

# ***Zen in the Art of Pistol Shooting***

***Foreword by John Dreyer***

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Volumes of material have been written about acquiring proper physical technique and mental discipline in precision pistol shooting. I have found that most are tremendously valuable to any serious competitor and do a good job of describing the mechanics and philosophy of shooting. However, very few truly explored the ongoing tremendous internal battle of the competitor or the many other spiritual aspects of the sport.

In my journey from Marksman to Master, I learned a great deal about not only punching holes in paper, but about myself and my perception of life itself. Because I was unable to put together the words to relate my experiences, I sought for credible written works that properly illustrated my discoveries both on and off the range. As a result, I collected and dissected over fifty books plus almost that many articles from periodicals and other media on a variety of aspects of life and shooting. After almost a year of research and reflection, I was finally able to assemble that massive and mysterious puzzle of intellect and emotion that encompassed life both on and off the range. Surprisingly, the final piece of my puzzle turned out to be an incredibly simple way of looking at life, an ancient Eastern philosophy called Zen, a Japanese subset of Buddhist tradition.

## **ZEN IN SHOOTING:**

Deceptively simple in appearance, yet vastly complex is the art of pistol shooting. Without question, its mechanics are simple. Bill Joyner explains, "Create a machine rest with your stance, grip and breath control. Then with the gun in the machine rest, apply [trigger] pressure directly to the rear until the hammer falls." Attaining the physical prowess to accomplish this task is one thing. However, the mind's influence makes the process a bit more difficult. As Frank Higginson has

said, "In shooting, you learn more about yourself than any other sport." This self-discovery that exists in shooting is nothing more than Zen itself.

拳銃道  
"Kenjudo"

**Kenjudo, literally translated as the "Way of the Pistol," is the appropriate Japanese name for our sport when practiced as a traditional Zen martial art.**

While you may have thought of Zen as distant and mysterious, bear with me while I present it here in a series of diverse articles for you to explore. I encourage you to set aside any preconceived notions you have about Zen and check out these works. As far as I know, this is the first extensive collection of works published in any medium that explore the practice of precision pistol shooting as a Zen art.

Use the buttons on the navigation bar to the right to journey through the many writings on Zen in Shooting.

## ***Mental Aspects of Match Shooting***

***Joe White***

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During the last ten years I have been beaten by some of the best pistol shots in the world--also by some of the worst. By now I think that I know as much as anybody does about how to lose a pistol match. My personal experience in this field has been supplemented by countless hours of post mortem discussion. I have listened to a thousand stories about how some luckless wretch blew a match which he already had in his pocket. In about 90% of these cases "Buck Fever" was the culprit.

The "Buck" is the bane of the pistol shooter's existence. In its most severe form it can drive an intelligent, phlegmatic man into a state of idiotic convulsion. You may have heard of the deer hunter who ironically worked his slide until he pumped all his ammunition out on the ground, and then snapped his empty gun at a big buck 30 yards away. Or maybe you heard about the pistol shooter who loaded his gun with empty .38 brass for his last string of rapid after shooting 15 straight tens.

These are extreme cases of course. Sometimes the pressure will show itself only in a breakdown of concentration--a slight unfocusing of the mind. The shooter won't realize that he is coming unglued until his group starts spreading and even then he may blame his ammunition, his gun, the wind or the light conditions, before he finally realizes that he is a little bit shook.

I would like to give you the solution to this problem--a plan of action which would enable you to whip the pressure once and for all. That is what I would like to give you. But the only thing I can give you is a few solutions and suggestions which may or may not work for you. I'm sorry I can't do any better, but in my opinion, neither you nor I nor anybody else will ever be able to whip the pressure completely and for good. The best we can do is to learn to minimize its effect and to anticipate its attacks. Sometimes we can sidestep these attacks, and other times we can contain them to a degree, but we will never be immune.

A man's own nervous temperament has a great deal to do with his ability to handle pressure. If he is so jittery that he leaps eight feet into the air when a cat steps on a rug behind him, then he shouldn't try to be a pistol shooter. He would have a better chance at fame and glory if he would sell his guns, buy a rug and a cat, and go after the Olympic high jump record.

