THE ASSOCIATION ZEN DE MONTRÉAL

THE ASSOCIATION ZEN DE MONTRÉAL:

A CASE STUDY IN SŌTŌ ZEN NONVIOLENCE

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Abstract

In this thesis, I address the popular idea that Buddhism is a religion of nonviolence through the case study of a Sōtō Zen Buddhist group in Montréal, Canada. I focus on the following question: Is nonviolence a major concern for practitioners at the Association Zen de Montréal (AZM), and, if yes, why? I first examine Zen Buddhist violence and nonviolence scripturally and historically to show that both trends are present in the tradition. I also address the way in which the founder of the AZM, Deshimaru Taisen, presented his actions during the Fifteen-Year War to his Western followers. After providing ethnographic details about the group and its mother organization, the Association Zen Internationale (AZI), I turn to a discussion of the possible models of nonviolence in Deshimaru's writings. I then turn to practitioners' own views of the relation between their Zen practice and nonviolence.

I demonstrate that although nonviolence is not a defining characteristic of the AZM, practitioners do not hesitate to advance that Zen has a nonviolence impact on their lives. Furthermore, I argue that the variety of responses to the topic of nonviolence in this group is best explained by looking at the different discourses present in their views. These are the Western traditions such as analytic psychology, Romanticism, and Enlightenment thinking, the modern discourse on Zen produced in the post-Meiji years, and Deshimaru's own personality and behaviour, still emulated by his close disciples. Finally, the fact that Deshimaru never articulated a clear stance on nonviolence also helps explain why individuals possess different views on nonviolence.

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INTRODUCTION

During one of the interviews I conducted for this research, I sat in a white living

room with Valerie, drinking the blueberry juice she prepared for me. Early in our

conversation, this Argentinean woman explains her beginnings with Buddhism: "I was

spiritually inclined, but I was disappointed with the Catholic Church. So when somebody

came up with something that made more sense and that did not have such a history of

violence as the Catholic Church, I thought: that's interesting. And that's how I got into

it." This contrast between the violence of Catholic history and the peaceful inclination of

the Buddhist tradition is one that is definitely alive today. To historical events such as the

Christian Crusades (eleventh to thirteenth century), many compare the edicts of King

Aśoka (third century BCE), peaceful ruler who applied Buddhist ideals of nonviolence

and tolerance to his governance.[1] The idea that Buddhism is a tradition teaching

nonviolence is a popular one in the West.

Nevertheless, by giving closer attention to the history of the Buddhist traditions, it

is possible to find many instances where Buddhists have used their religion to justify

violence in armed conflicts. In the twentieth century, for instance, Japanese Zen Buddhist

sects have actively participated in the Fifteen-Year War,[2] lending the state their support

under the form of pro-war rhetoric, Buddhist chaplains, or rituals to help in its aggressive

nationalistic endeavours. In the years following these events, individuals from the sects

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[1] For example, Zen Buddhism scholar Kenneth Kraft, in his introduction to *Inner Peace, World Peace*, affirms: "History has recorded few Buddhist crusades or inquisitions" (Kraft, 1992: 1).

[2] On naming the War, see Ueda, 1995: 77; Ives, 1995: 38; and Ienaga, 1978: 248-249. By calling it the Fifteen-Year War, I am seeking to include the expansionist years into China, and not only the war with America.

have presented their apologies, and worked at promoting ways to prevent such events

from happening again. It is also during these post-War years that Zen teachers started to

establish themselves in Europe and the Americas to support Japanese communities abroad

and disseminate their teachings to an ever-growing non-Asian community of individuals

interested in Zen Buddhism.

Presented with both the ideal of a peaceful Buddhist tradition and the historical

instance of a Buddhist sect participating in a war, some scholars of Buddhism have

inquired into the factors that led to the events.[3] Instead of adding to this scholarship, the

present thesis jumps to the contemporary period and attempts to assess how practitioners

in a particular group, the Association Zen de Montréal (a Sōtō Zen-affiliated centre

founded in 1979),[4] negotiate the topic of Zen Buddhist nonviolence. By conducting

participant observation, reading the literature of the group, and asking its practitioners

questions related to nonviolence, I sought to answer the following question: is

nonviolence a major concern for practitioners of the centre, and, if yes, why? Through

this case study of a Zen Buddhist group in the West and its relation to nonviolence, I will

argue that while practitioners affirm the nonviolent impact of practice on their lives, the

ways in which they explain this impact vary from one individual to another. I will

address the factors responsible for this variety by exploring the different discourses at

play in their explanations, starting with the founder of the group's presentation of the

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[3] There are many other examples, such as other Buddhist sects' participation in the violence of the Fifteen-Year War in both Japan and China, or the Sinhalese Buddhist violence against theTamils in Sri Lanka. For China and Japan, see, among others, Demiéville 1957; Ketelaar 1990; Sharf 1993; 1995a; 1995c; Victoria 1997 [2006]; Yu 2005; Shahar 2008. For Sri Lanka, see, for example, Tambiah 1992.

[4] Henceforth AZM. The group was founded by French-Canadians who followed Deshimaru in France and then founded a centre in Montréal. See chapter three for more details about the group.

Fifteen-Year War and violence in general. Other factors include discourses of modern

Buddhism and Buddhism in the West, such as the importance of individual experience,

the romantic interpretation of the doctrine of interdependence, and the concern with social

justice.

1. Chapters

In order to prepare the grounds for my case study, I devote chapter one to an

overview of some Western literature on Chan and Zen violence and nonviolence. In the

first section of this chapter, I look into the popular image of Buddhism as a religion of

nonviolence, and contrast it with instances of Chan and Zen rhetorical and physical

violence. Presenting both scriptural and historical factors that have played a role in

legitimizing rhetorical and physical violence, I demonstrate that although the Chan

tradition developed an ontological stance of emptiness where the difference between

killing and not-killing did not exist anymore, when it comes to physical violence,

historical factors such as the necessity to defend the monastery may have played more

important roles in leading to the use of violence by Chan monks. In Japan, where the

theories of original enlightenment and the sudden precepts were popular, the unnecessary

nature of the precepts (including not-killing) became more of a motive to justify

antinomian behaviour and the use of violence. In this section, I also focus on the Meiji

period (1868-1912) and after to show that both the emptiness of the precepts and the

bodhisattva's right to kill were elements of the tradition appealed to by Zen Buddhist

individuals to justify Japan's nationalistic endeavours. In section two of this chapter I

address the post-War years' reassessment of Zen Buddhism in relation to violence, and I

survey the literature on Zen and ethics with a focus on its articulation in the West. I thus

offer, in chapter one, a historical background in which to situate the various discourses at

play in Zen Buddhist violence and nonviolence.

In chapter two, I start focusing on my case study by giving attention to the

founder's treatment of the Fifteen-Year War and his role in it as a member of the

Japanese occupying forces in Indonesia. In his autobiography, the only resource I could

find to get access to his actions during the war years, Deshimaru narrates anecdotes in

which he attempts to avoid the violence of the War, braving the danger entailed in going

against the nationalistic and militaristic endeavours of his country. Deshimaru's

descriptions of his master Sawaki Kōdō (1880-1965) (infamous for his participation in the

Russo-Japanese War [1904-1905] and his pro-war rhetoric) as concerned with peace and

nonviolence are further evidence of Deshimaru's concern to present a Zen scrubbed of its

violent connotations. By giving attention to the context of his writings, the Paris of the

1970s, and comparing his autobiography to the literary genre of Buddhist sacred

biography, I demonstrate that although not a pacifist, Deshimaru still creates a model of

nonviolent action during a time of conflict in his narrative.

In chapter three, I turn the discussion toward the AZM and its mother association,

the France-based Association Zen Internationale,[5] and consider some of their basic ideas

and practices. I start by situating the development of the group in its European and then

Canadian contexts, highlighting its emphasis on the meditative practice of *zazen*, the

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[5] Henceforth AZI. Group founded in 1970 by Deshimaru in Paris. The AZI now possesses centres in many countries. See chapter three for more details.

importance of the figure of the master for the practitioners, and the group's organization

since Deshimaru's demise. While at first glance these elements do not seem to be

determining factors for the topic of nonviolence, I contend that taking them into account

helps to explain the variety of discourses of nonviolence at the AZM. For example, the

emphasis on individual transformation through meditation can lead individuals to seek an

alternative point of view from which to perceive the world around them. Some

practitioners, furthermore, depict an interdependent world view in which individuals are

deeply interconnected, to the point where hurting another person is the same as hurting

oneself.

In chapter four, I delve into the topic of nonviolence from, first, the perspective of

Deshimaru's writings and oral teachings, and second, the perspectives of adherents to the

AZM. I demonstrate that although Deshimaru does not present an ethic of nonviolence in

his teachings, when asked about it, his followers do adhere to the view that Zen

Buddhism leads to nonviolence. In answering questions concerning the topic, they appeal

to different elements contained in Deshimaru's teachings, features of the modern

Buddhist discourses, and their own experience with Zen Buddhism. The fact that Zen

nonviolence at the AZM is constructed from several layers of understanding, therefore,

helps explain its variety and sometimes inconsistency. Indeed, some practitioners may

argue that violence, in the form of shouting or hitting another person, can be necessary in

certain situations, while others may leave less space for such possibilities. In order to

present the answers of the practitioners interviewed on the topic, I have organized my

results into two main narratives, both represented by a particular interviewee and

complemented by concurring answers. I used such method for clarity and flow, but I must add that neither narrative is totally representative of all the information gathered through my field work.

2. Themes

2.1. Nonviolence and Buddhism

Since I address the theme of nonviolence in Buddhism, a discussion of this term in relation to Buddhism will help to clarify the way in which I will use it throughout my thesis. But first, I will introduce the term nonviolence in its broad sense. Nonviolence, literally the absence of violence, can designate many things. It has been argued by theorists of nonviolence that one thing that it is not is pacifism. Mark Kurlansky, for example, writes that "Pacifism is treated almost as a psychological condition. It is a state of mind. Pacifism is passive; but nonviolence is active."[6] Due to its linguistic nature as a negation of violence, what nonviolence is also depends on how violence is defined, itself not an unproblematic task.[7] Barend ter Haar defines violence as "both the licit and illicit (culturally sanctioned and non-sanctioned) use of / threat with concrete / symbolic corporeal / physical violence."[8] The advantages of such a definition for the approach of religiously inspired violence lie in its inclusion, first, of culturally sanctioned violence, and, second, of symbolic violence. On the other hand, it limits the scope of violence to interpersonal manifestations. A broader definition is the more encompassing one that

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[6] Kurlansky, 2006 [2008]: 6.
[7] See Jon Abbink's discussion of the term in his Preface to *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, 2000: xi-xvii.
[8] Ter Haar, Barend, in "Violence in Chinese culture," http://website.leidenuniv.nl/~haarbjter/violence.htm.

Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung has provided, which sees violence as "… present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations."[9] In this definition, one can question what it means to prevent someone from reaching his or her full potential, but such a phrasing has the ability to address more subtle forms of violence, such as structural and psychological.[10] In fact, according to this definition, the mere act of wearing clothes that are manufactured in oppressive conditions is considered violent. Throughout my thesis, I will use "nonviolence" in the broadest sense, as an attempt to avoid causing violence in its various manifestations.

Beyond the question of what type of violence nonviolence addresses, two main ways of thinking about nonviolence are to see it as either a technique, or as an ethical philosophy.[11] In the first instance, it means renouncing the use of violence in order to effect some personal, social, or political change within a particular situation. Gene Sharp, theorist of nonviolence, defines nonviolent action as "a means of conducing conflicts and waging struggles" that may be adopted out of religious or ethical motives, but are "based on considerations of expediency."[12] Such an approach to nonviolence, therefore, considers nonviolence as a means to an end, and does not necessarily imply an attempt to integrate it with life in a general way. On the other hand, nonviolence as an ethic involves a commitment to avoid violent acts not only during conflicts but also in everyday actions. A famous embodiment of this approach to nonviolence is Mohandas K.

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[9] Galtung, 1969: 168.
[10] For a detailed description and definition of the different categories of violence, see Barak 2003.
[11] Holmes, 2005: xix.
[12] Sharp, 1967 [1969]: 109.

Gandhi (1869–1948), who waged his struggle against the British colonial powers with

nonviolent techniques such as civil disobedience, but also believed that nonviolence had

to be integrated to people's way of life. For example, he wrote: "It is violence and

delusion and ignorance to say that nonviolence cannot be practiced at all times, in all

places, and fully and so to set it aside."[13] For Gandhi, nonviolence was thus more than a

technique.

Both scholarly and popular views of the Buddhist tradition generally agree to label

its doctrines and practices as guided by nonviolence, or *ahiṃsā*.[14] In his work on

Buddhist ethics, for example, scholar Peter Harvey argues that nonviolence and peace

"are certainly both strongly represented in its value system."[15] In his introduction to

Buddhism and Peace: Issues of Violence, Wars, and Self-Sacrifice, Buddhism scholar

James A. Benn writes: "The practices and doctrines that this religion has advanced over

the past two and a half millennia in order to create and maintain peace as well as to avoid

and eventually to eradicate violence have been widely celebrated as one of the most

significant aspects of its rich and profound heritage."[16] In the past decades, many

Buddhists of different affiliations have emphasized particular teachings and promoted

their nonviolent orientation. Famous examples of Buddhists considered as peace activists

are Tibetan leader the XIVth Dalai Lama (b. 1935), Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh

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[13] Gandhi, 2002: 106.
[14] The term *ahiṃsā* derives from the Sanskrit root *hiṃs*, "a desirative form of the verb *han*, to kill or injure or strike." With the negative prefix "*a*," it means "absence of the desire to kill or harm." *Ahiṃsā* is also the first vow in Jainism (Chapple, 1992: 50-51).
[15] Harvey, 2000: 239.
[16] Benn, 2007: 1.

(b. 1926), and Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi (b. 1945).[17] In the

West, elements of the Zen tradition conducive to nonviolence have been brought forward

by individuals such as Robert Aitken (b. 1917), former rōshi at the Honolulu Diamond

Sangha in Hawai'i, Zen teacher Lin Jensen (b. 1932) of the Chico Zen Sangha in

California, and Bernard Glassman (b. 1939), founder of the Zen Peacemakers.[18]

In the twentieth century, the nonviolent aspect of Zen teachings and of many other

Buddhist traditions have been placed into the category of "engaged Buddhism."[19]

Therefore, in order to better grasp the nature of nonviolent ideas and the various forms

they have taken in the modern world, it is important to address this larger category. The

term "engaged Buddhism" was allegedly coined for the first time by Thich Nhat Hanh in

the 1960s.[20] Furthermore, socially engaged Buddhism "has come to cover a broad range

of approaches, unified by the notion that Buddhist teachings and practices can be directly

applied to participation in the social, political, economic and ecological affairs of the

nonmonastic world."[21] In terms of nonviolence as a category of engaged Buddhism,

Christopher S. Queen, a pioneering scholar of engaged Buddhism, provides a long list of

Buddhist nonviolent resources:

[17] Among these individuals, both the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and 1991, respectively. Thich Nhat Hanh was nominated for the same prize in 1967 by Martin Luther King, Jr. For a more extensive list of Buddhist individuals promoting peace, see Harvey, 2000: 270-285.
[18] In terms of peace activities, Aitken is the founder of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (see discussion in chapter one, fn. 164), Lin Jensen has sat in *zazen* to protest the war in Iraq (see McMahan, 2008: 84), and Glassman has introduced a number of programs such as "street retreats" and prison meditation to address social ills (McMahan, 2008: 47).
[19] For example, in his chapter on engaged Buddhism, Kraft discusses peace movements such as the Order of Interbeing (Thich Nhat Hanh's organization) and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, co-founded by Aitken (see Kraft, 1992: 11-30).
[20] See Kraft, 1992: 18; Queen, 1996: 34, fn. 6; Rothberg, 1998: 273; Yarnall, 2003: 286.
[21] Rothberg, 1998: 268.

> ... its founding manifesto, the Four Noble Truths...,
> offering relief from the causes of human suffering; its
> cardinal moral precept, to refrain from harming living
> beings (*ahimsa*); the practice of lovingkindness, compassion,
> sympathetic joy, and equanimity (*brahmaviharas*); the
> doctrines of selflessness (*anatta*), interdependence
> (*paticcasamuppada*), and non-dualism (*sunyata*); the
> paradigm of enlightened beings (*bodhisattvas*) who employ
> skillful devices (*upaya*) to liberate others from suffering;
> and the image of the great "wheel-turners" (*cakravatin*) and
> moral leaders (*dhammaraja*) who conquer hearts and
> minds–not enemies and territories–by their exceptional
> wisdom and kindness.[22]

Although an in-depth analysis of how each of these aspects of the Buddhist tradition has

been used to promote nonviolence in different historical and socio-cultural contexts

would be far beyond the scope of this thesis, a few examples will hopefully suffice to

show how some leaders have used Buddhist ideas to either avoid or struggle against

violence.[23]

In Asia, this phenomenon is represented by individuals such as Sulak Sivaraksa, a

Thai reformer and activist who co-founded the International Network of Engaged

Buddhists with other Buddhist leaders in 1989.[24] For Sivaraksa, the first precept of non-

killing "naturally calls for the settling of internal and external conflict through nonviolent

means," and "... also means not to live luxuriously or consume wastefully while others

are dying of starvation."[25] One can see, here, how the Buddhist "moral cardinal precept,"

as Queen calls it in the above quotation, is turned into a social ideal aimed at fighting

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[22] In Queen 1998 [2007]: 15.
[23] Literature on Buddhism and nonviolence offers many case studies in which particular teachings have been used to react nonviolently to conflict situations, as well as to struggle against different types of violence. See Kraft 1992; Queen and King 1996; and Queen 2000.
[24] Kraft, 1992: 26-27.
[25] Sivaraksa, 1992: 129.

against not only violence in interpersonal conflicts, but also structural violence. Another

Buddhist leader who has identified the Buddhist precepts with the goal of promoting

nonviolence in the world is Thich Nhat Hanh. In addition to the five lay precepts, he

recommends fourteen additional rules to be respected by followers of the group he

founded, the Order of Interbeing.[26] His twelfth precept, an elaboration on the precept not

to kill, adds "Do not let others kill."[27] He thus extends the precept forbidding killing in

such a way as to help preventing indirect ways of killing.

Besides addressing different individuals and groups depicting Buddhism as a

nonviolent tradition, it is important to notice the recent scholarly debate on the relative

modernity of a Buddhism serving the social aspect of a nonviolent practice.[28] For many,

the social involvement of Buddhists can be attributed to the encounter of their tradition

with Christianity and its 'social gospel.' Certain scholars see no problems in seeing this

development as the natural adaptation of a tradition that has changed so much throughout

its history. Cynthia Eller expresses this view when she writes the following:

> When the search for a genuinely Buddhist nonviolence is filtered
> through the latent demands of a predominantly Christian
> conscience, what emerges is a new Buddhism and a new Buddhist
> ethics, no less valid than the many new Buddhisms that have been
> produced in the 2,500 years of the Dharma's movement eastward
> around the globe.[29]

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[26] Kraft, 1992: 21. This group is the continuation of Nhat Hanh's original Tiep Hien Order in Vietnam, founded in 1964.

[27] Quoted in Kraft, 1992: 21.

[28] The opposite movement, namely the cooperation of Buddhist groups with nationalistic goals, can also be included in the category of modern Buddhism. Buddhism and modernity scholar David L. McMahan notes this trend in his work on Buddhist modernism, providing the examples of prewar Japan and contemporary Sri Lanka (2008: 42).

[29] Eller, 1992: 91.

On the other hand, some scholars have tried to understand Buddhist involvement in issues

of violence also as a response to "the impact of modernity and its attendant forces of

industrialization and urbanization on Asian societies."[30] Rather than an issue of whether

Buddhist nonviolence is the result of Western influences on the tradition, therefore, a

more encompassing approach lies in the question of the modernity of such a phenomenon.

There are many issues at stake in the question of whether Buddhist social

involvement, including but not limited to nonviolence, is a traditional element. On one

side are the interests of those who desire to present social engagement as an authentic part

of Buddhism, thus justifying such an engagement as contiguous with the religion.[31] For

instance, some argue that by teaching for forty years, the Buddha himself initiated the

first step of a socially engaged Buddhism.[32] Or, as Thich Nhat Hanh argues, one can

think that "Engaged Buddhism is just Buddhism. If you practice Buddhism in your

family, in society, it is engaged Buddhism."[33] On the other hand, an array of scholars of

Buddhism and Buddhists (and Buddhist scholars, one might add) maintain that social

engagement is a modern development of the tradition, and emphasize that thinking

otherwise is a matter of methodological naïveté and historical reconstruction.[34] For

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[30] Dietrick, 2003: 255. Notable scholars who have discussed the issue of modernity and Buddhist social involvement are Robert N. Bellah (1965), Donald K. Swearer (1970), and, more recently, David L. McMahan (2008).

[31] Yarnall labels scholars who side with this argument the "traditionists," and provides two following lists of names fitting in this category. From the Buddhist perspective, he names: "Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak Sivaraksa, Walpola Rahula, Ven. Khemadhammo, Kato Shonin, and H.H. the Dalai Lama." From the Western perspective, he includes: "Patricia Hunt-Perry, Lyn Fine, Paula Green, Joanna Macy, Stephen Batchelor, Bernard Glassman Roshi, and Robert Thurman..." (2003: 289).

[32] Kraft 1992: 4.

[33] Quoted in Rothberg, 1998: 272.

[34] Yarnall, 2003: 299. Again, Yarnall provides a list of individuals arguing along these lines, calling them the "modernists" and noting that most come from a Western cultural background: "Robert Aitken, Cynthia

example, Queen sees engaged Buddhism as "unprecedented, and thus tantamount to a

new chapter in the history of the tradition,"[35] and goes so far as calling it a fourth vehicle,

or *yāna*.[36] Robert Aitken also acknowledges the impact of Christianity and his concern to

adapt his teachings to his Western audience in his interpretation of Zen Buddhism. He

shares this opinion in his work on Buddhist ethics, writing that "[a]s Western Buddhists,

we are also Judeo-Christian in outlook, perhaps without knowing it. Inevitably we take

the precepts differently, just as the Japanese took them differently when they received

them from China, and the Chinese differently when Bodhidharma appeared."[37]

Underlying the debate concerning the source of engaged Buddhism is thus the question of

whether it is a revival of certain elements of the tradition or a completely new adaptation.

Whether engaged Buddhism is a recent development or not, I will employ the

definition provided by the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, which considers it as a

phenomenon that attempts to "address sources of human suffering outside the cravings

and ignorance of the sufferer–such as social, political and economic injustice, warfare and

violence, and environmental degradation...."[38] It must also be noted that the larger issue

of the identity of engaged Buddhists, for my thesis, is only of peripheral importance.

Since I focus on the nonviolent aspects of Sōtō Zen Buddhism as understood by

practitioners of a Canadian community, it suffices to situate Zen and nonviolence as part

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Eller, Nelson Foster, Richard Gombrich, Ken Jones, Joseph Kitagawa, Kenneth Kraft, Christopher Queen, English-born Sangharakshita, Gary Snider, Judith Simmer-Brown, and Max Weber...." (2003: 295).
[35] Queen, 2000: 1.
[36] Queen, 2000: 24.
[37] Aitken, 1984: 13. This statement obviously takes for granted the establishment of a special lineage dating back to the Buddha, a historical construct already present in Tang China (for example, see Faure, 1997).
[38] Definition from the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, quoted in Jones, 2003: 178.

of the larger context of engaged Buddhism. Here, I am primarily concerned with how

practitioners of the AZM view and practice nonviolence, and not with whether they

consider themselves "engaged Buddhists" or not.

2.2. Buddhism in the West

As this thesis addresses a Buddhist group in a Western country, a few words must

be said about Buddhism in the West and some of the issues scholars encounter when

studying the topic. First, we must deal with the discussion surrounding which typology to

use to differentiate "ethnic Asians born into a Buddhist cultural heritage" from "non-

Asian converts to Buddhism."[39] The category of "Two Buddhisms," first introduced in

1979 by pioneering scholar of Buddhism in the West Charles S. Prebish,[40] has been

questioned by scholars,[41] but it still stands today as an important heuristic device.[42] A

notable effort in that sense was proposed by Victor Hori, third-generation Canadian

Japanese and Buddhist scholar. When addressing Buddhism in the West, he emphasizes

the mode of transmission (as opposed to the community's Asian/ethnic or non-

Asian/convert background) as a useful factor to understand the way this tradition spread

in North America and Europe. He thus uses the category "ethnic religion" to represent

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[39] Numrich, 2003: 55.

[40] Prebish, 1979: 51. (See also Nattier, 1998: 320, fn. 13).

[41] Prebish published "Two Buddhisms Reconsidered" in 1993, and Numrich published "Two Buddhisms further Considered" in 2003.

[42] As argued by Nattier, "At first glance this colourful assortment of Buddhists seems virtually impossible to characterize in any meaningful way. Yet characterize them we must, for simply to list them all will tell us next to nothing" (1998: 188). Therefore, even though, as pointed out by anthropologist Wendy Cadge, "the current picture is considerably more complex" (cited in Numrich, 2003: 62) than what this dichotomy presents, it seems that, for the time being, it may still be useful. Yet it is important to qualify this use of the terms as a heuristic device employed strictly for the sake of articulating the identity of the groups addressed in this paper.

individuals whose interest in practicing Buddhism is "limited to preserving their own

ethnic culture and identity in North America."[43] The group Hori labels "missionary

religion," on the other hand, includes individuals who "came (or in some cases returned)

with the deliberate intention of teaching Buddhism to Westerners."[44] A similar point was

made by Jan Nattier, who differentiated types of Buddhisms on the basis of the way in

which they arrived in the West.[45]

These categories, again, are not without their own difficulties. For example, an

obvious obstacle lies in naming the generation born to the first generation of "convert"

Buddhists. Jeff Wilson, a scholar of American Religions and of Buddhism in the West,

makes an interesting observation concerning the use of the term "ethnic," asking in the

postscript to his work: "... how can we allege that Japanese ethnic influences are greater

in Japanese-American Zen than European-American ethnic influences in convert Zen?"[46]

Indeed, since the Japanese Buddhism that was introduced to the West was one that

previously went through the post-Meiji revitalization of Buddhism in Japan,[47] and

claimed to be "in exact agreement with the doctrines of modern sciences,"[48] it may be

possible to perceive some American ethnic influences in both "ethnic" and "convert"

Japanese Buddhism.

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[43] Hori, 1994.
[44] Hori, 1994.
[45] Her three proposed categories are an "import Buddhism" that is demand driven, an "export Buddhism" that is not actively sought but introduced through missionary work, and a "baggage Buddhism," her version of ethnic Buddhism (Nattier, 1998: 189).
[46] Wilson, 2009: 195.
[47] McMahan, 2002: 219-220. This process was highly influenced by Western thought. See also Sharf 1995a, as well as further discussion in chapter three.
[48] Sōen, quoted in McMahan, 2002: 220.

Despite this blurring of the categories of "ethnic" and "non-Asian" Buddhists,

they remain helpful in the sense that they recognize that Buddhism, in certain cases, has

come to the West through individuals intending to introduce it to non-Asians. In the case

of Zen Buddhism in the West, it seems that most practitioners are non-Asian converts

who followed the missionary pattern of conversion. This pattern can be observed rather

early in the development of Zen in America in the converting intents of individuals such

as Sōen Shaku (1859-1919) and his students Senzaki Nyōgen (1876-1958) and Daisetz

Teitaro (D.T.) Suzuki (1870-1966), who traveled to "promote the Rinzai lineage in

America."[49] The same can be said of later individuals such as Yasutani Hakuun (1885-

1973), Suzuki Shunryū (1904-1971), Maezumi Taizan (1931-1995), and Philip Kapleau

(1912-2004) (a convert, but also a non-Japanese missionary), who all participated in the

establishment of Zen centres in America.

The development of Japanese Buddhism in Canada is similar to that of the United

States.[50] The first established Asians were Chinese and Japanese, and the main form of

Japanese Buddhism brought was Jodō Shinshū.[51] The province of Québec received its

first Asian immigrants in the late 1880s, and these were mostly Chinese moving from

British Columbia, with a minority of Japanese immigrants.[52] The first Japanese temple in

the francophone province was affiliated to the Jodō Shinshū-based Japanese Canadian

Buddhist Churches of Canada, and only a few Zen meditation groups existed in the 1960s

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[49] Prebish, 1998: 4.

[50] For a detailed account of the development of Buddhism in the United States, see Fields, 1981 [1986]: 76-
82.

[51] Matthews, 2002: 121.

[52] Dorais, 2006: 120.

and 1970s.[53] While around half of Buddhist temples and meditation centres at the turn of

the century were "operated and frequented by francophone or anglophone non-Asian

Québecers," the population of non-Asian Buddhists totalled only eight percent of the

province's Buddhist adherents.[54] Such statistics may not illustrate the dissemination of

Buddhism with total accuracy, since there are also some problems with denomination

when it comes to counting both Asian and non-Asian Buddhists, or "converts." On one

hand, some Asian individuals may practice traditional Buddhist rituals but may not

consider themselves "Buddhists" when it comes to the census.[55] On the other, the

Buddhist label neglects individuals who may practice at centres but refuse to call

themselves "Buddhists," such as occasional practitioners.[56] Nevertheless, the ratio of the

number of centres to the number of adherents in the case of non-Asian Buddhists remains

interesting since it presents a picture in which a few Buddhist adherents are spread over

many centres.

Notwithstanding self-identification, Buddhism in the West scholar Bruce

Matthews counted about seven hundred Buddhist temples, centres, libraries, and

meditation groups in Canada in 2002.[57] Furthermore, while some scholarly attention has

been given to so-called "ethnic" Buddhism in the province of Québec,[58] little has been

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[53] Dorais, 2006: 120, 137 (fn. 1), with reference to Fradette 2002.
[54] Dorais, 2006: 121.
[55] See, for example, Boisvert et al., 2006: 142-143.
[56] The problem of categories and statistics to account for Buddhism in France are discussed in Lenoir, 1999a: 25-35.
[57] Matthews, 2002: 120.
[58] For example, Dorais 2006 presents Vietnamese Buddhism in the province, and Boisvert, et al. 2006 discuss "convert" Buddhists but mostly focus on ethnic communities around Montréal.

written about its opposite category, "convert" Buddhism.[59] This situation may be a

response to the academic attention given to the American "Zen boom" of the 1950s and

1960s, which has focused on the convert aspect of Zen in America only.[60] Other than

contextualizing the AZM to better understand the ways in which nonviolence is

approached in the group, my thesis is thus partly an attempt to remedy the lack of

ethnographic information on convert Buddhism in the province.

3. Method

This thesis is based on one month of fieldwork at the AZM conducted from the

end of May 2008 to the end of June 2008. During this period, my participant observation

consisted of a one-day introductory session, a five-day summer camp, and daily

meditation at the dōjō.[61] I also gathered information through eight interviews lasting

around fifty minutes with each practitioner who volunteered to be interviewed and five

anonymous questionnaires collected at the end of my research. Both interviews and

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[59] There is little attention given to Zen in Matthews' edited volume on Buddhism in Canada (2006), nor in Janet McLellan's work on Buddhism in Toronto (1999).

[60] Asai and Williams, 1999: 20. To counteract that tendency, Senryō Asai and Duncan Ryūken Williams propose the examination of Japanese American temple economy, which shows that their main source of revenue comes from death rites and cultural activities and that only a minimum amount is made and spent on the study of Buddhism (1999: 23, 28). They then argue that "the Zen temple (which they contrast to the usually non-ethnic Zen center) has served as a Japanese American community center with its major activities geared toward the maintenance of community and familial ties through death rites and 'Japanese culture' activities, including tea ceremonies, folk dancing, and other Japanese cultural events" (1999: 20). Therefore, Zen in the West should not be considered only as consisting of a purely non-ethnic or "convert" faith focused on meditation, but also as a tradition kept by Japanese ethnic communities, similar to the status of Jōdo Shinshū, or Japanese Pure Land (see, for example, McLellan, 1999: 35-73). While Zen meditation may still be practiced in Japanese ethnic temples, however, the majority of these practitioners are non-Japanese, and the meditation hall (zendō) is only peripheral to the hall for services (hondō) (Asai and Williams, 1999: 29-30).

[61] The dōjō is a Japanese word (道場) used by practitioners to refer to the room in which they sit zazen and do other related practices such as ceremonies and chants. The literal meaning of this term is "place of the way." Practitioners at the AZM often refer to the "dōjō" when they are speaking of the centre. I will use this term throughout my thesis in their way.

questionnaires contained a first set of questions geared toward acquiring basic

information such as the age, employment, religious background and initial contact with

the AZM in order to get a general ethnographic portrait of the group. The second set of

questions focused more specifically on the topic of Zen and nonviolence, and contained

questions such as "In what ways would you say your practice impacts your everyday

life?" "Do you think that Zen Buddhism has the potential to solve interpersonal conflicts

in nonviolent ways?" or "Do you think that Zen Buddhism has the potential to solve

conflicts in nonviolent ways on a larger scale?"[62]

There are a few important details to note concerning the results of my research.

First, since my purpose in this thesis has not been to present a complete ethnographic

portrait of the AZM, I will limit my presentation of the group to basic information that

will help put teachings and practices in context. Additionally, most individuals who

agreed to participate in my research have practiced for ten years or more. Having

practiced longer, they may have felt more comfortable in sharing their experience.

Indeed, with the exception of one who has been practicing for only two years, the other

participants have all been practicing for eight years or longer. My observations, therefore,

are limited to practitioners who have a serious level of involvement with the centre, and

do not necessarily apply to individuals who have just started their practice. Such a

sample of practitioners, therefore, adds a bias to my research, in that its results will reflect

the situation of experienced individuals who have a rather frequent practice.

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[62] See questionnaire and interview guide in Appendix A.

In addition to data I gathered through fieldwork, I use a variety of other sources of

information about the AZM. In terms of general information, I refer to the websites of

both the AZI and the AZM, which contain basic details about the practices and the way

they present it to the wider public.[63] I also use literature from the AZI, which is mostly

composed of works collecting the teachings of Deshimaru, although some older disciples

have also published a few books. Since Deshimaru spoke Japanese and a little English,

all of his works were created with the collaboration of disciples willing to help him

translate his teachings into French. Some works are also collections of oral teachings

(*kusen* and *mondō*)[64] that were registered by disciples. An important piece of writing for

chapter two is Deshimaru's autobiography, and I treat the limitations of this particular

genre in that chapter. For my chapters on the AZM, I also use some of the oral teachings

of important AZI teachers who come regularly to the province. During summer camps or

*sesshin*s, these teachings are taped, transcribed, and sold at the *dōjō*. I also used various

pamphlets and letters to the members gathered during my fieldwork. In terms of

translation, I translated all the interviews from the French except one,[65] and translated

most works from Deshimaru and his disciples from the French.[66] Since I clarify such

details here, I will not mention issues of translation again for these particular cases.

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[63] I also use the websites of groups related to Deshimaru but who severed their ties with the AZI in my discussion of Zen in Europe and the aftermath of Deshimaru's demise (especially in chapter three). See my internet sources in the bibliography.

[64] A *kusen* is an oral teaching disseminated while practitioners are sitting in *zazen*. A *mondō* is a public question-and-answer period during which practitioners sit together around the master and ask their questions (Deshimaru, 1974 [1975; 1977; 1981]: 272).

[65] The only interview I conducted in English was my interview with Valerie.

[66] The only exception is Deshimaru, 1981 [1985] (I used the English translation). Note that I also used a French translation for Deshimaru, 1984, which was published originally in English.

CHAPTER ONE: Historical Background

Introduction

This chapter provides some historical background to the themes of nonviolence

and violence in Zen Buddhism. The first section sets up a discussion of Buddhism and

nonviolence in general, demonstrating that although the Buddhist tradition is usually

praised for its nonviolent orientation, its history contains instances of violence as well. I

then focus more specifically on the Zen tradition and its Chinese forerunner, Chan,[67]

providing examples of both rhetorical and physical violence. Since the present thesis is

about a contemporary Sōtō Zen group, I devote greater attention to the Meiji and post-

Meiji Zen Buddhist support of Japan's nationalistic and militaristic endeavours.[68] In the

second section of this chapter, I address contemporary treatments of this Zen violence,

both from the Buddhist and non-Buddhist academic worlds. I briefly present the main

lines of this criticism of the Zen sects, as well as some of the recent attempts to articulate

a Zen Buddhist ethical system. This section also lays out a discussion of nonviolence

from the Zen Buddhist perspective, treating it as one of the many elements at play in

contemporary Zen Buddhist ethical concerns. In accordance with the topic of

nonviolence in a Western Sōtō Zen group, I finally narrow my discussion to instances that

demonstrate how this Zen nonviolence has been articulated and promoted in the West.

