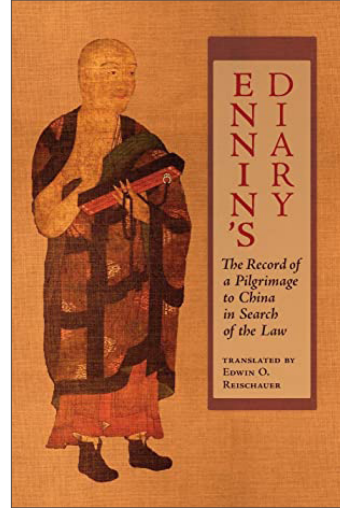


# Book Review

Reischauer, Edwin O., trans. *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*. New York: The Ronald Press Company. Reprint. New York: Angelico Press, 2020. Pbk. \$22.95

Reischauer, Edwin O. *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China*. New York: The Ronald Press Company. Reprint. New York: Angelico Press, 2020. Pbk. \$22.95



Every library that does not own copies of the original 1955 printing of these two volumes must purchase reprinted editions of Edwin O. Reischauer's (1910–1990) two books about Ennin 円仁 (794–864), a Japanese Buddhist monk and pilgrim who journeyed to China from 838–847. Among the many reasons why academics and educators worldwide should be especially grateful to Valerie Hansen (Stanley Woodward Professor of History, Yale University) for leading the project to have Reischauer's two marvelous books about Ennin republished by Angelico Press more than six decades after these monographs were first published is that, unfortunately, it very well may be the case that not enough has changed in our teaching curricula to assuage Reischauer's rationale for writing about Ennin in the mid-twentieth century. In *Ennin's Travels In T'ang China* (3), Reischauer wrote:

The Venetian's account of his wanderings, by stirring men's imaginations, helped to shape the course of history, while Ennin's record of his travels has gone virtually unread and unknown to this day. Yet Ennin long preceded the Italian to that great land and left what is in some ways an even more remarkable record of his peregrinations.

The illiterate Marco Polo, years after his travels were over, recounted his adventures orally and in broad and sometimes hazy outline, but Ennin's day-to-day diary of his varied experiences is a unique document for its time in world history.

Marco Polo's (1254–1324) Book of the *Marvels of the World* (It. *Il Milione*, 'The Million'), dictated to Rustichello da Pisa, remains a mainstay in classrooms across the globe. While I suspect that although a cadre of East Asian studies professors and their students since the publication of Reischauer's two books about Ennin have been treated to Ennin's firsthand account of life in ninth century China and Japan, Polo—who very well may not have traveled to China at all—<sup>1</sup> remains the far better-known premodern globetrotter for far too many. This remains a pity because Reischauer's translation of Ennin's diary, *Nittō gūho junrei gyōki* (alt. *Nitto gūho junrei kōki*) 入唐求法巡礼行記, in *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* is one of the most important books ever published about premodern East Asian History. I suspect that many readers would agree with my assessment that Ennin's Diary stands alongside Edward H. Schafer's (1913–1991) *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of Tang Exotics* (1963) as critical English language studies that any research library must own about Tang dynasty (618–907) China. Both books are unequalled in terms of their coverage of a period of Chinese history for which primary sources are comparatively scant and how they perfectly supplement recent publications about the field of Silk Road—and specifically Dunhuang—studies that has grown by leaps and bounds in recent decades. Ennin's firsthand account provides superlative examples of the many points raised by Valerie Hansen in her two excellent textbooks about Silk Road history and archaeological discoveries particularly in Central Asia and western China (in Xinjiang, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet), especially with regard to life in the 'Cosmopolitan Terminus of the Silk Road',<sup>2</sup> or Tang Chang'an. Susan Whitfield's complementary volume with

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, *Did Marco Polo go to China?*

<sup>2</sup> Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History with Documents*, 239–268.

even more rare examples of the material culture of medieval China and Inner Asia also requires context only available in English by Reischauer about Ennin or Schafer's *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, and perhaps more recently Donald S. Lopez Jr.'s *Hyecho's Journey: The World of Buddhism*.

