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The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery

YAMADA Shōji
山田奨治

Eugen Herrigel's "Zen in the Art of Archery" has been widely read as a study of Japanese culture. By reconsidering and reorganizing Herrigel's text and related materials, however, this paper clarifies the mythical nature of "Zen in the Art of Archery" and the process by which this myth has been generated. This paper first gives a brief history of Japanese archery and places the period at which Herrigel studied Japanese archery within that time frame. Next, it summarizes the life of Herrigel's teacher, Awa Kenzō. At the time Herrigel began learning the skill, Awa was just beginning to formulate his own unique ideas based on personal spiritual experiences. Awa himself had no experience in Zen nor did he unconditionally approve of Zen. By contrast, Herrigel came to Japan in search of Zen and chose Japanese archery as a method through which to approach it. The paper goes on to critically analyze two important spiritual episodes in "Zen and the Art of Archery." What becomes clear through this analysis is the serious language barrier existing between Awa and Herrigel. The testimony of the interpreter, as well as other evidence, supports the fact that the complex spiritual episodes related in the book occurred either when there was no interpreter present, or were misinterpreted by Herrigel via the interpreter's intentionally liberal translations. Added to this phenomenon of misunderstanding, whether only coincidental or born out of mistaken interpretation, was the personal desire of Herrigel to pursue things Zen. Out of the above circumstances was born the myth of "Zen in the Art of Archery."

Keywords: Zen — archery — kyudo/*kyūdō* — Eugen Herrigel — Awa Kenzō — *shadō* — myth

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FOR MOST PEOPLE the term "Japanese archery" (*kyūdō* 弓道) evokes thoughts of spiritual training or *kyūdō*'s close relationship with Zen spirituality. Commentators commonly assert that "*kyūdō* leads to spiritual focus" (*seishin tōitsu* 精神統一) or that "*kyūdō* resembles Zen." If we examine the history of Japanese archery, however, it is no exaggeration to say that it was only after the end of the Second World War that *kyūdō* became particularly associated with Zen. To be even more specific, this phenomenon occurred after 1956 when a book called *Zen in the Art of Archery* (originally, *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschiessens*, 1948) by a German professor of philosophy, Eugen Herrigel (1884–1955), was translated and published in Japanese. Since its first German edition in 1948, this book has been translated into several foreign languages (English, Japanese, Portuguese, etc.), and it has been continually reprinted as one of the best-selling works on Japanese culture.

How did people approach Japanese archery before the appearance of this book? If we confine ourselves to the post-Meiji period (after 1868), most people practiced it either as a form of physical education or for pleasure. In pre-war texts about Japanese archery, with the exception of certain isolated religious sects, there is little or no mention of *kyūdō*'s affinity with Zen.[1] Likewise, among modern practitioners of Japanese archery those people who approach it as one part of Zen training are extremely unusual in Japan. In spite of these facts, popular books and commentators emphasize the connection between Japanese archery and Zen. The circumstances underlying this phenomenon deserve closer attention.

Consider, for example, a public opinion poll conducted by the *Kyūdō* Research Project (Kyūdō Kenkyūshitsu 弓道研究室) at Tsukuba University in 1983 (see Table 1). They asked 131 people who practice Japanese archery in West Germany what prompted their initial desire to learn *kyūdō*. A full 84 percent responded "for spiritual training." Moreover, about 61 percent cited their interest in Zen and about 49 percent specifically said they began *kyūdō* because they had read Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*. No similar polls have been conducted in Japan, but I personally feel that even though some Japanese *kyūdō* practitioners might talk a lot about *kyūdō*'s relationship with Zen, most of them actually practice *kyūdō* either as a form of physical education

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[1] For example, in 1923 Ōhira Zenzō 大平善蔵 assumed the pseudonym Shabutsu 射仏 ("Shooting Buddha"), founded the Dainippon Shagakuin 大日本射覚院 (Greater Japan Institute for Awakened Archery), and proclaimed the doctrine of "seeing true nature through the Zen of shooting" (*shazen kenshō* 射禅見性).