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[67] The tern "Zen" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese term "Chan," which is turn is a transcription of the Sanskrit term "dhyāna." The latter term refers to a state of deep meditation (Harvey, 1990: 153). As Faure emphasizes, it is important to treat the Chan and Zen traditions separately since they possess "historical, cultural, and doctrinal differences" (Faure, 1993: 3).
[68] I also elaborate further on the Meiji years and the Fifteen-Year War period in chapter two.

This preliminary overview of Zen violence and nonviolence provides the context for the

presentation of nonviolence as expressed in a Montréal-based Sōtō Zen group.

1. Tracing Violence in Buddhism

One of the most often cited Buddhist tenets justifying the nonviolent orientation of

the tradition is the Buddhist precept against injuring living beings.[69] In the *Vinayas*, or

Buddhist monastic codes, the act of killing a human being is considered *pārājika*, a

serious offence that can lead to one's excommunication from the monastic order.[70] Being

an important precept adopted by both laypeople and monastics, the prohibition against

taking life even extends to keeping a vegetarian diet in Chinese indigenous texts. For

example, the third lesser principle of the *Fanwang jing* (*The Book of Brahma's Net*,

compiled between 440 and 480 CE),[71] mentions the following: "Celui qui mange de la

chair se charge d'une culpabilité immense, et celui qui le fait le sachant et le voulant se

rend coupable d'un péché secondaire faisant souillure."[72] The precept of non-killing also

became an important aspect of the bodhisattva ideal. The *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (*Ten

Stages Sūtra*, composed between the first and second centuries CE),[73] which offers a

detailed explanation of the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, states that an individual

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[69] See Harvey, 2000: 66-69.

[70] Demiéville, 1957: 262. On loss of communion as a punishment for the transgression of a *pārājika*, see Clarke (forthcoming). The usual association of *pārājika* with the expulsion from the order has been questioned by Shayne Clarke 2009, who demonstrates that penance was available to those who had committed *pārājika* offences in all but the Pāli monastic code. It remains, however, that *pārājika* offences are seriously punished in either case.

[71] Groner, 1990: 255, Ch. 梵網經, T 1484.24.

[72] In *Fanwang jing*, 42.

[73] Cleary, 1984 [1986; 1987; 1989; 1993]: 1, Ch. *Shidi jing* 十地經, T 287.10.

"must not hate any being and cannot kill a living creature even in thought."[74] These

various sources thus show one major aspect of the nonviolent orientation of Buddhist

doctrine, especially as it pertains to the Mahāyāna tradition. On the other hand, it would

be impossible to ignore opposing trends in the Buddhist tradition, which legitimate killing

for certain purposes, both in the scriptures and historically. The following section

approaches issues of Buddhist violence doctrinally and historically with a focus on the

Chan and Zen Buddhist tradition.

1.1. Scriptural Aspects of the Justification of Violence

That the injunction against killing can be circumvented in particular cases is

attested in some sūtras, treatises, and monastic codes. A frequently cited example in the

Mahāyāna tradition comes from Asaṅga's (fourth or fifth century CE) *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*,

which contains a whole section on ethics. The following lines illustrate the logic behind

the bodhisattva's resort to violence, here the killing of a human being:

> Accordingly, the bodhisattva may behold a robber or thief
> engaged in committing a great many deeds of immediate
> retribution, being about to murder many hundreds of magnificent
> living beings... for the sake of material goods. Seeing this, he
> forms this thought in his mind: "If I take the life of this sentient
> being, I myself may be reborn as one of the creatures of hell.
> Better that I be reborn a creature of hell than this living being,
> having committed a deed of immediate retribution, should go
> straight to hell." With such an attitude the bodhisattva ascertains
> that the thought is virtuous or indeterminate and then, feeling
> constrained, with only a thought of mercy for the consequence, he
> takes the life of that living being. There is no fault, but a spread
> of merit.[75]

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[74] Cited in Kraft, 1992: 5.
[75] *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, 70-71.

This type of killing, qualified as "skilful means" (Skt. *upāya-kauśalya*),[76] is only one

example of how breaking the precepts can be justified. A similar logic is found, in fact,

in the *Upāya-kauśalya sūtra* (first century BCE),[77] in which compassionate killing is also

enacted to prevent bandits from committing bad deeds (and being born in hell), while at

the same time saving the lives of merchants.[78] Such justifications were also extended, in

certain texts, to killing individuals guilty of slandering the *Dharma*. In the

Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra (fourth century CE),[79] in fact, it is said that there is no bad karma

in killing an *icchāntika*, or "one who can never be enlightened."[80] These particular

cases,[81] therefore, demonstrate that within early Mahāyāna literature, both proscription

and justification of killing were already present.

In the above examples justifying killing, the bodhisattva willing to kill for the sake

of saving another being (or beings) from the karmic consequences of their acts also

accepts the karmic results entailed by such an act. In other words, killing is still punished

through negative karmic baggage that bodhisattvas are willing to take upon themselves.

After observing these justifications for killing, it is interesting to address an alternative

logic that allows killing—the apparent non-existence of either killing or non-killing. Here

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[76] Harvey, 2000: 130.
[77] Harvey, 2000: 135, with reference to Tatz, 1994: 1.
[78] Harvey, 2000: 135-136.
[79] Harvey, 2000: 137, Ch. *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T 374.12.
[80] Harvey, 2000: 138, 470.
[81] There are other examples of this type, but the purpose of this chapter is not to offer an extensive description of the different cases in which killing is permitted.

the *Dazhidulun*, a commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* attributed to Nāgārjuna

(c. 150-250 CE),[82] appears to be one of the earliest articulations of this trend:

> Therefore, living beings in fact are non-existence. There will be
> no sin of killing if there is non-existence of living beings; no one
> can be said to observe the precept if there is no sin of killing. ...
> Just like that there will be no sin if one commits killing in dream
> and kills the image in mirror, so is one who kills empty form of
> the five aggregates of [a living being].[83]

In later developments of Mahāyāna Buddhism, as seen in the *Dazhidulun*, it thus seems

that the consequences of violent acts lose their weight, as the empty, non-dual nature of

reality is articulated.[84] These writings, furthermore, provide the seeds for an ideological

genealogy used by the Chan and Zen traditions to justify antinomian or violent behaviour.

Since part of this section's goal is to identify the main scriptural foundations for

the justification of violence in Zen, it is pertinent to give some attention to the

development of the idea that killing does not exist in the Chan and Zen traditions. Since a

comprehensive account of the issue would be beyond the scope of this chapter, I will

outline the broad lines of thinking that have led to an ontological stance of emptiness

where differentiations between right and wrong, killing and not killing, do not hold.

Radically advancing the notion that reality is ultimately empty, and that any enlightened

being who has tapped into the insight may not suffer the karmic consequences of killing

or breaking other precepts, this thinking sheds light on Buddhist antinomian behaviour

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[82] Harvey, 1990: 95, Ch. 大智度論, Skt. Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra, T 1509. 25.

[83] Cited in Yu, 2005: 6.

[84] Such stance, however, does not necessarily consist in a literal encouragement to murder. As East Asian religion and philosophy scholar Christoph Kleine argues: "Most of the authors passionately warned against an antinomian abuse of their theories which were originally not meant to be taken as guidelines for the actual conduct of unenlightened commoners" (Kleine, 2006: 90).

and also Buddhist justifications of the use of violence in conflicts. I will now turn to key

developments in Chinese indigenous writings relevant to the creation of an empty stance

where the difference between killing and not-killing does not exist.

An important step in the articulation of an empty reality where dual conceptions

such as right and wrong action do not exist is the assertion that these conceptions are

simply constructions of the deluded mind. In this respect, the *Awakening of Faith*,

attributed to Aśvaghoṣa in the sixth century CE but probably apocryphal,[85] is revealing.

In this scripture, the concept of the *tathāgatagarbha*[86] is drawn into the discourse of an

original principle underlying both the relative and the absolute aspects in the scheme of

twofold reality.[87] An important teaching of the *Awakening of Faith* for the topic at hand

is that differentiation, or duality, derives from the unenlightened mind. Providing a

description of the different aspects of this mind, the treatise concludes: "Since all things

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[85] Harvey, 1990: 114. Ch. *Dasheng qixin lun*大乘起信論, T 1666.32.

[86] The term *tathāgatagarbha* is defined, first, in the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* (Ch. *Dafangdeng rulaizang jing* 大方等如來藏經, T 666.16), a third century text. *Tathāgata*, an epithet referring to the "Thus-come (or gone)-one," is generally used to designate Śākyamuni Buddha in Indian Buddhist texts. In *tathāgatagarbha,* the term basically means "Perfect One," or simply "buddha" (Harvey, 1990: 114). On the other hand, *garbha,* usually meaning "embryo" in Sanskrit, was translated as *ts'ang,* or "womb" (meaning literally "storehouse") in Chinese (Rawlinson, 1983: 260). Since, in the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra,* this term is said to be equivalent to *Buddha-dhātu,* in China it came to mean "Buddha-nature," or *foxing* 佛性 (Harvey, 1990: 114). In its turn, *Buddha-dhātu* can also be translated in different ways (see Rawlinson 1983 for a discussion of the ambiguity of those terms). In Chinese indigenous treatises such as the *Awakening of Faith*, the concept of the *tathāgatagarbha* is elaborated upon to become equated with the original, untainted Buddha-nature that exists within all sentient beings. The importance of the development of *tathāgatagarbha* ideas for the Chan tradition is stressed by Faure: "…much of Chan doctrine derives from the Tathāgatagarbha tradition and its speculation on the Buddha-nature…." (Faure, 1993: 147). Such an idea is also confirmed by Sinitic and Korean Buddhism specialist Robert E. Buswell, Jr.'s significant claim that Chan "evolved out of an attempt to elaborate the praxis aspects of Tathāgatagarbha thought" (Buswell, 1989: 10).

[87] While the concept of two truths dates back as far as *Abhidharma* writings (see Harvey, 1990: 98), what is at stake for this thesis is how Chinese indigenous writings developed the idea. In the twofold truth theory in Chinese Mahāyāna apocryphal texts, the actions and influence of bodhisattvas in this world are explained in terms of relative truth even though these beings have realized the absolute, undifferentiated nature of reality, where notions of "being" do not make sense.

are, without exception, developed from the mind and produced under the condition of

deluded thoughts, all differentiations are no other than the differentiations of one's mind

itself."[88] Taking this statement to its extreme, one could conclude, in fact, that the

difference between killing and not killing (and this could be extended to any other

precept) is only a result of the deluded mind's incapacity to realize the absolute,

undifferentiated nature of reality. This stance on absolute reality could be used by Chan

masters and disciples to justify acts of violence, and it was not held exclusively by this

school of Buddhism.[89] The development of this idea that is characteristic of Chan and

Zen Buddhism, however, is that both the relative and absolute aspects of this reality

would eventually be unified in a rhetorical move to affirm "sudden" enlightenment.

The expression "transcendent immanence"[90] to indicate the merging of the relative

and absolute aspects of reality denotes a radical association of the realm of sentient beings

with the absolute, where the transcendent becomes immanent in the phenomenal world.

Faure explains this complex logic in the following way: "…the desire for transcendence

turns into a radical immanence, and the soteriological structure elaborated as an expedient

tends to become an end in itself."[91] Within the context of ninth- and tenth-century China,

this radical immanence became the Chan formula of enlightenment. However, scriptures

are clear on the idea that this scheme is restricted to the highly trained bodhisattva only.

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[88] *Awakening of Faith,* 52.

[89] For example, the Huayan school also held similar beliefs. See Hakeda, 2003: 53. This comes to show that, although it claimed to represent a "separate transmission outside the teachings," Chan Buddhism developed its basic ideas within the larger context of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. The concerns of early adepts of Chan, as Buswell argues in his work on the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra,* were thus "framed by the same controversy then occupying sinitic Buddhist philosophers." See Buswell, 1989: 125.

[90] Faure, 1991: 58

[91] Faure, 1991: 58.

For example, the *Awakening of Faith* describes the different stages of a bodhisattva

bringing him or her to realize progressively the insight that reality is non-dual in the

following way:

> When they leave the last stage of bodhisattvahood, they will
> perfect their insight [into Suchness]. When they become free
> from the 'activating mind' they will be free from the perceiving
> [of duality]. The Dharmakaya of the buddhas knows no such
> thing as distinguishing this from that.[92]

The introduction of this scheme of awakening, in which bodhisattvas are placed beyond

conventional truth, nevertheless opens the door for individuals to argue against the

necessity of keeping the precepts, since the latter is limited to the relative aspect of reality.

What is at first described as an insight restricted to advanced bodhisattvas in the

Awakening of Faith would become, at least in Japan,[93] an insight available to any

individual in the scheme of sudden enlightenment.

Another apocryphon, the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* (composed during the seventh

century),[94] provides major clues concerning the practices leading to awakening to one's

pure nature. This scripture treats thoughts and language as discriminatory acts that lead

to more delusion about the true nature of reality. Aware of this process and the need for

the extinction of the mind, one whose mind has been calmed "knows that all mentality

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[92] *Awakening of Faith*, 71.

[93] Zen Buddhism scholar Steven Heine offers the following thoughts on the phenomenon: "Antinomianism was an insidious ideology that was perhaps more of a temptation or a threat in the context of Japanese Buddhism, which was dominated by esotericism and eclecticism, than in China, with its moralistic Confucian orientation" (Heine, 2006b: 16). I will address antinomian trends in Chan below.

[94] See Buswell's discussion of authorship, 1989: 170-177, Ch. *Jingang sanmeijing* 金剛三昧經, T 273.9. Note that even though this scripture might have been composed in Korea as Buswell argues, it nevertheless constructed its ideas from the Buddhist tradition brought over by Chinese travelling monks and Korean monks who spent time in China. It also spread quickly in China, which confirms the validity of its ideas for a Chinese audience. Therefore, the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* can still be considered as representative of Chinese Buddhism.

and materiality are nothing but the ignorant mind. The discriminations of the ignorant

mind differentiate all the dharmas; [all the dharmas] are nothing apart from name and

materiality."[95] From the point of view of absolute reality, therefore, since dharmas, the

building blocks of reality, include the differentiation between right and wrong, this claim

seems to entail that, ultimately, there might be no difference between these moral

concepts. This idea offers similarities to a poem attributed to Sengcan (d. 606), putative

third Chan patriarch: "Be not concerned with right and wrong; The conflict between right

and wrong; Is the sickness of the mind."[96] This idea of the ultimate non-duality of right

and wrong, therefore, may have helped to pave the way for a logic that would lead to the

justification of precept-breaking behaviour such as killing.

In light of such ideas, is one to conclude that the enlightened one is beyond the

necessity to act morally in Chinese indigenous writings? On one hand, the

Vajrasamādhi-sūtra teaches that bodhisattvas who have peeked into their original nature

(the *tathāgatagarbha*) are freed from having to follow the precepts. The Buddha is said

to express such an idea in the following line: "One who cultivates the dharma of voidness

does not base himself on the three realms of existence and does not linger over the

specific practices of the *Vinaya*."[97] In this same *sūtra*, however, we also learn that the

reason why one who has achieved this state does not need to follow the precepts is

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[95] *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*, 237.
[96] In Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 204.
[97] *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*, 193. Such treatment of the *Vinaya* makes it hardly a coincidence that the person who wrote the first commentaries to this scripture is Wŏnhyo (617-686), a Korean Buddhist known for his precept-breaking behaviour such as frequenting brothels (Faure, 1991: 233).

because he or she will automatically respect them. This is clearly stated in the following

passage:

> ...while he (the one who perceives the non-duality of mind and
> objects) does not wear the dharma-robes and neither observes all
> the Pratimoksa precepts [monk's disciplinary rules] nor
> participates in the Posada [fortnightly religious observations], he
> does not engage in personal licentiousness in his own mind and
> obtains the fruition of sainthood.[98]

Although this statement rejects any justification for bodhisattvas to fall back into a state

of licentiousness, it may nevertheless be interesting to compare this view with the types

of justifications monks used to justify a certain moral laxity. In the section below,

however, I demonstrate that the idea that practice is unnecessary has led, in some cases, to

antinomian behaviour.

1.2. The Rhetoric of Emptiness and Antinomian Behaviour

Before addressing the involvement of Buddhists in violent actions from the

historical perspective, it is pertinent to give attention to the ways in which the doctrine of

transcendent immanence was used to justify other types of morally lax actions. This

merging of the "two truths" of reality does lead to the hypothetical situation in which an

individual, having claimed enlightenment, can kill an individual and argue that, ultimately,

it does not go against any precept (since there are no such things as precepts or, as a

matter of fact, no one to kill or to be killed in absolute reality). However, the next step is

to verify the occurrence of such an attitude in Chan and Zen history. The non-dual

attainment of the bodhisattva was sometimes presented by scriptures as allowing certain

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[98]*Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*, 220.

acts that would usually be judged as going against the precept of non-killing. In the

Treatise on the Transcendence of Cognition, a Chan text found at Dunhuang, probably

dating from the eighth century,[99] one can find the following revealing lines:

> Ne peut-on pas, dans certaines conditions, tuer un être vivant? Le
> feu de brousse brûle la montagne; l'ouragan brise les arbres; la
> falaise qui s'écroule écrase les bêtes sauvages; le torrent qui
> s'écoule noie les insectes. L'homme qui rend son esprit 心
> pareil [à ces forces de la nature] est en droit d'en faire autant.
> Mais, s'il éprouve la moindre hésitation, s'il [s'imagine] 'voir' un
> être vivant [dans l'objet de son acte], 'voir' un meutre [dans son
> acte], s'il lui reste la moindre pensée 心 [non dépersonalisée],
> alors, ne tuât-il qu'une fourmi, il se trouve lié par cet acte 業
> *(karman)*, dans lequel sa vie est impliquée.[100]

In this passage, as nature is sometimes violent, so is the adept who has achieved a perfect

reflection of the myriad things. However, the author of this passage is careful to note that

any failure to remain in this state of non-thinking can actually bring serious consequences

upon one's karmic account. Nevertheless, the line between killing and non-killing here is

still fine, even though this awakened individual may only represent a theoretical ideal.

This is what has led Brian Daizen Victoria, Sōtō Zen priest and Buddhist scholar, to argue,

referring to the treatise mentioned above, that "[t]his antinomian license to kill with moral

impunity is the most dangerous, and deadly, of Chan's many 'insights.'"[101] Individuals

failing to grasp the theoretical aspect of this ideal, in fact, can easily use it to legitimate

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[99] For the different editions of this treatise, see Demiéville, 1957: 296, fn. 3. (Ch. *Jueguan lun* 絶觀論).

[100] Demiéville, 1957: 296, fn. 3. This passage is all the more interesting in light of Deshimaru's argument that one who practices *zazen* becomes in harmony with nature (see chapter four).

[101] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 204.

violence. From this view of nature's violence as a model, the meaning of the word

"naturalist" heresy[102] takes on a whole new dimension.

An example of the criticism that illustrates this phenomenon comes from Chinese

Song monk Puan Yinsu (1115-1169), whose statement is also quoted by Ōbaku Zen

master Chōon Dōkai (1630-1682): "And today there is an empty-minded Zen school,

people who, without having the proper awakening, explain that to drink wine or eat meat,

and to commit adultery is no obstacle for the enlightened nature."[103] It thus seems that,

justifying themselves with the rhetoric of original enlightenment, individuals have

rejected precepts such as celibacy and the prohibition against drinking. Daoji (d.1209), a

Song Chan master, shows this trend. It is said, in fact, that this individual elevated

"...hedonistic values as a social ideal;" he ate meat, drank intoxicating beverages,

gambled, and stole.[104] This type of behaviour, or "naturalist" tendency, was thus a real

phenomenon in Chinese Buddhism. In Japan, the group calling itself *Darumashū*, or

Bodhidharma's followers, held the opinion that since one's mind is already enlightened,

one does not need to keep any precept or follow any practice.[105] Such justifications for

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[102] Term used to qualify groups who engaged in antinomian behaviour. See Faure, 1991:59.

[103] Faure, 1991: 236.

[104] Faure, 1991: 129, with reference to Jean DeBernadi, 1987: 311.

[105] On this topic, William Bodiford explains: "Exactly how the precepts were rejected is unclear, but one Darumashū text asserted that the purpose of the precepts lies only in controlling the active mind. Therefore, when one attains no-mind (*mushin*) all precepts are left behind" (Bodiford, 1993: 168). While groups like the *Darumashū* advocated a rejection of the precepts from an ideological basis, other sects actually used violence in order to attain awakening. A potent example is the killing of animals by contemporaries of Linji Yixuan (d. 866), apparently "to demonstrate the mortal danger of any duality" (Demiéville, 1957: 296. My translation) Barend ter Haar, in an article on the Chan practices of the Yongzheng emperor (1678-1753), addresses the regular beatings of monks during sitting sessions in such a way that they are said to be "beaten into enlightenment" (Ter Haar, 2008: 17). This practice, in fact, has been a popular one in the Rinzai (ch. Linji) sect of Zen Buddhism, and corresponds with the austere, sometimes aggressive character of its founder. Here the act of violence, harming other sentient beings (animals or monks), is achieved by a presumably enlightened one (master) but on the premise that this practice will help.

breaking the precepts and the unnecessary nature of practice demonstrate that it directly

developed from the greater Sinitic context out of which Chan (and then Zen) came.

The above exploration shows that the ultimate emptiness of the precepts,

developed from ideas found in Chinese indigenous writings, was used to justify

antinomian behaviour. Once the concept of an immanent Buddha-nature was asserted,

and the line between the relative and ultimate realities collapsed through the rhetoric of

"sudden" awakening, the act of killing, among other precept-breaking actions, potentially

lost its negative karmic connotation. However, it is still fair to ask whether this logic

extended to the general legitimatizing of physical violence. In order to address the

historical aspect of Buddhist involvement in violent acts, it is necessary to go back to

another dimension of the phenomenon, namely its socio-political factors.

1.3. Chan/Buddhist Violence in History

The involvement of Chinese Buddhist monks in armed conflicts goes back to the

Jin (317-420) and Wei (386-534) dynastic periods. In Japan, ever since its introduction to

the country, Buddhism was characterized by a close relation to state power. This can be

seen, for example, in the early use of rituals and *sūtras* as technologies for the welfare of

the state during the Nara period (710-794)[106] and later the integration of the Buddhist

Law (*buppō* 仏法) and the Imperial Law (*ōbō* 王法).[107] In other words, by receiving

privileges such as exemption from taxes and access to land, Buddhist monks were

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[106] See, for example, Grappard, 2000: 79-80.
[107] See Kuroda, 1996: 276-284.

expected to help rulers in the maintenance of the state, and such help sometimes extended

to the warding off of enemy troops.

Buddhist monks' participation in armed conflict was not always physical,

however, and it can be argued that one of the main involvements of monks in early

Chinese conflicts was through ritual. This role is described by the indigenous scripture

entitled *Scripture for the Humane Kings*,[108] the self-proclaimed purpose of which is the

protection of the state. For example, it presents a ritual to be observed in times of

difficulties,[109] and then encourages its use in the following manner: "If, in coming ages,

all the kings of states, and others, should desire to protect the state or to protect

themselves, then they should likewise receive and hold, read, recite, and expound this

scripture."[110] While this involvement was not necessarily physical, the simple act of

assisting rulers in their military expeditions through supernatural powers such as foresight

still involves participation in armed conflicts.

Besides the ritualistic assistance of monks in wars, scholars have gathered

evidence pertaining to their physical participation in armed conflicts as early as the fifth

century.[111] An important instance of a Chan group involved in warfare is the association

of the Shaolin monastery with the future Tang emperor Li Shimin (599-649). The armed

group, in fact, played a key role in the battle that won the future emperor his reign. In

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[108] Ch. *Jenwang jing* 仁王經, T 245.8. For a discussion of authorship and translation matters, see Orzech 1998.

[109] *Scripture for the Humane Kings*, 245-246.

[110] *Scripture for the Humane Kings*, 249.

[111] This is presented by Sinologist Tsukamoto Zenryū's (1898-1980) list of nine major Buddhist rebellions between 402 and 517 (in Gernet, 1956: 278). In terms of monks involved in emperors' armed conflicts, J.J.M. De Groot cites many cases in which individual monks became known for their military skills (De Groot, 1967: 103-109). For example, Wei emperor Xiao Wu Di (r. 532-535) had a monk-general who carried weapons with him (De Groot, 1967: 104).

this battle, the monks occupied a strategic point against former Sui general Wang

Shichong (d.621).[112] While the monks of Mount Song, where the monastery was situated,

refused the military titles offered, this event nevertheless anticipates the future martial

training of the Shaolin monastery.[113] The fact that Li Shimin, posthumously Taizong,

imposed the secularization of most Buddhist monks and nuns (Shaolin monks were

excepted)[114] after his victory also reveals the type of threat that Buddhist groups

presented for emperors. In fact, this edict illustrates the phenomenon of monastic groups

as large bodies of individuals ready to side with the party most likely to further their

interests.[115] Hence, pioneer French Sinologist Paul Demiéville writes in "Le Bouddhisme

et la guerre": "C'est un fait significatif que, dans l'histoire de Chine, la question du

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[112] Demiéville, 1957: 277. See also Shahar, 2001: 362-364, and 2008: 22-34.

[113] Indeed, Shahar demonstrates that the involvement of Shaolin-affiliated monks in warfare was more related to factors such as economic power and geopolitical location. For example, the first recorded instance of Shaolin monks fighting an enemy was during the Sui dynasty (ca. 610), and it consisted in the defense of the monastery's wealth against bandits (2008: 21). Furthermore, the Shaolin involvement with Li Shimin was deeply connected to the monastery's strategic location for the defeat of Wang Shichong's army (2008: 23-24). However, only in the late Ming period (1368-1644), Shahar argues, did Shaolin martial arts become systematized (2008: 55-56).

[114] Demiéville, 1957: 275.

[115] There are many other examples of armed monastic bodies. For example, the Song dynasty (960-1279) saw the participation of monks fighting the Northern Jurchen of the Jin dynasty (See De Groot, 1967: 105, and Hirata, 1994: 7). The Ming dynasty represents an interesting period for the topic of this paper, since it is during the later part of this period that scholars have found concrete evidence of the systematized use of martial arts by monks from the Shaolin temple and other temples as well. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in fact, there are no less than forty sources directly mentioning the martial art training and involvement of monks in various military events (Shahar, 2001: 364). These sources, mostly written by Chinese literati figures and imperial generals, reveal the close association between the government and the Buddhist community. Reflecting on general Yu Dayou's (1503-1579) account of Shaolin monks' training, Shahar notes: "His conception of their monastery as a military institution enriches our understanding of the multifarious roles that Buddhism played in late-Ming society" (Shahar, 2001: 377). During this period, monks also engaged in military campaigns against Japanese pirates attacking the Jiangnan coast. Literary evidence shows, on one hand, the admiration of generals for Shaolin monks' military abilities, and, on the other, the fear that the same monks could become a threat if they decided to turn their military skills against the government (Shahar, 2001: 384-386). With those late-Ming testimonies, we thus obtain a picture of at least some Chinese monks participating in warfare directly with their fists, staffs, and spears.

service militaire des moines bouddhistes ne s'est pas posée en termes idéologiques, mais

en termes économiques."[116]

Martial arts training for Buddhist monks was further pursued in Japan, and, once

in that country, took a life of its own by being integrated in the training and life of the

Japanese warrior class of the Kamakura period (1185-1333). It is relevant to note, on this

subject, that one of Eisai's (1141-1215) first major treatises was entitled "Treatise on the

Spread of Zen for the Protection of the Nation."[117] Following similar patterns it had first

created in China (and previously in India), Buddhism in Japan presented itself as able to

protect the state by different means, both occult and physical. At the level of doctrine,

Faure argues that "...the theory of 'innate awakening' (J. *hongaku shisō*) was one of the

main theoretical justifications for the changes that took place in medieval Japanese

monasteries and that allowed, among other things, the emergence of the so-called

warrior-monks (*sōhei*)."[118] However, this approach to doctrine as producing a certain

historical phenomenon would not be complete without attention to the context in which

the relation between martial training and Zen developed in Japan. While in China,

Shaolin martial training has been attributed to the violence surrounding the monastery, it

seems that in Kamakura Japan, Zen martial teachings were specifically adopted by

warriors out of a recognition of their value for the warrior mentality.

Significant figures in the process of adopting Zen for martial training purposes

were powerful Kamakura regents such as Hōjō Tokiyori (1227-1263) and Hōjō Tokikume

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[116] Demiéville, 1957: 268-269.
[117] King, 1993: 33.
[118] Faure, 1991: 231. It is interesting to place this comment in light of the above discussion concerning early Chan articulations of radical immanence.

(1251-1284), who sought in Zen a way of dealing with Mongol invasions.[119] It is thus

only in the thirteenth century that Zen actually became the preferred religion of warriors,

which in turn developed into an integral training. The appeal of Zen Buddhism for the

warrior is described later by Zen master Takuan Sōhō (1573-1645), who is often cited as

having popularized the idea of no-mind (J. *mushin* 無心) as relevant for martial

training.[120] In the post-Tokugawa era, Zen Buddhists revived this idea to lend at least

their rhetorical support to the aggressive nationalistic activities of the imperial system. In

doing so, they made clear that Zen doctrine was particularly well-fitted to help the nation

succeed in its endeavours.

1.4. Zen and Violence in the Post-Meiji: Using Doctrine to Justify Violence

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japan, Zen Buddhist individuals participated

in war activities by providing rhetoric to justify the killing of one's enemies on the

battlefield. At play in this phenomenon is the combination of the doctrinal ideas of the

emptiness of killing, along with socio-political motivations to support the nationalistic

endeavors of Japan.[121] One example from Rinzai priest Sōen Shaku will suffice to

illustrate that trend.[122] In fact, using Sōen as the main example is especially appropriate

since he was considered "the greatest Rinzai Zen master of his day"[123] and also because

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[119] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 215.

[120] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 216.

[121] For a discussion of the factors leading to the association of Zen Buddhist rhetoric with Japanese nationalism, see chapter two.

[122] This is the same Sōen who participated in the spread of Zen in America (see introduction). Other examples of formulations of the Buddhist pro-war rhetoric from different individuals can be found in Victoria 2003; 1997 [2006]; Ketelaar 1990; Sharf 1993; 1995a; 1995c; and Ienaga 1978.

[123] Victoria, 2003: 112.

he was the master of D.T. Suzuki, whose writings greatly influenced the image of Zen

projected to the rest of the world. In a response to Russian pacifist Tolstoi enjoining him

to condemn the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), the priest replied:

> Even though the Buddha forbade the taking of life, he also taught
> that until all sentient beings are united together through the
> exercise of infinite compassion, there will never be peace.
> Therefore, as a means of bringing into harmony those things
> which are incompatible, killing and war are necessary.[124]

Although this does not mean that Sōen took lives himself,[125] it is easy to see how this

rhetorical form of violence becomes physical when adopted by the military. Indeed, one

could argue that it is much easier to kill when convinced that this act is approved by

religious authorities. Through a certain interpretation of Buddhist philosophy, other

individuals went so far as to argue, referring to the emptiness of the precepts, that this use

of violence was not breaking any precept.[126] Although such a brief portrait of Buddhist

individuals engaged in pro-war rhetoric does not do justice to the complexities of their

views and arguments, it nevertheless shows that some Zen Buddhist priests did not

oppose the state's expansionist goals and the violent means used to attain them.

The pro-war rhetoric of Zen Buddhist individuals, starting in the Meiji, thus

presented new elements advancing Zen as the proper religion for military and

nationalistic purposes. First, the idea that the Japanese hold the only genuine form of

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[124] Ketelaar, 1990: 171. Also mentioned by Sharf, 1993: 10, n. 18, and Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 29.
[125] Note, however, that he went to the battlefield as a Buddhist chaplain during the Russo-Japanese War, a time during which he wrote the following: "... I also wished to inspire, if I could, our valiant soldiers with the ennobling thoughts of the Buddha, so as to enable them to die on the battlefield with the confidence that the task in which they are engaged is great and noble" (quoted in Victoria 1997 [2006]: 26). His words therefore encouraged the taking of lives by reminding the soldiers of the importance of their task.
[126] See chapter two for a discussion of Sawaki Kōdō, Deshimaru's master, and his pro-war rhetoric affirming that "Whether one kills or does not kill, the precept forbidding killing [is preserved]" (cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 36).

Buddhism can be seen as fitting nicely with the expansionist character of Japan in the

modern period. The following statement by a leading scholar of religion, Anesaki

Masaharu (1873-1949), shows the sentiment that Japan, in its expansion into other

Buddhist countries, carried a "spiritual burden," not unlike the infamous "white man's

burden" that justified the European colonial enterprise earlier. He expressed his view in

1899 as follows: "Our Nation (Japan) is the only true Buddhist nation of all the nations in

the world. It is thus upon the shoulders of this nation that the responsibility for the

unification of Eastern and Western thought and the continued advancement of the East

falls."[127] Although this is not a direct exhortation to invade other Asian countries, again,

one cannot underestimate the power of religious authorities when they speak in times of

turmoil, political or other.

Some proponents of Zen Buddhism in the Meiji years and beyond also

extrapolated on the idea of "true Buddhism" to present Zen as the ultimate expression of

the Asian spirit. For example, D.T. Suzuki's "Oriental Oneness"[128] illustrates this trend.

Another important contribution of Zen Buddhists to the pro-war rhetoric is their strong

association between Zen and *Bushidō* (武士道 "Warrior's Way"). Sōen can be quoted

once more here, as he wrote in 1919 that "The power that comes from Zen training can be

called forth to become military power, good government, and the like."[129] Later, in the

midst of the Fifteen-Year War, Suzuki again defended this association, arguing that "The

soldierly quality, with its mysticism and aloofness from worldly affairs, appeals to the

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[127] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 15.
[128] Doak, 1995: 195.
[129] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 99.

will-power. Zen in this respect walks hand in hand with the spirit of *Bushidō...*."[130]

Such a vision of Zen shows a willingness to support the state's endeavours in, first,

expanding into Asia, and second, waging a fully-fledged war against the Allied Forces.

Finally, concerning the Buddhist involvement in the efforts leading to the Fifteen-

Year War, rhetoric was only one of the different approaches used by Buddhist priests.

Scholars have argued that from "the 1920s to the early 1940s," Buddhist priests:

> lent their social status and homiletical skills to propaganda
> campaigns (*kyōka undō* 強化運動) run by the state to cultivate
> obedient imperial subjects, organized and/or participated actively
> in patriotic groups, exhorted parishioners to "serve the public"
> (*hōkoku takuhatsu gongyō* 報国托鉢勤行), donated temple funds
> for the construction of warplanes, ran officer-training programs,
> performed ceremonies and chanted sūtras to promote Japanese
> victory, assisted the families of the war dead, served as chaplains
> for troops fighting overseas, and helped "pacify" (*senbu* 宣撫)
> occupied and colonized areas and mold colonized Asians into
> imperial subjects (*kōminka* 皇民化).[131]

In contrast to this support for the nation's war, many post-war Buddhist individuals have

criticized the involvement of the sects in war activities. Notable in this endeavour are

individuals such as Rinzai sect affiliated professor Ichikawa Hakugen (1902-1986) and

Sōtō Zen scholars Hakayama Noriaki (b. 1943) and Matsumoto Shirō (b. 1950).[132]

Crucial to this criticism is the idea that Zen should regain the realm of ethical teachings

and get away from the idea that good and evil are mere illusions. The following section

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[130] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 106.
[131] Ives, 2001: 16. The references given for this passage are Kashiwahara 1990; Yoshida 1970; and Victoria, 1997 [2006].
[132] For a discussion of their ideas and other individuals criticizing their sect's involvement in the war, see Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 157-181, and discussion below.

will address some of this criticism, along with modern voices in the articulation of Zen

Buddhist ethics, and of Zen Buddhist nonviolence more specifically.

2. Modern Considerations of Zen and Nonviolence

2.1. Criticism of Zen and Violence

The post-war years in Japan saw the emergence of criticism of the Zen sects'

involvement in nationalistic war activities. Although a full account of the nature of this

criticism is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to address its main ideas in

order to introduce the development of Zen Buddhist nonviolent thought. A notable

Japanese individual who tackled the issue of Buddhist war involvement is Ichikawa,

whose work outlines not only how Zen Buddhist sects became allies of the status quo in

Japan, but also explains how they can change and become ethical agents in the socio-

political realm.[133] Rather than associating Zen religious freedom with freedom from

morality, he argues that such freedom must connect with socio-political freedom, an act

that allows criticism of political powers.[134] For Ichikawa, therefore, the compliance of

the Zen sects during the war is an act that must be denounced and apologized for.

Furthermore, through this process Zen thought must be reformed in such a way as to

avoid repeating these mistakes.

