

CREATING PILGRIMAGES: BUDDHIST PRIESTS AND POPULAR RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

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Introduction

Although much work has been done on the comparative study of pilgrimage by Western academics, little if no account has been taken in such studies of the complex and important Japanese pilgrimage tradition. Equally, while there have been many excellent studies of Japanese pilgrimages by Japanese academics, these have tended to treat pilgrimage in Japan almost exclusively as a Japanese religious phenomenon, and have paid little attention to any comparative analysis or to how the study of Japanese pilgrimage practices might fit into, or add to, wider discussions or comparative theories of pilgrimage. This article is a preliminary attempt to bridge this academic gap by looking at pilgrimage in contemporary Japan, with particular focus on the ways in which new pilgrimages have been created in recent decades. It asks whether these patterns of formation, and the manner in which such pilgrimages have been utilised by religious authorities (primarily Buddhist temples), throw new light on some widely held theories about pilgrimage that have developed from comparative studies of pilgrimage in other cultures and religions (especially Christianity), and on the general interpretation of pilgrimage as primarily a manifestation of folk or popular (as opposed to orthodox, established or hierarchic) religion.

As Andrea Dahlberg has noted, pilgrimages are “chiefly understood as the stuff of folk religion” (1991:48 fn.1).¹ This is a perspective that is found in the work of Victor Turner, whose studies of pilgrimage (especially of Christianity) have been the focus of much attention. Turner viewed pilgrimage as an expression of populist religious sentiment that was anti-hierarchical, governed not by the rules and doctrines of religious doctrines and structures, but in antithesis to them, created by populist sentiment. Pilgrimages, in the Turnerian view, were generally formed as a result of extraordinary religious phenomena such as visions and the reports of miraculous events that drew the curious and the faithful to religious places, which became transformed into pilgrimage sites through the visits of the faithful, as the following comment from Victor and Edith Turner illustrates: “A pilgrimage’s foundation is typically marked by visions, miracles or martyrdoms. The first pilgrims tend to arrive haphazardly, and intermittently, though in great numbers, “voting with their feet”” (1978: 25).

This image of the formation of pilgrimages (and hence of the location of pilgrimage

within the field of folk religion, and as a manifestation of the will of the people, and as standing somewhat in antithesis to, or in tension with, the orthodoxies represented by priestly hierarchies) certainly conditioned Turner's analysis of pilgrimage as anti-hierarchical and as representing the popular as opposed to the ecclesiastical tradition. Anthropological studies have done little to challenge this view or to subject it to detailed historical scrutiny, in part, no doubt, because documentation on the formation of pilgrimages (at least in earlier eras) is relatively scarce since materials detailing the existence and popularity of pilgrimages tend to appear only after the pilgrimages themselves have formed and developed a clientele or popularity.

It is here that a study of pilgrimages in Japan can provide us with some new perspectives, for over the past few decades a number of new pilgrimages have come into existence in Japan whose origins can readily be determined. An examination of the ways in which pilgrimages come into being in contemporary Japan appears to suggest a more complex picture than that portrayed by Turner, with religious hierarchies and authorities playing a greater role in the formation of pilgrimages than the picture outlined above suggests and even at times actively inventing pilgrimages. Indeed, the contemporary Japanese situation provides us with evidence of alternative models concerning the formation of pilgrimages, that suggest that pilgrimages may in fact be invented by religious institutions and hierarchies and those associated with them as a means of extending their popularity and support and that, in short, they may be every bit as much an extension and manifestation of orthodox, hierarchic religion as they are of folk religion.

The pilgrimage boom and the formation of new pilgrimages in contemporary Japan

It is widely considered by Japanese academics that the practice of pilgrimage enjoyed, in the 1970s and 1980s, a period of great popularity and growth in Japan, and the term *junrei būmu* (pilgrimage boom) has been widely used to describe this phenomenon. Whether there has been a real pilgrimage boom in terms of pilgrim numbers is beyond the scope of this article.² What is sure is that, since the late 1960s, a vast attention has been paid to pilgrimages in the media and in popular and academic literature, with a concomitant growth in the amounts of publicity (often through the proselytising activities of Buddhist priests, but often, too, backed up by commercial concerns such as transport companies that gain financially through catering for pilgrims) given to pilgrimages, and, linked to these phenomena, in the creation of new pilgrimage routes. Whilst all these elements are parts of the "pilgrimage boom" it is also clear that they are equally products of it: in particular the notion that there has been a "pilgrimage boom" has been a causal factor leading many Buddhist priests to develop new pilgrimages that can, in some way, cater to, and benefit from, the potentially growing pilgrimage market.

