

Zen Buddhism in Europe and Slovakia: Deshimaru Taisen, Sandō Kaisen, and Pavol Rozložník

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This paper traces the beginnings of the tradition of Zen Buddhism in Europe and Slovakia, based on three personalities related to its earliest history and development. At the same time, however, it is dedicated to the figure of Pavol Rozložník, an artist, graphic designer, and educator, the first Zen monk ordained within the tradition of the Sōtō school (曹洞宗) in former Czechoslovakia, deceased in October 2018. Pavol was ordained in the lineage of master Sandō Kaisen and his teacher master Deshimaru Taisen 弟子丸泰仙, and as Kaisen's representative was largely responsible for the earliest spreading of Zen in the Czech and Slovak Republics. In this paper, I will address the many activities that Pavol was passionate about during his lifetime, and present his endeavours within the early European Zen Buddhist community as part of the lineage of his teachers and forerunners, master Kaisen and master Deshimaru, who were all instrumental in propagating the teaching of Zen Buddhism in Europe.¹

*Establishing Buddhism in a new country is like holding a plant to a stone and waiting for it to take root.*²

Pavol Rozložník was born on September 13, 1957, and died on October 11, 2018. Pavol died on the very first day of *sesshin* 接心, a Zen meditation retreat, which had been planned months in advance. In Zen – as well as in

¹ I remain greatly indebted to Lubica Hamarová and Robert Slapnička for their advice. I am also deeply grateful to professor Ishii Seijun, whose valuable suggestions were most appreciated.

² David Chadwick, *Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999), 252.

Japanese Buddhism in general – it is said that it is a great gift to die during meditation or during a meditation retreat.³ Pavol drew his last breath when the retreat, which was then dedicated to him, officially began.

Pavol

*When rocks, trees, and birds laugh,
How could the Buddha himself remain serious?⁴*

Pavol was the first person I met who knew Zen. He knew how to talk about it openly and warmly, as he used to do with everything that he felt close to, simply and cordially. He knew a lot about Zen from books, because he loved books, any books, but mostly he knew how to live and practice Zen and how to communicate its message in its entirety, sometimes harshly and sometimes kindly.

The Japanese Zen master Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), an important teacher, writer, and thinker, one of the two founders of the Sōtō school 曹洞宗, is also renowned as the author of the monumental work named *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*. In a number of instances in the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen talks about endless missteps of Chan/Zen masters and disciples, about their “mistake on top of a mistake” (*shōshaku jushaku* 將錯就錯), which accompanies their everyday lives, suggesting “making the right mistake” is the proper path to take. Despite this, however, Dōgen writes in the fascicle “Cypress Tree” (Hakujushi 栢樹子), the masters nonetheless “take in emptiness and receive its echo” (*shōko sekkō* 承虛接響) to be “as they are” (*goyaku nyoze* 吾亦如是).⁵ In his commentary, Kawamura Kōdō 河村孝道 adds that the “limitless succession” (*mugen ni sōzoku* 無限に相續) of

³ Ichirō Hori, “Self-Mummified Buddhas in Japan. An Aspect of the Shugen-dō (“Mountain Asceticism”) Sect,” *History of Religions* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1962), 227-229.

⁴ Pavol Rozložník, Bratislava, Slovakia, February 1997.

⁵ *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* (hereafter DZZ) 道元禪師全集, Vol. 1, ed. Kawamura Kōdō 河村孝道 et al. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1995), 440.

such missteps leads to “penetrating each dharma” (*ippō gūjin* 一法究盡).⁶ Life of a Zen practitioner, as described in the words of Zen master Dōgen, is a continuous mistake that borders on emptiness and its echo, while at the exactly same time one should not give up on being authentically oneself, “as one is.”

This was, without a doubt, how I viewed Pavol, unconsciously of course. I did not know much about his private life but I understood that he knew and experienced what he was teaching about. I knew little about Buddhist doctrine or the teaching of the Four Noble Truths then, but I knew that Pavol’s knowledge and learning stem from his own experience. Therefore, he could sometimes be harsh and sometimes kind.

The same grey wallpaper that I remember from last summer
The same dried flowers from last spring
The same names in the calendar
And two friends, sitting in my room, sharing my bed
Him, Sorrow
Her, Solitude
It’s hard to untangle
To what do I owe their presence
*When they don’t share my rent.*⁷

Pavol graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia, where he returned to teach between 1990–1992. In 1989, he founded IQ Design Studio, the very first and therefore the oldest of its kind in post-communist Slovakia. His work concentrated on brand design and corporate identity, he devised title pages for books and magazines, posters for art events and so forth, while never steering too far away from drawing and painting. He created or co-created brands and corporate identity

⁶ DZZ 1: 439.