In a similar vein, scholarship in English has also criticized Zen sects for their

actions during the war. In this domain, Victoria stands out with his *Zen at War*, a work

documenting many Zen Buddhists' pro-war attitudes and acts. In the second edition of

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[133] See Ives, 1992: 90-94.
[134] Ives, 1992: 94.

his work, he added a chapter documenting Zen violence and political compliance

historically.[135] He presents these historical developments as a first step toward creating a

peaceful religion. For Victoria, peaceful, or nonviolent Buddhism is an original state of

the tradition that must be regained, not created, an assumption contained in the following

question he asks his readership: "How is the Zen school to be restored and reconnected to

its Buddhist roots?"[136] Along with his criticism is thus a latent belief in the essentially

peaceful core of the Zen tradition that has been buried under historical circumstances.

For Victoria, identifying the elements that contributed to the association of Zen Buddhism

with nationalism and militarism, therefore, will eventually lead to avoiding them in the

future.[137]

Another important academic contribution to the criticism of Zen Buddhist sects

during the war years and those leading to them is Sharf's analysis of Zen nationalism. In

his argument, the rhetoric that posits Zen as free from any historical circumstances has

led to a disconnection from "traditional Buddhist soteriological, cosmological, and ethical

concerns."[138] By presenting a "pure" Zen, as it were, Zen intellectuals neglected

important aspects of the tradition. Particularly relevant for the topic at hand is the neglect

of ethical concerns. Furthermore, the articulation of an essential Zen beyond cultural

differences, as expressed by individuals such as D.T. Suzuki, participated in the

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[135] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 192-231.

[136] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 231.

[137] Victoria adopts a more active stance in an article where he criticizes Zen groups in the post war years. He argues: "Yet today's Engaged Buddhists may nevertheless end up contributing *indirectly* to bloodletting by not actively campaigning for a Buddhist morality that firmly opposes it, instead basing their moral stance on teachings going back, in the case of Zen, no further than *Dharma* ancestors deeply indebted to their military, samurai or imperial patrons" (2001: 87).

[138] Sharf, 1995c: 43.

establishment of an Asian hegemonic discourse. Although the idea of a pan-religious

experience appealed to many in the West, Sharf offers the following warning:

> But impatience with plurality and uncertainty in the intellectual
> realm can lead all too readily to impatience with plurality and
> uncertainty in the realm of politics. It may not be mere
> coincidence that a surprising number of those who saw Zen as a
> solution to spiritual anxiety were drawn to authoritarian or
> totalitarian solutions to social and political unrest.[139]

While such a statement necessitates a more in-depth study of the relation between non-

dualistic world views (whether religious or philosophical) and totalitarianism, the point is

well taken. It is also a particularly interesting observation in light of some of the recent

articulations of Zen Buddhist ethics, which I address below.

Criticism about Zen Buddhist sects, therefore, comes from different perspectives:

Japanese, non-Japanese, Buddhist, and non-Buddhist. Following this trend, in the post-

war years, attempts to articulate a Zen ethic has emerged. Indeed, Zen Buddhism is often

accused of failing to establish a definition of good and evil that would then foster ethical

guidelines to follow. Christopher Ives, who has written extensively on Zen ethics, and in

particular those of the Rinzai tradition, claims:

> In promoting its soteriological aims by emphasizing the need to
> 'transcend' distinctions between good and evil, Zen often gives
> the impression that one leaves such distinctions in the dust, never
> to enter again into consideration of what might be good and evil.
> In short, the tradition has yet to articulate sufficiently how one
> returns to 'good' and 'evil' and regrasps the realm of ethics.[140]

As a response to criticism of this kind, both Japanese and Western scholars have

formulated ways of relating Zen to ethical thinking. In Japan, for instance, Hisamatsu

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[139] Sharf, 1995c: 50.
[140] Ives, 1992: 47.

Shin'ichi (1889-1980) and his student Abe Masao (1915-2006) wrote extensively on how

to articulate ethical action from a Zen perspective. For Hisamatsu, founder of the FAS

Society,[141] Zen awakening was "the basis for genuine action in the world... and in

history..., the arenas of social ethics."[142] His society, in fact, is an organization that

strives to act upon Hisamatsu's articulation of a Zen social ethic. In Abe's writings about

ethics, an important point is his treatment of good and evil, categories deemed important

for guiding one's behaviour. He wrote: "...Buddhist ethical life is established in light of

prajñā (wisdom) and *karuṇā* (compassion) where, without the distinction of good and

evil, the distinction is clearly realized."[143] His view is thus faithful to a Zen Buddhist

rejection of the categories of good and evil, but it paradoxically includes these categories

by transcending them. The importance of compassion, furthermore, is related to the

bodhisattva's vow to help all sentient beings.

Many voices that have participated in the formulation of Zen Buddhist ethics also

come from the Western perspective. One of the main proponents of the movement is

Robert Aitken. The fact that his *Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics* (1984) is

cited as a source in Zen Buddhist ethics in two main works on the topic attests to the

widespread importance of his writings in the West.[144] It is in this work that Aitken

interprets and teaches the ethical meaning of the precepts and other concepts such as the

bodhisattva vows, interdependence, and emptiness. The Buddhist precepts that are

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[141] According to Abe, FAS is an acronym of the following: "F" standing for "awakening to the formless self," "A" for "standing on the standpoint of all humankind," and finally "S" for "creating history suprahistorically" (Abe, 2003: 30).

[142] Ives, 1992: 75.

[143] In Ives, 1992: 87.

[144] For example, on Buddhist ethics, see Harvey 2000: 71, 74-75, 82, 143-144, and on Zen Buddhist ethics, Ives 1992: 37-38, 55, 97, 118.

important for the Diamond Sangha, the Zen group founded by Aitken, are Sōtō Zen sect

founder Dōgen's (1200-1253) sixteen bodhisattva precepts: "The Three Vows of

Refuge," "The Three Pure Precepts," and "The Ten Grave Precepts."[145] Concerning the

way in which one ought to understand the precepts, Aitken is critical of the Zen Buddhist

tradition, noting that "[t]hough Mahayana Buddhism ... teaches the innate value of each

being and the essential harmony of the universe, we find the Precepts of the Buddha

treated metaphysically rather than practically in the Zen tradition."[146] His presentation of

the precepts, therefore, seems to be aimed at applying them more literally, in such a way

as to turn them into ethical guidelines to be adopted by the followers. Such an endeavour

materialized in *The Mind of Clover*, which was purportedly compiled to "clarify [the

precepts] for Western students of Buddhism as a way to help make Buddhism a daily

practice."[147]

Another notable Western work focusing on the articulation of Zen Buddhist

ethical teachings is *Invoking Reality: Moral and Ethical Teachings of Zen* (2007), written

by John Daido Loori (b. 1930), founder of the Mountains and Rivers Order in the United

States. This work emphasizes the importance of considering the sixteen precepts as

ethical teachings in Zen practice.[148] A major concern here is to counter an interpretation

of Zen Buddhist practice as non-ethical or unethical, as well as to take some distance

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[145] Aitken, 1984: 4.
[146] Aitken, 1993: xvi-xvii. This criticism can also be found in different works on Buddhist ethics. For example, Ives writes: "Eisai and Dōgen made general statements about promoting the good and avoiding evil, yet they offered little in the way of an explicit definition of what might be good overall" (1992: 64).
[147] Aitken, 1984: 3.
[148] For example, he writes: "In essence, the precepts are a definition of the life of a Buddha, of how a Buddha functions in the world. They are how enlightened beings live their lives, relate to other human beings, make moral and ethical decisions, manifest wisdom and compassion in everyday life" (Loori, 2007: 2).

from what has been called "wild Zen." In fact, the first sentence of Loori's work is as

follows:

> When Zen arrived and began to take root in this country, there
> arose a misconception about the role of morality and ethics in the
> practice of the Buddha-Dharma. Statements that Zen was beyond
> morality or that Zen was amoral were made by distinguished
> writers on Buddhism, and people assumed that this was correct.[149]

In such a work, therefore, the militaristic Japanese Zen is not the first reason mentioned

as the cause for the need to establish a Zen Buddhist ethic, but rather an antinomian

understanding of Zen popularized in the sixties. As a matter of fact, the way in which

Zen Buddhism was understood by certain communities in the United States was also a

concern for Aitken, who was often teaching to a group he called the "New Age people,"

consisting of free-spirited individuals living on the beaches of Maui as an escape from the

status quo in the late sixties and early seventies.[150] While letting such a clientele frequent

his *zendō*, he still sought to avoid teaching a Zen Buddhism that justified antinomian

behaviour, not differentiating between right and wrong. This view was typical of "Beat

Zen anarchists," who held that "in the falling away of body and mind, in the *realization*

of life, all belief systems have to go; correct behaviour will then arise spontaneously,

rendering ethical systems obsolete."[151] Aitken's work can thus be seen as a corrective for

a certain type of Zen he considered threatening for the precepts and ethical life in

general.[152]

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[149] Loori, 2007: 1.
[150] Tworkov, 1989 [1994]: 41-42.
[151] Tworkov, 1989 [1994]: 59.
[152] Other writers have expressed similar concerns with the ethical orientation of Zen in America. For
example, Nattier writes: "... in Zen circles recent scandals have led to a new interest in the cultivation of
the Buddhist moral precepts" (1998: 194). Victoria is also critical of certain American teachers and their

Along with a reaction to the militaristic aspect of Zen Buddhist rhetoric before

and during the war years, therefore, a concern with the ways in which Zen was

understood and practiced in the West became a motivation for Zen teachers to articulate a

Zen Buddhist ethic. Western scholarship on the topic also attests to this phenomenon,

breaking the trend of research on Zen "dominated by philosophical and theological

interests focused on the soteriological significance or religious awakening and related

studies in intellectual history."[153] Notable in such endeavour are Christopher Ives' *Zen*

Awakening and Society (1992) and Philip Olson's *The Discipline of Freedom: A Kantian*

View of the Role of Moral Precepts in Zen Practice (1993).[154] In the first work, Ives

attempts to trace Rinzai Zen theoretical and historical developments that led to the

nationalistic and militaristic rhetoric of the Zen discourse in the Meiji period. He then

presents some of the recent developments in Japanese ethical thinking, including the

works of Hisamatsu, Abe, and Ichikawa, and takes on the challenge of proposing some

basic guidelines for the articulation of a Zen Buddhist ethic relevant for postmodernity.[155]

On the other hand, Olson's work is concerned with applying the teachings of Suzuki

Shunryū (1904-1971), the Sōtō Zen Japanese master who founded the San Francisco Zen

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discourses. He reproaches Zen Peacemakers' founder Bernie Glassman (b. 1939) his apologetic attitude toward Yasutani Hakuun, one of the Zen masters who participated in nationalistic pro-war rhetoric of his time (2001: 88). Victoria also deplores Philip Kapleau's rhetoric, quoting the founder of Rochester Zen Center's lines: "If the act [of killing] were done no-mindedly, beyond self-conscious awareness of one taking life and a life being taken, no painful karma would be incurred, for in the profoundest sense there would be no killer and nothing killed. Let me hasten to add that only a highly developed individual could act in this way" (quoted in Victoria, 2001: 84).
[153] Unno, 1999: 509.
[154] Other academic works that treat Buddhist ethics but do not focus specifically on Zen are Damien Keown's *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992 [2001]), a work edited by Prebish entitled *Buddhist Ethics: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (1992) (in which one can find an essay by James Whitehill called "Is There a Zen Ethics?"), and a volume edited by Keown, Prebish, and Husted entitled *Buddhism and Human Rights* (1998).
[155] Unno, 1999: 526 (see also Ives 1992).

Center and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, to a Kantian approach to morality.

According to Olson,

> ... when Suzuki and others talk about the practice of *zazen* as free
> from goal-oriented thinking or dualistic notions of good and evil,
> they are referring to the noumenal unconditional basis of the
> moral life, which is not subject to the relative, conventional, and
> therefore unreliable terms of the phenomenal world.[156]

Olson thus decries the association between Zen non-dualistic thinking, as sought in the

practice of *zazen*, and antinomian behaviour. In this work, furthermore, Olson seeks "...

to develop a theoretical basis for criticizing the practice of 'wild' Zen Buddhism in

America by conducting a philosophical inquiry into the fundamental principles of Zen

practice."[157] Both Ives and Olson, therefore, offer strategies to rethink Zen Buddhist

ethics and articulate them for a modern Western audience. In the following section, I

address a particular aspect of such ethics, the concern with nonviolence.

2.2. Zen Nonviolence

Within these modern efforts to criticize the association of Zen sects with

militaristic endeavours and to articulate a Zen ethical system, an important aspect of the

Buddhist tradition is its nonviolent orientation.[158] Two major trends which Buddhist as

well as non-Buddhist scholars point out to articulate Zen Buddhist nonviolence are the

bodhisattva precepts and the worldview of interdependence. In the West, such a concern

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[156] In Unno, 1999: 520.
[157] Olson, 1993: xiii.
[158] Different styles of Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics are provided in Queen 2000 and divided into four
categories: discipline, virtue, altruism, and engagement (11).

has often been approached within the larger context of so-called "engaged Buddhism,"[159]

and most literature on the topic belongs to this larger category. In this section, I present

some major trends of thinking about Zen nonviolence. Since my focus is on a Zen

Buddhist community in Canada, I will provide concrete examples of Buddhist

communities in the West that try to embody such principles in different ways.

Sōtō Zen Buddhist practitioners normally adopt the sixteen bodhisattva precepts

presented by Dōgen in the "Jukai" chapter of his *Shōbōgenzō*. First among these precepts

is the prohibition against killing, "which for many is the cardinal tenet of Buddhist

ethics."[160] This precept, for some Buddhists, justifies a pacifist stance in conflicts,

whether personal or political. Prominent Buddhist leaders of the twentieth century such

as the Dalai Lama or Thich Nhat Hanh cite not-killing as fundamental in their pacifist

stance toward their opponents. For example, the latter affirms: "I am determined not to

kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my

thinking, and in my way of life."[161] In a similar vein, Sōtō sect-affiliated scholar Taigen

Dan Leighton argues, speaking of the bodhisattva precepts: "First is the primary precept

of not killing, but instead supporting life. This can and should be applied to a Buddhist

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[159] For a definition of the category of engaged Buddhism, see introduction.
[160] Rothberg, 1992: 49. This prohibition is the first of the ten serious prohibitions, which are the same as the ten grave precepts of the *Fanwang jing* (Bodiford, 1993: 170). Besides the ten prohibitions, the two other categories are the three devotions (the three refuges) and the three pure precepts (see *Shōbōgenzō*, 311-313). On the order of the precepts, Bodiford notes: "The first precept in the *Ssu-fen lü* is for the monk to control his own sexuality (i.e., self-control), whereas the first precept in the *Fanwang ching* forbids the killing of all sentient beings (i.e., saving others)" (1993: 165). The *Sifen lü* 四分律, or Four-part *Vinaya* (Jp. Shibunritsu), is a monastic code attributed to the Indian Dharmaguptaka school, and was used for ordination in Chinese Buddhism when Dōgen visited China (Bodiford, 1993: 164).
[161] Cited in Kraft, 2000: 491.

response to the policies of our political and corporate rulers."[162] In such an approach to

the precept, therefore, a literal prohibition against killing[163] is at stake, justifying a

nonviolent stance for Zen Buddhism.

A major protagonist of the association of Zen Buddhism and peace in the West,

Robert Aitken,[164] presents the same precept as follows: "[t]he First Precept plainly means

'Don't kill,' but it also expresses social concern: 'Let us encourage life,' and it relates to

the mind: 'There is no thought of killing.'"[165] Analyzing this sentence, he establishes a

parallel between the literal view of not killing and the Jain strict adherence to *ahiṃsā*. He

relates the second exhortation, to encourage life, to the bodhisattva's compassionate

action of saving all beings. On the topic of war and political conflict, Aitken also stresses

what he considers the impossibility of a just war theory from the Zen perspective. Such a

theory, he argues, goes against the literal interpretation of the precept, and therefore

cannot be accepted.[166] Furthermore, although Aitken's precept-adhering individual is

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[162] Leighton, 2006: 69.

[163] As opposed to an approach to the precepts as a ritual, or empty and therefore not binding. For example, Bodiford argues that "When the bodhisattva precepts and Tendai monastic rules were interpreted in terms of medieval Tendai doctrines of inherent enlightenment (*hongaku hōmon*), the evil conduct that the precepts were meant to control could be reduced to a mere dualistic abstraction" (1993: 167). See also discussion in section one of the present chapter.

[164] Concerning Zen Buddhism and nonviolence, Robert Aitken's thinking and actions represent one of the most elaborate attempts at articulating a "Zen" ethical teaching in North America. In terms of writing, *The Mind of Clover* is his main work on the ethical meaning of the precepts and other concepts such as the bodhisattva vows or interdependence. Aitken's belief in the nonviolent potential of Zen Buddhism also materialized in his creation, with a group of friends at his Maui *zendō*, of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF) in 1978 (Simmer-Brown, 2000: 68-73). This nonprofit organization, affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, has as mission "... to serve as a catalyst for socially engaged Buddhism," and "... to help beings liberate themselves from the suffering that manifests in individuals, relationships, institutions, and social systems" (*BPF*, "Mission," http://www.bpf.org/html/about_us/founders/founders.html). Although the BPF is not limited to Zen Buddhists, its creation nevertheless demonstrates Aitken's concern with taking the Buddhist teachings out into the world in order to reduce suffering.

[165] Aitken, 1984: 16.

[166] Aitken, 1984: 19. Concerning the political involvement of Japanese Zen Buddhist individuals in wars, and his own teacher Yasutani's advice to practitioners to follow their draft call during the Vietnam War,

usually not one who is considered "awakened," undertaking to follow the precepts will

still help one in the process. This is confirmed when he interprets Dōgen's statement

"The Buddha-seed grows in accordance with not taking life. Transmit the life of the

Buddha's wisdom and do not kill" as meaning "[w]ith the practice of not killing... you

will become the Buddha and transmit his wisdom."[167] By associating adherence to the

precept of not-killing and awakening, therefore, Aitken presents nonviolence at the core

of his Zen practice.

The insight into the interdependence of all phenomena is also an important aspect

of Zen Buddhism that is cited as conducive to a nonviolent attitude toward all forms of

life. On this world view, Cynthia Eller affirms: "The Buddhist doctrines of dependent co-

arising and no-self establish a framework in which the advancement of the true needs of

the self cannot possibly detract from the true needs of the other."[168] It is from such an

ontological stance that Joshu Sasaki Rōshi (b. 1907), Rinzai teacher and founder of

Mount Baldy Zen Center, advances that once the distinction between the self and others is

dissolved, an individual is able to work in a total embracing attitude of others where "one

can truly *be* peace and *work for* peace."[169] Daniel Zelinski, who has worked on mysticism

and morality, also presents Dōgen as teaching the interdependence of the self and others.

By interpreting the assertion that "all beings *have* Buddha-nature" to mean that "all

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Aitken remained quiet. Helen Tworkov explains his silence in the following way: "Aitken had a firm grasp on the distinctions between Zen practice and Japanese culture. He also had learned from the Japanese something of the diplomacy of discretion; familiar with the political allegiances of most Japanese teachers, he had long ago concluded that certain activities were simply not discussed" (1989 [1994]: 42).

[167] Aitken, 1984: 24.

[168] Eller, 1992: 94. This is confirmed in McMahan's more recent work on Buddhist modernism, where he claims: "As articulated in contemporary Buddhist literature, the concept of interdependence combines empirical description, world-affirming wonder, and an ethical imperative" (2008: 150).

[169] Cited in Ives, 1992: 141.

beings *is* Buddha-nature," Zelinski argues, Dōgen effectively taught the transcendence of

the dichotomy between self and others.[170] Such a move beyond seeing others as separate

from oneself can easily lead to the claim that harming others is the same as harming

oneself. Hence, the Zen world view of interdependence of all phenomena, including the

self and others, justifies nonviolence according to certain individuals.

Aitken articulates the connection between interdependence and nonviolence in

more specific terms. For him, the concept of interdependence is central to explain why

one ought not to harm other people, and even the environment. Referring to the

Avataṃsaka sūtra[171] and the image of the "Net of Indra," he presents the doctrine of

interpenetration as meaning "that I and all beings perfectly reflect and indeed *are* all

people, animals, plants, and so on."[172] As a world view, this doctrine implies that every

time harm is done to a being, it resonates to all other beings, even oneself. Aitken,

therefore, advances that "[v]iolence to another is violence to all, including myself."[173]

Such a presentation of the non-dual, interrelated status of the self and others, therefore, is

one of the bases of the Zen ethic of nonviolence articulated by Aitken.

Dōgen's view on the effect of the insight of interdependence on individuals'

behaviour is also rephrased similarly by Zelinski:

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[170] Zelinski, 2003: 54.

[171] Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, or "Flower Adornment Sūtra," T 278.9, dated between the first and second centuries CE (Cleary, 1984 [1986; 1987; 1989; 1993]: 1).

[172] Aitken, 1984: 9. It is important to note that such an interpretation of the interdependence of phenomena is a modern one, based especially on Fazang's (643-712) writings mixed with romantic and rationalist ideas. On the topic, McMahan argues: "The contemporary Buddhist ethic of interdependence, though it had occasional precedents in pre-modern Asian Buddhism, likely worked its way into contemporary Buddhist thought through remnants of the Romantic-Transcendentalist line of thinking that resonated with similar ideas in Huayen and Zen thought" (McMahan, 2008: 178).

[173] Aitken, 1993: 135.

> Dōgen's ideally nonattached individual is a humble agent in the
> world whose perceived sense of a pervasive interconnected unity
> of all things through Buddha-nature instills a sympathetic
> connection to others within him or her, which in turn results in his
> or her projects and actions expressing both respect and
> compassion.[174]

Although such a description does not entail nonviolence specifically, it is easy to make

the jump and argue that treating others with respect and compassion can also mean not

using violence against them. The figure of the bodhisattva, furthermore, stands as the

embodiment of a compassionate attitude. Since the ideal bodhisattva has gained insight

into this interdependent world view, his or her moral actions are spontaneous. This

spontaneity, furthermore, replaces deliberate action based on rigid definitions of good and

evil, which remains faithful to the Mahāyāna approach to the precepts.

Conclusion

This presentation of certain trends in the association between Zen Buddhism and

nonviolence is by no means exhaustive, but it nevertheless prepares the ground for a

discussion of how individual practitioners perceive nonviolence in a Canadian Sōtō Zen

community. Furthermore, these particular uses of Buddhist concepts to justify a

nonviolent stance of the Zen tradition are part of a modern discourse characterized by the

globalization of Buddhism and an increasing engagement with Western intellectual and

cultural modes. In this sense, the urge to articulate a Zen Buddhist ethic is a product of

modernity, along with, in Buddhist Modernism scholar David L. McMahan's words,

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[174] Zelinski, 2003: 60.

individualism, egalitarianism, liberalism, democratic ideals, and social reforms.[175] Ives

concurs with the need to recognize the recent developments in the articulation of a Zen

ethical system: "...Zen ethicists could address the further question of whether Engaged

Buddhists are engaging in acts of *eisegesis*, looking selectively in Buddhist texts and

practices to find support for preexisting stances that they brought to their practice of

Buddhism in the first place."[176] While addressing different individuals and groups

depicting Buddhism as a nonviolent tradition, therefore, it is also important to notice the

recent scholarly debate on the relative modernity of a Buddhism serving the social aspect

of a nonviolent practice.

Although very general, this chapter has demonstrated that when it comes to the

question of the violent or nonviolent orientation of Zen Buddhism, the tradition has

theoretical and historical aspects that could serve as evidence for both sides. Indeed, Zen

Buddhism has a past of both war and peace, as Buddhist groups allied themselves with

political rulers or social causes. If the teachings can be used to justify both war and peace,

however, it is only by giving attention to a tradition of nonviolence in a specific context

that one can understand the underlying mechanisms that are at play when a religion is

internalized by a teacher and his or her followers. Attempting to understand how

practitioners of the Association Zen de Montréal view their practice and its relation to

nonviolence, hopefully, will provide a more accurate picture of how the different strands

of violence and nonviolence are negotiated in one particular group. At play in my

research is thus not the question of whether Buddhist nonviolence or engaged Buddhism

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[175] McMahan, 2008: 13.
[176] Ives, 2005: 53.

are "recovered" or "reconstructed," but rather how they manifest in a particular context.

In this sense, I am following McMahan's observation that "The historian of religion, qua

historian, should not merely recapitulate sectarian or even canonical rhetorics of

authenticity but examine what practitioners *do* with the texts and other elements of the

tradition."[177]

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[177] McMahan, 2008: 179.

CHAPTER TWO: Deshimaru's War

Introduction

Any treatment of the teachings and practices of nonviolence within Deshimaru's

group, the Association Zen Internationale, must first explore the extent to which the

founder favoured nonviolence over violence in solving conflicts. Such an exploration is

all the more important since Deshimaru, as a Japanese man who lived through the

Fifteen-Year War (1931-1945), took part in the war activities of his country. As

addressed briefly in chapter one, the involvement of the Sōtō Zen Buddhist sect (like

most Buddhist sects in Japan) in approving the war and Japan's colonial expansion, is

now well known due to the scholarship of individuals such as Brian Victoria and Japanese

historian Ienaga Saburō.[178] Within this context, therefore, it becomes all the more

interesting to see how Deshimaru, as a Buddhist individual following the teachings of

Sōtō Zen master Sawaki Kōdō, presented his actions during this period. Such an

approach will demonstrate that, through his autobiographical writings, Deshimaru

attempted to create an ideal of nonviolent action during a time of conflict.

Before addressing the nonviolent stance of Deshimaru during the war, I first

consider the position of Zen Buddhist sects before and during the war in order to provide

the context of his narrative. For this purpose, I use different stories of war resistance as

documented by Victoria, Ienaga, and Sōtō Zen priest and scholar Ishikawa Rikizan to

offer examples of the possible obstacles to advancing a nonviolent stance during this

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[178] See Victoria 1997 [2006], and Ienaga 1978.

period as a Buddhist. Second, I review two major strategies used by Deshimaru to

establish his distance from the pro-war Buddhist rhetoric at the time. This section starts

with a retelling of three different episodes narrated in his autobiographical writings

describing him as a nonviolent protagonist. I also address his presentation of a nonviolent

Sawaki, and contrast this picture with the war-enthusiast Sawaki depicted in the

scholarship of Victoria and Ienaga. Finally, I address the literary genre of Deshimaru's

writings and situate his autobiography within the context of its place and time: Paris of

the 1970s. Doing so will demonstrate that by presenting his wartime actions as

nonviolent, not only is Deshimaru's work apologetic, but it also contributes to the

creation of an ideal that impacts the way his Zen is understood and practiced by his

Western followers.

1. Context: Zen Buddhism in the Post-Meiji Era

1.1. The Construction of the Post-Meiji Nationalistic Buddhist Discourse

As addressed in chapter one, by the time of the Fifteen-Year War, Japanese

Buddhist sects in general supported the nationalistic endeavours of Japan by providing it

with pro-war rhetoric and others means such as missionary activities.[179] In order to

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[179] For a list of other wartime Buddhist activities, see chapter one, p. 40. These missionary efforts started after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), when Japanese Buddhist missions were established in China. After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Buddhist missions expanded to Korea and continued until the end of the Fifteen-Year War in 1945 (Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 63-65). The first Sōtō Zen temple in Korea was established in Pusan in 1905 (Hur, 1999: 107). Individuals taking part in the missions were involved in a variety of tasks. For example, they taught the Japanese language to colonized populations, provided shelters for soldiers, helped employees of Japanese companies, and even acted as spies in some cases. During these years, Buddhism also became an important element within the Japanese colonial discourse and the development of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," the name given to the colonial project to unite Asia under Japanese hegemony (Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 65).

understand this readiness to embark on an aggressive campaign, however, it is important

to take into account the socio-political elements that led to the situation.[180] The Buddhism

that emerged out of the early Meiji period (1868-1912) was one that responded and

adapted itself to Nativist ideology.[181] In the words of Ketelaar, by the time of the Meiji

Constitution in 1889, "Buddhism had managed to transform itself from being perceived

as one of the plethora of 'ancient evils' into one of the essential repositories of the true

essence of 'Japanese culture.'"[182] Indeed, the eagerness to demonstrate the cooperation of

the Buddhist sects with the government can be sensed in a letter dating from 1871 and

signed by thirty-four priests from different sects, containing the following words: "All

[Buddhist] sects uphold the Great Teaching of our Imperial Nation; thus, without

exception, the teaching of each [Buddhist] sect should be used in the guidance of the

people's hearts."[183] This close association was also illustrated by the participation of

Buddhist priests in the Ministry of the Doctrine, a government body created in 1872 and

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[180] In fact, the late Tokugawa and early Meiji periods represent a turning point in the relation between Buddhist sects and the government in Japan. As demonstrated by the scholarship of James Edward Ketelaar, the Meiji restoration, with its nativist, anti-Buddhist rhetoric as popularized by individuals such as Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), acted as a blow to the tradition (1990: 30). Buddhism was characterized as a foreign religion inimical to the Japanese spirit and Buddhists as parasitic individuals detrimental to the economy and society in general (Ketelaar, 1990: 29-41, see also Sharf, 1995a: 109). During the early Meiji years, the polemic against Buddhism was implemented through actual government policies (see Ketelaar, 1990: 68). Followed by the separation of Shinto and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離), and the rejection and destruction of Buddhism in Society (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈), these policies eventually led to a period of Buddhist persecutions (Ketelaar, 1990: 43-86). Such a context partly explains the subsequent re-positioning of Buddhist sects in relation to imperial authority.

[181] Nativism was a nationalistic ideology that emerged in the late Tokugawa period through the writings of Hirata. Its proponents advocated a "return" to a constructed ancient Japan by heralding Shinto as the true religion of the country, and divine imperial rule based on the "Unity of Rites and Rule" as the ideal government system. Such ideas played an important role in the Meiji Restoration (1868), as well as the conception of Buddhism as a "foreign" and thus "impure" (Ketelaar, 1990: 87).

[182] Ketelaar, 1990: 86.

[183] Ketelaar, 1990: 98.

using priests as doctrinal instructors to promote the National Doctrine to the population.[184]

The denigration and then persecution of Buddhism in the early Meiji years thus fostered a

Buddhism ready to comply with the government.

The Meiji criticism of Buddhism as foreign, parasitic, and superstitious also led to

the formulation of so-called "New Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō* 新仏教). This reformist

Buddhism, characterized by intersectarian organizations concerned with social action,

was articulated by intellectuals highly influenced by the Western Enlightenment and

Romantic discourses. Making their Buddhism relevant to a modern Japan, these

Buddhists claimed "a transcendent, unificatory epistemology not bound by any particular

chronology or temporality that was, however, simultaneously present within any

particular historical place."[185] Within this context, Zen Buddhists presented their type of

Buddhism as rational and totally compatible with Enlightenment thinking. This type of

Zen was promulgated during the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, and subsequently

transmitted to the West by individuals such as Shaku Sōen, D.T. Suzuki, and Senzaki

Nyogen.[186] Through their discourses, Buddhism was transformed to fit the ideals of a

modern Japan.

A result of both Buddhist persecutions under the Meiji era and the subsequent

reformulation of a Buddhism in total harmony with the "modern" ideals of the West,

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[184] Ketelaar, 1990: 99. This doctrine is delineated by the so-called Three Standards of Instruction (*Sanjō no kyōsoku* 三条の教則), nationalistic and nativist-flavored injunctions which consisted in the following: "1. Comply with the commands to revere the kami and love the nation. 2. Illuminate the principle of heaven and the way of man. 3. Serve the Emperor and faithfully maintain the will of the court" (Ketelaar, 1990:106).
[185] Ketelaar, 1990: 134.
[186] For further discussion of New Buddhism, see, for example, Ketelaar, 1990: 132-135; 164-173.

Buddhist priests thus enlisted in a movement to make their ideas and practices relevant to

turn-of-the-century, nationalistic Japan. Doing so, they readily promoted the nationalistic

ideologies of the government, as Sharf notes:

> In their spirited defense of their creed, Buddhist leaders actively
> appropriated the ideological agenda of government propagandists
> and the nativist movement. They became willing accomplices in
> the promulgation of *kokutai* (national polity) ideology—the
> attempt to render Japan a culturally homogeneous and spiritually
> evolved nation politically unified under the divine rule of the
> emperor.[187]

When support of the nation occurred during times of war, Buddhist priests did not retreat

from their effort, articulating a discourse that legitimated Japan's use of force to

accomplish its political goals. Zen Buddhist priests, in particular, were keen on

emphasizing the relevance of their sect in matters of warfare. For example, Nukariya

Kaiten (1867-1934), a Sōtō priest who wrote *Religion of the Samurai: A Study of Zen*

Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan, published in 1913, argued: "It is Zen that

modern Japan, especially after the Russo-Japanese War, has acknowledged as an ideal

doctrine for her rising generation."[188] In such a context, any discourse that went against

the aggressive, nationalistic ideals of state ideology was obviously difficult to articulate,

let alone promulgate.

In an era of Japanese nationalism and colonial expansion, Buddhist compliance

with the imperial system thus translated into a readiness to legitimate and even participate

in these endeavours. One of the main nationalistic activities Buddhist priests participated

in was missionary expansion in Korea and China. As the Buddhist situation since the

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[187] Sharf, 1995a: 110.
[188] Cited in Sharf, 1995a: 115.

Meiji demonstrates, however, it is easy to understand why, in the words of Ishikawa,

"...the various Japanese Buddhist organizations (including the Sōtō sect), hoping to

recover the responsibilities endangered by the early Meiji situation, all jumped on the

bandwagon by starting missionary activity on the Asian continent."[189] Such an idea is

also expressed by Ketelaar, who argues that "Meiji Buddhism's attempt to define its own

history ... was an attempt to *dissipate the vision of Buddhism as heresy*; this very creation

of a historical autonomy directly contributed to the production of a pan-Asianism central

to the geo-political strategies of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s."[190] In other words, reacting

to the dramatic religious changes brought about by the Meiji government, Buddhist

priests re-oriented their stance as a means of survival.

1.2. Going Against the Nationalistic Discourse: Voices of Dissent

Within this context, Buddhist anti-war ideas were not part of the mainstream

discourse. Looking for individuals who opposed the war, we must therefore look beyond

overt acts of resistance, and give more attention to individuals who did their best to avoid

taking part in the violence of the war. In order to classify resistance to violence, Ienaga

names two broad categories: passive and active resistance, with each having further

subdivisions.[191] His inclusion of silence as one of the methods of passive resistance

illustrates well the fact that one cannot underestimate the risks associated with resisting

the army. Ienaga also mentions the words of an individual he relates as stating that

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[189] Ishikawa, 1998: 95-96. For a treatment of the Sōtō sect in Korea specifically, see Hur 1999.
[190] Ketelaar, 1990: 214.
[191] Ienaga, 1978: 204.

"anyone who opposed the army would be killed."[192] Nevertheless, there are some

documented cases of resistance to the pro-war Buddhist rhetoric, and the section below

attempts to provide examples of these exceptions to the rule.

Ishikawa, in an article documenting the activities of two Sōtō Zen monks before

the Fifteen-Year War, demonstrates how the ideals of Buddhism could be carried to two

opposite extremes. On one hand, he introduces Takeda Hanshi (1864-1911), a monk

greatly involved in the missionary activities of his sect and who was appointed by his sect

to the role of superintendent of the Korean mission.[193] On the other hand, Ishikawa

presents Uchiyama Gudō (1874-1911), an active priest who encouraged "the refusal of

military conscription and the denial of the emperor system" as a way of destroying "the

roots of the people's suffering."[194] While the first individual received the approval of his

sect, the other was expelled from it and eventually received the death penalty by hanging.

These two cases, when placed side by side, demonstrate the realities facing Buddhist

individuals: resistance to nationalistic rhetoric and Japan's missionary activities was met

with imprisonment or even death. The following examples of resistance to the Fifteen-

Year War support the same conclusion.

One organized movement against the growing Japanese militarism was the *Shinkō

Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei*, translated by Victoria as the "Youth League for Revitalizing

Buddhism."[195] The nature of the opposition this group presented to the current state of

Buddhism can be seen in the 1931 declaration of the reasons behind its creation: "A

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[192] Ienaga, 1978: 204.
[193] Ishikawa, 1998: 97.
[194] Ishikawa, 1998: 101.
[195] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 66.

revitalized Buddhism must be based on self-reflection. It must deny currently existing

Buddhism which has already lost its capacity for confrontation while, at the same time,

calling on all Buddhists to return to the Buddha."[196] However, the difficulties the group

encountered as it tried to promote its claims to the larger Buddhist community

demonstrate that its opinions were not welcomed by many people. In fact, when

representatives of the League tried to convince the greater All-Japan Federation of

Buddhist Youth Organizations (*Zen Nippon Bukkyō Seinenkai Renmei*), of which it was a

member, to oppose "anti-foreign, militarist, and nationalist ideologies," it was expelled

from the Federation.[197] The arrests of many members of the League in 1937 and its

eventual disappearance[198] also demonstrate that any opposition to the state's endeavours,

along with its Buddhist support, could only be enacted under the risk of being persecuted.