Although both *Ennin's Diary and Ennin's Travels In T'ang China* remain timeless studies of Ennin and Tang China by almost any definition of the word, the *Diary* is perhaps more valuable because of the quality of Reischauer's translation. Not only did he provide careful analysis of the extant editions of Ennin's *Nittō gūho junrei gyōki* in the Preface (pp. xv–xviii) with annotation to the *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書 edition he primarily used for his translation (now no. 563 in 72, pp. 84–133), Reischauer's translation is, as none other than Arthur Waley (1889–1966) said, 'extremely full and accurate'.<sup>3</sup> In their reviews, Edwin G. Pulleyblank (1922–2013), Jacques Gernet (1921–2018), Arthur W. Hummel (1920–2001), and Arthur F. Wright (1913–1976) chastised Reischauer especially for many mistranslations of bureaucratic titles, which any reader can now check for accuracy against Charles O. Hucker's (1919–1994) *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (1985). No reader should be unaware of T. H. Barrett's point that Ennin 'can hardly be termed a neutral witness'<sup>4</sup> when it comes to the many—sometimes fantastic—edicts recorded in Ennin's *Diary*. But no one can discount the detail with which both Ennin wrote about nearly everything he witnessed in Tang China and perceived those events from the perspective of a Japanese Tendai 天台 monk or that Reischauer's annotation is copious. It is somewhat regrettable that the decision was not taken to update the use of Wade-Giles to the now standard Pinyin Romanization system for Chinese. But this is a reprint edition, after all, and exposing students to this antiquated system for rendering Chinese into Roman letters can become a springboard to allow them to utilize many sources published before the 1990s.

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<sup>3</sup> Waley, Review of *Ennin's Diary*, 198.

<sup>4</sup> Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang*, 86, 87; Barrett, 'The Madness of Emperor Wuzong', 175.

*Ennin's Diary* covers each of the four rolls (Reischauer calls *juan* or *kan* 卷 'scrolls'), which includes his departure as part of the official diplomatic mission to Tang China led by Fujiwara no Tsunetsugu 藤原常嗣 (d. 840), and joined by pilgrim-monks Jōgyō 常暁 (d. 867; in China 838–839), Engyō 円行 (799–852; in China 838–839), and Ensai 円載 (d. 877), among others. Their party shipwrecked upon arrival. But Ennin and the group disembarked on the second day of the seventh lunar month of 838. One of the highlights of *Ennin's Diary* is the story of the Koreans with whom he lodged and traveled, including Chang Pogo 張保臯 (787–846), who established a thriving trading empire and assertively interceded in Korean politics (*Ennin's Travels*, 287–294), before Ennin traveled north to Mount Wutai in early 840, and then to reside in the capital at Daxingshan Temple 大興善寺 later that year. *Ennin's Diary* is a superb source for information about teachers of Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō* 密教), rituals, and even Sanskrit, as well as the aforementioned imperial edicts and evidence of the intricate bureaucratic life of Tang China. It also provides immediate evidence about the book collecting done by Japanese pilgrims to the East Asian continent at this time.

*Ennin's Travels in T'ang China*, the accompanying volume to *Ennin's Diary*, received far greater scrutiny from reviewers when it was published, and remains far more problematical in several respects than *Ennin's Diary*. *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China* addresses several themes more likely to appeal to a wider readership than *Ennin's Diary*, including seafaring, especially among ninth century Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese, travel in Tang China by boat or on foot, roads and waterways, economic conditions (including the use of charcoal, the sale and purchase of copper), monastic life (e.g., bathing and great festivals), and especially the practice—rather than doctrines—of Buddhism in China and Japan.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary readers would do well to bear in mind several of the criticisms raised by George Sansom (1883–1965), including the following:

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<sup>5</sup> Frankel, Review of *Ennin's Diary*; Wright, Review of *Ennin's Diary*, 122–123.