Table 1. Motivation for Studying Japanese Archery

For spiritual training	84.0%
Because of interest in Japanese culture	66.4%
Because of interest in Zen	61.1%
To learn proper posture	54.2%
Inspired by Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*	48.9%

(Results of survey of 131 West German practitioners of *kyūdō* conducted by the Kyūdō Kenkyūshitsu, Tsukuba University, 1983; multiple answers were possible.)

or for pleasure. In accounting for this divergence in attitude between German and Japanese *kyūdō* practitioners we cannot ignore the influence of Herrigel's book.

Many Japanese authors have discussed Herrigel (e.g., NISHIO 1978; ŌMORI 1982; MINAMOTO 1995). All of their essays basically repeat Herrigel's own account of the mystical episodes that occurred with his teacher, Awa Kenzō 阿波研造 (1880–1939). For all intents and purposes they completely affirm Herrigel's account and take Herrigel's interpretation as the starting point for their discussions of Japanese archery and, by extension, of Japanese artistic endeavors (*geidō* 芸道). We must question, however, if Herrigel's work can be regarded as a reliable foundation for interpreting *kyūdō* and other Japanese arts.

It is a well-known fact among *kyūdō* researchers that Awa, the person who taught Herrigel, was an eccentric instructor. Authors who are not *kyūdō* specialists, however, usually accept Herrigel's description of Japanese archery at face value. Of course, if Herrigel's account is considered not as a treatise on Japanese archery but merely as his own interpretation of Japanese culture or as his own personal story, then it is quite singular and of great interest. Certainly it reflects the widespread interest in Japanese Zen that was current at that time. When one considers the disparity between actual *kyūdō* and the description of Japanese archery that Herrigel presented, however, it is impossible to uncritically accept his book as a reliable account of what he experienced and observed as a foreigner in Japan. This essay will present a new reading of Herrigel's text and its associated sources and will, by reconstructing his account, clarify how the myth of *Zen in the Art of Archery* came to be propagated. Henceforth I will not use the term *kyūdō* (literally "the way of the bow"), which has modern connotations, but will use the term *kyūjutsu* (literally "the art/technique of the bow") since it is the term actually used by Herrigel. Before discussing Herrigel, though, it is useful to briefly review the history and techniques

of Japanese archery so that we can be forearmed with some background knowledge and thus be better able to put Awa and Herrigel's relationship in the proper perspective.

The History and Techniques of Kyūjutsu

As is well known, bows have been used for hunting throughout the world since ancient times. In Japan, archeological sites dating from the Jōmon period (roughly 5,000 BCE to the third century BCE) have yielded wooden bows and large quantities of stone arrowheads. The Japanese bow has two distinguishing characteristics: it is long with a length of over two meters, and it is shot by being gripped at a point below the center of the bow stave. In particular, the below-center grip is a unique feature of the Japanese bow. The earliest evidence for the use of this type of grip is found on a Yayoi-period (roughly fourth century BCE to third century CE) bronze bell (*dōtaku* 銅鐸), now designated a National Treasure, that was reportedly excavated from Kagawa Prefecture. It shows a scene that depicts an archer aiming at a deer, and it appears that the archer is gripping the bow below the center of the stave. The earliest written evidence consists of a passage in the *Weishu* 魏書 (a Chinese chronicle compiled before 297) that says that soldiers in the Japanese islands "use a wooden bow that is short below and long above." From as early as the third century, therefore, Japanese archers used the below-center grip.

