

Shikoku's Local Authorities and *Henro* during the Golden Age of the Pilgrimage

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This article uses primary historical materials to focus on a topic largely ignored in previous studies of pilgrimage: the relationships between pilgrims and local populations, particularly local officials and authorities. The materials studied here deal with the Shikoku pilgrimage in the latter part of the Tokugawa Period, and indicate how local officials tried to control the increasing number of pilgrims through the imposition of various regulations on their travel. On the other hand, however, these same officials undertook certain obligations towards the pilgrims, especially in case of sickness or death. Such institutionalized support may have been equally as important as the spontaneous almsgiving of the local population to pilgrims.

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE HISTORIOGRAPHY has claimed that the main elements of the Bakufu's policy relating to travel in the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) were *sakoku* 鎖国, which prohibited Japanese from traveling abroad; *sankin kōtai* 参勤交代, whereby regional lords were required to reside in alternate years at the capital, Edo; and *tochi kinbaku* 土地緊縛, which attempted to control and limit the movement of ordinary people. Historically speaking, such severe policies seem to be quite rare. However, some recent research attests that the rigid system established during the seventeenth century did change, some of its basic principles became lax, and the development of travel among ordinary citizens was symptomatic of these social changes (see, for example, UCHIDA 1996).

The popularity of the Shikoku pilgrimage between 1800 and 1850—the period I would call the golden age of Shikoku pilgrimage—can also certainly be considered as a characteristic of the evolutionary development. From this perspective it would be interesting to examine the reaction of the political and administrative authorities in Shikoku in the face of the growing phenomenon of eighty-eight-stage Shikoku pilgrimage in the late Tokugawa period. Indeed, the case of Shikoku

could provide an example of the degree of tolerance seen in an administration renowned for its severity and the degree of flexibility of a social system known for its rigidity. At the same time such an investigation would enable us to acquire a very concrete understanding of the conditions of the pilgrims (*henro* 遍路) in the Tokugawa period, to know who the pilgrims were, and also to measure their impact on local societies in Shikoku.

The purpose of this article is thus to reflect on both the sociological aspects of the Shikoku *henro* during the Tokugawa period and the local administration of this time.¹ First I will show how the local authorities in Shikoku tried to control the numerous pilgrims. Then I will question whether they succeeded in efficiently controlling the *henro* who came from outside, who were constantly on the move, and therefore who were not well integrated into the social order. Finally, I will discuss whether the attitude of the authorities toward the *henro* was generally hostile or benevolent, and why.

A Strictly Regulated Circuit

The basic principle of the Shikoku pilgrimage circuit in the Tokugawa period was, like today, to walk around the island of Shikoku with the intention of visiting eighty-eight sites traditionally associated with Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師 (see READER 1993 and 1996). In the course of this long circuit of around 1400 kilometers, pilgrims had to pass through each of the four provinces of Shikoku (Awa, Tosa, Iyo, and Sanuki) and, because the holy sites were often in or near towns and villages, they came into contact with the local populace. Along the way, whatever their starting point (most of the *henro* came from other areas of Japan, but Shikoku natives probably constituted at least a quarter of the total), and whatever their motives (for example, to seek cures from disease or to perform ascetic practices), the *henro* had to submit to some very definite rules of travel. In fact, these rules were often also observed in the other provinces of Japan, and were imposed by authorities on other categories of travelers besides pilgrims; the above-mentioned principle of *tochi kinbaku* (tightly binding [the ordinary people] to the land) and the idea that the intrusion of foreign elements into local societies was potentially subversive were considered sufficient grounds for such regulations throughout the country. Thus the local administration (daimyō bureaucracy, officials of towns

¹ My analysis is based on unpublished original manuscripts and printed historical documents and records from Shikoku.

and villages)² had to submit to and follow the regulations of a higher authority, namely the Tokugawa bakufu. In order to see how these regulations operated, let us take a look at the progress of the typical pilgrim in the Tokugawa period.

