

Area Studies

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Paper Theme 3

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Central to the notion of in-transit areamaking is idea that through the movement of people, things or information an area, region or route gets a certain meaning. The former two possibly being the origin, destination or the place through which passage takes place.

In the case of Japan, a striking example of this in-transit areamaking is the *Shikoku* Pilgrimage. This pilgrimage, as undertaken by Buddhists, entails a journey on the *Shikoku* island, along 88 shrines.

In practical terms, this example of in-transit exhibits clear characteristics. There is a clear predetermined route, along which the participants of the pilgrimage travel. The infrastructure of travel comprises mainly of roads, used for travel on foot and by motor vehicle. The contact zones during this journey are the 88 shrines visited along the way.

The consequences of the *Shikoku* pilgrimage are, quite logically, mainly based in religion; While the main goal of the journey is personal—mainly proving or improving ones piety, the interaction with other participants adds to the experience. On the other hand, the 88 individual shrines are linked together to for a cyclic network. As a result of this connection, the individual shrines, who wouldn't have much importance by themselves, become part of a larger structure with great religious importance.

Interesting to note is that in the past, notably in the Edo period, Japanese citizens were not allowed to travel freely. In order to partake in the *Shikoku* pilgrimage, they had te be given special permission and had to carry proof of their intent. Due to this state influence, the in-transit area making could potentially be hindered.