

## **O-sunafumi**

For centuries, the Shikoku Pilgrimage was a journey that only few were able to undertake. Reasons for this included the remote location of the island itself, the expense required for travel, and the physical demands of the pilgrimage. To make the blessings of Shikoku accessible to a wider audience, some pilgrims in the Edo period (1603–1867) started bringing back sand from the sacred sites and using this to create miniature pilgrimages called o-sunafumi in locations throughout Japan. These usually featured small chapels with pictures or statues representing the deities of the temples along the actual pilgrimage route. A bag of sand from the temple that enshrined the depicted deity would be buried in front of the image. This sand represented the sacred ground of the temple and allowed the pilgrim who stepped on it to receive the same blessings as a visitor to the actual sanctuary.

O-sunafumi retain their relevance even today. Though Shikoku is no longer as difficult to reach as it once was, and pilgrims nowadays do not necessarily have to walk from one temple to the next, the pilgrimage remains out of reach for many, particularly those with mobility issues or physical ailments. The o-sunafumi tradition lives on not only through the many established mini-pilgrimages but also in the form of mobile versions that can be set up indoors for a limited time. Visitors to Shikoku can experience o-sunafumi at some of the 88 temples, including Zentsuji (number 75) and Okuboji (number 88).