You might ask at this point, "But what about old Tommy Tenring!" Tommy doesn't have a nerve in his body, he uses ice water for blood, he has tunnel vision, he can concentrate like a Hindu mystic, he measures eight inches between the eyes and he holds a Ph.D. in both physical education and psychology. "Tell me," you ask, "How can this guy get shook!"

The truth is that Tommy can shoot well enough when he is a little bit unglued to beat most of us on our best day. Also his attacks of pressure will come much less often and will be milder than yours and mine. But wait until he shoots 100 slow and 100 timed in the

National Match course. He knows full well that nobody has ever fired an individual score of 300 X 300 in a registered match, and as he gets ready for the rapid fire stage the thought keeps gnawing away at his mind that he is only ten easy 25 yard tens away from being the first man in history to do it. If he is not very careful to keep his imagination under control he will see a big neon sign above his target flashing out the headline-"Tenring goes clean in the National Match course." Tommy calls up all his powers of concentration and gets ready to fire the string. He does not drop his clip in the sand, he does not load up with five empties and he does not fire on the wrong target. But he does leak out two nines at six o'clock. His mental meanderings have taken their toll. The Buck has just cost him a new National record. He finds little consolation in the knowledge that he already holds the NMC record with 299-29X. He is furious with himself for being so spineless under pressure. But you and I look at his 298 on the scoreboard and say, "Wow, look at that. Not a nerve in his body, etc." If you are another Tommy Tenring, or have been close to it, all I can say to you is, "I wish I had your problems and you were writing this." But if you have the same troubles that I do, you may be interested in some of the things that have helped me. If you try them a few times, and they don't work for you, then by all means forget them.

First of all, the most human thing to do is to look around for something which requires no training or mental effort on our part. I am talking about such things as alcohol, tranquilizers, or dope. I do not recommend any of these. You can hear plenty of stories around a pistol range about how old so-and-so shot thus-and-such when he was full of beer. If you are tempted to try it yourself, first find out how the pistol shooter makes out in the grand aggregate. You can then make your own decision.

I have seen a man get so steady from alcohol that he couldn't find his shooting box which was twenty feet away in plain view. I know a man who got so tranquil from tranquilizers that he considered it a bit funny every time he shot a six. I heard about a man who smoked a marihuana cigarette before rapid fire because he had heard that it would make the time seem to pass slowly. He said that the time passed slowly enough, but that he couldn't lift his gun.

There are several things that I try to remember to do that have helped me a lot. One of these is to be completely ready. I like to have my sights blacked and adjusted and a couple of clips loaded before I walk up to the firing line. Being ready is important in slow fire, more important in timed fire and absolutely critical in rapid fire. Very few things will unglue me quicker than to start a string of rapid when I am not quite ready. Like most everyone else I have a little routine I go through before the targets come around. I watch the bullseye when the targets are turned away to find some reference point to aim in on. I get my feet placed. get a good grip on the gun, aim in on the reference point. control my breathing just the way I want it, and watch the sights very carefully for alignment. Then when the targets start around I am completely ready to start mashing the trigger. If I am busy loading a clip or blacking my sights and forget to find an aiming point, it bothers me. If I let my routine get behind the commands it bothers me more and if I don't have my mind geared to rapid fire, I am in real trouble even though I went through the routine exactly right.

If you also have trouble getting your mind geared to rapid fire, I recommend that you try something that has helped me a lot. I prefer to do this on the line just before firing the