New and revived pilgrimages in Japan

Whilst it would be impossible in a short article to name and give details of all the pilgrimages that have been created during this period, even a brief outline of some of those that have appeared in the past two or three decades would suffice to give an impression of the phenomenon. In this outline I shall also comment on their formation and on people involved in this process, after which I shall look more closely at a couple of these cases. All the pilgrimages I shall be discussing follow a common Japanese Buddhist pattern of pilgrimage, in which a specified number of temples or other such religious sites are linked together in one route, with each site being an integral part of the wider pilgrimage; such types of pilgrimage, which are generally referred to as *junrei* or *junpai* (both of which terms can be translated as pilgrimage and both of which indicate a linked journey to a fixed number of sacred sites that, as a group, constitute a pilgrimage), are perhaps the most prevalent type of pilgrimage found in Japan today. They are also, at least insofar as all, or most, of the religious sites on the routes are Buddhist temples, largely Buddhist in orientation, and it has largely been the Buddhist priesthood that has been active in their creation.³

One of the earliest examples of pilgrimage creation or development in the post-war era was the 1968 revival of the Shin Saikoku (“new Saikoku”) pilgrimage route, which incorporated 33 temples in the Osaka-Kobe region dedicated to Kannon. This pilgrimage, which was modelled, in terms of numbers of sites and focus of worship, on the historically important Saikoku pilgrimage,⁴ originally developed in 1932, when three Kansai area newspapers, the Osaka Jiji Shinbun, the Kyoto Nichinichi Shinbun and the Kôbe Shinbun, campaigned to establish a pilgrimage in the Kansai region that would provide a focus for the spiritual aspirations of the area’s people and act as a focus of social and civil unity and identity (Shimoyasuba 1986: 9). The pilgrimage lapsed during the war and immediate post-war years, but as a result of the growing interest in pilgrimage in general manifested from the late 1960s on (it was in this era that the Saikoku and Shikoku pilgrimages began to attract large number of pilgrims), priests from some of the prominent temples involved in the route, such as Shitennôji in Osaka and Dôjôji in Wakayama prefecture, decided to revive it. Shimoyasuba Yoshiharu, a civil servant in Kawachi Nagano in the Osaka region, who had close connections with Shitennôji and was a friend and former classmate of its head priest, was asked to assist in this process and to produce a guidebook for the newly revived route.⁵ The book sold well, and it, and the accompanying publicity that followed the revival, helped make the pilgrimage successful; it also brought Shimoyasuba’s name into some prominence, and led him, as we shall see shortly, to a subsequent career as an organiser and creator of new pilgrimages.

Other 33 stage Kannon routes that have been created since include a 33 stage *Boke fûji* (prevention of senility) Kannon route, founded in 1984 and incorporating temples throughout western Japan, from the Kansai region, to Shikoku and Kyûshû and the Chûgoku region. Many other of these *boke fûji* pilgrimages, which cater for those concerned with the problems of ageing (see Reader 1995, forthcoming) have developed subsequently at regional levels,

including the Kyūshū and Shikoku *boke fūji* Kannon pilgrimages (formed in 1987 and 1991 respectively). Other pilgrimages of a similar nature that have developed recently include those focused on the attainment of happiness and longevity (*rakujū*). In 1987, for example, such a route, a 33 stage Rakujū Kannon pilgrimage was established in the Hokuriku region with the aim of enabling people to have a happy old age and to avoid senility. This pilgrimage was developed due to the activities of the priest Horii Ryūjun, whose temple Onsenji belongs to this route. Horii began the campaign to establish this pilgrimage in 1984, lobbying other priests in the region until eventually 33 temples had agreed to participate in it, and in June 1987 a ceremonial ritual (*hōyō*) was held at Eianji in Kanazawa to mark the pilgrimage's official opening. It is common to hold official opening ceremonies to consecrate new pilgrimages, and this practice, again, points to the role that the official religious hierarchies play not just in establishing pilgrimage routes but in validating them. Other routes of a similar nature have appeared in recent years, including the Kinki Rakujū Kannon pilgrimage, formed at the end of the 1980s.

