

# BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE

## A Comparison of Lumbini and Shikoku

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*The following essay is a comparison of the current state and potential value of Lumbini (Nepal) and the Shikoku Eighty-Eight Sacred Places circuit (Japan) as pilgrimage and tourist centers. Based on recent data gathered by the author, he seeks to examine the experiences of recent pilgrimages in Shikoku and speculates on the possibility of the future development of, and international collaboration between, these two famous religious sites.*

RELIGION IN JAPAN reflects a long history during which various religious beliefs and practices—some indigenous, some “imported” from other places—have been adopted and adapted to Japanese culture. Japanese pilgrimage studies have concentrated more on the historical and folkloric dimensions of pilgrimage than they have on anthropological and fieldwork-based studies. There are very few exceptions, and these focus usually on examining pilgrimage within the boundaries of Japanese culture and religion, rather than on using the topic to make any broader comparative studies or to use such studies of Japanese pilgrimage to help further any wider ranging theoretical positions.

Pilgrimage that involves visiting multiple sites has been widely practiced for a long time in Hinduism; for example, the four *dhama* visits in India completed by the final visit of Pashupatinath in Nepal. Likewise, the Buddha mentioned four places that a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. Thus a salient characteristic of multiple-site routes is that they contain a set number of places that should be visited in the context of the pilgrimage. It is, for instance, common practice for pilgrims doing multiple-site routes in Japan to carry a scroll or pilgrim’s book that they have stamped at each site and that serves as testimony as it is filled with stamps to the pilgrim’s progress and, when full, to the completion of the pilgrimage. Thus each site on multiple-site routes is equally important in terms of completing the route (READER and SWANSON

1997, 240). The Shikoku Eighty-Eight Sacred Places Pilgrimage is one of the most famous pilgrimages. It is one of the most prominent, evocative, and photogenic pilgrimages in Japan, with a highly developed pilgrimage culture, which in turn is one of the most prominent elements in the Japanese religious structure (READER 2005, 9). The Shikoku pilgrimage has become an international pilgrimage destination. People with religious faiths other than Buddhism also make this pilgrimage in Shikoku.

Nepal is a Himalayan country with a unique and diverse living history, culture, and natural beauty, including Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain, Lumbini, and the birthplace of the Buddha. It has been blending and carrying this history for thousands of years. The grove of Lumbini developed into a pilgrimage site soon after the *parinirvana* (physical death) of the Buddha. Lumbini's strengths in this respect are—to name just a few—that it is a high class pilgrimage site, declared as a World Peace City, a World Heritage Site, and hailed as the Fountain of World Peace that may provide ultimate peace and nirvana. It hosts national and international Buddhist monasteries, and is therefore the home of monks, nuns, peace lovers, and spiritual leaders. There are more than 160 religious, historical, and archaeological sites related to the Buddha and his life in and around Lumbini (see GHIMIRE 2014).

Despite Lumbini's huge potential there are several reasons why it has not been fully developed. Today, Lumbini can be considered as a synonym for a world peace center, and one of the world's most important pilgrimage destinations. Buddhist people around the globe have great respect for Lumbini. If Nepal can create a more religious environment, develop Buddhist circuits, and expand to Indian sites and Asian regions, it will definitely lengthen the period that tourists and pilgrims stay in the country. An increase in the number of visitors will contribute significantly to economic activities and employment. Lumbini could be developed along the lines of Shikoku. Learning from Shikoku and Japan could provide important guidelines for the development of Buddhist pilgrimage, and specifically Lumbini in Nepal. The purpose of this postdoctoral research is to uncover Buddhist pilgrimage practices with a special focus on Shikoku Japan, compare it with Lumbini, and develop guidelines for pilgrimage development in Lumbini.

## Research Methodology and Plan

This research is exploratory and primarily analytical in nature. The research has adopted both qualitative and quantitative inquiries based on primary and secondary sources, and self-collected data. Primary data were obtained from field visits, questionnaire surveys, and formal and informal interviews in Shikoku. Secondary

data and information were collected from publications such as journals, books, documents, and reports from the library; bulletins, reports, and plans published by Government and non-Governmental organizations; various seminar papers; and Internet searches.

There were three categories of respondents: tourists/pilgrims visiting Shikoku, organizations/agencies providing tourism service (such as hotels, travel agencies, temples, restaurants), and various experts (writers, heads of temples, CEO). Three sets of questionnaire, both in English and Japanese, were developed and the primary data were collected. I distributed the questionnaires in stamped, addressed envelopes personally to the respondents, and they then could return them by post or alternatively could scan a copy and send it by email. The questionnaire for pilgrims/tourist was also posted on social sites as well. The questionnaire survey and interviews were conducted between August and December 2016.

On-site surveys were conducted with a sample of 101 visitors to Shikoku, at the entrance gate to temple complexes, at souvenir shops and hotels, pilgrimage trails, and on the trains in the Shikoku area. Of these, fifteen respondents had already visited Shikoku and were connected with social media; thirty were stakeholders such as hotels, restaurants, travels, souvenir shops, and so forth, and six were experts on Shikoku and pilgrimage tourism. To draw a representative sample of tourists, days and sites were randomly selected. Tourists/pilgrims who were seen at the selected site, day, and time were intercepted and asked to fill out the survey. The majority of tourists agreed to participate, which yielded a response rate of more than 65 percent. Lack of time, language difficulty, and no interest in the survey were the main reasons for people declining to participate.

The questionnaire for pilgrims/tourists was comprised of questions that elicited information related to nationality, purpose of visit, budget for the trip, mode of transportation in Shikoku, organizer of the visit, influencing factors for the Shikoku pilgrimage, stay in Shikoku, impact of pilgrimage tourism, willingness to visit again, problems faced, expectations, best and worst experiences from the Shikoku pilgrimage, and demographic characteristics including age, gender, education, religion, and nationality. Likewise, they were also asked whether they knew Lumbini or not, and if so, plan to visit and network between Shikoku and Lumbini. The questionnaire for stakeholders was comprised of questions that drew information related to their marketing plan and budget allocation, impact of pilgrimage tourism, whether they know of Lumbini and want to establish a network between Shikoku and Lumbini or not; and their expectations for help from the local government. They were also asked, on a five-point scale (fully disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and fully agree) to rate their agreement/dis-

agreement on tourism and economic propositions in Shikoku. Lastly, experts were interviewed mostly with open-ended questions.

Making use of concepts and data from my previous research about Buddhist pilgrimage and Lumbini, I utilized my time to study, observe, and interact with various people and related organizations in Japan. By alternating fieldwork in Shikoku and residence at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, I benefited from regular discussions and cooperation from Paul L. Swanson, an expert in Japanese religion, culture, and pilgrimage. I also met other experts and researchers in Japan who helped me to contextualize and analyze material and provided guidance for the research.

### Pilgrimage: An Old but New Phenomena

The terms “*tirthayatra*” (pilgrimage) and “tourism” are both related to travel. The word “pilgrimage” was derived from the Latin word *peregrinus*, “stranger,” which indicates a visit to a sacred place. Tourism is secular while pilgrimage is a sacred act. Tourists derive mental relaxation from novel sights whereas the devout perceive spiritual enlistment from pilgrimage (GURUNG 1998, 32). The history of modern tourism is not as old as pilgrimage tourism, the oldest concept or original art of traveling. Pilgrimage tourism is a significant type of tourism and the pilgrimage to sacred and holy places like Lumbini for Buddhists, Pashupatinath for Hindus, Jerusalem for Christians, or Mecca-Medina for Muslims inspired modern tourism in society (GHIMIRE 2004). Pilgrimage is a well-known phenomena in religion and culture and it exists in all the main religions of the world (COLLINS-KREINER 2006). The ideal pilgrimage is an expression of the human aspiration for perfection, and those myths and legends associated with sacred journeys define the ideal and structured symbols for its enactment (KUNWAR 2006, 245). BARBER (1993, 1) defines pilgrimage as: “A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding.” The origin and evolution of the *tirthayatra* tradition of Hindus seems to be as old as their civilization or perhaps older than that (KAUR 1985, 27).

Pilgrimage is a fundamental part of many religions, from the Hajj in Islam and the Kumbha Mela and pilgrimage to char *dhama* (four *dhama*) in Hinduism; pilgrimages to Santiago and Rome in Christianity; and the four sacred sites in Buddhism. They allow the pilgrim to fulfill a commitment to their religion and free up time to reflect on life. The Shikoku pilgrimage fills the same need for the people who subscribe to the Shingon sect of Buddhism in Japan. Pilgrimage is moving meditation. On a pilgrimage, you walk; however, it is a process of spiritual purification in your body and mind. This spiritual practice is for con-

centration and awareness, as taught by the Buddha. Pilgrimage allows you to discover who you are and where you stand. It develops your mind and beliefs. When you walk, it becomes a memory and a history (Mat Schmidt, 2016). Pilgrimages serve as means through which ordinary people can enter the world, even if temporarily, of the religious specialist. This is a recurrent feature of pilgrimages worldwide. It has been seen as a means of acquiring merit that could enable people to overcome bad karma and ensure better rebirths for themselves and their kin. In Japan, for example, it is widely believed that performing the Shikoku pilgrimage will bring the pilgrim special spiritual merit that can either help the pilgrim attain entry into the Buddhist Pure Land at death, or be transferred to one's deceased kin to facilitate their journey to the next realm (READER 2012).

