

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Asian Languages and Literature Departments.

LESLIE S. KAWAMURA

SAICHŌ: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School. By Paul Groner. Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 7. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. viii + 337 pp., with a bibliography and index. ISBN 0-89581-0905

Almost fifteen years have passed since Stanley Weinstein decried the neglect of the Tendai tradition by Western scholars in his review article on Hakeda's book on Kūkai.¹ A number of publications in the last few years have rectified this situation somewhat.² These recent publications are best illustrated by Groner's pioneering work on Saichō, the founder of the Japanese Tendai school.

Groner's book on Saichō concentrates on the role of the precepts in the establishment of the Tendai school in early Heian Japan, but also provides a short opening chapter on Buddhism during the late Nara period and a substantial biography of Saichō, which takes up almost half the book. The biographical account methodically examines the life and times of Saichō, from his early life, the years on Mt. Hiei, his voyage to China and return to Japan, his relations with Kūkai, and his struggles to establish the Tendai school. It contains accurate annotated translations and discussions of important works such as the *Ganmon* (Vows, pp. 28–30), *Rokujōshiki* (Regulations in six articles, pp. 116–123), and various petitions to the court (pp. 126–156). Groner meticulously presents the various aspects of Saichō's life and work, revealing an extensive knowledge of primary sources and a thorough familiarity with recent Japanese scholarship. On controversial points such as uncertain dates (pp. 19–21), the deterioration of relations with Kūkai (pp. 83–87), and the interpretation of the famous phrase "he who sheds his light over a corner

¹ See "The beginnings of esoteric Buddhism in Japan: The neglected Tendai tradition," in *Journal of Asian Studies* XXXIV/1 (November 1974), pp. 177–191.

² See David W. Chappell, ed., *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism: An Outline of the Fourfold Teachings*, Tokyo: Daiichi-Shobō, 1983 (reviewed in *The Eastern Buddhist* XVII/2, pp. 142–144, 1984), and the special issue on *Tendai Buddhism in Japan* in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2–3, 1987, which contains a comprehensive bibliography on the subject.

BOOK REVIEWS

of the country" (*shōu ichigu*, pp. 116–117), Groner carefully presents a wide array of opinion, scrupulously avoiding reckless or biased conclusions. One can read this account with the assurance that no important source or interpretation has been ignored.

That is not to say that Groner's work covers everything there is to write about Saichō and early Tendai Buddhism. The topic is too vast for a single book, and Groner wisely concentrates on one aspect: the precepts and their role in the establishment of the Japanese Tendai school. The "precepts" in this context refer to the *Ssu fen lü*,³ the *vinaya* followed by most temples in Nara and the rest of Japan in Saichō's time, and the *Fan wang* (bodhisattva, or "perfect") precepts,⁴ which Saichō wanted to establish. In Part Two Groner again details meticulously the role of the precepts in Saichō's thought, the provisional Hīnayāna ordination, Saichō's sources for the perfect precepts (including Chinese commentaries on the bodhisattva precepts), the influences on Saichō's view of the precepts, and the integration of the various strands of Japanese Tendai. Finally, in Part Three, Groner examines the effects of Saichō's reforms during the Heian period, and by extension their influence on Japanese Buddhism as a whole. This shift from the *Ssu fen lü* precepts to the more general bodhisattva precepts marks an important turning point in the development of Japanese Buddhism, and we are indebted to Groner for his diligent assessment of the subject.

As mentioned above, many important topics concerning Saichō and the Tendai school remain unexamined. The most important doctrinal issue is the controversy surrounding Buddha nature, represented in the long-running debate between Tokuitsu (who supported the Hossō doctrine of the five different *gotras*, or natures, of human beings) and Saichō (who supported the *ekayāna* principle of universal Buddha nature). Groner gives an adequate summary of this important debate (pp. 91–106), but it remains a topic requiring a full book-length study. As Tokiwa Daijō emphasized in his classic study of the development of the Buddha nature doctrine, at no other time in the history of Buddhist thought was this topic so thoroughly analyzed.⁵ Do all beings possess the potential for attaining enlightenment and becoming a Buddha (a position which developed into the *hongaku*, or "inherent enlightenment," concept which dominates Japanese Buddhism); or do beings have different

³ The *Dharmaguptavinaya*, T. 22, #1428, 567–1014.

⁴ Based on the *Fan wang ching*, T. 24, #1484, 997–1010, to be distinguished from the *Brahma jala-sūtra* (T. 1, #21, 264–270) of the *Āgamas*.