Many new pilgrimages incorporating 88 temples, which have as their central focus of worship Kōbō Daishi and which take as their basic model the 88 stage Shikoku pilgrimage, have also developed in recent years. Many such pilgrimages had developed during the Tokugawa era (see Reader 1988) but many of these had fallen into abeyance by the post-war era.⁶ In the past two decades, alongside the creation of new routes there has been a concerted effort in many parts of Japan by priests keen to reassert local customs and traditions and also to attract new people to their temples, to revive such routes. Thus in 1988 the local priest, Kawanishi Ekai, and his son, the assistant priest at the Kawanichi family temple Saichōji on the island of Suō Oshima in Yamaguchi prefecture, revived the island's 88 stage pilgrimage which had existed in the Tokugawa era. Its re-opening marked by a large Buddhist ritual attended by priests from much of western Japan, and by representatives of the temple associations (Reijōkai) of several other pilgrimage routes (*Chūgai Nippō* Sept. 9th 1988).

Along with such revived pilgrimages numerous other, new 88 stage pilgrimages have been formed in this period. In 1984, for example, an 88 stage pilgrimage route, the Kyūshū Hachijūhakkasho Reijō, was formed at the instigation of Shingon priests in northern Kyūshū to commemorate the 1150th anniversary of Kōbō Daishi's entry, according to Shingon and folk belief, into eternal enlightenment (*nyūjō*). In December 1989 the 88 stage Shikoku Shin Mandara pilgrimage, which incorporated not only Buddhist temples but also seven Shinto shrines, was established in Shikoku as a result of the campaigning of the Buddhist priest Fukushima Seijō, from the temple Manpukuji in Tokushima. According to Fukushima, one motivation behind the route was to restore the former integration between different religious traditions on the island for, until the Meiji Restoration, the Shikoku pilgrimage itself had incorporated Shinto as well as Buddhist places of worship.⁷ The pilgrimage was organised at a meeting of temple and shrine priests that took place on December 7th 1989 in Matsuyama; when I interviewed Revd Fukushima in November 1990 he was able to report that the pilgrimage had attracted around 10000 pilgrims in its first year.

Several pilgrimages associated with Fudô Myôdô, normally involving 36 temples⁸, have developed since the late 1970s. In 1979 the 36 stage Kinki Fudô pilgrimage was established, again with Shimoyasuba playing an active role in its development, to be followed by several other regional Fudô routes, including the Kyûshû Hokuriku, Kantô, Tôhoku and Hokkaidô Fudô pilgrimages until, by 1991, 10 such regional Fudô pilgrimages were in existence. A similar process appears to have occurred with pilgrimages focusing on the Buddha of healing Yakushi, and several Yakushi pilgrimages, normally linking 49 sites together, have appeared in recent years, including a 49 stage Saikoku Yakushi route that was established (again with Shimoyasuba's assistance) in 1989.

The Seven Gods of Good Fortune (*shichifukujin*) which have, as a group, been the focus of pilgrimages since at least the earlier part of the Tokugawa era, with several such local routes in Edo proving popular, especially at New Year, have flourished in recent years as a focus of pilgrimage activity. In present-day Tokyo local *shichifukujin* routes continue to flourish, as they do also in Kyoto, where the *Miyako Shichifukujin* pilgrimage in particular has attracted a rapidly growing number of pilgrims in the latter part of the 1980s (Itô 1988: 149). *Shichifukujin* pilgrimages have experienced a quite pronounced growth both in terms of pilgrims and the numbers of routes created especially since 1973, when perhaps the most successful of all these routes was established on the island of Awaji, largely as a result of the activities of a local priest, Iwatsubo Shinkô. Backed by the local tourist board and by local transport companies (all of whom were keen to develop tourist facilities and attractions on the island), the Awaji pilgrimage, which can be accomplished in little over a day by bus and which enables participants also to see all of the island and take in its other sights as well, has proved remarkably popular, attracting over 100,000 pilgrims a year. In so doing, it has come to dominate the pilgrimage market in Awaji, drawing people away from the other pilgrimage routes extant on the island.⁹