### Buddhist Pilgrimage

After the *parinirvana* (physical death) of the Buddha, the relics of his body were collected from the funeral pyre and divided into eight parts. These were distributed to claimants, and stupas were erected to keep the relics. The practice of pilgrimage in Buddhism probably started with visits to these places, and the purpose could be to achieve some kind of personal advantage such as rebirth in a good location, as well as to honor the great master. Thus the custom of pilgrimage has been widespread among Buddhists for many centuries. It is said that Buddha emphasized the importance of pilgrimage (Buddhanet 2010). The Buddha advised that there is no release from grief outside of pilgrimage, unless the end of the world is to be reached. So let a man be a world-knower, wise, world-ender (KUNWAR 2006). The early Buddhist pilgrims endured tremendous hardship, and some of them changed the course of history (SZOSTAK 2007). Pilgrimage has been an especially conducive concept with its focus on the notion of life as a journey toward higher goals, and because of the emphasis on transience in Buddhist tradition. The Buddha was the first Buddhist pilgrim, and his life story is one of pilgrimage, in which he leaves home to travel in search of the truth. Indeed, key places are associated with his life and significant turning points in Buddhist history (READER 2012). It was the Buddha himself who enshrined pilgrimage as an important act in the life of a practitioner. In answer to Venerable Ananda's concern that the monks would no longer be able to see the Buddha and pay their respects after his Mahaparinirbana, the Buddha mentioned four places which a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. They are:

Lumbini: “Here the Tathagata (the Buddha) was born!”

Buddhagaya: “Here the Tathagata became fully enlightened, in unsurpassed, Supreme Enlightenment!”

Sarnath: “Here the Tathagata set rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Law!”

Kusinagara: “Here the Tathagata passed away into Nirvana.”

In visiting those places, early Buddhist pilgrims not only walked in the Buddha’s footsteps, thereby metaphorically treading the same path to enlightenment while being in his presence, but did so alongside fellow pilgrims walking the same path and hence experienced a sense of community (READER 2012). The Buddha said, “And whosoever, Ananda, should die on such a pilgrimage, with his heart established in faith, he at the breaking up of the body, after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness” (*Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, Chapter v; in SAN 2002, 15). There are other important sites as well where the Buddha performed his great miracles, and those sites where he and the *sangha* held their retreats during the rainy season. A pilgrimage to the holy places mentioned by the Buddha is a once-in-a-lifetime undertaking by Buddhists. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place as an act of devotion and faith (*shraddha*). A strong desire stems from one’s devotion to undertake a pilgrimage in order to heed the Buddha’s advice. In the course of visiting the sacred places, pilgrims feel the need to be in the Master’s presence and this fullness of faith conduces to joy and the observance of morality and the foundation of all merit. After the journey is over, one should always try to recollect the joyful moments spent at holy places to keep them vivid in one’s memory (SAN 2002, 11). READER (2012) writes that as Buddhism spread across Asia, it also created new places of pilgrimage in every region that Buddhism permeated—from sacred mountain sites in Tibet to places such as the Shwe Dagon Temple in the Burmese capital of Rangoon, which according to popular belief houses relics of the Buddha’s hair, and the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka, which also houses a reputed relic of the Buddha. In such places, it was believed pilgrims could thus “meet” the holy figure at the center of their religion, and acquire his spiritual grace.

### Pilgrimage in Japan

Pilgrimage in Japan developed gradually. The ascetic wanderings of individuals took the form of pilgrimage routes, which were then adopted by the aristocracy and, later, the common masses. Pilgrimage became popular in the Heian period among the aristocracy, who visited places like Ise Shrine, Hasedera, and Shitennō-ji. During the Edo period, pilgrimage became popular for all classes of people. Shinno Toshikazu has described pilgrimage as “one of the great pil-

lars” of Japanese religion (READER and SWANSON 1997, 225). Pilgrimages are important in Japanese religious development, and play specific and crucial roles within the functioning of the various religious organizations with which they are associated. It has been voluntary pilgrimages such as the Ise pilgrimage and multiple-site types such as the Saikoku *junrei*, the Shikoku *henro*, and the various regional “copied” pilgrimages that have tended to attract the greatest levels of mass participation and to have had the greatest influence in the broader development of Japanese pilgrimage culture (READER and SWANSON 1997, 238). In Japan, pilgrimages can be classified into two general types: 1. multi-site circuits and 2. single-site pilgrimages. Multi-site circuits involve a number of sacred places linked together numerically, with each location devoted to the same single deity or to a group of related deities. This is known as *honzon junrei*. Single-site pilgrimages involve a journey to one particular sacred site.

There are a number of aspects of the pilgrimage which are rich in symbolism—particularly its association with death. The clothing worn and items carried by a pilgrim indicate that he or she is “dead to the world” (MACGREGOR 2002, 11). What attracted many pilgrims were temples known for their miracle efficacy, in other words, miracle temples in Japan. Kannon was clearly the most popular deity venerated at these miracle temples. Furthermore, the most popular pilgrimage temples belonged to three sects in Japan: Tendai, Shingon, and Hossō (AMBROS 1997, 304). SCHUMACHER (2013) writes that pilgrimages were first undertaken in the Nara Period (710–794), but the custom did not become popular until the Heian Period (794–1185). Kumano, in southern Wakayama Prefecture, became a large center for adherents and pilgrims of the Shugendo movement during the Heian Period. Other popular pilgrimages at the time were to Hasedera (Kyoto), Shitennō-ji (Osaka), and Mt. Koya. In the Edo Period (1600–1868) the number of people making pilgrimages to both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines increased rapidly, especially to Ise Shrine, Kotohira Shrine (Kagawa), the eighty-eight temples of Shikoku and Western Japan, to Zenkoji (Nagano), Kiso Ontake (central Japan), and Mt. Fuji (Shizuoka). One phenomenon of the Edo Period was *Okage-mairi* お蔭参り, the special pilgrimage to Ise Shrine. The *Okage-mairi* tradition continues unabated even today, with approximately six million people visiting Ise Shrine yearly. In Japan, as PYE (2014) notes, pilgrimages have been turned into considerably less arduous ordeals than they were in the past thanks to public transport, comfortable lodgings, good food, and an ample supply of vending machines. READER (2005) elicits that the *henro* was one of several pilgrimages that emerged in the latter Heian period linked to the activities of religious mendicants and wandering proselytizers known as *hijiri*, whose seminal role in popularizing folk Buddhist faith in Japan has been widely discussed by Japanese scholars. The *hijiri* promoted the virtues of Buddhist figures of worship and emphasized pilgrimages to important temples and

other holy places as a way of deepening faith, attaining salvation in this or the next life, and gaining merit and worldly benefits (READER 2005, 107). Likewise, Shinnen was the seminal figure in the development of the *henro*, making the pilgrimage more widely known through his stories, guidebooks, and miracle tales. It is a striking example of how individuals can help make the pilgrimage and create a series of footsteps for others to follow (READER 2005, 121).

### Shikoku: The Eighty-eight Buddhist Temples Pilgrimage Destination

The Shikoku pilgrimage is the most famous type of pilgrimage and most frequently referred to as *henro*, a term specific to this pilgrimage, or *meguri*, which literally means “to go round,” but “is most widely used in cases where the sites on a pilgrimage route are not united by their dedication to a single figure of worship” (READER and SWANSON 1997, 233). It is perhaps the most famous pilgrimage in Japan, and appears in chronicles of the Heian Period (latter half of the eleventh century), when it developed as an ascetic practice involving religious sites. By the seventeenth century a more structured route had developed, involving the eighty-eight temples still visited today. It seems that in the latter part of the Muromachi period (1338–1573), the trip to Shikoku became “a widespread practice involving participants other than religious specialists and ascetics” (READER 1987). STATLER (1983, 97) notes that the Japanese are an optimistic people. In Japan, over the centuries, Buddhism was transformed into an optimistic creed. Kōbō Daishi’s contribution to this was his insistence that man (and women too) for whom earlier Buddhism held out no hope had within him the seed of Buddha; by hard practice following strict precepts anyone could find and nurture that seed, could manifest his innate Buddha nature, and could achieve enlightenment. In pilgrimage typologies developed by Japanese scholars, Shikoku is classified as a *seiseki* pilgrimage—one associated with the sacred traces or presence of a holy person. In Shikoku this figure is Kōbō Daishi, a miracle-working figure with origins in the Japanese Buddhist tradition whose presence permeates the pilgrimage and binds it to the island of Shikoku (READER 2005, 10).

