

The Emperor's New Clothes: The Buddhist Military Chaplaincy in Imperial Japan and Contemporary America

Brian Victoria

All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death. Likening others to oneself, one should neither slay nor cause to slay.

Dhammapada, v. 129

Abstract

In twentieth century Japan, Buddhist military chaplains were present on the battlefield from as early as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 and lasting up through the end of World War II. The focus of this article is less on the history of these chaplains than the manner in which they interpreted the Buddha Dharma so as to allow them and their sectarian sponsors to play this role. This is followed by a more detailed examination of the recent emergence of a Buddhist chaplaincy within the U.S. military, asking whether there are any similarities, especially doctrinally, between the military chaplaincy in the two nations.

The purpose of this examination is to identify issues related to those elements of Buddhist doctrine and practice that make the existence of a Buddhist chaplaincy both possible and, at the same time, problematic. Equally important, it reveals one facet or dimension of the manner in which institutional Buddhism has served the political and military interests of those countries in which it is present, and still does so.

Introduction

At first glance Buddhism would seem poorly equipped for providing chaplains to the members of the military of any country. For starters, the first precept that Buddhists of all schools and sects, both lay and cleric, pledge to abide by is to abstain from taking life. As Bhikkhu Bodhi, an American Theravāda monk and translator of the Pāli Nikāyas, notes: “The *suttas* [Skt. *sūtra*], it must be clearly stated, do not admit any moral justification for war. . . . One short *sutta* even declares categorically that a warrior who dies in battle will be reborn in hell, which implies that participation in war is essentially immoral.”¹

Further, Buddhist apologists like Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki have portrayed Buddhism as a strictly if not uniquely peaceful religion. Suzuki wrote: “Whatever form Buddhism takes in different countries where it flourishes, it is a religion of compassion, and in its varied history it has never been found engaged in warlike activities.”² Thus, inasmuch as soldiers are required to kill or incapacitate all those whom the government of their country designates as its enemies, the existence of a ‘Buddhist soldier’ would appear to be an oxymoron. Or in simpler words, “What’s a nice, peaceful religion like Buddhism doing in a place like the military?”

Apart from Buddhism, there are related questions that need to be addressed, beginning with why a predominantly Christian nation like the U.S. would welcome non-Christian military chaplains, or at least chaplains outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, into the ranks of its chaplaincy corps. Is this relatively recent development a sign of the acceptance of an authentic religious pluralism on the part of the U.S. military, if not the American government? If so, should this development be welcomed, especially by adherents of a heretofore non-recognized faith, and/or a faith primarily adhered to by an ethnic minority in the U.S.?

Although space limitations do not allow for an in-depth exploration of these questions, at least an introduction can be presented with the hope that future scholars will follow with more detailed studies and alternative approaches. Meanwhile this article does not attempt to resolve the broader, and thornier, issue of the appropriateness of a Buddhist, or any other, chaplaincy in the U.S. military. Rather, the focus is on the historical development of and justification for a Buddhist chaplaincy and its attendant, chiefly ethical, problems.

¹ “War and Peace: A Buddhist Perspective,” *Inquiring Mind*, p. 5. The *sutta* referred to in this quotation is the *Samyutta Nikāya* 42:3. CE

² Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, p. 34.

In light of the U.S. military's expectation that a chaplain, as a uniformed military officer, actively contribute to fulfilling the military's mission of conquering the enemy, the argument can be made that, by definition, Buddhist chaplains, like the chaplains of all faiths, cannot remain true to the peaceful tenets of their faith. Further, given that if they step too far out of line chaplains can be forced to resign their commissions or, at the very least, fail to be promoted, the argument can be made that there is an inherent conflict between their duty as a uniformed officer and their spiritual calling. Important though these questions are, they fall beyond the scope of this article.

Thus, while no normative position regarding the appropriateness of a Buddhist chaplaincy will be attempted, the paper's conclusion will nevertheless identify areas deserving further consideration as the number of Buddhist chaplains within the U.S. military continues to grow. Bearing this in mind, let us begin our study with a very brief examination of Buddhism's historical connection to violence and warfare.

Buddhist “Holy Wars”

Demonstrating the falsity of the assertions quoted above that Buddhism is, in practice, a religion of peace, another Theravāda monk, S. Dhammika, notes: “Even a cursory acquaintance with Asian history will show that this claim is baseless.” According to Dhammika, two examples in Buddhist history clearly show an early connection between Buddhism and warfare. The first example involved King Anawrahta (1044-77), the monarch who made the Theravāda school of Buddhism the state religion of Burma. Dhammika describes how the king, following his conversion, acquired his first set of Pali-inscribed Buddhist scriptures:

The nearest copy was in the neighboring kingdom of Thaton that was invaded, its capital sacked and the scriptures triumphantly brought to Pagan on the backs of a train of elephants. The king of Thaton and his family lived out their remaining days as slaves in a monastery. To get relics to enshrine in the numerous *stupas* he was building Anawrahta then invaded Prome, stripped its temples of their gold, broke open its *stupas* and carted everything off to Pagan again. The next victim was Arakhan that possessed the revered Mahamuni image that the king was determined to get to glorify his capital. This time the battles were inconclusive, and the king had to be content with some less sacred images and relics.

After this, Anawrahta turned his pious and belligerent eyes to Nanchao where the Tooth Relic was enshrined. The king of Nanchao managed to avert disaster with an unexpectedly impressive show of arms and by buying off Anawrahta with a jade Buddha image that had come into contact with the Relic. All of Anawrahta's campaigns were opposed militarily and must have resulted in a great deal of bloodshed although no figures are given in the ancient records. The clerics who recorded these events were only interested in the number of monks Anawrahta fed and the number of monasteries he built, not in how many people he slaughtered. However, what is clear is that these wars qualify to be called religious wars.³

The second example Dhammika cited is far better known. It concerns the story of Prince Duṭṭhagāmaṇi as recounted in the *Mahāvamsa*, an early, non-canonical history of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka. In the second century BCE, a line of non-Buddhist Tamils had ruled Sri Lanka for some seventy-six years. However, in 101 BCE Prince Duṭṭhagāmaṇi started a campaign to overthrow them and make himself king. From the very beginning Duṭṭhagāmaṇi and his supporters saw their struggle as a crusade designed to “bring glory to the religion”. Monks accompanied the troops into battle because “the sight of the monks is both a blessing and a protection for us.” Monks were also encouraged to disrobe and join the fighting, and thousands are recorded as having done so. To ensure victory, Duṭṭhagāmaṇi attached a relic of the Buddha to his spear. He claimed that this meant that he was not fighting for his own advantage but for the promotion of Buddhism. In effect, Duṭṭhagāmaṇi used Buddhism to enhance the morale, or fighting will, of his soldiers.

Following his victory, however, it is said that Duṭṭhagāmaṇi regretted the large number of enemy he had killed. Although probably an exaggeration, the *Mahāvamsa* claims that as many as one million Tamils were slaughtered. Deeply disturbed, Duṭṭhagāmaṇi was relieved when, as the following passage details, eight senior priests assured him that he had made very little bad *kamma* (Skt., *karma*) since nearly all his victims were non-Buddhists and, as such, were no more than animals.

³ S. Dhammika, *The Broken Buddha: Critical Reflections on Theravāda and a Plea for a New Buddhism*. Available on the Web at: <http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf> (accessed October 3, 2013).

Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges; the other had taken unto himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from the heart, O ruler of men.⁴

Historical examples like these have led Oxford University's Alan Strathern to conclude:

However any religion starts out, sooner or later it enters into a Faustian pact with state power. Buddhist monks looked to kings, the ultimate wielders of violence, for the support, patronage and order that only they could provide. Kings looked to monks to provide the popular legitimacy that only such a high moral vision can confer.

The result can seem ironic. If you have a strong sense of the overriding moral superiority of your worldview, then the need to protect and advance it can seem the most important duty of all. Christian crusaders, Islamist militants, and the leaders of "freedom-loving nations" have all justified what they see as necessary violence in the name of a higher good. Buddhist rulers and monks are no exception.⁵

Buddhist scholar Stephan Batchelor reinforced Strathern's viewpoint when he provided the following explanation in his book, *Buddhism without Beliefs*: "The power of organized religion [is] to provide sovereign states with a bulwark of moral legitimacy."⁶ Applied to Buddhism, this means that killing by the state is moral so long as Buddhist clerical leaders approve of it on the basis of the interpretations presented above as well as others.

⁴ XXV, pp. 108-112. All related quoted material contained in Bartholomeusz, *In Defense of Dharma*, p. 56.

⁵ Strathern, "Why are Buddhist monks attacking Muslims?" BBC, 1 May 2013. Available on the Web at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22356306> (accessed on 11 August 2013).

⁶ Batchelor, *Buddhism without Beliefs*, p. 16.

The common theme in all of the preceding examples is that it is not Buddhist teachings *per se* that have been responsible for Buddhism's endorsement of violence. Rather, institutional Buddhist leaders have, with but few exceptions, responded positively to the needs, or demands, of the rulers of their respective states, whether they be kings, feudal lords, generals, prime ministers, or, as in the case of the US, a civilian president who also serves as the military's "commander-in-chief". In other words, Buddhism, like all of the world's major faiths, has typically played an important supportive role in violence initiated by the rulers of those countries to which it has spread.

The Buddhist Chaplaincy in Japan

Origins

As for actual Buddhist chaplains, one of the earliest progenitors of such figures is to be found in Japan. Japan is of particular significance because, as this article reveals, it was the Buddhist faith of Japanese-Americans that was primarily responsible for the creation of a Buddhist chaplaincy in the US military.

Japan's Buddhist chaplains can be traced back to at least the fourteenth century. It was in 1333 that warriors loyal to Emperor Go-Daigo (1288–1339), whose political power had been usurped, revolted against the warrior-led government holding sway in Kamakura. As a result, itinerant Buddhist chaplains belonging to the Pure Land sect (J. *Jōdo-shū*) were assigned to warriors in the field in order to ensure that their patrons recited the name of Amida Buddha at least ten times at the time of death. In so doing, it was believed, the warrior's rebirth in the Pure Land was assured.

