

BOOK REVIEWS

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*Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage
to China in Search of the Law*

Ennin's Travels in T'ang China

By E. O. REISCHAUER

(New York: Ronald Press Co., 1955.) Pp. 454+xvi; 341+xii.

With the appearance of these two volumes, Ennin, better known to some by his posthumous title, *Jikaku Daishi*, assumes his rightful place among those travelers who are widely known to have left behind them records of first-rate historical importance. He has had to wait a long time. This Japanese Buddhist monk, born in 793, crossed the sea in 838 to T'ang China, whence he returned to Japan in 847. During his nine-and-a-half-year stay in China he kept detailed notes of what he saw and experienced, which, in the words of Professor Reischauer, constitute "not only the first great diary in Far Eastern

history [but] also the first account of life in China by any foreign visitor." Yet it is probable that many long years went by during which no one at all read his account of his travels. Contemporary Chinese or Japanese are not necessarily more interested in their ninth-century history than we are in investigating European documents concerned with the same period. Moreover, history in the East has until recently been considered primarily as an exercise in the correct classification of officially important dates and proper names. Ennin's diary, on the other hand, in the text four bulky scrolls of over seventy thousand charac-

ters written in medieval Chinese and only accessible thanks to a copy made in 1291 by an aged monk, interests us above all by the detail of its observations, by the atmosphere it re-creates. Apart from sporadic mentions of fragments of his work accessible to specialists alone, the only other recent account of Ennin which may have filtered through to the general reading public in the West is to be found in a few pages of Dr. Arthur Waley's work, *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces*, published in 1952. Professor Reischauer, who holds the chair of Far Eastern languages at Harvard University, has now translated into English the entire text of the diary, which he has edited in a separate volume with copious notes and a short preface under the title, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*. In a companion volume, *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China*, he has discussed Ennin's life and sketched out the historical value of the *Diary*, thus providing a more than adequate introduction for the reader of the *Diary* in translation. Specialists will find the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean characters for proper names in the *Diary* volume, and in both books a twelfth-century idealized portrait of Ennin is reproduced in color. Both volumes are well produced and provided with indexes and end-paper maps. So it is now as easy, if not easier, to find one's way around Ennin's record than it is to keep track of the movements of Marco Polo across Asia.

In writing the volume *Ennin's Travels*, Professor Reischauer has naturally made much use of the materials furnished by the *Diary* itself, but he has

also utilized other sources. After comparing Ennin with some other travelers—a point to which we shall return later—*Ennin's Travels* gives a brief idea of the cultural situation of ninth-century China and explains how Ennin's text has been passed down to us. The next chapter traces out Ennin's life as a whole, his youth, entry into religion, his voyage to China, and his pilgrimage to what the wrapper calls "holy Mt. Wu-t'ai"; it gives a short summary of the attacks on Buddhism in China after 840, tells of Ennin's return to Japan and his subsequent life as a church dignitary, and then briefly assesses his personality and his historical importance. This chapter is based primarily on two biographies of Ennin written in the ninth and early tenth centuries. In the following chapter the author discusses the role of Japanese embassies in Far Eastern trade and diplomacy at the time, and the whole story of the embassy to which Ennin was attached is summarized, use being made of contemporary records of the Japanese court. Then comes a chapter wherein the contacts of Ennin with Chinese officialdom on the road to and in the Chinese capital are analyzed, the primary source in this case being of course the *Diary*. Ennin in the course of his travels copied down many official documents which are remarkably similar in style to the bureaucratic jargon which we all know so well in other countries today. While at Teng-chou, he attended an important official ceremony—the reception by local prefectural and subprefectural government officials of an imperial rescript—and his description of this ceremony is particularly interesting. Then comes a chapter

Book Reviews

on "Life in T'ang China," in which Professor Reischauer summarizes the varied information contained in the *Diary* concerning such matters as national festivals, taboos, conditions of travel and lodging, monasteries, the cost of living, readings of the scriptures in order to cause rain to fall or to stop it from falling, the prohibition of the purchase or sale of iron in Yang-chou, the digging of coal near T'ai-yüan-fu, etc. As Professor Reischauer justly remarks, on economic matters "Ennin's comments are more intriguing than conclusive. But for a man of religion, little concerned with such mundane affairs, he was not a bad economic reporter." The sixth chapter of *Ennin's Travels* is devoted to popular Buddhism. Here is brought together what the *Diary* has to tell us of the monasteries and their organization, the sectarian divisions of the Buddhist church, its services and its miracles. Particular attention is given to the diarist's description of the Wu-t'ai monastic establishments. The close check kept on clerical ordinations in China at this time is shown by the strict regulations concerning them which Ennin noted down. The *Diary* has also much to tell of other religious matters, such as "maigre feasts" and the cult of Monju, and describes in some detail the "five terraces" of Wu-t'ai. This chapter closes with some considerations on the apogee and decline of Buddhism in China. In his seventh chapter, which describes the persecution of Chinese Buddhism, Professor Reischauer draws not only on the *Diary* but also on other contemporary Chinese accounts. This persecution dealt a hard blow to Buddhism in China; frc1.. 845 onward the church