match. Hold a stop watch in your left hand and go through a string of rapid in your mind. Try to picture everything exactly as you want it to happen, with the preliminary commands from the range officer, with your own target, and with the gun that you are using that day. When the imaginary target comes around. start your stop watch and go through the entire string in your mind including the recoil and recovery from each shot and the sight alignment and trigger squeeze for the next one. Pay particular attention to your rhythm as you go along. After the last shot stop your watch and see how many seconds you used. Repeat the string if necessary until you hit a satisfactory time which you can set to your liking. I like between 9 and 10 seconds. By doing this you have the right rhythm in your mind and you will start the match with confidence that you know how long it takes ten seconds to tick off. Confidence and rhythm won't necessarily give you 20 tens, but they will sure save you from a lot of wild shots. Probably the most common use of the stop watch is to time slow fire strings. If you have ever been worried about time on a windy day and hastily cranked off two bad shots because you expected the cease fire any second. and if the cease fire command came a full two minutes after two beautiful 30 second lulls, then nobody has to tell you that a stop watch is important. You don't need a watch to get off ten shots in ten minutes, but with a watch you won't worry about time. This is important because worrying will unfocus your mind and open up your group. With a watch you can space your shots better. If your hold is a little shaky, you know you have time to take it down and start over. It gives you more confidence, and confidence is conducive to better scores. On my better days when they are going pretty good I use the stop watch to time my rest periods between shots. This can help you fight off the buck when you have a real good string going. Make up your mind before you start how much time you will rest between shots; you can revise it later if you need to. When you fire one, check the watch. Try to stick to your self-assigned rest periods to the second. I sometimes time my breathing the same way while I am resting, trying to make it come out right for the next shot. This keeps your mind busy, and you are less likely to start sweating your score. It also introduces another element of precision into your routine which may improve your ability to think positive thoughts about what you are doing.

Our mind has a tendency to relax before the shot breaks. We stand there working hard on a shot and the old subconscious is screeching "shoot it, so you can relax." The best way to overcome this is to follow through. This is very important. I would write follow through on the blackboard a thousand times if that would make me remember to do it on every shot. I am talking about a mental follow through which keeps all the attention on the business at hand until the bullet is safely in the ten ring. Bad shots are very often caused by a slight relaxing of the attention just as the shot goes off. This is usually accompanied by a spasmodic jerk of the trigger finger when the subconscious gives us its mental elbow in the ribs to "shoot it and get it over with."

One of the most effective procedures for me to follow when I am having this trouble is to tell myself that I am dry firing and that, on this particular shot, I will be very careful to keep the sights aligned before, during and after the fall of the hammer. Then during the trigger squeeze I work up a mental picture of the hammer falling and the sights remaining in perfect alignment after the hammer has fallen. This is what I mean by mental follow through. The idea is to continue working at keeping the sights aligned even while the bullet is traveling toward the target. It is the best insurance you can get against relaxing your

attention too soon. They say that intense concentration is just the old story of mind over matter. The brain must have complete control of the body and its actions. I think in my case it would be easier if I had a larger brain and a smaller body.

Unless someone kept score at a match we would never know who won. My advice is to let the statistical officer do the worrying about who is winning. When you finish a match, check your score card and make sure that every individual shot has been recorded correctly and that the totals are correct. Then sign your card, turn it in and forget it. One of the surest ways to put the monkey on your back is to walk up to the line knowing that you need a certain score in order to win the aggregate, to set a new record, to beat old Tommy Tenring for the first time in your life, or to do anything else that you want very much to do. If the doctors could feed us a pill which would make us forget how to count or add, our aggregate scores would surely improve.

But then we would still have the problem of the well meaning friend who says, "Boy, you have got it made. All you need on this last ten shots of rapid is 98 and you will have a new aggregate record. The way you are going today you can't possibly miss." I have promised myself that if this ever happens to me again, I will take out my pocket knife, open the dullest blade, and slowly whittle off his head. This should clear the air and ease the tension so that shooting the 98 will be easy. It is possible, however, that by the time I clean up the gore, dispose of the body, and have a long talk with the police, I may wish that I had gone ahead and shot the 10-10-9-8-7 on the last string, like I did the last time it happened to me.

There are many mental gymnastics which you might employ to keep the neon sign from starting to flash out the glad tidings of your sensational victory when you are only halfway through the match. You might try naming all the New England states with their capitals, or some similar stunt. I sometimes conjugate Spanish verbs. I have to be careful with this one though. It's pretty easy for me to get confused trying to figure out the preterite form of some obscure radical changing verb, and the stop watch can easily get ahead of my shot string.