First of all, before departing for the Shikoku pilgrimage, pilgrims were required to obtain a passport, known in the Tokugawa period as an *ōrai tegata* 往来手形, which was issued by local officials or temples. The content of this document was quite standardized: name and address of the pilgrim, information about his/her family's temple and sectarian affiliation, definition of the purpose of the trip, and various clauses relating to the treatment of the pilgrim in case of illness or death. The following is a translation of a typical *ōrai tegata*:³

Travel Permit

Kanamonoya Rihei, from Shinmachi of the castle town of Matsumoto, Shinano Province [present-day Nagano Prefecture].

We attest that the above-named person's family has for generations been a parishioner of the Jōdo sect and our temple. He is applying to go on a pilgrimage to Shikoku to fulfill a vow. As we recognize his will, we present a travel permit to him. Please let him pass through the barrier stations of the provinces without hindrance. When night falls he will ask to stay the night. If he should fall ill and die, please bury him according to the rites of the local priest. In such a case it will not be necessary to inform his home province.

Shōhō-ji [?] of Tera-machi

Tenpō 5 (1834)

When the pilgrims' starting point was not one of the provinces of Shikoku, they also had to obtain a further document at their port of disembarkation in Shikoku; this *funeagari kitte* 船揚り切手 attested that the pilgrims had landed in Shikoku in possession of an *ōrai tegata*.

From the beginning of their walk, the duration of the pilgrim's journey around Shikoku was limited. Some provinces or localities strictly fixed the duration of pilgrims' travel. For example, when pilgrims

² The basic unit of provincial government in premodern Shikoku was, like everywhere else in Japan, the domain (*han* 藩), not the province. However, whereas some provinces were divided into several domains, for example eight domains for Iyo and three for Sanuki, some domains extended over a whole province (Tosa and Awa). Broadly speaking, because of the very strong centralization of the political system, the bureaucratic hierarchies of Shikoku were not distinct from those in other parts of Japan.

³ This document belongs to the Tada family (Shishikui, Kōchi Prefecture). The name of the temple that issued this document does not appear in any of the dictionaries of place-names I have consulted.

entered the Tosa domain, they knew that they had to cover the 400 kilometers of this province within thirty days.⁴ Some small localities also imposed this kind of time limit: for example, pilgrims had to pass through the small locality of Kumayama (Iyo) within five days.⁵ Even when such restrictions were not clearly fixed, the pilgrims' travel had to follow a regime imposed by the authorities. Indeed, as it was strictly forbidden to stop at the same locality for more than one night, the duration of the journey was automatically limited. The local authorities were forcing the pace of the pilgrims.

In the Tokugawa period, the authorities had an easy method of making sure that all of these regulations were followed: the pilgrims had to show their passports and other official documents whenever they were requested to. In most cases, they had to show them at the numerous barrier stations, *bansho* 番所 or *sekisho* 関所, situated at the boundaries of the domains or provinces. These stations could add notes (such as dates) and affix their stamp to the documents. The three following quotations taken from *Shikoku junrei dōchū kiroku* 四国順礼道中記録, the diary of nine *henro* who, starting from Sanuki, went on the pilgrimage in 1833, illustrate this situation.

1. [Awa] The 26th day of the second month; rainy weather. At [Shirotori], we visited the Shirotori Shrine, and then we entered Awa Province. Our *ōrai tegata* were examined at the barrier station called Ōsaka-guchi. In the ninth hour we were allowed to pass, and then we worshiped at the third temple, Kosen-ji.
2. [Tosa] The 4th day of the third month; fine weather. From the village of Takazone we went to Kannoura in Tosa Province, and there our certificates were examined. As there were no problems, the formalities ended quickly.
3. [Iyo] The 17th day of the third month; rainy weather and then, from the ninth hour, fine weather. From here [the pilgrimage] enters Iyo. We walked from [the temple of Terayama] and then crossed the Sukumo River. We showed our *ōrai tegata* at the barrier station at Matsuo-saka, where they were inspected.⁶

⁴ This information was found in a *henro* diary, written in 1838, called *Shikoku kikō-uta nikki* 四国紀行歌日記, the text of which can be found in KUBOKAWA-SHI DANKAI 1986, p. 52.

⁵ Several documents provide this information; see, for example, a legislative text of the later Tokugawa period in the possession of the Doi family of Ehime Prefecture, who kindly provided me with a copy of this text. The text is also mentioned in a local catalogue of pilgrimage materials; see IYO-SHI DANKAI 1978, p. 215.