⁷ Pavol Rozložník, *kusen* 口宣 talk in Senec, Slovakia, february 1996.

portfolio for General Health Insurance Slovakia, Slovak Insurance Company, Bratislava – Old Town, Radio Okey or Telekom, as well as advertising posters for e.g. the Slovak National Theater. His work was mostly simple, direct, and precise. Tangible and clear.

In 2005, Pavol became co-owner and the creative force behind the company named *Komunikácia (Communication)*, where he lead courses on calligraphy, created special board games, artetherapeutic mandalas of emotions and tendencies called *Mandalive*, which in the meantime developed into a successful mobile application and a book in both Slovak and English languages.⁸ Related to this, Pavol is the creator of “Corporate Mandala,” a tool supporting business and team-work, which brought him the prestigious design award Silver A’Design Award in “Education and Training” in 2013. In 2006, Pavol became the head of the Department of Visual Communication at the Faculty of Arts of the Technical University of Košice, his hometown located in the eastern part of Slovakia. In 2011, he wrote a volume called *Academic Writing for Doctoral Students at the Faculty of Architecture* for the Faculty of Architecture at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, a treatise describing his own experience from the area of practical design combined with academic work. His intention was to write about visual communication in a popular manner and to bring the work of graphic designers closer to a general audience. Here, at the Department of Architecture in 2016, Pavol defended his ArtD. dissertation titled *The Design of Visual Communication of a Cultural Institution*, where he again tried to portray his craft in a manner that would communicate with and to the reader in a simple and clear manner. He strove to present the pursuit of graphic designers as a plastic and palpable one, approachable also for those who are not easily acquainted with it. “It is all about how the book

⁸ Lubica Hamarová and Pavol Rozložník and Dana Hamarová, *Mandaly pre lepší život: Vyfarbite svoje emócie a vlastnosti* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2016), Lubica Hamarová and Pavol Rozložník and Dana Dúbravská, *Mandalive®: mandala art therapy for working with emotions and behaviors* (Bratislava: Komunikacia, 2020).

communicates with us,” he would say.⁹

Throughout this entire life, Pavol was enthusiastic about Asia, namely for China and Japan, and he held Zen Buddhism and general Buddhist thought in great respect. He journeyed to China a number of times, visiting bustling grand cities as well as remote mountain villages. As a graphic designer, he could talk endlessly about Chinese writing, as a monk about Chinese Chan or Japanese Zen, about the life of ancient masters, but also about literature, tea, poetry, paintings, and the arts. In the summer of 1990, mere months after the peaceful transition of power from the old communist regime to a new group of enthusiasts called the Velvet Revolution, and a re-opening of Czechoslovak national borders after a 40-year-long forced political, economical, but especially social, cultural, and intellectual isolation of Czechoslovakia from the rest of Europe and the world, Pavol travelled by himself to a Zen monastery in France. The first *sesshin* in Slovakia took place the following summer, in July 1991, under the guidance of the French-Polish Zen Master Sandō Kaisen. While in France, Pavol was ordained a novice in a *jukai* 受戒 ceremony according to the tradition of the Japanese Sōtō school, thus becoming the first ever person to be ordained in the Zen tradition who came from Slovakia and the contemporary Czechoslovakia, respectively. In 1993, Pavol received novice priest ordination *tokudo* 得度, and was subsequently appointed by his master Kaisen into the role of representative of the lineage responsible for spreading Zen Buddhism in his home country of former Czechoslovakia.

*Do not waste a single moment. The han is bidding you.
How long do you want to continue to die?*¹⁰

⁹ Vitek, Pavel and Kopřiva, Juraj, “Digitalizácia a grafický smog očami grafických dizajnérov,” *PrintProgress* 2 (2012), 14.

¹⁰ Pavol Rozložník, *kusen* 口宣 talk in Mariková, Slovakia, July 2018.

Deshimaru

*Kenshō is not necessary. [...] Zazen is more important.*¹¹

Zen was first brought to Europe in 1967 as the Japanese master Deshimaru Taisen, who journeyed from Japan to France by train via the Trans-Siberian Railway, set foot in Paris. Deshimaru Taisen (1914–1982), known as Yasuo 泰雄 in his childhood, was born on November 29, 1914 in Morodomichō 諸富町, now part of the city of Saga 佐賀市 on the southern Japanese island of Kyūshū 九州. He was the only son, born among two older and two younger sisters. Yasuo's father was a respected village headman, well-versed in the study of Chinese classics, heading a company dealing in ship transportation and expecting his son to take on the family business. His mother, on the other hand, was a devoted follower of the Jōdō shinshū 浄土真宗, or Pure Land school, venerating Buddha Amitabha 阿弥陀仏 by means of *nenbutsu* 念仏 invocations. She wanted the young Yasuo to join her in her prayers every morning and night. “She made me do the same. I would have to do *gasshō* to Amida Buddha, and then, following my mother, I too would recite his name. But once my mother was in deep concentration, I would escape and only sneak back when it was nearly over,” said Deshimaru of the devotion that was present in his childhood home.¹² In his later writings, Deshimaru reminisces upon the figure and influence of his mother: “From a young age, she wanted me to become a monk. She was different from ordinary mothers for, at the bottom of her heart, she believed that becoming a monk was the happiest thing in one's life and that one couldn't succeed more than that. [...] At that time, in my home province of Saga, it was believed that the greatest achievement of one's life was to get ahead as a soldier.”¹³ Becoming a soldier was what Deshimaru's father had

