in the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage to illustrate aspects of the pilgrimage that a pilgrim might miss if he were not walking the path. The Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage is a pilgrimage on Japan that is similar to the Shikoku Pilgrimage. By displaying a fragment of the hanging scroll "Illustrated Chronicle of the Great Master from Koya," the pictures of the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage, and Ito Ryuzin's complete map of Mount Koya in a chronological organization detailing Kobo Daishi's life journey, this exhibition reveals the important impact of the Shikoku temples' history on pilgrimage today.

Figures



FIG 1: Fragment from the Illustrated Chronicle of the Great Master from Koya (Koya Daishi gyojo zue dankan), Catalogue number: 43, Japan, Kamakura period, late 13th or early 14th century, Hanging scroll; ink and colors on paper, H. 10 7/8 x W. 21 3/8 in. (27.7 x 54 cm), Credit Line: John C. Weber Collection, Mount Koya



FIG 2: Newly Augmented Complete Map of Mount Koya (Shinzo Koyasan zenzu), Catalogue number: 42, Ito Ryuzan (Japanese), Japan, 1857, Color woodblock print, H. 21 5/8 x W. 46 1/16 in. (54.9 x 117 cm), C. V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley, Mount Koya

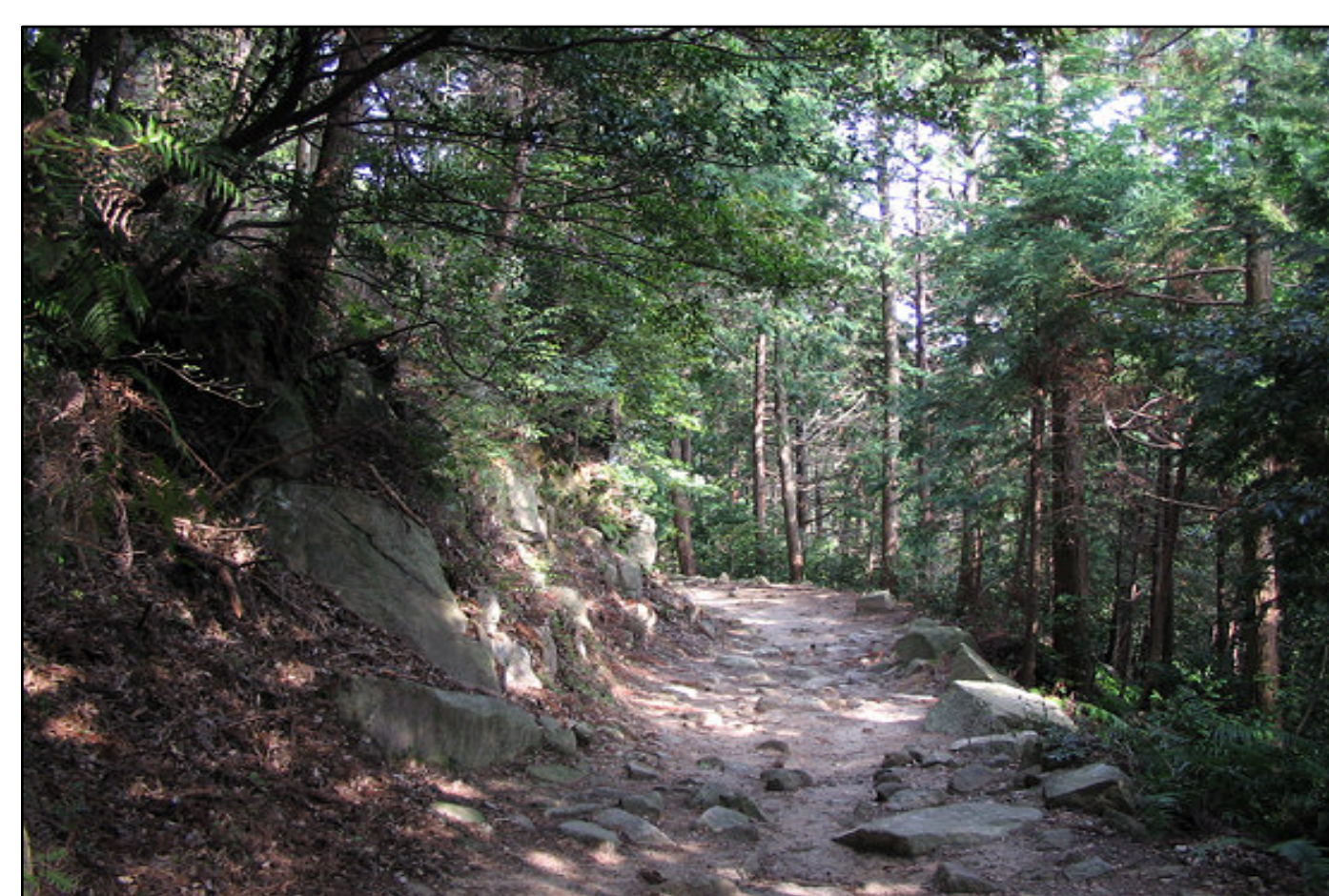


FIG 7: A pathway by Temple 25, the Kiyomizu-dera Temple, founded in 627AD by the monk Hodo Sennin.



FIG 9: A small statue of Jizo found along the trail towards the Kannonsho-ji, Temple 32 on the Kansai Kannon pilgrimage.

Exhibition List

FIG 1: Fragment from the Illustrated Chronicle of the Great Master from Koya (Koya Daishi gyojo zue dankan), Kamakura period, late 13th or early 14th century, Hanging scroll; ink and colors on paper, H. 10 7/8 x W. 21 3/8 in. (27.7 x 54 cm), John C. Weber Collection, Minneapolis Institute of Art

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FIG 3: Small temple associated with Kobo Daishi halfway up a mountain path - only viewable by walking. Near the Makinoo-dera (Sefuku-ji) Temple, Osaka. (538AD)

FIG 4: Steps leading to Makinoodera Temple, which is part of the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage, a pilgrimage on Japan that is similar to the Shikoku Pilgrimage. (538AD)

FIG 5: Beginning of the Kami Daigo-Ji Temple, which is part of the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage, a pilgrimage on Japan that is similar to the Shikoku Pilgrimage. (Founded by the monk Shobo in 874)

FIG 6: Path to the Onjoji (Miidera) Temple, which is part of the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage, a pilgrimage on Japan that is similar to the Shikoku Pilgrimage. (764AD)

FIG 7: A pathway by Temple 25, the Kiyomizu-dera Temple, founded in 627AD by the monk Hodo Sennin.

FIG 8: A 2km path leads up to the Kannonsho-ji Temple, which is part of the Kansai Kannon Pilgrimage, a pilgrimage on Japan that is similar to the Shikoku Pilgrimage. (605AD)

FIG 9: A small statue of Jizo found along the trail towards the Kannonsho-ji, Temple 32 on the Kansai Kannon pilgrimage.

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Conclusion and Discussions

By examining images of the similar Kansai Kannon pilgrimage, we have shown the contrast between the route of the walking pilgrim and the limited view that the pilgrim gets when he travels by modernized forms of transportation. We propose that, in order to present a more accurate contrast, directly depicting the Shikoku pilgrimage, we partake in further research on the topic. This may include obtaining images of the actual Shikoku pilgrimage route, as well as contrasting images of the experience that the Shikoku bus travelers have.

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