Inventing new pilgrimages: the process in action

What has been remarkable about all these pilgrimages is that in every case cited (and these are, I stress, merely a small number of the pilgrimages created in recent years), the pilgrimage has developed not because of some vision or miraculous event that has drawn people, either haphazardly or in ordered floods, to the sites concerned, nor because of any popularly-inspired surge of religious fervour directed at particular holy places or centres, but because of calculated decisions by priests associated with the sites on the route. I shall shortly make some suggestions as to why, at this time, priests have been making such decisions to invent pilgrimages. First, however, in order to illustrate more clearly the processes that have gone into the formation of such routes, I shall look in more detail at some of the pilgrimages mentioned above and the people behind them. In particular I shall focus on some of the new pilgrimages that have developed in Kyûshû and also on the activities of Shimoyasuba Yoshiharu, the former civil servant involved in the revival of the Shin Saikoku

route.

As has already been noted, in the 1980s a number of new pilgrimages developed in Kyūshū particularly in the northern part of the island around its main city of Fukuoka, including an 88 stage pilgrimage based on the figure of Kōbō Daishi, in 1984, and a 33 stage *boke fūji* Kannon route in 1987. Other routes including a 36 stage Fudō pilgrimage also were developed in this period, while a monthly magazine *Junpai Raifu* ("Pilgrimage Life") which was supported by, and publicised, the various pilgrimages of northern Kyūshū began to be published. Besides the various Kyūshū pilgrimage temple associations whose routes it promotes, the magazine has close connections with various local and regional bus companies, especially the Ukawa Bus Company, whose President Ishii Takeshi, is an active supporter of the pilgrimage routes in the region. Ishii is also a friend of two priests in Fukuoka, Tsutsumi Kakusei, of the temple Hōzōin, and Aramaki Jikai, of Myōsekiji, who have played major roles in establishing and promoting pilgrimages in the region. That all these interest groups — bus companies, magazine and priests — were closely aligned and operated in conjunction with each other was demonstrated to me when I attended an end of year party held in Fukuoka for those involved in coordinating pilgrimage activities in the region. Those present included the editor of *Junpai Life*, Mr. Ishii, the President of the Ukawa Bus Company, the priests Tsutsumi and Aramaki and a number of other priests representing various other pilgrimage routes in Kyūshū. The discussions at this meeting centred in part on how best to promote and develop pilgrimages in the region, how those concerned could serve to develop and reinforce a sense of regional identity, and how they could best transform the pilgrimages they had created into traditions that would endure into the next century.

The Kyūshū *boke fūji* pilgrimage was created largely through the activities of Reverends Aramaki and Tsutsumi, who had also been involved in the development of the *boke fūji* route developed in western Japan in 1984. They felt that this route was too geographically widespread to attract many people and that a more localised route would be more attractive. Hence they decided to invent a new route based in northern Kyūshū and so contacted priests they knew or whose temples were in interesting or accessible locations (including temples located near hot spring resorts, where the pilgrims would be able to relax at the end of a hard day's pilgrimaging), until they had persuaded 33 such temples to join. Each temple was required to acquire a statue of the *boke fūji* Kannon, a form that itself has been invented in recent years and that has been marketed primarily by a Buddhist statue-making company in Kyoto as its focus of worship (see Reader 1995, forthcoming for further details).

Reverends Tsutsumi and Aramaki have also liaised with other regional interest groups, including tourist offices and travel firms to publicise and promote the emergent route, and have established a *sendatsu* system, with honorific ranks and titles bestowed on pilgrims who have performed a pilgrimage a number of times and who are committed to supporting and promoting it. Similar systems exist on many other pilgrimages in Japan including the Shikoku pilgrimage, with the *sendatsu* serving as leaders of pilgrimage parties and as recruiters of pilgrims and even, in some cases, as professional pilgrimage travel agents (see Reader 1993).

Reverends Tsutsumi and Aramaki felt that it would be essential to develop a coterie of *sendatsu* who could act as agents for the pilgrimage, to encourage others to do the route and to lay the foundations of a tradition that would allow the pilgrimage to continue to be successful in the future. By December 1990 they had recruited 110 *sendatsu* and hoped that this would lead in turn to a growth in the numbers of pilgrims. The priests do not necessarily think that their pilgrimage will be an immediate success; rather, in creating this route (and in supporting other new routes in the region) they are, they feel, building the foundations of what they hope will in subsequent eras be a tradition, an intrinsic part of the culture of their region. This notion is reiterated by Ishii Takeshi, the President of the Ukawa Bus Company, who has stated that his aim is to develop a pilgrimage tradition in Kyūshū that would, in 50 to 100 years, rival that of Shikoku (*Chūgai Nippō* June 22nd 1988). Similar attempts to develop *sendatsu* systems and create pilgrimage traditions can be found in many other pilgrimages in Japan such as the Shin Shikoku Mandara route and the Kansai Yakushi pilgrimage (Reader 1993: 38-41).