The beginnings of the Shikoku pilgrimage are said to date back to the ninth century when the Buddhist priest Kūkai, later known as Kōbō Daishi (774–835), made a journey around Shikoku in search of enlightenment. Kūkai developed the Shikoku pilgrimage route comprising of eighty-eight main Buddhist temples and numerous additional temples and shrines with several ancient local pilgrimages. By the seventeenth century, the fame of the *henro* had spread and had become popular among ordinary Japanese. IANNARONE (2013) writes that Kōbō Daishi, founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, is one of the most important people in Japanese history, and he still holds considerable sway and respect in





Figure 1: Shikoku island and location map of 88 temples.

Japan today. Aside from being a priest, he was also a master calligrapher, poet, scholar and advisor to the emperor. In his early years, he turned away from his aristocratic upbringing and became a wandering ascetic in the mountains and valleys of Shikoku; the eighty-eight temple pilgrimage recreates his journeys around the island.

Geographically, Shikoku is one of the four main islands of Japan. It is located in the southwestern part of the Japanese archipelago at a latitude of 34°N. Shikoku is comprised of four prefectures, Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime, and Kōchi. Shikoku has a mild and warm climate with distinctive, beautiful seasons.

### *Henro and the Numbering of Temples*

One of the standard Japanese words for pilgrimage is *junrei*. However, the Shikoku pilgrimage is called *henro*. Shikoku literally means “four provinces” and the pilgrim’s journey through the four provinces is considered to be a symbolic path to enlightenment. The theme of Tokushima prefecture (temples 1–23) is *Awakening*; Kōchi prefecture (temples 24–39) is *Ascetic training*; Ehime prefecture (temples 40–65) is *Enlightenment*; and Kagawa prefecture (temples 66–88) is *Nirvana*. Since pilgrims have to visit all eighty-eight temples to complete the pilgrimage, all of them are equal; however, some may be more equal than others in the eyes of the pilgrims. Temples with dramatic physical settings or with powerful historical connections tend to have a greater effect on pilgrims.

### *O-henro Practices at Temples*

Mostly, the pilgrimage starts from Ryōzenji (Temple No. 1) in Tokushima and ends at Ōkuboji (Temple No. 88) in Kagawa. The pilgrims are given the Buddhist Ten Commandments to follow at least during the pilgrimages at temple number

one. These are: Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not commit adultery. Do not tell a lie. Do not use flowery language. Do not speak ill of others. Do not be double-tongued. Do not be covetous. Do not be angry. Do not be perverse.

Traditionally, the pilgrims (*O-henro*) perform the following optional actions at each temple in Shikoku:

- At the main gate: To ward off evil spirits, the pilgrims bow once facing the main hall.
- At the wash basin: To purify themselves, pilgrims wash their hands and mouth.
- At the bell tower: Pilgrims ring the bell to mark their arrival.
- At the main hall: The main deity can be seen here. First, pilgrims light incense and a candle, ring the bell once, and declare to the main deity that they have come to worship. Drop the name-slip (*osame-fuda*) and copied sutra (*shakyō*) in the box, recite the sutras.
- At the Daishi hall: A figure of Kōbō Daishi can be seen here. Pilgrims worship in the same way as at the main hall.
- At the Stamp Office: Pilgrims receive the temple stamp in their stamp book.
- At the main gate: Pilgrims again face the main gate and bow once

### *Shikoku O-henro Costumes*

*O-henro* are free to wear whatever they please on their pilgrimage. However, the pilgrim's traditional costume (special symbolic clothing) comprises a white shirt with Japanese script indicating they are a pilgrim, a conical sedge Chinese hat, a shoulder bag, and a walking stick. By choosing these items, one will be identified and respected as a pilgrim by those one meets along the way. Foreign pilgrims gain a sense of belonging to a privileged group in Shikoku. Once you start walking in the white *O-henro* costume, you are no longer treated as a foreigner but as an *O-henro-san* like everybody else. It is really a unique experience that you cannot experience anywhere else. *O-henro* do indeed cross boundaries of language, culture, and nationality (MORETON 2016). On the other hand, pilgrims—in a vehicle or on foot—consider themselves to be traveling alone with Kōbō Daishi as their companion and guide. This spiritual presence is expressed by the words *dōgyō ninin* (two traveling together) written on the hats.

### *Pilgrimage Season and Travel Options*

The temperature and weather of mid-March to May in spring, and October to November in autumn, are most suitable for undertaking the pilgrimage in Shikoku. In the normal cycle of yearly weather, during the rainy season of June and

July, there is a lot of rain. In August and September the weather is stable, but this is the season when occasional typhoons will make their appearance. READER (2005, 1) writes that there is a Japanese saying that in spring Shikoku comes alive with the sound of pilgrims' bells. The trail itself is very well marked by the ubiquitous red arrows and other markers that populate the trail. There are many ways to do the Shikoku pilgrimage. Everyone has their own personal circumstances, such as the ability to walk, paying capacity, time availability, interest, and so forth.



Figure 2. Ohenro attire.

### The Economics of Shikoku Pilgrimages

Holy sites are often surrounded by religiously orientated businesses and facilities, such as souvenir shops, travel agencies, hotels, and even hospitals, providing employment for the host community (EVANS 1998; VIJAYANAND 2012, 333; in GHIMIRE 2013). Pilgrimage tourism also affects the population in the vicinity of the pilgrimage site. Almost all shrines, including the largest, demonstrate this fact unambiguously (VUKONIC 1998; in GHIMIRE, 2013). Marketers benefit from the booming religious tourism as they could find new territories to sell their products and services (VIJAYANAND 2012, 335). Income is boosted when a temple runs a successful *shukubo*, a well-equipped, clean, and friendly lodge usually run by the priest's wife, and local helpers accommodate pilgrims. Pilgrims/tourists can use various lodging options on the Shikoku pilgrimage route. The cost varies depending upon meals and other facilities.

Pilgrimage option	Days	Tentative cost
Walking entire pilgrimage at one time	45–60 days	¥400,000 (less than ¥10,000/day)
Bicycle pilgrimage	15–20 days	¥200,000 (At least)
Small groups (charter small buses or taxis)	8 days	¥500,000 (At least)

Table 1. Basic cost of a pilgrimage.

### Lumbini: An International Pilgrimage Destination

Lumbini, hallowed by the birth of the Buddha Sakyamuni, is one of the most significant pilgrimage destinations in the world. It lies in the southwestern plains of Nepal. Nepal is honored to have on its territory Lumbini (see KUNWAR and GHIMIRE, 2012), the birthplace of Lord Buddha, the greatest, the brightest, and the light of peace and indeed the most illustrious son of Nepal (GURUGE

1998, 26). The newly-born Prince Siddhartha (who later was distinguished as Lord Buddha) took his seven steps and uttered an epoch-making message to the suffering humanity in Lumbini. The famous Indian Maurya Emperor Asoka, guided by his spiritual teacher Upagupta, made a pilgrimage to visit this holy site in 249 BC. The famous Chinese pilgrims Tseng Tsai (4th century), Fa Hsien (5th century), and Hiuen Tsang (7th century) visited Lumbini for pilgrimage and study about Buddhism and spirituality. The visits of the Chinese travelers brought more records out about Lumbini. Hiuen Tsang's records are the most informative of all for he not only traveled to see Lumbini and other Buddhist sites, but he also maintained a detailed description of his travel. UN Secretary General U Thant's pilgrimage to Lumbini in 1967 was taken to be a milestone in the history of Lumbini. The historic events held in Lumbini reconfirmed and enhanced Lumbini's status as the Fountain of World Peace and sacred pilgrimage shrine of the Buddhists and peace-loving people, and a symbol of international brotherhood, peace, and prosperity, and helped to project it as a World Peace City and important tourist destination.

Geographically, Lumbini, which has been internationally recognized as the birthplace of Lord Buddha, is situated in Rupandehi District of Southern Terai, at an altitude of 105 meters above sea level and around 300 kilometers southwest of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal.

### *Lumbini as a Spiritual/Pilgrimage Destination*

The Buddha mentioned four places which a pious disciple should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. Among them the first one is Lumbini, where the Tathagata (the Buddha) was born. The importance of Lumbini is so great that the Buddha himself advised his followers to make the pilgrimage to Lumbini. Lord Buddha explained the significance of Lumbini in the words: "Lumbini should be seen [visited] by persons of devotion, which would cause awareness and an apprehension of the nature of impermanence..." because Lumbini is the foremost Buddhist pilgrimage site in relation to the other sacred sites. Many scholars designate Lumbini as an unmatched spiritual destination of the Buddhist world. Visitors are overwhelmed with the sanctity and serenity of Lumbini. The spiritual feeling of being at the holy birthplace of the Enlightened One nurtures devotion and faith in their mind and fills their hearts with purity, compassion, and wisdom (GHIMIRE 2016).

