

Dogyo Ninin

The phrase dogyo ninin (“traveling together”) is written on the sedge hats worn by Shikoku pilgrims, as well as on the walking sticks they carry. It refers to the belief that a pilgrim is always accompanied in spirit by Kobo Daishi, the priest who is considered the founder of the pilgrimage and who is honored at all of the 88 temples. Kobo Daishi is thought to watch over all pilgrims, relieving their suffering and offering a helping hand in times of difficulty. The walking stick (kongozue) is considered the physical embodiment of Kobo Daishi’s spirit, and pilgrims are expected to treat their staff with great care. This includes washing its base at the end of each day. The pilgrims of old would do this to symbolically wash the “feet” of Kobo Daishi before washing their own feet when preparing to enter an inn to rest for the evening.