
Jean-Noël ROBERT, *Les Doctrines de l'école Japonaise Tendai au début du IX^e siècle: Gishin et le Hokke-shū gishū*. Paris: Editions Maisonneuve & Larose, 1990. xiv+455 pp. Bibliography and index. ISBN 2.7068.1018.1.

A common response by people, especially Japanese, who hear that I am a specialist in Tendai Buddhism is “Ah, you are studying *mikkyō*.” No, I reply, I study T’ien-t’ai/Tendai Buddhism proper, the comprehensive system of Buddhist teachings and practices as systematized by T’ien-t’ai Chih-i 智顓 (538–597). The prominence of esoteric teachings and practices in Japanese Tendai is a later development that is often quite different from the ideas presented in the writings of Chih-i. The fact that many people automatically associate Tendai with *mikkyō* reflects the dominance of this form of Buddhism in the Japanese Tendai school from an early time in its history. It was not always so, however. The *Tendai Hokkeshūgishū* 天台法華宗義集 [Collected teachings of the Tendai Lotus school] of Gishin 義真 (781–833), the Japanese monk who accompanied Saichō as his interpreter on the momentous trip to China that allowed Saichō to officially transmit the T’ien-t’ai school to Japan, was, as Robert points out on the cover, “la première présentation systématique des doctrines du Tendai au Japon” and, significantly, does not deal at all with *mikkyō*. The *Shūgishū* is an important document, for this as well as other reasons, and Robert’s study and detailed annotated translation is a great leap forward in Western Tendai studies.

Most of this study is taken up with the annotated translation of the *Shūgishū*, but it starts with short chapters on “The *Lotus Sūtra* and Tendai doctrines in Japan before Saichō” and “The life of Saichō.” On these subjects Paul Groner’s work (1984) is more detailed, but then Robert provides a chapter on “The life and work of Gishin.” Robert’s attention to detail is reflected in his notes to this chapter, referring to all the surviving biographies of Gishin. He also discusses Gishin’s role in the early Tendai school.

The rest of the book is an annotated translation of the *Shūgishū*. As Robert points out, Gishin's text was one of the so-called *Tenchō chokusen roppon shūsho* 天長勅撰六本宗書 [Six sectarian texts compiled by imperial request in the Tenchō era (824–834)], a collection most famous for including the *Jūjūshinron* 十住心論 of Kūkai. It takes the form of a catechism and consists almost entirely of excerpts from Chih-i's *Fa hua hsüan i* and *Mo ho chih kuan*, and is thus not so much an original commentary as a concise summary compilation of the writings of Chih-i. It consists of two parts:

I. On Doctrine

1. The Four Teachings (Tripiṭaka, Shared, Dinctinct, Perfect)
2. Five Flavors (milk, cream, curds, butter, ghee)
3. One Vehicle (*ekayāna*)
4. Ten Suchlikes
5. Twelfefold Conditioned Co-arising
6. Two Truths (mundane and supreme)

II. On Practice

1. The Four Samādhis (Constantly Sitting, Constantly Walking, Half-sitting and Half-walking, and Neither Walking nor Sitting)
2. Three Categories of Delusions (deluded views and attitudes, minute delusions, and fundamental ignorance)

I am not competent to judge whether or not the translation reads smoothly in a literary sense, but I can attest to the fact that it is accurate. Perhaps a sample paragraph from the section on the Two Truths will illustrate Robert's work, followed by a rather free translation of the same passage in English (from a complete translation submitted to the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai):

Le terme de “deux vérités” apparaît dans les sūtra, mais il est difficile d'en comprendre le principe. Les gens de ce monde se livrent depuis toujours à de vastes polémiques à leur propos. Il est dit dans un sūtra qu'autrefois le Buddha et Mañjuśrī disputèrent ensemble des deux vérités et tombèrent tous deux en enfer jusqu'à la venue du buddha Kāśyapa à qui ils demandèrent de dissiper leurs doutes. Ces deux Saints à la terre des causes n'étaient pas encore capable de comprendre; à plus forte raison, comment le coeur humain produirait-il l'abandon de l'appropriation?