While priests, as the Kyūshū case shows, may themselves act as creators and organisers of pilgrimages, they may also commission lay people to play a role in the process. As was mentioned earlier in this article, one person who has become especially prominent in this field is Shimoyasuba Yoshiharu.¹⁰ As has been mentioned, he first became involved with pilgrimages when he was asked to help revive the Shin Saikoku route because of his close connections to the Buddhist temple Shitennōji. As a committed lay Buddhist who believes that pilgrimages serve a vital role in bringing ordinary people into temples and in enhancing their faith, his subsequent pilgrimage making activities have been inspired by his desire to do something he considers beneficial to Buddhism. His motivations are not, it should be stressed, primarily financial: although he gets some small recompense from the temples who ask him to help establish pilgrimages, he in fact covers many of the initial expenses he incurs in his surveys looking for suitable temples to incorporate into pilgrimages, and he lives primarily, and rather modestly, on his pension.

He became well known because of his involvement in the Shin Saikoku pilgrimage and subsequently received calls from priests seeking advice on how to create new routes of their own. Since 1980 when he retired from his job, he has devoted his life to the development and promotion of pilgrimages. Over the years he has, either on his own initiative or on request from temple priests, helped to create several new pilgrimages, including the 49 stage Saikoku Yakushi pilgrimage, the 36 stage Fudō pilgrimage in the Kinki region, and a 36 stage Amadera (temples run by nuns) route; in the former cases he was asked by priests to assist in the creation of the routes, while the latter was his own idea.¹¹

The process of creating a route, according to Shimoyasuba, involves much diplomacy and time. In order to select the 36 temples for the Fudō pilgrimage he visited approximately 200 temples that enshrined Fudō in the Kinki region, analysing such issues such as whether they have long histories, whether they possess any important cultural artefacts or famous Buddhist statues, whether they are already the focus of popular faith, whether they were in beautiful

settings or had good scenery nearby, and whether they were relatively easily accessed by road or public transport. Rivalries, either institutional and long standing between temples or personal between priests also had to be taken into consideration: there were, for example, priests who wished their temples to be part of the route only as long as other temples and priests were excluded. Eventually he managed, through a process of selection, diplomacy and persuasion, to select 36 temples enshrining Fudô that were willing to be part of the route, and to produce a guidebook publicising it. He has produced several other books and taken part in the creation of other pilgrimages since, and is regularly consulted by priests on such matters.

Factors behind the invention of pilgrimages

It is perhaps appropriate here to make some brief and necessarily preliminary comments here about why priests in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s have seen fit to create new pilgrimages or to ask others to do this for them. One factor in the process has been the concept of the pilgrimage boom itself: the perception (fuelled by widespread discussions in the media of the apparent “pilgrimage boom”) that pilgrimage has been an increasingly popular practice in the modern age has in and of itself helped encourage priests to establish new routes. The very development of new routes often serves to give impetus to further new pilgrimages, as the cases of the regional Fudô and *boke fûji* Kannon pilgrimages mentioned above have shown.

Pilgrimages also appear attractive to priests seeking to find ways to inspire religious commitment and to bring people into their temples in an age when Buddhist temples, especially in rural areas, have faced numerous problems due to the erosion of the *danka* system, which is the traditional basis of support, both emotional and financial, for temples, and due to the rising numbers of people who have drifted away from established religions such as Buddhism. Many temples in rural areas in particular have had to close or have been threatened with closure due to such factors, and those that survive have been driven to seek new means of subsistence and support. In such circumstances, joining a pilgrimage route has proved to be a lifeline for many temples: at least one of the temples on the Kyûshû *boke fûji* route, Kôyadera in Saga prefecture, was on the point of closure as it had virtually no parishioners left, before it joined the pilgrimage. Subsequently it has benefitted from the sales of amulets to pilgrims, from the fees they pay to get their scrolls and pilgrims' books stamped, and from donations left by them. In such terms pilgrimages can not only be a much needed source of economic support for temples in the modern age, but may also serve to reorient them and to transform them into centres of popular faith and devotion.

