

Global Migration and the Anthropocene:

The Expansion of Pilgrimage and Tourism after the Second World War

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Although the anthropocene period of Planet Earth's history spans many thousands of years, the period of economic change after the Second World War is making a deep impact on the globe's environment as the protracted debate over 'global warming' demonstrates. Massive wealth has been generated through the revival of war-torn economies in Europe, Russia, Japan and China, the role played by the USA as a global capitalist superpower and the economic development in India and Brazil.

A key feature of these economic changes has been the rapid growth of the travel and tourism sector. This growth was first evident in W. Europe and N. America but since the 1970s tourists from Japan and other prospering countries around the world have swelled the ranks of those on the move. (This is only one dimension of global migration, of course. Refugees, displaced people and labour migrants represent the darker aspects of global migration and the deep inequalities in the distribution of wealth within and between nations).

Pilgrimage to religious and non-religious sites has benefitted greatly from the expansion of global travel and tourism. Some sites receive many millions of visitors annually, such as Rome, Assisi and Lourdes in Europe while the Kumbh Mela festivals in India attract millions of Hindus every five and ten years. These are just the most renowned examples of how people on the move are contributing to the complex interweaving of tourism and pilgrimage where many people enjoy walking the pilgrimage routes as evidenced on the island of Shikoku and along the routes to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

The presentation will consider these developments in the context of their impact on the environment. It will focus on the ways in which local landscapes have been changed by the expansion of pilgrimage shrines and routes in the European region. This will set the scene for discussion after the presentation of the relevance of these developments to the Japanese context.