Spirituality and peace are the fundamental aspects of Buddhism and they exist at Lumbini. The Lumbini region encompasses dozens of Buddhist-spiritual sites and houses beautiful flora and fauna which can evoke spirituality, serenity, and satisfaction in the minds of visitors. Lumbini, a world heritage site with outstanding universal value, has great importance as one of the top class spiritual and pilgrimage destinations in the world (GHIMIRE and RAI 2015). Pilgrims and

visitors come to Lumbini and express their religious and spiritual sentiments in various ways, often linked to their diverse cultures. They come to meditate, chant, and beat on drums, and to offer gold leaves, coins, incense, or milk. They all come with the expectations of peace and harmony (UNESCO 2013, 11). Today, Buddhists from all over the world, as well as other travelers, are interested in the ancient history and culture of Nepal.

### *Lumbini Master Plan*

Lumbini is one of the most sacred places in the world. Over many centuries people have developed visions of the place where the Buddha was born. When U Thant visited Nepal in 1967, he proposed the development of Lumbini into a major center of pilgrimage. An architect, Kenzo Tange of Japan, was assigned to create the Lumbini Master Plan. The plan was approved by the UN and the Government of Nepal in 1978. The overall intent of the plan is to reinforce the symbolic entity of the Lumbini Garden in its simplicity and clarity. Details of the plan were based on Buddhist symbolism of geometric shapes and the path to enlightenment. Within the plan there are three main components: New Lumbini Village, The Cultural Centre/Monastic Zone, and The Sacred Garden. The design is oriented on a north-south axis. The Master Plan encompasses a 1 x 3 mile area, and the remaining area outside the Lumbini Project Area within the 5 x 5 mile zone is the Buffer Zone, which protects the three central zones. Tange made every effort to emphasize the values of Lumbini and carefully laid it out in direct relation to Buddhism. The form of a circle enclosing a square is a mystical universal symbol of purity and simplicity. The ultimate objective of the plan is to create an atmosphere of spirituality, peace, universal brotherhood, and nonviolence consistent with the times, as well as to convey Buddha's message to the world. The visitor enters the site from the New Lumbini Village (location of

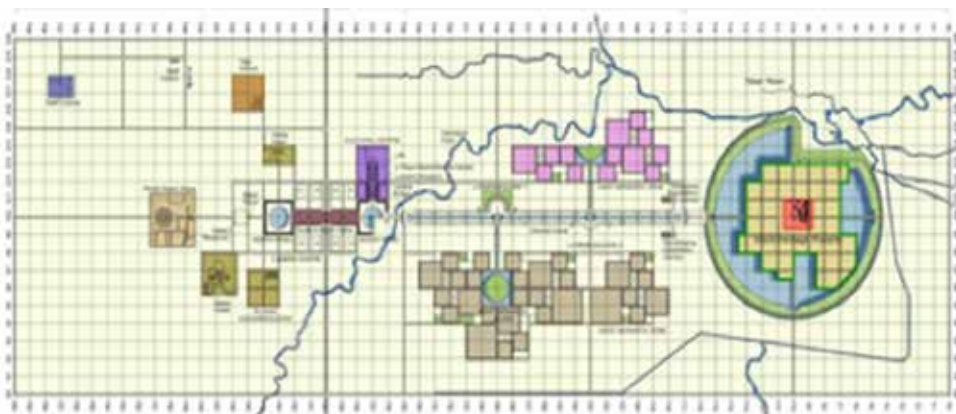


Figure 3. Lumbini Master Plan. Source: UNESCO 2016

“worldly” activities), and then proceeds to the Cultural and Monastic Zone for knowledge and spiritual purification before reaching the Sacred Garden (the birthplace of the Buddha), which is surrounded by a circular pond. RAI (2010, 19) writes that the continuous prayers, meditation, and worship in monasteries helps increase their faith and purify their minds. After having attained a certain level of mental clarity, devotion, and faith, they are now eligible to enter the Sacred Garden, hallowed by the birth of the Buddha, to realize the apprehensive nature of impermanence. Moreover, one can feel the Buddha’s blessing within the tranquility.

The devotees now circumambulate the sanctum sanctorum, pay homage to the exact birthplace of the Buddha marked by the marker stone, worship the Nativity Sculpture, and observe the remains of the ancient Mayadevi Temple. The sedimentary sandstone, lying deep in the sanctum sanctorum of the Mayadevi Shrine known as the marker stone, pinpoints the exact location of the Buddha’s birthplace. The sandstone image of Queen Mayadevi giving birth to the Buddha is known as the Nativity Sculpture, which was installed in seventh century AD. Emperor Asoka erected the Asoka Pillar in Lumbini, which carries the authentic and living history of the birthplace of Sakyamuni. The Asoka Pillar, with epigraphic evidence, testifies to Lumbini as the birthplace of the Buddha. A little south of it, there is a Sacred Pond popularly known as the Puskarni Pond where Mayadevi had bathed just before giving birth to the Buddha, and where the infant Buddha was given the first purification bath (GHIMIRE and RAI 2015). Implementation of the Master Plan commenced in 1978 and was initially scheduled to be completed by 1985. Progress, however, has been slower than anticipated (UNESCO 2016).

### *Significance and Attractions of Lumbini*

Great heritage sites are a place of attraction for all people irrespective of personal religious faith. Today, Lumbini can be considered as a synonym of a world peace center and a top class pilgrimage destination. Buddhists from around the world feel pride and satisfaction and fulfillment of life while visiting Lumbini. It is equally popular among non-Buddhist visitors. The terms *hida budhe jate* (here Lord Buddha was born) and *hida bhagavan jateti* (because Bhagwan-Lord Buddha was born here) mentioned in the pillar inscription of Emperor Asoka seem to have been uttered by Upagupta to explain the importance of the site to the emperor. The Buddhist text *Divyavadana* also refers to almost the same version, that is, the royal preceptor was uttering these words while pointing to the exact birthplace of the Buddha to Emperor Asoka.

Lumbini is the hub for many attractions and is abuzz with religious, archeological, historical, and natural activities. Major attractions are the Mayadevi temple, nativity sculpture, Asokan Pillar, Puskarini pond, marker stone, other

structural remains, The Sacred Garden, The Eternal Flame, The Monastic Zone, The Lumbini Museum, The Lumbini International Research Institute, natural biodiversity, and Lumbini village tour. Other important sites associated with the life of the Buddha around Lumbini are Tilaurakot, Niglihawa, Sagarhawa, Araurakot, Kudan, Gotihawa, Devdaha, and Ramgrama. Each has its own importance for pilgrimage, sightseeing, historical, and archaeological purposes.

### *Buddhist Circuits and Package Tours*

The Buddhist Circuits are networks of pilgrimage places of highly significant holy sites of Buddhism; where Lord Buddha was born, attained Enlightenment, preached the first Sermon, reached Nirvana, and other important sites related to the Buddha or his life. Developing a Buddhist Circuit should be one of the priorities among Asian countries and particularly of the government of Nepal (GHIMIRE 2014). Once Buddhist circuits are developed, a number of other developments take place around them, which leads to increased job creation, more foreign currency earnings, more business opportunities, infrastructural development, the promotion and conservation of important Buddhist sites, the promotion of local arts and crafts, the promotion and consumption of agricultural products, and so forth. With the development of circuit tourism, there will also be other multiple benefits, such as tourists who increase their length of stay, revisiting the sites (people might be interested in visiting again or visiting all destinations in a circuit if they were unable to visit all in previous visits), recommending friends and relatives, or writing articles or news about their visits. There are 160 archeological sites in the Lumbini Region exhibiting different events in the Buddha's life. Those sites are to see, experience, worship, and pay homage to the Buddha (GHIMIRE, 2013).

The potential tourist market for Lumbini is massive. Lumbini is the nerve center for Buddhists around the world and a center of attraction for others. Lumbini has a huge potential to be a World Peace City but it requires a sincere and combined effort. The Nepali government should take the initiative for a shared contribution from the global community to make it possible. Successful implementation of the plan will help develop Lumbini into a world-class spiritual tourism destination that will bring peace, prosperity, harmony, and spirituality to the whole world, and no doubt Nepal will experience many benefits.

## **Survey Findings Concerning the Shikoku Pilgrimage**

In this section, an attempt has been made to present the primary data collected from Shikoku analytically. Various methods of presentation have been used to illustrate and present data.

### *Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

**Nationality:** An attempt was made to present the nationality of the respondents. I interviewed respondents from sixteen nations and the majority of them were Japanese (56.0%), followed by Australian (8.6%), German (6.0%), Dutch (5.2%), Canadian (4.3%), UK (4.3%), and so on.

**Sex:** Among the respondents 58 (50.0%) were female, 56 (48.3%) were male and 2 (1.7%) did not reply.

**Religion:** Among the respondents 57.8% were Buddhist, followed by 13.8% Christian, 2.6% Shinto, 25.9% other, and 0.9% did not mention their religious preference.

**Age group:** Among the respondents 17.2% were in the 21–40 age group, 33.6% were in the 41–60 age group, 48.3% were in the above 61 age group, and 0.9% did not indicate their age group

**Academic qualifications:** Among the respondents 36.2% were post-graduates, 31.0% undergraduates, 19.8% high school graduates, and so on.

**Occupation:** Among the respondents 22.4% were employed, followed by 17.2% retired, 16.4% teacher/P\professor, and so on.

