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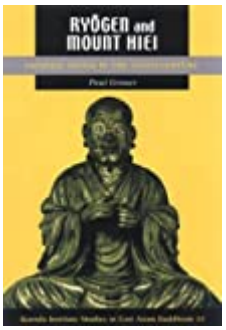

Paul Groner. *Ryōgen and Mount Hiei: Japanese Tendai in the Tenth Century.* Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism Series, vol 15. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002. xv + 525 pp. $48.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-2260-6.

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Ryougen is one of the "three sages and two teachers" (*sanshou nishi*) of the Japanese Tendai tradition. Although he is the least known among modern Buddhist scholars–the other four figures are Saichou, Ennin, Enchin, and Annen–Groner points out that "of the five, Ryougen is enshrined in more temples than any of the others" (p. 290), indicating his broad influence and popularity at a local level. Admittedly, when first picking up this book, I came to the subject thinking that Ryougen was "just" a practical, scheming politician who, though influential in the development of Tendai as an institution, was far from the "ideal" monk we Buddhist scholars tend to focus on as "important" figures in Buddhist history, and who played a crucial role in the secularization/corruption of the Tendai establishment to boot. My assumption that Ryougen would not be so interesting (or worthy of attention) revealed my bias that figures with a doctrinal influence (such as Saichou and Ennin) are more "important" or "compelling." Groner's study, however, impressed on me again the importance of institutional history, as well as underscoring the centrality of "practical benefits" in Japanese Buddhism, through Ryougen's achievements in these areas.

I also had the pleasure of visiting Mount Hiei, along with Paul Groner and many others, in the spring of 2003, where I was impressed with the continuing strong presence of Ryougen on the mountain. The many monuments in his memory as well as the vigorous activity of the temples associated with him (such as the Daishidou in Yokawa) show his continuing popularity with regard to practical benefits, such as his role in protecting against evil forces, rather than in doctrinal matters. (This, for example, is in contrast to Saichou's transmission of T'Jien-t'Jai teachings, Ennin and Enchin's role with *mikkyou*, or Genshin's contribution to Pure Land ideas.) It is this role, as well as Ryougen's contributions as a practical/political organizer and promoter of the Tendai institution, that Groner reveals and discusses so well in this book. This voluminous study presents the life and contribution of Ryougen in roughly chronological order.

The opening chapters discuss Ryougen's place in the Tendai school, and the early (pre-Ryougen) history of factionalism within the Tendai school, thus providing a good summary of developments on Mount Hiei in the 150 years between Saichou (the founder) and Ryougen. The successive chapters then follow Ryougen's illustrious career, from his early years to his rise to prominence, his success in gaining patronage from the Fujiwara family, his reputation and skill in debates, his accession to head (*zasu*) of the Tendai school, his role in developing the Tendai examination system (including *rongi*, or doctrinal debates), his success in gathering financial sup-

port for rebuilding or renovating old buildings and building new structures, and his struggle to consolidate control through factional appointments. This section on factional appointments contains a nuanced discussion of Ryougen's reputation as the person who established the use of warrior monks on Mount Hiei, implying that Ryougen was responsible (at least in part) for the corruption of the Tendai school through the recourse to violence; however, Groner shows that the actual use of warrior monks developed after Ryougen's death.

The next section, chapter 12, is an anomaly in that it does not fit the general flow of the book; rather it should be considered a bonus as Groner shares his work on the role of nuns during this period (ninth to tenth century). The most fascinating chapter, to me, was the final (though short) epilogue on Ryougen's "posthumous career," in which Groner briefly discusses the development of Ryougen's reputation and its various manifestations, from the spread of assemblies (*kou*) honoring Ryougen, images of Ryougen with mysterious powers, his reputation as "the founder of the fortunetelling systems found at Japanese temples and shrines" (p. 298), his power as the "king of demons" (*maou*), and his influence in the development of Tendai rituals and practices. On this last point, it is not surprising that many later *hongaku* ("original enlightenment") texts were attributed to Ryougen. In addition to giving these *hongaku* texts the authority of a famous author, Groner makes the interesting observation, by connecting Ryougen's contributions on the development of debates on Mount Hiei to the style of *hongaku* argumentation, that "the tendency to take scriptural passages out of context and elucidate them in debates may have developed into the unregulated explanations that characterize some *hongaku* literature" (p. 302). In any case, it is clear that Ryougen's reputation and continued influence on the folk level reflects the multifaceted nature of his varied contributions. Finally, the volume wraps up with appendices providing translations of numerous works by Ryougen, thus providing textual substance to the explanations of Ryougen's life and work.

In sum, this volume is a meticulous and detailed study of a key figure in Japanese Buddhist history. Based on Groner's work, it could be argued that Ryougen is of more importance than figures (such as Enchin and Annen) whose influence was limited mainly to doctrinal studies, and is certainly worthy of our attention in understanding Buddhism in Japan.

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