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Le Guide du Zen. By Eric Rommeluere. Paris: Editions Le Livre de Poche, Collection les Guides Selene, 1997. Pp. 315. ISBN: 2-253-17003-8, FF 79.

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Among the recently increasing number of publications on Buddhism in France, Eric Rommeluere's *Guide du Zen* has a very particular place. It is neither a sympathetic general presentation of Buddhism for a wide audience, like Jean-Claude Carriere's best selling *La Force du Bouddhisme* (Press Pocket, Paris, 1996, first edition in 1994), nor one of the few attempts to analyze the diffusion of Buddhism in contemporary France, like Raphael Liogier and Bruno Detienne's *Être Bouddhiste en France Aujourd'hui* (Hachette Littératures, Paris, 1997; see also Dennis Gira's article in *Esprit*, June, 1997).

Eric Rommeluere has previously published an anthology of Chinese and Japanese classical Zen texts, *Les Fleurs du Vide* (Grasset, Paris, 1995). He has written here an introduction to Zen practices.

Le Guide du Zen aims at being a repertory of the main Zen centers in the world and a practical guide to Zen-related practices, from Duerckheim's Japanese Soto or Rinzai Zen, to Chinese Ch'an or Korean Zen. It does include less famous groups related, institutionally or not, to Zen Buddhism.

The foreword states quite clearly, "Ce guide ne pretend nullement a l'exhaustivité," and warns that "il n'appartient pas a l'auteur de decider (quel centre) dispense ou non un enseignement conforme a un Zen authentique qu'il ne saurait ici definir." So this guide does not claim to be exhaustive, nor does it formulate any judgment on the practices of the centers.

The purpose here is not to have a directory of all existing centers—however useful that could be—but to give an introduction to Zen practice and centers to Westerners interested in Zen practice who do not necessarily know much about it.

In less than 300 pages, 247 Zen centers are reviewed, with information provided on their exact location, how to get there, and whom to contact in order to be accepted as a practitioner. With the emphasis on centers where Westerners can practice, almost 80% of the centers mentioned are in Europe or the United States. *Le Guide* also includes centers in Asian countries, mainly in Korea and Japan, with a note regarding when one can meditate or just pay a tourist visit there.

For each location, there is a short profile of the center explaining its lineage or affiliation, the time of meditations and retreats, and a list of affiliated centers. Illustrated with photos of centers and a few portraits, these profiles are very informative and give a vivid impression of daily life in these various Zen institutions. Inserts on themes like "Zen and Christianity," "the Zen monastic experience," or biographies of the influential Zen teachers give historical or contextual information. Whenever possible, there are bibliographic references about the centers or themes.

At the end of the book, the reader will find a glossary of the main Japanese or Chinese Zen terms. The guide is indeed very handy for anyone willing to experience Zen meditation, whether in Europe, America, Asia or Oceania. Surely the information provided here could be found elsewhere, but in various and different sources like specialized sites on the internet or the literature of each center.

Due to its format and purpose, this book unfortunately does not explain the author's reasons for choosing the centers listed, leaving the reader to decide whether the omitted centers were forgotten or deliberately excluded. Another unfortunate feature, from a sociological point of view, is that in the rapidly changing context of the diffusion of Zen, a second edition might prove necessary quite soon. Nevertheless, the guide is still useful for a sociological analysis. For example, even a quick glance at the list gives empirical evidence of the preeminence of Soto among the various Zen centers in the West. Part of this is probably explained by the Soto school's effort to organize training for priests to serve as missionaries outside of Japan. However, the preeminence of the Soto tradition in the West according to this list may be explained by the fact that the author, an ordained Soto monk since 1981, probably had easier access to information about Soto centers than relevant Rinzai centers.

One example of this is the case of a prominent Rinzai teacher, Ven. Gesshin Myoko Prabhadasadharmā Roshi, who has gained a following in the US and Europe in recent years. *Le Guide* mentions her American center (International Zen Institute of America, no. 159). Although the commentary points out that "there are other affiliated centers in Germany, Holland and Spain," it gives neither the numbers nor the addresses of those centers. Such information would have provided a better idea of the importance of this lineage, whose followers have grown rapidly in Germany, for example, with some twenty groups and centers arising in the five years since inception.

Again from a sociological perspective, *Le Guide* may provide a helpful view of the diversity represented in Western Zen schools. For instance, the American list, consisting mainly of the most famous centers, reveals a greater diversity of Zen practices in the U.S. than elsewhere. Zen practices in the United States range from strict adherence to orthodox Asian methods to the rejection of the label 'Zen'. This diversity may reflect the longer history of interest in Zen practice in North America.

Such history, however, has long needed further elaboration. For example, Soen Shaku (1859-1919), who took part in the World Parliament of Religion in 1893, was the first Japanese Master to teach in America. An historical perspective of this sort has not been discussed in the literature to

date. Such a socio-historical work would find *Le Guide du Zen*, with its landscape of Zen practice in the West, a useful starting point, yet by itself *Le Guide* would not be sufficient. A deeper effort to gain an analytic understanding of Zen practice in a western context requires more than *Le Guide du Zen*'s collection and dissemination of information, valuable as that may be.