**Organizations/Agencies:** Tourism stakeholders (organizations/agencies) are very important for providing necessary services to the pilgrims/tourists and tourism policy development. These organizations invest money for infrastructure development, pay taxes to the government, provide employment opportunities to the locals and others, consume local products, and make a profit. Among 30 responding organizations: hotel/guest house (26.7%), tourist information office (16.7%), travel company (13.3%), restaurant (13.3%), souvenir shop (10.0%), and others (6.7%).

The tourism industry provides employment to a large number of people directly and indirectly. Altogether 421 staff members (male–217 and female–204) were working in responding organizations/agencies in Shikoku.

### *Situation and Strategies for Pilgrimage Tourism Development*

This inquiry deals with responses by experts to understand the situation and strategies for pilgrimage tourism development. With regard to the question “why do people go on pilgrimages?” the experts have different opinions. One Shikoku expert says pilgrimage is for self-reflection, in memory of someone who has passed away, or to experience a “spiritual” journey, to pray for something, as part of a religious ritual or teaching, to get closer to God or some other holy being or saint (E-5; henceforth, “E-5” refers to “Expert no. 5,” “P-21” to “Pilgrim no. 21, and so forth). E-6 explains that pilgrimage is pilgrimage, whether it is Buddhist, Christian, Judaic, Islamic, or anything else. Pilgrimage is a time and place set aside for an inner spiritual quest, a time and place to look for answers



to spiritual questions the pilgrim may have brought to the trail with them. The majority of non-Japanese walkers are visiting Shikoku for the physical walk in rural Japan rather than for spiritual reasons. Overall, though, I think people walk pilgrimages in general because of an inner feeling of something missing in their life. Given that “religion” is not as important as “spirituality” for many people, a pilgrimage gives them a place where they can focus on their inner spiritual quest while at the same time enjoying the outdoors. Likewise, other expert respondents opined that people are missing something in their lives, and seek spiritual help and self-understanding (E-3). Pilgrims visit to reflect on their lives, to visit memorials for ancestors, and to get stamps in their books from temples (E-2), and pilgrimages help them if they have troubled mind/spirit (E-1). In another question “What do you think about Buddhist pilgrimages?,” (E-5) explains, “It is often in a circle with no beginning and no end. This matches the Buddhist teaching of life and reincarnation. Christian pilgrimage routes often seem to be a straight line, which matches the Christian teaching of the afterlife that one will go up to heaven or down to hell. I prefer the Buddhist way of thinking and their form of pilgrimages.” People are seeking more spiritual things these days (E-3). There is too much seeking for worldly benefits (E-2), and a pilgrimage is a process to reflect and gain relief from mental stress (E-1).

To the question “What is the current situation of the Shikoku pilgrimage and tourism in general?,” the experts opined that large tourist organizations in Shikoku must be careful as to how much they can advertise the Shikoku pilgrimage because of its religious background and nature (E-5). Visitors not only from Japan but also from abroad are increasing (E-4). (E-6) explained that it is difficult but manageable for non-Japanese speakers. As the numbers of non-Japanese pilgrims increase, organizers are going to have to deal with lodging issues and camping issues, but that is not insurmountable. However, other experts have a different opinion. They point out that, due to more emphasis on business and profit, fewer people are visiting compared to twenty years ago (E-2). Likewise, (E-1) says, fewer people come to Shikoku because they are too busy in their daily lives and have to work longer, even at the age of sixty and above.

### *Number of Visits to Shikoku*

Pilgrims/tourists revisit a pilgrimage site if it is interesting for them or they are not satisfied with one visit or want to do more rituals. An attempt was made to understand the number of visits of tourists/pilgrims to Shikoku. The majority of the respondents (43.1%) were first-time visitors, 18.1% had visited two times, and 17.2% of the respondents had visited Shikoku more than five times. The data shows that more than 50.0% of the respondents were repeat visitors to Shikoku; it indicates that pilgrims/tourists are not satisfied with just their first visit and want to repeat again and again.

*Purpose of Visit*

The purpose of visit could be one of the motivating factors for travel that makes tourists move away from their home to a desired destination. An inquiry was made to know the purpose of visit of the respondents. Tourists/pilgrims visit Shikoku with various purposes. In the multiple response question, survey participants could respond to more than one purpose. As can be seen, 85.3% visited Shikoku for pilgrimage whereas 21.6% visited Shikoku for sightseeing, and so on. It shows that Shikoku is an important sightseeing destination as well.

Purpose of visit	Responses		Percentage of Cases
	No.	Percentage	
Pilgrimage	99	73.3%	85.3%
Sightseeing	25	18.5%	21.6%
Research	2	1.5%	1.7%
Others	9	6.7%	7.8%
Total	135	100.0%	116.4%

Table 2. Multiple responses on purpose of visit.

Furthermore, an attempt was made to see the cross-tabulation between the nationality and purpose of visit of the respondents in Shikoku. The data in Table 3 shows that 87.7% of Japanese visited for pilgrimage and 80.0% of Canadians visited for sightseeing.

Nationality		Purpose of visit				Total
		Pilgrimage	Sightseeing	Research	Other	
Japanese	Count	57	9	0	7	65
	% within nationality	87.7%	13.8%	0%	10.8%	
British	Count	5	1	0	0	5
	% within nationality	100%	20%	0%	0%	
Australian	Count	8	2	1	0	10
	% within nationality	80%	20%	10%	0%	
American	Count	3	1	0	0	3
	% within nationality	100%	33.3%	0%	0%	
German	Count	6	2	0	0	7
	% within nationality	85.7%	28.6%	0%	0%	
French	Count	1	2	0	0	3
	% within nationality	33.3%	66.7%	0%	0%	

Nationality		Purpose of visit				Total
		Pilgrimage	Sightseeing	Research	Other	
Canadian	Count	2	4	1	0	5
	% within nationality	40%	80%	20%	0%	
Dutch	Count	6	2	0	0	6
	% within nationality	100%	33.3%	0%	0%	
Korean	Count	2	0	0	0	2
	% within nationality	100%	0%	0%	0%	
Italian	Count	3	0	0	0	3
	% within nationality	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
New Zealander	Count	2	1	0	1	2
	% within nationality	100%	50%	0%	50%	
Others (Czech, South African, Nepali, Taiwanese, Austrian)	Count	4	1	0	1	5
	% within nationality	80%	20%	0%	20%	
TOTALS	Count	99	25	2	9	116

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of multiple responses on purpose of visits by nationality.

Likewise, the following table represents the cross-tabulation between sex, age group, religion, and purpose of visit. The data shows that 92.4% Buddhists, 75% Christian, 100% Shintoists, 100% Hindus, and 75.9% of those of other religions visited for the purpose of pilgrimage. It shows that quite large numbers of people who are not Buddhists with other religious faiths than Buddhism also participated in the pilgrimage in Shikoku.

			Purpose of visit				Total
			Pilgrimage	Sightseeing	Research	Other	
Sex	Female	Count	52	9	1	4	58
		% within sex	89.7%	15.5%	1.7%	6.9%	
	Male	Count	46	15	1	5	56
		% within sex	82.1%	26.8%	1.8%	8.9%	
	No reply	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		% within sex	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Age	21-40	Count	17	6	0	4	20

			Purpose of visit				Total
			Pilgrimage	Sightseeing	Research	Other	
Age		% within age	85%	30%	0%	20%	
	41-60	Count	35	10	1	1	39
		% within age	89.7%	25.6%	2.6%	2.6%	
	Above 61	Count	46	9	1	4	56
		% within age	82.1%	16.1%	1.8%	7.1%	
	No reply	Count	1	0	0	0	1
% within age		100%	0%	0%	0%		
Religion	Buddhism	Count	61	10	0	4	66
		% within religion	92.4%	15.2%	0.0%	6.1%	
	Shinto	Count	3	0	0	0	3
		% within religion	100.0%	0.0%	0%	0%	
	Christian	Count	12	5	0	1	16
		% within religion	75%	31.3%	0%	6.3%	
	Hindu	Count	1	1	0	0	1
		% within religion	100%	100%	0%	0%	
	Others	Count	22	8	2	4	29
		% within religion	75.9%	27.6%	6.9%	13.8%	
No reply	Count	0	1	0	0	1	
	% within religion	0%	100%	0%	0%		
Total		Count	99	25	2	9	116

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of multiple responses on purpose of visits by sex, age group, and religion.

The respondents were also asked whether they had visited other pilgrimage sites in this or another journey. Among them 46.6% of the respondents had visited other pilgrimage sites. The pilgrimage sites they have visited include Saikoku Thirty-three temples and Ōshima Eighty-eight in Japan, Lumbini in Nepal, Camino Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and many other places all over the world.

***Proposed Budget and Economic Activities***

An attempt was made to know the proposed budget for the trip, expenses on travelling, lodging, food, pilgrimage attire, shopping, and others. Most of the pilgrims/tourist respondents did not want to disclose their financial matters. A Canadian tourist who was in Japan for the sightseeing spent a maximum amount of ¥850,000 and a Japanese pilgrim spent ¥600,000. Likewise, an Austrian pilgrim spent a minimum of ¥150,000 to complete the Shikoku pilgrimage.