⁶ For further details see the contents of the diary reproduced in KIYOYOSHI 1994.

Judging from their diary, it appears that these nine *henro* were not required to complete any formalities in their home province of Sanuki.

In certain cases, the administrative formalities of the pilgrims were more complicated than those mentioned above. For example, when a pilgrim stopped for a few days in a village because of sickness, the local authorities issued some further documents to authorize this situation. In such a case, the pilgrim had to show these new documents to subsequent authorities. Sometimes the local bureaucracy generated an impressive amount of red tape, as illustrated in the case of Jinsuke, who died on the road in Awa Province, and Hime, his daughter, who survived him and intended to continue on the pilgrimage after his funeral. The following document is addressed to the officials of both Naka and Kaifu districts in Awa by the headman of Shishikui Village in 1817.⁷

I send you in all eight documents:

Statements made by Hime, daughter of the above-mentioned Jinsuke, by officials, and by members of the population in the locality pertaining to the investigation [into the cause of the death of Jinsuke]; 3 documents

A note from the temple Enton-ji of Shishikui Village; 1 document

The notice by which the above-mentioned village officials recently sought instructions concerning the passage [of Hime]; 1 document

Duplicates of the *ōrai tegata*, the *funeagari kittle*, and the certificate of entrance issued at Ōsaka-guchi [the barrier station of Awa Province]; 3 documents.

Thus, the various administrative authorities of Shikoku could help one another control the course of the pilgrims. However, as it would otherwise be impossible to keep close track of every individual pilgrim, authorities also determined the exact route pilgrims could follow. Local Shikoku authorities required pilgrims to keep only to the “*henro* routes,” that is, the *henro kaidō* 遍路街道, also known as the “*fudasho* [i.e., pilgrimage temple] routes” 札所街道, as the following document shows.

The system whereby *henro* who come from other provinces are not allowed to go along side roads away from the *fudasho* routes is an old one. However, although the castle town [of Kōchi] is not part of the Shikoku pilgrimage route, ...a great many *henro* come into this castle town, stay there, and even go to beg in the samurai quarters. As the situation has become disordered,

⁷ This document belongs to the Tada family (Shishikui, Kōchi Prefecture).

henceforth *henro* must pass from Ichinomiya [Zenraku-ji, no. 30] through Tanabe-shima to go to Godai-san [Chikurin-ji, no. 31], and they will not be allowed to come into the castle town, as before.

The 7th year of Bunsei [1824]

(HIROE 1966, pp. 74-75)

In short, pilgrims in the Tokugawa period were closely restricted. Furthermore, in the case of a violation of these rules, the local authorities could impose several forms of punishment. One of the severest measures that could be directed against pious pilgrims who were hoping to recover from illness by going on the pilgrimage was to deny them entry into the province. This is precisely what happened to some sick pilgrims who arrived at the frontier of Tosa during the Tenpō era (1830-1844): the domain denied them entry. I think that this was because they suspected that such pilgrims might settle in the province for medical care beyond the official time limit, but also because they thought pilgrims might become a burden on the local populace, who were affected at this time by a nationwide famine. This policy is reflected in the following injunction from 1838:

Naturally, it is forbidden to allow passage to those who are obviously sick and cannot walk, as well as old people and children who are traveling alone. (cited in HIRAO 1962, p. 169)

In addition to this kind of prohibition, arrests and expulsions were also means used to repress undesirable *henro*. Indeed, there were some antisocial elements among the pilgrims in Shikoku during the Tokugawa period. It is to this issue that I turn next.

A Sufficient Control?

These rules by which local authorities intended to control pilgrims were not always observed. Research by scholars such as Shinjō Tsunezō and Maeda Takashi has shown that during the golden age of the Shikoku pilgrimage in the first half of the nineteenth century, some pilgrims partially or totally neglected the official regulations. This was certainly the case with the *kojiki henro* 乞食遍路 (beggar-pilgrims) and the *shokugyō henro* 職業遍路 (professional pilgrims), who swindled credulous locals, as well as various others (such as old people and sufferers of leprosy) who chose to remain on the Shikoku pilgrimage route until they died. Both Shinjō and Maeda have emphasized the existence of these categories of antisocial pilgrims, thus giving a general image of nonconformity to the pilgrimage and the pilgrims.