This particular event, therefore, suggests that organized resistance was not a

successful option for Buddhists opposed to the war and the state's nationalistic agenda. It

also confirms Ienaga's argument that: "Any really determined action to stop the war and

prevent a national disaster inevitably entailed illegal resistance. ...there was almost no

organized illegal resistance in Japan."[199] Such affirmation is all the more relevant since

Ienaga's chapter addressing resistance to the war also includes non-Buddhist individuals,

which shows that this persecution applied to any dissenter, whatever his or her status and

religious affiliation. Tight government control thus helps to explain why little resistance

to the war occurred. The following consists of an attempt to assemble instances where

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[196] Quoted in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 67.
[197] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 71.
[198] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 73.
[199] Ienaga, 1978: 208.

Buddhist individuals refused to participate in the violence of the war, although they were not war dissenters per se.

Ienaga mentions an instance reported by Ishiga Osamu, a member of War Resister International (a Quaker organization), who heard, while in detention, of a member of the Shin sect "who refused to take human life."[200] Since this anecdote does not tell us whether there were many other similar cases, one cannot conclude that the Buddhist precept not to kill was appealed to generally. However, it shows that it is only by looking at scattered statements like this one that we can get a glimpse of the use of Buddhist elements as basis for nonviolent action or resistance to the war. A similar case is found in the acts of a Jōdo sect chief priest, who put the following passage from United States of America's founding father Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) on the bulletin board of his temple in 1939: "There never was a good war or a bad peace. A reckless war destroys in one year what man took many years to create. [Benjamin] Franklin."[201] Again, one may ask how widespread such acts of resistance could have been in wartime Japan, and how parishioners reacted to them. Given the limited amount of similar records, it is also important to think about the possibility that much of the documentation of resistance may have been lost or suppressed by the state. Since the state successfully enrolled most Buddhist priests in its war effort, it may be that resisting members were simply silenced. The following story shows that trend.

Sōtō Zen abbot Kondō Genkō (b. 1879), from Seiunji near Tōkyō, included the following statement in one of his evening talks in 1937: "It is troubling that hostilities

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[200] Ienaga, 1978: 215. Also mentioned in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 73.
[201] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 73-74. Also in Ienaga, 1978: 215.

have broken out between Japan and China. War is an activity in which people kill each

other. Whether it be friend or foe, the killing of people is monstrous. There is nothing

more sinful in this world than the killing of people."[202] This priest was warned by the

police at least once, and seemingly resigned from his abbotship to eventually disappear

from his monastery.[203] This shows the type of control Buddhist priests were under, as

well as the sensitivity of topics that did not strictly follow the state's nationalistic

propaganda. A similar incident documented by Victoria actually involves the protest of

parishioners against anti-war rhetoric, which shows that they were aware of the "right"

discourse that should have been adopted by priests when they spoke of the position of

Japan during the war. In 1937, Shōgan Takenaka, an abbot affiliated with the Higashi

Honganji branch of the Shin sect, stated:

> I don't know what others may think about the recent trouble [in
> China], but it looks to me like aggression. From a Mahayana
> point of view, it is improper to needlessly deprive either oneself
> or others of their lives, incurring enormous costs and loss of life in
> the process. War is the greatest sin there is. Just how much
> advantage is there taking in such places as Tianjin or Baoding? It
> would be better to stop the war in such places.[204]

Elements of this statement show an acute awareness of the contradiction between what

Shōgan called the "Mahāyāna point of view" and the expansionist attitude of Japan,

which led to the murder of many Chinese and Korean individuals. This quotation is also

far removed from the philosophically-justified killing of any force opposing the

establishment of an Oriental harmony under Japanese hegemony. It is therefore not

[202] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 74.
[203] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 74.
[204] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 75.

surprising that Shōgan was charged with "fabrications and wild rumour," and put under

surveillance until 1945, when the war ended.[205] Such an incident thus confirms the

danger associated with holding an opinion contrary to the state's, especially when this

opinion was expressed to the wider public.

In terms of evidence of Buddhist opposition to killing coming from the battlefield

itself, one rare instance has been documented by Victoria. The original source for this

incident was Tsuzuki Mana (b. 1920), former president of a company, who recalled his

training as a private in the newsletter of his company, which Kōno Taitsū (b. 1930), then

president of Hanazono University, accidently found during a visit to the company in

1995.[206] The event, involving the said president and a Sōtō Zen priest named Daiun Gikō

(b. 1922), is an illustration of two individuals resisting the act of killing required in their

training. Upon being ordered by the leader of the platoon to murder tied Chinese

prisoners with the bayonets attached to their rifles, both Tsuzuki and Gikō refrained from

following orders and were therefore punished.[207] This story illustrates an act of resistance

to killing directly on the battlefield, albeit during training. Again, punishment is the

consequence of such acts, but, perhaps a reflection of the smaller scale repercussions of

their actions, it was less severe than the types of punishment suffered by individuals who

publicly disagreed with the ideas behind the war.

These examples show that even during times of conflict and nationalistic

propaganda, some individuals attempted to go against the grain in either speech or action.

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[205] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 75.

[206] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 75-76.

[207] Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 76-77. Their punishment consisted in walking in the snow imitating dogs with their boots in their mouths, which both resisters found "unexpectedly light" (Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 77).

As proposed by Ishikawa, the key to understanding the difference between resisting and

adopting the pro-war rhetoric of the time may reside more in situational factors than the

doctrinal background of each individual.[208] Indeed, the above-mentioned cases represent

individuals who used Buddhist elements to go against the nationalistic trends of their

affiliations, just as their sects used the same Buddhist background to lend their support to

the state. In the following section, I address Deshimaru's presentation of his own battles

against the violence of the war, and his use of Buddhist teachings to justify his behaviour.

It is important to read Deshimaru's case in light of the medium that documents it, namely

his own *Autobiographie d'un moine Zen*, originally written in Japanese and published in

French in 1977.[209] Furthermore, attention must be given to the context of his writings.

Deshimaru, a Japanese master who intended to spread Zen in Europe, writing toward the

end of the Vietnam War, had no interest in presenting his participation in the Japanese

nationalism and militarism decried by so many in the West. Therefore, while his actions

can be compared to those of the individuals mentioned above, one must be careful to keep

in mind the time, place, and intent behind his writings.[210] I will assess the impact of these

important factors in the third section of this chapter, after presenting his war stories.

2. Stories of Resistance: The Creation of a Nonviolent Ideal

Although Deshimaru was in no way a war dissenter, from his autobiographical

writings emerges a desire to display his concern to avoid causing harm on an individual

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[208] Ishikawa, 1998: 106.

[209] For more details about this work, see section three of the present chapter.

[210] It must be noted that the same critical analysis could apply to each case mentioned above. However, for purposes of space and relevance to the topic at hand, I must limit this analysis to Deshimaru's particular case.

basis. Born in Saga prefecture, young Deshimaru received military training at his father's

request but never became part of the army due to his short-sightedness.[211] He then

worked for different companies, hoping to be sent to work abroad, and obtained a position

in the weapon-producing Mitsubishi company in 1940.[212] After the events at Pearl Harbor,

his company sent him to Indonesia to act as administrator of the Dutch colonial mines

taken over by the Japanese army.[213] It is in this position, as a Japanese occupier, that he

relates his ability to work in nonviolent ways with diverse conflicts that arose during the

five-year period he would spend in South-East Asia. I will present three particular events

that illustrate this tendency, and then deal with his presentation of his teacher, Sawaki.

2.1. Ideal War Stories

A first notable anecdote in which Deshimaru demonstrates his concern with

nonviolence[214] occurs when he helps a group of Singaporean actresses faced with the

threat of being forced to become prostitutes by the Japanese army. In his presentation of

the event, he emphasizes the high risks associated with such an action by relating that he

hesitated due to his fear of being accused of resistance by the army.[215] In the end,

however, Deshimaru agrees to hide the girls. Thanks to his connections with a certain

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[211] Deshimaru, 1977: 45. Maybe as a demonstration of his distaste for the military, Deshimaru adds that this forced training went against his own wishes to attend the Fine Arts school of Ueno, in Tōkyō. In contrast, Deshimaru's close friend Tamotsu organized a Buddhist group with pacifist ideals (1977: 80-81, 130-131).
[212] Deshimaru's desire to learn English and to travel is a recurring theme in his autobiography, perhaps hinting at his eventual proselytizing activities in Europe.
[213] Deshimaru, 1977: 134, 143.
[214] This concern with nonviolence, as mentioned above, should be treated within the context of this work, which he wrote while in Paris. More information about the context of Deshimaru's autobiography and what it can teach about its nonviolence will be provided below.
[215] Deshimaru, 1977: 151.

sergeant Hashimoto, he is able to plead to general Imamura Hitoshi (1886-1968)[216] and

saves the actresses from prostitution.[217] Effectively, the sole threat of contacting Imamura,

coupled with Deshimaru's connection with the general, scared the head of the local

Japanese forces, a colonel named Yokohama. Through opposing Yokohama's and his

Japanese army's plans, therefore, Deshimaru recounts that he saved many women from

the type of forced sexual behaviour that was not uncommon during the wartime period.[218]

Following Ienaga's characterization of prostitution, which "is by its very nature a

violation of women's rights to a decent occupation and livelihood,"[219] one can see that

Deshimaru's act prevented, at least on a small scale, this type of violence. Furthermore,

the means used to reach this end did not include any type of violence, as he acted through

a legitimate complaint to a superior.

A second case narrated by Deshimaru involves what he describes as the unfair

incarceration of Chinese and Indonesian individuals by the Japanese army. Under the

cover of accusations of smuggling large sums of money back to Chiang Kai-shek's

government, the Japanese military police seemingly avenged their failed attempt at

acquiring prostitutes.[220] Facing this situation, Deshimaru writes that he decided to

confront the army and attempted to liberate the prisoners. First, he smuggles food and

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[216] Note that this is the same Imamura who was recognized as "one of the most intelligent strategists in the Imperial Army," and who was revered by his troops as "epitomizing the essence of the Bushidō spirit" (Victoria, 2003: 108).
[217] Deshimaru, 1977: 152-153.
[218] This type of behaviour happened in Korea, where women were sent to the front troops as "comfort girls" (Ienaga, 1978: 158-159), in Malaya, where girls' schools were changed into brothels for the Japanese (Ienaga, 1978: 174), and in many other places, where even Japanese girls were used for this type of service (Ienaga, 1978: 184).
[219] Ienaga, 1978: 184.
[220] This is Deshimaru's allegations for their motives. See 1977: 153.

goods at night to comfort the prisoners, bribing the prison guards to get in.[221] However,

after a few altercations between Deshimaru and the guards when he tries to let a Chinese

woman visit her father, Deshimaru is incarcerated too and thrown into a poorly lit and

badly ventilated cell. At some point during his three weeks of imprisonment, he relates

that he screamed the following at the police:

> I did not do anything wrong! I do not care about the law and your
> fallacious reasoning, I only obey my own consciousness. My act
> is not contrary to the teaching of the Buddha. Your foolishness,
> your rigidity and your incomprehension will lead you to a
> situation much worse than what I am suffering right now![222]

This statement marks a contrast between, on one hand, the military law, actions and

reasoning of the army, and, on the other, Deshimaru's own actions, consciousness, and

what he saw as the teachings of the Buddha. He thus situates himself as standing apart

from the cruel acts of the army, and as their victim due to his sense of what he presents as

a Buddhist-inspired justice. Through this story, therefore, he presents a Buddhist ideal of

nonviolence that may redeem his participation in the war, at least in the eyes of his

followers.

Ultimately, Deshimaru tells us he was able to get out of prison and even liberate

the hundred prisoners, once more by appealing to his connections with higher authorities

in the army. He contacted general Imamura through a letter he gave to his ally in the

imperial army, sergeant Hashimoto.[223] Reflecting on the event, Deshimaru writes about

the contrast between his own actions and those of other Mitsubishi workers, who would

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[221] Deshimaru, 1977: 154.
[222] Deshimaru, 1977: 158. He notes after this quotation that those policemen were condemned to death after the war, confirming the feelings expressed in his statement.
[223] Deshimaru, 1977: 159.

not help the prisoners out of fear of being in conflict with the company.[224] In another

work, *Zen et vie quotidienne*, Deshimaru alludes to this same event in the following

words: "The military police wanted to exterminate the prisoners; but I went to prison and

distributed goods, cigarettes, which gave them the solace that they were missing."[225]

These additional details illustrate his emphasis on the exceptional nature of his actions,

with the result that they appear all the more courageous considering the heavy risks

involved in defying the army's will.

The third case in which Deshimaru relates his attempt to deal nonviolently with

the situations that arose during his stay in Indonesia can be found in his cooperation with

the Indonesian Independence movement led by Indonesian leader Sukarno (1901-1970).

This case must be treated with great caution, as the type of help he provided to the native

population consisted in letting them have the Japanese army's weapons after the latter's

defeat. The help is therefore related to giving weapons to a particular group, and is

obviously not an act of nonviolence. On the other hand, this event is worth mentioning as

it is illustrative of Deshimaru's desire to show his reader that his individual consciousness

was disconnected from the Japanese army's endeavours.

At the time of Japan's defeat, an independence movement started in the south of

Indonesia. One of the main demands of this group was for the defeated Japanese army's

weapons in order to prevent Indonesia from falling under colonial rule again. In October

1945, a delegation of the independence movement, under the leadership of an individual

named Manusama, was able to occupy the capital of Bangka island, where Deshimaru

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[224] Deshimaru, 1977: 159.
[225] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 145.

was at the time.[226] Soon, the independence movement threatened to kill Japanese

civilians if the army refused to give up their weapons, but the Japanese army, in fear of

being accused of rebellion by the allied forces, would not give in to the demands.[227]

Manusama then convinced Deshimaru to meet with the Japanese general and ask him to

relinquish the army's weapons, but Deshimaru was not even allowed to talk to the general.

Later that night, realizing the massacre that was on its way, Deshimaru implored

Manusama to take the general as hostage "pacifically"[228] in order to convince him to give

up the army's weapons. This plan was successful to a certain extent,[229] as the weapons

were delivered by the army to the Indonesians, and the massacre of civilians was avoided.

Such a solution also prevented further conflict since the Japanese army would have had to

take up arms against the independence movement in the event of a massacre.

Deshimaru's attempt to avoid greater violence, here, can be better understood in

terms of the ends he used to solve the conflict between the Japanese army and the

independence movement. Since the objective of this manoeuvre was the distribution of

weapons to the native population, however, this case must also be treated as trying to help

avoiding the re-colonization of Indonesia after the war, which was not necessarily without

violence.[230] Nevertheless, this story is a good illustration of the mixed motives of a man

participating in a war, trying to avoid violence but also perceiving its potential need in

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[226] Deshimaru, 1977: 169.
[227] Deshimaru, 1977: 169-170.
[228] Term used by Deshimaru, 1997: 172.
[229] Three of the general's guards were shot dead during the altercations leading to his captivity.
[230] This type of cooperation was widespread in the war's aftermath, as Sukarno and other independence leaders sought help from the Japanese to confront the Allied forces and establish the independence of Indonesia (Ienaga, 1978: 178).

terms of helping populations avoid being further dominated by more colonial powers.[231]

These particular acts were not exceptional ones, since there were many instances of

Japanese army factions' helping the Indonesians resist the Allied forces. What is

important to retain from this story, perhaps, is the way in which Deshimaru presents his

desire to help Indonesians attain independence.

2.2. Sawaki's Two Discourses

Beyond his actions during the war, Deshimaru also depicts his master Sawaki's

teachings as promoting ideals of tolerance and nonviolence. His representation of Sawaki,

a Sōtō Zen master otherwise known for his pro-war rhetoric, demonstrates a concern with

distancing not only himself, but also his lineage, from any involvement in the violence of

the war. I will first briefly present Sawaki's war rhetoric as documented by Victoria and

Ishikawa and then contrast it with Deshimaru's description of his master.

The involvement of Sawaki in Japanese war activities started when he was drafted

into the military for the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). In his memoirs, he writes of

his initial reluctance to serve in the army, thinking it would conflict with his intent to

follow the Buddhist path.[232] Nevertheless, his attitude changed as he and his platoon

engaged in battles. He thus also recorded his feelings about killing in his memoirs:

> Once we started fighting, however, I felt that this was great.
> When my rifle would not work anymore due to overheating from
> continuous firing, I would shift my position and piss on it to cool
> it off. Then I would shoot some more .... "Combat is easy," I

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[231] Such a concern for the local populations may not excuse Deshimaru's role as an occupier in Indonesia, but it still demonstrates his desire to distance himself from the imperialistic goals of his country.
[232] See Ishikawa, 1998: 91.

> thought. "Until I came here, nothing I had experienced gave me
> such a feeling of freedom. There is no place better than this." ... I
> killed a belly full of people in the Russo-Japanese war. There was
> one battle in particular during which we lured the enemy to fall
> into a pit and we picked them off like sitting ducks with great
> efficiency.[233]

This quotation illustrates the facility with which Sawaki started killing once on the

battlefield. His doubts about the incompatibility of war and his Zen training, as expressed

in his reluctance to engage in the military, were seemingly dissipated by the feelings of

freedom he experienced as he started killing. Second, as mentioned by Ishikawa, this

piece of writing is a typical illustration "of how the Buddhist ideal of 'not taking life' had

no effect whatsoever on the circumstances of a Buddhist's experience of 'freedom' and

satori."[234] This particular discourse, furthermore, would become popular in later literature

combining Zen Buddhism and martial arts.[235]

Sawaki's war experience turned into full-fledged pro-war rhetoric at least by the

time of the Fifteen-Year War. In an article he wrote in 1942 in the Buddhist magazine

Daihōrin, he expresses the following stance:

> ...it is just to punish those who disturb the public order. Whether
> one kills or does not kill, the precept forbidding killing [is
> preserved]. It is the precept forbidding killing that wields the
> sword. It is the precept that throws the bomb.[236]

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[233] Cited in Ishikawa, 1998: 92.
[234] Ishikawa, 1998: 92.
[235] This modern depiction of Zen as compatible with martial arts is represented in its earliest forms by
works such as Nitobe Inazō's *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan* (1905), or Nukariya Kaiten's *Religion of the
Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan* (1913). For further discussion of
this phenomenon, see Sharf, 1995a: 112-116, and Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 95-129.
[236] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 36.

This rhetoric employs Mahāyāna Buddhist notions such as the emptiness of the precepts and the consequent relaxing of the necessity to uphold them.[237] Coming from a master who has been labeled "one of the most representative teachers of the modern Sōtō school,"[238] Sawaki's rhetoric demonstrates one type of support for the war in Japan.

Before turning to Deshimaru's treatment of his master, it is important to note that Sawaki's stance during the war was later criticized by members of his own sect. For example, Sōtō Zen scholar and proponent of Critical Buddhism Hakayama Noriaki (b. 1943) condemns Sawaki's behaviour and rhetoric during the war, arguing: "Not only was Sawaki not a Buddhist, but he took up arms against [Sōtō Zen Master] Dōgen himself... ."[239] Such a criticism attempts to distance the Sōtō sect from the actions of individuals who participated in the pro-war discourse of the twentieth century. Instead of criticizing and condemning his master's actions, however, Deshimaru employs a different strategy, which is an alternative presentation of Sawaki's discourse washed of any violence. Doing so, he further participates in constructing an ideal of nonviolence during a time of war, which is all the more interesting due to the master's use of Zen rhetoric to support Japan's war activities.

One presentation of Sawaki's words is found in Deshimaru's autobiographical writings. As a conclusion to the chapter relating the above-mentioned prison event, he quotes a letter he received from his master. In contrast to Sawaki the war-enthusiast

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[237] See chapter one, section one.
[238] Ishikawa, 1998: 91.
[239] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 176.

described above, Deshimaru presents a master who is concerned with respecting all

human beings. From this letter, he quotes the following lines:

> In this moment, humanity is in a critical situation. I wish, through
> zazen, to be able to bring it back on the right track and into
> stability. Our country is at war, but you should still try to see
> beyond your own frontiers, and to love men with whom you live
> at the moment. Everyone who does zazen is my disciple.[240]

This positive depiction of his master shows Sawaki's concern for the rest of humanity,

along with *zazen* as the solution for its troubles. The idea of seeing beyond one's

frontiers is particularly surprising from a master who was infamous for nationalistic lines

such as "Invoke the power of the emperor; invoke the power of the military banner."[241]

Deshimaru's description demonstrates, therefore, his will to show his master in a different

light.

Deshimaru does not discuss either the involvement of Sawaki during the Russo-

Japanese war or his nationalistic rhetoric. Instead, he emphasizes the moral support from

his master, arguing that it inspired him to do good deeds even if it went against the will of

the Japanese army. For example, in the preface to one of his early works, *Vrai Zen:*

Source vive révolution intérieure, published in 1969, he cites a letter[242] from his master as

the source of his resolution to help Chinese, Indonesians, and Europeans to get out of

prison. This letter contained the following words: "Love them all, beyond nationalities.

They are all my brothers. I hope to teach *zazen* to all peoples of the world. I hope that

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[240] Deshimaru, 1977: 160.

[241] Cited in Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 175-176 (through the words of Hakayama).

[242] Whether this is the same letter as the one mentioned above is unknown, but due to the similarities in the topic, it is highly probable. Even if it were the same letter, however, the content is pertinent to cite since it is one of the rare occasions where Deshimaru shares his master's perceptions on the topic of the war.

this war will stop, to be able to bring peace to spirits."[243] This contradictory picture of

Sawaki as both fierce nationalist and tolerant teacher, therefore, confirms the type of ideal

Deshimaru is attempting to promote to his followers. Although we might not be able to

solve the contradictions involved in the double discourse of Sawaki,[244] what can be

concluded is that while writing his autobiography in the 1970s, Deshimaru attributed an

ideal, nonviolent stance to his master. And this ideal is what he presented to his followers.

3. Autobiography as Hagiography/Apology

That Deshimaru's presentation of his nonviolent stance was successfully

transmitted to his disciples is illustrated in the writings of Philippe Coupey, an American

who followed Deshimaru and published some of his oral teachings in a work entitled *La*

voix de la vallée.[245] In his introduction to this work, Coupey redeems Deshimaru's

participation in the war through the following account of his experience in Indonesia:

> Having arrived on Bangka island, near Sumatra, Deshimaru
> taught the practice of *zazen* to its inhabitants, Chinese,
> Indonesians, and Europeans. Saddened and scandalized by the
> behavior of his peers (the occupying Japanese army was torturing
> and executing without discrimination many natives), Deshimaru
> upheld actively the cause of the islanders. Denounced as resister,
> he was thrown into prison. Despite disease, suffocating heat, flies,
> dirt, lack of water and food, and his own condemnation to death,

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[243] Deshimaru, 1969: 32-33.

[244] A contrast between a public stance for the government and a private discourse for his disciple could be an interesting path to explore, but it lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

[245] Published in 1984, this work is a transcription of Deshimaru's teachings during four nine-day *sesshins* that took place in Val d'Isère, France, in the summer of 1977. It is also the first book that published Deshimaru's teachings in the English language originally. I have unfortunately only had access to its French translation, and therefore all citations are my translation from the French.

he remained sitting in his cell, facing the wall, wearing his
Master's rakusu.[246]

Such an idealistic summary of Deshimaru's stay in Indonesia supports the conclusion, at

least in this particular case, that Deshimaru's autobiography, and probably his oral

discourse concerning the same events, were successfully assimilated and promoted by his

followers in Europe. This presentation, furthermore, participates in spreading an image

of Zen Buddhism that is fundamentally nonviolent and tolerant. Especially because

Deshimaru addresses his behaviour during a time of conflict, this ideal is amplified and

thus acts as a model for his followers.

Deshimaru's positive presentation of Sawaki was also adopted by his disciples, as

seen, again, in Coupey's writings. The latter relates the events that happened before

Deshimaru's departure for Indonesia, and cites Sawaki's words: "We are probably going

to lose the war. Our nation will be destroyed, our people annihilated... . Maybe this is

the last time that we will see each other. Whatever happens, love all humanity without

distinction of race or belief."[247]   Once more, the Sawaki presented here is one who can

see beyond the nationalistic discourse of his country, and who encourages his disciple to

see everyone as his equal. Since Deshimaru left for Indonesia in 1941, which would be

before Sawaki's text expressing that whether one kills or not, the precept against killing is

preserved, it is hard to explain the discrepancy between Sawaki's public war discourse

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[246] In Deshimaru, 1984: 37. A *rakusu* is a small garment worn around the neck by Zen Buddhists who have
taken the precepts. The *rakusu* in this citation is Sawaki's, which he gave to his disciples before
Deshimaru's departure for Indonesia. In Deshimaru's autobiography, he asks his master for the *rakusu* and,
after a first refusal and some hesitation, Sawaki agrees to his demand (1977: 135).
[247] Cited in Deshimaru, 1984: 36. These words from Sawaki are not mentioned in the autobiography. In the
latter work, at the time of Deshimaru's departure, Sawaki agrees to give his *rakusu* to Deshimaru and says:
"Well, take it! By wearing it, you will become a hero pushed by fate's caprices et you will never stop. I
never separated myself from it since my trip in China" (Deshimaru, 1977: 135).

and Deshimaru's presentation of the same individual to his followers. Rather than

depicting a Sawaki who changed his discourse in the forties, this presentation reflects a

conscious decision to present his master in a positive, nonviolent way.

In order to shed light on Deshimaru's presentation of his actions and his master's

words, we must consider the context in which Deshimaru wrote his autobiography.

According to his own account, he wrote this work during the 1970s while living in Paris.

He did not initially intend to publish it, but rather wrote out of nostalgia for the past,

simply for himself. It is only in response to the demands of a Japanese publishing

company, who, in Deshimaru's words, "wished to provide spiritual sustenance to a

disoriented youth," that he published it, first in Japanese and then in French.[248] Beyond

this information about the time and place of his writings, Deshimaru also mentions a few

details about what he wished to express in his writing. In the postscript, he writes: "... in

parallel to the tribulations and vicissitudes of my life, I tried to describe the evolution of

my spiritual thought."[249] Instead of treating Deshimaru's autobiography as a series of

related facts, therefore, one must give attention to the elements he included to illustrate

his spiritual growth. One way of doing so is to treat his autobiography and its retelling by

followers as a sacred biography, or hagiography.[250]

The various versions of the story of the Buddha attest to the importance of

biographies in the Buddhist tradition. Through the telling of his previous lives as a

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[248] Deshimaru, 1977: 205.
[249] Deshimaru, 1977: 205.
[250] The decision to categorize Deshimaru's life story as biography or hagiography can be debated, but as Faure argues: "...the biographical process is in most cases only an unconscious duplication of the hagiographical process" (1986: 188).

bodhisattva, or narrating his life as he became Śākyamuni Buddha,[251] not only are great

stories produced and disseminated, but, most importantly, religious meaning is created.

In her introduction to an edited volume on sacred biographies of Buddhism,

anthropologist Juliane Schober formulates this aspect in the following words: "In

Buddhism, biographical episodes function as frames of reference that map thematic

configurations onto divergent trajectories of time and place."[252] In the Chan and Zen

traditions, sacred biographies also abound, presenting the lives of its great figures. For

example, one can find in Daoxuan's (596-667) *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*

(645-664) an account of the life of Bodhidharma. Rather than reading his life as

historical material, however, Faure demonstrates that it is more fruitful to read elements

in such stories as literary device, and descriptions of great figures as textual paradigms.[253]

It is thus by giving attention to literary details and the context of these works that one

gains the most useful information concerning their relevance for the tradition. In a

similar vein, certain literary elements in Deshimaru's autobiography work to produce

meaning for his followers. For example, his constant practice of *zazen*, his return to

important Buddhist books to go through times of trouble, and his relation with his master

are all important elements that can shape his followers' views of their practice and

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[251] For his previous lives, see the *Jātakas* (an early Pāli collection was compiled by an unknown author in the fifth century CE [Davids, 1880: lxxvi]). For biographies of his life as the Buddha, see, for example, the *Lalitavistara* (an anonymous compilation edited before the ninth century CE [Winternitz, 1933 (1972): 253-254]), the *Buddhacarita* (attributed to Aśvaghoṣa, second century CE [Olivelle, 2008: xxii]), and the *Mahāvastu* (attributed to the Lokottaravādin branch of the Mahāsāṅghikas, with sections dating from the second century BCE but probably completed in the fourth century CE [Winternitz, 1933 (1972): 239-247].
[252] Schober, 1997: 12.
[253] Faure, 1993: 130-133. See also Faure, 1986: 190.

beliefs.[254] This is true of his depiction of his own wartime activities and the discourse of

his master, which work to produce a narrative redeeming his participation in the war. In

this case, the way he relates the events creates a distance between his Zen and the

mainstream war rhetoric of the Buddhist sects at the time. Such a reading of his work

does not seek to downplay its relevance as legend or myth, but rather to shed light on its

religious meaning.

That Deshimaru's story can be treated as a sacred biography is also demonstrated

by the presence of extraordinary events, and even one that is close to being miraculous.

This event is not narrated by Deshimaru in his autobiography, but rather in the retelling of

his story by Coupey in his preface to *La voix de la vallée*. In this anecdote, traveling

from Bangka to Billiton Island, Deshimaru's boat is hit by the American army. Thrown

in the ocean without a lifejacket, he is rescued twenty-four hours later by the Japanese

navy. Commenting on this event, Coupey writes: "Although his clothes were shredded,

the rakusu was intact. And the notes of his Master, while written in ink, were as fresh and

clear as they were on the first day."[255] The introduction of a miracle, or at least

extraordinary event, in the retelling of Deshimaru's life hints at the manner in which his

story should be treated. Rather than approaching it as a series of historical events plainly

demonstrating his acts in Indonesia, one should read it as a narration crafted to present

meaningful events in his life. Given the context of his actions, even his distance from the

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[254] Given that they read his book, obviously (I met at least two practitioners who mentioned this book). However, elements of his autobiography are also found in oral teachings and writings by his disciples, as mentioned above in the writings of Philippe Coupey. Since this chapter addresses Deshimaru's wartime behavior, other elements of his teachings found in his autobiographical writings will be addressed in chapter three.
[255] Deshimaru, 1984: 38.

pro-war rhetoric of his time could be treated as "extraordinary," and hence contribute to

elevating Deshimaru's status as a legendary Zen master in the eyes of his followers.

When situated in its historical context, Deshimaru's autobiography can also be

read as a strategic literary device to deal with the topic of his war participation. Just as

other Zen teachers in the West, Asian or not, he had to face the condemnation of Buddhist

support for the war. Offering his own individual actions as detached from the pro-war

rhetoric of his sect and presenting Sawaki under a rather positive light, therefore,

Deshimaru employs narrative to redeem his lineage. This strategy can be compared to

other Zen teachers' strategies in the West. For example, Robert Aitken, although a

radical pacifist, had to deal with his tradition's past and military activities. When

Yasutani Hakuun, invited to a *sesshin* in Honolulu, advised a man to follow his country's

demands to participate in the Vietnam War, Aitken had to justify the master's answer by

talking about the difference of culture and *karma*.[256] Rather than trying to distance his

lineage from the Buddhist war rhetoric, therefore, he attempted to offer explanations for

its rise. Avoiding the topic most of the time, he also used the strategy of silence, as

related by Tworkov: "He had also learned from the Japanese something of the diplomacy

of discretion; familiar with the political allegiances of most Japanese teachers, he had

long ago concluded that certain activities were simply not discussed."[257] While this is

only one instance among various strategies to deal with the Buddhist support for the war,

it demonstrates an important perspective in which Deshimaru's writings must be read.

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[256] Tworkov, 1989 [1994]: 42.
[257] Tworkov, 1989 [1994]: 42.

Conclusion

The different elements that emerge when reading Deshimaru's autobiography in its historical context help us to understand an important aspect of his construction of an ideal of nonviolence. Beyond the distancing from Buddhist pro-war rhetoric, Deshimaru's autobiography also works as a potential model of nonviolent action. While he probably did not intend to produce such a model,[258] when read in a Western context, his autobiographical writings fit the modern popular understanding of Buddhism as a nonviolent tradition.[259] From a different perspective, being written in the 1970s, Deshimaru's work is also a product of this view of Buddhism. In this sense, Deshimaru is both responding to values of nonviolence, peace, and activism stressed in modern Buddhist literature and creating a modern discourse for his brand of Zen at the same time.

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[258] That Deshimaru was not an exemplar of nonviolence is beyond doubt. For example, he ate meat, and reportedly took a certain pleasure in throwing live crabs in the boiling water himself and then making fun of his scandalized disciples while inventing a *mantra* to help the crabs attain a better rebirth (in de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 166). I will say more about Deshimaru's precept-breaking behaviour in chapter three below.

[259] See chapter one. See also Faure, 2009: 93-99, where the author discusses the popular received idea that "Buddhism is a peaceful religion."

CHAPTER 3: The Association Zen de Montréal

Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the Association Zen de Montréal by first looking at the

arrival of Deshimaru in France and contextualizing his foundation of the Association Zen

Internationale within the development of Zen in Europe. I then move to some basic

characteristics of the AZI that made it popular in Europe, namely Deshimaru's

personality and his emphasis on *zazen*. Finally, I present the AZM by addressing Zen in

the province of Québec and the foundation of the *dōjō*[260] in Montréal. I will follow with a

brief ethnographic portrait of the *dōjō*, providing basic information about its teachings

and practices, as well as who practices there. I will do so by focusing on the AZM's

presentation of *zazen*, other practices such as ceremonies, and their relation to Buddhism

and its institutions.

1. Zen in Europe

1.1. Beginnings

While it would be beyond the scope of this chapter to offer an exhaustive account

of the development of Zen Buddhism in Europe, it is nevertheless relevant to trace some

of its broad historical outlines to help situate the AZI. The encounter of Europeans with

Zen Buddhism goes as far back as the Christian missionary years in Japan. The first

descriptions of Japanese Buddhist practices sent to Europe were by Francis Xavier (1506-

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[260] This Japanese word is used by practitioners at the AZM to refer to the centre. For a definition of the
term, see introduction, fn. 61.

1552), a Spanish missionary.[261] Another missionary, a Portuguese named Christovao

Ferreira (1580-1650), is said to have converted to Zen during the Christian persecutions

and even wrote a pamphlet against Christianity.[262] This early exploration of Japanese

Buddhism, soon stopped by the political situation in Japan, would only start again in the

Meiji period. Indeed, it was only when Japan opened its borders and sent Japanese priests

abroad to learn about Western culture and present Buddhism to the West that Japanese

Zen Buddhism continued its spread in Europe and America.[263] By that time, the study of

Buddhist texts was well underway in Europe, thanks to individuals such as ethnologist

Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800-1894), philologist Eugène Burnouf (1801-1852), and

philosopher and statesman Jules Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire (1805-1895).[264] During the

second half of the nineteenth century in Europe, knowledge concerning the Buddhist

tradition was mostly based on Pāli texts, which came to be considered as representing an

older, and therefore "purer," Buddhism. Partly responsible for this development were

British founder of the *Pali Text Society* T.W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) and German

philologist Hermann Oldenberg (1854-1920).[265] It is in such a context that "an elite circle

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[261] Koné, 2001: 141, Batchelor, 1994: 165.

[262] Koné, 2001: 141. The reference provided for this particular event is Shore, 1992: 48. See also Batchelor, 1994: 180-181.

[263] The first Japanese priests to sail from Japan to Europe in 1872 were from the Nishihongan-ji and Higashihongan-ji branches of the Shin sect and their main purpose in Europe was to acquire knowledge about European socio-political history and culture (Ketelaar, 1990: 126). Another marking event in the spread of Zen Buddhism in the West was the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, during which Japanese priests from different sects presented their version of Buddhism to the world. Snodgrass describes this type of Buddhism as "'Eastern Buddhism,' a repackaging for a Western audience of *shin bukkyō*, a philosophical, rationalized and socially committed interpretation of Buddhism that emerged from the restructuring of Buddhism and its role in Japanese society necessitated by the religious policy of early Meiji government" (Snodgrass, 2003: 115). See also Ketelaar, 1990: 136-173, and discussion below.

[264] Bauman, 2000: 10. See also Lopez, 1995: 2-5.

[265] Bauman, 2000: 11.

of internationally minded Japanese intellectuals and globe-trotting Zen priests"[266] brought

the Zen Buddhist tradition to the West and shaped the Western perspective on the matter.