For many priests, creating a new pilgrimage can be seen an act of devotionism, which is seen both as a manifestation of their personal religious commitment and part of a wider duty to provide the ordinary people with accessible means of religious practice through which they can develop their own faith. Virtually all the priests I interviewed who have been involved in the creation of pilgrimages have spoken in such terms; admittedly there may, in

what they say, be some degree of self-justificatory rhetoric aimed at legitimating what are clearly economically beneficial exercises, but in general I have been struck by the general earnestness and sincerity of those I have talked to on this subject.

The priests are usually also motivated by a desire to help their local communities. In an age where rural areas have suffered economically, much effort has been placed at all levels of society into the drive for rural regeneration (as typified by the *furusatozukuri* and *muraokoshi* movements), and this dynamic may also be observed in the invention of pilgrimages. One of the factors that motivated Kawanishi Ekai and his son to revive the pilgrimage on Suō Oshima was that they were concerned at the gradual decline in the island's population, at the erosion of its economy (which had become wholly dependent on fruit farming, mostly carried out by an ageing and declining population), and at the erosion of the island's sense of identity as its young people drifted away to the large cities. By reviving the pilgrimage they hoped not only to provide a new spiritual focus for the islanders which would help reaffirm their sense of pride in their home environment but also to resuscitate the local economy by attracting to the island pilgrims from outside who would require lodgings and spend money there.¹²

Regional rivalries also play a role here, as I have discussed elsewhere (Reader 1988) where I showed how regional and small-scale pilgrimage routes often developed due to local rivalries and desires to emulate the activities of neighbouring villages, regions and (in the Inland Sea area) islands, and by regional desires to express local identity and to assert a sense of independence from neighbouring regions. I would suggest that this factor is also present in the present-day formation of pilgrimages. When activists in Kyūshū talk of creating traditions so that their pilgrimage might, in a century or so, rival that of Shikoku, they are expressing an underlying sense of regional rivalry. When one region establishes a pilgrimage others rapidly follow suit; thus the invention of a *boke fūji* pilgrimage in Kyūshū has been followed by a similar route in Shikoku, and a Fudō pilgrimage in the Kinki region has spawned copies across the rest of Japan.

Hence, the formation of pilgrimages, and the notion of developing traditions around them, emerges out of a mixture of factors, ranging from devotionism to commercialism, from desires to show faith in the sacred nature of the temples and their figures of worship and to provide ordinary people with paths of faith, to more pragmatic motives inspired by a need to provide economic support for the temple's survival or aggrandisement, as well as to promote the region in which the pilgrimage is located. All of these factors can be discerned, in varying degrees, behind each of the new pilgrimages that have been invented in recent times; all also illustrate the role of the priests and hence of official religious hierarchies in creating pilgrimages. They also demonstrate that pilgrimages, at least in terms of new pilgrimages in Japan, develop for pragmatic reasons rather more than they do from miraculous events emanating from the folk and popular religious traditions.

CONCLUSIONS

Although I have only had space to deal with newly formed pilgrimages here, I would suggest that investigations of older and more established pilgrimage routes in Japan would show some similar patterns. I have shown this in an earlier examination of the formation of small-scale pilgrimages in Tokugawa Japan, where I showed that the island and regional pilgrimages centred on Kôbô Daishi were generally formed due to the activities of priests and other leading figures in regional hierarchies (Reader 1988). Examinations of the formation of other pilgrimages, such as the Saikoku and Shikoku pilgrimages, in both of which various figures connected with the religious establishments, from the priests of Miidera who were involved in the development of Saikoku, and those of Mount Kôya active in the formation of Shikoku¹³, show something similar, while the role of religious activists such as the *hijiri*, who often were fundraisers for and promoters of particular Buddhist temples (see Goodwin 1993) in developing pilgrimages also demonstrate the close involvement of the temples in this process. In such terms it should be clear that the priests in the modern day who create pilgrimages do not represent just a modern phenomenon, but one with roots deep in Japanese history. Indeed, the development of these earlier pilgrimages as a means of spreading popular faith and encouraging ordinary people to visit (and hence give support to) Buddhist temples mirrors, although perhaps in a less coordinated way, the present situation. Pilgrimages, supposedly the stuff of folk religion, have been developed throughout Japanese history by those closely associated with the religious hierarchies and official structures of Buddhism, and are currently being used as a means of reinvigorating and regenerating those structures in the modern age.