As historian Sybil Thornton notes, the activities of these chaplains quickly expanded beyond a purely religious function, and they ended up burning, burying and praying for the dead, as well as caring for the sick and wounded. When their warrior patrons were not engaged in battle, the chaplains amused them with poetry and assumed a role close to that of a personal servant. Given that these chaplains appear to have been beholden to their patrons for food, clothing, and shelter, this latter role is hardly surprising.⁷

⁷ Thornton, "Buddhist Chaplains in the Field of Battle" in Lopez (ed.), *Buddhism in Practice*, pp. 586-7.

Over time, these chaplains came to play what might best be described as a paramilitary role, actively aiding and protecting their warrior patrons when needed. This, however, provoked a reaction from the chaplains' ecclesiastical superiors: in a letter written in 1399, they admonished their subordinates to "never touch things like bows and arrows and weapons . . . because they are used to kill." On the other hand, chaplains were allowed to hold their master's body armor and helmet "because they are things that protect the body."⁸ Should the chaplains violate these prohibitions, or their warrior patrons force them to, the ecclesiastical authorities threatened to cancel the rebirth of the offending party in the Pure Land.

Whatever one may think of these Pure Land chaplains, at least minimal standards of conduct existed for all parties. By the sixteenth century, however, things had changed. On the one hand, the battlefield neutrality of priests affiliated with the earlier itinerant branch (J., Yūgyō-ha) of Pure Land Buddhism continued to be recognized by the authorities. On the other hand, Sybil Thornton notes that priests in other sects were forced to provide warlords with "camp-priests who acted as couriers, bodyguards, and body servants to warriors in the field."⁹

While other sects of Japanese Buddhism may not have provided chaplain-like figures that ministered directly to warriors on the battlefield, the Zen sect nevertheless enjoyed a particularly close relationship with medieval warriors from the thirteenth century onwards, a relationship consisting of a meditative training regimen to overcome the fear of death, integrated with a metaphysical basis for its acceptance on the battlefield. As D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966) notes:

In Japan warriors have, for the most part, practiced Zen. Especially from the Kamakura period [1185-1333] through the Ashikaga [1337-1573] and Warring States period [1467-1567], it is correct to say that all of them practiced Zen. This is clear when one looks at such famous examples as [warlords] Uesugi Kenshin, Takeda Shingen, and others. . . . I believe one should pay special attention to the fact that Zen became united with the sword.¹⁰

⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 590.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 589.

¹⁰ Quoted in Victoria (5 August 2013), "Zen as a Cult of Death in the Wartime Writings of D.T. Suzuki," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 11, Issue 30, No. 5. Available on the Web at: <http://japanfocus.org/-Brian-Victoria/3973#sthash.poJWptcx.dpuf>.

Modern Era

Given this historical background, it is not surprising that, in the modern era, Buddhist chaplains accompanied troops to the battlefield as early as the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5. Their job was not only to give ‘morale-building’ talks to the soldiers, but also to conduct funerals for those who fell in battle, as well as notify the relatives of the deceased in Japan itself. Even in times of peace the need for chaplains was recognized, with the Nishi (West) Honganji branch of the True Pure Land sect (Jōdo-Shinshū), for example, dispatching forty-six priests to more than forty military bases throughout Japan as early as 1902.

In the same year Nishi Honganji produced a booklet entitled *Bushidō* as part of a series called “Lectures on Spirit” (*Seishin Kōwa*). The connection between the two events is clear in that it was Ōtani Kōen (1850-1903), an aristocrat and the branch’s administrative head, who both dispatched the military chaplains and contributed a foreword to the booklet. Kōen explained that the booklet’s purpose was “to clarify the spirit of military evangelization.”¹¹

As its title suggests, Nishi Honganji intended this booklet to provide the doctrinal basis for its outreach to the military. That this outreach had a broader focus than the soldiers themselves can be seen from the inclusion of a final chapter entitled “To the Parents and Family of Military Men”. Although in 1902 Japan was at peace, there was an increasing awareness of the possibility of war with Imperial Russia. Thus sectarian leaders like Kōen realized that soldiers’ parents and family members would be concerned that their loved ones might die in battle.

The booklet’s author, Satō Gan’ei (1847-1905), was a military chaplain as well as clerical head of a Nishi Honganji-affiliated laymen’s association known as the *Yuima-kai* (Skt. *Vimalakīrti*).¹² The military character of this association is clear in that three high-ranking Imperial Army officers were members, each contributing a calligraphic endorsement to the booklet. One of the three, Lt. General Ōshima Ken’ichi (1858-1947), later served as Minister of War in two cabinets and Privy Counsellor during the Asia-Pacific War of 1937-45 (aka WW II).

¹¹ Satō, *Bushidō*, p. xxii.

¹² *Vimalakīrti* is the central figure in the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. The text presents him as the ideal Mahayanist lay practitioner and a contemporary of Buddha Shakyamuni. However, there is no mention of him in Buddhist texts until after Nāgārjuna (2nd century CE?) popularised Mahāyāna teachings in India.

In his introduction, Gan'ei explained that the purpose of religion in Japan was “to be an instrument of the state and an instrument of the Imperial Household.” More specifically, the government had granted Buddhism permission to propagate itself in order “to ensure that citizens fulfill their duties [to the state] while at the same time preserving social order and stability.” Gan'ei claimed religionists like him had been charged with making sure this important task was accomplished.¹³

In a section entitled “The Way of the Martial Arts and the Way of the Buddha”, Gan'ei explained what this had to do with the military:

The *bodhisattva* of the Way of the Buddha is the warrior of the Way of the martial arts; the warrior of the Way of the martial arts is the *bodhisattva* of the Way of the Buddha. This is due to a mysterious convergence between *bodhisattva* and warrior. That is to say, the warrior in the Way of the martial arts is made knowledgeable of life and death through duty and loyalty, while the *bodhisattva* in the Way of the Buddha is able to destroy evil, know the future, and exist freely within the realm of life and death. Therefore, if a warrior believes in the Way of the Buddha, he will be doubly advantaged, with the courage derived from his sense of loyalty and duty further strengthened even as he loses his fear of death.¹⁴

In Japan's first major war with a European power, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, Zen priests like Shaku Sōen, abbot of Engakuji in Kamakura, also volunteered to go to the battlefield. Shaku described his motivation as follows:

I wished to have my faith tested by going through the greatest horrors of life, but 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. I wished to convince them of the truths that this war is not a mere slaughter of their fellow-beings, but that they are combating an evil, and that, at the same time, corporeal annihilation really means a rebirth of [the] soul, not in heaven, indeed, but here among ourselves. I did my best to impress these ideas upon the soldiers' hearts.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁵ Quoted in Victoria, *Zen at War*, p. 26.

Brief though they are, Sōen's words are pregnant with meaning. First, his words reveal one of the roles, or even the main role of chaplains in all militaries, i.e., the promotion of the "morale" (aka "fighting spirit") of the soldiers on the battlefield. This is accomplished by convincing the soldiers that they are engaged in a morally just struggle, in Sōen's words, "to enable them to die on the battlefield with the confidence that the task in which they are engaged is great and noble." Built into this understanding is that the enemy's actions must necessarily embody the opposite, i.e., "they are combating an evil."

It is noteworthy how closely these words resonate with countless Christian military chaplains who have similarly sought to inspire their soldiers with "the ennobling thoughts of [God/Christ]." Christian chaplains also promote the belief that "the task in which they [Christian soldiers] are engaged is great and noble" and are therefore "combating an evil." In Sōen's case, the "Buddhist difference" is that for Buddhist soldiers "corporeal annihilation really means a rebirth of [the] soul, not in heaven, indeed, but here among ourselves." At least according to D.T. Suzuki's translation of his master's words, as quoted above, Sōen granted Japanese soldiers who perished during the Russo-Japanese War both a "soul" and the opportunity to be reborn "among ourselves."

To be sure, Sōen recognized that there was an inherent conflict between a Buddhist soldier's duty to kill his nation's enemies and the Buddhist precept, valid for lay and cleric alike, "not to kill". Sōen resolved this conflict in a short essay entitled "The Buddhist View of War". First published in 1906, the essay read in part:

Whatever calling he may have chosen in this life, let him [the citizen of a nation] be freed from egocentric thoughts and feelings. Even when going to war for his country's sake, let him not bear any hatred towards his enemies. In all his dealings with them let him practice the truth of non-*atman*. He may have to deprive his antagonist of corporeal presence, but let him not think there are *atmans*, conquering each other. From a Buddhist point of view, the significance of life is not limited to the present incarnation. We must not exaggerate the significance of individuals, for they are not independent and unconditional existences. They acquire their importance and a paramount meaning, moral and religious, as soon as their fate becomes connected with the all-pervading love of the Buddha, because then they are no more particular

individuals filled with egotistic thoughts and impulses, but have become love incarnate. They are so many representative types of one universal self-freed love. If they ever have to combat one another for the sake of their home and country — which under some circumstances may become unavoidable in this world of particularity — let them forget their egotistic passions, which are the product of the *atman* conception — of selfishness. Let them, on the contrary, be filled with the loving-kindness of the Buddha; let them elevate themselves above the horizon of the mine and thine. The hand that is raised to strike and the eye that is fixed to take aim do not belong to the individual, but are the instruments utilized by a principle higher than transient existence. Therefore, when fighting, fight with might and main, fight with your whole heart, forget your own self in the fight, and be free from all *atman* thought.¹⁶ [See Appendix I for complete text.]

