Mapping Shikoku: Picturing Buddhist Pilgrimage in Contemporary Japan

Anna Maria Ortiz
Pepperdine University

Chloe Walton
Pepperdine University

Cody McManus
Pepperdine University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/sturesearch

Part of the Asian Art and Architecture Commons

Recommended Citation
Ortiz, Anna Maria; Walton, Chloe; and McManus, Cody, "Mapping Shikoku: Picturing Buddhist Pilgrimage in Contemporary Japan" (2012). Pepperdine University, Featured Research. Paper 77.
https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/sturesearch/77

This Research Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Student Research at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Featured Research by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact Katrina.Gallardo@pepperdine.edu, anna.speth@pepperdine.edu.
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 heno, into the history of his or her religion by reflecting upon the act 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. 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.

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 pilgrimage gives when it 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.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank W. M. Keck Foundation Project Director and Associate Dean Lee Kats, Seaver College Dean Rick Marrs, Seaver Associate Dean Constance Fulmer, Assistant Director of Research Katy Carr, Technology Liaisons Jenny Cha and Ernest Lauer, Fine Arts Librarian Elizabeth Parang, Peer Mentors Josette Barsano and Lori Patrick.