The Japanese situation, certainly in terms of the invention of new pilgrimages and traditions, shows us that it has been the priesthood and those connected with the centres of religious authority who have created, and who continue to create or make, pilgrimages. In other words, rather than emerging, at the outset, due to a spontaneous religious outpouring of popular religious faith from the ordinary people, pilgrimages and the traditions they espouse, are developed from above, from the religious hierarchies and orthodoxies, and are then handed down and propagated amongst the populace. Moreover, the formation of pilgrimages in Japan shows that religious inspiration, whilst it is a factor in getting a pilgrimage started, is not the only, or the prime, element required. As the examples of the Kyûshû priests and of Shimoyasuba Yoshiharu cited above suggest, persistence, persuasion and sheer organisational hard work are what really counts.

However, one should note that just because pilgrimages have been created or promoted by priests, this does not guarantee that they will be a success. Although there are large numbers of pilgrimage in existence in Japan (see, for example, Nakao 1973 and Tsukuda 1981, which list most of the pilgrimages extant in Japan; each gives details of well over 100 pilgrimage routes), not all attract any appreciable number of pilgrims. It is perhaps most accurate to state that at present a relatively small number (amongst which can be included

Saikoku, Shikoku, Chichibu, and a number of prominent regional pilgrimages such as Sasaguri and Shôdoshima) receive large numbers of pilgrims, while several more newly formed routes appear to be growing in popularity. However, not every pilgrimage attracts enough pilgrims to develop into a cult or to sustain itself. Of the many pilgrimages that developed during the Tokugawa era, many fell into disuse in later years, while the future of some of the newly formed or revived routes of the past decades may be in doubt through lack of visitors. Most of the pilgrimages invented or revived in recent years have attracted a relatively small if steady number of pilgrims, with the Shin Saikoku route getting around 12000 pilgrims a year, and the Kinki Fudô and Yakushi pilgrimage routes each getting around 10000 at present according to Shimoyasuba.

The crux of the matter is of course that, even though they can create pilgrimages and indeed disseminate legends, miracle tales or romantic literature about them, priests and their commercial associates cannot make people do them. The pilgrims themselves, even if they do not play a great a role in actually creating pilgrimages, still have (to use Turner's phrase) to vote with their feet (or, in modern Japan, with their cars and buses) if a particular pilgrimage is to develop into a popular practice and to develop a tradition. The fact that pilgrimages in Japan are, as this article has described, generally created from above, does not mean that pilgrimages are not expressions of popular or folk religion. Rather it shows us that what is the stuff of folk religion is also the stuff of the orthodox and the hierarchic, and that the organised religious establishments themselves may be not so much manipulators of the folk tradition as active creators of it. Pilgrimage in Japan is thus simultaneously an example of popular faith and of a religious orthodoxy that is expressed and promoted through a folk religious prism. Its popular dimensions come, in part, from the responses of people who, by choosing to do them or not, effectively determine whether they will be a success, hence entering the realms of popular religion, or not.

Thus the contemporary invention of pilgrimages by priests in Japan, reflecting as it does a pattern of pilgrimage development discernible in earlier Japanese history, provides us with an example which suggests we need to rethink the commonly held idea that pilgrimages spontaneously develop out of religious phenomena associated with folk religion and that they are thus products of the popular and anti-hierarchic attitudes of the ordinary people. While these are important themes in many pilgrimages, and whilst spontaneity as well as the occurrence of visions and miracles may play their part in producing some pilgrimage phenomena, they may not, at least as far as the Japanese pilgrimage examples discussed here show, be as predominant as has been assumed. Rather, the data provided through studies of contemporary Japanese pilgrimage, in particular in terms of their invention and in the creation of traditions surrounding them, suggests that a reassessment of the nature of pilgrimage as a popular religious phenomenon is in order, and that scholars studying pilgrimages in other cultures or in comparative perspective need to give greater focus in future to the roles of priests and the organisations and hierarchies they belong to, and to further consider the extent to which pilgrimages may be a creation of, and hence a central element within, religious

orthodoxies. Certainly the Japanese example tells us that pilgrimages may be created and promoted by religious hierarchies and priests, and then if successful, acquire populist dimensions through the encrustations of tradition, folk tales, tales of miraculous events and the like.