I must enter a mild protest against his somewhat reckless use in this context of the comparative method of historical analysis. Cautiously used it is a very fruitful technique, but it has its dangers. Thus I think that his comparison of Ennin's diary with the narrative of Marco Polo is rather strained and not illuminating, while to compare Ennin and Boswell seems to me to be more than a little far-fetched. In general I doubt the usefulness of treating under one rubric things or ideas which are distant in time and different in kind. Talking of foreign missions in T'ang times, he says: 'Today embassies and diplomatic relations in general may suggest pompous artificiality. For the most part missions abroad have little to do with a country's inner development and, instead of shaping international relations, tend to be merely the surface manifestations of the strains and stresses arising at points of more vital contact between nations. But this was by no means the situation in the Far East in the ninth century.'<sup>6</sup>

Looking back at Reischauer's works and life with the benefit of hindsight, we know he became a diplomat and was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Japan from 1961–1966 by President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963). Therefore, Sansom's assessment may have been more apt than he knew when he wrote his review. Arthur Waley fittingly noticed that Reischauer mistakenly assumed that Japanese ships at this time had rudders.<sup>7</sup> These and other seemingly insignificant errors still do not mar *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China* to the extent that the topics raised in each chapter, embassies (Chap. 3), Ennin and Chinese officials (Chap. 4), life in Tang China (Chap. 5), 'Popular Buddhism' (Chap. 6), the Huichang 會昌 era (842–845) anti-Buddhist persecution (Chap. 7) and Koreans in China (Chap. 8), are any less illuminating today than they were when first published in 1955.

One of the desiderata raised by Denis Twitchett (1925–2006) in his review of both books by Reischauer has thankfully been addressed in recent decades by scholars in Japan and in the west: Twitchett hoped that attention would be paid to another Tendai monk-pilgrim

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<sup>6</sup> Sansom, Review of *Ennin's Diary*, 375.

<sup>7</sup> Waley, Review of *Ennin's Diary*, 198.

and perhaps ‘more accurate observer’ named Jōjin 成尋 (1011–1081). Jōjin’s diary, *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 參天台五臺山記 (Diary of Travels to Mount Tiantai and Mount Wutai), covers only two years in China, 1072–1073, but it has become an excellent source with which to compare and contrast not only myriad changes that transpired in China between the ninth and eleventh centuries, but also how Japanese travelers’ perceptions of Chinese—and Koreans—had changed, too.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which Reischauer’s study and translation of Ennin’s diary transformed the academic discourse about medieval China and Japan can be revealed by the fact that a version of *Ennin’s Travels to Tang China* was translated into Japanese in 1984; the current 2005 edition by Reischauer is currently available among a widely accessible series of books available in almost any bookstore in Japan. Reischauer’s books are ‘landmarks in Far Eastern studies’,<sup>9</sup> or East Asian studies in modern parlance. We are indebted to Valerie Hansen not only for republishing these two classic books about Ennin, but also for the separate and effective forwards to each monograph that provide brief and judicious summaries of how Reischauer and his research about Ennin and his diary have stood the test of time. These books, and especially *Ennin’s Diary*, will be valuable additions to the list of excellent sourcebooks now available for teaching about medieval Chinese and Silk Road history, as well as historical political relations between China, Korea, and Japan. Let us hope that Angelico Press can keep these books in print for many years to come.

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<sup>8</sup> Borgen, ‘*San Tendai Godai san ki*’, ‘The Case of the Plagiaristic Journal’, ‘Jōjin Ajari no Haha no Shū’, ‘Jōjin’s Travels from Center to Center’; Keyworth, ‘Jōjin on the spot’; Saitō, *Tendai nittō nissō no jiseki kenkyū*.

<sup>9</sup> Waley, Review of *Ennin’s Diary*, 199.

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