The expert respondents were asked: “Compared to other modern tourism, why are the economic activities of pilgrimage tourism low?” One of the Shi-

koku tourism experts stated, “there is a huge amount of business related to the Shikoku pilgrimage such as bus tours; the selling of pilgrim attire and so forth; promotion of the route via television, radio, and newspaper; talks given by experts around the country and exhibitions held in big cities in Japan and the world; websites produced by Japanese and non-Japanese, all of which benefit Shikoku and the pilgrimage route economically. I do not know if these activities are ‘pilgrimage tourism activities’ or not” (E-5). Pilgrimage is not tourism. It is the process of cultivating spirituality. In pilgrimage, pilgrims do not spend more money (E-3). Pilgrimage is not the same as tourism that promotes consumption (E-4)—it is an ascetic experience, so people should not seek economic return only (E-2), and pilgrims have no place to spend a lot of money (E-1).

In answer to another question, “What are ways to receive more economic benefits from pilgrimage tourism?” The expert explained that four companies have created Shikoku pilgrimage tours for foreigners to tap into that market and help bring money onto the island recently; however, there is a lack of native English-speaking Shikoku pilgrimage guides. There also needs to be more inns, perhaps around 3,000–4,000 yen/night, with English-speaking owners who can cater to foreign guests (E-5), yet promote affordable lodging for pilgrims (E-2). It is a mistake to seek economic results from the pilgrimage. Pilgrims need basic facilities and services that might not make a profit (E-3). If you seek consumer activity and more economic returns, you need a strategy for such promotion (E-4).

## Factors Influencing Visits to Shikoku

There are various factors influencing pilgrims/tourists to visit Shikoku. The most influential factors are religious belief and respect for Kōbō Daishi, to honor and remember the ancestors, participation in rituals, to gain a sense of Buddhism and Japanese culture, information from books and other publications, friends, yoga teachers, travel agents, websites, advertisements, natural beauty, and hiking outdoors. One pilgrim was influenced by previous visits (p-21); another pilgrim found a picture of Shikoku pilgrimage on Santiago’s way (p-15). One met a Japanese pilgrim who talked about Shikoku while walking Camino; others love walking on pilgrimages and the spiritual experience (p-78). One heard the voice of the Buddha, respects the Buddha, and will walk for twelve years (p-30). Some others sought family happiness and better health, or relief from the stress of work, or from retirement.

### *Mode of Transportation in the Shikoku Pilgrimage*

Pilgrims/tourists have several options of travel modes for the Shikoku pilgrimage. These include bus, car, motorbike, scooter, bicycle, and walking. Many of the pilgrims/tourists travel in groups via bus or mini-taxi these days; however,

walking is the best way to do the pilgrimage. A significant number of pilgrims—mostly foreigners—still walked the route; however, it does not suit all pilgrims/tourists depending upon their age, physical situation, time, and desires.

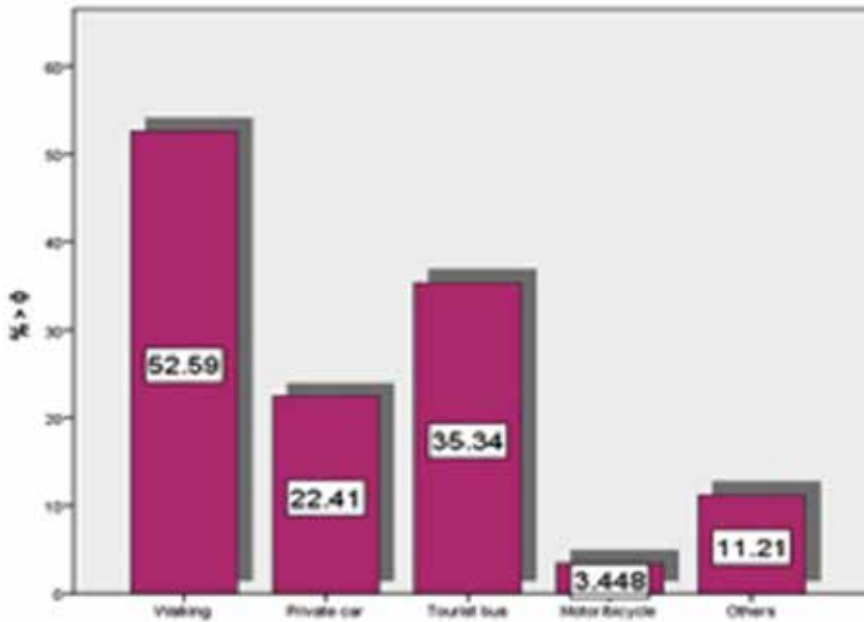


Figure 4. Mode of transport.

Among the five categories of mode of transportation in the Shikoku pilgrimage, the respondents could answer as many as appropriate. The result shows that a majority (52.59%) of the respondents chose walking, followed by 35.34% using tourist buses and so on.

Furthermore, a cross-tabulation analysis was made between the age groups of the respondents and the mode of travel. The majority (80%) of respondents for the 21–40 age group walked, whereas 44.60% of the respondents of those aged above 61 were using tourist buses. Younger people preferred walking and travelling individually, whereas the older groups preferred group travel and tourist buses.

### *The Organizers of the Pilgrimage*

The respondents were asked about the organizer of their visit. The data shows that majority of the respondents (66.4%) organized their visit themselves, 26.7% visited with a guided tour, and 4.3% respondent's visit were organized by others, whereas 2.6% of the respondents did not mention their organizer.

Age group		Mode of travel on Shikoku pilgrimage					Totals
		Walking	Private car	Tourist bus	Motorcycle or bicycle	Other	
21-40	Count	16	3	4	2	4	20
	% within age	80.00%	15.00%	20.00%	10.00%	20.00%	
41-60	Count	27	10	12	1	6	39
	% within age	69.20%	25.60%	30.80%	2.60%	15.40%	
Above 61	Count	17	13	25	0	3	56
	% within age	30.40%	23.20%	44.60%	0.00%	5.40%	
No reply	Count	1	0	0	1	0	1
	% within age	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	0.00%	
Total	Count	61	26	41	4	13	116

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of mode of travels by age-group in Shikoku.

### *Stay in Shikoku*

Pilgrims/tourists have various options for accommodation during the Shikoku pilgrimage. The respondents were asked about their stay in Shikoku—they could give as many answers as appropriate. A majority of the respondents (83.6%) stayed in hotels, 54.3% in temples, 28.4% in lodges, 29.3% in other places (such as tents), 4.3% in the houses of relatives or friends, and 1.7% did not mention where they stayed. Most pilgrims search for budget-class accommodation. The respondents opined that the hotels in Shikoku are expensive. The lodging should be cheaper (p-13), more affordable accommodations that are flexible with arrival time, bath time, meals, and so forth (p-104), and some accommodation places were booked out by bus pilgrims/tourists so there was no space for individual *henro* (p-24).

### *Willingness to Repeat a Visit in Shikoku*

An attempt was made to inquire about their willingness to repeat their visit to Shikoku. The report shows that the majority of respondents (79.3%) expressed a willingness to repeat their visit to Shikoku, although 17.2% do not want to visit again, and 3.4% did not give their opinion.

### *Willingness to Visit Lumbini*

An attempt was made to inquire about willingness to visit Lumbini in Nepal. The report shows that a majority of the respondents (76.7%) expressed that they do not want to visit Lumbini, 21.6% want to visit, and 1.7% of respondents did not give their opinion. In a cross-tabulation analysis between the nationalities of the respondents and their plans to visit Lumbini, a majority (87.7%) of Japanese

respondents do not have any plans to visit. On the other hand, 100% of Italian and 42.9% of German respondents want to visit Lumbini.

### Expectations of the Shikoku Pilgrimage

“Why do people go and what do they expect from the Shikoku pilgrimage?” is one of the important questions. As noted by one of the respondents (E-3), people have different expectations and they want to gain something from the Shikoku pilgrimage. Other expert respondents opined that Shikoku has a unique culture which is very precious. People go on pilgrimage to reflect on themselves, clear their mind and spirit (E-4), gain worldly benefits and memorials for their ancestors (E-2), and recall old memories and get relief from sickness and the death of parents (E-1). There seems to be a “pilgrimage boom” and people want to try a pilgrimage that is not well known. Some want to experience a lengthy religious journey in Japan, or want to interact with the Japanese in a countryside setting (E-5). One pilgrim respondent said that it changed her as a person, being impressed with the generosity of the people, the peacefulness of the surroundings, and the profoundly surreal way of life that she could have never imagined. It was an experience of a lifetime that she still thinks about today (p-107). Other expectations were to experience the unique culture of Shikoku, improve mental health, for spiritual development, interaction and involvement with the locals, experience Japanese culture, enjoy and reconnect with nature, self-improvement and personal satisfaction, a sense of achievement, discovering things about oneself, deep emotional feelings, a chance to escape everyday life, for a broader understanding of Buddhism, more insight into cultural and religious beliefs in Japan, spiritual comfort, to improve mental and personal health, develop a positive attitude, fulfillment of a wish, and more. P-41 was expecting time for reflection upon her life. She wanted to be on her own and to get rid of bad things from the past. She expected to come to terms with her mother’s death. It had changed her life, her way of looking at people, and she became a Buddhist. She learned to bear bad weather and still stay positive. Some others expected to learn about history, culture, and Buddhism, tourism and health, or had an interest in gifts and food sold at local shops, or to sleep outside and to remain healthy.