¹¹ Taisen Deshimaru and Philippe Coupey, *Zen and Karma: Teachings by Roshi Taisen Deshimaru* (Chino Valley, Arizona: Home Press, 2016), 54.

¹² Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 99.

¹³ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

indeed envisioned for him to do. As a distinguished figure within the local community and in line with the contemporary trend, his father wanted him to join the army ranks, an aim the youth did not – and could not – accomplish due to his shortsightedness. With such dramatically opposing parental expectations, Deshimaru recounts how he felt torn from a young age.

Some time during his teenage years, Deshimaru met Sawaki Kōdō 沢木興道 (1880–1965), who would later become his teacher, for the first time. Sawaki, known under the sobriquet of “Homeless Kōdō 宿無し興道” because of his extensive travels around the countryside without putting down roots at a particular temple, a lifestyle he undertook in order to give meditation instructions at various Zen temples, was an influential teacher and a distinguished scholar of Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō*. Sawaki is especially celebrated for his revival of the practice of seated meditation of *shikan taza* 只管打坐, which he believed embodied the heart of *Shōbōgenzō*’s message. Furthermore, Sawaki may also be remembered for his intentionally bizzare description of meditation practice as a “good-for-nothing *zazen*.”¹⁴ During his extended travels throughout the land, whenever he was lecturing in Saga, Sawaki was made welcome at the house of a former classmate of Deshimaru, a family named Mashima 真島家.

At the age of eighteen, Deshimaru travelled to Kantō to study economics and English at present-day Kanagawa University 神奈川大学, then known as *Yokohama semmon gakkō* 横浜専門学校. Throughout his university years, he paid special attention to his studies of English and began visiting a Protestant church in order to practice the spoken language under the tutelage of the pastor’s daughter. During this time, Deshimaru also travelled to Kamakura, the coastal town just south of Yokohama, which in the 13th century had been the haven of Chan emigrée monks from China. Under the

¹⁴ Steven Heine, *Readings of Dōgen’s Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 198-199.

Hōjō clan 北条氏 patronage, these monks were influential in establishing some of the oldest Rinzaï 臨濟宗 Zen temples in the country. Deshimaru sat his first *sesshin* at a subtemple of one of these temples, Engakuji Kojirin 円覚寺居士林, and later seemed to remember his experience in a vivid manner: “We got up every morning at 2 a.m. and sat zazen until 6 a.m. And at night there was no sleeping. We sat zazen outside with the mosquitoes. And then [there was] the *kyōsaku* – I received *kyōsaku* from morning until night, and my body had turned all red. Five days went by. I kept my patience. But then, on the sixth day, the *kyōsaku*[-man], who must have been sleepy like everyone else, hit me with the stick – not on the shoulders, but on top of the head. I got angry and jumped up and hit him back. We fought. Now in Rinzaï temples, as everyone faces each other while in zazen, they all saw the fight. Everyone jumped in order to stop me. But I was a champion swordsman at the time, and I had no difficulty keeping them off me. Of course, this has nothing to do with religion, it is just violence. Anyway, I had had enough, and so I went off to see the master – who was in his room sleeping – and I woke him up and I told him that I wished to leave, that I wanted to stop [doing] zazen. I told him all about the incident which had just taken place, and he laughed. ‘In the history of Zen,’ the master said. ‘no one but you has ever attacked the *kyōsaku*[-man]’.”¹⁵

After his graduation in 1936, Deshimaru joined the foreign division of Morinaga Confectionery Company 森永製菓. In April the previous year, Sawaki Kōdō was appointed a lecturer at Komazawa University 駒澤大学 and in December he assumed the role of head training monk *godō* 後堂 at Sōjiji temple 総持寺. It was about this news that Deshimaru received a letter from Mrs. Mashima, the mother of his former classmate in Saga, telling him of Sawaki Rōshi’s new assignment and inviting him to visit the teacher. This was the second meeting between Sawaki and the young student, about which Deshimaru later said: “Even though I had met him in Saga on a number of occasions, when I now think of it, [this time] it felt

¹⁵ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 99-100. Italics and brackets my own.