As mentioned in chapters one and two, the type of Buddhism that emerged during

the Meiji period was characterized by a concern to make the tradition fit with the modern

nationalistic ideals of Japan. Responding to trying years during which Buddhism was

labeled a foreign and decadent institution posing an obstacle to the development of Japan

into a modern nation,[267] Buddhist intellectuals sought to reform their tradition. The

discourse that emerged was a presentation of Japanese Buddhism as "an

uncompromisingly empirical, rational, and scientific mode of inquiry into the nature of

things"[268] that represented "the most evolutionary advanced form of the Buddha's

teaching."[269] It is this version of Buddhism, or New Buddhism (shin bukkyō), that

characterized the type of Zen Buddhism that reached the West during and after the Meiji

period. Important proponents of Japanese Zen in the West were Rinzai priest Shaku Sōen

(1859-1919), who participated in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and

his students D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966), whose prolific works on Zen left a deep impact on

the way in which it would be understood in the West. The legacy of Suzuki, as well as

other Japanese intellectuals such as Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), Hisamatsu Shin'ichi

(1889-1980), and Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990) was a presentation of Zen highly

influenced by the European discourse on the value of "experience," promoted by

Westerners such as German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst

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[266] Sharf, 1995a: 108.
[267] Sharf, 1995a: 109. See also chapter two.
[268] Sharf, 1995a: 111.
[269] Sharf, 1995a: 110.

Schleiermacher (1768-1834), German scholar Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), and American

philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910).[270] Presented as a transcultural

experience, Zen was freed, as it were, from its institutional apparatus. Such "essential"

Zen appealed to many Europeans and Americans alike. As Sharf notes, however, it is

important to remember that "those aspects of Zen most attractive to the Occident ... were

derived in large part from Occidental sources."[271] Nevertheless, it is this particular image

of Zen that was first displayed to the West, and through the same token left a lasting

impact on the way Zen would be perceived in the West from then on.

In Europe, a Japanese Zen monk named Tai Sue (dates unknown) apparently

attempted to start a Buddhist institute shortly after World War I.[272] However, his mission

failed and it is only later, during the 1960s and 1970s, that what has been called a "Zen

boom" took place in Europe.[273] In this period, Zen Buddhist teachers arrived in Europe,

responding to a strong demand caused by the popularization of Zen by Suzuki and others.

As in America,[274] the first founders of Zen centers were Asian missionaries, with lay

Rinzai leader Nagaya Kiichi (1895-1993), who started teaching in Germany in 1965, and

Sōtō monk Taisen Deshimaru (1914-1982), who arrived in France in 1967.[275] Apart from

the Japanese Zen tradition, other notable Zen teachers were the Vietnamese monk Thich

Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), who arrived in France in 1966, and the Korean monk Seung Sahn

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[270] Sharf, 1995a: 135.
[271] Sharf, 1995a: 140.
[272] Lenoir, 1999b: 278.
[273] Koné, 2001: 143.
[274] Notable early Asian missionaries in America were Shaku Sōen and Senzaki Nyōgen for the Rinzai sect, Suzuki Shunryū for the Sōtō sect, and Maezumi Taizan (1931-1995) for the more recent Sanbōkyōdan sect (See Fields, 1981 [1986]: 168-272).
[275] Koné: 2001: 143. See also Lenoir, 1999b: 278-284, and Batchelor, 1994: 120-123, 136-137.

(1927-2004), from the Kwan Um Zen school, who started teaching in the 1970s.[276] These

teachers founded various centers, thus establishing a new step in the dissemination of Zen

in Europe by allowing Western enthusiasts to have personal encounters with a teacher.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these teachers taught a Zen adapted to their

Western audience. Furthermore, at least in the case of Japanese Zen, these new

proponents were often very critical of the state of the tradition in their home countries,

and theirs was thus a Zen they sought to reform.[277] Since it would be beyond the scope of

this chapter to present the background and activities of each individual, I will here focus

on the case of Deshimaru.

1.2. Deshimaru's Mission and Lineage

In the literature of the AZI, founded by Deshimaru, a recurring theme is the

teacher's desire to implant "true Zen" in the West.[278] This assertion of an authentic Zen

not only echoes earlier proponents of Zen who reduced the tradition to an essential, core

experience, but also Deshimaru's own master's criticism of the state of the Sōtō sect in

Japan. Indeed, after ordaining Deshimaru at the age of fifty-three years old, Sawaki is

related to have told him:

> In India during the time of Bodhidharma, Buddhism was in a state
> of decadence. So Bodhidharma's teacher told him to take the

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[276] Koné: 2001: 143. The Chinese Chan tradition arrived in Europe later, introduced by John Crook and Ton Lathouwers (Koné: 2001: 144).

[277] Koné, 2001: 148. The same can be said of the development of Zen in the West in general. See Spuler, 2000: 34, Tworkov, 1989 [1994]: 4, and Finney, 1991: 387.

[278] The title of one of Deshimaru's early books, *Vrai Zen* (1969), attests to that. In the same work, he calls Sawaki "heir of the true Zen tradition" (1969: 22). Batchelor describes Deshimaru's mission in the following words: "...to establish in Europe what he passionately understood to be 'True Zen'" (1994: 120-121).

Dharma to the East. Likewise in Japan, Buddhism is now dead. And so you, my Dharma heir, who know the true teachings of the Buddha, take them to the West so that Buddhism may again flourish.[279]

It is within such teleological paradigms that Deshimaru understood and presented his mission in Europe. Before presenting the AZI and its branch group the AZM, it is therefore important to give attention to the circumstances of Deshimaru's arrival and stay. This information will, in turn, shed light on the concerns of the master and the type of teaching he disseminated to his followers.

Deshimaru associated his teachings with Sawaki whom, according to some versions of the story, he followed for thirty years except for a period during the war.[280] While this attribution of a close master-disciple relation may not be far from the truth, it is also pertinent to add that Deshimaru was married and had children before he left for Europe.[281] His ordination and mission, therefore, only took place later in his life, when, near his deathbed, Sawaki finally agreed to ordain him as a monk.[282] From the literature of the AZI, this refusal to ordain Deshimaru was due to Sawaki's desire to let him "have the experience of people who were not isolated by the monastic life" so that "he would be able to offer a teaching that was more relevant to them."[283] Deshimaru also cites his master's response when he asked to be ordained for the first time in the following words:

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[279] Cited in Batchelor, 1994: 122.

[280] For example, Deshimaru, 1984: 16 ("In memoriam" by Philippe Coupey).

[281] Details about his children are usually not provided. However, de Smedt presents the situation in the following way: "he abandoned the world of affairs, shaved his head, said goodbye to his family life and his five big kids born from two beds" (de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 64). Additionally, a letter of criticism to the teachers at the AZI mentions that he was the father of four children, including two illegitimate ones (Pelayo, 1999).

[282] Lenoir, 1999b: 279. This was in 1965.

[283] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: vii (in translator Nancy Champoux's note).

"You will not bury your life in these temples of bureaucratic prelates! It is better that you

become a true bodhisattva who continues zazen in the dirt of the social world."[284]

Deshimaru's lay career as a married man with children, therefore, is valued in the group's

literature as having given him the experience to deal properly with the problems of

everyday life. In light of the type of Zen that was brought to the West, Deshimaru's path

thus goes hand in hand with the emphasis on the practice of *zazen* over and above

institutional belonging or monastic practices. In turn, such a path first nurtured and then

became what he called "true Zen."

Deshimaru's teacher, Sawaki, must also be addressed as one of the factors that

contributed to his particular articulation of Zen. Putting his associations with the pro-war

rhetoric of his sect aside,[285] Sawaki has been known, at least in the West, as a reformer of

the Sōtō school who sought to go back to Dōgen's teaching by emphasizing the practice

of *zazen*. In his presentation of *La pratique du Zen*, Vincent Bardet describes Sawaki as a

"bold reformer who came back to the pure teaching of Dogen ... namely to the very

source of Zen: the practice of zazen, which is the Awakening itself."[286] After teaching at

Komazawa University, Sawaki also became abbot of Antaiji, a Sōtō Zen temple located

in Kyōto and known for its acceptance of Western disciples and emphasis on the practice

of *zazen*.[287] Arthur Braverman, an American who practiced in this temple, imagines

Sawaki:

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[284] In Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 11.
[285] Discussed in chapter two.
[286] In Deshimaru, 1974 [1975, 1977, 1981]: 18.
[287] For example, Braverman writes: "Antaiji became a temple for students to practice Zen without the distractions most temples in Japan took for granted—parishioners needs such as funerals, memorial serves, religious holidays, and in some cases weddings" (2003: 15).

He is a rebel—badmouthing the Zen institutions with their lazy
clerics. But most of all, he is waving a banner for *zazen*—the
zazen known as *shikan taza*, or just sitting, a *zazen* that he insists
has absolutely no value in the sense of progress, benefits, or in,
his everyday language, "paybacks." "Because it takes you out of
the world of loss and gain," he says, "it should be practiced."[288]

Sawaki's criticism and insistence on *zazen* are not only both adopted by Deshimaru in his

teaching in Europe, but also presented as the only true Zen.[289] Again, this specific

presentation of Zen as a meditative practice to the exclusion of other elements of the

tradition must be qualified in its modern context. Indeed, it is closely related to a

discourse in which going back to this practice of seated meditation is considered a return

to a "pure" Zen, in imitation of the Buddha's enlightenment experience under the Bodhi

tree. It is important to distinguish, nevertheless, Sawaki's emphasis on *zazen* from the

modern insistence on *satori* or *kenshō*. "Just sitting," here, is proposed not as a means to

an end, but as an end in itself. The search for epistemological certainty through

meditation[290] is thus related to *zazen* itself. In chapter four, I demonstrate one of the ways

in which Deshimaru participated in the discourse on meditative experience as the true

way of seeing things, and for which he used the term *hishiryo*.[291] Following this idea,

Deshimaru affirmed that the very origin of Zen Buddhism was "[w]hen Buddha woke up

under the Bodhi tree."[292]

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[288] Braverman, 2003: 58-59.
[289] This presentation of his Zen as "true Zen" is criticized by Pelayo, a former member of the AZI, as "particularly revealing of a sectarian way of presenting Zen" (1999).
[290] As presented in Sharf 1995b.
[291] See chapter four below.
[292] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 3. In the same work, he teaches: "Zen means going directly back to the mind of Buddha, who experienced satori under the Bodhi tree" (115).

Deshimaru's move to Europe is often presented as a mission similar to that of

legendary Chan/Zen founder Bodhidharma. In de Smedt's biography, Deshimaru

affirms: "Me too, since I have been in Europe, I continued day after day like

Bodhidharma for nine years. Probably even more than Bodhidharma."[293] This ambitious

view is adopted by his followers, as demonstrated, for example, in a translator's note

calling him "the first Zen patriarch of the West."[294] Apart from affirming the validity of

his teachings by connecting him to an important lineage,[295] these associations with

Bodhidharma also present Deshimaru's coming to Europe as the latest step in the spread

of Zen Buddhism. Certain historical details, nevertheless, should be mentioned

concerning his path. Deshimaru's first intention had been to teach Zen in America, and it

was in response to the demands of a group of French "Zen macrobiotic" adepts that he

planned his departure for France.[296] He initially lived in poverty, but soon gained

popularity and was able to establish his first *dōjō* in Paris in 1972.[297] Furthermore, while

he is often presented as an individual sent in Europe by the Sōtō sect to enlighten the

West, his status as *kaikyōsōkan*, or Sōtō missionary responsible for Europe and Africa,

was a later attribution, given to him in 1975 by the Japanese authorities.[298]

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[293] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 176.

[294] In Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: x.

[295] Deshimaru's lineage is addressed below.

[296] Lenoir, 1999b: 278. He had taught *zazen* to these individuals at Teishoji in 1966 (Deshimaru, 1969: 134). There is a discrepancy between Lenoir's and Deshimaru's accounts of the events. According to Lenoir, an adept gave his address to Deshimaru while in Japan and was surprised to see him arrive at his home with only his *zafu*, *kesa*, and his master's notebooks as luggage (1999b: 279). In one of Deshimaru's tellings of the story, he was rather invited by the adepts of the same group (1969: 134).

[297] Lenoir, 1999b: 280.

[298] Lenoir, 1999b: 282. For example, editors of one of his works mention that he was the first to be sent in Europe by Sōtōshū (Deshimaru, 1969: 11). Bardet, in his presentation to *La pratique du Zen*, insists on this authority: "Master Deshimaru arrives in Paris toward the end of the year 1967, with a mandate for all Europe from Soto Zen, and sustained by all Zen schools in Japan" (in Deshimaru, 1974 [1975, 1977, 1981]:

Beyond this type of institutional recognition, it is clear even from a cursory look

at the literature of the AZI that for Deshimaru and his followers, lineage is an important

aspect of their tradition. The importance of Deshimaru's lineage is often emphasized by

giving Sawaki a position of high authority in Japan. For example, in an introduction to

one of Deshimaru's works, the editors describe Sawaki as the highest authority in Japan

since the death of Dōgen.[299] Furthermore, Deshimaru's connection to a lineage of

teachers going as far back as the Buddha is often mentioned, with or without the details of

his own transmission. Some versions of the events simply mention that Sawaki, on his

deathbed, made Deshimaru his successor by giving him the transmission, called *shihō*.[300]

Other versions, however, specify the fact that Deshimaru's *shihō* was officially given by

Yamada Zenji (1889-1979), or Yamada Reirin, then abbot of Eiheiji, and not Sawaki

himself.[301] Nevertheless, his spiritual (as opposed to official) lineage is upheld by his

followers. The most frequently cited evidence for this transmission is Sawaki's gift of his

*kesa*s and bowls to Deshimaru before he died.[302] What is not mentioned in this account of

Deshimaru's lineage is Sawaki's other disciples, who equally received transmission from

him. For example, important disciples of Sawaki were Narita Shūyū (1914-2004), who

received *shihō* from Sawaki,[303] and Kōshō Uchiyama (1912-1999), who was his official

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18). Batchelor, however, mentions that his success in Europe led retrospectively to his recognition (1994: 123). See also Batchelor, 1994: 123.

[299] Deshimaru, 1969: 11.

[300] For example, in Vincent Bardet's presentation in Deshimaru, 1974 [1975, 1977, 1981]: 18.

[301] See Coupey's "In Memoriam" in Deshimaru, 1984: 16. See also Halfmann, 1999.

[302] Coupey's "In Memoriam" and "Introduction" in Deshimaru, 1984: 16, 38. The *kesa* is a garment worn by monks, and symbolises transmission from master to disciple (Deshimaru, 1984: 255).

[303] Lenoir, 1999b: 281. See also the website of Ludger Tenryu Tenbreul, a German disciple of Deshimaru who separated from the AZI and founded his own center: *Zen-Vereinigung Deutschland e.V.*, "Teachers," http://www.zen-vereinigung.de/p69.shtml. Narita gave *shihō* in 1983 to Taiten Guareschi, who teaches Zen in Italy, in 1986 to Ludger Tenryu Tenbreul, who teaches in Germany, and in 1987 to Dokushō Villalba,

successor since he inherited the abbotship of Antaiji from Sawaki.[304] By claiming

Sawaki's lineage, therefore, Deshimaru established himself as heir to a rich tradition and

the vessel for its proper transmission to the West. At the same time, such a claim

participates in producing an idealistic lineage selective with its historical details, an act

that echoes earlier constructions of lineages in the Zen tradition.[305]

2. Association Zen Internationale: Deshimaru's Teachings and Legacy

An ethnographic picture of the Association Zen de Montréal would not be

complete without first addressing its mother organization, the Association Zen

Internationale, founded in 1979 by Deshimaru.[306] While this group included more than a

hundred *dōjō*s in several countries by the time of Deshimaru's death, in his sociological

study, *La Rencontre du bouddhisme et de l'Occident*, Lenoir raised this number to two

hundred by 1999.[307] In terms of the representation of Deshimaru's Zen in Europe, it was

estimated by Koné in 2001 that around eleven percent of Zen centres in all Europe were

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who teaches in Spain. See also *Communidad Budista Soto Zen*, "Linaje y transmisión," http://www.budismozen.es/php/mod/resource/view.php?id=99.

[304] Braverman, 2003: 8. Although Sawaki was officially abbot of Antaiji, he never stayed at that location until he became too sick to travel. As a token of his traveling lifestyle, his nickname was "homeless Kōdō" (Braverman, 2003: 8).

[305] For example, Faure demonstrates that although Chan lineages claimed to go back to the Buddha himself, the first mention of a Chinese patriarchal lineage only appeared in the seventh century CE (Faure, 1997: 96). In Japan, Bodiford notes, "the ritual manipulation of Dharma transmission attained its most extreme expression in the institutionalization of Sōtō temple Dharma lineages (*garanbō*)" (Bodiford, 1991: 429). Deshimaru's lineage is depicted in Deshimaru, 1984: 22-23. See appendix B.

[306] This association derived from an earlier one, founded in 1970, called the Association Zen d'Europe. See Lenoir, 1999b: 279-280. See also *AZI*, "L'AZI," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?rubrique8.

[307] Lenoir, 1999b: 280.

related to his teaching.[308] Today, the AZI boasts centres in many countries around the

world, including twelve European countries, Canada, and the United States.[309] The

number of practitioners who have participated in the group's activities from its origins to

the year 1999 was around fifteen thousand, with two thousand active members in the

same year.[310] Its headquarters are situated in La Gendronnière, a temple founded by

Deshimaru in 1980 near Blois in France's Val-de-Loire region, and labeled by Lenoir the

biggest Sōtō Zen temple in the world.[311] During its first summer alone, it is estimated that

a total of five thousand individuals from all Europe frequented its *sesshins*.[312] These

retreats are still organized at this temple, and attract hundreds of practitioners from

different parts of the world every year.[313] Many of the more serious practitioners at the

AZM, in fact, spend part of their summers in "La Gendro," the name they use to refer to

the temple.

2.1. Personality

In his sociological study of convert Buddhism in France, entitled *Le bouddhisme*

en France, Lenoir notes that two major factors for Deshimaru's success in establishing

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[308] Koné, 2001: 146. It is to be noted that these groups do not all belong to the AZI, since some are led by former disciples of Deshimaru who severed their ties with the association. Koné estimates further that such groups consist of about twenty percent of all Deshimaru-related groups.

[309] See *AZI*, "Lieux de pratique," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?article39. This topography, retrieved from the website of the AZI, obviously does not include centres founded by teachers related to Deshimaru but who severed their ties with the AZI. For example, Stéphane Thibault's website indicates that his group has also centres in South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chili, and Uruguay) and in the Caribbean (Cuba and Guadeloupe). See *Zen: Lignée de Deshimaru*, "Listing of dojos," http://www.zen-deshimaru.com/EN/sangha/dojo-list.html.

[310] Lenoir, 1999a: 86.

[311] Lenoir, 1999b: 280.

[312] Lenoir, 1999b: 280.

[313] See *AZI*, "La Gendronnière," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?article4.

centres and disseminating Zen in Europe were his personality and his emphasis on

zazen.[314] First, the attraction of his personality is not only demonstrated by the ways in

which biographers, editors, and practitioners relate to him, but also in the problems of

authority encountered by his association after he passed away. While an attempt to

encompass all the details of his personality would be impossible, mentioning a few

descriptions by close disciples will at least give a taste of the way he was perceived as a

master. One of the first things to notice in these descriptions is the range of different

epithets used to qualify his personality. Coupey, in a memoriam to his master, uses

French author Rabelais' carnivalesque character Pantagruel side by side with skeptical

French author Montaigne to illustrate this variety:

> He was a Pantagruel with a nuance of Montaigne…. He could be
> puritan, or machiavellian, but he remained always concentrated
> and orthodox. He was the friend, the competent professor, the
> wise man. He was in fact the enchanter of man and beast, and all
> those who were following him liked him.[315]

What Coupey means by "orthodox" in this case is unclear, especially in light of more

critical views of Deshimaru, which I provide below. Nevertheless, Coupey's description

conveys a sense of admiration for the different aspects of his master's personality. A

similar account is provided in the translator's note to another of Deshimaru's works:

"Deshimaru's personality was unique: blustery, sensitive, truculent, subtle, and inimitable.

Its greatest strength lay in the boundless universal energy he transmitted, and in itself

there is nothing inimitable about that…."[316] In both views, therefore, what emerges is the

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[314] Lenoir, 1999b: 280.
[315] Coupey's "In Memoriam," in Deshimaru, 1984: 17.
[316] Translator's note, in Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: viii.

image of a master whose complex personality and energetic style attracted many

individuals (and animals in the case of Coupey's description).

Along with this attractive energy came bursts of anger and a somewhat

unpredictable behaviour. However, this aspect of Deshimaru's personality does not seem

to have bothered those who followed him. For example, Jacques Brosse, a close disciple,

wrote the following about his master:

> From him emanated a magnetic, intense, even incandescent
> energy, to which no one could remain insensitive. His fits of
> anger, his implacable determination, and the roughness of his
> language, always direct, made him dreadful and sometimes
> shocking. But after being angry, Sensei would burst out laughing
> and invite you to drink. How could anyone be angry him? He
> touched justly, always to the sensitive point that he detected right
> away and we would quickly understand that his apparent brutality
> was, in fact, compassion.[317]

Deshimaru's anger and drinking activities, here, are presented in a positive light, as a

certain "skilful means" that attracted many individuals. Such aspects of his character,

along with his life as a layman before his ordination, are also used by followers to

demonstrate his humaneness. A French woman interviewed by Lenoir, in fact, shared the

following: "Nobody explains to you what a formidable man Deshimaru was. On the

other hand, Buddhist disciples tell you that he spent his time getting drunk, having sex

with women, and that he died from cancer. I find that extremely healthy."[318] Such an

account reveals a certain pride on the part of Deshimaru's followers to present their

master's epicurean side. They may find in him similarities with popular depictions of

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[317] Cited in Lenoir, 1999b: 283 (my translation). I will come back to Deshimaru's anger as compassion in the following chapter.
[318] Lenoir, 1999a: 69 (my translation).

monks whose antinomian behaviour is a manifestation of their liberation.[319] On one side,

namely the side of the followers in Europe, Deshimaru's excesses and bursting energy

were aspects of his personality that gave him authority as a Zen master.

On the other hand, certain individuals also publicly criticized Deshimaru's

behaviour as providing a negative model for followers. For example, Jean-Pierre

Schnetzler, disciple of Deshimaru for five years before becoming a disciple of Kalu

rinpoche (1905-1989), a Tibetan teacher, affirms: "...he was too much of a

fundamentalist of the posture for my taste, and probably not a model of abstinence. It

was probably easier for certain disciples to imitate him by drinking whisky... which is

quite far from exhausting the wisdom of Zen!"[320] In their criticisms of the AZI, both

Halfmann and Pelayo mention Deshimaru's immoderate drinking as a negative aspect of

the master's behaviour.[321] This particular side of Deshimaru, therefore, was not

appreciated equally by all individuals. On this topic, it must be noted that Sawaki, in an

early encounter with Deshimaru at Sojiji, got him drunk with Japanese strong alcohol.

When Deshimaru mentioned that above the temple door it was written that no alcohol or

garlic could enter through it, Sawaki answered: "Do not worry. This sake entered

through the back door."[322] Deshimaru uses this anecdote to teach that one can drink, but

in a moderate way only.[323] Such an attitude toward alcohol, in fact, is presented as a

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[319] See discussion in Sharf, 1995c: 43.
[320] Cited in Lenoir, 1999b: 184 (my translation).
[321] See Halfmann 1999 and Pelayo 1999.
[322] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 170.
[323] For example, Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 171, 185. Note, however, that Sawaki certainly did not make him drink moderately, as he got Deshimaru so drunk that the latter stumbled out of the temple and ended up lying in dog feces on the ground (See Deshimaru, 1977: 90).

Mahāyānist middle-way of approaching precepts, between the two extremes of abuse and

total abstinence.[324]

2.2. Emphasis on *Zazen*: Tradition and Experience

In an attempt to explain Deshimaru's popularity, Lenoir argues that another factor

was his emphasis on *zazen* and his denunciation of "religious intellectualism and

institutionalism."[325] As mentioned briefly above, this practice was central to Deshimaru's

presentation of Zen, as well as for his master Sawaki. Thus, it can be argued that *zazen*

gives meaning to all other elements of practice at the AZI. Part of the attraction to the

practice is found in its malleability, since, although guided by the teachings of the

association, every practitioner experiences *zazen* individually. From his interviews with

practitioners in France, Lenoir notes that this experience is important for practitioners

who do not want to be told what to believe in. He concludes:

> To the figure of the priest, pastor, or rabbi, who transmit what one
> should believe and not believe, should do and not do—briefly,
> dogma and norm—, [practitioners] oppose the figure of the
> oriental master who transmits the modalities of an experience that
> he realized himself.[326]

Zazen is thus taught as a technique, but the experience remains individual. The practice

of *zazen* and its results also stand above institutional concerns such as ordination or years

of monastic training. For most of Deshimaru's followers, as argued by Koné, "[s]piritual

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[324] For example, see Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 185.
[325] Lenoir, 1999b: 280.
[326] Lenoir, 1999a: 231 (my translation).

achievement is seen as more important than status as an ordained monastic."[327] A

corollary of this emphasis on experience is the devaluation of institutions, rituals, and

doctrine.

As discussed by Sharf, the emphasis on "transformative personal experience" in

the study of Buddhism is a modern phenomenon that does not necessarily reflect

traditional Buddhist monastic practices.[328] However, for Deshimaru (and his followers, as

we will see in chapter four), transformative experience through *zazen* is a central concern

that gives shape to his articulation of Zen. The experiential nature of *zazen*, furthermore,

contributes to the difficulty of articulating doctrine since, once put into words, the

experience becomes stuck in categories that do not reflect its true nature. Deshimaru

affirms this view in the following words: "If you limit yourself to written experience you

can understand Buddhism with your intellect, but if you do not practice *zazen* you cannot

come close to the Buddha-mind or understand the experience of Buddha."[329] Faithful to a

Chan/Zen distrust of language,[330] according to Deshimaru, any written account of doctrine

is doomed to fail to do it justice since it is limited by words. Such downplaying of

language can thus be appreciated by a Western audience suspicious of dogmatic claims.

Deshimaru's emphasis on *zazen* also allows individuals to entertain a relationship

with Buddhism that is not necessarily "religious." One of Lenoir's interviewees, a

European male, argues: "Silent meditation is not a religion, it is a practice, a method of

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[327] Koné, 2001: 151.
[328] Sharf, 1995b: 232.
[329] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 117.
[330] For example, see Faure, 1993: 195-199.

developing a spirit of goodness that we all possess within ourselves."[331] Although I will

demonstrate below that there are a variety of ways to relate to Buddhism within the AZM,

it is still pertinent to discuss how Deshimaru's insistence on meditative practice helps

many individuals to relate more easily to the tradition. For instance, since *zazen* stands

above other institutional or monastic concerns, Deshimaru teaches that lay practice is

better than monastic practice. He says:

> What is easier is to practice *zazen* for an hour in the morning, or
> even twice a day, and be free the rest of the time. That's better!
> For the Japanese monks *zazen* is a business, a profession. But you,
> now, you want to practice *zazen*, so *zazen* is always fresh for you,
> it is not a business. When *zazen* becomes a business the true
> religious spirit dies.[332]

Such a criticism of the Sōtō sect in Japan echoes many Europeans' (and, as will become

clear below, Québécers') problems with Christianity. By focusing on teaching a

technique as opposed to a dogma, therefore, Deshimaru's Zen allows individuals to

connect to a religious tradition that does not require mandatory beliefs, except in the

effectiveness of *zazen*.

   Although it is true that Deshimaru's emphasis on *zazen* teaches a practice and not

a dogma, it must be noted that close relations between the master and his disciples is an

important element ensuring that the practitioner attains the "right" experience. In a

tradition where words are reduced to meaningless categories, another mode of

communication is necessary. This mode of transmission has been dubbed "wordless

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[331] In Lenoir, 1999a: 198.
[332] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 119.

transmission from mind to mind," or *ishin denshin* 以心伝心.[333] An idealized, modern

description of the Dharma transmission process, it revives a close relation with a certified

master who can judge one's progress on the spiritual path; in this case, *zazen*. In Europe,

this relationship can be seen as a factor contributing to the success of Zen and other

traditions emphasizing the necessity to follow a particular master. Koné affirms, on that

topic: "It can be argued that Zen and Tibetan schools attract Westerners because their

emphasis on the master-disciple relationship overshadows explicitly religious aspects in

the first stages of involvement."[334] By meeting privately with disciples and answering

their questions in a public encounter called *mondō*,[335] Deshimaru could thus share his

teachings without letting them become dogmatic assertions. The type of discourse used

in such teachings is spontaneous and often paradoxical, usually eluding the questioner's

mental categories.[336] Putting the focus of teachings upon the master, who has the capacity

to answer his disciples' queries based on his own experience, results in creating a strong

bond between master and disciple in the group. That such a relation existed between

Deshimaru and his disciples is undeniable, as demonstrated by the problems members of

the AZI faced when the master passed away without naming someone to take his place.

The events following his death are addressed below.

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[333] Bodiford, 1991: 423.

[334] Koné, 2001: 148.

[335] To these oral teachings could be added the many works of Deshimaru that are published in the form of question-and-answer sessions. For example, Deshimaru 1984; 1981 [1985], and parts of 1977 [1983] (pp. 37-57), 1974 [1975, 1977, 1981] (pp. 49-77).

[336] Halfmann criticizes such language, arguing that with its help, "[t]he the masters masterfully undermine the self-confidence of any questioner." For him, "together with the group pressure," this language causes "the questioner to doubt his own understanding rather than the teachings of the master" (see Halfmann 1999).

2.3. Death and the Aftermath

Although this presentation of Deshimaru only briefly mentions some of his

personality traits, it sketches the portrait of a man who seduced his followers by his strict

emphasis on *zazen* and his intense, sometimes shocking, personality. The AZI, during

Deshimaru's life, was thus centered around him as a figure of authority. Such a model of

authority, labelled "spiritual authority" by sociologist James William Coleman,[337]

dominated the association in its early days. Lenoir, in his work on convert Buddhist

France, confirms this fact when he notes that French practitioners of both Zen and

Tibetan traditions insist on the importance of a master to guide them in their practice.[338]

According to Koné, the authority of the Zen master in the West is derived from a belief in

the master's awakening experience, which is certified, in turn, by his or her own

master.[339] The master-disciple relationship is then characterized by elements such as

signs of deference to the teacher, greater social distance between teacher and student, and

rules concerning proper language and behaviour toward the teacher.[340] Close to the

"Confucian model of the patriarchal extended family," in this model the master not only

holds authority on spiritual matters but also temporal ones such as administrative

duties.[341] This situation applied to the AZI, at least until Deshimaru's death in 1982.

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[337] Coleman, 2001: 129.
[338] Lenoir, 1999a: 222.
[339] Koné, 2001: 150. It must be noted that such a belief is not based on historical facts, since the idea that monks need to attain *satori* before they can inherit the Dharma is erroneous. For example Sharf argues: "...the fact is that Chan/Zen 'dharma inheritance' entailed the transmission of nothing less than the Buddha-mind, which, according to the logic of Chan/Zen doctrine, is already possessed by all. As such, formal transmission actually involved the ritual investiture of a student in an institutionally certified genealogy" (1995b: 273, fn. 23. See also p. 243).
[340] Koné, 2001: 152, with reference to Coleman, 2001: 129.
[341] Coleman, 2001: 129.

Lenoir relates the following fact demonstrating the master's centrality: "…the disappearance of master Deshimaru and the many tensions that followed pushed away many practitioners and had as a consequence the stagnation of its effectiveness, despite the growing popularity of Zen within French society."[342] The death of Deshimaru, the spiritual authority whose status as Zen master was recognized and accepted as authentic by his followers, thus forced notable institutional changes on the AZI.

To speak of the model of authority that developed after Deshimaru's death, Koné uses Coleman's model called "spiritual friends" (Pāli *kalyana-mitta*), which replaced the "spiritual authority" model in place during Deshimaru's presence in Europe.[343] In this model, individuals charged with teaching are treated less formally, and the relation between teacher and student is characterized more by mutual exchange than by transmission of knowledge.[344] Such a change of authority was caused partly by the absence of an official dharma heir named by Deshimaru. Nevertheless, he possessed a number of close disciples who would give shape to the association's structure in the aftermath of their master's death. In order to understand the AZI and its present functioning down to its Montréal branch, therefore, a few words must be said about the events following Deshimaru's death and their outcome in terms of authority.

[342] Lenoir, 1999a: 98.
[343] 2001:152, with reference to Coleman, 2001: 129.
[344] Coleman, 2001: 129. Coleman writes: "This term is a rough translation of the Pali word *kalyana-mitta*, and it refers to the deep bonds of friendship and mutual affection that develop between those who are struggling to follow the spiritual path and those helping them to find their way" (2001: 129).

Deshimaru passed away somewhat abruptly of cancer of the pancreas since he

refused, for a while, to acknowledge his sickness.[345] Such a situation partly explains[346]

why he did not have the time to give directions to his followers concerning the

organization of the association after his demise. Indeed, he had not yet had the chance to

give *shihō* to any of his European disciples,[347] and this caused certain tensions within the

AZI. The importance of dharma transmission from a particular master in the eyes of

Deshimaru's close disciples was felt, since, at first, many would refuse to receive it from

anybody else. Their refusal caused certain problems, such as preventing them from being

authorized to give ordinations.[348] In 1984, however, three disciples were elected by vote

to receive transmission from Niwa Zenji, then abbot at Eiheiji.[349] Of these disciples, only

Roland Rech is still active in the AZI, but later, many other disciples have also sought

transmission from other masters in Japan.[350] These early negotiations surrounding the

continuity of the AZI, according to Lenoir, are revealing of the ambiguous relations

Deshimaru himself had with Japanese authorities. Indeed, he left his disciples with a

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[345] Lenoir, 1999b: 281. Lenoir attributes this lack of recognition to the fact that Deshimaru declared many times that cancer was closely related to attachment to the ego, and that a good practice of *zazen* was a way to avoid it (1999b: 281).

[346] Other reasons might reside in the fact that he did not find any disciple fit to receive transmission. For example, de Smedt notes that he was in dismay one night, exclaiming: "Yes, but... I cannot give *shiho*" (1985 [2005]: 224).

[347] It must be noted that Halfmann, in his letter of criticism, points out that a Japanese monk, Horyu Tamaki, received *shihō* from Deshimaru. He calls this event a "'family secret' overshadowed until July 1999." The *godōs* at the AZI, however, affirm that Deshimaru gave the monk "a formal *shiho* which he took back some weeks later, because of bad behavior" (Halfmann, 1999).

[348] Lenoir, 1999b: 281.

[349] Lenoir, 1999b: 282. These disciples were Roland Rech, Stéphane Thibault, and Étienne Zeisler. While Rech is still at AZI, Zeisler passed away in 1990 and Thibault left the association in 1995 (Pelayo, 1999).

[350] Ten out of sixteen teachers on the official site of the AZI are listed as having received official transmission, or *shihō*, from various Japanese masters. Some have received transmission as late as 2004, and it will be interesting to see the developments when the first generation of individuals who did not practice under Deshimaru will seek transmission. See *AZI*, "Teachers," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?rubrique21.

strong criticism of Japanese Sōtō institutions but nevertheless drew his own authority as

master in Europe from this sectarian affiliation.[351] The years following Deshimaru's

death, therefore, illustrate well the centrality of the spiritual master and his institutional

position in the dissemination of his Zen.

For some time, the AZI went through a transitional period during which followers

negotiated its organization.[352] Nowadays, the AZI is directed by a committee of twenty-

four individuals who meet monthly, and which includes many former disciples of

Deshimaru.[353] The choice of a democratic organization following the demise of an Asian

master is a common process for Zen groups in the West.[354] Furthermore, individuals

responsible for particular centres across Europe and for La Gendronnière are not called

masters, but *godōs* 後堂, a title defined as "guardian of a dōjō" in AZI literature.[355] The

direction of activities such as *sesshin*s or summer camps at La Gendronnière is shared by

different individuals,[356] illustrating the absence of a single authority at the association's

headquarters. On the other hand, practitioners encountered at the AZM usually identify

with a particular master that they follow whenever they have the chance to travel to

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[351] Lenoir, 1999b: 282.

[352] This period lasted arguably about a decade. Denise, practitioner at AZM, related her experience in 1991 at La Gendronnière: "I found it pretty 'rock and roll,' it was a group of hippies, it was undisciplined… It had only been ten years since Deshimaru died, and they had not finished organizing. It is totally different now."

[353] See *AZI*, "Présentation," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?article50.

