



Maria Rodríguez del Alisal, Peter Ackerman, and Dolores P. Martinez, ed., *Pilgrimages and Spiritual Quests in Japan*

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PILGRIMAGES AND Spiritual Quests in Japan is a collection of essays on spiritual journeys that has been eleven years in the making. The volume traces its origins back to the Ninth Japan Anthropology Workshop (1996) on the theme “Pilgrimage and the International Encounter.” The workshop was held at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, one of Europe’s most famous historic pilgrimage destinations. The collection consists of sixteen essays divided into four parts: 1) pilgrimages, paths and places; 2) reconstructing the Quest; 3) the quest for the magic, luminal, and non-ordinary; and 4) the quest for vocational fulfillment.

In her preface, Joy Hendry alludes to the editorial challenges the collection faced. She promises that the volume contributes in-depth studies with innovative anthropological perspectives on pilgrimage and spiritual quests that “ultimately open the eyes of our readers to new ways of thinking” (p. xi). There are several contributions that fulfill Hendry’s promises: the chapters on pilgrims on Shikoku during the Edo period and the contemporary period by Natalie Kouamé and Hoshino Eiki respectively, Joy Hendry’s chapter on contemporary Japanese theme parks as pilgrimage

that is, short-term fieldwork such as traveling to sites for single or multiple short trips. Though disparaged by Western anthropologists and ethnographers as shallow and scientifically inadequate, travel ethnography has a long history in Japan. Van Bremen traces the use of travel ethnography by Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), the founder of Japanese folklore studies, and other ethnographers up until the present. He then singles out two significant travel ethnographers, Torii Ryūzō (1870–1953) and Miyamoto Tsunēichi (1907–1981), to show how travel ethnography informed their research conducted during World War II. He concludes that travel ethnography can be particularly useful during times of war and natural disasters and can serve as a valuable supplement to more extended fieldwork. Though van Bremen's essay contains no methodological reflections on pilgrimage, his analysis of Japanese approaches to ethnographic and anthropological research represents a valuable contribution to the field. It makes for especially interesting reading in the context of other recent methodological reflections on anthropological research on Japan such as *Doing Fieldwork in Japan* (2003) and *The Making of Anthropology in East and Southeast Asia* (2004) and *Asian Anthropology* (2006), a volume VAN BREMEN himself edited with Eyal Ben-Ari and Syed Farid Alatas.

Several other contributions are of note as essays that established innovative starting points of inquiry with great potential, but they ultimately fall short of realizing their potential—perhaps in part because the articles were of such limited length. Patrick Beillevaire's essay on *agari-umāi*, a royal tour of sacred places on the Ryūkyū Islands, provides a solid historical summary, but unfortunately the essay ends at the most salient point: the contemporary appropriation of the practice. Given that the volume was promised to present anthropological perspectives on pilgrimage and travel, I was surprised that Beillevaire did not explore in depth how *agari-umāi* serves to create ethnic and regional identities in contemporary Okinawa.

The essays by Pilar Cabanās and Rosalia Medina Bermejo explore the relationships of Japanese artists and poets with Spain by following Thomas RIMER's approach in his *Pilgrimages: Aspects of Japanese Literature and Culture* (1988). The essays are well researched and contain interesting biographical data. One could argue that the expansion of the category of pilgrimage to a personal quest of self-discovery has innovative potential, but the essays do not develop the theme with clarity, nor do they examine the implications of the inclusion. Thus these chapters do not contribute much to the methodology of pilgrimage or travel.

Nakamaki Hirochika's analysis of internationalization training for civil servants as rites of initiation and pilgrimage is suggestive. His topic also has the potential to broaden the categories of pilgrimage discourse. Yet ultimately the essay fails to address two fundamental questions: Why do the Japanese authorities consider it sufficient to train their civil servants in English and send them to the United States in order to internationalize them when the majority of the foreigners in Japan actually come from other Asian countries? Why are they not trained in Chinese or Korean instead? Perhaps it is only in the last five years or so that that the realities of immi-

gration in Japan has begun to be acknowledged, and so did not find its way into this chapter, which is based on a conference paper from the mid 1990s.

This omission is a reflection of a larger shortcoming that runs through the entire volume: much of the research is dated. One would have hoped that even though the original essays were presented at a conference held in 1996, the editors would have encouraged their contributors to update their work to reflect more recent development in the field, but even the editors' introduction shows little awareness of important recent publications in the field of pilgrimage in Japan, such as the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* special issue on pilgrimage edited by Paul SWANSON and Ian READER (1997) or Ian READER's superb study of the contemporary Shikoku pilgrimage (2005).

Another weakness is that the volume is marred by methodological problems and factual errors that escaped the editors. For example, Usui Sachiko claims that "Zen-zai [i.e., Sudhana]'s journey in the Kegon Sutra [...] might have stimulated Kūkai to establish the pilgrimage course connecting the 88 temples in Shikoku" (p. 32). Her point that actual Buddhist pilgrimages were influenced by practices described in Buddhist scriptures is entirely valid. However, the claim that the Shikoku pilgrimage was actually founded by Kūkai is problematic. This may be a notion that is commonly held by pilgrims or claimed by pilgrimage promoters, but it belongs to the realm of hagiography rather than historical reality accepted by contemporary scholars of the Shikoku pilgrimage.

Conference proceedings tend to present their editors with challenging decisions about the selection of contributions and the transformation of conference papers into articles. Despite these obstacles, their attraction lies in the presentation of new research and in the collection of articles on a unified theme in a single volume. Perhaps *Pilgrimages and Spiritual Quests in Japan* would have had greater appeal had the volume been published soon after the conference, before the material became dated. Unfortunately, the collection is of uneven quality and displays a typical shortcoming of conference volumes: the contributions remain superficial due to their brevity—the average length is ten to eleven pages. The editors would have been better served by being more selective based on the quality of the contributions and giving the authors more space to develop their presentations into full articles.

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Barbara AMBROS
University North Carolina at Chapel Hill