like a real interview (*mensetsu* 面接) between a teacher and a disciple who had met anew.”¹⁶ Deshimaru subsequently joined Sawaki for the weekly one-day gatherings devoted to *zazen* practice (*zazenkai* 坐禪会) that he led at Sōjiji and elsewhere, as well as at lectures he gave at Komazawa University and a number of temples. Despite Sawaki Rōshi’s open admonition about taking the monastic orders, when he warned that “from leaving one’s home to taking one’s leave is what entering priesthood (*shukke* 出家) really is about,”¹⁷ Deshimaru asked him for ordination. However, Sawaki Rōshi discouraged him from joining the priesthood, no matter Deshimaru’s earnestness and devotion to practice, and advised him to continue his life as a layperson. Becoming a monk, to Sawaki, was “the same as carrying through one’s life as an office worker.”¹⁸ When remembering this encounter in later years, Deshimaru quoted Sawaki saying “true Zen is in all of life’s experience.”¹⁹ Sawaki did not reject him entirely, however. He supported Deshimaru in practicing *zazen* but he did not encourage the youth to abandon lay life and become a monk.²⁰ Deshimaru could not but abide with the wishes of his teacher and so he became a businessperson.

In 1940, Deshimaru joined Mitsubishi Mining Company 三菱鉱業 and spent the war in Indonesia and Sumatra. Thereafter, he returned to Tōkyō and within the next twenty-something years made a name for himself among the business and political circles of the capital. He met with Sawaki Rōshi

¹⁶ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

¹⁷ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

¹⁸ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

¹⁹ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

²⁰ Master Taisen Deshimaru And The Arrival Of Zen In Europe, Association Zen Internationale. <https://www.zen-azi.org/en/book/master-taisen-deshimaru-and-the-arrival-of-zen-in-europe> (accessed June 28, 2019).

shortly after the war but it was not until their final meeting right before the master's demise that Deshimaru was at last ordained. In 1965, at the Kyōto temple of Antaiji 安泰寺, Deshimaru became the last disciple of Sawaki, just before the latter's passing in December that year. Deshimaru received from his teacher monastic ordination *denkai* 伝戒 and given the name Mokudō Taisen 默堂泰仙. His full dharma transmission *dembō* 伝法, also called *shihō* 嗣法, was obtained in 1974 from master Yamada Reirin 山田靈林 (1889–1979), the 75th abbot of Eihei-ji temple 永平寺 and president of Komazawa University.²¹

Following the footsteps of Sawaki Rōshi, Deshimaru truly became a home-leaver and gave zazen instructions at every Zen temple in every province. It was during this time that he met the founder of macrobiotics, Sakurazawa Nyoichi 桜沢如一 (1893–1966), who in the pre-war years had travelled to Paris, where he changed his name to George Ohsawa. Through this encounter, Deshimaru was invited by Sakurazawa to give meditation instructions at a temple named Teishō-ji 貞祥寺 in the city of Saku 佐久市 in Nagano prefecture 長野県 to a group of 80 French macrobioticians who arrived there in August 1966. It seems this is where the idea of a voyage to Europe took shape, as in early July the following year, Deshimaru left Japan on board of a ship from Yokohama and headed for the old continent. In his later writings, Deshimaru remembers this as the fulfillment of a wish he had been nourishing for a long time. “In 1965, just before the passing of my revered teacher Sawaki Kōdō, I received ordination from him. I decided that once I passed [the age of] 50, I would spread Buddhism in Europe. [...] For some years, I have been harboring a desire to convey true Buddhism to people in the West, to bring genuine peace and freedom into the depths of human heart.”²²

²¹ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eihei-ji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

²² Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eihei-ji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

*My mission during these last ten years in Europe has been to create an exchange between these civilizations.*²³

After arriving in Paris, Deshimaru stayed and worked in a macrobiotics shop, where he also earned his living by giving *shi'atsu* massage and calligraphy lessons. Zen as a distinct tradition had not been largely known in continental Europe by then and was rather associated with other areas of Japanese culture such as flower arrangement, tea ceremony, or calligraphy. However, Deshimaru concentrated on sitting practice with his students and strove to teach them about Zen and zazen, to which he attached the utmost importance. As he later confessed, “Under the influence of my mother’s faith of the pure and simple *nenbutsu* that never changed, and the extraordinary essence of Zen of my lifelong teacher, the revered Sawaki Rōshi, by whose character I was captivated, my desire blazed toward a more profound spirituality.”²⁴ Deshimaru thus decided to integrate the two varying approaches of his mother and his teacher, and bring the everydayness that he had learned with the repetition of *nenbutsu* into Zen. He chose to combine the constancy of the unsophisticated *nenbutsu* invocation that he had witnessed from his mother with motivations that turned from a commonplace repetition of *nenbutsu* to a determined and concentrated practice of zazen, as observed from Sawaki Rōshi. “One has to extricate oneself from this conceptual world that takes place only in one’s mind and bring action to one’s behavior. Learning spontaneously through experience, overcoming the discrimination of human awareness and paying attention to simple reality that transcends logic – I have come to believe there is nothing else,” Deshimaru later wrote.²⁵ He left behind philosophical and religious aspects of Buddhism and emphasized the ordinariness of Zen, which to him was zazen.