Further, in light of the fact that D.T. Suzuki was Sōen's lay disciple, it should come as no surprise to learn that Suzuki adopted a similar position to that of his master, i.e., killing was acceptable in Buddhism so long as it was done without "hatred towards his enemies". To the extent that Suzuki's invocation of his Buddhist faith in support of war comes as a surprise, if not shock, to his many admirers in the West only reveals how poorly Suzuki is understood even today. In a 1904 English language essay entitled "A Buddhist View of War" Suzuki wrote:

War is abominable, and there is no denying it. But it is only a phase of the universal struggle that is going on and will go on, as long as one breath of vitality is left to an animate being. It is absurdity itself to have perpetual peace and at the same time to be enjoying the full vigor of life. We do not mean to be cruel, neither do we wish to be self-destructive. When our ideals clash, let there be no flinching, no backsliding, no undecidedness, but for ever and ever pressing onwards. In this kind of war there is nothing personal, egotistic, or individual. *It is the holiest spiritual war.*

¹⁶ Shaku Sōen, *Zen for Americans*, pp. 193-97. See "Appendix I" for the complete text. Also available on the Web at: http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/Buddhist-View-of-War_Soen.html (accessed May 5, 2016).

One thing most detestable and un-Buddhistic in war is its personal element. Egotistic hatred for an enemy is what makes a war most deplorable. But every pious Buddhist knows that there is no such irreducible a thing as ego. Therefore, as he steadily moves onward and clears every obstacle in the way, he is doing what has been ordained by a power higher than himself; he is merely instrumental. In him there is no hatred, no anger, no ignorance, no prejudice. He has lost himself in fighting. . . . Let us then shuffle off the mortal coil whenever it becomes necessary, and not raise a grunting voice against the fates. From our mutilated, mangled, inert corpse will there be the glorious ascension of something immaterial which leads forever progressing humanity to its final goal. Resting in this conviction, Buddhists carry the banner of Dharma over the dead and dying until they gain final victory.¹⁷ (Emphasis mine) [See Appendix II for the entire essay.]

In reflecting on this essay, the first thing to note is that it was not written in a political vacuum, but in the midst of a war that Suzuki enthusiastically supported. For example, when Japan first attacked Russian naval forces stationed in China on February 10, 1904, Suzuki, then resident in the U.S., commented in a letter to a friend: “The Chicago papers this morning published two naval battles fought at Port Arthur and Chemulpo, in both of which the Japanese seem to have won a complete victory. This is a brilliant start & [*sic*] I hope that they would keep on this campaign in a similar manner till the end.”¹⁸

Secondly, perhaps influenced by his support of the war, Suzuki clearly advocated what he called “the holiest spiritual war” as an integral part of Buddhism. He was equally convinced that it is “absurdity itself to have perpetual peace and at the same time to be enjoying the full vigor of life.” Thus, the killing of one’s fellow human beings is only to be expected inasmuch as it has been “ordained by a power higher than himself.” Given this, the question becomes: what use are the efforts of mere mortals, Buddhist or otherwise, to oppose war or work for peace?

¹⁷ D. T. Suzuki; *The Light of Dharma*, July, 1904, Vol. 4. No. 2, pp. 179-182. Available on the Web at: <http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/A-Buddhist-View-of-War.html> (accessed May 5, 2016).

¹⁸ Quoted in Victoria, “The ‘Negative Side’ of D. T. Suzuki’s Relationship to War,” p. 104. Available on the web at: <http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/DTSuzukiandWar.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2016).

Although Suzuki did not clearly identify what this God-like “power higher than himself” is, he appears to suggest that it is the *Dharmakāya*, i.e., the absolute basis of reality, that ordains war and killing. Is this the teaching of the Buddha Dharma?

Damien Keown, a scholar of Buddhist ethics, is also puzzled by Suzuki’s reference to a power higher than himself. Keown writes:

I'm not sure what the 'higher power' he [Suzuki] refers to is, that sounds odd in a Buddhist context, and saying that the warrior is 'merely instrumental' makes it sound like his actions are predetermined and so he has no moral responsibility for what he does. In brief, it's the usual Zen attempt to deny moral values by creating a smokescreen of metaphysical mumbo-jumbo.¹⁹

Unlike his master, Shaku Sōen, Suzuki never became a Buddhist military chaplain. Given his lay status, this is hardly surprising. Yet, it is clear that doctrinally speaking the two men shared a strongly war-affirming stance based on their Buddhist faith. In this, of course, neither man was unique, for, as detailed in my book *Zen at War*, this was the near universal stance adopted by both Buddhist scholars and clerics associated with Japan’s traditional Buddhist sects in the 20th century, at least up until Japan’s defeat in 1945.

Organized Resistance

It should be noted, however, that there were flickers of resistance to the incorporation of Buddhism into the modern Japanese military. For example, the "Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism" (*Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei*), founded on April 5, 1931, was a notable exception to institutional Buddhism's ready subservience to the state. Between 1931 and 1934 the League published a total of six pamphlets detailing its critical stance on various issues.

The League’s second pamphlet, published in 1933, was entitled: "On the Road to Social Reform and the Revitalization of Buddhism" (*Shakai Henkaku Tojō no Shinkō Bukkyō*). As the title implies, the focus was on the need for social reform based on a Buddhist understanding. For example, it put forth the proposition that international cooperation, rather than narrow nationalism, was the Buddhist approach to world peace. It claimed that when nations seek solely to promote themselves, they inevitably

¹⁹ Damien Keown shared these comments with the author in an e-mail dated November 21, 2015.

resort, sooner or later, to military force to achieve their self-centered goals. The League claimed this was clearly at odds with the Buddhist doctrine of "selflessness" (*muga*).

As early as May 1933, at the third national conference of the All Japan Federation of Buddhist Youth Organizations (*Zen Nippon Bukkyō Seinen-kai Renmei*), League representatives recognized the dangers stemming from the rise of totalitarianism not only in Japan but in Germany as well. Thus they put forward a motion condemning Hitler and the Nazi Party for their "all-out violent oppression of the Jewish people", their "burning of cultural properties", their "repression of liberals and peace activists", etc. These violent acts were identified as both "inhumane" and "anti-Buddhist".²⁰ Their motion, however, was rejected and only resulted in increasing degrees of suppression by both institutional Buddhism and the police. With the arrest of some two hundred members in October 1937, the League came to an end and with it any organized Buddhist resistance to Japan's ever growing repression of political dissent at home and military aggression abroad.

Individual Resistance

Despite the absence of organized resistance there were still individuals who resisted the war effort based on their Buddhist faith. For example, Rinzai Zen Master Nakajima Genjō (1915-2000) described his wartime service in the Imperial Japanese Navy as follows:

In 1937 my ship was made part of the Third Fleet and headed for Shanghai in order to participate in military operations on the Yangtze River. We eventually reached the city of Chenchiang where the temple of Chinshan-ssu is located. It was a very famous temple, and I encountered something there that took me by complete surprise. On entering the temple grounds I came across some five hundred novice monks practicing meditation in the meditation hall. I blurted out to the abbot, "What do you think you're doing! In Japan everyone is consumed by the war with China, and this is all you can do?" The abbot replied, "And just who are you to talk! I hear that you are a priest. War is for soldiers. A priest's work is to read the sutras and meditate!" I felt as if I had been hit on the head with a sledgehammer, and as a result I immediately became a pacifist.²¹

²⁰ Quoted in Victoria, *Zen at War*, p. 71.

²¹ Quoted in Victoria, *Zen War Stories*, p. 7.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES



Nakajima Genjō in the Imperial Navy

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES



Nakajima Genjō as a Zen Priest

Needless to say, “realizations” like those of Nakajima and other individual wartime Buddhists had no appreciable effect on Japan’s war effort. In fact, as far as Nakajima is concerned, in January 2000 this author personally asked him if he had attempted to distance himself from Japan’s war effort following his change of heart. His reply was short and to the point: “I would have been court-martialled and shot had I done so.”²²

Nevertheless, the historical record reveals that there were a number of individual Buddhists, both lay and cleric, who opposed Japan’s war effort based on the tenets of their Buddhist faith, especially the vow they had taken to abstain from taking life. This suggests that Buddhism, like other world religions, can become the catalyst or basis for war resistance. However, at least in the Japanese case, the record also reveals that Buddhism’s connection to such war resistance was, in terms of absolute numbers, let alone efficacy, very weak.²³

On the contrary, it can be said that Buddhism and Buddhist chaplains in wartime Japan provided all of the ingredients, from doctrinal interpretations to battlefield religious practice, necessary for the spiritual support of Japan’s military aggression. Not only that, in the postwar period, Japanese-influenced Buddhist military chaplains would resurface in an unlikely venue, i.e., in Japan’s wartime enemy – the United States of America.

The Creation of a Buddhism Chaplaincy in the U.S. Military Background

In examining the process leading to the acceptance of Buddhist chaplains, the first point to be made is that religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam have long been suspect in the U.S. military due to their non-Western origins, i.e., as alien to America’s WASP-dominated, Judeo-Christian heritage. Even Roman Catholic military chaplains were rejected until the American Civil War.

Consequently, Japanese-Americans were rebuffed when they requested the establishment of a Buddhist military chaplaincy during the war. They were rebuffed when, following forcible placement in “relocation camps” immediately after Pearl Harbor, their young men were finally allowed to enlist in the Army beginning in 1943, on condition they would fight in Europe. According to Greg Robinson, then Assistant Secretary of Defense John J. McCloy feared that negative American perceptions of Buddhists would compromise the reputation of their units.²⁴

²² Ibid., p. 14.

²³ For additional examples of individual Buddhist resistance to Japan’s wartime aggression, see Victoria, *Zen at War*, pp. 73-78.

²⁴ Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America*. p. 271.

Changing Attitudes

It was the undoubted bravery of Japanese-American soldiers demonstrated in W.W. II that slowly began to change the minds of U.S. military, political leaders and the American public. For example, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was composed completely of Japanese-Americans who served in the European theater. The 442nd arrived in Europe after the 100th Infantry battalion, another Japanese-American unit, had already established its reputation for bravery on the battlefield. In time, the 442nd became, for its size and length of service, the most decorated unit in U.S. military history.