If you will work hard on ideas such as these, concentrating on the ones that seem to help, you will find that you will gradually begin to control the pressure better. It goes without saying, however, that no amount of mental power can make you shoot any better than you know how to shoot. Lots of regular practice under match conditions will not only improve your ability, but as your practice scores improve, you will have more confidence in yourself.

The ability to withstand the pressure of competition will then enable you to shoot your good scores in matches. When you get into a tight situation, you will lose your points, a few at a time, and not by the handful. Then one happy day, the other shooters will start pointing to your scores and saying, "Wow, look at that, not a nerve in his body!"

# ***Issha Zetsumei: One Shot and Expire***

***John Dreyer***

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## **Introduction**

"Issha Zetsumei" is a Japanese phrase whose image provides a masterful foundation for the art of pistol shooting. When translated to English it means literally "one shot and expire." The saying conjures the image of the last act of a dying man - a shooter summarizing his entire life with a single shot. In other words, the goal is to establish in your mind that you have no other purpose or concern in life than to properly execute the current shot.

***"When you do something, you should burn yourself completely, like a good bonfire, leaving no trace of yourself." - Shunryu Suzuki Roshi***

In Zen, it is recognized that there are no second chances in life. One must throw himself fully into any activity he is participating, regardless of how mundane it might be. Each activity should be done as if it were their only activity on Earth. In shooting, this means to concentrate on each shot as if it were the only shot you will ever shoot. Jackson Morisawa Sensei explains this concept as "each [shot] is final and decisive as each moment is the ultimate."

It is both the challenge and valuable purpose of the art of shooting to help us attain the freedom of our being, both physically and mentally. Shunryu Suzuki Roshi has said, "When you do something, if you fix your mind on the activity with some confidence, the quality of your state of mind is the activity itself. When you are concentrated on the quality of your being, you are prepared for the activity."

## **Mushin**

When we practice the art of shooting, our minds must become calm and quite simple. But this does not happen by accident. Because by nature our minds are

complicated and very busy, all of our activity in life is usually shadowed by traces of other thoughts. These traces and notions make it hard to concentrate fully on what we are doing. In fact, most people have a double- or triple- notion in one activity. The saying, "to catch two birds with one stone" states what is happening in their minds. Because they are trying to catch too many birds, it becomes difficult to concentrate on one activity, and as a result, they may not catch any birds at all! In other words, if you leave a trace of thinking on your activity, you will become attached to the trace and not the activity.

***"To take [your stance] is to have the right state of mind. There is no need to obtain some special state of mind."- Shunryu Suzuki Roshi***

Our first priority in preparing to fire a single shot or string of shots is to bring all of our awareness to the present. The routine processes of taking our stance and focusing on our breathing should act as a trigger to automatically bring our thoughts fully to the moment at hand. To understand this mindset, try to picture the image of a digital clock - this instrument has no sense of past or future; all it has is the moment. Surely you've watched one to see how it changes - take this as a challenge to "catch the ceaseless flow of quality in the passing moment." How much quality can you compress into any moment by simply being there and nowhere else? This is the magic and life-lesson of our art.

The state of mind that we are trying to attain in Zen and the arts is called "mushin" in Japanese, roughly translated to mean "empty mind." While in English there is no exact equivalent to the word, Professor Daisetz Suzuki describes it as a state of "conscious unconsciousness." Because of the inseparability of mind and body, you cannot view mushin as purely a mental phenomenon. You cannot simply reason yourself into mushin, you must utilize proper breathing and stance to create it. When you have assumed your proper shooting stance and are preparing to raise the pistol, recall Thich Nhat Hanh's saying, "Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile." Awareness of our breathing is the biggest key in uniting our

mind and body, the first step in creating mushin. Focusing on our breathing will enable us to lose any thoughts that might be clouding our minds and will allow us to "become" the present moment. As a result, you will lose all sense of yourself and other and will be able to completely concentrate.