[354] For example, after the demise of Suzuki Shunryū and the crisis caused by the sexual activities of his Dharma heir Richard Baker (b. 1936), many at the San Fransisco Zen Center turned toward a democratic system of authority (Fields, 1981 [1986]: 265). The democratic process at the AZI was also criticized by Halfmann, who wrote: "The committee itself is 'elected' in a fairly obscure and undemocratic procedure." He attributes this weakness to the proxy system, which allows older disciples with enough followers in their respective *dōjō*s to get elected no matter what (1999).

[355] Deshimaru, 1974 [1975, 1977, 1981]: 269.

[356] For example, the schedule for the summer 2009 was divided in six sessions led by different teachers (*AZI*, "Calendrier 2009," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?article149.

Europe. This confirms Koné's mention of the resurgence of the "spiritual model" in the

late 1990s.[357] In the presentation of the AZM below, I will demonstrate that the two

models of authority are present to some extent in the organization of the centre.

3. The Association Zen de Montréal

3.1. Beginnings and General Presentation

Having dealt with the topic of Zen in Québec in the introduction to this thesis, I

now turn to the presentation of the group under study. The Association Zen de Montréal

(or Dōjō Zen de Montréal) was founded in 1979 by French-Canadians who returned to the

province of Québec after having practiced under Deshimaru while living in France. The

master had then recommended starting a *dōjō*, and certified it as a branch member of the

AZI when he visited Montréal in 1980.[358] Presently, the main teachers of the center are

Hei Rin Lise Lambert, ordained as a nun in the Sōtō Zen tradition since 1985, and Go

Shin Michel Ménard, ordained as a monk in the Sōtō Zen tradition since 1989.[359] Both of

these individuals, along with several other practitioners, were present at the conference

and *sesshin* Deshimaru led during his only visit to Québec. This event, in fact, is cited by

many practitioners as being the trigger for their adherence to the AZM. In terms of

organization, as presented on the official website of the center, its administrative

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[357] 2001: 153.

[358] *AZM*, "Historique," http://www.dojozen.net/fra/azm.php?page=historique. Only one of my interviewees took part in the very beginnings of the *dōjō*, and he related that at Deshimaru's *sesshin* in Québec, the master ordained around twenty-eight individuals as bodhisattvas out of the hundred participants. At the end of the *sesshin*, Deshimaru also had disagreements with the founder of the Montréal *dōjō* and relieved him of his responsibilities, putting a group of practitioners in place to manage the *dōjō*. This anecdote shows that, in this case, Deshimaru's authority extended to the associations founded in other countries.

[359] *AZM*, "Teaching," http://www.dojozen.net/eng/azm.php?page=enseignants_eng. They were both ordained by a close disciple of Deshimaru.

committee is composed of volunteers who are all "ordained bodhisattva, monk, or

nun."[360] Such an emphasis on an administrative group composed of experienced

individuals is thus in line with the AZI's concern with democratic decision-making

processes. Furthermore, it is an instance where the "spiritual friend" model of authority is

at play.

In order to start practicing at the *dōjō*, interested individuals must first go through

an initiation session, which is organized once a month and lasts two and a half hours.[361]

They can then frequent the centre, which offers *zazen* on a regular basis. One *zazen*

period lasts around one and a half hours, and is composed of two sessions of forty

minutes of sitting meditation, separated by ten minutes of *kinhin*, which is slow walking

meditation. The proposed cost of one *zazen* period is $7.00, but practitioners can also pay

monthly, which is normally $30.00, or $20.00 for students and unemployed individuals.[362]

Every first Sunday of the month, a "Zen day" is organized, which consists of one full day

of practice at the *dōjō*. From 7:00 am to 4:00 pm, a participant can expect to practice

zazen, *kinhin*, *kesa* and *rakusu* (a garment worn over the robe around the neck) sewing, do

samu (manual work at the centre), and eat silently from a bowl.[363] The centre also

organizes around four *sesshins* a year, which last from two to two and a half days, as well

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[360] *AZM*, "AZM," http://www.dojozen.net/fra/azm.php. A letter of invitation to the 2009 AZM's annual general assembly counted twenty-two voting individuals, but invited all members to come. It also provided members with a document summarizing the 2008 meeting, where thirteen voting members were present out of nineteen listed. See *Letter* in bibliography.
[361] The cost of such an introductory session is $30.00 and usually covers unlimited *zazen* practice for the rest of the month. In the early years of the center, the same introduction used to last longer. A practitioner who started frequenting the *dōjō* in 1997 indicated that his introduction session was spread over three days. They would start with a theoretical session, then a more technical one where they were taught the posture, and finally a session where they would put the teachings in practice.
[362] *AZM*, "Activités," http://www.dojozen.net/fra/activites.php?page=horaire.
[363] *AZM*, "Journées Zen," http://www.dojozen.net/fra/activites.php?page=journee. The proposed cost of a Zen day is $10.00.

as one week-long summer camp. These longer activities are led either by a senior monk

from the *dōjō* or by a teacher from the AZI.

Concerning age, out of the thirteen individuals who shared information with me

through the medium of either an interview or a questionnaire, nine were aged fifty years

old or above. The youngest participant in my research was thirty years old, although I

have noted a few younger-looking individuals coming to the *dōjō* during my participant

observation. This age information may reflect the fact that older practitioners have a

more constant practice due to factors such as retirement, and probably felt more

comfortable with participating in my research, having practiced longer. At the same time,

it is not rare to hear the comment that newcomers do not stick to the practice very long

and that a lot of people come and go. In terms of gender, both sexes are represented

roughly equally at the *dōjō*. Among my thirteen participants, five were male and eight

female, while the convocation letter for the 2009 Annual General Assembly counted

eleven voting individuals of each sex. There is, therefore, no notable predominance of

one sex over the other.

In terms of initial adherence in the *dōjō*, most practitioners interviewed had an

interest in meditation before they started their practice at the AZM. As mentioned above,

some of the older followers met Deshimaru in person at the occasion of his conference

and *sesshin* in Québec. Among this group, a female practitioner in her sixties said that

she was practicing yoga before meeting Deshimaru, and that she became a member

because his teaching "worked" for her. While traveling in France for a while, another

practitioner read a book by Deshimaru and attended his conference once back in the

province. Concerning practitioners who have not met Deshimaru, the reason cited most

often for their early interest is a book, and in some cases one of Deshimaru's books.

Many individuals also had an interest in some "spiritual traditions," such as yoga, tai chi,

or other types of mediation. In one case, a practitioner mentioned still practicing tai chi,

but usually adherence to the *dōjō* seems to involve a shift to single practice. Almost all

individuals interviewed, furthermore, received an early Catholic education, just as most

Québécers do. However, this education is generally mentioned as a formality, and

described as having little or no impact on practitioners' lives. There is one exception in

my interviews, where one female practitioner said that she was deeply religious as a little

girl, but that she drastically stopped practicing when she was fourteen years old.

3.2. Centrality of Deshimaru

As soon as one steps inside the *dōjō*, it is obvious that Deshimaru is still an

important figure for the AZM. Indeed, my first encounter with one of the two directors of

the *dōjō* was spent discussing a huge photograph of the master, which is hung on the wall

facing the entrance door.[364] In this black and white picture, Deshimaru is sitting in *zazen*,

and the co-director commented on the impressive energy of his posture. Other than being

the founding figure of the AZM, Deshimaru also plays other roles in this *dōjō*.

Deshimaru's presence is felt in the numerous oral teachings taught during practice, where

he is cited by the teachers. The books for sale at the *dōjō* are mostly by him, although

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[364] See Appendix C.

there seems to be a growing collection of works by some of his closest disciples.[365]

Above all, the Zen practiced here is shaped by how the Japanese master taught it, as his

concerns for a Zen focused on lay *zazen* practice has been successfully transmitted. By

addressing the major themes of meditation, rituals, and institutions mainly through both

Deshimaru's writings and practitioners' perspectives,[366] I will demonstrate that the

emphasis on *zazen* is the common denominator for everything surrounding the practice.

Before delving into this presentation of the teachings and practices as the AZM, it

must be noted that my description of Deshimaru's and the AZM's Zen is by no means

exhaustive, as it relies heavily on literature that is not necessarily read by all

practitioners,[367] and a total of thirteen individuals who shared information through an

interview or questionnaire. It must also be noted that each individual point of view may

not be representative of the whole of the group. Finally, since I address nonviolence in

the following chapter, I will leave the discussion of morality and ethics aside and return to

it later.

3.3. Association Zen de Montréal: Teachings and Practices

A beginner at the *dōjō* receives, as part of his or her initiation session, a small

pamphlet summarizing basic terms and practices of the AZM. In this document, one can

read: "Above everything, Zen is a POSTURE, the sitting posture of *zazen*, with three

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[365] I will address the importance of Deshimaru's close disciples in the section on institutions.
[366] I will also use Lenoir's sociological study of Buddhism in France to establish parallels when relevant, as well as primary sources such as the group's pamphlets and website.
[367] Although he wrote quite a few, Deshimaru does not particularly encourage reading too many books since he puts more emphasis on experience. For example, he teaches: "It is not necessary to read books: rather, have the experience here and now" (Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 115).

fundamental elements: the attitude of the body, breathing, and the attitude of the spirit."[368]

This brief but precise teaching is a good first step in addressing Deshimaru's Zen as

understood by his Montréal followers. I already presented his emphasis on *zazen* above,

and a more substantial explanation is not necessary for the purposes of this chapter.

However, I will here present *zazen* through the eyes of the practitioners who participated

in this study.

In terms of practice, all interviewees claimed to practice *zazen* at least three times

a week.[369] The importance of the group for practicing was also a recurring theme in

interviews. For example, one of the two individuals in charge of the *dōjō* affirms that

even when only one beginner shows up for a *zazen* session, it makes all the difference for

her. On the other hand, practicing alone is seen as dangerous for some individuals, and

one practitioner mentions that it could lead to practicing for oneself only. Most

individuals, furthermore, emphasized that it goes beyond simply sitting. Here are a few

descriptions of practice that illustrate this trend, retrieved from my interviews when I

asked them to define practice: "The *dōjō* is the door for practice, but once I quit the *dōjō*,

it continues 24h/24h whenever possible. I am not saying that I am thinking about it all

the time, but it is at the heart of my life." "It is when I open my eyes in the morning, until

I go to bed at night. You feel it even more when you go to a summer camp or in a

monastery." "Everything is practice." "For me, practice is my whole life. You know,

practice is being in the present moment, being present to whatever you are doing and

doing it completely. Sitting can be compared to a musician doing scales, but life is the

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[368] *Introductory pamphlet*, 5 (Retrieved at the AZM in May 2008).
[369] Only a few will practice at home on a regular basis, usually for reasons of distance from the *dōjō*.

practice..." "It is like an infusion, you only realize later how much it is part of your life."

While *zazen* is taken as the basic practice related to Zen, it is also presented by

practitioners at the AZM as going beyond the simple act of sitting, and as affecting life in

general.

Such a central importance given to sitting and its larger impact on life echoes the

modern emphasis on transformative experience advanced by certain proponents of Zen

Buddhism. Experience, again, trumps doctrine and words, and is valued above all. A

practitioner confirms this view:

> The words of the ancients, of masters, they are the guides, but you
> need to manipulate them, to observe them, you need to
> appropriate them, you need to digest them, but you must leave no
> trace of them. It is not something that you can carry with you all
> the time. Just like food, if it stays in your stomach, you become
> sick; you need to evacuate.

Doctrine and language, in other words, are valued as guides on the path or as "skilful

means," but they have no value beyond this role. This view thus presents an image that is

similar to the Buddhist image of the raft which must be built to cross over the river but

also left behind on reaching the other shore, or the Daoist comparison of words with a

fishnet.[370] *Zazen*, as a practice, hence becomes the primary element that is used by

members of the AZM to explain other elements of their association, such as rituals and

institutions. I will also demonstrate in chapter four that *zazen* is also the practice that is

cited as central in leading individuals to nonviolence.

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[370] The image of the raft is an early one found in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, and is cited in Harvey, 1990: 31.
For the Daoist image of the fishnet that is discarded once the fish is caught, see *Zhuangzi*, p. 302 (cited by
Faure in 1993: 196).

Although most practitioners present *zazen* as the most important practice,[374] other

elements of their practice are often cited as different means to keep the state of mind

acquired through *zazen*. For example, a male practitioner in his forties argued that doing

sanpai and *gasshō* helps him to abandon the cravings of his ego, and leads to abnegation.

Another interviewee mentioned that, at first, ceremonies made him uncomfortable, but

that he changed his mind after hearing a certain Alonzo, Raphaël Triet's friend, mention

the ceremonies as "the spirit that teaches the body," in contrast to "the body that teaches

the spirit" in *zazen*. In a questionnaire filled out by a thirty-year-old female practitioner,

ceremonies and chanting are listed as second in importance to *zazen*, before the categories

of teachings and social life. Ceremonies and ritual, therefore, are generally accepted as

part of the practice, supplementary to *zazen* and of assistance in the maintenance of the

right state of mind. Such a perspective can be contrasted with the limited importance of

meditation paraphernalia and objects found in the *dōjō* pointed out by a practitioner

interviewed by Lenoir in France. He insists on the secondary importance of ritual,

mentioning: "It can bring something supplementary, but it is totally secondary; we can

very well do *zazen* in a forest or in a room, without incense or candles."[375] There is,

therefore, still a wide range of attitudes concerning rituals and ceremonies at the AZI, and

practitioners of the AZM generally lean toward a positive outlook on them. However,

practitioners embracing rituals explain their importance in relation to *zazen*, and not the

other way around.

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[374] Coleman presents similar observations in his study of seven different Buddhist groups (including two from the Zen tradition) in the late 1990s. In a survey he conducted, 92 percent of the respondents ranked meditation as most important, above traditional rituals and ceremonies and social relationships with other members (Coleman, 2001: 119-120).
[375] In Lenoir, 1999a: 197.

A final point to address before moving to the theme of nonviolence at the AZM is

the institutional aspect of the group. Other than its affiliation with the AZI, which I

addressed above, other important institutional aspects of the AZM are the Buddhist label

and the master-disciple relationship. Just as Deshimaru had presented Zen as beyond

religion,[376] practitioners at the AZM do not necessarily attach great importance to calling

themselves "Buddhists." The range of answers to the question "Do you consider yourself

Buddhist?" is divided rather equally between "yes" and "no," with even an in-between

answer; "a little bit." Furthermore, public displays of the centre such as the *dōjō*'s

external appearance, pamphlets, and its website rarely mention the word "Buddhism,"

using "Zen" or "Zazen" instead. There is thus no open association of Deshimaru's Zen to

Buddhism at this level of involvement. In his interviews with practitioners at AZI centers,

Lenoir notes a similar trend. First, he mentions that this lack of identification as

"Buddhist" can be attributed to the fact that most practitioners come to the association for

a practice rather than a doctrine. One example that demonstrates such a tendency is found

in an interview with a woman who frequents the *dōjō* when she feels like she needs it. By

engaging with the association essentially for the practice of *zazen*, practitioners do not

necessarily need to define themselves as "Buddhists."[377] Such disengagement from

Buddhist affiliation can even lead some practitioners to leave centres of the AZI. Hence,

one male practitioner interviewed by Lenoir affirmed that Zen centres do not really

represent Buddhism. After practicing at an AZI *dōjō*, he turned toward a Tibetan centre

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[376] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 3.
[377] Lenoir, 1999a: 71.

where he felt he was "in contact with an authentic tradition."[378] In France as in Québec, therefore, the Buddhist label is not necessarily adopted, and frequenting the *dōjō* is more related to a practice than a religious affiliation.

Another way of considering affiliation at the AZM is to note the relationship entertained by practitioners with individuals who have received transmission. These individuals are AZI members who were close disciples of Deshimaru. As mentioned above, most serious practitioners spend part of their summer (or any other period of the year, depending on their work schedule) at monasteries in France or Spain. The choice of countries is guided by an affiliation with a particular disciple of Deshimaru. Two recurring names in my interviews were Raphaël Triet and Jean-Pierre Faure. The former is officially responsible for the *dōjō* in Montréal, and mostly teaches at the Morejona, a monastery in Spain. He also shares summer camp teaching with other *godōs* at La Gendronnière. Many practitioners in Montréal follow him, and try to spend time at least once a year in Europe, even if he comes to Québec for a summer camp. For example, when he taught the summer camp at Kinkora in May 2008, during the same summer many practitioners went to La Morejona to pursue intense practice a few weeks later. As for Jean-Pierre Faure, he teaches at Kanshoji in France, and also teaches during summer camps at La Gendronnière. At least two interviewees mentioned him as their main teacher, and have been to his monastery in the past for extended periods of time as long as three months. Practitioners who mention such affiliation to particular teachers also try to follow their spiritual advice, and express admiration at their level of comprehension. A

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[378] Lenoir, 1999a: 146.

female practitioner who follows Jean-Pierre Faure, for example, talked about the

difficulty Québécers have with authority. However, she also affirmed that her practice

leads her to have more trust in others, and to leave her ego aside: "Often, when my master

tells me things, I do not understand, but now I can trust him. Even if I don't understand

now, I know that at some point I will." Another practitioner commented on his intimate

relation with Jean-Pierre Faure, which he saw as different from his relation to Raphaël,

affirming: "Jean-Pierre knows how to shake me, and does not let me marinate in my

juice." The importance of a spiritual teacher in the figure of the European *godō* is thus a

characteristic of the practice at the AZM. Such affiliation, furthermore, seems to confirm

Koné's observation that the "spiritual authority" model is still present at the AZI, here in

the specific case of its Québec branch center.

Such relationships with European teachers also demonstrate that the concept of

transmission is still an important one at the AZM. Deshimaru's insistence on experience

and its particular mode of transmission is a recurrent theme in his writings. For example,

he affirms: "If there is no master, the disciple is like a blind man walking without

anything to guide him," and "It is the master who must certify the authenticity of your

understanding; if you certify yourself, there is no true understanding."[379] It thus seems

that while keeping this emphasis on experience, which is attained through *zazen*, AZI

centres also promulgate the modern discourse on experience that can only be taught from

mind to mind, with the help of a master.[380] Most practitioners would agree with this type

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[379] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 124-127.
[380] Lenoir also notes this trend in France, as he relates that at the AZI, transmission is the transmission of experience (1999a: 329).

of transmission of the teachings, and the following words from a male practitioner are

representative of the situation at the AZM:

> It is good to practice with a master, with someone who went
> through the same path before you, someone who also had a master.
> This is the way of Zen, it is transmitted from person to person,
> successively, and it is very important that we insist on coming to
> the *dōjō*, at least once in a while, to be with the group.

Almost twenty years after Deshimaru's death, therefore, some of his disciples have

worked toward reproducing the model of spiritual authority that he left behind. It must

also be noted that recently, more communication with Sōtō authorities in Japan has been

promoted. For example, a group of teachers, including the two head teachers of the AZM,

took part in a trip to Japan to visit a few monasteries during the Spring of 2009.

Newsletters from Eiheiji translated into French, furthermore, are available on the posting

board of the main room of the centre.

Conclusion

This introduction to the AZM and its relation to Deshimaru's Zen has brought

many points to the forefront. I have argued that both the AZI and the AZM are

organizations that still follow the main guidelines of Deshimaru's Zen. The latter's

emphasis on *zazen*, furthermore, can be seen as a factor of popularity since it attracted,

and probably still attracts, individuals by being presented as a technique as opposed to a

dogma. Moreover, *zazen* also gives shape to the institutional aspects of the AZM, as it

requires a close relation with a master, but does not necessarily carry the weight of the

"Buddhist" label. I will pursue this exploration of the AZM's teachings and practices in

greater detail in the next chapter, through the theme of nonviolence. Again, *zazen* as

primary practice colours the ways in which individuals relate to nonviolence, and its lack

of "dogmatic" content contributes to the creation of a variety of interpretations when it

comes to discuss the topic.

CHAPTER FOUR: Nonviolence as Idea and Practice at the AZM

Introduction

As addressed in chapter one, there have been many attempts in the twentieth

century to articulate a Zen Buddhist ethical system using elements of the tradition such as

the bodhisattva precepts, the bodhisattva ideal, or the doctrine of interdependence. It is

on these same elements that the discourse of Buddhist nonviolence is often based. I will

now explore how these ideas are articulated and put into practice in the lives of individual

practitioners at the Association Zen de Montréal. Concerning the theoretical aspect of

this inquiry, it must be noted that within the literature of this group, there is no single

work that specifically offers ethical guidelines. When asked, however, practitioners have

their own interpretations of the ways in which their practice leads them to more

nonviolent lives. In this chapter, I present the models of nonviolence proposed by the

founder of the Association Zen Internationale, Deshimaru, and complement them with

individual accounts gathered through interviews and questionnaires from June 2008. I

demonstrate that the absence of specific teachings condemning violence creates a space

used by individuals to create their own discourse of nonviolence. In order to do so, I

offer the narratives of two main practitioners at the AZM, showing that the group's

consideration of nonviolence can go from getting glimpses of the interconnectedness of

everything in the universe to wearing the black *kesa* as a white flag. The discourses of

Zen nonviolence at the AZM, therefore, cannot strictly be accounted for from the group's

official teachings, but rather involves many discourses related to modern Buddhism and

Buddhism in the West.

1. Models of Nonviolence

In order to examine Deshimaru's discourse on nonviolence, I proceed with

concepts generally used in constructing Zen Buddhist ethics. As mentioned above,

Deshimaru has no work or teaching comparable to, for example, Robert Aitken's work on

ethics and engaged Buddhist action.[381] In Deshimaru's writings and commentaries, there

is no specific teaching that proposes a Sōtō Zen Buddhist articulation of a nonviolent

ethical system. Nevertheless, by exploring his views on the bodhisattva precepts, the

bodhisattva ideal, and the doctrine of interdependence, one can find the basis of an ethic

of nonviolence, which his followers use and elaborate upon through their individual

understanding of his teachings.

Before looking for an articulation of nonviolence in Deshimaru's writings, it is

important to recall that his teachings are driven by a call to return to *zazen*, or seated

meditation, as the key for practice. This comes as no surprise from a Sōtō Zen master

who intended to follow the model of Dōgen and who, just like his own master Sawaki

Kōdō, criticized the state of the sect in Japan for its laziness and opulence.[382] Indeed,

Deshimaru enjoined Sōtō priests in Japan to return to the "root" of their practice, to open

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[381] Aitken's *The Mind of Clover: Essay in Zen Buddhist Ethics* is a work in which he articulates the ethical teachings of Zen Buddhism for his Western students. See Aitken, 1984: 3.
[382] Braverman, 2003: 59. Another example of a twentieth century criticism of the state of Zen in Japan came from the *Sanbōkyōdan* sect, which decried the state of both Sōtō and Rinzai sects and warned against "the dangers of institutionalization, ritualization, and intellectualization" (Sharf, 1995d: 427). This criticism of ritualization goes back at least to Dōgen even though, as demonstrated by Bernard Faure, he paradoxically became "one of those who eventually did the most for the ritualization of Zen" (1991: 289).

their *dōjōs* to the public and teach them *zazen*.[383] He even understood his teaching in

Europe as a mission to implant "true Zen" in a land where it could truly take root, in

contrast to a Japan where the practice of Zen had become stale.[384] One of his biographers,

Marc de Smedt, claims that Deshimaru used to repeat that the seed of Zen could not be

found in Japan or Asia anymore, but rather in the West where it was growing in a new

soil.[385] In this sense, *zazen* became, for Deshimaru, the overarching practice that confers

meaning to potentially nonviolent elements in Zen such as the bodhisattva precepts, the

bodhisattva ideal, or the doctrine of interdependence.

1.1. Precepts

As presented in chapter one, many proponents of nonviolent Buddhism mention

the precept forbidding killing as an important nonviolent teaching. Indeed, the precepts

are rules that are undertaken either at the lay or ordained levels, and guide one's

behaviour by forbidding actions such as killing, lying, or stealing.[386] For Deshimaru and

his order, following the Sōtō ordination system, the sixteen bodhisattva precepts as

enunciated in Dōgen's "Jukai" chapter of his *Shōbōgenzō* are taken at the time of one's

ordination, and are thus present in the life of the practitioner. Deshimaru qualifies the ten

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[383] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 148.
[384] See also discussion in chapter three.
[385] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 147. Also mentioned in Deshimaru in 1969: 143-147, where he explains why Europe is the proper soil to receive his Zen, and in Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 51, where he expresses the following: "When the soil is exhausted the seed can no longer grow. But if you change the soil a good seed can develop. Europe is fresh, as far as Zen is concerned, and I hope that the seed of Zen will grow there. Now the Japanese are trying to imitate European Zen." In this last sentence, he demonstrates his awareness of the impact of Western interpretations of Zen back in Japan.
[386] Different Buddhist traditions value different lists of precepts. My discussion of the precepts, here, is limited to the list of precepts taken by adherents to the AZI and AZM, which are explained below.

fundamental precepts as the pure and universal essence extracted by the Buddha himself

from the Hindu moral system.[387] Furthermore, he considers the precepts and *zazen* as

being in a relationship of mutual interdependence and asserts that practice enhances moral

strength and vital energy, which are the two pre-requisites for what he calls "the

humanitarian work of the bodhisattva."[388] The precepts, therefore, represent an important

source of ethical behaviour and nonviolence for Deshimaru.

At the same time, however, it seems that the precepts are of only secondary

importance in Deshimaru's writings. For example, one rare instance where he addresses

the precepts is in one of the *kusens*[389] he delivered shortly before his death, and even here

he speaks only of the five lay precepts. In this particular teaching, although he qualifies

the five precepts as "fundamental," he does not elaborate on them, but instead jumps to

the importance of *zazen* and other actions surrounding meditation such as *gasshō* and

sanpai.[390] Additionally, in his main introductory work, which has been published in

various editions since 1974,[391] Deshimaru does not explain or even name the sixteen

bodhisattva precepts. He addresses the topic in a more specialized work published in

1978, entitled *Zen and Everyday Life: The Practice of Concentration*, in which he

explores the ten fundamental *kai*, or precepts.[392] I will now sketch the outline of his

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[387] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 131.
[388] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 131.
[389] Oral teachings delivered during *zazen*.
[390] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 230. *Gasshō* is a gesture with joined hands symbolizing the unity between the spirit and existence, and *sanpai* are prostrations in front of the Buddha or the master that occur after chanting the *Heart Sūtra* (Deshimaru, 1974 [1977; 1975; 1981]: 269-273.
[391] This work is entitled *La Pratique du Zen*, and was first published under the title *La Pratique du Zen: Zazen*.
[392] In this work, he devotes one chapter to the precepts, entitled "Karma" (135-222).

treatment of the precepts in order to see to what extent they participate in the construction

of a discourse of nonviolence.

In the chapter entitled "Karma" in *Zen and Everyday Life*, Deshimaru introduces

what he calls the ten fundamental precepts. Addressing their meaning for the practitioner,

he contrasts the "Hīnayāna"[393] emphasis on morality with the Mahāyāna path that offers a

middle way uniting all opposites through *zazen*.[394] The Mahāyāna path, he argues, does

not offer the security of a moral code but a "middle way" that:

> ...dips right away the strong man in the non-everything, the
> beyond everything, by uniting all opposites, of which he bursts
> the illusory contours through successive and repetitive contact, in
> the manner of two soap bubbles that collide until the
> disappearance of any limitative shell.[395]

Deshimaru further privileges this method over what he calls the "pragmatic" methods of

Hīnayāna Buddhism. He thus places the precepts to a secondary rank in importance to

zazen.[396] Indeed, he even goes to the extent of calling *zazen* the highest precept that has

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[393] The use of the pejorative term Hīnayāna is his, and thus denotes his consideration of the Mahāyāna tradition as superior to Nikāya Buddhism. Deshimaru writes that the Hīnayāna path is gradual and considered inferior, and he advances that this gradual path has, at least, the merit of offering security to the weak (Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 60-62). The devaluation of the *Vinayas* in comparison to bodhisattva ethics is a complex process that had its roots in sūtras such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. Such texts "paved the way for the establishment of so-called '*bodhisattva-śīlas*' as a higher form of Buddhist discipline than the traditional moral code, now denounced as '*śrāvaka-śīlas*' or 'precepts of the hearers'" (Kleine, 2006: 77-78). In Japan, Saichō was one of the first to reject the *Sifen lü* and establish ordinations based on the Mahāyāna precepts of the *Fanwang jing* (see Groner, 1984).

[394] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 59. In this sense, Deshimaru follows Dōgen's rejection of the Chan monastic rules enunciated in the twelfth-century text called the *Chanyuan qinggui* ("Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery," compiled by Changlu Zongze [?-1107?] [Yifa, 2002: xix], which combined the precepts from the *Shibunritsu* (containing 250 precepts for monks and 348 precepts for nuns) and the *Bonmōkyō* (outlining fifty-eight bodhisattva precepts). See Bodiford, 1993: 164-165.

[395] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 62.

[396] This is obviously not an innovation on Deshimaru's part, as a literal adherence to the bodhisattva precepts in the Japanese Sōtō tradition has mostly held a secondary importance in relation to the spiritual or ritual meanings on precepts (see Bodiford, 1993: 167-172). Furthermore, Deshimaru's position follows Dōgen's emphasis on the supremacy of *zazen* over precepts and rules (see Heine, 2006: 18-22).

the power to extinguish the defilements[397] in an absolute way.[398] Quoting freely from the

Lotus sūtra, he finds confirmation for his view in the following passage: "Through zazen,

we will vanquish all aspects of crimes and faults, and will shine in all ten directions."[399]

Before adherence to the precepts, therefore, *zazen* is the guiding practice that leads

individuals to understand *karma* and thus behave properly. It remains to be seen how this

understanding of *zazen* and its results can lead to an ethic of nonviolence. But first, I will

explore Deshimaru's view of not killing, the precept usually appealed to by individuals

arguing for the nonviolent orientation of Buddhism.[400]

Not killing, writes Deshimaru, is the most fundamental and universal precept, and

should be the first to be respected.[401] Additionally, killing also involves actions other than

the physical murder of humans and other beings. For example, Deshimaru advances that

not killing can also take the meaning of not making others suffer, not hating, and not

being jealous of others.[402] One of the explanatory premises behind this injunction against

harming others is the insight into the undifferentiated nature of one's body and the rest of

the universe. Deshimaru expresses this point in the following way: "…all existences have

one body. Understanding the true original nature of the ego signifies penetrating non-

separation, non-differentiation between the self and the others. Through this

comprehension, any crime, any hatred, any jealousy, any animosity is banished

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[397] Deshimaru uses the term *bonnō*, a Japanese translation of the Sanskrit word *kleśā*, or defilement. The *bonnō*s are defined by Deshimaru as "all mental and physical functions that disrupt and afflict the spirit" (1978 [1985]: 45-52).
[398] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 62.
[399] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 137.
[400] See discussion in chapter one.
[401] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 138.
[402] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 147.

forever."[403] For him, therefore, the precepts are the natural rules of human behaviour that

allow individuals to be in harmony with what he believes to be the true laws of the

universe, as opposed to man-made laws imposed externally.[404] In other words,

nonviolence, here considered under the precept of not killing, is a spontaneous attribute of

the one who has deep insight into the true nature of reality.

1.2. Bodhisattva Ideal

As mentioned in chapter one, works on Buddhist ethics sometimes point to the

ideal of the bodhisattva in order to present a Zen Buddhist ethical system. One of the

advantages of this model is the possibility of moving beyond having to adhere literally to

a list of prohibitions such as the precepts. This possibility to abrogate the behavioural

codes is attributed to the bodhisattva's skilful ability to calculate the greater good that will

come out of an action.[405] The bodhisattva ideal is present in Deshimaru's writings to a

certain extent, and practitioners of the AZI still undertake bodhisattva vows. However, it

is also worth mentioning that none of my subjects at the AZM mentioned the vows as a

model on which to base their behaviour toward others in situations of conflict. In *La

pratique du Zen*, Deshimaru's main work summarizing his teachings, one can find an

allusion to the bodhisattva's goals. In a *Mondō*, or formal question and answer period

transcribed in this work, Deshimaru answers a question about the role of love in Zen,

arguing: "Love is not made only of embraces and kisses, but also of wooden stick strokes.

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[403] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 147.
[404] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 148.
[405] I discuss early examples of this skilful calculation in chapter one.

To profoundly rejoice at the success of others, to think unconsciously of their happiness, such is the bodhisattva attitude."[406] In this response, the mixture of hitting the other out of love while keeping an attitude of selfless compassion is typical of the bodhisattva who has such a profound insight into reality that he or she can use skilful means to help others. As with the precepts, however, Deshimaru's treatment of the bodhisattva's compassion is also closely related to the insight gained through *zazen*. He writes: "*satori* is realized unconsciously within ourselves by natural transformation of the *bonno*s, and the spirit of compassion is awakened consequentially, through the sight of those who suffer."[407] For him, therefore, the bodhisattva's compassion is brought through *zazen* as well.

Deshimaru's understanding of the bodhisattva's skilful means, in accordance with many Mahāyāna Buddhists before him, allows the killing of an individual in the case where it could save many. He does not expand greatly on this topic, remarking in one place that it is written in a *sūtra*, which he does not identify.[408] In another instance, he simply states: "In a good spirit, it is sometimes necessary to kill bad people, a dangerous criminal for example."[409] Although Deshimaru's position is inscribed in a wider tradition

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[406] Deshimaru, 1974 [1975; 1977; 1981]: 69.

[407] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 72. Again, the term *bonnō* refers to the defilements, or the passions. See definition above, fn. 397.

[408] Deshimaru, 1984: 102. This could be the *Upāya-kauśalya sūtra*, in which compassionate killing is enacted to prevent bandits from committing bad deeds (and being born in hell), while at the same time saving the lives of merchants (See Harvey, 2000: 135-136). See also chapter one, section one.

[409] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 146. It is important to note that the doctrine of skilful means is the doctrine that was often appealed to by Buddhist leaders to justify Japanese expansion through aggression (Victoria, 1997 [2006]: 226). It is also from such a doctrine that some modern Buddhist teachers have built Buddhist "Just War" theories. For example, Bodhin Kjolhede (b. 1948), abbot of Rochester Zen Center, agreed with the bombing of Serbia by NATO in 1999, affirming: "We have a responsibility to respond. That's what responsibility means in Zen: responsiveness. If there is such a thing as a justifiable war, then this would appear to be it" (quoted in Kraft, 2000: 492). On the other hand, Ken Jones, Zen practitioner and teacher who wrote on engaged Buddhism, argues that violence as means to an end "...habitually corrupts the

of skilful means, where the intent is directed at helping the greatest number of beings,

such an attitude cannot be taken as a consistently nonviolent approach to every situation,

since it allows the killing of certain individuals. I will come back to this point when

presenting Deshimaru's followers' views on "skilful" violence, and argue that their

adherence to this principle is not unanimous.

1.3. Interdependence

In his writings, Deshimaru also appeals to a modern interpretation of the doctrine

of interdependence to explain the world of his Zen.[410]   On this subject, Deshimaru argues

the following:

> True universal love comes from the consciousness of our common
> creation from the cosmic order. The others, without ego like
> myself, are not fundamentally distinct from me. To make others
> stronger.... the highest love and the real wisdom consist in
> leading the other to discover the common root of our life.[411]

In *zazen*, he teaches, one thus gains an insight into the interdependence of the self and

others. That this insight comes through *zazen* is obvious for Deshimaru, since it is only

once one can sit without a goal, or *mushotoku*,[412] that one comes to the realization that

there is no self. Such a view is expressed in his commentary on the *Hōkyō Zanmai*,[413]

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peaceful (ultimate) ends to which the violent may sincerely aspire, as well as profoundly affecting the
whole character of their current undertaking" (Jones, 1989: 297).

[410] I addressed interdependence and its modern interpretations earlier in chapter one.

[411] Deshimaru, 1974 [1975; 1977; 1981]: 89.

[412] Japanese term literally meaning "without profit." I address Deshimaru's consideration of this term
below in the section on *zazen*.

[413]Ch. *Baojing sanmei* 宝鏡三昧, "Jewel-mirror Samādhi," a work attributed to Tōzan Ryōkai (Ch.
Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 , 807-869). This poem contains traces of the doctrine of interdependence,
and is chanted regularly by practitioners of the Sōtō sect (see Isshū and Sasaki, 1966: 185, 380-381, and
Nishijima and Cross, 2007: 243, fn. 41).

where he writes that everyone, including master and disciple, man and woman, body and

organs, are all under the law of interdependence.[414] Without directly asserting that the

result of this world view is that *zazen* can contribute to the spread of peace, Deshimaru

nevertheless cites the following sentence from Dōgen's *Bendōwa* (1231)[415]: "One

individual person practicing zazen influences the entire cosmos."[416] In the context of a

commentary emphasizing the interdependence of all phenomena, this choice of citation

demonstrates a belief in the potential effects of *zazen* on a larger scale.[417] The view that

zazen can impact individuals and groups in nonviolent ways thus seems to take some of

its roots from Deshimaru's modern take on the doctrine of interdependence.