According to them, this fringe element was taking advantage of the system of *settai* 接待 (custom of giving alms and support to pilgrims)⁸ that provided needy *henro* with the means to go on the pilgrimage and, even, to support themselves. Thus they suggest that during times of economic hardship in the Tokugawa period, such antisocial pilgrims would increase. Both Shinjō and Maeda claim that the local Shikoku authorities constantly tried to suppress such antisocial pilgrims, in contrast to the ordinary populace who tended to treat these pilgrims benevolently (see SHINJŌ 1982 and MAEDA 1971).

While there is no doubt that Shinjō's and Maeda's works have revealed an important sociological aspect of the Shikoku pilgrimage during the Tokugawa period, it is also necessary to carefully consider the real extent of this subversive aspect. The fact that some *henro* disturbed Shikoku's political authorities does not necessarily mean that they were a serious menace to the social order in Shikoku. Furthermore, the existence of such elements seems to have had no influence on the general attitudes of local authorities towards common pilgrims.

In order to gain an insight into the nature of some of these pilgrims, let us look at some historical materials, for numerous texts and documents from the Tokugawa period reveal the existence throughout the island of antisocial pilgrims, or at least of pilgrims who did not observe the aforementioned rules.

The following quotation comes from a long legislative text relating to *henro* who passed through Kumayama in Iyo. The text itself is interesting because it makes a distinction between several categories of offenses. Indeed, besides those pilgrims whose official period of stay in Kumayama had expired, the authorities stigmatized beggars and *henro*—or, at least, some individuals dressed as *henro*—who had committed crimes of larceny.⁹

Some pilgrims to the eighty-eight temples, but also lordless samurai, beggars, and people who seem to be outcasts, are infiltrating the villages. They have the appearance of practitioners of austerities but, sometimes, some of them intend to commit petty theft. They check to see whether people are away from home working in the fields, take whatever they find, and then flee; many of them slip [into the villages] at night.

⁸ In the Tokugawa period, the term "*settai*" meant giving alms (rice, money, etc.) to a traveler, and especially to a pilgrim or a monk. However, in the context of the Shikoku *henro*, the term can have an extended meaning; for example, providing a pilgrim with free lodging for one night or erecting a tomb for a dead pilgrim can be considered *settai*. During the Tokugawa period, this custom flourished throughout Shikoku, but seems to have declined in other regions of Japan.

⁹ This legislative text is in the possession of the Doi family of Ehime Prefecture (see note 5).

Furthermore, some *henro* took advantage of the fact that many people believed that pilgrims had charismatic powers, as is shown in the following passage from a decree of the Tosa domain in 1824:

Illegal [pilgrims] come into [Tosa] and, asserting constantly in different localities that they are ill, they sojourn in these places for a few days; or, they sell spells and prayers, or pills and powdered medicine. Worst of all, they gamble and steal.

(cited in SHINJŌ 1982, p. 1065)

The existence of such historical materials suggests that the local authorities were concerned, with good reason, about some of the dysfunctional aspects of the pilgrimage. However, one has to take great care when analyzing these official documents. To infer from them that pilgrims of this sort were numerous and dangerous to the social order could well be erroneous. Has any bureaucratic machine ever produced any documents to note that everything is in order? While the existence of such materials could be an indication of some serious disturbances, it might well also be a reflection of the vigilance of the administration.

An important point to note here is that there are no records of such pilgrims causing uprisings in Shikoku in the Tokugawa period; numerous insurrections troubled the social order of Shikoku, but none were related to the pilgrimage. Furthermore, the Shikoku pilgrimage never manifested the turbulent and socially disruptive aspects seen in the greatest manifestation of pilgrimage activity in the later Tokugawa period, the *okage mairi* 御蔭参り (pilgrimages to Ise), particularly in 1830 and 1867.