²³ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 30.

²⁴ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eihei,ji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

²⁵ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eihei,ji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

*The essence of Zen is within the practice of zazen. Without zazen, there is no Zen.*²⁶

Deshimaru taught, lectured and published works dealing with the fundamentals of Zen, Buddhism, and Eastern thought. He also immersed himself into the study of European thought and philosophy, as well as Christianity. In time he gathered a crowd of supporters and followers, with whom he sat *zazen* and *sesshins* and whose numbers gradually grew. Little by little, Deshimaru built a *dōjō* 道場 in Paris, then in other French towns, and travelled to teach not only in France but also in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Britain, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, even as far as Morocco and Algeria in northern Africa. Deshimaru was interviewed on the French and Swiss national television, and gave lectures at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. In 1969 when European Zen Association – later renamed International Zen Association (*Association Zen Internationale*) – was established in Paris, it had 38 branch centers; there was a Paris hospital director, university professor, and head of research center among its members, whose figure reached an astounding 13.000. It seems that the craving crowds of Europeans for whom *zazen* represented a “spiritual revival” were endless.²⁷ According to the words of one of Deshimaru’s disciples, Zen was “truly wonderful” and Deshimaru introduced them to “a great spiritual legacy of the East,” teaching them the “sturdy and powerful posture of *zazen*.” This, they believed, would become “a great motive to harmony that will lead to equanimity in the minds of all people around the world and bring about true peace for all beings.”²⁸ It is possible, notes Araki, that some of Deshimaru’s success may also be attributed to his gruff voice,

²⁶ Deshimaru in Araki, Toshie 荒木稔恵 . “Nihonzen no kaigai dendō ni tsuite, sono ittan to shite” 日本禪の海外伝道について、その一端として . *Bukkyō keizai kenkyū* 46 (2017): 280.

²⁷ Araki, Toshie 荒木稔恵 . “Nihonzen no kaigai dendō ni tsuite, sono ittan to shite” 日本禪の海外伝道について、その一端として . *Bukkyō keizai kenkyū* 46 (2017): 278.

²⁸ Araki, Toshie 荒木稔恵 . “Nihonzen no kaigai dendō ni tsuite, sono ittan to shite” 日本禪の海外伝道について、その一端として . *Bukkyō keizai kenkyū* 46 (2017): 278.

the face of a charging barbarian, and his intense personality.²⁹

While his naming as the official proselytizing representative (開教総監) of the Sōtō school in Europe from 1976 was unofficial, the formal appointment of international commissioner responsible for the transmission of Zen teaching (国際布教総監) came in 1979.³⁰ However, in his quest to cause Zen to flourish in the West, Deshimaru went even further. During his early years in France, he brought a number of his European disciples over to Japan, to Teishōji temple in Nagano prefecture, where they participated in a one-week long Japanese-French Zen training programme.³¹ His intention was to teach and spread Zen in practice and thought, as well as to connect – or at least to draw near – Japanese and Western Zen, and especially its European and American lineages. And so in 1979 Deshimaru travelled to the United States to meet the Japanese Zen master Maezumi Taizan Hakuyū 前角大山博雄 (1931–1995), founder of Zen Center of Los Angeles, and Richard Baker, disciple of Suzuki Shunryū 鈴木俊隆 (1904–1971) and the second abbot of San Francisco Zen Center, the two most prominent figures within the contemporary American Zen establishment.

The last grand undertaking of Deshimaru was the construction of a Zen temple that would be based on Dōgen's Eiheiji temple 永平寺, which was opened in autumn 1979. Named “La Gendronnière” and located in the vicinity of the French town of Blois, about 150 kilometers south of Paris, it was to become the hub of learning of Zen in Europe, where Deshimaru intended to bring Japanese masters to teach and transmit the Zen tradition to his European students. At this former 19th century royal castle,

²⁹ Araki, Toshie 荒木稔恵. “Nihonzen no kaigai dendō ni tsuite, sono ittan to shite” 日本禅の海外伝道について、その一端として. *Bukkyō keizai kenkyū* 46 (2017): 277.

³⁰ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

³¹ For this reason, Teishōji remains a popular practice temple among Europeans until the present day. Teishōji Temple, Saku City, <https://www.city.saku.nagano.jp/kanko/townguide/temp/teishoji.html> (accessed June 28, 2019).

