

Hospitality in sacred sites and pilgrimage routes:

A qualitative study of hosts supporting Koyasan pilgrimage

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the thesis and research objectives. Then, it reviews religious hospitality and three perspectives to analyze the religious hospitality. It also shows the research site, Koyasan and research methodology.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how religious hospitality has been transformed in the process of modernization, and what kind of hospitality is offered in the current context where pilgrimage and tourism intersect. To address these concerns, this thesis examines hospitality from the following three perspectives: (1) Mobility—exploring the transformation of pilgrimage and sacred sites resulting from new modes of transportation, (2) Commodification—examining the influence of commercialized pilgrimage and tourism on traditional practices of hospitality and (3) Spiritual labor—detailing the spiritual and secular work of monks in temple stay tourism. This thesis focuses on Koyasan, a sacred site of the Koyasan Shingon (Esoteric) Buddhism located in Wakayama Prefecture. Koyasan is a sacred place with a long history of more than 1,200 years from its foundation, and is now well known as a religious sanctuary and a global tourist destination. By choosing such a place as a research site, this thesis can investigate the transformation of religious hospitality with modernization. This thesis is based on constructivist approach, and three qualitative studies were conducted. Specifically, (1) an analysis of local histories along the Koyasan pilgrimage route, (2) an ethnographic study of local residents trying to revive religious hospitality, and (3) an interview study with monks working at temple lodgings.

Chapter 2: Pilgrimage, means of transportation and its effects on host communities

Chapter 2 examines how the changes in the means of transportation for pilgrimage have transformed the communities along the pilgrimage route, based on the mobility paradigm. The mobility paradigm is a conceptual framework for understanding how social relations are created from the continuous and reciprocal movement of people, objects, information, and images (Urry, 2007).

The changes in the means of transportation for pilgrimage to Koyasan have already been investigated (Hirayama & Nishizawa, 2004; Ikeda, 2015). This study analyzed these findings in combination with the transformation of local communities. This study uses secondary documents such as travelogues, newspaper articles, and government website materials, with a focus on the history of the municipalities around Koyasan.

As a result of the analyzing these documents, chapter 2 shows the development of the means of pilgrimage has transformed local communities, making them part of the pilgrimage or excluding them from it. Railways and driving pilgrimages have weakened the relationship between pilgrims and local communities. However, driving is more flexible than railways and have partially revived the interaction between pilgrims and local communities, so the interaction between pilgrims and local communities should consider not only the speed of transportation but also its flexibility. The revival of walking pilgrimage has rebuilt and strengthened the relationship between pilgrims and local communities. This was a similar result to other previous studies.

Chapter 3: Tourism and the transformation of religious hospitality: An ethnography of *osettai* along the *Choishi-michi* pilgrimage route, Japan

Chapter 3 will focus on the walking pilgrimage revival because this helps revival of host guest interaction. Specifically, it is examined how meanings and experiences of *osettai* have changed over time from Edo period to now, and what kind of roles the tourism plays in the current transformation of *osettai*.

This study uses ethnographic approach at Kyoraji district along the *Choishi-michi* route. It employs interviews, observation and secondary document analysis. As a result, the research outlined the transforming meanings of *osettai* from an economic-religious exchange to a commodified economic service, and finally to a cultural exchange during the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering this transformation, walking tours do play an important role in creating motivation, inspiration and an opportunity to help revive traditional forms of religious hospitality, rediscovering local memories and sharing them with the next generation. However, the revival of *osettai* in the Kyoraji district was made possible by the ongoing preservation of the Kobo-Daishi faith.

Chapter 4: Religious practitioner or spiritual laborer? Negotiating spiritual labor in temple stay tourism at Koyasan sacred site, Japan

Chapter 4 will explore what the impact of temple-stay tourism is on the life of monks and how the spiritual labor is controlled in the temple-stay tourism. This study will use the concept of spiritual labor to think about monks' labor. Spiritual labor is defined the commodification, codification, and management of the spirituality of workers in an organization (McGuire, 2010, p.75). So, it is explored how monks' spirituality is commercialized, codified and managed by the temple.

This study uses semi-structured interviews with both employers and workers to focus on the management aspect of spiritual labor. As a result, it was shown that the life of monks is greatly affected by temple-stay tourism, and that the life of monks, which once integrated spirituality and labor, is now being separated. Religious hospitality by monks is an attempt to achieve the path to enlightenment by offering various kinds of offerings. On the other hand, commercial hospitality and the modern work environment restrict the provision of religious hospitality to those who are paid for their stay and during their working hours. This paper shows that in this environment, monks are trying to achieve religious hospitality through the management of spiritual labor at the individual and organizational levels. In addition, it was found that there is no significant difference in the way spiritual labor is managed in both companies and lodgings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The theoretical and academic contributions of this thesis to the study of religious hospitality are fourfold. As a result, this thesis identifies the following four points. First, it was found that there are two types of religious hospitality in Koyasan: *osettai* by local residents and *fuse* by monks. Secondly, from the perspective of mobility, it was shown that the speed and flexibility of mobility of pilgrims and tourists are important for the practice of religious hospitality. Thirdly, from the perspective of commodification, it was clarified that even if hospitality by local residents is incorporated as part of the tour, the underlying belief in Kobo-Daishi is maintained. Fourthly, from the perspective of spiritual labor, it was described that monks have conflicts to provide religious hospitality in commercialized temple-stay context. By using the three perspectives of mobility, commodification, and spiritual labor, this thesis contributes to a multifaceted understanding of the nature of religious hospitality. The paper also makes a contextual contribution to the study of pilgrimage tourism in Japan through rich ethnographic descriptions.