⁵ See Tokiwa Daijō, *Busshō no kenkyū*, reprint. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1972, pp. 25–27.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

natures and potentials, with some forever cut off from the possibility of Buddhahood?

An issue that remains unresolved is the capability of Tokuitsu himself and his presentation of the Hossō/Yogācāra position. It is generally agreed that Saichō "won" the debate, and the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism in which the Buddha nature concept became an almost undisputed assumption leads one to easily accept this conclusion. However, there are grounds for believing that Tokuitsu was a competent but not brilliant scholar,⁶ and I suspect that scholars of a Yogācāra bent, if familiar with Tokuitsu's work, would not be satisfied with his defense of their position. Recent work by Hakamaya Noriaki of a semi-sensational nature, arguing vehemently against the "orthodoxy" of the Buddha nature/*hongaku/tathāgata-garbha* tradition, reveals that this stance has not died out in Japan.⁷ To discuss this subject is to cut to the core of Buddhist doctrine. What is the meaning of *pratiṭya-samutpāda* and *sūnyatā*?⁸ What is the correct understanding of non-duality (such as taught in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*) and is it compatible with other purported teachings of the Buddha? How can one justify the concept of the Buddha nature, or *tathāgata-garbha*, or the universality of the potential to attain Buddhahood, theoretically with regard to the doctrine of *anātman*, or practically when faced with the prevalence of ignorance, greed, avarice, and delusion in the world today? Saichō may have won the battle, but the issue remains unresolved.

The Buddha nature issue is just one of many topics surrounding Saichō and the early Tendai school which remain to be studied and clarified. It bears repeating, however, that Groner's study is a pioneering effort in this area and

⁶ Japanese scholars (including Tokiwa Daijō) have usually considered Tokuitsu a very competent scholar, but some have raised questions concerning his scholarship. See, for example, the article "*Tokuitsu kyōgaku e no gigi*," in *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* XXV/2, 1977, pp. 680-681. See also the full compilation of articles and source material on Tokuitsu edited and published recently by Tamura Kōyū, *Tokuitsu ronsō*, Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1986.

⁷ See, for example, the articles "*Kyōto gakuha hihan*" (Critique of the Kyoto school) in *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu ronshū* 17, October 1986, pp. 413-436; *Yuimakyō hihan* (Critique of the *Vimalakīrti sūtra*), *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 36/1, December 1987, pp. 10-16.

⁸ The recent work by David J. Kalupahana on Nāgārjuna and his controversial claim that Nāgārjuna was not a Mahāyānist is not unrelated to this topic. See *Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.

BOOK REVIEWS

deserves to join the small but growing number of works that should grace the bookshelves of those interested in Japanese Buddhism.

PAUL L. SWANSON

RATIONALITY AND MIND IN EARLY BUDDHISM. By Frank J. Hoffman. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987. xii + 128 pages, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 81-208-0211-X

Professor Hoffman's work is, he says, one that operates at the interface between philosophy of religion and buddhology, taking as its raw material the Buddhism of the Pali *Nikāyas*. By this he means that he wants to gain "sympathetic understanding of what is internally coherent and linguistically precise in the language of the . . . texts studied" and to pay "attention to Asian thought from a critical philosophical point of view" (p. 7). Certainly, the main thrust of the book is philosophical: it is perhaps best understood as an application to early Buddhism of some of the methodologies and substantive conclusions developed by anglophone philosophers of religion since about 1930.

Hoffman treats a somewhat miscellaneous collection of issues, including: terms for and ideas about the mental; the thesis that early Buddhism is a kind of empiricism; problems involved with *anattā* and rebirth; and problems involved with describing *nibbāna* as the "deathless" (*amata*). In the first three chapters (pp. 1-45) he deals with methodological issues, theses that, if taken seriously, would make his approach ineffective or inappropriate. He first rejects the thesis that it is improper to restrict attention to the Pali *Nikāyas* without considering the later exegetical and commentarial tradition, and stresses (quite properly) that one can understand the *Nikāyas* as a self-sufficient body of literature

He then considers whether the Buddhism of the *Nikāyas* is unintelligible in virtue of systematic offences against the 'principle of contradiction'. Hoffman nowhere makes quite clear what he intends by this principle; some remarks suggest that he intends to include the principle of excluded middle, others that he does not. But his main point is that the apparent contravention of this basic logical principle (a principle that is at least a condition upon all meaningful discourse) in the third and fourth lemmas of the tetralemma used so frequently in Buddhist texts, is not in fact a contravention at all. This is because logic is