Needless to say, many if not the majority of these Japanese-American soldiers were Buddhists, primarily associated with the Jōdo Shin (True Pure Land) sect of Buddhism. There is one indication that one or more Japanese-American Jōdo Shin priests disguised themselves as Christian military chaplains and accompanied the 442nd into battle.²⁵



A plaque commemorating the wartime deaths of members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team

²⁵ This indication is contained in the 2006 docudrama, *Only the Brave*, directed by Lane Nishikawa. Nishikawa went to great lengths to portray the unit's wartime exploits as accurately as possible. One scene in the film depicts Japanese American soldiers being comforted by a Christian chaplain. However, the language exchanged between the two sides makes it clear that the Christian chaplain is actually a Shin Buddhist priest. The author, however, has been unable to establish the historical authenticity of such a person or persons.



The Grave Marker, with Dharma Wheel, for Astronaut Ellison Onizuka

The unquestioned bravery of the Japanese-American soldiers led the Secretary of the Army to approve the placement of a Buddhist symbol, i.e. a “Dharma Wheel”, on relevant soldiers’ graves in February 1951. At the same time, the Dharma Wheel was allowed in chapels in national military cemeteries. However, together with the Star of David, this Buddhist symbol was given a position secondary to the Christian Cross.



Chapel at the Punchbowl in Honolulu, Hawaii

Finally in 1990 the American military resolved to make plans for inclusion of Buddhist chaplains in the armed forces. In August of that year the Institute of Heraldry produced rank insignia, once again taking the Dharma Wheel or *dharmachakra* as its emblem.



First Buddhist Chaplains in the U.S. Military

Although Buddhist chaplains were initially rejected by the US military, today the “Buddhist Churches of America”, affiliated with the Nishi Hongwanji branch of the Jōdo Shin sect in Japan, remains the sole organization allowed to officially endorse Buddhist chaplains. Thus it is not surprising that the first formally recognized U.S. Buddhist chaplain was an ordained priest in that sect, Lieutenant Junior Grade Jeanette Gracie Shin. The Navy commissioned Lt. Shin, whose Buddhist name is Yuinen, in 2004. Among other assignments, Lt. Shin has served as a United States Navy Chaplain stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California. Although there are now additional Buddhist chaplains, all of them, with the exception of Lt. Shin, serve in the U.S. Army.

Shin was raised a Buddhist and describes herself as having been a “military brat”. Instead of going into the Air Force like her father, she enlisted in the Marine Corps and became a communications operator because she wanted to do something different. After leaving the Marine Corps, Shin went to school at George Mason University in Virginia, earning her bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and Religious Studies. After college, Shin attended the Buddhist Seminary in California, where she received a master’s degree. Shin intended to become a Buddhist minister, but changed her mind when America went to war in Iraq:

I’ve been a chaplain since 2004. Since we’re at war, I thought I should go back to the military. With my background and knowledge, I thought I should become a chaplain. That way I can help our service members *prepare for the war*, not just physically, but spiritually.²⁶ (Emphasis mine)

In working with service members, Shin states she helps them to relax and meditate, and she educates them about the history of Buddhism.

In an October 4, 2012 interview posted on the website of the Buddhist magazine, *Tricycle*, Lt. Shin was asked about her work as a military chaplain, including the question of how she responds to those Buddhists who criticize her with regard to Right Livelihood and keeping the first precept, i.e., to refrain from taking life. In response, Shin replied:

²⁶ Quoted in “Navy’s only Buddhist Chaplain with 1st Marine Logistics Group.” Available on the Web at: <http://www.dvidshub.net/news/printable/40052> (accessed 15 December 2013).

I have encountered some Buddhists who object to the practice of military chaplaincy due to the First Precept and Right Livelihood; however, my response is that Buddhists do exist in the military; they are citizens of this nation, so therefore they should have a chaplain of their faith background available. Also, America is not the only country to have Buddhist military chaplains—they are also present in the armed forces of nations with predominantly Buddhist populations like South Korea and Thailand. Buddhists, like other people, make individual choices about their practice of Dharma; it is not for me to judge how they interpret doctrine—my only concern is that they are able to practice without discrimination.²⁷

Given the past history of religious discrimination Japanese-American Buddhist soldiers experienced, Shin's concern that today's Buddhist soldiers be able "to practice without discrimination" is understandable, even praiseworthy. Yet, while Shin claims that it is not up to her "to judge how they interpret doctrine," she finds no difficulty in interpreting Buddhist doctrine so as to affirm military service. Thus, at the time of the 2010 Vesak observance Shin issued the following proclamation:

This year's Vesak observance, the remembrance of Lord Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment, and Parinirvana, occurs closely to our Memorial Day observance. On both occasions, this is a time for the remembrance of deeds that provided for our Emancipation from suffering: the Buddha's final victory over Mara, and our military veterans who gave the "last full measure" so that we may have freedom today [*sic*].

The Buddha showed us the Way to liberation, that liberation from suffering was in fact possible, and available regardless of our karmic circumstances or our social caste; our veterans have sacrificed so that we also are liberated from slavery and oppressive government. We continue to honor and remember the Buddha for His Great Compassion for us. We must not only remember what he accomplished, but work to pass on his teachings.

²⁷ "Q & A with Lt. Jeanette Shin, U.S. Military's First Buddhist Chaplain." Available on the Web at: <http://www.tricycle.com/blog/q-It-jeanette-shin-us-militarys-first-buddhist-chaplain> (accessed on 11 September 2012).

American Buddhists have fought in the wars of this nation, and Buddhist families have lost sons and daughters in our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have also given the “last full measure”, no different from any other citizen of this Nation. Do not forget those who have given so much for us. Take time during your Memorial Day vacation, or during your memorial services this Sunday, to remember those who have served. *Namo Amida Butsu*

Lt. Shin further stated that she wished to clear up a misconception about the nature of a military chaplain’s work: “I think one misconception is that military chaplains function as missionaries or that they preach killing. However, most chaplains really are concerned with ensuring that individuals, whether in the military or hospital or prisons, have access to services and sacraments of their respective faith.”²⁸

Lt. Shin maintains a website entitled “Buddhist Military Sangha.”²⁹ Its mission statement reads as follows:

- Provide a welcoming and positive forum for Buddhists currently serving or who have served in the military to communicate with and support one another.
- Recognize and promote honorable military service as in accord with the Eightfold Path’s Right Livelihood.
- Correct misconceptions about Buddhists serving in the military.
- Help Buddhists unfamiliar with the military understand the jobs of their relatives and friends who are serving or who have served, and who love and respect the military profession.
- Help Buddhist Sanghas learn how to support and understand Buddhist military members, veterans, and their families.

²⁸ “Q & A with Lt. Jeanette Shin, U.S. Military’s First Buddhist Chaplain.” Available on the Web at: <http://www.tricycle.com/blog/q-lt-jeanette-shin-us-militarys-first-buddhist-chaplain> (accessed on 11 September 2012).

²⁹ The “Buddhist Military Sangha” website can be accessed at: <http://buddhistmilitarysangha.blogspot.jp> (accessed on 15 December 2013).

- Represent the importance of religious pluralism and diversity in today's military population, and by extension in American society.
- Provide information about Buddhist Military Chaplaincy in US Armed Forces.

On this website Shin quotes numerous personages, including the Dalai Lama, as well as Buddhist teachings to justify Buddhism's support for warfare as well as the existence of a Buddhist military chaplaincy. She quotes the Dalai Lama addressing soldiers as follows:

I have always admired those who are prepared to act in the defense of others for their courage and determination. In fact, it may surprise you to know that I think that monks and soldiers, sailors and airmen have more in common than at first meets the eye. Strict discipline is important to us all, we all wear a uniform and we rely on the companionship and support of our comrades.

Although the public may think that physical strength is what is most important, I believe that what makes a good soldier, sailor or airman, just as what makes a good monk, is inner strength. And inner strength depends on having a firm positive motivation. The difference lies in whether ultimately you want to ensure others' well being or whether you want only wish to do them harm.

Naturally, there are some times when we need to take what on the surface appears to be harsh or tough action, but if our motivation is good our action is actually non-violent in nature. On the other hand if we use sweet words and gestures to deceive, exploit and take advantage of others, our conduct may appear agreeable, while we are actually engaged in quite unacceptable violence.

The ultimate purpose of Buddhism is to serve and benefit humanity; therefore I believe that what is important for Buddhists is the contribution we can make to human society according to our own ideas and values. The key to overcoming suffering and ensuring happiness is inner peace. If we have that, we can face difficulties with calmness and reason, while our inner happiness remains undisturbed.

The teachings of love, kindness and tolerance, the conduct of non-violence as I have explained above, and especially the Buddhist theory that all things are relative, are a source of that inner peace.

It is my prayer that all of you may be able to do your duty and fulfill your mission, and in due course when that is done to return to your homes and families. [Signed] Dalai Lama³⁰

Echoing these words are those of Capt. Somya Malasri, a former Thai monk who is currently one of only two active duty U.S. Army chaplains. Malasri explains the Buddhist rationale for warfare as follows:

A lot of people ask if a Buddhist can be a soldier because the first precept is no killing. The answer is yes. You can protect yourself or sacrifice yourself to do the righteous thing. You can sacrifice yourself to protect your country because if there's no country, there's no freedom and you cannot practice your religion. In Buddhism, if you go to war and kill others, it's your duty, not your intention to kill other people. If a person dies of your intention, and you have anger, that is wrong in Buddhism. *When soldiers go to war, they don't have any intention to kill others and they don't have hatred in their minds.*³¹ (Emphasis mine)

In the first instance, it is interesting to compare Malasri's understanding of the relationship of Buddhism to war and the state (represented by the emperor in this instance) with that of Japanese scholar-priest Inoue Enryō, who wrote in 1904:

Buddhism is a teaching of compassion, a teaching for living human beings. Therefore, fighting on behalf of living beings is in accord with the spirit of compassion. . . . Buddhism would not exist [in Japan] without the devotion of the Imperial family. When looked at from this viewpoint, it is only natural for Buddhists to fight to the death in order to repay the debt of gratitude they owe to the Buddha and the emperor.³²

³⁰ Ibid., posted on Monday, 21 June 2010 (accessed on 11 December 2013).

