

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

the intellectual history of Ch'an and Zen. After all, Dōgen was, is, and will be, neither sectarian nor nonsectarian.

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THE MARATHON MONKS OF MOUNT HIEI. By John Stevens. Shambhala, Boston, 1988. vii + 158pp., with a Bibliography, Glossary and Index. ISBN 0-87773-415-1

Long after midnight much of the year, Tendai monks dressed in white, with long and narrow bamboo hats that resemble, if anything, lotus leaves coming out of the water with their sides folded up, stop one by one high on Mt. Hiei to sit under a giant cedar overlooking Kyoto. There they pray for the safety of the emperor and world peace. They are the *gyōja*, or 'practitioners', doing the *kaihōgyō*, the 'practice' of 'circling' the 'peaks', and the subject of John Stevens' *The Marathon Monks of Mt. Hiei*.

The reader is first introduced to the life and thought of Saichō, the sympathetic 8th century founder of Tendai Buddhism in Japan. Instead of pursuing 'a career of the cloth' among the elitist priests in the capital Nara, Saichō went into retreat on Hiei, the mountain behind his hometown Sakamoto. His study of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai texts while there led to his later creating a center that was more conducive than Nara to meditation and study.

The history of the new monastery established on Mt. Hiei, the Enryakuji, is dealt with next. Kyoto had become the capital during Saichō's life. In time the custom of influential families funding their own temples on nearby Hiei—and of emperors and others becoming priests there on retiring—turned Enryakuji into a political center. Personal guards developed into small standing armies, which then, century after century, warred on Kyoto and each other. Even so, genuine religious seekers continued to come to Enryakuji. The founders of nearly all of the other Japanese Buddhist sects spent years at the Tendai mountain center. Finally, the samurai to first unite all of Japan, Oda Nobunaga, decided to break Enryakuji's military power and had it burnt to the ground by an army of 25,000 in 1571. It was rebuilt relatively soon after, but never again to more than 1/20th of its previous size.

From here Stevens passes to the religious practices in Enryakuji. Before ordination everyone must do a two-month period of training. Those priests wishing to become the abbot of an Enryakuji temple also have to take a three-year course in which there is a hundred days of *kaihōgyō* or a similarly intensive period of practice. A few then elect to do *rōzan*, to 'stay' an unbroken

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twelve years on the 'mountain'. One way of doing this is to live without ever leaving and with a minimum of food and clothing and no heat in the temple where Saichō is enshrined. Another way is to spend seven of the years doing the *sennichi*, or '1000-day', *kaihōgyō*.

On the most common *kaihōgyō* course, one of 30 kilometers, a *gyōja* stops to do a service with mudras and mantras at each of the main temple buildings (earlier described by Stevens) along the length of Mt. Hiei, then goes down to the foot of the mountain to the many sacred places in the Shinto shrine Hiyoshi Taisha, through the town of Sakamoto where the Tendai headquarters, high school, 'higher school' and many temples are, and then back up. A *gyōja* also often stops to pray towards certain trees, or stones, or the graves of priests, or distant mountains, and the like. The rest of the time he repeats the mantra of the *gyōja*'s patron 'deity', the fire-haloed Fudōmyōō. The only place a *gyōja* is allowed to sit is under the giant cedar.

The *kaihōgyō* course isn't so hard that an ordinary person cannot do it. Lay groups are taken around twice a month, April through November. My experience is that it is an exhilarating if somewhat exhausting hike. Doing it more than one night is apparently another thing. A summation of what lay persons say who have done it for seven days will sound familiar to those who have experienced a week of Zen sitting:

First day: "Tough but interesting."

Second day: "How did I get myself into this?"

Third day: "I'm going to die."

Fourth day: "Hang on. Maybe I can make it."

Fifth day: "Things are looking up."

Sixth day: "Only one day is left."

Seventh day: "I did it. All in all it wasn't so hard."

A beginning *gyōja* can have a great deal of physical trouble as the weeks go by. Even someone accustomed to the *kaihōgyō* can suddenly come down with a virulent illness or have an accident that makes going on seemingly impossible. But a *gyōja* cannot quit under any circumstances, and carries a rope and a knife to give him ways to end his life if he is unable to go on.

For the first three years of the *sennichi kaihōgyō* there is one 100-day period a year. This is increased to two in the fourth year. The second period of the fifth year is then followed by a *dōiri*, 'entering' a (Fudōmyōō) 'temple', eight days of prayer without any food or water or sleep. The next year has only one practice period, but the length of the course is doubled by going down the other side of Hiei to Kyoto. The addition, in the first period of the seventh and last year, of the old perimeter of Kyoto nearly triples the course. The initial distance is returned to for the final 100 days, but some time later most *gyōja*

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spend a full week, again without water, food or sleep, facing the intense heat of a fire ceremony invoking Fudōmyōō.

The *dōiri* divides the *kaihōgyō* into two. Someone who has been essentially practicing for his own sake before *dōiri* practices for others afterwards. I have heard it said that being placed between life and death by *dōiri* endows the *gyōja* with special powers. He circles Kyoto in order to bless the city and anyone who comes up to him; the final fire ceremony is fueled with 100,000 sticks with believers' requests to Fudōmyōō written on them.

The *sennichi kaihōgyō* is severe to say the least, making, as it does, Buddhist practice into a literal matter of life and death. In the past 400 years only forty-six have done it. Stevens ends with fascinating biographies of those from the Meiji Period on, and in particular, of the two to have completed the *kaihōgyō* most recently.

If Stevens can be criticized, it is for his use of 'marathon' for *kaihōgyō* and 'spiritual athlete' for *gyōja*. A *gyōja* obviously must be in good shape to daily do for months a course which is much more uphill than a marathon's and is sometimes twice as long. But the *kaihōgyō* is walked, albeit at quite a clip, not run, and a *gyōja* isn't racing or trying to improve his time or doing the *kaihōgyō* for any of the reasons an athlete might have for doing a sport. Of course the *kaihōgyō* isn't a sport, nor does Stevens say it is, yet the subject of the book is listed on its back as being "Sports" first and then "Religion." Someone who has discovered *The Marathon Monks of Mt. Hiei* in the Sports Section of a bookstore may be in for a surprise. On the other hand, this relatively minor imperfection does help Stevens to achieve his apparent—and, to me, praiseworthy—goal of reaching more than only academic and religious audiences. Anyone could enjoy his informative introduction to this unique and significant religious practice.

PETER SCHNEIDER

THE ART OF ZEN: Paintings and Calligraphy By Japanese Monks, 1600–1925. By Stephen Addiss. New York: Abrams, 1989. 224 pp., 114 illus., bibliography, notes, index.

This book, an exhibition catalogue, is intended to be more than a mere guide to a show. Rejecting the staid catalogue format of successive descriptions of discrete works of art, Addiss organizes his book into seven chapters that concentrate on the lives and works of important painters who executed *zenga* (Zen painting). Apart from a brief introductory essay, the chapters pre-