

"For any natural phenomena or literary work there exists a cause. The sun, the moon, and the stars appear when the sky is clear. A man writes when moved. So the Eight Trigrams of Fu Hsi, the Tao-te Ching, the Book of Odes, the Elegies of Ch'u were written down by men who were inspired from within. Of course, there can be no comparison between these sages of the past and a common man of the present such as I, yet somehow I feel compelled to express my innermost feelings."

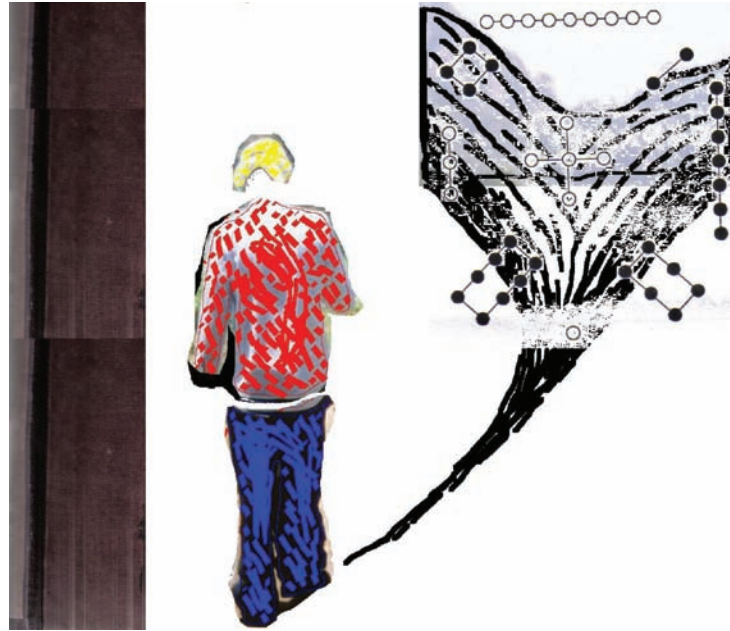
Kukai

"Every artist is a ghostly worker. Not by years of groping and sacrifice does he find his highest expression; his fingers are guided by the dead in the delineation of a flying bird, of the vapours of mountains, of the colours of morning and evening, of the shape of branches and the spring-burst of flowers."

Lafcadio Hearn

"All ways already found, known and proven, are wrong ways, since they are not his own"

Joseph Campbell



# Dissolving Path

Indications on Not-knowing Nothing

Neil Cantwell

# Summary: Wandering leads to Wonder

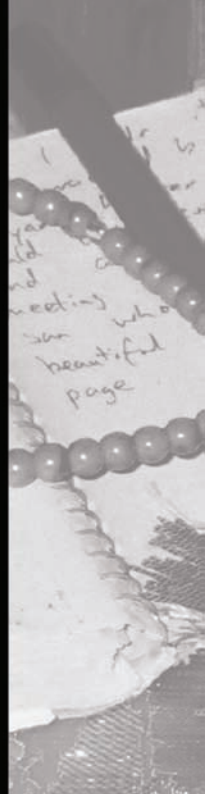
Dissolving Path: Indications on not-knowing Nothing is a work of travel philosophy based on the experience of 50 days walking the 88 temple Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan. This is a book that is both personal and universal, following an individual journey while seeking to provide a modern Buddhist perspective upholding the value of esoteric philosophy and practice.

Through a diary following the everyday trials and tribulations of walking over 1000km, the reader is introduced to the central focus of the pilgrimage, the 9th century "saint" Kukai, perhaps the most remarkable figure in Japanese history about whom

little has been written for popular audiences in English. Providing further background to his life and the religious basis of the pilgrimage, this book also offers a rare insight into the tradition of Esoteric Buddhism, spanning India, China and Japan in its fascinating and secretive history. However, these subjects are made relevant to the world of today through the author's personal connections to topics as diverse as the culture of hip-hop, the politics of intellectual property and climate change. Told in an engaging and at times humorous style, with moments of emotional and poetic weight, this is a compelling story recalling the drama of a personal pilgrimage.



## chapter\_01



# The beginning of the end is the middle

## Introduction: A Catalogue of Kindness

Outlining the background of the book and the pilgrimage at its heart through thanking all those without who it would not exist.

## Chapter 1: on the ferry to Temple 11

Retracing the first part of the path from Temples 1-10 that had been covered three years before, the many customs and meanings of the pilgrimage are introduced as the journey gets underway. Following the initial happy reuniting with the Fujii-sans, met on the path last time and now proving to be the author's major supporters, a range of other fellow pilgrims are encountered, from the warm friendliness of Jyogi-san – a man walking on artificial legs following two car crashes, to the withdrawn worrying of Asushi-san.

## Indication 1: All In En

Introducing the Buddhist concepts of 'in' and 'en' causation that will underpin the whole book. Explained in terms of the authors connection to Shaolin Kung Fu, the music of the Wu Tang Clan. Exploring the relation between karma and causation, as seen in the work of David Hume. Describing Vajrayana as a distinct form of Buddhism. Explaining the use of Mandala in terms of 'in' and 'en'.