#### *Opinion Regarding the Extended Circuit between Lumbini and Shikoku*

As this research is a comparison between two important Buddhist pilgrimage sites, an inquiry was made concerning the opinion of the respondents about possible connections between these sites. In response to the question, “What is your opinion regarding an extended Buddhist circuit between Lumbini and Shikoku?” most of the respondents took it as a spectacular idea. They opined that it is good for Buddhists or pilgrimage lovers to have a connection between the Buddha’s



birthplace from where the Buddhism originated and developed, and Shikoku. People who do pilgrimages are always interested in the next one. Given that the Buddha was born in Lumbini, it is natural that Buddhist pilgrims would love to go there. It could be a long journey of a few weeks combining pilgrimage and tourism. P-68 asked, when can I go? However, most of the people visiting Shikoku are not aware of Lumbini. Many, on the other hand, found the connection between Shikoku and Lumbini very interesting, with possible connections between people from different countries and places, and to connect the two regions and see how Buddhism evolved between South and East Asia. It could be highly interesting for those who want to explore, and for those who want to learn more about Buddhism, and interesting for specific interest groups. It would be a great opportunity for Japanese and people from other countries to know about the place which is the origin of Buddhism, and also to know about Nepal. It would raise awareness of Lumbini, and more people would be interested to do both pilgrimages. It would be good for Buddhism and both countries, to have a connection between two important Buddhist sites and countries with similar faiths and beliefs. Many Japanese will visit Nepal, and Nepalese will visit Japan. Alternatively, some other respondents asked, how is Lumbini promoted? How can I get information if I want to visit Lumbini? There should be more advertisements internationally, with books, articles, and other resources, as long as it does not become just another reason for a commercial enterprise. Shikoku is basically centered on Kōbō Daishi, and Lumbini is the birthplace of Shakyamuni, so it might be difficult to connect them directly. Japanese and Nepalese have differences in Buddhist culture and tradition, which also might make it difficult to make connections.

### *Problems in and around Shikoku*

The pilgrims/tourists will be satisfied with the visit, enjoy their trip, and might repeat their visit if they have no problem at that destination. The tourism providers should work carefully to minimize problems. The respondents were asked whether they had problems in Shikoku or not. The majority of the respondents (78.4%) stated that there was no problems; however, 19% of the respondents experienced different problems in Shikoku and 2.6% of the respondents were unable to give their opinion.

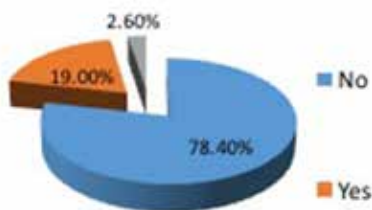


Figure 5. Problems in Shikoku.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to state their problems during the Shikoku pilgrimage. P-78 explains that “as a Western woman people tended to turn me away rather than treat me differently to how they think I should be treated. I was often told at temples there was no accommodation (when I knew

there was). I would get Japanese people to make the calls to the temples and some ryokans on my behalf to make a booking and very often—at least once a week!—there would be availability, until they hear my name and learn that I am a westerner and a woman—then I am told no availability, we are full!” Problems faced by other pilgrims were signs for non-Japanese readers/speakers, hard-to-read menus, labels, and name as they were basically in Japanese, and irregular public transportation.

*Experiences on Shikoku Pilgrimages*

The pilgrim’s satisfaction is the outcome of the pilgrims’ subjective comparisons of the expectations and achievements from the visit. An attempt was made to know the best and worst experiences of the pilgrims/tourists during Shikoku pilgrimage. Here is a list of their experiences:

Best experiences	Worst experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking for 53 days around Shikoku island, Osettai, and the most incredible kindness shown by local people.</li> <li>• Meeting with many amazing people, great hospitality, Shikoku is very safe to travel alone, good food and Japanese life (p-24).</li> <li>• Most friendly and helpful people I ever met on a trip like this. Pilgrimage would not have been possible without the support of the local people in Shikoku (p-25).</li> <li>• Multiple modes of transportation and types of accommodation, peaceful atmosphere at temples, time to reflect and pray.</li> <li>• Exploring deep meditation while walking (p-68).</li> <li>• Scenery and the uniqueness of the travel (p-21, p-68).</li> <li>• Food, cycling trip, relief from stress, peaceful mind, reflecting on life and peace of mind, temple gardens, good state of roads, meeting people from different parts of Japan and other countries. .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disappointment in many of the temples while getting stamps, too commercialized. The inability to communicate, the “unfriendliness” of temple staff, the treatment I received for being a western woman by the temples and some ryokans (p-78),</li> <li>• Some accommodation places were booked out by bus pilgrims/tourists so there was no space for individual <i>henros</i> (p-24).</li> <li>• Some restaurants did not allow pilgrims with pilgrimage attire (p-29), disappointment in some lodges (p-63).</li> <li>• No proper schedule in some temples &amp; not welcoming pilgrims (p-43, 49)</li> <li>• Too much noise in some temples (p-88), ringing the bell while chanting (p-16).</li> <li>• Roads without a sidewalk are stressful to walk down.</li> <li>• Surprisingly hard to get vegetarian meals (p-21).</li> <li>• Heavy rain and fog, very hot and humid weather, typhoons.</li> </ul>

Table 6. Experiences on the Shikoku pilgrimage.

*Promotion of Pilgrimage Tourism*

In a question about what needs to be done for the promotion of pilgrimage tourism, responding organizations/agencies were asked to select as many as appropriate answers from eight categories listed in a questionnaire. Their multiple responses are presented in the following table. The majority (63.3%) selected

marketing/publicity, 60% selected facilities for the pilgrims/tourists, and 46.70% selected peace and security and so on.

*The Economic Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism in Shikoku*

Pilgrimage tourism has various impacts in Shikoku. Among them, the economic impact is one of the most important. In an enquiry to identify the economic impacts of pilgrimage tourism in Shikoku, 73.3% cited that there is an economic impact, 6.8% stated no, and 19.9% did not give their opinion. Those who felt the economic impact and replied “yes” were further asked to indicate as many of these as appropriate. Most of the first time visitors and foreigners were unsure of the impact.

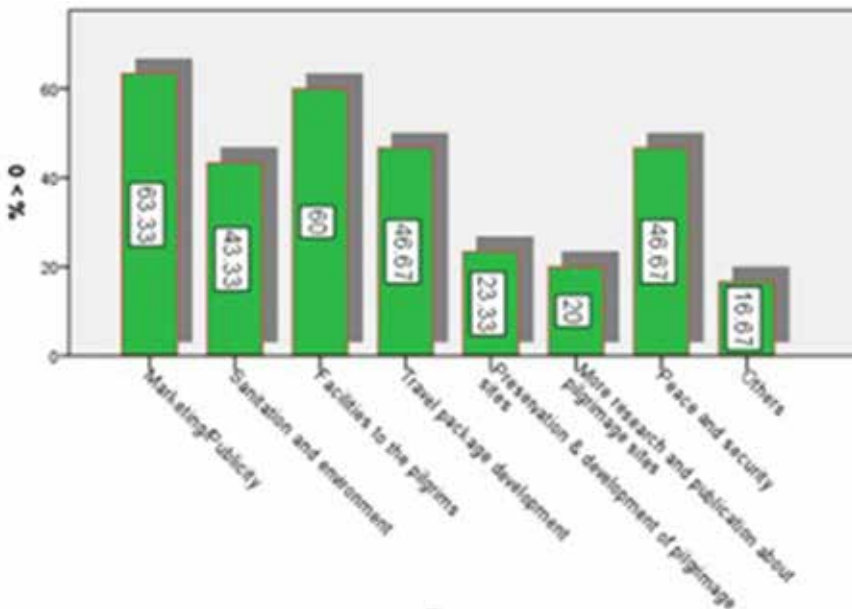


Figure 6. Multiple responses on tourism promotion.

The multiple response output result shows that 90.6% responded to the consumption of local products, 52.8% responded to job opportunities, 51.9% responded to increased communication, and so on.

Category	Responses		Percentage of Cases**
	No.	Percentage of Cases*	
Tax and foreign exchange earnings	53	14.1%	50.0%
Job opportunities	56	14.9%	52.8%
Consumption of local products	96	25.5%	90.6%
Urbanization	8	2.1%	7.5%

Category	Responses		Percentage of Cases**
	No.	Percentage of Cases*	
Increased communication	55	14.6%	51.9%
Better infrastructure	29	7.7%	27.4%
Modernization of facilities	45	12.0%	42.5%
Improved standard of living	24	6.4%	22.6%
Others	10	2.7%	9.4%
Total	376	100.0%	354.7%

\*Percentage of all check marks, \*\*Percentage out of the respondents who checked.