Deshimaru erected a *dōjō* that was designed to house up to 400 students and remains the seat of the *Association Zen Internationale* until the present day. In Deshimaru's obituary, La Gendronnière was proudly called "the largest Zen training center in Europe."³² Interestingly – expressing a playfulness of words not unusual in the Zen tradition – Deshimaru attached to its French name of La Gendronnière ゼンドロニエール similarly sounding Japanese characters of 禅道尼苑.

In 1981, Deshimaru became ill and returned to Japan the following year. Suffering from an acute renal failure, he passed away in Yokohama municipal hospital on April 30, 1982. On May 2, a memorial service was held at Sōjiji temple, while Deshimaru himself is buried in the aforementioned temple of Teishōji in the mountainous prefecture of Nagano.

*Concentrate. The last moments of zazen are the most important. When you can no longer be patient, be patient. Then you will have deep concentration.*³³

During the almost fifteen years Deshimaru spent in France, he singlehandedly succeeded in establishing the foundations of Zen in Europe, built a Zen monastery based on the Japanese model, and set up the International Zen Association, which today counts more than thirty Zen centers in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland. In a 1980 Swiss TV programme, he was described as a teacher with a hundred thousand followers.³⁴ Deshimaru is the author or co-author of fifteen books, including two commentaries on the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles of "Genjō kōan 現成公案" and "Makahannya haramitsu 摩訶般若波羅蜜," which he wrote based on the notes of Sawaki Rōshi.

³² Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

³³ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 67.

³⁴ Deshimaru Taisen, Daihonzan Eiheiji, <https://eiheizen.jimdofree.com/> 弟子丸泰仙 / (accessed Oct 12, 2021).

Before returning to Japan, however, Deshimaru did not name any of his disciples his official successor, or grant anyone the full dharma transmission.³⁵ It demanded another personal pilgrimage of three of his students, who journeyed to Japan to receive a full dharma teacher's ordination by the then-abbot of Eihei-ji, master Niwa Rempō 丹羽廉芳 (1905–1993). According to the words of Orimo Yōko, who translated Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* into French, it is “an undeniable fact that if Zen is now transmitted in Europe, it is thanks to Deshimaru personally.”³⁶

Kaisen

*Everything in the entire universe is constantly changing. If this is so, then I too can change and I can also change my unwholesome actions to wholesome, my despair into happiness.*³⁷

Sandō Kaisen, also known by his civil name as Alain Krystaszek, was born on May 18, 1952, in the French town of Lyon to a French mother and a Polish father. At the age of eight, however, his family left for Poland, where the young Alain then spent his formative years. His first spiritual teacher was a bishop in the town of Wrocław, whom Alain assisted in church. Later, even though he pursued Catholicism and Calvinism alike, he used to say religion to him was always more about meeting people rather than ideas.³⁸ At a young age, Kaisen was devoted to martial arts, a practice he tried to learn from a number of teachers. Following this dream, Kaisen left for China in 1972, where he met a master named Su-ta. In his temple near the Shao-lin 少林 complex, Kaisen studied martial arts as well as traditional Chinese medicine. After a one-year stay with his Chinese master, Kaisen returned to France to teach martial arts, acupuncture, Japanese massage *shi'atsu*, and

³⁵ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, xvi.

³⁶ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, xvi.

³⁷ *Tridsaťšest' otázok súčasného sveta* (Bratislava: Q111, 1996), 17.

³⁸ Curriculum Vitae, Zen Kaisen. <https://www.zenkaisen.cz/sando-kaisen/zivotopis/> (accessed June 29, 2019).

physiotherapy.

Kaisen met master Deshimaru already in 1968 but their journeys went separate ways due to Kaisen's internal conflict between Christianity and Buddhism. They met again in 1975, after Kaisen had already returned from China and after which he did not leave Deshimaru's side until the latter's departure for Japan in 1982. Kaisen received monastic ordination from Deshimaru in 1979, allegedly as a result of his own request to "return martial arts to their original foundation, which is zazen."³⁹ Today, Kaisen runs the monastery of Radiant Peak (*Pic Lumineux*) in Lazrac in France, practices zazen – having named it "Sitting of the Buddha" – and calligraphy – calling it "Beautiful writing—Cloud and Water." Due to his central European origins, Kaisen also established Zen sitting groups in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Russia. His followers organize Kaisen's lectures, publish books and CDs, and in the past arranged conferences and public presentations of Kaisen in local broadcasting and television companies as well as happenings with personalities of cultural and political life.