# chapter\_02



## Chapter 2: from Temple 12 to Temple 18

Having overcome the first barrier of the climb to Temple 12, the path turns back into the city from the mountains. With almost religious destiny the author is able to shelter from a typhoon at the hospitality of the Fujii-sans once again. Completing the feeling of this first circular section being some kind of qualifying course for the challenge ahead, the full importance and seriousness of being a pilgrim is made clear in a visit to a terminally-ill elderly friend of Mr. Fujii's.

## Indication 2: Personal Miraculous Possibility

Explaining the difference between Kukai and Kobo Daishi, leading onto examining the formation of the pilgrimage, the miraculous possibility of Kobo Daishi, the shared nature of all pilgrimage in terms of desire for the contact with the supernatural, relaying the authors own 'created meaning' of the pilgrimage through translation of The Heart Sutra, explaining the technique of this translation in terms of hip-hop, reflecting on the possible shared message of Buddhism, pilgrimage and hip-hop in terms of the need to create personal meaning.





# chapter\_03

## Chapter 3: Temple 10 to Temple 27

The long road under the cliff-face to Cape Muroto provides the first significant challenges as a rhythm of walking and writing begins to settle in. The process of discovering what it might be to be a “proper” pilgrim unwinds as the nature of the experience begins to have its effects, helped by an encounter with the “slowly, slowly” attitude of full-time henro, Takahashi-san. However, as the first exhaustion tipping-point is reached, the chapter culminates in a desperate plea for supernatural assistance.

## Indication 3: Do not follow in the footsteps

The life of Kukai, his role within Esoteric Buddhism, considering the art form of calligraphy as a means for understanding Japanese aesthetics, related to the art of DJ Krush, drawing conclusions about the nature of originality, looking at the achievements of Kukai upon his return to Japan, comparing his thoughts on the natural world to the state of modern Japan, the ‘concrete industrial complex’ and the danger of fixed kata, as exemplified by the Japanese football team but challenged by the figure of Hidetoshi Nakata, returning to considering the status of Kukai in modern life and how he continues to have influence.



## chapter\_04



### Chapter 4: Temple 28 to Temple 38

Having survived this first test of faith, the author begins to embrace the pilgrimage's transformatory powers. Following the coastal path to the half-way point of Cape Ashizuri, the diary entries become increasingly reflective and poetic. Four days spent with the exemplary henro generosity of Nishikawa-san marks the closest personal encounter of the trip with a fellow pilgrim and there is also a surprise reuniting with the Fujii-sans, as they provide a rare night of luxury.

### Indication 4: Indian truth seeds and Wittgenstein

Explaining the history and ideas of Vajrayana/Esoteric Buddhism, related to the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein, showing developments within Wittgenstein's thought in terms of Buddhist practice of mantra and mudra, the notion of language games in terms of the nature of reality and consciousness, as the starting point for the religious understanding of Gandhi in Bhagavad Gita, leading to discussing the politics of seed-saving, related to the Japanese concept of 'Mottai-nai', returning to the importance of the concept of seed within Esoteric Buddhism.



## chapter\_05



### Chapter 5: Temple 38 to Temple 51

The nights are getting colder and the distances between temples longer as the nature of the pilgrimage's challenge deepens. Marking extreme peaks and troughs of emotion and motivation, the solitary nature of this section of the path leads to increased thoughts of distant friends at home, until finally the at times seemingly unattainable goal of the city of Matsuyama is reached.

### Indication 5: Not-knowing Nothing

The nature of myth in the work of Joseph Campbell, how traditional Western philosophy excludes such an understanding, the problem of reality in the history of Western philosophy, Nietzsche's perspectivism related to truth and reality, as being equivalent to the open-ended nature of reality within Esoteric Buddhism, the philosophy of not-knowing nothing,





## chapter\_06

### Chapter 6: Temple 51 to Temple 67

Starting to look towards the end, the final long sections and hard climbs are ticked off in a way that no longer seems unusual. At the penultimate mountain temple there is an inspiring encounter with a man who has just made himself homeless to do an unconventional variation of the pilgrimage. The destroyed nature of the path up and down this mountain, following a recent flood, suggests some of the lessons of the pilgrimage to issues of the real world.

### Indication 6: Philosophical generosity

The tradition of Shugendo and the relation of Kukai to other animist religious traditions in Japan, the philosophical generosity of Buddhism, how belief systems may be violent, in terms of the concept of Intellectual Property, as the oil of the 21st century, comparing the effects of IP to the realities of climate change, leading to reflection on the philosophy of science and education.





# chapter\_07

## Chapter 7: Temple 67 to Temple 82

Returning to the section of the path between Temples 71-81, visited three years before, combined with increasing awareness of the end drawing near, makes for an anticipatory crescendo of feeling and reflection in conjunction with an overwhelming chain of events. The author's personal relationship with Kukai moves to a higher level as some kind of deeper confirmation of the personal meaning of the pilgrimage is revealed.