was never again to enjoy the same extensive secular power. Professor Reischauer's account of the different stages in the attack on Buddhism is painstaking and clear, and this chapter (sixty pages) is perhaps the most interesting in the whole volume. After the end of the period of persecution Ennin remained for more than a year in China, but his contacts were now mainly with Koreans. The eighth chapter of *Ennin's Travels* is in fact concerned with sketching out the role and historical importance of Korea as a cultural link between China and Japan. From the point of view of their level of civilization the Koreans were, in Ennin's time, ahead of the Japanese. Professor Reischauer roughs out the role of Koreans in the commerce between East China, Korea, and Japan and tells of their embassies to the court of Ch'ang-an and their influence in Chinese affairs. Korean monks were to be found in Chinese monasteries and their soldiers in the armies of the Chinese emperor, their trading communities being mainly along the south coast of the Shantung Peninsula and the lower Huai. A special paragraph is devoted to the life of a Korean merchant prince, Chang Pogo, use being made here of the Korean annals as well as Japanese and Chinese sources. The last chapter deals with Ennin's long-delayed return to Japan.

I hope I have been able to give some idea of the richness and diversity of the material contained in the *Diary*. It should be of interest not merely to specialists of things Chinese and Japanese but also to historians, ethnologists, specialists in oriental religions, and even perhaps to economists. If Ennin does

not keep the place in history he has earned, it will not be the fault of Professor Reischauer.

As I have said above, Professor Reischauer at one point compares Ennin with some other great travelers in Asia. The examples he chooses are Marco Polo, who visited China in the Mongol epoch (from 1275 to 1291); Hsüantsang, the great Chinese Buddhist scholar who was away in India and Central Asia from 629 to 645; Enchin, a Japanese of the Tendai sect who was in China from 853 to 858 and has left some interesting fragmentary records of his travels; and Jojin, another Japanese monk who left a valuable account of his visit to China in 1072. Although Professor Reischauer makes many judicious and enthusiastic remarks in support of the relative value of Ennin's account of his travels, I cannot help finding that in some ways he is a little hard on Marco Polo. For example, he calls him "illiterate." Now, whatever the following passage from Marco Polo's *Travels* may mean, I think it does little to suggest that he was illiterate: "Now it came to pass that Marco, the son of Messer Nicolo sped wondrously in learning the customs of the Tartars [*sic*] as well as their language, their manner of writing, and their practice of war; in fact he came in brief space to know several languages and four sundry written characters."¹ It cannot be denied, as Yule pointed out long ago with regard to Marco Polo, that "in no respect is his book so defective as in regard to Chinese manners and particularities."² But

fortunately for us his travels covered much other ground in Asia and give us valuable material on India and other Asiatic countries—which is not the case for Ennin, whom no one would think of blaming for this state of affairs. Again, I think that Professor Reischauer overstates his case when he writes that "Marco Polo, coming from a radically different culture was ill-prepared to understand or appreciate what he saw of higher civilization in China. . . . Ennin, as a fellow believer, entered easily into the heart of Chinese life." Ennin, too, noted what struck him as unusual or odd, and he often passed over the obvious, about which we would like to know so much more. Many of his descriptions of Buddhist ritual are, to an anthropologist interested in this aspect of his *Diary*, tantalizingly inadequate. Furthermore, one does not find in Ennin those sudden *raccourcis* which occasionally light up the pages of many a foreign observer precisely because they stress fundamental cultural differences. As an example may I quote Rubruck, writing of the debate between the Christians and "the Tuins": "Then [the Tuin] inquired by what I wished to begin the discussion, by the subject how the world was made, or what becomes of the soul after death. I replied to him: 'Friend, this should not be the beginning of our talk. All things proceed from God; He is the fountain-head of all things; so we must first speak of God, of whom you think so differently from us. . . .'"³ A Republican on Washington or a Communist on Moscow can both

1. H. Yule and H. Cordier, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Vol. I (London, 1929), p. 27 (Prologue, chap. xv).

2. *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 110.

3. W. W. Rockhill, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55* (London, 1900), p. 231.

Book Reviews

be great bores; and Ennin is certainly not that. He is undoubtedly a much more important witness of things Chinese than Marco Polo, if only because he saw much more of how the people

really lived and had contacts with people of classes whom the other never seems to have frequented. Churchmen, like soldiers, are often closer to the common people than are merchants.