(pp. 152–53)

The term “two truths” is mentioned in the sūtras, but its meaning is difficult to understand. The world is in an uproar and has debated this issue for a long time. A sūtra [the *Miao sheng ting ching*] says, “In the past the Buddha and Mañjuśrī had a dispute over the two truths, and they both fell into hell. It was not until the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa that their doubts were resolved satisfactorily.” If these two sages in their causal stages [previous to attaining Buddhahood] were unable to understand completely, how is it possible for people with strong emotional passions?

To his credit, Robert reveals his familiarity with modern Japanese scholarship by pointing out in a long note that the sūtra mentioned in this passage is an apocryphal Chinese text that was not extant until rediscovered recently at Tun-huang and included in a book published by SEKIGUCHI Shindai (1969).

Finally, the numerous and detailed notes (850 running almost 200 pages) are a gold mine of information on Tendai teachings, texts, and terminology. And the very detailed index, including the *kanji*, will certainly serve as a primary source for the ongoing multilingual database on T'ien-t'ai technical terms that I am preparing in tandem with a project to translate the *Mo ho chih kuan* into English (by myself) and French (by Robert).

Given the above information, an unavoidable question is: how useful is the *Shūgishū* as an introductory text to Tendai, and how does it compare to the *T'ien t'ai ssu chiao i* 天台四教儀 (Jpn. *Tendai shikyōgi*), by the Korean scholar Chegwan (d. 971), which is still used most often today as an introduction to Tendai? I have argued elsewhere (SWANSON 1985) that the *Shūgishū* gives a better outline of the basic teachings of Tendai proper than the *Shikyōgi*, and others have pointed out the dangers of relying exclusively on the Tendai *goji-hakkyō* 五時八教 "classification of teachings" approach found in the *Shikyōgi* (see CHAPPELL et al. 1983, pp. 30–40). Unfortunately, however, the *Shikyōgi* is much better organized and easier to use as an introductory outline of T'ien-t'ai teachings. But the *Shikyōgi* also suffers from being excerpts of already concise explanations by Chih-i, and often cannot be deciphered without reference to the original text. I myself have capitulated to the temptation to use the *goji-hakkyō* in an introductory course on Buddhism. Though the *goji-hakkyō* formulation will continue to provide a temptingly simple outline to use for undergraduate classes, however, scholars who want a more accurate grasp of what Chih-i was attempting to teach are better advised to refer to the *Shūgishū* and Robert's work.

A related question is why the *Shūgishū* has been largely ignored, not only by non-sectarian scholars but also by members of the Tendai school itself. One reason has been mentioned at the beginning of this review – Gishin does not deal with *mikkyō*, and it was the esoteric brand of Buddhism that most interested the Heian court from the early days of the Tendai school. Another reason surely was political. Gishin was chosen by Saichō on his deathbed to be his heir, a controversial appointment challenged almost immediately by the rival followers of Enchō. After Gishin's death in 833, however, Enchō became head of the Tendai school, and his faction dominated Mt. Hiei. Gishin's disciple and appointed successor Enshū left Mt. Hiei humiliated. As in modern Japanese politics, belonging to the wrong faction leads to impotence. Gishin's work quickly came to be largely ignored, though it does seem to have had some influence on the topics debated during the Tendai *rongi* on Mt. Hiei.

In any case, Robert's study now brings this text to our attention and provides a rich source for understanding the T'ien-t'ai teachings of Chih-i, if not Japanese Tendai (at least the *mikkyō* aspect). My only complaint is that, in contrast to the well-designed and handsome cover, the inside is a disappointing camera-ready copy of a typewritten manuscript. One would expect more from a publisher to do justice to the sophistication of its contents.

Finally, may I return the compliment and repeat Robert's words in his introduction with regard to my own work on Gishin: "Ses conclusions sont très voisines de nôtres et il est réconfortant de voir Gishin ainsi réhabilité par des recherches indépendantes" (xiv).

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