1.4. *Zazen*

Ultimately, for Deshimaru, *zazen* is the way to foster an ethical life and remedy

the ills of society. Invited to the 1979 World Buddhist Congress in Japan, he illustrated

his belief in the power of *zazen* in front of a room filled with people representing different

Buddhist traditions.[418] Attacking the existence of such a congress and speaking about its

uselessness in the endeavour to save all beings, he had three disciples come up on stage

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[414] Deshimaru, 1974 [1975; 1977; 1981]: 191.

[415] Bielefeldt, 1998: 34.

[416] Deshimaru, 1974 [1975; 1977; 1981]: 192.

[417] Leighton also uses Dōgen to explain the impact of *zazen* on others and its relevance for ethics. He cites the *Bendōwa* as expressing that when one sits in *zazen*, "displaying the Buddha mudra with one's whole body and mind," then "everything in the entire dharma world becomes Buddha mudra, and all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment" (Leighton, 2006: 62). Other Zen practitioners have criticized this conception of *zazen* as insufficient as a means of influence in the contemporary period. For example, Nelson Foster, co-founder of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and teacher at the Diamond Sangha in Hawai'i, asserts: "We delude ourselves if we suppose that our zazen and its gentle good effects can alone have the corrective results that are now necessary for planetary survival" (1985 [1988]: 59-60).

[418] This anecdote is related by de Smedt, who was accompanying Deshimaru in Japan with a few other close disciples.

and sit in *zazen*. As related by his biographer de Smedt, his words to the audience were

as follows: "here is the only truth to spread, the just action to teach and practice oneself in

order to find the clarity of being."[419] This event would not be the only time when he

presented *zazen* as the key to eliminate suffering and create a better world.

During an oral teaching, for example, he cites a sūtra that he does not identify:

"those who do zazen resist general bad karma."[420] The general bad karma mentioned here

refers to negative karma accumulated by society, and is addressed by Deshimaru as the

cause of a possible atomic war.[421] Within this discourse, Deshimaru comments on the

same unidentified sūtra with the following words: "But I would like to be precise: those

who really do zazen, those whose zazen spirit is still present in their lives, because one

really needs a spirit that is straight, stable, both serene and open, rigorous like the zazen

posture in order to escape the pernicious pressures of our civilization."[422] Without

directly admitting the ethical or nonviolent nature of the impact that meditation can have

on individuals' lives, Deshimaru thus still alludes to its potential in solving critical

problems. Following a similar trend of thinking, one of his close disciples, Jacques

Brosse,[423] interprets his master's words as an affirmation that "[t]he posture excludes

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[419] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 118. Note the paradoxical mix of goal-less meditation alongside the spread of meditation for the purpose of saving all beings. This aspect of *zazen* frequently reappears in Deshimaru's teachings as well as in his followers' interpretations.

[420] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 107.

[421] This *kusen* was delivered in 1981, and thus probably refers to the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Concerning the idea of a "collective karma," Deshimaru taught the idea that through the actions of individuals, civilizations and countries produce their own karma (Deshimaru, 1984: 141).

[422] Cited in de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 107.

[423] This individual writes that he was ordered by Deshimaru to start teaching three years after his ordination (Brosse, 1992 [1999]: 9). Also a historian, he wrote more than a dozen works on topics such as Buddhism, spirituality, and mythology.

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imposture."[424] This idea of a natural link between the *zazen* posture and just action is an

element of Deshimaru's teachings that frequently comes back in his writings, and is

echoed in his followers' views as well.

When consulted on the topic of an ethical revolution by individuals questioning

the future of mankind, Deshimaru apparently presented *zazen* as the only solution. De

Smedt relates this in his biography of the master, explaining his solution as:

> ... introducing meditation in education to give beings, at an early
> age, the taste of this practice which will create a feedback
> between diverse runaways, a control of excitements, a profound
> reflection down to its roots and will elaborate a true biological
> thermostat within our psychosomatic entities.[425]

Such a solution presents an interesting but complex mix of ideas, including the belief in

the spontaneous psychological benefits of meditation on individuals and their

repercussions on society at large eventually. Since it is not my purpose here to trace the

development of this combination of meditation and psychology, it suffices to mention its

presence in both modern Japan and the West, where Zen is sometimes explained as a

solution to neurotic suffering.[426] A second element in the above citation is the idea that

meditation is a practice that restores the individual to a natural, spontaneous ethical self.

Such a description of *zazen* thus fits in what McMahan calls the "Romantic-

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[424] Cited by de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 49.

[425] Cited in de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 105.

[426] McMahan addresses the different trends of thought on the topic of Buddhist meditation and psychology in a chapter entitled "Meditation and Modernity" (2008: 183-214). However, Deshimaru was keen to avoid presenting Zen Buddhism exclusively as a health practice. He wrote: "It is stupid to want to create a European Zen. Zen is Zen! Obviously, we need to keep its true essence, get rid of the decorations and ornaments. We should neither conceive an erroneous Zen, nor limit its range to health, nor create a 'Zen-yoga'" (Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 217).

Transcendentalist" discourse of modern Buddhist literature. Relevant themes of this

discourse are:

> ... the idea of an inner source from which springs authentic ethical action; the precedence of this source ... over external authority and 'rules'; the transcendence of conventional understanding of right and wrong by a spontaneous and ethically insightful act in perfect accord with circumstances.[427]

By presenting *zazen* as the solution to violence in the world, therefore, Deshimaru's ideas

are inscribed in the larger modern Buddhist discourse that interprets the Zen rhetoric of

spontaneity within the framework of Western Romantic ideas about nature. These ideas

are then coupled with a conception of seated meditation as the method that allows

individuals to find their true selves.

Before delving into the ways in which Deshimaru's teachings are internalized by

members of the AZM and put into practice, it is useful to try to explain how *zazen*

"works" according to Deshimaru, or how it guides behaviour when practiced regularly.

As mentioned in the above quotation, he believes in *zazen*'s capacity to act as a "true

biological thermostat," by which he means that it regulates one's psychosomatic being

and thus, presumably, one's thoughts and actions. He also expressed this idea during an

oral teaching, saying: "By the practice of *zazen*, we can control our negative desires,

unconsciously, naturally, and automatically."[428] Meditation, here *zazen*, as the method to

control negative thoughts and tap into one's inner ethical nature, is an important theme

for many Buddhists the West. Again, McMahan writes: "This transformation of internal

dispositions, rather than the following of externally imposed rules, is the root of ethical

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[427] McMahan, 2008: 84-85.
[428] Deshimaru, 1984: 52.

behavior, according to many contemporary Buddhist teachers."[429] Such a description of

the relation between meditation and ethical behaviour definitely applies to Deshimaru's

presentation of *zazen*. Explaining the exact nature of this control, and what it entails,

however, presents many difficulties since Deshimaru was also keen to emphasize the

impossibility of speaking about good and evil from a Zen point of view. Nevertheless, it

must be noted that Deshimaru is cautious about not falling into the naturalist heresy,[430]

where everything, including the passions, is part of Buddha nature and thus to be

encouraged. Such thinking, for him, is a great mistake and only leads to more passions,

or defilements.[431]

Part of Deshimaru's solution to the problem of Zen morality is also found in his

description of *hishiryo*, a Japanese term that he describes by citing Dōgen. He quotes the

latter's words from the *Fukanzazengi*: "Please, think from the bottom of non-thinking, do

not think from the bottom of thinking; it is *Hishiryo*, the secret of Zen."[432] This state,

which is attained through the practice of *zazen*, is seen as stimulating instinctive action

that will necessarily be right action.[433] *Hishiryo* is closely related to the doctrine of

emptiness for Deshimaru, since it is from this empty state of non-thinking that form, or

action, arises. Borrowing ideas from the *Heart sūtra*, Deshimaru explains that in such a

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[429] McMahan, 2008: 184.

[430] See chapter one for discussion of the naturalist heresy.

[431] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 63. He uses the Japanese term *bonnō*.

[432] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 15. See also 1984: 78. The *Fukanzazengi* 普勧坐禪儀, or "Universal Promotion of the Principles of Seated Meditation," is a meditation manual by Dōgen around 1230 following his return to Japan (see Bielefeldt, 1988: 15-34, and Heine, 2006: 91).

[433] This is not far from ideas found in the apocryphal *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*, where the bodhisattva who does not follow any disciplinary rules yet commits no licentious action (see chapter one).

state, emptiness gives rise to form.[434] He also uses the word *hishiryo* to describe the

attitude the adept should maintain during calligraphy, the tea ceremony, and martial arts,

among other practices.[435] Within this framework, the world of morality is left behind and

characterized as limited to the intellect.[436] Paradoxically, however, morality and just

action arise from this non-thinking because it leaves the intellect, qualified as the sixth

sense in Buddhism and thus also a source of illusion.[437] Deshimaru argues: "If you think

with your personal consciousness, if you must do one thing or another in order to follow

the dictates of ethics or morality, then life becomes difficult."[438] According to this view,

therefore, if one has the thought of acting properly, one does not do it in the right state of

mind, but as soon as one lets go of ideas of the good and helping, one automatically acts

that way.

Another important feature of *zazen* that relates to proper action is what Deshimaru

calls *mushotoku* practice, or practice without purpose or the idea of profit. He describes

this state of mind as having the ability to "transcend dualistic egocentrism" and "regulate

the accomplishment of individual actions melted into the rhythm of the cosmic

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[434] In this scripture, Avalokiteśvara tells Śāriputra: "...a son of good lineage or a daughter of good lineage who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom should perceive things in this way: form is empty; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness" (*The Heart Sūtra*, vii).
[435] de Smedt, 1985 [2005]: 158-159. Such a connection between Zen and unconscious, intuitive action is closely related to the ways in which D.T. Suzuki has promoted Zen Buddhism to the West in his writings. A marked example of this connection is Suzuki's treatment of Zen and martial arts, in which he used sixteenth-century Rinzai Zen master Takuan Sōhō's writings to develop his theory of no-mind, or *mushin* (see McMahan, 2008: 128-131). Deshimaru often refers to Suzuki's notion of *mushin*, and affirms that it is the same as *hishiryo*, which, he argues, is simply Dōgen's preferred rendition of the term (see Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 235).
[436] Deshimaru, 1984: 74. In this instance, Deshimaru qualifies the desire to do good and avoid bad as "moral passions" since they are related to the attachment to the idea of paradise and the fear of hell. He considers these intellectual calculations for behaviour to be inferior to the comprehension attained through the practice of *zazen*.
[437] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 235.
[438] Deshimaru, 1981 [1985]: 24.

movement."[439] By sitting in *zazen* without thoughts of gain, one develops this ability to

act selflessly, and thus acts in accordance with nature. The fact that there are both

peaceful and violent forces in nature does not seem to bother Deshimaru too much, as he

argues that without following this cosmic order, our lives would be very difficult.[440]

What exactly he means by this idea is unclear, but throughout his other writings and

teachings it is obvious that *zazen* leads one to "good" actions. Deshimaru finds

confirmation for such an idea in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, which he sees as expressing the

idea that one obtains the greatest effects and the most beneficial *karma* through the

practice of *zazen*.[441] Again, *zazen* is described as an activity that should not be thought of

in terms of gain for oneself or others, but that paradoxically brings benefits. It remains to

see how Deshimaru's followers at the AZM internalize these teachings, and whether they

use them to produce a nonviolent discourse.

Through this brief overview of the writings of Deshimaru related to violence and

nonviolence, I have demonstrated that he does not exactly construct a specific nonviolent

ethic for his followers. While he argues that not killing is an important precept, he also

allows its abrogation accordingly with the bodhisattva's skilful means. He also touches

upon the topic of interdependence, which becomes an important theme for his followers

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[439] Deshimaru, 1978 [1985]: 72.

[440] Deshimaru, 1984: 49. Note the parallels between Deshimaru's claim and the ideas found in the passage from the *Treatise on the Transcendence of Cognition* cited in chapter one, fn. 100. It goes without saying that Deshimaru's explanations on how to behave based on *zazen* is lacking clear guiding rules, and sometimes echo Chan and Zen arguments in support of killing.

[441] Deshimaru, 1984: 139. In this sense, Deshimaru follows Dōgen in subsuming all three aspects of Buddhist practice (wisdom, meditation, ethics) to *zazen*. For example, Dōgen asked his disciple Ejō (1198-1280): "When seated in meditation (zazen), what precepts are not being observed? What virtues are lacking?" (Bodiford, 1993: 169. Also cited in Heine, 2006b: 22). It is important to note, however, that Dōgen composed many works dealing with monastic rules (see Kim, 1975: 234).

at the AZM. Deshimaru's primary concern, however, remains to present *zazen* as the

practice that leads practitioners to attain a state of mind beyond the intellectual

distinctions of moral systems. Such an aspect of his teachings prevents the articulation of

moral guidelines. The different themes in his writings, furthermore, are internalized in

various ways by his followers. In the section below, I will show that two main narratives

are produced out of the AZM teachings. While some practitioners argue that Buddhism is

inherently nonviolent and leads individuals to adopt a nonviolent stance, others advance

that violence is sometimes necessary. While both narratives take their roots from the

seeds sown by Deshimaru, they do not necessarily agree on the topic of nonviolence. I

will now turn to individuals practicing at the AZM in an attempt to trace the different

understandings of nonviolence produced by their practice of Deshimaru's Zen.

2. Individualized Modes

In Deshimaru's writings and oral teachings, the practice of *zazen* and reaching a

certain state of mind dominate over injunctions to behave in a specific manner. Although

faithful to Deshimaru's emphasis on *zazen* as the root of individual and social peace, it

seems that his followers have interpreted his teachings from their insights and practice,

and have come up with their own experience of the lessons Zen Buddhism has taught

them. In the following section, I explore how, although they barely mention specific

ethical teachings in Buddhism, individuals deal with the topic of Zen nonviolence. The

fact that this nonviolence is interpreted individually also creates a multiplicity of

meanings and practices. For example, while one individual elaborates on diminishing

anger through sitting, another views the interdependence taught in Buddhism to mean that

hurting others is hurting the self. While both cite Deshimaru's and his close disciples'

teachings to support their claims, both also go beyond them and transform them through

other prominent Western discourses to explain the inherent nonviolence they see in their

Zen practice.[442]

Before presenting the various responses offered by practitioners at the AZM

during interviews, it is pertinent to mention some details about the methods I used to

organize data.[443] In the following section, I do not group responses according to the

categories of nonviolence I have used to this point, namely the bodhisattva precepts, the

bodhisattva ideal, and the doctrine of interdependence. Although participants mentioned

compassion and interdependence, their responses are much more difficult to classify

under these categories. Instead, nonviolent themes that stood out in my research included

the value of accepting other views, being compassionate, seeing the interdependence of

the self and others, and the importance of being at peace with oneself in order to be at

peace with others. Each of these themes contains overlapping elements, which are

combined according to the practitioner's experiences with Buddhism, and are in turn

filtered through his or her own cultural background.

In my presentation of nonviolence as interpreted by Deshimaru's followers in

Montréal, therefore, I chose to follow mainly the narratives of only two practitioners, into

which I integrated elements from other practitioners' accounts. On one hand, I present

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[442] Examples of these discourses are provided by McMahan, who calls them the "native traditions" of the West: theosophy, analytic psychology, Christianity, Judaism, Enlightenment rationalism, Romanticism, and Post-Modernism (2008: 19).

[443] See introduction for the method used to gather data, and chapter three for general ethnographic information about the group.

Valerie, a female practitioner in her sixties who turned to Zen Buddhism partly for its

nonviolence and who still maintains its validity in finding peaceful solutions to conflicts.

I then proceed to Richard, a man in his fifties whose adherence to Zen Buddhism was not

initially related to nonviolence, but who admits that his practice leads to nonviolence in

the sense that it has helped him to diminish his anger and has taught him to deal with

others in a more peaceful way. He nevertheless still adheres to the view that sometimes,

violent means can be used to help other people. Covering these two individuals'

treatment of Zen and nonviolence, complemented by information gathered through my

other interviews, I create two principal narratives of Zen and nonviolence that give a good

idea of the range of opinions on the topic at the AZM. While individuals in both

narratives cite Deshimaru's and his close disciples' teachings to support their claims, they

also go beyond them and use personal experience to show the nonviolence in Zen. Far

from forming a comprehensive picture of what Zen nonviolence can be, my exploration

of the topic will thus show that Zen Buddhist inspired nonviolence in the group is an

individual and contextual phenomenon that feeds on both ideal teachings and lived

experience.

2.1. Valerie

Valerie, a follower in her sixties who works as a nonviolence trainer,[444] has

practiced at the Association Zen de Montréal for 13 years. Before Deshimaru's Zen, she

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[444] She works for a company that offers nonviolence workshops in schools and work environments.

also practiced Rinzai and Tibetan Buddhism.[445] As a middle-class Argentinian woman

who was raised Catholic and immigrated to Canada fifteen years ago, her understanding

is mixed with other Buddhist and "spiritual" traditions, which shape her view of the

nonviolent teachings in Zen. When relating her first experiences with Buddhism, Valerie

admits that she was attracted to the religion because it did not have the history of violence

that the Catholic Church had. In her initial turn toward Buddhism she thus held a

preconceived notion of a tradition of peace that never justified the use of violence in wars,

a result of the modern representation of Buddhism to the West as a religion of individual

and world peace.[446] It is thus highly probable that this conception of a nonviolent

Buddhism also influenced Valerie's perception of Deshimaru's teachings. Furthermore,

by seeing Zen in this way, she in turn contributes to making it a source of nonviolent

teachings.[447] While this process of representation and transformation can be observed in

many followers, with Valerie it is a large part of her life since she works as a nonviolence

trainer in schools and businesses. Using a mix of Buddhist ideas along with other

nonviolent traditions, she develops her nonviolence programs by picking and choosing

from the tradition and creating a nonviolent Buddhism. In order to do so, just like other

practitioners, she appeals to different concepts that are taught by Deshimaru but also

interprets them in new ways.

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[445] She was first introduced by a friend to Rinzai Zen in London during the seventies. In her own words, she "took other kinds of spiritual paths; Arubindo, and Tibetan Buddhism…", and then practiced at the Rinzai-affiliated Centre Zen de la Main in Montréal before she changed for the AZM "when that was kind of over."

[446] See chapter one for a description of the different proponents of a nonviolent Buddhism.

[447] This process of representation is addressed by McMahan, who argues that fantasies about Buddhism should not be neglected in the study of Buddhism in the modern West and Asia since these misconceptions can have an impact on how Buddhism develops (2008: 21). This is especially true in Valerie's case since she spreads this "peaceful Buddhism" through her nonviolence training workshops.

The first thing Valerie mentioned when I address the question of Zen Buddhism

and nonviolence is the doctrine of interdependence. She affirmed that Zen practice at the

AZM leads to getting glimpses that the other is you, and that there is no separation

between self and others. Answering my question about the potential of Zen to provide

nonviolent alternatives to conflicts, she argued that since people do not want to injure

their own selves, this insight logically leads to nonviolence toward others.[448] Such a

world view and its logic were also mentioned by other practitioners. For example, Mary,

a woman in her late forties who has practiced at the AZM for twelve years, thought that to

hurt others is to hurt oneself. She explained this idea by saying that for a practicing

individual, there is gradually less separation between oneself and others. Indeed, a week

before my interview with Mary, Raphaël Triet, leading the summer camp in May,

discussed the importance of seeing the self in others. By that, however, he meant that one

can see the same potential for violence in oneself and other people, but at different levels,

which are further explained by people's *karma*.[449] Without directly admitting that

injuring another is equal to injuring oneself, he thus still put forth a way to better

comprehend other people's potential for violence. This comprehension, for some

practitioners, is enough to lead them to deal more peacefully with other people's violent

acts or attitudes.

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[448] Such an affirmation, again, is a product of a modern interpretation of the doctrine of interdependence. There are, however, antecedents for the idea in early Mahāyāna writings. For example, McMahan cites the Korean monk Gihwa (1376-1433): "Humaneness implies the interpenetration of heaven and earth and the myriad things into a single body, wherein there is no gap whatsoever. If you deeply embody this principle, then there cannot be a justification for inflicting harm on even the most insignificant of creatures" (2008: 178). McMahan adds, however, that "such an explicit link between the ontology of interdependence (or interpenetration) and ethics is ... rare" (2008: 178).
[449] I received his answer when I asked him the following during a personal conversation: "If other people are you, how can you enter in relationships with other people without acting out of self-love?" (May 2008).

Another practitioner who presented interdependence as the basis for the

nonviolence in Zen is Lucie, a woman in her sixties. She was introduced to Zen

Buddhism at the conference Deshimaru gave when he was invited to Montréal in 1980 by

the members of the recently-founded *dōjō*.[450] After this event, she started practicing and

has never stopped since then. Her explanation of conflict contained an interesting mix of

the notion of the three poisons (greed, hatred, and delusion) and interdependence. She

affirmed: "Greed is a terrible poison, and when you don't have what you want you

become angry, which is the other poison, you see? The third poison is ignorance—

ignoring that we are related to the cosmos in its entirety, that we are interdependent." For

Lucie, while greed is the starting point of conflict, ignorance seems to be the poison that

keeps us from seeing our interrelatedness to others and thus resorting to violence. In this

scheme of thought, countering ignorance is thus an important step in nonviolent action,

since it can act as a calming agent on our greed and anger toward others. By seeing the

interdependence of the self and others, it becomes harder to keep wanting what others

have and to be angry at them. She also added that people who do not practice Zen can

also realize this truth, but thought that Zen is the royal way, or the highway to it.[451] She

argued: "it helps us feel that we are not that important, after all."

In a conversation about *zazen*, Denise, an acupuncturist in her late fifties, also

appealed to a version of interdependence when she claimed that her practice can have a

peaceful impact on a larger scale. Her explanation of meditation and the way it relates us

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[450] As I mentioned earlier, the *dōjō* was founded in 1979 by practitioners affiliated with Deshimaru's teachings.
[451] She used the French terms "la voie royale" and "l'autoroute," respectively.

to others presented the doctrine of interdependence coupled with her training in the

healing sciences. After talking about the situation of Buddhist monks in Myanmar, she

reflected:

> I think that even if one is not in a country in conflict, it has an
> impact. The fact of being peaceful is like a rock that you throw in
> the water: it makes circles. You know, we are, and the word was
> again used today (Zen day), something universal. It is like
> breathing: we breathe, but for people who do osteopathy, the
> breathing of the subject who is being treated enters in a level
> where "it" breathes. It is something that is in our clock, in our
> bio-rhythm, it is in the human being. So it is something of that
> order that is vast, that traverses us.

Her interpretation of the ways in which *zazen* affects the individual and then society is

thus linked to a discourse, common in the West, emphasizing a connection between

Buddhism, nature, and the healing sciences.[452] From this view, *zazen* becomes the

practice that allows a calm state of mind, which is the first step in the creation of peace on

a larger scale. That this process can happen, according to Lucie, is due to the

interconnectedness, or universality, of human beings.

Besides emphasizing the interdependence of the self and other people around,

another aspect that Valerie mentioned when it comes to nonviolence in her practice was

the gradual loss of attachment to one's opinion. First mentioning that she would not offer

the ideal view that Zen practitioners are always less conflict-ridden, she still argued that

practicing individuals will become less attached to their opinions and desires. Since, for

her, conflict is created when "you are not doing what I want you to do," she concluded

that people less attached to their desires will necessarily have lives with less conflict. At

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[452] See chapter three, and section one of the present chapter.

play in this understanding is the view that through practice, one becomes more aware of

the coming and going of emotions and opinions and is then able to be less attached to

them. While Valerie did not mention technical terms like the *bonnōs* or *mushotoku*,[453] her

explanation of this detachment is similar to Deshimaru's explanation of the

transformation of egoistic thoughts and actions through practice.[454] However, and this is

where Valerie's perspective departs from Deshimaru's, this practice becomes a way of

solving conflicts with other people nonviolently since it will create a space to listen to the

other instead of sticking to one's opinions, preventing negotiation.

Sophie, a practitioner in her forties who has been practicing for at least ten years

and who sometimes translates works of the AZI from French to English, concurred with

Valerie when she affirmed that her practice provides her with the emotional distance

necessary to deal nonviolently with other individuals. Answering my question about the

nonviolent impact of Zen on her life, she said:

> I try to see that my reality is not Reality. I mean, I can think of
> something, and someone else can see it differently. That is not
> easy. ... I try to let compassion arise, you know, when people
> annoy you, when you feel like judging them, I tell myself that
> everybody has the nature of the Buddha.

Sophie's practice thus leads her to be more open-minded when it comes to looking at

other individuals' points of views. Seeing alternative ways of thinking without judging is

explained by her within the framework of compassion and the attempt to avoid judging

others. Such compassion leads to nonviolence since better acceptance also means, first,

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[453] See discussion of these terms in the context of AZI literature in the present chapter, above.

[454] For example, Deshimaru writes that *mushotoku* is a "state of consciousness that transcends the egocentric dualism" and that harmonizes "the accomplishment of individual actions melted in the rhythm of cosmic movement" (1978 [1985]: 72).

less chance of fostering more conflicts and, second, not trying to crush others in situations

· of conflict.[455]

Benjamin, a practitioner who has been going to the *dōjō* for eleven years, also

presented his practice as leading to better relationships with other people since it helps

him to let go of the desire to be right all the time. After I presented my topic to him, he

told me:

> ...you abandon your egoism, you stop looking at yourself, you
> stop locking yourself up in your head, in your thoughts, in your
> small problems, and you are more apt to see the person in front of
> you. To be listening, that's it. When you have to solve a conflict,
> it is only that the person in conflict with another must stop
> thinking about herself and start listening. It does not necessarily
> mean that we will always be in agreement, but you can still
> understand the point of view of the other. And this is the way of
> the Buddha: it is to encompass all points of views, to avoid
> staying inside one's own egoistic point of view. It is that simple!

Benjamin's experience with Zen, therefore, leads him to a better appreciation of the

other's point of view, but not necessarily to the detriment of his own opinion. When it

comes to dealing with interpersonal conflicts, Benjamin's explanation is close to Sophie's,

since both affirm that practice enhances their ability to listen to others even in times of

disagreement. Instead of trying to hurt the other person mentally or physically in order to

prevail over their opinion, they seek to let others have their views while engaging in

dialogue.

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[455] Although rejecting the views of others is not mentioned specifically in relation to violence in Deshimaru's writings, it is interesting to note that "killing the views" of others is seen as a seed of violent action by some Buddhist individuals. For example, Robert Aitken, in the chapter entitled "Not Killing" of his *Mind of Clover*, argues that "If I am anxious to protect myself, then I will kill your views" (Aitken, 1984: 23). From this perspective, Sophie's presentation of her attitude to other people's views could relate to nonviolence.

Abandoning the desire to be right all the time, or having to "win" an argument,

can manifest in other competitive activities as well. Marc, a practitioner in his fifties,

affirmed the following: "my practice also changed me in the sense that I am a much less

competitive person, in sports for example. This may be less good, in some ways, since

you start losing tennis matches, but this is only if you mind losing...." Although Marc's

attitude is not necessarily directly related to nonviolence, one can see here another way in

which practice leads to letting go of the desires of the ego. The last part of his sentence,

expressing that it only matters if one minds losing, is also interesting since it advances a

certain indifference to the results of the game. In other words, if you argue or compete

with a mind that is *mushotoku*, then you have less chance of winning.[456] However, since

the desire to win is understood here as a negative manifestation of the ego, Marc's ideal

practitioner is not disturbed by losing.

The narrative represented by Valerie's stance thus promotes an ideal vision of Zen

practice as leading to nonviolence. Here, Zen was chosen by the practitioner for its

peaceful orientation and its doctrine of interdependence articulates a world view in which

hurting another being is absurd since it also means hurting oneself. Furthermore, practice

leads one to be more open-minded to other people's opinions, which may mean that one

will be less inclined to hurt the opponent in a situation of conflict. Valerie's narrative

thus presents Zen as a source of nonviolent conflict resolution, and does not justify

violent means to reach one's ends. Themes that are at play in this discourse are the

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[456] This is an interesting point since it contradicts the popular view of Zen that promises enhanced performance by letting go of the conscious desire to win. Benjamin, in fact, agreed that sometimes it seems that Zen "takes," but he also affirmed that if one's occupation is to be a tennis player and to win matches, one can still be performing. He explained that maybe it will not be done with an aggressive spirit, or the desire to crush the other. He finished: "But if your work is to win matches, you will win matches."

modern Romantic interpretation of interdependence and values of tolerance toward

opinions differing from one's views. *Zazen* also occupies a place of importance since it is

considered by these practitioners to be the best method leading to insights on the

undifferentiated nature of reality and the strivings of the ego to be right all the time. In

the following section, I explore an alternative discourse that also presents Zen as mainly

leading to nonviolence, with some exceptions.

2.2. Richard

Richard is an artist in his fifties who was introduced to Deshimaru's Zen when he

was nineteen years old. After his brother-in-law, who met Deshimaru in person, showed

him the posture of *zazen*, Richard started his own *dōjō* at his cottage in the woods. After

two years, he stopped practicing, in his own words, "because of alcohol, women, or, in

short, life as an artist." It thus appears that his practice initially corresponded to a rather

antinomian type of Zen popularized in the sixties, where elements such as rules and

authority were not considered very important.[457] His beginnings with Deshimaru's Zen

were of a different order than what Valerie described, and were not motivated by a

perception of Zen as less violent than other religious traditions. Richard's reasons for

starting the practice were his admiration for his brother-in-law's impressive energy and

his own desire to become stronger. Although he was not affiliated with the AZM during

those years, he has been for the past ten years, when, as a result of a serious disease, he

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[457] See chapter one, section two.

decided to start his practice anew. He even moved to Montréal to live closer to the *dōjō*,

which illustrates his strong commitment.

For Richard, the posture practiced while sitting in *zazen* is the first element that

impacts his life. In order to explain this process, he repeated Deshimaru's words that

zazen affects a person "automatically, unconsciously, and naturally."[458] From this first

assumption, the primary importance given to the posture, over, for instance, theoretical

teachings related to the precepts or how to be a bodhisattva is evident.[459] In this sense,

and Richard's answer here is representative of many practitioners' views on the topic, the

presentation of nonviolence in Zen is characterized by Deshimaru's emphasis on *zazen*.

Richard's view was confirmed by Marc, who holds a view of *zazen* and its automatic

benefits that is similar to Deshimaru's. Marc claimed that ultimately, the *zazen* posture is

a great gift because people must practice with the spirit of *mushotoku*, which means, for

him, practicing for nothing. In our conversation, he exclaimed how it could seem odd to

practice for no purpose, and added that Deshimaru, when reading the notebooks of his

master, had thought the same: "To practice rigorously, but for no reason!" (Marc's

paraphrase). In life, Marc explained, we always do something for a reason, so if we start

doing it for nothing, we develop an attitude of donation. And the result is that one can

now give one's time for nothing. Finally, Marc mused that the fact that we do this,

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[458] An expression repeated by Deshimaru in both his written works and oral teachings. See 1984: 196, where he says in a *kusen*: "I always say 'automatically, naturally, unconsciously.'" De Smedt also mentions it in his preface to *La Pratique du Zen*. See Deshimaru, 1974 [1977; 1975; 1981]: 12. See also section one of the present chapter.
[459] Such a view of Deshimaru's Zen is in accordance with the teacher's presentation of Zen as a technique and not a dogma (see chapter three).

sometimes without knowing, may be what Buddha nature is, since everyone helps his or

her neighbour to a certain extent.

Following these two explanations of the ways in which *zazen* affects individuals,

an important question arises. If individuals should abandon any sense of purpose in their

practice, then how can they conceive of the "good" ethical action and then act upon it?

Or, in other words, how does one get out of a passive stance when faced with ethical

questions? As a step toward answering these questions, Richard's views can be useful.

For him, the impact *zazen* has on someone is not one of passive acceptance of others just

as they are, good or bad. To illustrate this claim, he shared his experience of having to

deal with members of his lodging cooperative who stole money from other members. He

decided to get elected on the board and make sure the guilty individuals would not go

unpunished. Discussing the fact that punishment does not necessarily mean violence, he

added:

> As for me, I came to the realization that the only way, and it is not
> easy to find, is that one has to do what cannot not be done. And it
> is only this way that we can understand it. Because automatically,
> just action is behind this way of thinking. And when you are sure
> of this just action, the spirit is at peace. And this is the only way,
> according to me, to do what cannot not be done.

This notion of a "just action," therefore, is related to an individually experienced sense of

social justice and a concern with action in this world. Richard thus adheres to

Deshimaru's idea that *zazen* allows one to tap into an intuitive sense of ethical action, a

recurring theme of the "Romantic-Transcendentalist" discourse in modern Buddhist

literature.[460] Such an intuitive understanding of the "good" action helps explain why he

employed a double negation, "what cannot not be done," to qualify the type of action he

aspires to. Beyond this notion of an intuitive "just" action, Richard also affirmed that

automatically, practice leads to adherence to the bodhisattva precepts. He explained:

> ... the first shocks of *satori* behind, you realize that you need to
> follow the precepts and the eightfold path. But you also realize
> that you are already doing it without noticing. It is that way for
> most people.... You are seeing the flowers of *zazen*, finally.... I
> would say that it is like an infusion, or that *zazen* works through
> absorption. But I still have efforts to make as a monk!

Such words demonstrate that although many of the results of *zazen* are automatic,

Richard is aware of the precepts to follow as an ordained individual. Nevertheless, he

explained the precepts as the "flowers" of *zazen*, growing naturally, nurtured by its

practice. Such a view is reminiscent of the bodhisattva who does not need to adhere to

the precepts, but who respects them naturally.

Another interesting aspect of Richard's experience with Zen is his gradual work

with his own anger. In the following reflection, he demonstrated how for him, practice

came to take a nonviolent meaning:

> When I was ordained bodhisattva, the little black square, for me,
> was a white flag that I was offering to myself. To make peace is
> to make peace with oneself. This is what I started to see, that if I
> was in the process of making peace with myself, I could make
> peace with others. And it is this way, really, that I completely
> wove in zen for the rest of my life.

Therefore, an important symbol in Zen Buddhism, the black square of the *kesa*, was

experienced as a white flag, a symbol of surrender and thus peace for Richard. While this

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[460] See discussion in section one of the present chapter.

interpretation is not one that comes directly from Deshimaru, his teachings contain the

idea that *zazen* leads to decreasing the passions and the sense of an ego. In this sense,

Richard's stance expresses the surrender of passions and anger to make space for

individual peace. Richard also indicated that this peace fosters peace with others.

Through his own practice, he thus uses Deshimaru's teachings to create a nonviolent ideal.

While having a conversation on social engagement, Richard also argued that his

practice automatically opens him up to compassion. On this topic, he paraphrased the

teachings of a close disciple of Deshimaru[461] affirming that "*zazen* without compassion,

or awakening for oneself only, is absolutely ridiculous. It is noble, but not more than

that." The development of compassion through *zazen*, therefore, goes hand in hand with

abandoning the idea that one's practice is for oneself. Richard also argued that the

posture, even if practiced by the greatest egoist, over the years, leads to a feeling of great

union, a union that is unnameable, incomprehensible. He said it surely leads to the other,

to the healing of the suffering of the other. He mentioned the importance of seeing that

this person is in trouble. Richard's white flag, therefore, can become a method of dealing

with others in less violent ways, since, first, he can see and let go of his own anger, and

second, realize and see beyond the anger in the people with whom he deals. The way in

which he internalized the Zen teachings of Deshimaru, therefore, is inseparable from his

own past experiences with anger, and a certain amount of reading from other meditative

traditions. Indeed, Richard admitted to having read a lot of Krishnamurti, Carl Jung, and

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[461] This quotation refers to Raphaël Triet, who is still active in Spain and usually comes annually to the province of Québec to lead summer camps, *sesshins*, and other activities.

general works on Buddhism. His Sōtō training in Montréal is thus a guiding framework

through which other ways of thinking are filtered and assimilated.

Richard's approach to anger coincides with a modern use of meditation as a way

of dealing with one's negative emotions. He argued that the very act of observing his

anger enables him to disarm it by seeing its origins and then letting it pass by. Stressing

the importance of attention, he claimed that it leads him to react in a different, less violent

way with others. Mary also offered an interesting image to speak of the way in which she

tries to deal with anger. She compared anger to a spark in the forest, and added that

instead of feeding the spark and causing a fire, one should become aware of it but keep

walking without suppressing it. Such considerations of the way in which meditation can

help with anger are a reflection of the modern psychoanalytical interpretation of

meditation.[462] On this aspect of meditation, Denise offered an interesting presentation of

her experience with Zen and anger. She said:

> You know, while sitting and watching yourself, if you are in a
> situation of conflict, you can be sure that it will go through your
> screen. And then you are in a kind of non-willing, non-
> attachment, non-retaining, so the blinkers are wider and
> sometimes, it leads to resolutions. I experienced it. I used to get
> carried away easily, you know, I used to be a very angry person,
> and sometimes it comes back full speed, even now. When the
> mustard comes to my nose, it is crazy![463] Fortunately, this
> practice, throughout the years, made me go swiftly through things,
> and I don't get caught too much anymore. And I am less angry
> than before. These are very precise situations that I am starting to
> better identify. I think and I let go. I have a little distance. But
> sometimes, I do not care about the distance, it needs to come out!