*The relationship between a teacher and his disciple is very important. It is the same as that between a sculptor and his disciple. One does not become a sculptor just by visiting museums. The aim of art is not to learn art. The task of the artist-teacher is to teach his students to overcome obstacles within themselves, to express their true creativity and the imminent and unbound light that is within.*⁴⁰

In former Czechoslovakia and later in independent Slovakia, the one person responsible for such happenings and activities was Pavol, whom Kaisen appointed to lead the first "Zen mission" in these regions. At the beginning of the nineties, Kaisen himself even contemplated to move and settle in Bratislava, Slovakia, and to spread Zen from there among his students in

³⁹ Rōshi Kaisen, *Budo Dharma*, 11.

⁴⁰ *Tridsaťšesť otázok*, 64.

Slovakia and Poland. As he himself wrote: “Looking east today I made a stop where I was awaited by a few disciples. When I travelled around the Danube [river] in Bratislava, I decided to settle there and bring there the Law.”⁴¹ Even though the plan did not develop further, Kaisen’s activities regarding spreading of Zen in central Europe were nevertheless considerable. In the nineties, four of his books were published in Czech and Slovak translations, dealing primarily with the topics of Zen, Buddhist teaching, martial arts, introducing Zen poems and addressing current social issues. The person in many ways responsible for the three books that were published in Slovak was Pavol, either as the designer, printmaker, editor, or publisher.

Pavol designed the cover and layout of the entire publication named *Zazen Satori*, comprising Kaisen’s notes on Zen, the teaching and its beginning, about zazen, breathing, and ceremonies.⁴² There is also the slim yet pregnant volume called *Thirty-six Questions of the Contemporary World*, in which various personalities of Slovak cultural, religious, or political life – together with Kaisen – discuss current issues regarding society, ecology, religion, or ontology.⁴³ The entire design and layout of this booklet was again Pavol’s job.⁴⁴ Kaisen’s third publication in Slovak is a compilation of poems arranged so that it can be read from both sides – called alternately *Poems of the Crazy Monk* or *Treasures of the Spirit* – here, Pavol was again the responsible editor, printmaker, and designer.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Rōshi Kaisen, *Budo Dharma*, 195.

⁴² Roshi Kaisen, *Zazen Satori* (Bratislava: Gardenia Publishers, 1993).

⁴³ The thin volume consists of questions and answers given by a number of “guests.” Most of them were well-known and respected figures, e.g. Franciscan priest Ján Krstiteľ Balász, the recently deceased painter Miroslav Cipár, lawyer and politician Ján Čarnogurský, the then mayor of the city of Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, Peter Kresánek, or esteemed jazz musician Peter Lipa.

⁴⁴ *Tridsaťšesť otázok*.

⁴⁵ Rōshi Kaisen, *Verše bláznivého mnícha – Poklady ducha* (Bratislava: Perex K + K, 1997).

*On the Way, there is no before and no after. Here and now creates the future. Our present practice influences our future practice and our future life. If we cultivate a mind that is attached to fame or force, this mind will create further attachment in the future. The aim is to eliminate attachment. There is no point in thinking about it consciously, it is enough to follow a true teacher and attachment will naturally drop away. Also attachment to the idea of attachment is a source of attachment.*⁴⁶

Pavol

*Silence is white and time is dripping water
Why are the trains racing when one can only arrive somewhere seated
The sun came out and Buddhas' heads fall
A fish jumped above the frozen pond*⁴⁷

Pavol was devoted to the question of one's true role, of one's meaning, existence, and identity within the world. He dearly loved his friends and was genuinely interested in how they were. He remembered their life stories, and could re-open a conversation that dwindled years before. And he listened. Questions of personal life and experiencing of personal life were crucial to Pavol's own understanding of life as an artist and designer, areas where the idea and creation of identity was his principal pursuit. In an interview for *Denník N*, a prominent Slovak newspaper, Pavol said, "the problem is that we are not sure who we are and who we would like to be. [...] The search for and awareness of one's identity is a constant process."⁴⁸ Since the question of one's identity and one's role in life is a recurring issue in Zen too, for Pavol his professional and personal life, his work and his interests merged, in Pavol's view they formed a single whole.

⁴⁶ Róši Kaisen, *Budo Dharma*, 137.

⁴⁷ Pavol Rozložník, *sesshin* in Senec, Slovakia, february 1996.

⁴⁸ Zuzana Duchová, "Slovensko bude mať dobré logo vtedy, keď budeme vedieť, kto sme." *Denník N*, <https://dennikn.sk/391219/slovensko-mat-dobre-logo-vtedy-ked-vediet/> (accessed March 4, 2016).