In fact, it is likely that the main characteristics of the Shikoku pilgrimage protected the authorities and local populations from serious trouble. The *henro* often walked alone or in small groups. As SHINJŌ notes, *kō* 講 (religious associations) did not organize their journeys (1988, p. 1049). Records attest also that the pilgrimage was generally an individual spiritual adventure; for example, among the inhabitants of Naoshima in Sanuki who went on the pilgrimage from 1804 to 1877, most seemed to have been alone or to have gone in twos and threes (YAMAMOTO 1996, p. 131). Moreover, the very strong religious motivations of these pilgrims appear to have made them indifferent to mundane concerns. The Shikoku pilgrimage seems to have retained its spiritual atmosphere and not to have been as infused with touristic elements as many other pilgrimages were during the Tokugawa period.

Signs of Hospitality

Despite the existence of materials that attest that the Shikoku authorities adopted repressive measures against some *henro*, it seems that, actually, so long as the aims and activities of the pilgrims were of a religious nature, they were tolerated by the authorities. That was the case even in the Tosa domain, whose attitude towards the *henro* is considered by specialists to have been particularly severe.¹⁰

The Tosa authorities made it clear who could be admitted as pilgrims, as is shown in this decree of 1838:

Regarding the inspection [at the frontier of the Tosa domain] of the *henro* who come from other provinces.

They must bring the *ōrai tegata* issued by their province as well as their *nōkyō[chō]*¹¹ and, for those who are not from Shikoku, a *funeagari kittle*,

They must bring enough money for traveling expenses;

It is forbidden to allow passage to people who do not possess each of the above-mentioned documents.

(cited in HIRAO 1962, p. 169)

Thus, the pilgrims who could provide proof of pious motives—the *ōrai tegata* and the stamped *nōkyōchō* attested to this—were admitted without problem to the domain.

Does this, then, mean that the authorities also received the pilgrims with benevolence or, at least, with hospitality? While such a question may sound surprising, given the apparent severity of the rules, my current research suggests that this may well be a valid question. Indeed there are various historical materials that suggest that the general attitude of local authorities in Shikoku towards the *henro* should not be analyzed only in terms of repressive control. The fact is that the Shikoku authorities during the Tokugawa period did help pilgrims who were in trouble.

For example, the attitude of the authorities towards *yukidaore henro* 行き倒れ遍路 (pilgrims who fell ill or died on the road) is worth considering. Some pilgrims fell ill during their long journey, while pilgrims who were sick even before they left home were not uncommon. On the way, some of these pilgrims died. In such cases, the pilgrims seem to have been aided by the Shikoku people and the authorities. It is

¹⁰ Although this is a common assumption in Shikoku studies, I think it is important to point out that so far no comparative studies have been made on the legislation produced by different domains, and it is not possible to affirm this thesis.

¹¹ The *nōkyōchō* is a special book carried by pilgrims in which each pilgrimage temple affixes its stamp to indicate that the pilgrim has visited and worshiped there.

well known, for example, that numerous *yukidaore henro* were given a grave, many of which can still be seen to this day near the pilgrimage temples. As mentioned earlier, these kinds of donation are generally called *settai* when the benefactors were individuals or religious associations such as *kō*. But there is no specific term that has developed for the assistance that Shikoku authorities themselves gave to *yukidaore henro*. This is partly because this issue has not attracted the attention of *henro* researchers, and partly because the provision of such help was just one of the numerous official functions of the premodern local authorities.

Numerous historical materials from the Tokugawa period provide evidence of such hospitality. Many sick pilgrims were repatriated to their provinces with the assistance of local authorities. The term *mura okuri* 村送り was often used to designate the escort of a person from village to village. The case illustrated in the following document seems to be a typical one: this was sent by Imajirō, headman of Agata Village in Iyo, either in 1844 or 1856, to the officials of the villages through which two pilgrims, Sué and Riemon, had subsequently to be escorted.

Riemon and his mother Sué, from the village of Ōbeppo, Aki district of Aki Province (present-day Hiroshima Prefecture), left together to make the Shikoku pilgrimage and the Saikoku pilgrimage. On the 29th day of last month, while they were visiting the officials of the village, they had Riemon examined because he told them that, due to a footsore, he could not walk. Because it was difficult for him to walk, he wanted to stay and recuperate. However, since it was not possible to be quickly cured of his illness, he wanted to return immediately to his province and recuperate. Thus he applied [to the officials] for permission to be repatriated to his province. This is the reason why the officials of the village came and ascertained the true situation. They saw that Riemon, in such a physical condition, could not be promptly cured and continue on the pilgrimage, therefore they accepted the request [of the two pilgrims] and, after the inspection of their *ōrai tegata*, they reported the facts to the office and escorted them out. Therefore, please escort them to their province by the prescribed route.