## **Heijoshin**

Attaining mushin while shooting is certainly a challenging task. Any number of delusive thoughts can distract us and cloud our minds. It can be thoughts of trying aspects of our daily lives such as work, finances or relationships that can intrude our concentration. But the thoughts that are most difficult to keep from following are those relating to our shooting performance itself. Each shot must be made without any regard for past performance or to one's performance in the future - concern about how the aggregate score is going to be affected cannot be a consideration. However, the truth is that most of the internal dialogue that people have in their minds center upon thinking about and planning what they will do. These thoughts are delusive - this planning for the future simply keeps them from concentrating fully on the present and impairs their performance. "Have you ever gone on a well-deserved vacation and in the middle of all of the fun and relaxation found yourself thinking about when the trip will end?" asks Sensei Dan DeProspero. Everyone has done so - and this is precisely the delusional type of thinking we must avoid in shooting.

***"The Way is ... not picking things up along the road." - Tung-shan Shou-ch'u***

It can be said that the real value of the art of shooting is not what we gain from it but what we lose. Lao Tzu has said, "If we learn, we accumulate day by day. If we study [a Zen art], we reduce day by day." In the practice of a Zen art, unnatural fixations ranging from muscular tension and immature attitude to vicious circles of interpersonal interactions are to be lost. It is this manner that our true self emerges. Calmness of spirit in all circumstances, acting spontaneously without restraint,

acting without concern for public recognition, seeing things as they truly are, and realizing that every day is a fine day are positive qualities that are already within us. Our practice of shooting will allow us to unlock those qualities by shedding the delusive thoughts we have collected that weigh us down that mask our true self.

One objective in our practice of shooting is to achieve "heijoshin," which translates from Japanese to "ordinary mind." The Zen definition of an "ordinary mind" is one that is calm, well-balanced and disciplined at all times. The secret in life to attaining this mindset is to treat ordinary moments as special and as a result special moments will seem ordinary. In shooting, this means not grieving over bad shots, but also not to rejoice over good shots either! In either case, analyze the execution of the just fired shot and leave it - do not carry its memory any further. Preparations for the next shot, the only shot that matters, must begin immediately. This is particularly difficult because of the cumulative nature of an aggregate - good shots or bad - there is a natural tendency to foolishly reflect on how the aggregate score is going to be affected even BEFORE we fire a shot.

## **Zanshin**

"Zanshin" is an important term in any activity we practice as a Zen art. It translates literally to "remaining heart" and partly refers to an element of the fundamentals known as "follow-through." However, follow-through is somewhat of a trivialization of Zanshin. On a deeper level, Zanshin means that the state of mind and body used in executing an action is not dissipated by it, but is carried over into the next activity. On a physical level, breathing and stance remain correct; the body remains in balance, arm and shoulder muscles remain flexed, and we are ready to fire another shot. On a mental level, one's awareness and concentration remain after the trigger break and "calling of the shot." It is at this point where we must come to terms with the quality of the shot just fired, but we cannot dwell on it. If so, our concentration will lapse. Zanshin, therefore, is the critical phase during which it is determined whether the shot just fired will haunt the shooter or whether he will be able to maintain mushin.

Understand that the ego is the source of any grief or anger we might feel after a poor shot, not the moment of the shot itself. The problem of grief arises when we subordinate the moment to our self-centered thoughts: not just this moment, but what WE want. Most emotions do not arise out of the immediate moment, such as witnessing a child getting struck by a car, but are generated by our self-centered demands that life be the way WE want it to be. While it is not bad to have such emotions, they have no importance in themselves. When such emotions emerge, our feelings should be identified and looked at with interest, but nothing more. Our attention should remain in the present moment. If we become upset, we have lost our attention to the present moment. Conversely, if we can pay complete attention to the present moment, we will never become upset.

## **Fudoshin**

The ego is a form which has been developed over countless generations of life. It is a technique used by everyone for living in a civilized manner. The practice of pistol shooting allows us to transcend the ego by mastering it. While we progress in our art, we will gain increasing insight into our own psychological makeup. This can be a painful process, for we must acknowledge flaws in our character that make us shoot poorly at times. Greed, competitiveness, vanity, self-criticism, shyness, fear, need for approval - are but a few of the personality traits that can lead to delusive thoughts that cloud our awareness. We must recognize these flaws before we can transcend them. Recognize that shooting is an ongoing struggle with the ego, a battle with oneself. In this battle, one must face physical and psychological pain in order to experience the fruits of victory. From our practice, one learns to endure pain and austerity, delay gratification, concentrate fully on the task of the moment, each moment, and refine form to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  degree. The ultimate objective of our continued practice of shooting is losing the ego and realizing the freedom of the true Self.