Historians believe that the bow came to be used as a military weapon after the end of the Yayoi period (ca. third century CE). They base this conclusion on evidence from Yayoi period archeological excavations, which have yielded arrow heads that are larger than those of previous periods and skeletons that show evidence of arrow wounds. By the medieval period, works of literature had begun to celebrate the military exploits of famous archers, such as Minamoto Yorimasa 源 頼政 (1104–1180) who killed a mythical beast known as a *nue* 鵺 (see *Heike monogatari* and the Noh drama *Nue*), or Minamoto Tametomo 源 為朝 (1139–1177?) who drew an exceptionally powerful bow. The Genpei War (1180–1185) saw bows and arrows come into full flower as military weapons. The organized styles or lineages (*ryūha* 流派) that have taught archery down to the present day, however, were not founded until the time of the Ōnin War (beginning 1467). At that time a man named Heki Danjō Masatsugu 日置弾正正次 (ca. 1444–1502) supposedly polished his skills in the battles in Kyoto and afterwards toured other provinces teaching archery. Some scholars have suggested that Heki Danjō Masatsugu is a fictional character, but a definitive conclusion regarding his historicity has not been reached.

In any case, Heki Danjō Masatsugu supposedly taught his exquisite archery techniques to the father and son pair of Yoshida Shigekata 吉田重賢 (1463–1543) and Yoshida Shigemasa 重政 (1485–1569). From the time of the Yoshidas, the transmission of this archery lineage can be documented through historical sources. This lineage eventually became known as the Heki-ryū 日置流 (a.k.a., Yoshida-ryū) and it split into various branch lineages (*ha* 派) such as the Insai-ha 印西派, the Sekka-ha 雪荷派, the Dōsetsu-ha 道雪派, the Sakon'emon-ha 左近衛門派, the Ōkura-ha 大蔵派, and so forth. Even today these lineages still survive in various parts of Japan. In addition, a Shingon Buddhist priest named Chikurinbō Josei 竹林坊如成 who officiated at a temple sponsored by the Yoshida family and who was also a skilled archer, founded a lineage known as the Heki-ryū Chikurin-ha. Although the name of this lineage begins with the appellation "Heki-ryū," most scholars have concluded that it has no direct connection to Heki Danjō Masatsugu.

In addition to the various branches of the Heki-ryū, there exists another celebrated archery lineage known as the Ogasawara-ryū 小笠原流. When this style began in the early Kamakura period (ca. 1185–1333) it consisted of the methods of archery, horsemanship, and etiquette taught by Ogasawara Nagakiyo 小笠原長清 (1162–1242), who emphasized both knowledge of ceremonial precedents (*kojitsu* 故実) concerning the use of bows in official functions as well as special techniques for equestrian archery (*kisha* 騎射). The early Ogasawara teachings, however, were lost during the Muromachi period (ca. 1336–1573). Descendants of the Ogasawara family split into a number of collateral groups, so that by the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) among regional lords (*daimyō* 大名) alone there were at least five clans using the Ogasawara name. Tokugawa Yoshimune 徳川吉宗 (1684–1751), the eighth Tokugawa shogun, collected *kyūjutsu* texts from throughout Japan and ordered Ogasawara Heibei Tsuneharu 小笠原平兵衛 常春 (1666–1747), one of his middle level retainers (*hatamoto* 旗本), to study their contents so as to revive the lost Ogasawara teachings of equestrian archery and ceremonial precedents. In this way Ogasawara Heibei Tsuneharu became the direct founder of the Ogasawara-ryū that now exists in Tokyo.

The above-mentioned lineages or schools of *kyūjutsu* did not all teach the same methods. Technically speaking, Japanese archery can be divided into two main categories: ceremonial archery (*reisha* 礼射) and military archery (*busha* 武射). Ceremonial archery is concerned with the ritual and thaumaturgic aspects of *kyūjutsu,* and one can safely say that this is the exclusive domain of the Ogasawara-ryū. Military archery can be further divided into foot archery (*hosha* 歩射), equestrian archery (*kisha*), and what is called temple archery (*dōsha* 堂射).

Foot archery refers to the archery used by foot soldiers on the battlefield. These archers must be able to accurately hit targets with sufficient force to penetrate traditional Japanese armor at a distance of approximately thirty meters (the optimum killing range) even in the heat of battle when their lives hang in the balance. The training in the archery lineages that specialize in foot archery, such as the Heki-ryū Insai-ha, aims to develop an extremely accurate, subtle technique and to cultivate a death-defying spiritual fortitude.