(see SAITŌ 1975, p. 36)

Indeed, a document dating from 1784 lists the names of a number of villages in northern Iyo that constituted, together with the above-mentioned village of Agata, what we might call a *mura okuri* network (see EHIME-KEN SHI HENSAN IINKAI 1984, pp. 83-84).

The example of Agata Village is not an isolated one. Indeed, recent research by MURAKAMI Kazue (1995) into one of the most famous Tokugawa-era archives related to the Shikoku pilgrimage, the

Komatsu-han kaisho nikki 小松藩会所日記 (Diaries of the Komatsu domain office) covering the period 1716 to 1866, has sought to measure statistically the importance of such assistance. Murakami has found that among the 1,139 cases of *yukidaore* (both people who were ill and those who died while traveling on the roads of the Komatsu domain) that were recorded by the officials, 949 clearly refer to pilgrims. In all, 943 of the cases relate to people who died, and 196 cases relate to persons who were offered an escort (*mura okuri*). Of these 196 cases, 124 concern pilgrims.¹² Thus, the proportion of people, and especially of pilgrims, who were helped to return home was quite significant. The *mura okuri* concerns all those who were recorded as sick travelers by the Komatsu authorities. Even if there were some sick travelers who did not appear in the records, it is clear that such assistance was standard practice (MURAKAMI 1995, p. 20).

However, one must take care not to assume an overly idealistic view of this help. When Shikoku authorities helped a sick pilgrim return home, or buried a dead one, it is conceivable that they were just following the rules for common travelers that had been established by the Tokugawa bakufu since the end of the seventeenth century. Indeed, several successive ordinances—the first one was enacted in 1688—stipulated the measures (medical examination, medical care, inspection of the *ōrai tegata*, contact with the relatives; see MURAKAMI 1995, pp. 2–4) that the local authorities had to take in case of *yukidaore*. In the rigid system of the Tokugawa bakufu, the authorities had to observe these rules. Moreover, the fact that the Shikoku authorities issued numerous documents relating to medical care, escort, or burial of *yukidaore* pilgrims, does not necessarily mean that only such cases were very common. It may also signify that these authorities were concerned by the expenses that were incurred through such activities. Since, according to bakufu legislation, these expenses had to be paid either by the travelers themselves or by the local populace, it may well be that by putting the facts down in writing, the local authorities sought to present clearly the situation to other authorities, and thus also remind them of their respective obligations.

Conclusion

Thus, the overall relationship between Shikoku authorities and *henro* during the peak period of the pilgrimage in the Tokugawa period

¹² Information regarding the escort of *henro* in the Komatsu domain not available in her paper (1995) was provided to me by MURAKAMI Kazue.

(i.e., the first half of the nineteenth century), seems to have been, broadly speaking, good. Provided the pilgrims observed the regulations, they could pass throughout the island and devote themselves to their religious practices. In case of illness or death, such pilgrims could also depend on local officials, who organized their medical care, their repatriation, or their burial.

The reception that the Shikoku authorities gave to henro reveals that the political authorities of the latter Tokugawa period were tolerant regarding the mobility of the ordinary populace. From the perspective of the pilgrims, it appears that they accepted the bureaucratic restraints that were imposed on them, for in the context of the freedom that the authorities were actually granting, these regulations could be seen as comparatively insignificant constraints.

Thus, it is not possible to address the question of attitudes toward Shikoku pilgrims purely in terms of severity on the part of the local authorities and benevolence on the part of ordinary people. Just to credit the ordinary populace with generous feelings (shown, for example by the custom of *settai*) and to criticize the authorities for their apparently repressive control, does not enable us to understand the true complexity of the situation.¹³ As this article has shown, although the authorities did seek to regulate the pilgrims closely, and to proscribe unruly elements, they also provided a system of support for those in need who followed the regulations.

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¹³ For further details see my article, KOUAMÉ (n.d).

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