***"Don't be afraid of failure. See it as a learning experience that provides an opportunity for new growth." - Hideharu Onuma Sensei***

Quite possibly, a person's most powerful weapon for survival and success is the ability to believe in oneself. It is true that one of the most difficult points in the practice of any Zen art is coming to terms with the fact that we alone are responsible for everything that happens. As a result, this reality creates a natural stress arising from doubts of our ability to perform well. However, it can be said that these self-doubts are nothing more than delusional thoughts. Just as you do not drive to work every day fearing that you are going to be fired, you cannot allow thoughts of the fear of failure cloud your mind while shooting. It is imperative that any stress we experience be identified in order that we can set our delusional thoughts aside. Once identified, stress can be seen as a positive thing. Armed with self-confidence, stress can be rechanneled into positive energy for the intense mental concentration that is necessary to succeed.

"Fudoshin" is a Zen term that translates to "immovable mind," a mind that is so clear and unclouded that nothing can move it. Since it sees everything as it really is, the immovable mind harbors no hesitation, confusion, doubt or dishonesty, and therefore fears nothing. Like an irresistible natural force that sweeps away everything in its path, this mind is invincible. Nothing can stand before it and nothing is beyond its grasp. Takuan Roshi explains, "Keeping the mind tranquil as it moves in the myriad directions in the midst of uproar and commotion is true tranquillity. Tranquility in tranquillity is not true tranquillity; it is tranquillity in action that is the true tranquillity." While some people may view this state of mind in an overly romantic way, divorced from mundane considerations, it has, so far as shooting is concerned, a very practical application. This mind gives birth to flawless shooting and so the results of your shooting will show plainly whether you have achieved it or not. Therefore, you can only grasp it through shooting, and when you grasp it, your shooting will be perfect.

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# ***Zen in the Development of a New Shooter***

***Translation by John Dreyer***

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*Excerpts from an interview with Kanjuro Shibata XX, Sensei. While initially written for Japanese Archery (Kyudo) it has been translated and heavily edited to explore our modern precision pistol sport.*

## **The Developing New Shooter**

For the beginner, the fundamentals provide the basis of shooting. New shooters should carefully reflect on each and every shot as if it was their only shot. In all sports there are competitors, winners and losers. However, this is not the primary focus in shooting. If understood through a Zen perspective, shooting is based on the idea "one shot" (issha). The focus and reflection on each shot is the most important thing. In the beginning, learning technique is the first priority of the new shooter. However, most beginners forget about this and think of the target and their score too much. It is not important where your shots go. That is only a reflection of the accuracy of your technique and the purity of your mind. Working on the fundamentals refines your technique. Scores are secondary - improved scores will come in time.

As the new shooter continues to work on proper technique, he begins to encounter the Zen "Seven Defilements" of mind. The way to set aside these defilements is through the Zen Art or "Way" aspect of shooting. This Zen "Way" is endless. Practice never ends, and begins again with each shot. You don't shoot the target. Keeping to the fundamentals, the shot will go to the bullseye, just as if the shot had its own mind. It is not "you" shooting at the target. The right mind and the right heart, not just the right form, shoots the target. This right mind will be gained by the fundamentals, reflecting on both accuracy of the technique as well as on the Seven Defilements.

The Seven Defilements:

1. Happiness (Yorokobu)
2. Anger (Okoru)
3. Greed-Uneasiness (Urei)
4. Expectation (Omou)
5. Sadness (Kanashimu)
6. Terror (Osoreru)
7. Surprise (Odoroku)

The ultimate goal of shooting is to cleanse or polish your mind, precisely the same as sitting meditation, or "zazen." By perfecting technique, you are not polishing your style of shooting, but rather the mind. The dignity of shooting is the important point. Without the right mind, no matter how long you shoot, this dignity won't be gained.