³¹ Ibid., posted on Friday, 17 August 2007 (accessed on 11 December 2013).

³² Quoted in Victoria, *Zen at War*, pp. 29-30.



Lt. Shin just after she has sworn allegiance to the USA on induction as a military officer

In both instances we see that “freedom of religion” (i.e., to practice Buddhism) is not an inherent human right but rather something in the nature of a ‘gift’ bestowed on its citizens by the state. Needless to say, the idea of the king (i.e., state) as both benefactor and protector of Buddhism has long been deeply embedded in Thai Buddhism as it has been in institutional Buddhism throughout Asia. Hence, Buddhist soldiers are expected to offer up their lives as an expression of gratitude or repayment for the state’s beneficence.

Implicit in this relationship is the unconditional subservience of the Buddhist *sangha* (community) to the state. In the country of Malasri's birth, i.e., Thailand, this subservience can be seen in the fact that it is one of only two Asian countries that have a formal Buddhist military chaplaincy, the other being South Korea. Like all Thai Buddhist military chaplains in the Theravada school of Buddhism, Malasri first had to formally disrobe before he could become a military chaplain. In South Korea, on the other hand, Buddhist military chaplains wear officers' uniforms but, as adherents of the Mahāyāna school, retain their clerical status.

In addition, Malasri's statement that in going to war soldiers must have no intention of harming others or harboring ill-will toward them mirrors the sentiments of both Shaku Sōen and D.T. Suzuki previously introduced, i.e., that the Buddhist soldier may kill so long as he harbors "no hatred, no anger, no ignorance, no prejudice" toward his enemy. And although phrased in a somewhat more convoluted manner, this is a position Suzuki maintained even in the postwar period. In 1959, Suzuki wrote:

The art of swordsmanship distinguishes between the sword that kills and the sword that gives life. The one that is used by a technician cannot go any further than killing, for he never appeals to the sword unless he intends to kill. The case is entirely different for the one who is compelled to lift the sword. For it is really not he but the sword itself that does the killing. *He has no desire to do harm to anybody*, but the enemy appears and makes himself the victim.³³ (Emphasis mine)

It can, of course, be rightly argued that intentionality is a critical component of Buddhist ethics. The reason for this, of course, is the central role of *karma* in Buddhist doctrine. Thus, each intentional thought, word and deed has a corresponding effect, negative intentional acts having a negative effect and positive acts a positive one. As Shakyamuni Buddha is recorded as having said: "I say that intention is *kamma* (Skt. *karma*), for having intended one thinks, speaks or acts."³⁴

One of the best-known Mahāyāna explications of intentionality related to killing is contained in the *Upāyakauśalya* (Skill in Means) *Sūtra*. This sutra tells the story of a ship's captain, named Great Compassion, whose boat was carrying

³³ Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 145.

³⁴ *Anguttara Nikaya* III, 415.

500 merchants. Like the captain, all of the merchants were *Bodhisattvas*, except one, a robber who planned to kill everyone on board in order to steal the ship's cargo. Thanks to a dream, the captain became aware of the robber's murderous intent and agonized over what to do. If he told the merchants about the robber they would no doubt kill the robber but then would have to suffer the karmic results of their deeds for aeons. At the same time, the captain realized that if he did nothing the merchants would die. Finally, out of compassion *for the robber*, the captain determined to personally accept the hellish karmic retribution himself, killing the robber so as to prevent the latter from having to suffer the results of his evil deeds. However, the sutra states that due to the captain's great compassion and utterly selfless motivation he was ultimately spared from rebirth in hell.

As the translator of this sutra, Mark Tatz, notes, this sutra is likely to have been composed in the first century B.C.E.³⁵ If Tatz is correct, this sutra is highly unlikely to represent the original teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha concerning the use of violence. In fact, Damien Keown, a scholar of Buddhist ethics, has gone so far as to label this sutra the place “where it all started to go horribly wrong for the Mahāyāna.”³⁶ Nevertheless, this sutra deserves close scrutiny given the role it has played in endorsing the use of “compassionate violence” in the Mahāyāna school.

On the surface this sutra appears to support the claims of Sōen, Suzuki, Malasri and others that Buddhists may kill so long they do so without hatred or animosity toward the enemy. On closer examination, however, it can be readily recognized that even if it accurately reflected Shakyamuni Buddha's views, the application of this sutra to modern warfare would be highly problematic. First, unlike the bodhisattva ship's captain, modern soldiers are anything but free to decide whom they will kill, with or without a dream. On the contrary, they are effectively automata, killing anyone their superiors order them to kill with little or no means of determining the guilt or innocence of their victims.

Second, their adversaries on the battlefield, who carry the designation “enemy”, are typically no different from them. They are likely in the prime of life and, more often than not, fighting as a result of having been conscripted into their country's military, i.e., forced under threat of imprisonment, or even death, to kill the designated “enemy”, whom they have never met and know little about

³⁵ Tatz, trans. *The Skill in Means (Upāyakaṣāya) Sutra*, p. 1.

³⁶ Quoted in an e-mail to the author on July 27, 2016.

other than the fact that their military superiors have inevitably identified their adversary as “evil”. Further, running deep in the consciences of soldiers on both sides is their fervent desire to return home safely to loved ones. They are made to believe that the only way this can occur is if they kill whomever they are ordered to kill. Unlike the ship’s captain, they have no choice.

Third, in modern warfare it is nearly axiomatic to recognize that nations engage in war to promote their “national interests”. This understanding of the causes of war has been recognized in the West since the time of Machiavelli (1469-1527). National interests are nothing if not the *collective self-interest*, aka *selfishness*, of the citizens of a nation, especially the self-interest of the rich and powerful in that nation. Nevertheless, seldom if ever do the rich and powerful themselves do the actual fighting, though they reap the financial rewards that come with making the weaponry, acquiring the natural resources, etc. connected with a successful war. Nor must it be forgotten that it is typically the nation’s poorest and least educated citizens upon whom falls the task of actually fighting *and dying* on the battlefield.

From a Buddhist perspective, national self-interest is simply an alternative name for collective ego, an expression of attachment to such things as land, natural resources, cheap labor, military power, etc. As such, the furtherance of national self-interest, i.e., collective *selfishness*, could never be a goal in accord with the Buddha Dharma, inasmuch as the latter is devoted to release from all forms of attachment.

At this juncture the question is typically raised as to what a Buddhist should do in the face of a truly dangerous if not demented figure like Adolf Hitler. Shouldn’t a Buddhist soldier, if he or she has the chance, kill someone like Hitler, a figure far, far, worst than a robber, in order to save the lives of innumerable innocent victims?

Once again, it would certainly appear necessary to do so. Yet, demented though Hitler may have been, he could not have killed many without the support of large numbers of German citizens. The historical reality is that the German people only followed a psychopath like Hitler out of the great financial and societal insecurity facing them in the aftermath of WW I and the Great Depression. This insecurity, in turn, was in large part a direct result of the massive war reparations imposed by the victors on the defeated German nation in the Treaty of Versailles at the end of WW I. When a people are driven to desperation they react desperately. Thus, the solution to future Hitlers is not ever more weaponry such as atomic or hydrogen bombs but, instead, ensuring that no people are driven to take desperate measures due to impoverishment or oppression.

Finally, there is one aspect related to the story of a bodhisattva ship’s captain

that is of critical importance: the lack of any suggestion that the ship's captain, thanks to his dream, had to first make sure that the man he intended to kill, however reluctantly, really was a robber, and as a corollary, the need for the soldier to exercise his own independent judgment as to who is, or is not, his enemy. Shakyamuni Buddha famously said, "Those who without themselves ascertaining the state of affairs follow the rumours of others are utterly irresponsible; they are exploitable by others."³⁷

In fact, this exactly fits the circumstances of the American invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003. Weapon inspectors said at the time that there was no compelling evidence Saddam Hussein possessed "weapons of mass destruction", nor was there convincing evidence that Iraq was a state sponsor of terrorism. Nevertheless, the US ordered its soldiers to invade Iraq. In such a case, is it sufficient for American Buddhist soldiers taking the lives of countless Iraqis to claim that they were merely "following orders" or that they killed "without hatred" or killed "compassionately"?

In the story of the bodhisattva ship's captain there is nothing that addresses the need for Buddhist soldiers to ensure, at the very least, that they are killing the "bad guys". In a different context, Shakyamuni Buddha addressed this issue when he stated:

Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, "The monk is our teacher." When you yourselves know: "These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness," enter on and abide in them.³⁸

Based on the list above, it is reasonable to assume that Shakyamuni Buddha would also have included in his admonition "not to go (kill in this instance) upon

³⁷ Pali text: *Appatvā padaviññāṇaṃ paraghosānusārino pamādaparamā bālā, te honti parapattiyā. Jātaka 322, Daddabha Jātaka*. Translation provided by Richard Gombrich.

³⁸ Quoted in the *Kālāma Sutta* of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*. Translated by Soma Thera, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society. Available on the Web at: <http://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh008.pdf> (accessed 25 October 2016).

the orders of military superiors unless you yourself know that your opponent is truly your “enemy”.

