



Basho

[Places]

By Setouchi Jakuchō

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場所

瀬戸内 寂聴

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There are many successful female writers from the island of Shikoku. Setouchi Jakuchō, born in Tokushima Prefecture, in her youth thought that “the tinkling of pilgrims’ bells heralded spring” as they walked the route around the island’s 88 pilgrimage sites. She also “learned about the gratuitous act of love” from watching her mother offer hospitality to pilgrims at the front door. She grew up in a climate where she caught a glimpse of many human dramas, which surely shaped her.

The author was born Setouchi Harumi. She spent a happy adolescence in Tokushima before moving to Tokyo to attend a women’s university. While in school, she married a young scholar and they moved to Beijing during World War II. After the war, she returned to her hometown with her child. However, she fell in love with her husband’s student and ran away with him. She then became a popular writer, repeatedly changing lovers and addresses in various places in Kyoto and Tokyo. Her works are important for thinking about the lives of Japanese women, who were liberated from feudalistic conventions following the war’s end.

At the age of 51, Setouchi suddenly decided to take Buddhist vows and later became a nun in the Tendai sect, changing her name to Jakuchō. At her hermitage in the Sagano district of Kyoto, she has pursued the way of literature for 40 years, occasionally going on volunteer missions to deliver medicine to war zones in the Middle East and continuing her outdoor sermons at the temple of Tendaiji in Iwate Prefecture.

In this masterpiece of autobiographical fiction, the author goes on a personal pilgrimage in her late seventies to the places where she spent the intense first half of her life before taking Buddhist vows. The opening section, “Nanzan” [Mt. Nanzan], in which she recalls her earliest memories in Tokushima, is particularly lovely. The section “Bizan” [Mt. Bizan], which conveys the “stinging pain” of her innocent rendezvous with the young man she eloped with, is also full of memories of her native place. (OM)

Setouchi Jakuchō

Born Setouchi Harumi in Tokushima Prefecture in 1922. In 1973, took the tonsure at Chūsonji Temple in Hiraizumi, Iwate Prefecture. In 1998, completed a 10-volume modern Japanese translation of *Genji monogatari* [trans. *The Tale of Genji*]. Won the Noma Prize for Literature for *Basho* in 2001. *Setouchi Jakuchō zenshū* [The Collected Works of Setouchi Jakuchō], completed in 2002, spans 20 volumes. In 2006, received the Order of Culture. Has also worked on librettos for kabuki, noh, kyōgen, and opera.



瀬戸内 寂聴（セトウチ ジャクチョウ）

1922年徳島県生まれ。旧名は瀬戸内晴美。1973年平泉中尊寺で得度。1998年に『源氏物語』の現代語訳（全10巻）を完訳。2001年『場所』で第54回野間文芸賞受賞。2002年『瀬戸内寂聴全集』（全20巻）が完結。2006年文化勲章を受章。歌舞伎、能、狂言、オペラの台本も手掛けている。

四国出身で大成した女性作家は多数いる。徳島県生まれの瀬戸内寂聴は「春はお遍路さんの鈴の音が運んでくる」と幼い頃、思っていた。また、母親がお遍路さんを玄関先でもてなす姿から、「無償の行為、愛を学んだ」という。数多くの人間ドラマを垣間見る風土の中で育ったのだろう。

瀬戸内晴美は、幸福な少女時代を徳島で送り、東京の女子大へ進学。在学中に結婚した若い学者と北京で戦争を体験し、一児を連れて故郷に戻る。ところが夫の教え子と恋に落ち、出奔。それからは京都、東京の各所でいくつかの恋と転居を繰り返しながら人気作家の道を突き進む。この作品は、敗戦を契機に封建的な因習から解放された、日本女性の生き方を考える上でも重要だろう。

瀬戸内は51歳で突如、出家を断行し、以後、天台宗僧侶、寂聴を名乗る。京都・嵯峨野の庵で、ときに中東の戦地まで薬を届けにボランティアで赴き、岩手県天台寺で青空法話を続けながら、40年もの間、文学の道を極めてきた。

『場所』は、70代後半になった作者が、出家に至る激しい半生を過ごした場所を、もう一度その足でたどって書かれた私小説の傑作だ。とりわけ冒頭の、徳島での原初の記憶を呼び起こして書かれた「南山」がすばらしい。そして駆け落ちした若者との無垢な逢い引きの、<ひりひりした切なさ>が伝わる「眉山」もまた、ふるさとの記憶である。(OM)

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