### **More Than Just a Sport**

Today, shooting is being practiced by thousands of people all over the world for the development of mental discipline as well as for spiritual development. The simple elegance of the mechanics, the beauty of the equipment and the atmosphere of solitary dignity predominant at the range, have a great attraction for those who wish to walk upon the path of self-knowledge.

If you look at it from the outside, shooting seems to be just a game. Raising the pistol and shooting at the target resembles a test of skill, but shooting is much more than just a sport. To discover the true nature of shooting one has to look inside, to cut through and go beyond any kind of preoccupation, whether it be worry, hope, doubt or fear. Although the actual forms of competitive shooting have changed over and over again and equipment has become more sophisticated over the last two centuries, the essence of true shooting practice always remains the same. It is the epitome of traditional Zen "standing" meditation.

## **A Spiritual Path**

Although shooting is certainly not a religious practice, we may still apply the philosophies of Zen Buddhism and Shinto to understand its true value. In this light, the heart of shooting is truly linked to Buddhist philosophy, with the interpretation of Tao merged into it. The teachings of Zen Buddhism tell us that our true selves are hidden within deep layers of habitual thought patterns, self-delusion and ego. We live in a dream-world of our own making.

The aim of Zen meditation practice is to wear away these layers of illusion and ego so as to be free from the dualistic outlook that keeps us from understanding our true nature and living harmoniously with ourselves, others and the universe at large. In zazen, one strives to unify body and mind, the medium of the breath, and maintaining a strict sitting posture. Shooting as "Zen in action" incorporates the same concepts of mind and body working in unison.

To the sincere practitioner, shooting is a way of life, and there should be no separation between shooting training and everyday activities. Each shot is shot as if it were the only one, just as each moment of one's life is the ultimate. The shooting practitioner does not look at the target for the result of his or her practice, but inward, for the target is not a target - it is a mirror. And if the heart is right, each shot clears away some more of the obstacles clouding the vision of one's true nature.

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## ***Right Practice, Right Lifestyle***

***How Shooting and Lifestyle are Intertwined - by John Dreyer***

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This large body of work is still in progress. The outline is complete and rough drafts for several sections are in place. After working on it at "full throttle" over a course of a few months, I ran out of gas on the project and it was tabled in August of 2001. I have resumed working on it, so eventually the finished work will appear here.

Thank you for your patience.

## ***Zen in Visualization of Fundamentals***

***John Dreyer***

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This was projected to be my masterpiece of the writings in the Zen category. I spent an enormous amount of time in collecting research materials and in planning to piece the information together in a format that would really dazzle! Unfortunately, the project really kicked my butt and I burnt out on it way back in September of 2001. Years later, as I look over the outline again, I see the potential of the piece, and will resume working on it over the Spring and Summer of 2005.

Thank you for your patience.

## ***A Brief History of Zen***

### ***A Look at the Origins and Evolution of Zen***

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Zen is a subset of Buddhist tradition founded first in China and then later in Japan. The name of the sect derives from the Sanskrit dhyana [meditation]. In China the school early became known for making its central tenet the practice of meditation, rather than adherence to a particular scripture or doctrine.

The founder of Zen in China was the legendary Bodhidharma, who came to China from India in the late 5th cent. A.D. He taught the practice of "wall-gazing" and espoused the teachings of the Lanka-Vatara Sutra (whose chief doctrine is that of "consciousness-only"; see Yogacara), which he passed on to his successor Hui-k'o (487-593).

According to tradition, Hui-neng (638-713) became the sixth patriarch of Chinese Zen by superseding his rival in the intuitive grasp of the truth of enlightenment, even though he was illiterate. The Platform Sutra, attributed to Hui-neng, defines enlightenment as the direct seeing of one's "Original Mind" or "Original Nature," which is Buddha, and this teaching has remained characteristic of Zen. A number of teaching lineages arose after Hui-neng, all claiming descent from him, and teaching the method of "sudden enlightenment best known in the West by the term satori. In its formative period Zen was influenced by both Taoism and elements of Prajna-Paramita Buddhism (see sunyata).