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[462] For example, McMahan argues: "One of the most influential views of meditation to emerge from the psychoanalytic tradition is that, like psychoanalysis itself, it opens up the unconscious to consciousness and in doing so frees the individual from destructive habits and repressed contents of mind" (2008: 192).
[463] French expression meaning that one becomes angry.

Denise's perception of her anger and how she deals with it is closely related to the

practice of sitting, where she can better observe her patterns and anger. Nevertheless, she

still admitted to getting angry sometimes, and her practice is thus a continual process of

observing her emotions. In these cases, however, she mentioned that she goes through

her phases of anger quicker than before. Her experience with practice thus echoes

Deshimaru's reputation of getting angry at disciples and yet being calm immediately

after.[464]

Concerning anger, Richard was also faithful to his master when he admitted that

sometimes, anger can be useful. While we had this conversation, I reminded Richard that

he told me once that Zen sometimes helped to let anger come out. He then replied by

relating an experience he had in Spain with Raphaël Dōkō Triet during his ordination.

The teacher was naming the precepts and the eightfold path, and said that one needs to be

careful with anger, but that sometimes it is also important to be angry.[465] And this is

because one has to show the path to others. On that topic, Richard shared his idea that

sometimes, one has to give a good kick in the rear end to someone who is lost. At play in

this treatment of anger is thus the skilful means of the bodhisattva, who does not reject

any means when it leads to the greater good, but who remains calm and compassionate in

his mind. Here, Richard demonstrated that he does not hold a strict adherence to

nonviolence, since he allows its use in certain situations.

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[464] See chapter three. Mary also expressed this particular view of anger when she said that anger and emotions can be expressed in practice, but they should not stick to the mind of the individual. There is no attachment to these emotions, whether they are negative or positive.

[465] Deshimaru treats his own anger in similar ways, yet mentioning the freedom of his consciousness from anger even when he scolds his disciples. See 1984: 224-225.

A more nonviolent method of dealing with anger was related to me by a female

practitioner during a conversation we had at the May 2008 summer camp. The mother of

two children, she said that she once consulted with an AZI teacher about how to manage

her anger when dealing with individuals. In response to her inquiry, he advised that she

should give a quarter to everyone who annoys her. The few individuals taking part in this

conversation bantered on how hard she should throw that quarter to the annoying person,

maybe reflecting the casual atmosphere of the conversation, which took place while

sipping a beer in front of the fireplace. Nevertheless, this is an original method of dealing

with conflict by giving money, a gesture contrary to what one usually does when

someone is annoying. In this response, one can perceive echoes of stories in which

Sawaki got Deshimaru drunk, or Raphaël Triet asked for money from a beggar to take a

subway.[466] One can also see glimpses of skilful means in such behaviour, even though it

is not emphasized as such by practitioners. This combination of stories and theoretical

ideas thus illustrates the multiplicity of ways in which the discourse of nonviolence is

articulated at the AZM.

Richard's narrative is representative of a view of practice that is more intuitive

than the logical insights explained by Valerie. Such an explanation of the intuitive

aspects of practice does not exclude the idea that sometimes, violence can be used as a

skilful means to help others. Compassion, in this sense, is valued above the means to put

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[466] For the first anecdote, see chapter three. The second anecdote is related in a transcribed question and answer period to Triet during the summer camp of 2006. Triet, as a young man, asked for money from a beggar to take the subway and get to Deshimaru's birthday party. He uses this anecdote to show that one must abandon one's certainties when trying to help others. He relates Deshimaru's words: "One must beg to the beggar and give to the rich man" (*Kusen*, 2006: 11). This unconventional way of helping, Triet argues, enacts a change of spirit in people that is necessary to understand how to help others.

it in practice. In this narrative, furthermore, the idea that *zazen* helps to deal with one's

own anger is strong. This treatment of anger, however, is accompanied by an affirmation

that anger can be an important emotion that one should acknowledge but not nurture.

Any of its manifestations are ideally described as a means to help individuals, just as

Deshimaru's fits of anger were understood as necessary for his followers' progression in

their practice. Leaving aside the two narratives represented by Valerie and Richard, I

now turn to a discourse emphasizing the importance of the *sangha* as leading to a

nonviolent orientation.

2.3. The *Sangha*

In treating interpersonal conflicts and their nonviolent solutions, it is necessary to

consider group behaviour. After all, it is within his or her group of co-practitioners that

the individual first interacts after the practice of *zazen*. Such group encounters require

practitioners to put the insights gained during *zazen* in practice, and are even considered a

practice in themselves. According to Sophie, for example, practicing with other members

of the *sangha* holds a place of importance since it creates an automatic process of self-

perfection. She affirmed: "It is an occasion to turn the mirror toward myself and to say,

well, if a certain situation of conflict arises, how can I be part of the problem, how can I

be part of the solution? We say that *sanghas* are like little rocks in a bag that polish each

other through friction."[467] This image of the rocks polishing each other is one expressing

the importance of practicing with others, entering into conflict with them and gradually

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[467] This image is also mentioned by Hori in his presentation of Zen in America (1998: 59).

learning to deal with people in nonviolent ways. Indeed, Sophie affirmed that even in

Zen, there are many occasions for conflicts.

> Sometimes, for example, we get nervous, we don't have a lot of
> time, we want to do things in a certain way, and others disagree
> with us. ...Confidence, to have trust in others, these are aspects
> of the practice that are very strong. They force you to leave your
> pride aside, to leave your ego aside.

This process is one that can happen while doing *samu*, periods of work during Zen days

or *sesshins* where the practitioners have to cook, wash the dishes, clean the living quarters,

or other manual tasks. It is during these periods that practitioners interact with others and

possibly come into conflict over ways of doing work.

At the *dōjō* or in other settings such as summer camps or monasteries, therefore,

practitioners have the opportunity to conflict with one another and apply the insights

gained through their practice. I experienced such an opportunity while participating in a

sesshin in May 2008, when I entered into conflict with a practitioner over how to wash

the dishes. While someone had taught it to me in a certain way, this man insisted on

doing it another way. I have to say that due to his insistence, I let him do it his way.

Although this is not an illustration of nonviolence since he definitely "won" by just not

listening to me, it is still an interesting anecdote illustrating the ways in which conflicts

occur in the microcosm of the community of practitioners. Indeed, beyond the *saṅgha*,

on the topic of the potential of Zen to solve conflicts nonviolently on a large scale,

practitioners usually emphasize the importance of individual practice before its broader

application. Sophie, for example, does not think that practice can be used to solve

international conflicts, but she mentioned the situations in Myanmar and Tibet and

expressed her admiration for monks who continue to practice and uphold a compassionate attitude toward their adversaries in times of conflict. Rather than offering ways in which practice can be applied on a larger scale, therefore, she bases her view on individual examples. Nevertheless, on the topic of war, she believes that if one cannot "solve" a war, it is at least possible, through practice, not to add to the violence.

The idea that it is necessary to deal with one's own conflicts before one can deal in nonviolent ways with others is one that was also mentioned by Benjamin: "If you want to solve a conflict, you must solve conflicts you have with yourself first. For this reason, at the level of society, it is less easy to solve social problems, or wars.... So what you can do in this situation is to awaken yourself." At stake in this view is also the possible application of conflict resolution to a larger social scale, but only once individuals have dealt with their own inner conflicts. Concerning this issue, Benjamin's view is representative of other individuals at the *dōjō*, who usually suggest going through steps toward individual peace and only then apply this peace to relations with others. An illustration of this process happened in a discussion with Benjamin on internationally active monks such as Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai-Lama. He sees them as individuals who, through their practice, have been able to attract individuals and create change. He affirmed: "If there had not been this strong practice, which attracted individuals to do the same, and led them to develop a spirit of gratitude, they would not help in their mission." For him, it is in this way, through practice, that one can have an impact at the social level. One can only influence the world from one's practice, by awakening oneself, by abandoning one's egoism, and by being ready to listen to others.

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Finally, a rather interesting anecdote concerning nonviolence on a larger scale was related to me anonymously through a female practitioner's answer to a questionnaire. She shared the following story:

> One day, a practitioner coming out of *zazen* was walking by his master's side. He said: "I am happy, I just did a good *zazen*. I have the impression that I am helping others, even those who do not practice." The master smiled and said: "Yes, it is true. When you remain sitting, in silence facing the wall for an hour and a half, at least you do not piss off anyone, and thus yes, you help others."

Such an illustration of nonviolence offers an alternative perspective on the topic of conflicts with others, as it takes *zazen* to a different level, and in a rather humorous fashion. Here, in the master's response, sitting is not a practice giving the follower any deeper insight on reality and relations with others, but physically keeps him from entering into conflicts with people. The story thus adds to the variety of discourses of nonviolence, and offers an interesting perspective on the idea that by sitting in *zazen*, every precept and virtue is respected.[468]

Conclusion

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to note that the centrality of *zazen* for the followers at the AZM presents an important difficulty for anyone who attempts to write on the topic. Although many of my interviewees mentioned their appreciation of the fact that I sat *zazen* with them as part of my research, in their eyes, anything I say about *zazen* needs to come from experience, and language itself is not sufficient to

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[468] See reference to this idea from Dōgen and Deshimaru's paraphrase in the present chapter, section one.

explain all the dimensions of this experience. For example, when I started speaking of

the bodhisattva ideal and helping others, Lucie repeated that it is more of an unconscious

thing for her. Then, she advised me to come back to the following idea when I would be

done with my research: "This should not be one more theory in our already packed

brain," she said. She also added that it was good to do this research, but that after, I

should let it settle. This view of theory, in contrast to experience, as not sufficient to

confer teachings thus seems to be an obstacle to any attempt to explain nonviolence as

viewed and practiced at the AZM. At the same time, however, it helps explain the variety

of ways in which Zen is related to nonviolence. This lack of direct explanation, in other

words, opens a space where the individual is free to experience *zazen* in creative ways.

The following sentence by Benjamin expressed this view: "Zen is extreme in the sense

that there is nothing to lean on, no support except your backbone that supports you.

There is no incantation, no magic, no saving God, that's it. Therefore, for solving

conflicts, there is no recipe, no list of steps."[469] Benjamin thus reasserted the view that

Zen is beyond intellectual comprehension and that one needs to practice *zazen* to realize it.

Perhaps as a result of this lack of specific guidelines, practitioners are further inclined to

experience traditional elements of Zen in their own ways. Doing so, they bring modern

Western values to their interpretation. The teachings of Deshimaru are thus filtered

through individual experience, and practitioners are not prevented from bringing elements

of other traditions, spiritual or not, in their practice.

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[469] Such a demythologized approach to Zen is one aspect of the modern interpretation of Buddhism. McMahan defines demythologization as "the modernization of cosmology along with a 'symbolic interpretation of traditional myths'" (2008: 7). As discussed in chapter three, in the case of Zen Buddhism, the presentation of Zen to the West by individuals such as D.T. Suzuki promoted Zen not as a religion but as a pure, unmediated experience of reality that is both rational and empirical (see Sharf, 1995b: 246-248).

The two broad narratives provided in this chapter have been useful frameworks

for exploring the variety of responses to the topic of Zen and nonviolence at the AZM.

Keeping in mind that there are many ways to organize the data gathered through my

research, these themes still reflect two ends of the spectrum of Zen and nonviolence in

this group. Valerie's narrative, largely influenced by her experience as a nonviolent

trainer and her preconceptions of Zen as a nonviolent tradition, offers a description

oriented toward the ideal end of the application of nonviolence in one's life. On the other

hand, Richard's narrative represents people who believe in spontaneous ethical action as a

result of practice but who also see violence as a necessary means in some cases.

Exploring both narratives and some additional views on group practice, I have tried to

convey that an ethic of nonviolence is not constructed solely from Deshimaru's teachings,

or from his followers' practice. However, when combined together, these teachings and

their various individual interpretations form a plurality of discourses that intersect with

each other. The approach of a practitioner to nonviolence is thus proper to the AZM and,

although it could share many elements with other Zen Buddhist traditions in the modern

West and Asia, is definitely contextual. The theoretical views found in Deshimaru's

written and oral teachings, the different stories about teachers that illustrate (or

contradict) these same teachings, or the cultural background of each individual are all

factors that participate in the discourse of nonviolence at the AZM. By giving attention to

only one of these aspects mover the others, it is impossible to arrive at an adequate

presentation of the place nonviolence occupies in this group's practice.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored the topic of Zen Buddhism and nonviolence through

the case study of a Sōtō Zen Buddhist group situated in Montréal. The different issues

treated in the four chapters illustrate well the wide range of themes involved in studying

the topic at hand. Indeed, I had to go back to different Buddhist scriptural justifications

of violence in order to trace the language Buddhists sects used to justify Japan's

aggressive endeavours in the twentieth century. I also had to give attention to the

relationship entertained between sects and the state in China and Japan to better explain

why Buddhist individuals did not abide by the precept forbidding killing and offer

resistance to the violence of armed conflicts. Such a historical context, in turn, helped to

assess Deshimaru's sometimes antinomian language, but also his concern to redeem his

participation (and, through the same token, his master Sawaki's) in the Fifteen-Year War

to his French audience in the seventies.

When it comes to the idea of Zen nonviolence at one of his branch groups, the

AZM, Deshimaru's writings present an ambiguous relation to violence. Although he does

mention the bodhisattva precepts and presents a world view in which everything is

interdependent, he also advances the view that one could kill in certain circumstances and

is himself depicted as a figure with a hot temper who would not hesitate to break the

precepts. His views on right behaviour, in fact, are best summarized in his presentation of

the effects of *zazen* on individuals. Such ideas are assimilated by his followers in

Montréal, where the absence of specific teachings is transformed through each

individual's background. Hence, when consulted on the impact of their practice in terms

of nonviolence, practitioners offer a variety of answers that illustrate not only the

influence of Deshimaru's writings, but also the impact of multiple discourses found in

modern Buddhist literature and Buddhism in the West. In my conclusion I will thus come

back to these discourses in an attempt to analyze the results of my research and situate

them within the context of studies on Buddhism in the West.

When speaking of modern Buddhism, I would first like to specify that this

category of discourses is largely a product of the encounter of the West with Buddhist

traditions, but that it is not limited to Buddhism in the West. For example, the Japanese

discourse promoting the inherently rational and empirical nature of Zen Buddhism may

be modern but it remains a discourse of Meiji New Buddhism. Furthermore, while it can

be argued that it was constructed out of a dialogue with Western philosophical ideas, it

must be remembered that it was also a product of a Buddhist movement responding to

intense social upheavals in the Meiji period. Therefore, although many aspects of modern

Buddhism derive from its encounter with discourses of the modern West, we must also

give attention to traditional aspects of the religion. To take nonviolence as an example,

the precept of non-killing illustrates the importance of *ahiṃsā* early in the Buddhist

tradition, but the claim that any Buddhist has a duty to denounce and protest war activities

in his or her country is debatable.[470] The purpose of my research is thus not to assess

whether nonviolence is a "traditional" aspect of Buddhism, but rather to trace the various

discourses at play in the treatment of nonviolence at the AZM.

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[470] I address a similar debate concerning whether engaged Buddhism is traditional or not in my introduction.

In assessing the ways in which members of the AZM explain the relation between

their practice and nonviolence, several themes arise. To start with the founder,

Deshimaru, I have demonstrated that his emphasis on *zazen* leads him to present the

practice as the solution to most social problems, including interpersonal conflicts, armed

conflicts and even personal problems. At stake in his writings is thus an elusive treatment

of ethics, which does not really offer guidelines or directions in terms of behaviour. By

giving closer attention to his teachings, however, I have proposed that his practice of

zazen includes following the precepts, cultivating the virtues of the bodhisattva, and

accessing the insight that every phenomenon is interrelated. Such a view of ethics is

partly a product of his master's insistence on *zazen* and criticism of the Japanese sectarian

institution. On the other hand, responding to his followers and other inquiries on the

pragmatic aspect of his teachings, Deshimaru turned his Zen into a practice that enables

individuals to respond to the cries of the world. For example, he was definitely optimistic

on the eventual widespread appeal of *zazen* as a technique. In an interview published in

1984, he expressed the following: "Sooner or later, the principles, let's say at least

utilitarian, of Zen will be integrated into Western mentality."[471] By reducing Zen to a

technique, separated from its religious content, Deshimaru thus made his Zen not only

more appealing to a public suspicious of religious dogma, but he also added a pragmatic

aspect to it. Such a characteristic confirms Queen's argument that one of the

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[471] Deshimaru, 1984b: 95.

characteristics of Buddhism in the West is pragmatism.[472] At the same time, Deshimaru's

Zen follows patterns similar to the Japanese so-called "New Religions," which promise

this-worldly benefits through the adoption of a certain practice.[473]

When it comes to the practitioners' views of nonviolence in their practice, the

AZM discourses on nonviolence open up to a variety of themes related to modernity and

Buddhism in the West. The narrative represented by Richard contained the idea that

zazen has an automatic beneficial impact on one's anger and, through the same token, on

one's relation with other people. Prominent in this discourse is the presentation of Zen as

a kind of psychotherapy that allows a natural balancing of one's emotions. Richard and

other practitioners, furthermore, believed in the larger impact of this inner peace on one's

moral decisions and relations with other people. Aside from the psychological aspect,

therefore, a Romantic view of human beings as able to attain their "true selves" in

harmony with nature is at play. Indeed, such a transformative aspect of meditative

experience in the life of the individual is a strong concern at the AZM, as gathered from

the centre's website: "In our disturbed world, practicing *zazen* means coming back to the

human being's true dimension and rediscovering the fundamental balance of our

existence."[474]   This optimistic view is sometimes related to Zen antinomian rhetoric,

where laws and precepts are left behind by one who has access to a particular insight,

here that of the bodhisattva. Nevertheless, Richard stressed the necessity to make efforts

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[472] Queen, 1999: xix. Queen discusses American Buddhism in this passage, but it definitely applies to Buddhism in the West (thus including Europe) in this case. The other two characteristics he mentions are democratization and engagement.

[473] Some of the characteristics of Deshimaru's Zen are also reminiscent of Sharf's description of *Sanbōkyōdan* Zen (1995d). For example, Deshimaru taught Zen to Christian orders and offered a demythologized Buddhist cosmology.

[474] *AZI*, "Zazen's Influence on our Lives," http://www.zen-azi.org/spip.php?article49.

and follow his bodhisattva precepts, which demonstrates that he does not believe that practitioners should be above any type of rules. Rather, rules and behaviour should coincide naturally.

In the narrative represented by Valerie's views, the prominent theme was the doctrine of interdependence, an ontological stance rendering the act of hurting other people equal to hurting oneself. This particular interpretation of interdependence, articulated in some of Deshimaru's writings, also found resonance in modern discourses on the compatibility of Buddhism and scientific thoughts, as well as the Transcendentalist stance on the universality of all phenomena. Rather than a use of interdependence as the assertion of a non-dual, empty outlook on reality, where any action is equally valid, practitioners promoted it as a justification of the importance of non-harming. At stake in such explanations of nonviolence is also the popular idea of Buddhism in general as a nonviolent tradition. As presented in chapters one and two, however, the ways in which various ideas and doctrines were interpreted by practitioners in the past depended on historical circumstances as well. This phenomenon is a pattern discernible in the Zen tradition, in which individuals attempting to justify both violence and nonviolence have presented their views as a return to "true Zen." Such reality opens up the question of how differently Deshimaru's teachings could be interpreted in the context of a country at war.

There are many other questions opened up by the research for this thesis. There still remains the question of the nature of Deshimaru's participation during the Fifteen-Year war, since I had no access to other sources to confirm or correct the many stories related in his autobiography. In addition to this lack of secondary literature, Deshimaru

himself does not address the topic of the war in his other works or oral teachings. Even in

his book on Zen and martial arts, the topic of Zen violence and its historical roots is

addressed very briefly.[475] In terms of the contribution of my research to the field of

Buddhist studies, since this thesis addressed a particular group, I cannot provide a greater

picture of Zen and nonviolence in the West. In order to go further into this issue, I could

further compare this group with other Buddhist groups in the West, whether explicitly

active upon their stance on nonviolence (e.g. Aitken's group) or not (e.g. Suzuki

Shunryū's group), and assess the effects of different factors such as the personality of the

founder, the political situation during the founding of the group, or the cultural

background of its practitioners on a group's view of nonviolence. Leaving the topic of

nonviolence aside, from the ethnographic perspective, it would be interesting to take a

closer look at the AZM and its relation to France to see if there are any marked

distinctions with other Zen Buddhist groups in North America.

I have also demonstrated through this thesis that although practitioners at the

AZM are affirming the nonviolent impact of their practice on their lives, this impact

manifests itself mostly on an individual basis and does not necessarily lead to an active

nonviolent stance. Although many practitioners believe in the subtle repercussions of

their own peace on others and perhaps even on society at large, most profiles do not

correspond to a close association between Zen and social action. It is relevant to mention,

however, that most participants in this research worked in domains related to helping

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[475] Deshimaru 1977 [1983]. In this work, Deshimaru explains the origins of martial arts by referring to the necessity monks had to defend themselves against brigands and soldiers. He writes that monks developed those hand combat techniques because they were forbidden by their precepts to use arms. Deshimaru also adheres to the legend that martial arts techniques were developed by Bodhidharma (1977 [1983]: 91-92). See Shahar 2008 for an academic account of the development of martial arts in Chan Buddhism.

others. Other than Valerie's work as a nonviolence trainer, which is directly related to

my topic, other employments included psychologist, nurse, and acupuncturist. Obviously,

such information cannot be used to conclude that Zen practice fosters a desire to actively

help others, but it could be interesting to research further on the topic. Furthermore, there

are different factors at play in practitioners' interpretation of Zen, such as the teachings of

the founder and his disciples, the influence from other popular Buddhist traditions or

"spiritual paths," and modern discourses such as psychology, romanticism, and social

engagement. However, it remains difficult to separate these trends and identify the

processes through which individuals belonging to a particular group form their opinions

based on the group's teachings. In some cases, the discourse of certain practitioners

concerning Zen and violence may even be unrelated to Deshimaru's discourse, or, as a

matter of fact, Buddhism itself. Such a situation leads to the following question: Is the

nonviolence described by practitioners Buddhist? In the West, since many Buddhists

tend to "pick and choose" certain practices and ideas from a tradition while leaving others

aside,[476] it is thus not surprising to see elements belonging to different discourses,

Buddhist or not, joined together under the "Buddhism" label.

Finally, I hope that I have been able to convey the idea that while nonviolence is

an ideal upheld in the Buddhist tradition, when it comes to explain how individuals put it

into practice, many other factors come into play. Even in a rather small group such as the

AZM, there is no commonly held notion of why Zen is related to nonviolence and how it

has an impact on individuals' behaviour. Nevertheless, the variety of discourses at play

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[476] See Coleman, 2008: 187.

in practitioners' responses shows that it is only by approaching the topic in a particular

context, here the AZM, that it becomes possible to identify the different trends involved

in Buddhist nonviolence in a twenty-first century group. It also illustrates well the fact

that Buddhism, in this period as in the past, is a tradition that must be studied in particular

cultural and geographic contexts if we want to make any sense of it as scholars.

Appendix A: Questionnaire and Interview Guide

Questionnaire

1) Background
What is your: Age? Sex?
What is your occupation?
Are you married? Do you have children? How many?
Do you consider yourself involved in your community (volunteering, political participation, helping individuals in need, etc...)?
If yes, what are the main actions you do in your community?

2) Practice
For how long have you practiced Zen meditation?
In what year did you start practicing at the *dōjō*?
How often do you practice during a normal week?
Have you attended one the following before?-Summer camp   -Sesshin
                                          -Zen Day   -Other (specify)
How would you list these aspects of the *dōjō* in order of importance for you (1=most important, 4=least important) -Meditation   -Social life
                                        -Teachings   -Other practice(s) (specify)

3) Religious Affiliation
Do you practice/believe in a religion? If yes, which one?
What religion were you raised in, if any?
Do you consider yourself a Buddhist?
Is affiliation with a certain type of Buddhism important for you?
Do you practice other types of meditation?

4) Zen Buddhism and Society
Do you think any aspect of Zen has answers to the following contemporary issues?
-Environmental crisis   -Psychological troubles
-War/Armed conflict   -Other (specify)
Do you think Zen Buddhism can help resolve conflicts in peaceful ways?
If yes, which one(s): -Political   -Personal (family, friends, etc)
                -Work conflicts   -Other (specify)

If you answered yes to the question above, what aspect(s) of Zen makes it relevant for conflict resolution?

-Meditation   -Particular Leader(s) (Name)

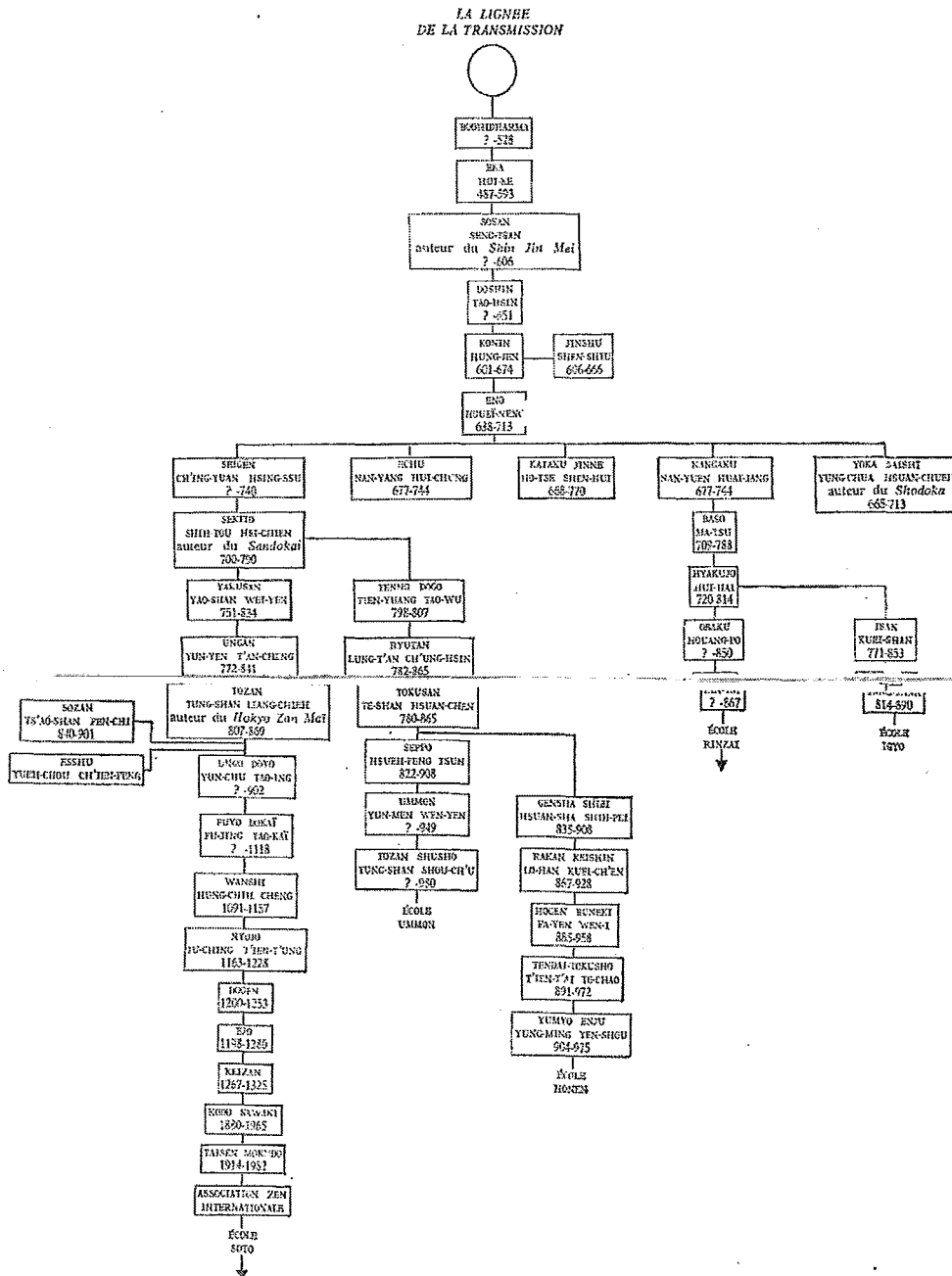-Philosophical ideas   -Other (specify)

5) Open Questions

In what way(s) has your practice influenced your life (individual, family, work, community, political views/actions)?

Is there any additional comment/idea you would like to share about the *dōjō* or Zen Buddhism in general?

Interview Guide
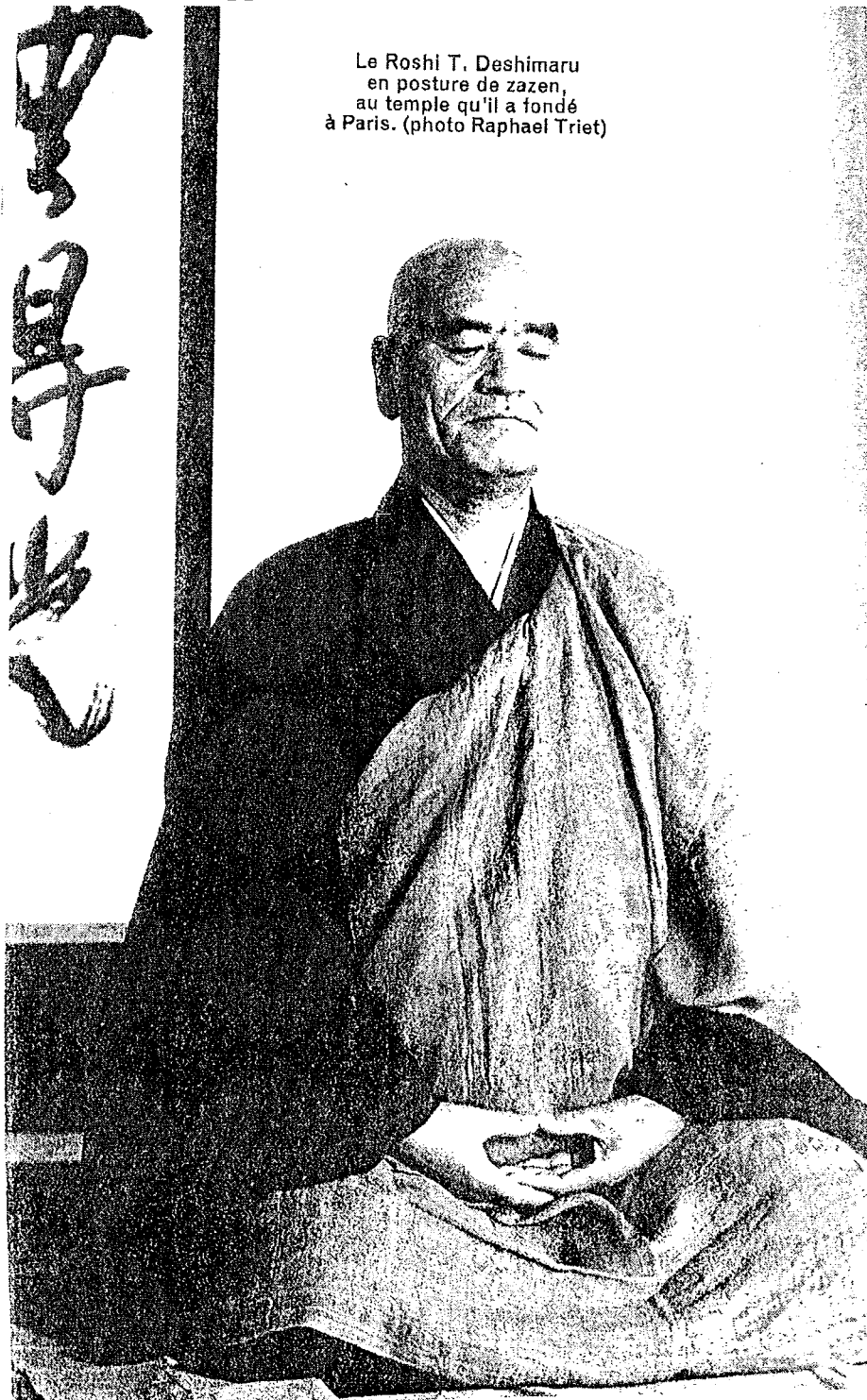
1) Information about you: Your age? Your occupation? Are you married? Do you have children and how old are they?

2) Please tell me about your first encounter with the Association Zen de Montréal. Did you already practice some form of Buddhism before? If yes, what type and where? If no, what was your previous, or other, religious affiliation?

3) How did you get interested in Buddhism, or Zen Buddhism?

4) What is the frequency of your practice? Do you practice outside the centre?

5) How do you define practice?

6) Do you read Buddhist literature? Which books?

7) In what way(s), if any, has Zen Buddhism affected your life (personal, social, work, or other)?

8) Do you think Zen Buddhism has the potential to provide non-violent alternatives to conflicts between individuals in environments such as work, family, or social circles?
If yes, do you think that this potential extends to larger issues, such as the peaceful resolution of political conflicts (wars, social problems, other)?

9) Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience as practitioner at the centre?

Appendix B: Deshimaru's Lineage

*LA LIGNÉE
DE LA TRANSMISSION*

BODHIDHARMA
? -528

EKA
HOUI-KÉ
487-593

SOSAN
SENG-TSAN
auteur du *Shin Jin Mei*
? -606

DOSHIN
TAO-HSIN
? -651

KONIN
HUNG-JEN
601-674

JINSHU
SHEN-SHIU
606-666

ENO
HOUEI-NENG
638-713

SEIGEN
CH'ING-YUAN HSING-SSU
? -740

EKIU
NAN-YANG HUI-CHUNG
677-744

KATAKU JINNE
HO-TSE SHEN-HUI
668-770

KANGAKU
NAN-YUEH HUAI-JANG
677-744

YOKA DAISHI
YUNG-CHIA HSUAN-CHUEH
auteur du *Shodoka*
665-713

SEKITO
SHIH TOU HSI-CHIEN
auteur du *Sandokai*
700-790

BASO
MA-TSU
709-788

YAKUSAN
YAO-SHAN WEI-YEN
751-834

TENNO DOGO
TIEN-YHANG TAO-WU
798-807

HYAKUJO
HUI-HAI
720-814

UNGAN
YUN-YEN T'AN-CHENG
772-841

RYUTAN
LUNG-T'AN CH'UNG-HSIN
782-865

GALKU
HOUANG-PO
? -850

ISAN
KUEI-SHAN
771-853

SOZAN
TS'AO-SHAN PEN-CHI
840-901

TOZAN
TUNG-SHAN LIANG-CHIEH
auteur du *Hokyo Zan Maï*
807-869

TOKUSAN
TE-SHAN HSUAN-CHIEN
780-865

? -867
ÉCOLE
RINZAI

814-890
ÉCOLE
IGYO

ESSHU
YUEH-CHOU CH'IEN-FENG

UNGO DOYO
YUN-CHU TAO-ING
? -902

SEPPO
HSUEH-FENG TSUN
822-908

GENSHA SHIBI
HSUAN-SHA SHIH-PEI
835-908

FUYO DOKAI
FU-JING TAO-KAÏ
? -1118

UMMON
YUN-MEN WEN-YEN
? -949

RAKAN KEISHIN
LO-HAN KUEI-CH'EN
867-928

WANSHI
HUNG-CHIH CHENG
1091-1157

TOZAN SHUSHO
TUNG-SHAN SHOU-CH'U
? -980

HOGEN BUNEKI
FA-YEN WEN-I
885-958

NYOJO
JU-CHING T'IEN-T'UNG
1163-1228

ÉCOLE
UMMON

TENDAI-TOKUSHO
T'IEN-T'AI TO-CHAO
891-972

DOGEN
1200-1253

YUMYO ENJU
YUNG-MING YEN-SHOU
904-975

EJO
1198-1280

ÉCOLE
HOGEN

KEIZAN
1267-1325

KODO SAWAKI
1880-1965

TAISEN MOKUDO
1914-1982

ASSOCIATION ZEN
INTERNATIONALE

ÉCOLE
SOTO

Reference: Deshimaru, 1984: 22-23.

Appendix C: Portrait of Deshimaru

Le Roshi T. Deshimaru
en posture de zazen,
au temple qu'il a fondé
à Paris. (photo Raphael Triet)

Reference: Deshimaru, 1977: 97.

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