Table 8: Multiple responses on impact.

Further, positive and negative impacts perceived by the respondents are given in the following table.

Opinion	Number	Percentage
Yes	107	73.3%
No	10	6.8%
Don't know	29	19.9%
Total	146	100%

Table 9: Impacts perceived by respondents.

***Business Promotion and Networking***

Budget allocation, marketing and publicity, and networking with different organizations are integral parts of business promotion. The responding organizations/agencies were asked about whether they have allocated a budget for business promotion: 73.3% of them do not have a budget for it, 20% of them allocated a budget, and 6.7% did not answer. Likewise, in a separate question about networking with Lumbini, 76.7% of responding organizations do not want it, 10% want it, and 13.3% did not give their opinion. The result shows that they might be conservative, or do not want to take a risk and are satisfied with their business.

***Rating of Hypothesis Related to Pilgrimage Tourism in Shikoku***

An attempt was made to test the eight factors that indicate economic activities in Shikoku by using a five-point rating scale. The five-point rating scale, defined as fully disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and fully agree, was used to understand the opinion of respondents.

The rating result on the factor “there has been a significant increase in land value/rent because of tourism activities in Shikoku area” shows that it is not an important factor, as the majority of the respondents (41.7%) were neutral, 25.0%

of the respondents rated fully disagree, and 2.8% of the respondents rated fully agree.

The rating result for “Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism brings opportunity for you to improve your skills through various trainings/opportunities” shows that it is an important factor as a majority of the respondents (63.9%) agreed, 22.2% of the respondents fully agree, no one disagreed, and 2.8% of the respondents fully disagree.

The rating result for “Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism has a positive impact in conserving local culture, that is, art, rituals, festivals, handicrafts” shows that it is an important factor as a majority of the respondents (58.3%) agreed, 19.4% fully agree, 5.6% fully disagree, and 2.8% disagree.

The rating result for “Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism opens up opportunities to start small businesses” shows that it is an important factor as a near-majority of the respondents (41.7%) agreed, 36.1% were neutral, 8.3% fully disagree, and none disagree.

The rating result for “Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism has been providing a significant number of employment opportunities” shows that it is a neutral factor as a near-majority of the respondents (38.9%) were neutral and there were an equal number of respondents who agreed and disagreed.

The rating result for “There is an investment friendly environment in Shikoku” shows that it is not an important factor as a near-majority of the respondents (38.9%) were neutral, 33.3% rated disagree, 11.1% rated agree, and none of the respondents rated fully agree.

The rating result for “You feel a sense of pride toward the Shikoku 88 Buddhist Temples” shows that it is an important factor as a near-majority of the respondents (40%) rated agree, 36.7% rated fully agree, 3.3% rated disagree, and none rated fully disagree. The rating result for “You feel a sense of ownership toward Shikoku 88 Buddhist Temples” shows that it is an important factor as a near-majority of the respondents (40%) rated agree, 33.3% of the respondents were neutral, and 10% rated fully agree.

## Summary and Conclusion

The Shikoku 88 Sacred Places pilgrimage (*henro*) is one of the most prominent, evocative, and photogenic pilgrimages in Japan with a highly developed pilgrimage culture. Kōbō Daishi, a miracle-working figure with origins in the Japanese Buddhist tradition comprised of several ancient local pilgrimages, is attributed with founding this pilgrimage route. The beginnings of the Shikoku pilgrimage are said to date back to the ninth century when Kūkai, later to be canonized as Kōbō Daishi, made a journey around Shikoku in his search for enlightenment. His presence permeates the pilgrimage and binds it to the island of Shikoku.

Shikoku is one of the important tourist destinations in Japan because of diverse attractions; however, primarily it is a pilgrimage destination. The Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism has been affecting the population in the vicinity of the pilgrimage site. The influence consists first of all in employment opportunities, which has led to demographic growth. The marketers would definitely benefit from booming religious tourism, as they could find new venues to sell their products and services.

A growing local movement is pushing to have the Shikoku pilgrimage route recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its cultural importance to Japan. As one of the few circular pilgrimages in the world, the end of the eighty-eight temples journey is also its beginning. But no matter what one's intent may be for doing all or some of the pilgrimage, one thing is for certain: you leave Shikoku a different person. Overall, hundreds of thousands of people are engaged in the pilgrimage annually on foot, by automobiles, bicycles, or other means in Shikoku. The government and tourist organizations should work to promote the Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan and around the world.

#### *Suggestions to Improve Shikoku Tourism/Pilgrimage*

In answer to the question, "What are the weaknesses to develop pilgrimage tourism?" (E-5) explains that there needs to be a balance between "pilgrimage" and "tourism." If things become too touristy, then the religious or spiritual side of the pilgrimage disappears. Some foreigners have mentioned that they do not want to see the Shikoku pilgrimage turn into a Disneyland type of place. (E-6) emphasizes that temples and the temple association need to make a concerted effort to make the walk easier for walking non-Japanese pilgrims. Lodging issues, places to sit out of the rain at temples, and so forth are important. I believe that there is a general lack of concern for non-Japanese pilgrims. The temples want the numbers to increase, but no one is trying to make life easier for them. Likewise, it should be a spiritual journey to fulfill pilgrims' desires (E-3), and many travel agencies are interested only in profit (E-2). There is no official policy; most of the development is from individual interest (E-3), and young people have insufficient knowledge (E-1). (E-5) further recommends having a "Cultural/Historical Center" for the Shikoku pilgrimage near Temple 1. The Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau has done an amazing job in improving "pilgrimage tourism" along the Kumano Kodō. Similar work needs to be done about the Shikoku pilgrimage. Many of the respondents recommended various strategies to improve Shikoku pilgrimage/tourism.

- English-language materials, multi-lingual signs, English speakers at hotels and temples, timetables at the bus and train stops and stations
- The Shikoku pilgrimage must be listed as a UNESCO world heritage site

- Temple staff need to be friendly/talk freely with the pilgrims
- Younger people should be educated to appreciate nature and Kōbō Daishi
- Lodging should be cheaper, flexible with arrival time, bath time, meals, and so forth, making it more accessible to walking pilgrims with cheaper hotels like the Camino de Santiago.
- Many of the lodge owners are elderly people; who will run those in the future?
- Improve the roads: roads to some temples are narrow and difficult to walk; improve the public transportation system to all the temples
- More public toilets, fix roads and infrastructures, safe and clean town and roads
- Luggage store in Tokushima for foreigners, more access to DATA and PHONE SIM for short-term visitors
- Organized tourism and pilgrimage is different things, do not forget the meaning and purpose of pilgrimage and just go with economics
- Advertise Shikoku, provide subsidies for local business and products
- Better maintenance and preservation of temples will enhance the future of tourism and pilgrimages
- However, there are few voices against commercialization, and bringing a UNESCO identity to Shikoku could result in rampant tourism. Do not kill the “pilgrimage” spirit, culture, and tradition. Reduce garbage and improve services to cater to larger numbers of pilgrims/tourists in the days to come.

### *Recommendations for Tourism/Pilgrimage Development in Lumbini*

Spirituality is a fundamental aspect of Buddhism and peace. Lumbini, as the birthplace of the Buddha, is a peerless spiritual destination of its kind in the world. However, it has not been developed and its potential is yet to be fully tapped. Some of the problems facing us are:

- Delay in completion of Lumbini Master Plan
- Lack of innovative and competitive marketing strategies
- Poor vision and politicized leadership responsible for speedy implementation of Master Plan
- Lumbini has not been considered a national priority
- Limited tourist flow in Lumbini
- Lack of recommendations
- Lumbini has a big potential to be a world-class spiritual destination
- Pursue a timely implementation of the Master Plan
- Extend a Buddhist circuit to other Buddhist sites in Nepal, India, and other Asian countries

- Develop infrastructure and basic services (hotels, guest houses, home stay, restaurants, information offices, souvenir shops) along the greater Lumbini circuit destinations
- Promotional programs/materials in international markets
- Research and publication of resources in multiple languages
- Lumbini can tap strategies and planning of tourism development in Shikoku, Koyasan, Kumano Kodō, Carmino de Santiago
- In order to preserve the peace, serenity, and moral values of the Buddha and Lumbini Sacred Garden, that all types of gambling and other activities that devalue human dignity be absolutely prohibited in nearby areas
- Promote a Buddhist moral education system and Buddhist heritage awareness
- Once you started walking in the white *O-henro* costume, you are no longer treated as a foreigner or local but only an *O-henro-san* like everybody else. It is really a unique experience that you cannot experience anywhere else. *O-henro* really cross boundaries of language, culture, and nationality in Shikoku. At least there should be some common unique costume for the pilgrims visiting Lumbini.

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