The 8th and 9th cent. were the "golden age of Zen," producing such great masters as Ma-tsu, Nan-chuan, Huang-po, Lin-chi, and Chao-chou. The unique Zen teaching style developed, stressing oral instruction and using nonrational forms of dialogue, from which the later koan was derived. In some cases physical violence was used to jolt the student out of dependence on ordinary forms of thought and into the enlightened consciousness. Scholarly knowledge, ritual, and performing

good deeds were considered of comparatively little spiritual value.

After the great persecution of Buddhism in 845, Zen emerged as the dominant Chinese sect, due partly to its innate vitality and partly to its isolation in mountain monasteries away from centers of political power. Two main schools of Zen, the Lin-chi (Jap. Rinzai) and the Ts'ao-tung (Jap. Soto), flourished and were transmitted to Japan in the 14th cent. The Rinzai sect placed greater emphasis on the use of the koan and effort to attain sudden enlightenment, while the Soto patriarch Dogen (1200-1253) emphasized sitting in meditation (zazen) without expectation and with faith in one's own intrinsic state of enlightenment or Buddha-nature.

The austere discipline and practical approach of Zen made it the Buddhism of the medieval Japanese military class. Zen monks occupied positions of political influence and became active in literary and artistic life. Zen monasteries, especially the main temples of Kyoto and Kamakura, were educational as well as religious centers.

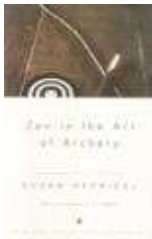
The Zen influence on Japanese aesthetics ranges from poetry, calligraphy, and painting to tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and landscape gardening, particularly the distinctive rock-and-sand temple gardens. Japanese Zen declined in the 16th and 17th cent., but its traditional forms were revived by the great Hakuin (1686-1769), from whom all present-day Rinzai masters trace their descent. Zen thought was introduced to the West by the writings of D. T. Suzuki, and interest in the practice of Zen meditation blossomed after World War II, resulting in the establishment of Zen centers in many parts of the United States.

## Zen: Recommended Reading

### Superb Zen Books of Interest to Pistol Shooters

www.bullseyepistol.com

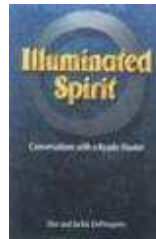
These are my favorite books on Zen, all inexpensive and readily available at [Amazon Books](#).



#### **Zen in the Art of Archery**

by Eugen Herrigel

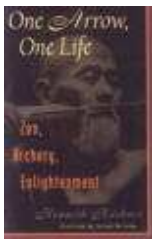
The first Western book on Zen, it was written by a German philosopher who studied Zen through the art of Kyudo. Almost all recent Western writings on Zen refer to it.



#### **Illuminated Spirit**

Conversations with a Kyudo Master  
By Dan and Jackie DeProspero

The authors discuss all aspects of their studies under a Kyudo master in Japan. This is an outstanding practical book on Zen.



#### **One Arrow, One Life**

Zen, Archery, Enlightenment  
by Kenneth Kushner

A tremendous recent book that explores the discoveries of the author as he progresses in Zen through his practice of Kyudo.



#### **Zen Action, Zen Person**

By T. P. Kasulis

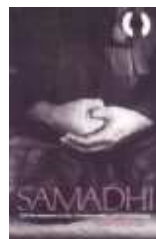
A very thorough examination of Zen practice and teaching. It is the first book on Zen to be written by an American philosopher and deeply dissects Zen for a Western audience.



#### **Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind**

By Shunryu Suzuki

An incredible collection of images and explanations of Zen teachings by a gifted and accomplished Zen master who established Zen in America in the 1970's.



#### **Samadhi**

Self Development in Zen, Swordmanship and Psychotherapy  
By Mike Sayama

A superb work on Zen in practice written by a PhD in psychology.



#### **Zen and the Art of Anything**

By Hal French

An easy-reading book that uses imagery and quotations to explain Zen in everyday life.



#### **Nothing Special - Living Zen**

By Charlotte Joko Beck and Steve Smith

A quality work by an American Zen teacher that discusses solutions in Zen to the many mysteries and difficulties of the human experience.