In light of the above it can be said that even if the *Upāyakauśalya* (Skill in Means) *Sūtra* could be shown to accurately depict the words of Shakyamuni Buddha, it offers no more than a point of departure for a serious discussion of the Buddhist position on modern warfare. At the same time it must be admitted that there may be a canonical reference suggesting Shakyamuni Buddha approved the use of armed force in defense of a nation, just as there are other canonical references in which he asserted that soldiers would go to hell for their deeds.³⁹

³⁹ One example of Shakyamuni Buddha’s seeming approval of maintaining and using a military force may be found in a conversation between a general named Simha, aka Sīha in the Pali original, and Shakyamuni Buddha:

Simha said: "I am a soldier, O Blessed One, and am appointed by the king to enforce his laws and to wage his wars. Does the Tathagata who teaches kindness without end and compassion with all sufferers, permit the punishment of the criminal? and further, does the Tathagata declare that it is wrong to go to war for the protection of our homes, our wives, our children, and our property? Does the Tathagata teach the doctrine of a complete self-surrender, so that I should suffer the evil-doer to do what he pleases and yield submissively to him who threatens to take by violence what is my own? Does the Tathagata maintain that all strife, including such warfare as is waged for a righteous cause should be forbidden?"

The Buddha replied: "He who deserves punishment must be punished, and he who is worthy of favor must be favored. Yet at the same time he teaches to do no injury to any living being but to be full of love and kindness. These injunctions are not contradictory, for whosoever must be punished for the crimes which he has committed, suffers his injury not through the ill-will of the judge but on account of his evildoing. His own acts have brought upon him the injury that the executer of the law inflicts. When a magistrate punishes, let him not harbor hatred in his breast, yet a murderer, when put to death, should consider that this is the fruit of his own act. As soon as he will understand that the punishment will purify his soul, he will no longer lament his fate but rejoice at it."

The Blessed One continued: "The Tathagata teaches that all warfare in which man tries to slay his brother is lamentable, but he does not teach that those who go to war in a righteous cause after having exhausted all means to preserve the peace are blameworthy. He must be blamed who is the cause of war. The Tathagata teaches a complete surrender of self, but he does not teach a surrender of anything to those powers that are evil, be they men or gods or the elements of nature. Struggle must be, for all life is a struggle of some kind. But he that struggles should look to it lest he struggle in the interest of self against truth and righteousness.

"He who struggles in the interest of self, so that he himself may be great or powerful or rich or famous, will have no reward, but he who struggles for righteousness and truth, will have great reward, for even his defeat will be a victory. Self is not a fit vessel to receive

U.S. Air Force

While the U.S. Air Force currently has no Buddhist chaplains, October 2007 saw the dedication of the “Vast Refuge Dharma Hall Chapel” at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO. This chapel came about as a result of a request made in 2004 by a graduate of the Academy's first Class of 1959, Wiley Burch. Burch, now a Buddhist priest affiliated with the Hollow Bones Rinzai Zen sect, requested that a multipurpose room in the lower level of the Cadet Chapel be transformed into a Buddhist chapel. At the Chapel’s dedication, Burch said:

any great success; self is small and brittle and its contents will soon be spilt for the benefit, and perhaps also for the curse, of others. Truth, however, is large enough to receive the yearnings and aspirations of all selves and when the selves break like soap-bubbles, their contents will be preserved and in the truth they will lead a life everlasting.

“He who goeth to battle, O Simha, even though it be in a righteous cause, must be prepared to be slain by his enemies, for that is the destiny of warriors; and should his fate overtake him he has no reason for complaint. But he who is victorious should remember the instability of earthly things. His success may be great, but be it ever so great the wheel of fortune may turn again and bring him down into the dust. However, if he moderates himself and, extinguishing all hatred in his heart lifts his down-trodden adversary up and says to him, Come now and make peace and let us be brothers, he will gain a victory that is not a transient success, for its fruits will remain forever. Great is a successful general, O Simha, but he who has conquered self is the greater victor.”

Note that in an e-mail to the author, Richard Gombrich has described this sutra as “a blatant forgery” while Peter Harvey has also raised serious doubts about the accuracy of the war-endorsing sections of this quotation, which first appears in the above form in the 1894 compilation of Buddhist teachings contained in Paul Carus’ book, *The Gospel of Buddha*, available on the Web at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/btg/>. For an overview of this debate see: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-buddhism&month=0801&week=e&msg=vm8OZXGZj%2BWm%2BjeEf8EK0g&user=&pw=>

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Shakyamuni Buddha’s opposition to war is contained in the *Samyutta Nikaya* (The Connected Discourse of the Buddha) 42.3, entitled *Yodhajiva Sutta* “The Warrior”:

When a warrior strives and exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, & misdirected by the thought: “May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist.” If others then strike him down and slay him while he is thus striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: “When a warrior strives and exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down and slay him while he is striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle,” that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb.

Thus, according to this *sutta/sūtra* a warrior (or soldier) inevitably goes to hell – or is reborn as an animal of some kind – as his karmic punishment for having killed. How many Buddhist chaplains would dare discuss this with Buddhist soldiers?

I understood there was a possibility or a place for Buddhism in the military. I understand the culture very well, and I understand the diversity of it. From that place, rather than being hard and coming in against, I came in willing to accept all. That's a Buddhist teaching, not to set yourself up against things so much as to just be, we say, like clouds and like water, just flow. . . . Without compassion, war is nothing but criminal activity. It is necessary sometimes to take life, but we never take it for granted.⁴⁰

The Academy's Buddhist program leader, Sarah Bender Sensei of the Springs Mountain Sangha, asked herself how Zen Buddhism fits with the military path:

People in the military come up — for real— against questions that most of us just consider abstractly. The questions of Buddhism are the questions of life and death. So where else would you want Buddhism than right there where those questions are most vivid?⁴¹

If the Air Force Academy is somewhat removed from a place where the questions of life and death are at their “most vivid” the same cannot be said for then Lt. (now Captain) Thomas Dyer, the first Buddhist chaplain in the U.S. Army. Serving with the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Lt. Dyer provided meditation instruction to soldiers actually located on the battlefield, i.e., to soldiers stationed at Camp Taji in Iraq.⁴²

Dyer subsequently explained the relationship of Zen to Buddhism as follows:

Primarily Buddhism is a methodology of transforming the mind. The mind has flux in it or movement, past and future fantasy, which causes us not to interact deeply with life. So Buddhism has a methodology, a teaching and a practice of meditation to help one concentrate in the present moment to experience reality as it is. . . . Zen practice is to be awake in the present moment both in sitting and then walking throughout the day. So the idea

⁴⁰ Ibid., posted on Thursday, 1 November 2007 (accessed on 11 December 2013).

⁴¹ Ibid., posted on Tuesday, 13 October 2009 (accessed on 11 December 2013).

⁴² A 2010 YouTube video of Lt. Thomas Dyer providing meditation instruction to US soldiers stationed at Camp Taji, Iraq is available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GbFGbDFiNo>.

is that enlightenment will come from just being purely aware of the present moment in the present moment.⁴³

Significantly, in Dyer's case the basic Buddhist precept to abstain from killing is conspicuously absent. On the other hand, being "purely aware of the present moment" is a very desirable state of mind on the battlefield, especially when freed from questions of individual moral choice or responsibility.

The "Spiritual Cost" to Buddhism

With some 5,287 Buddhists serving in the US military as of June 2009, few observers would argue against the need to address the spiritual needs of Buddhist soldiers.⁴⁴ It can also be said that the emergence of Buddhist chaplains in an increasingly multiracial, multicultural U.S. military was an entirely "natural", even "inevitable", process. Further, in light of institutional Buddhism's millennia-long history of involvement in, if not support for, organized warfare in those Asian countries where it flourished, why should the U.S. be any different?

As noted above, it is certainly possible to see the acceptance of Buddhist and other chaplains of non-Judeo-Christian religions as a part of the move toward genuine religious tolerance and pluralism within the U.S. military. In the case of Buddhism, military authorities, as we have seen, initially rejected Buddhist chaplains. Yet the exemplary bravery of Japanese-American (and Buddhist) soldiers in W.W. II brought eventual acceptance. This explains why the Japanese Jōdo Shin sect-affiliated 'Buddhist Churches of America' was the first, and still remains the only, officially recognized, endorsing agency for Buddhist chaplains, regardless of their personal sectarian affiliation.

Nevertheless, the question must be asked, even if it cannot be answered here: what has been the "spiritual cost" to Buddhism, especially its ethical teachings, for its long and ongoing history of subservience to the state, most especially state-initiated warfare? What happens to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha when the chaplains ministering to Buddhist soldiers are themselves wearing a military uniform and being paid by the military, thereby contributing to a prioritization of their own nation and its national interests?

⁴³ (Now Capt.) Thomas Dyer's explanation of Zen and Buddhism is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jc-UAumSVL8>.

⁴⁴ Jeff Brady. "Military Buddhist Chapel Represents Tolerance," National Public Radio, 13 October 2009.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

In the case of the Buddhist military chaplaincy in the U.S., it can be argued that the price of Buddhism's acceptance has been the same as for all other faith traditions, i.e., its incorporation into the military's overriding and enduring mission – to destroy all human beings, domestic and foreign, whom U.S. political leaders determine to be the enemy of the state. As a Buddhist chaplain, Lt. Shin, explained above, she sought to “help our service members prepare for the war, not just physically, but spiritually.”

In this connection it should be noted that Buddhist military chaplains, as officers, swear the same oath of allegiance to the state (i.e., its political leaders) as do combat officers:

I, [name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. [So help me God]

Note: The phrase in brackets need not be said if the speaker has a personal or moral objection.



Swearing in Ceremony for an Asian Buddhist U.S. Army Chaplain

One of the great ironies in the case of Japanese American Buddhists is that Lt. Shin, the first American Buddhist chaplain, employed either identical or very similar rationales to endorse American military actions as her Japanese predecessors did to endorse Japanese military aggression during WW II.

According to Shin, Shakyamuni Buddha is the prototypical “first warrior” because of his birth in the *kshatriya* caste. In a January 2008 Dharma talk entitled: “Shakyamuni – The First Warrior,” Shin noted:

Siddhartha Gautama (his birth name) was born into the *kshatriya varna*, or caste, of ancient India/Nepal. This was the caste of the warriors, the rulers and aristocrats of ancient India. . . .The Buddha's Enlightenment was described as a ‘battle’ between himself and Mara, the embodiment of death and evil. . . .[The Buddha said:] ‘Mara, riding atop a huge elephant, you came leading a whole army. Come, do battle! I shall emerge victorious. You will not throw me into disorder. Although the human and celestial worlds were both unable to destroy your army, I shall defeat your army as a rock destroys tree leaves.’

