

SAITŌ Enshin, trans. *Jikaku Daishi den* 慈覚大師伝; *The Biography of Jikaku Daishi Ennin*. Foreword by Ōkubo Ryōjun. Preface by David Chappell. Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1992. 181 pp. Bibliography. Cloth, ¥4,500. ISBN 4-7963-0074-0.

The life of Ennin 円仁 (793–864; posthumous title, Jikaku Daishi) is the stuff of which legends are made. A gifted young Buddhist monk who studied directly under Saichō, a pilgrim to T'ang China, a transmitter of Chinese culture and religion to Heian society, an honored teacher of emperors and nurturer of the budding and eventually overwhelmingly influential Tendai school of Buddhism on Mt. Hiei—these are all parts of Ennin's full and fascinating life. The phase during which Ennin traveled and studied in China is well known in the West, thanks to Edwin Reischauer's pioneering translation, *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China* (Ennin's diary) and his study *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (1955). Ennin's life and work after his return from China, however, has so far been neglected in English scholarship, despite its greater importance for the understanding of Japanese religion. Saitō Enshin's translation of the *Jikaku Daishi den*, the traditional biography of Ennin, goes a long way toward filling this gap, and

provides us with material for the further study of early Japanese Tendai Buddhism.

The *Jikaku Daishi den*, written around 970, is a good early example of Japanese religious biography. The work served as the main source of information about Ennin for the various later collections of biographies of Buddhist monks in Japan. Saitō's introduction provides the basic information concerning Ennin's life and some textual history for the work being translated. Most of this publication, however, consists of the English translation (pp. 21–77) with the original Japanese text sandwiched between the chapters, and about the same amount of space (pp. 79–156) devoted to detailed notes. A full bibliography provides much information for those wishing to delve further into the subject.

The litmus test of a translation is in the reading. Saitō's style is careful yet smooth. He clearly has a good grasp of his subject as well as a feel for English expression, and avoids the kind of choppy, overly literal translation that can turn such a project into a useless monument to good intentions. He generally stays close to the text, but it is obvious that he made a conscious effort to provide a readable translation. I did find one passage where it seems that a line has been missed, but this was an exception. A comparison of Saitō's translation of this passage (p. 27) with a version of my own may serve to illustrate Saitō's style. In many cases I have deliberately chosen a different translation (e.g. Tendai teachings/the Dharma; Dengyō Daishi/Saichō; *Maka shikan*/*Mo ho chih kuan*) to illustrate possible choices—not that one is correct and the other is not, but to indicate choices that must be made in translation:

Saitō: In order to propagate Tendai teachings, Dengyō Daishi selected ten gifted youths from among his disciples and had them study the *Maka shikan*, one fascicle to each person. Of the ten, only Ennin completed an entire fascicle. Faithfully following his master's instructions, Ennin applied himself to study the *Maka shikan* day and night with the greatest diligence, and whenever he finished studying a fascicle he delivered a lecture on it to the others from a teaching platform. Thus he completed studying all ten fascicles of the *Maka shikan*.

Alternate translation: In order to propagate the Dharma, Saichō selected ten of his young, gifted disciples to study the *Mo ho chih kuan*. Each of them was assigned one fascicle. *Ennin was one of these [chosen] men. Of the remaining nine, none completed their task, due to various conditions and responsibilities.* Only Ennin faithfully followed his master's instructions. He studied diligently day and night, and when he mastered the one fascicle, he lectured on it by ascending the teaching dais. He continued in this way until he completed all ten fascicles of the *Mo ho chih kuan*.

In short, the introduction is sparse but sufficient, the English translation reads smoothly, and the notes provide much important and valuable infor-

mation. The subject, however, deserves a detailed critical study, and much of the material in the biography begs to be unpacked and explained to a modern audience. The notes help somewhat, but a complete, organized study would have served as a full complement to Reischauer's earlier works—though perhaps I should not be so greedy and should instead be grateful for the good material that Saitō does provide.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the book was published through a grant from the Tendai Shūkyōgaku Zaidan and has limited distribution. It can be ordered from the Sankibō Busshorin bookstore (5-28-4 Hongō, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112) or directly from the author at Ryūsen-ji, 4-37-10 Hakusan, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112. Supplies are limited.

REFERENCES

REISCHAUER, Edwin

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