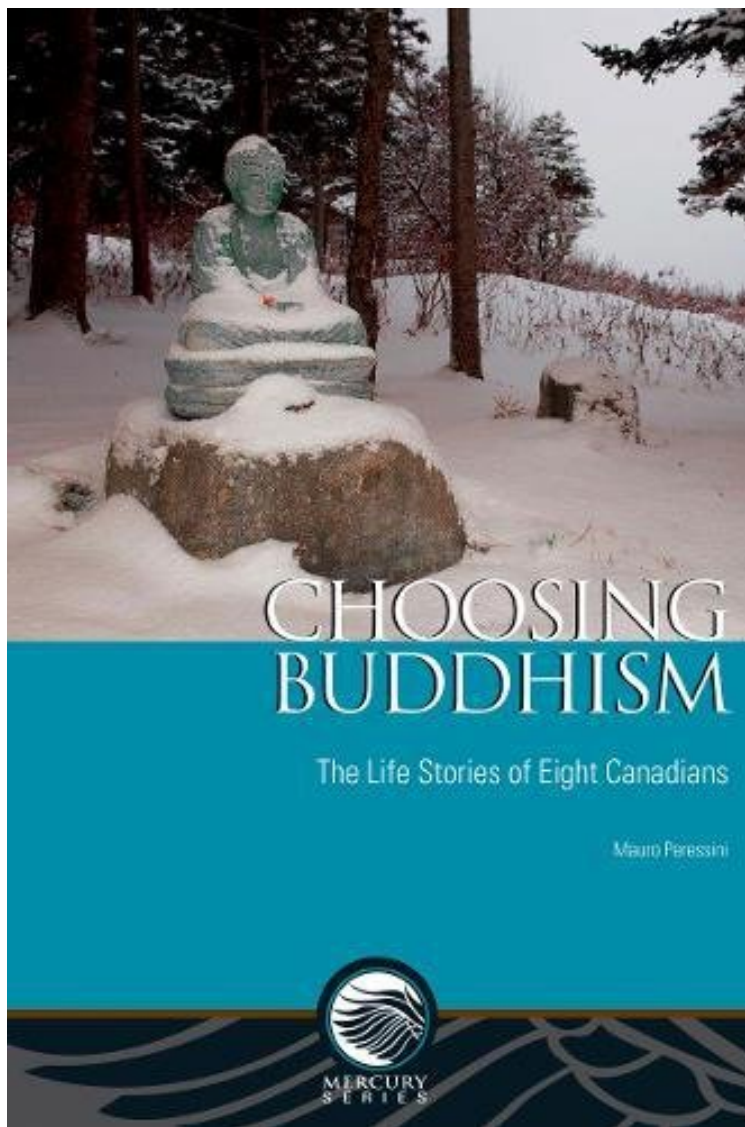


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## Choosing Buddhism: The Life Stories of Eight Canadians (Mercury Series)

*Mauro Peressini*

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**Mauro Peressini : Choosing Buddhism: The Life Stories of Eight Canadians (Mercury Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Choosing Buddhism: The Life Stories of Eight Canadians (Mercury Series):

This book explores the experience of Canadians who chose to convert to Buddhism and to embrace its teachings and practices in their daily lives. It presents the life stories of eight Canadians who first encountered Buddhism between the late 1960s and the 1980s, and are now ordained or lay Buddhist teachers. In recent census records, over 300,000 Canadians identified their religious affiliation as Buddhist. The great majority are of Asian origin and were born into Buddhist families or were Buddhist at the time of their arrival in Canada. Since the late 1960s, however, the number of Canadians converting to Buddhism has doubled every decade, and this demographic now includes more than 20,000 individuals. The eight Canadians whose life stories are featured in this book are among the very first to have chosen Buddhism. Their first-hand accounts shed light on why and how people convert to a religion from such distant shores. This book also offers contextual material (photos and texts) that complements the eight life stories. This material is meant to help readers enrich their understanding of the life stories by offering them the information they need to better grasp the meaning of the Buddhist notions mentioned, and the broader historical and spiritual contexts of the biographical accounts. While this book will be of interest to specialists because of the first-hand accounts, it is primarily aimed at a wider audience interested in Buddhism, religions or spirituality in general. It will also be of use to teachers whose courses touch upon any of these subjects. By combining life stories and contextual material, and placing an emphasis on the concrete experiences of Canadians with whom readers can identify, this book is an introduction to Buddhism and to what it means to lead a Buddhist life in contemporary Canada.

When I found out that I had cancer, the doctors gave me a mere six months to live. Ani Pema [Chdrn] was there, and she designed practices especially for me and my situation, to help me die and use the time I had left as well as possible. I still do those practices today. One of them is aimed at helping me open my heart to others and not cherish my ego. When I feel discomfort, which happens often these days, I think about people who are suffering just as much as I am if not more, and I liberate myself for them. I liberate myself as one of them and not as someone who is separate from them, little old me. Then, during the day, I recite the following chant: When appearances of this world dissolve, may I, with ease and great happiness, let go of all attachment to this world. When appearances of this world dissolve refers to the moment of death, and may I, with ease and great happiness, let go of all attachment to this world refers to the training in letting go of all my attachments. I look at what I possess, and if there is something I am particularly fond of, I give it away. From *Choosing Buddhism: The Life Stories of Eight Canadians*, edited by Mauro Peressini. Reprinted with permission of University of Ottawa Press and Canadian Museum of History 2016. Tsultrim Palmo (1933-2010) was a Polish Tibetan Buddhist nun and a former director of Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia, Canada. (Brad Warner *Tricycle Magazine*, Fall 2016, p. 21) About the Author Mauro Peressini is Curator of Social History at the Canadian Museum of History and holds a PhD in social and cultural anthropology from the Universit  de Montral. Dr. Peressini's work has long focussed on questions relating to immigration and on the construction of identities that underpin the decision to emigrate and immigrants' lives in Canada. More recently, he has been focussing on religious identities. In both instances, the biographical approach (life stories) has been his principal research method. In addition to authoring numerous publications, Dr. Peressini has curated a number of major exhibitions for the Museum, including *Presenza A New Look at Italian-Canadian Heritage* (2003), *Pompeii* (2005), *The Greeks* (2008) and *Vodou* (2012).