Equestrian archery refers to the technique of shooting the bow from horseback. It is not certain what equestrian archery on the battlefield was actually like, but its distinguishing characteristics can be inferred from present-day *yabusame* 流鏑馬 (in which archers ride horses down a straight course and shoot at three stationary targets placed along the length of the course) and from literature regarding *inu-oumono* 犬追物 (in which mounted archers chased dogs within a circular enclosure while shooting blunted arrows at them). It appears that equestrian archery emphasized the ability to skillfully manage a horse so that the archer could approach close enough to the target to shoot from a distance where it would not be too difficult to hit it. Consequently, in equestrian archery, training focuses on how to manage a horse while carrying and shooting a bow. Equestrian archery has been the province of the Ogasawara-ryū and the Takeda-ryū 武田流 (a sister tradition of the Ogasawara-ryū, which traces its lineage back to Takeda Nobumitsu 武田信光, d. 1248, a cousin of Ogasawara Nagakiyo).

Finally, temple archery refers to the techniques used exclusively in the *tōshiya* 通矢 competition, a type of contest that became very popular during the Tokugawa period. In *tōshiya* contests, archers compete non-stop over the course of an entire day and night to see who can shoot the most arrows (*ya*) the entire length (*tōsu*) of the outside verandah of the Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 (the Hall of Thirty-Three Bays) at the Rengeō-in 蓮華王院 temple in Kyoto, using only the space beneath the temple eaves, which measures 120 meters in length by 5 meters in height. Temple archery requires technique that allows the archer, with minimum fatigue, to shoot light arrows with a low trajectory. Insofar as the arrows are not required to penetrate armor, the technique differs considerably from that of foot archery. Moreover, temple archery entails considerable elements of sport or spectacle. From a spiritual perspective, it differs from foot archery and equestrian archery, which were based on the experience of facing death in battle. Both the Heki-ryū Chikurin-ha and the Heki-ryū Sekka-ha participated extensively in temple archery.

Foot archery and equestrian archery are still practiced today: foot archery through the adoption of the twenty-eight meter shooting dis-

tance as the basic layout of the *kyūdō* archery range, and equestrian archery in the form of *yabusame*. Temple archery, however, declined after the fall of the Tokugawa regime when competition at the Sanjūsangendō ceased. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), instructors of temple archery faced a desperate and confused situation because the loss of their shooting area left them no way to teach either the techniques or the spirit of temple archery. Herrigel's teacher Awa studied *kyūjutsu* under two teachers, Kimura Tatsugorō 木村辰五郎 of the Heki-ryū Sekka-ha and Honda Toshizane 本多利実 (1836–1917) of the Heki-ryū Chikurin-ha, both of whom came from lineages that specialized in temple archery. Also, since the founder of the Chikurin-ha, Chikurinbō Josei, had been a Shingon Buddhist priest, the teachings of this lineage reflected strong Buddhist influences. The characteristics of temple archery and the predicament faced by its practitioners constitute an important key for understanding Awa.

Awa Kenzō and Daishadōkyō (the Great Doctrine of the Way of Shooting)

Let us gradually bring the discussion closer to Herrigel. First, I will outline the life of Awa Kenzō, the man who taught Japanese archery to Herrigel. My principal source is a large commemorative volume by SAKURAI Yasunosuke (1981). Since this work was published in commemoration of the one-hundredth anniversary of Awa's birth, it must be used with caution. Nonetheless, even if it is not free of bias, as a study of Awa it has no equal. One winces a little at Sakurai's style of narration, which describes Awa's personality by referring to the geography and native fauna of the region around Ishinomaki Bay 石巻湾, where Awa was born and grew up, and intimates that Awa was born of the oceanic energy generated by the meeting of the southern-flowing Kurile (a.k.a., Okhotsk) Current and the northern-flowing Black (a.k.a., Japan) Current. Still, because Sakurai cites a wealth of primary sources he provides ample material for understanding Awa. In this section, I will sum up Awa's life based on Sakurai's account.