The ancient texts emphasize the need for determination, sacrifice, and courage for Buddhists to follow the path of Buddha-dharma, to bear up under hardships in order to achieve the highest goal a human being can attain: to conquer death, fear, ignorance, evil, and thereby attain liberation. *The qualities of a good warrior are exactly the qualities needed for a serious Buddhist practitioner.*⁴⁵ (Emphasis mine)

Shin's comments are similar to those of Rinzai Zen Master Shaku Sōen who, it will be recalled, served as a battlefield chaplain at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. In September 1905 Shaku published his *Diary of Subjugating Demons* (*J. Gōma Nisshi*), providing a personal account of his service with the Japanese First Army Division in Manchuria. Micah Auerback describes the contents of Shaku's diary as follows: “In our world, Sōen dilated, the demon king Mara is personified by none other than Imperial Russia, seeking to swallow

⁴⁵ The entire article, “Shakyamuni – The First Warrior,” is posted on the Website of the “Buddhist Military Sangha” available here: <http://buddhistmilitarysangha.blogspot.jp/search?q=Mara> (accessed 24 November 2014).

up the entire globe and to plunge it into darkness. Thus, he contended, ‘we must call [this conflict, that is, the Russo-Japanese War] not just a great just war in this world but rather a full-fledged great battle to subjugate demons throughout the [entire] cosmos.’”⁴⁶

It would only be a few months after its victory in this “great just war” that Japan took the first steps in the colonization of Korea.

A further irony is that Shakyamuni Buddha was depicted in a similar manner in the Nazi SS. With Hitler’s permission, Heinrich Himmler modeled the SS on the Japanese samurai class from November 1935 onwards.⁴⁷ Within the SS, Walther Wüst, an Indologist at Munich University and a high-ranking SS officer, portrayed Hitler as the Buddha of the present age because both the Buddha and Hitler were “warriors” who had first conquered evil (Mara in the Buddha’s case) and then totally and selflessly dedicated themselves to their “Volk”. Additionally, both men were “Aryans”. This latter point was important for the Nazis because, as Horst Junginger notes: “Since Buddha and Adolf Hitler belonged to the same hereditary community, they reacted the same way to the problems of their time. Moreover, their common genetic constitution endowed them with the capacity to guide their people from subjugation to freedom.”⁴⁸

The final irony is one that appears to have escaped the notice of the Shin-affiliated Buddhist Churches of America. In the aftermath of W.W. II, a number of Japanese institutional Buddhist leaders, including those of the two main branches of the Jōdo Shin sect, publicly repented their unconditional support of Japanese aggression as well as the manner in which they had twisted Buddhist doctrines in the process. On April 2, 1987, for example, Higashi Honganji issued the following statement:

As we recall the war years, it was our sect that called the war a “sacred war”. It was we who said “the heroic spirits [of the war dead] who have been enshrined in [Shinto’s] Yasukuni Shrine have served in the great undertaking of guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the imperial throne. They should therefore be revered for having done the great work of a bodhisattva.” This was an expression of deep shamelessness and ignorance on our part. When recalling this now, we are attacked by a sense of shame from which there is no escape. . . .

⁴⁶ Quoted in Auerback, “A Closer Look at Zen at War,” p. 158.

⁴⁷ Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: A Life*, p. 281.

⁴⁸ Junginger, “From Buddha to Adolf Hitler: Walther Wüst and the Aryan Tradition,” p. 125.

Calling that war a sacred war was a double lie. Those who participate in war are both victims and victimizers. In light of the great sin we have committed, we must not pass it by as being nothing more than a mistake. The sect declared that we should revere things that were never taught by the Saint [Shinran]. When we who are priests think about this sin, we can only hang our heads in silence before all who are gathered here.⁴⁹

The second main branch of this sect, i.e., Nishi Honganji, issued the following statement on February 27, 1991:

Although there was pressure exerted on us by the military-controlled state, we must be deeply penitent before the Buddhas and patriarchs, for we ended up cooperating with the war and losing sight of the true nature of this sect. This can also be seen in the doctrinal sphere, where the [sect's] teaching of the existence of relative truth and absolute truth was put to cunning use.⁵⁰

Conclusion

In light of the above, it is clear that the problematic aspects of a Buddhist military chaplaincy extend far beyond such individuals as Lt. Shin and the other Buddhist chaplains introduced in this article. A good argument can be made that the core of the problem lies in the military chaplaincy system itself, whether in wartime Japan or today's United States. As previously noted, all chaplains, regardless of faith, are required to unconditionally support the "mission" of their respective country's military, i.e., to defeat all enemies, domestic and foreign.

In the case of the US, one need only imagine what would happen to Lt. Shin, or any other Buddhist chaplain, who dared in a "Dharma talk" directed at soldiers to openly question, let alone criticize, the invasion of Iraq, a country that possessed neither "weapons of mass destruction" nor sponsored terrorism. Had she or any other chaplain even raised this issue, how long would military

⁴⁹ Quoted in Victoria, *Zen at War*, pp. 152-153.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

authorities have allowed them to minister to the “spiritual needs” of the troops under their care? Needless to say, this question can, and should, be asked of military chaplains of all faiths.

Thus, the question must be raised, even though we cannot address it here: is the current generation of American Buddhist chaplains, through their service to the state and its military, making the same errors as their Japanese and other Asian predecessors? Are the “emperor’s new clothes” alluded to in the title of this article really no more than the “secondhand” garments of their Japanese (and other Asian) Buddhist predecessors?

Or can the argument be made that, unlike Japan’s wartime aggression, the US fights only “just” or “defensive” wars on a worldwide scale, so that it is perfectly acceptable for American Buddhist chaplains to use the same interpretations of Buddhism as their now repentant Japanese predecessors. Further, need we ask what American Buddhist chaplains should have done if they came to the conviction that the second US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was based on falsehoods (as it was). Should they have shared their suspicions or convictions with the soldiers who looked to them for moral guidance? If morally challenged, should they have resigned their commissions or simply accepted the old dictum “my country right or wrong”, thereby ignoring the commitment of their faith to truthfulness.

Further, lurking in the background, is the question many soldiers and non-soldiers alike have asked themselves: What would the founder of my faith, Shakyamuni Buddha in this case, have done or at least expect me to do? This is a particularly vexing question for Buddhists, since Shakyamuni Buddha is recorded as having personally gone to the battlefield to prevent war on at least one occasion. In this instance he is said to have successfully reasoned with the belligerents on both sides over the division of river water in a time of drought, thereby preventing a war between them.

Of course, no one can be certain that this story concerning Shakyamuni’s personal intervention on the battlefield is historically accurate. Nevertheless, its inclusion in the Buddhist corpus indicates, at the very least, the existence of longstanding Buddhist antipathy to warfare, apparently beginning with its founder. On the other hand, as we have seen, down through the centuries Buddhists have a long record of collaborating with wars initiated by the political leaders of their day. Thus, as with many other faiths, it can be argued that Buddhism is no exception to the clash between “theory” (or doctrine) and historical “practice,” at least on the part of later Buddhists.

The almost unchallenged presence of Buddhist chaplains in the U.S. military suggests that this clash is far from being resolved. For those who believe that Buddhist soldiers, like others, deserve access to the teachings and nurture of the Buddha Dharma, one possible solution would be to continue to have Buddhist military chaplains, but chaplains who are not part of the military and subject to its chain of command and dictates. Such chaplains would then be truly independent and free to teach the Dharma according to their understanding. This would, however, require other Buddhist groups to pay for their expenses.

As for the larger question of Buddhism's relationship to war and violence, this is ultimately something each and every Buddhist must decide for her- or himself. In particular, this article raises the question of the importance of "intentionality" in Buddhism. Specifically, does the lack of "intent" to kill the enemy, coupled with a lack of hatred, supersede or render mute the first precept every Buddhist, lay and cleric alike, pledges to observe, i.e., not to kill? I leave this question for the reader to ponder.

Appendix I: "Buddhist View of War" by Shaku Sōen

This triple world* is my own possession. All the things therein are my own children. Sentient or non-sentient, animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, the ten thousand things in this world are no more than the reflections of my own self. They come from the one source. They partake of the one body. Therefore I cannot rest quiet, until every being, even the smallest possible fragment of existence, is settled down in its proper appointment. I do not mind what long eons it will take to finish this gigantic work of salvation. I work at the end of eternity when all beings are peacefully and happily nestled in an infinite loving heart.

This is the position taken by the Buddha, and we, his humble followers, are but to walk in his wake.

Why, then, do we fight at all?

Because we do not find this world as it ought to be. Because there are here so many perverted creatures, so many wayward thoughts, so many ill-directed hearts, due to ignorant subjectivity. For this reason Buddhists are never tired of

*The "triple world" (*triloka*) is a common Buddhist term for "the universe." The three worlds are "the world of desire"— (*kāmaloka*), "the world of bodily form" (*rūpaloka*), and "the immaterial world" (*arūpaloka*).

combating all productions of ignorance, and their fight must be to the bitter end. They will show no quarter. They will mercilessly destroy the very root from which arises the misery of this life. To accomplish this end, they will never be afraid of sacrificing their lives, nor will they tremble before an eternal cycle of transmigration. Corporeal existences come and go, material appearances wear out and are renewed. Again and again they take up the battle at the point where it was left off.

But all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas never show any ill-will or hatred toward enemies. Enemies – the enemies of all that is good – are indeed wicked, avaricious, shameless, hell-born, and, above all, ignorant. But are they not, too, my own children for all their sins? They are to be pitied and enlightened, not persecuted. Therefore, what is shed by Buddhists is not blood – which, unfortunately, has stained so many pages in the history of religion – but tears issuing directly from the fountain-head of loving kindness.