Thus, it may well be accurate to describe pilgrimage as an expression of folk and popular religion, but as this article has suggested, it is also an expression of the innovative and creative activities and strategies of those normally associated with religious orthodoxies and hierarchies, who create pilgrimage routes because they see them as a means of bringing more people into their temples and of increasing the numbers of people who develop an affiliation, even if on the rather casual level of pilgrimage visits, to their temples. In such terms, studying the ways in which Japanese pilgrimages have been invented not only causes us to reconsider prevalent theories and assumptions about the ways in which pilgrimages are formed; it also shows us that those orthodoxies and hierarchies are themselves closely concerned with, and are frequently active participants in, the development of folk religion. It also suggests that our common tendency to separate folk religion from orthodox and hierarchic religion and to view them as different or even oppositional types of religious structure is itself highly problematic, but that is the subject of another article.

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Notes

- 1 Dahlberg does herself not argue that pilgrimage is the stuff of folk religion; indeed, her article makes a rare critique of this perspective by showing how involved ecclesiastical authorities have often been in promoting pilgrimages in Catholicism.
- 2 One should note that little statistical evidence has been produced on this issue. It is my view that there has been growth in some pilgrimages, but equally decline in numbers in others: studies by Satô (1990a and b) show a fairly large increase in the numbers of pilgrims on large routes such as the Saikoku and Shikoku pilgrimages in the 1970s and 1980s, while figures I have obtained from sources on the island of Shôdoshima suggest that the pilgrimage there has experienced a gradual decline in the numbers of pilgrims in recent years.
- 3 There are, of course, also numerous single site pilgrimages, including the pilgrimage to Ise (*Ise mairi*) (see Nishigaki 1983), pilgrimages to specific sacred mountains (e.g the *Ontake mairi* (Aoki 1985), and to the sacred centres of the various Japanese new religions, all of which are important elements within the wider culture of Japanese pilgrimage. However, it has been the multiple site forms of pilgrimage (such as the Saikoku and Shikoku pilgrimages) that have been the most prominent forms of pilgrimage through much of Japanese history and that have been at the forefront of the pilgrimage boom in the present day.
- 4 The two most common models upon which pilgrimages have been based have been the Saikoku (33 stage, focused on Kannon) and Shikoku (88 stage, focused on Kôbô Daishi) pilgrimages: for fuller discussion of this phenomenon see Reader 1988).
- 5 During this process two temples dropped out and were replaced by two new temples, while an additional five temples became affiliated to the route as *kyakuban* or guest temples: this information was provided for me by Shimoyasuba Yoshiharu, to whom I am grateful for the help he provided me when I was researching this topic.
- 6 Many declined in the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the subsequent attacks on Buddhism; even such major pilgrimages as Shikoku itself suffered drastically in this era, with temples being closed and pilgrims driven or kept away from the sites. Many regional routes were closed down completely in this era, while many others failed to survive the war and immediate post-war years when there were few people able to travel.
- 7 Now the Shikoku route consists only of Buddhist temples. The formation of the new route, one should note, has not been greeted with equanimity by those connected with the Shikoku pilgrimage temples, who view it as an upstart and rival because, inter alia, of its adoption of a similar format (88 sites) and its claims to be going back to older traditions.
- 8 This number is because Fudô has a retinue of 36 boys.
- 9 I base this information primarily on information from priests on the island. There are several other routes on Awaji, including a 33 stage Kannon pilgrimage, an 88 stage Kôbô Daishi route, and 49 stage Yakushi route (Takeda 1981).
- 10 Shimoyasuba is not the only lay person who has played an active role in creating and publicising pilgrimages. Another is Tominaga Kôhei, who has, like Shimoyasuba, written several guidebooks about regional pilgrimages, many of which have been produced to coincide with the opening of the pilgrimages concerned (e.g. Tominaga 1984, 1990).
- 11 The information in this section comes from an interview with Shimoyasuba Yoshiharu at his home in Kawachi Nagano on Jan. 19th 1991.

12 Interview Saichōji, Suō Oshima, Nov. 24th 1988.

13 See, on the histories of these pilgrimages, Maeda 1971 and Shinno 1982.