Pavol also believed that “each designer offers a service”⁴⁹ which is akin to the service of *samu* 作務 in the Zen monastic tradition. Deshimaru considers *samu* equal to *zazen*. For Deshimaru, *zazen* is subjective and internal, while activities outside the *dōjō* are objective and external.⁵⁰ In the Zen monastic training body and mind are related, therefore the static and intimate *zazen* is balanced and harmonized by active physical work outside the meditation hall. In this context, Deshimaru maintains: “If you try to concentrate on two or more things at the same time, you get nothing. In *Shinjinmei* 信心銘 it is written that if you concentrate on one thing, you will obtain all things. Those who concentrate on [multiple things like] yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, Karmapa, Rinzai, Sōtō, and the martial arts know nothing of true Zen. But if you concentrate on one, you get all.”⁵¹ Pavol described his work of a graphic designer with the following words: “Many people believe that they understand graphic design and art because they know very little about it. If you want to understand something, you need to practice it.”⁵² This point can also be well illustrated with the words of Suzuki Rōshi, who addresses the issue of how important it is to do things fully and completely: “In order not to leave any traces, when you do something, you should do it with your whole body and mind; you should be concentrated on what you do. You should do it completely, like a good bonfire. You should not be a smoky fire. You should burn yourself completely.”⁵³

You must concentrate on all you do; even when going to the toilet you must concentrate. Zazen is not ascetism, but neither is it the Club Méditerrané. We are not here for amusement. We are here to observe ourselves, and

⁴⁹ Vitek and Kopřiva, “Digitalizácia,” 12.

⁵⁰ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 105-109.

⁵¹ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 96.

⁵² Duchová, “Slovensko.” *Denník N*, <https://dennikn.sk/391219/slovensko-mat-dobre-logovtedy-keď-vediet/> (accessed March 4, 2019).

⁵³ Shunryū Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice* (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala, 2011), 49.

*especially our minds. We are here to find ourselves.*⁵⁴

Pavol did not make distinctions between work and meditation, or between poetry and meditation, tea ceremony and meditation. For instance, about his work on corporate mandalas, he explained: “Every mandala contains at once an element of movement and a fixed point. The movement is symbolized by the circle which has no beginning and no end, whether it is depicted or perceived by feeling. When producing and designing a mandala, we creatively and sensitively insert the space with the client’s requirements; it is similar to making a company’s logo. We take into consideration everything that we know about the client and continue intuitively, as when creating a painting. We add and remove [elements] until we feel the vibration of the mandala. We work in a state of mind which in Zen is called ‘empty mind.’ We let the mandala appear and come alive. It is similar to every real creative process.”⁵⁵

Pavol’s life, like his mandalas, came, vibrated, and fulfilled itself. It contained an element of movement and a fixed point. Pavol found meaning in the precise and detailed commitment of his work as a graphic designer, and within the fixed, stable, and unmovable zazen which he practiced and taught, as well as among his many relationships and friendships that he nurtured along the way.

*What is the most important problem in our lives? How we live and how we die. From the beginning of time, man has asked himself this question of how he should live and how he should die.*⁵⁶

Mentioning the interconnectedness between work and meditation made me remember a poem of Pavol’s. Pavol wrote it during the building of a bridge

⁵⁴ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 63.

⁵⁵ “Mandala je protipólom zložitého biznis sveta,” *Stratégie* 6/2013, 20.

⁵⁶ Deshimaru and Coupey, *Zen and Karma*, 30.

in the monastery in France, one that would connect the monastery with an island in the nearby river along the adjacent small beach. Building of bridges and connecting distant shores is a common metaphor for overcoming the obstacles of samsāra and bringing self and others to the emptiness of nirvāna, which is represented as the “other shore.” Yet construction of bridges is also a metaphor for the simple and everyday bridging of common differences between human beings and their ordinary days, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, convictions, and attitudes. And it is with this poem that I would like to conclude the story of European Zen and its teachers and masters of Deshimaru, Kaisen, and Pavol Rozložník.

*For years we have been studying the same walls
We die as hawks and are reborn as ducks
For now, we build beaches on this shore and learn to construct bridges
Holding onto a belief that without the other shore there is no river
We still have to study a few walls and build a few beaches
Until laughing hard and losing ourselves
In the never-ending whirlwind dance of the Universe.⁵⁷*

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⁵⁷ *Tridsatšest' otázok*, 4.

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Summary:

This paper is dedicated to Pavol Rozložník (1957–2018), Slovak graphic designer, artist, and teacher. Besides working professionally as a successful typographer and designer, Pavol was also the first Zen monk to be ordained within the Zen lineage of Taisen Deshimaru (1914–1982) by Sandō Kaisen in 1993. This paper aims at introducing not only the life and career of Pavol, but also the history of European Sōtō Zen lineage, life and work of Taisen Deshimaru and that of his pupil, Sandō Kaisen, Pavol’s teacher. Without either of these three personages, there would have been a different development within the history of the European Zen. Deshimaru was the pioneer of European Zen tradition, Kaisen was his pupil and Pavol’s teacher, who in turn became the teacher of first Kaisen’s disciples both in the Czech and Slovak Republics.