The most powerful weapon ever used by Buddha in the subjugation of his wayward children is the practice of non-*atman* (non-egotism). He wielded it more effectively than any deadly, life-destroying weapons. When he was under the Bodhi-tree absorbed in meditation on the non-*atman*ness of things, fiends numbering thousands tried in every way to shake him from his transcendental serenity; but all to no purpose. On the contrary, the arrows turned to heavenly flowers, the roaring clamor to a paradisiacal music, and even the army of demons to a host of celestials. And do you wonder at it? Not at all! For what on earth can withstand an absolutely self-freed heart overflowing with loving kindness and infinite bliss?

And this example should be made the ideal of every faithful Buddhist. Whatever calling he may have chosen in this life, let him be freed from egocentric thoughts and feelings. Even when going to war for his country's sake, let him not bear any hatred towards his enemies. In all his dealings with them let him practise the truth of non-*atman*. He may have to deprive his antagonist of the corporeal presence, but let him not think there are *atmans*, conquering each other. From a Buddhist point of view, the significance of life is not limited to the present incarnation. We must not exaggerate the significance of individuals, for they are not independent and unconditional existences. They acquire their importance and a paramount meaning, moral and religious, as soon as their fate becomes connected with the all-pervading love of the Buddha, because then they are no more particular individuals filled with egotistic thoughts and impulses, but have become love incarnate. They

are so many representative types of one universal self-freed love. If they ever have to combat one another for the sake of their home and country – which under circumstances may become unavoidable in this world of particularity – let them forget their egotistic passions, which are the product of the atman conception of selfishness. Let them, on the contrary, be filled with the loving kindness of the Buddha; let them elevate themselves above the horizon of the mine and thine. The hand that is raised to strike and the eye that is fixed to take aim, do not belong to the individual, but are the instruments utilized by a principle higher than transient existence. Therefore, when fighting, fight with might and main, fight with your whole heart, forget your own self in the fight, and be free from all *atman* thought.

It is most characteristic of our religion, as we understand it, that while Buddha emphasized the paramount significance of synthetic love, he never lost sight of the indispensableness of analytical intellect. He extended his sympathy to all creatures as his own children and made no discrimination in his boundless compassion. But at the same time he was not ignorant of the fact that there were good as well as bad people, that there were innocent hearts as well as guilty ones. Not that some were more favored by the Buddha than others, but they were enabled to acquire more of the love of the Buddha. One rain falls on all kinds of plants; but they do not assimilate the water in the same fashion. Buddha's love is universal, but our hearts, being fashioned of divergent karmas, receive it in different ways. He knows where they are finally led to, for his love is un-intermittently working out their salvation, though they themselves be utterly unconscious of it.

Above all things, there is the truth, and there are many roads leading to it. It may seem at times that they collide and oppose one another. But let us rest confident that finally every ill will come to some good.

Appendix II (Complete Text): “A Buddhist View of War” by D.T. Suzuki

Every religion strives to bring about universal peace on earth; every prophet points out a way to paradise; every philosopher promises us the attainment of eternal happiness; every wise man tells us how to enjoy the bliss of life; and finally, every one of us wishes and endeavors to be delivered from all anxiety, worry, fear, grief, despair, etc. And in spite of all this, our world, our life is anything but peaceful, blessed and happy. How do we account for the paradox?

Is our idea of peace chimerical? Are we building an air-castle to bring it about? Is our civilization founded on the sand? Are all the noble aspirations of our ancestors and our enthusiasm to follow in their wake like running after a mirage in a desert? Is our very existence an empty dream which is charming only as long as it lasts? Or perhaps are some mischievous spirits hovering over our heads and luring us to a land of eternal contradiction?

Whatever our objective experiences are, the final verdict comes from within, not from without.

It is after all our will to believe our subjectivism, (sic) that decides our destiny on earth and in heaven. In spite of its contradictions, its apparent disappointments, and its visionary promises, religious faith is our final bulwark which is invincible even unto death. We know not the reason why; nay, it is idle to court the question. It is enough that it is so. Infinite happy is he, indeed, who takes refuge in this sanctum of faith.

What then is the faith entertained by a Buddhist in the midst of this constant warfare between individuals, between classes, between nations, and between all things?

To express most outspokenly, Buddhist faith is essentially optimistic.

Whatever apparent and temporary evils, they are destined in their very constitution to come to a happy terminus. The cosmological development of *Dharmakaya* [lit., Truth body] is so vast and comprehensive that all things are, at least temporarily, possible here, — even such as appear irrational, inharmonious, or immoral in their partial realization. What we poor mortals experience here is only an infinitesimal portion of the grand scheme of *Dharmakaya*.

There was once an idiot who observed the heavens through a hollow tube of reed. He sincerely believed what he discovered with his instrument, for hence his heavens could not be made vaster than the diameter of the tube. Perhaps we shall repeat this folly if we attempt to scale the infinitude of the *Dharmakaya* with our limited intellect.

Such is the fundamental faith of Buddhism. And the faith is attainable only by pureness and simpleness of heart. The superficial, dissecting, murderous intellect is forever barred out in the holy realm.

How vague, how hazy, how mystical! But this vague mysticism is the very source from which religion drinks to her heart's content. It is the most wonderful fact in this world of prosaicism that every soul is capable of experiencing it sooner or later.

Enlightened Buddhists, however, do not hide themselves forever in the shrine of eternal subjectivism, as far as their every-day dealings are concerned. They have no spite for the realm of relativity, because their temporal existence is possible only under this condition, and also because there is nothing dual in life which is the highest synthesis of all contradictions. They eat, they drink, they propagate, they collide, they struggle, they strike, and they succumb.

War is abominable, and there is no denying it. But it is only a phase of the universal struggle that is going on and will go on, as long as one breath of vitality is left to an animate being. It is absurdity itself to have perpetual peace and at the same time to be enjoying the full vigor of life. We do not mean to be cruel, neither do we wish to be self-destructive. When our ideals clash, let there be no flinching, no backsliding, no undecidedness, but for ever and ever pressing onwards. In this kind of war there is nothing personal, egotistic, or individual. It is the holiest spiritual war.

One thing most detestable and un-Buddhistic in war is its personal element. Egotistic hatred for an enemy is what makes a war most deplorable. But every pious Buddhist knows that there is no such irreducible a thing as ego. Therefore, as he steadily moves onward and clears every obstacle in the way, he is doing what has been ordained by a power higher than himself; he is merely instrumental. In him there is no hatred, no anger, no ignorance, no prejudice. He has lost himself in fighting.

Another thing that makes good Buddhists shrink, though not irrecoverably, is the physical side of war. Brutality has never appealed to Buddhism. It is barbarism pure and simple. As a matter of fact, we cannot escape our material existence, but it is our solemn duty to make its significance as spiritual as possible, for herein lies divinity of our being. At the present stage of civilization in which we are living, great masses of people are still desperately groaning under the yoke of crass materialism and war is still liable to rage in its most diabolical form. This is an evil Buddhists cannot take for a part of the grand scheme of Dharmakaya, comprehensive as it is. It must be crushed down at any cost with all the strenuousness Buddhists may possess.

As a physical being we are nothing. Even the strongest man cannot stand the explosion of a compound of nitroglycerin an innocent-looking chemical in itself. Strange, indeed, that such a spiritual essence as ourselves (sic) should be encased in such a fragile vessel as flesh. Stranger still that this spiritual essence very frequently yield (sic) itself to the clamouring demands of the flesh. But in spite of the incongruity, the significance of our existence asserts itself in a most

unmistakable way and sometimes quite unexpectedly. History bears witness to all this. Let us then shuffle off the mortal coil whenever it becomes necessary, and not raise a grunting voice against the fates. From our mutilated, mangled, inert corpse will there be the glorious ascension of something immaterial which leads forever progressing humanity to its final goal.

Resting in this conviction, Buddhists carry the banner of Dharma over the dead and dying until they gain final victory.

Bibliography

- Auerback, Micah. "A Closer Look at Zen at War," in Vladimir Tikhonov and Torkel Brekke (eds) *Buddhism and Violence*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Bartholomeusz, Tessa J. *In Defense of Dharma: Just-War Ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Batchelor, Stephen. *Buddhism without Beliefs*. London: Bloomsbury, 1997.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu. "War and Peace: A Buddhist Perspective," *Inquiring Mind*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring 2014, pp. 5-7, 2014.
- Junginger, Horst. "From Buddha to Adolf Hitler: Walther Wüst and the Aryan Tradition," in Horst Junginger (ed.), *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Longerich, Peter. *Heinrich Himmler: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Lopez, Donald S., Jr, ed. *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Martin, F.N. "The Evolution of a Myth – The Easter Rising, Dublin 1916," in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, ed. E. Kamenka. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973.
- Robinson, Greg, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Satō, Gan'ei. *Bushidō*. Tokyo: Senryūdō, 1902.
- Shaku, Soyen [Sōen]. *Zen for Americans* (originally published by Open Court Publishing Co. in 1906 as *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*). Translated by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1974. The entire book is available on the web at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zfa/index.htm> (accessed May 1, 2016).

Strathern, Alan. "Why are Buddhist monks attacking Muslims?" BBC, 1 May 2013.

Available on the Web at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22356306>
(accessed on 11 August 2013).

Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro. *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*.
Kyoto: The Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938.

_____. "A Buddhist View of War," *Light of Dharma*, No. 4, 1904.

Tatz, Mark, trans. *The Skill in Means (Upāyakaṣālya) Sutra*. Delhi: Motilal
Banarsidass; 1994.

Victoria, Brian Daizen. "Zen as a Cult of Death in the Wartime Writings of D.T.
Suzuki," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 11, Issue 30, No. 5, August 2013.

Available on the Web at: <http://japanfocus.org/-Brian-Victoria/3973#sthash.p0JWptcx.dpuf>

_____. *Zen at War*, 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.

_____. *Zen War Stories*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.