## Indication 7: Comparative cosmology

The perfection of the circle, mathematics or numerology, the modern cosmology of physics and space, how to accept a comparative cosmology of open-ended belief, the essential impermanence of 'en' and 'in', wandering leads to wonder.

## chapter\_08



### Chapter 8: Temple 82 to Mount Koya

Even before reaching Temple 88 or completing the circle by returning to Temple 1, the book reaches a speechless climax in the seemingly divinely destined receiving of news of a scholarship to enable its completion during the final climb to Temple 88. Ending with the message of gratitude and compassion received from the most Kukai-esque priest encountered at the final temple, the final thoughts written in front of Kukai's tomb at Koya-san make for a fitting end.

# Existing titles and possible commercial appeal

Dissolving Path offers a distinctive and worthy addition to the previous titles published in English about the Shikoku pilgrimage. The classic Japanese Pilgrimage by Oliver Statler has long been out-of-print, reflecting its charming but somewhat out-dated style and focus. The Travellers Guide to Japanese Pilgrimages by Ed Readicker Henderson spends only half its time talking about the Shikoku pilgrimage, and this mainly only considering the practicalities of getting from one temple to the next in the possession of a guidebook level of knowledge about the places visited. Self-published accounts such as Craig McLachlan's Tales of a Summer Henro offer only a limited personal perspective on the experience, sharing the feeling with many online accounts of the pilgrimage of seeming unlikely to appeal to anyone not already interested in the subject. Similarly, existing academic titles such as Dr Ian Reader's Making Pilgrimages talk to a limited specialist market.

This book has been written with the intention of appealing to a wide-range of audiences, from those with a specific Japanese or Buddhist interest, to a wider readership interested in travel experiences or new perspectives on philosophy. Inspired by the blend of idea and reality in the work of Eduardo Galeano, the enlightening style of William Dalrymple's writing about India and sharing some of the form and themes of Robert Pirsig's famous Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, this title has the potential to appeal to all sorts of book-buyers. As an accessible blend of experience and ideas, Dissolving Path represents an engaging work of philosophy that is both international and up-to-date in its focus and relevance, promising to leave the reader both emotionally uplifted and intellectually excited.



# Neil Cantwell is 27...

## Academic qualification:

- BA in Philosophy at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge University, UK
- Tsuzuki scholarship in Japanese at Daiichi Keizai University in Fukuoka, Japan
- MA in International Relations at Sussex University, UK
- Research Fellowship at Shuchiin University in Kyoto, Japan

## Specialist knowledge

Assistant Literary Editor to James Kirkup on Akiko Takemoto's translation of eminent Taiwanese/Japanese author Chen Shuchen's work, *Kukai: The Mandala*.

Unique period of study under the personal tuition of President Motohiro Yoritomi at Shuchiin University, the institution founded by Kukai 1200 years ago, and Imakumano Kannonji temple in Kyoto.

## Writing expertise

- journalism for *The Ecologist*, *The Japan Observer* and *The Cambridge Student*
- 4 A-level philosophy textbooks for Abacus Educational Services
- a factual report on tomatoes for Sustain:the alliance for better food and farming
- poetry for the on-line literary magazine *Scarecrow* and *Tallulah*, a publication of the Cambridge University Creative Writing Society

Professional level of expertise in the areas of Japanese culture surrounding the Shikoku 88 temple pilgrimage, including supervision from leading experts Dr Ian Reader and Prof Richard Bowring.





### **Other creative cultural activities**

- creative interests extend into the world of music in many forms
- undertaking performances across the UK and throughout Japan
- appearing on releases for Drift Records and Random Acts of Vinyl in the UK
- working with artists from Zebra Traffic Records and representing the label in Japan
- As one half of the UK-Japan hip-hop production partnership, Shinekosei, recently interviewed on the Far Side Music programme for Resonance FM
- Currently in pre-production stage of making a film 'The Magical Potential of Sound' with Tim Grabham of Cinema Iloobia about the relationship between music and religion in Japan.

### **Social enterprises**

- Committee member of Seedy Sunday: annual Brighton community seed-swap
- Hosting Seedy Sunday festival stall at Cambridge Strawberry Fayre, Guildford Ambient Green Picnic and Kingston Green Fair
- Creating and running the Special Nothing tent, a forum for debate on the politics of knowledge and information at the Eastern Haze Festival, the Big Green Gathering, and the Shambala Festival
- Wide experience teaching Philosophy and setting-up the discussion group, The No-school School.



### **Future writing projects**

Shortly beginning biographical interviews with Jean-Jacques Jordane, a 76 year old chanson singer and restaurateur, following his life from starting out as a singing cobbler on the streets of Montmartre, to starring on stage at the Moulin Rouge, to touring the world as a cabaret entertainer, with a lot of wine and women along the way.

Planned Overland trip through Africa in Winter 2008 as material for a sequel travel philosophy book, juxtaposing the history of European colonialism with an ethical examination of the concept of charity, based around analysis of the mythical character of Robin Hood.