



The Way of the 88 Temples: Journeys on the Shikoku Pilgrimage

Robert C. Sibley

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Compelled to seek something more than what modern society has to offer, Robert Sibley turned to an ancient setting for help in recovering what has been lost. The Henro Michi is one of the oldest and most famous pilgrimage routes in Japan. It consists of a circuit of eighty-eight temples around the perimeter of Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four main islands. Every henro, or pilgrim, is said to follow in the footsteps of K?b? Daishi, the ninth-century ascetic who founded the Shingon sect of Buddhism. Over the course of two months, the author walked this 1,400-kilometer route (roughly 870 miles), visiting the sacred sites and performing their prescribed rituals. Although himself a gaijin, or foreigner, Sibley saw no other pilgrim on the trail who was not Japanese. Some of the people he met became not only close companions but also ardent teachers of the language and culture. These fellow pilgrims' own stories add to the author's narrative in unexpected and powerful ways. Sibley's descriptions of the natural surroundings, the customs and etiquette, the temples and guesthouses will inspire any reader who has longed to escape the confines of everyday life and to embrace the emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of a pilgrimage.

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