Awa was born in 1880 in the village of Kawakitamachi 河北町 (Miyagi Prefecture) as the eldest son of the Satō 佐藤 family, which operated a *kōjiya* (a factory for producing malted rice used in the manufacturing of saké and miso). Awa's formal education consisted only of primary school, but in his eighteenth year (age 17) he opened a private school for teaching Chinese characters.[2] It is not clear, though, exactly what

[2] *Translator's Note*: Yamada follows the standard Japanese practice of counting "years of life" instead of the Western practice of counting "years of age." These two methods usually differ by one unit as illustrated by the following statements: During a man's first year of life

curriculum was taught at this school. In his twentieth year he married into the Awa family, who also were in the malted rice business in Ishinomaki City, and thereby acquired the Awa family name. The following year Awa began training in Heki-ryū Sekka-ha *kyūjutsu* in Ishinomaki under the tutelage of Kimura Tatsugorō, a former vassal of the Sendai Domain 仙台藩. Awa's progress was quite rapid, and after only two years he received his diploma of complete transmission (*menkyo kaiden* 免許皆伝), the highest rank possible. Thus, when Awa was only in his twenty-second year he established his own archery training hall near his house.

In 1909, during his thirtieth year, Awa moved to Sendai City where he opened a new archery training hall. In 1910 he began to study Heki-ryū Chikurin-ha *kyūjutsu* under Honda Toshizane, who was at that time becoming influential as an archery instructor at Tokyo Imperial University. At about the same time, Awa became the archery instructor at the Number Two College (Daini Kōtō Gakkō 第二高等学校) in Sendai. It appears that at this juncture Awa was an expert archer, being capable of hitting the mark nearly one hundred times for every one hundred shots (*hyappatsu hyakuchū* 百発百中). His instruction to his students also emphasized accuracy in shooting. Sometime around the beginning of the Taishō period (1912–1926), however, Awa began having doubts about his archery. The saying, "nothing is needed" (*nanni mo iranu*), from one of the secret archery manuals handed down in the Heki-ryū Sekka-ha lineage resonated deeply with Awa, so deeply that he began to disavow *kyūjutsu*.

This traditional Sekka-ha doctrine, "nothing is needed," appears in an archery manual titled *Yoshida Toyokazu tōsho* 吉田豊要答書 (The book of Yoshida Toyokazu's answers). The full passage begins with a list of archery techniques and then says they are not needed:

> As for the stance, the positioning of the body, the positioning of the bow, the grip on the bow, the grip on the string, the raising of the bow, the drawing of the bow, the draw length, the extension, the tension, the balance of hard and soft, the stretch, the rainfall release, and the morning storm release: I see that none are needed (*Tate wa ashibumi, dōzukuri, yugamae, tenouchi, kake, uchi okoshi, tsurumichi, yazuka, nobitsume, kuijime, gōjaku, hariai, murasame, asa arashi: nanni mo iranu to mi mōshi sōrō* 縦ハ足踏, 胴造り, 弓構, 手の内, かけ, 打起し, 弦道, 箭束, 延詰, 槭〆, 強弱, 張合, 村雨, 朝嵐, なんにもいらぬと見申候).[3]

he is not yet a year old; at one year of age he begins to experience his second year of life; during his third year of life he is two years old; and so forth.

[3] *Translator's Note:* The translation of many of these technical terms is speculative.

On first reading it appears to assert that one need not follow any of the techniques in the standard step-by-step sequence of shooting a bow. Immediately following the above sentence, however, the text goes on to say,

> "Not being needed" does not mean that they are unnecessary from the beginning. At the beginning when one knows nothing, if the beginner does not first completely learn the proper stance, then his torso and hips will not become settled (*Kono iranu wa hajime kara iranu nite wa kore naki sōrō. Hajime nani o mo zonzezu, totto shoshin no toki wa mazu ashibumi o narawaneba dō koshi ga sadamari mōsazu sōrō* 此いらぬハ始から不入にてハ無之候。初何をも不存，とっと初心の時ハ先足踏みをならわねハ胴腰か定り不申候).

In short, Yoshida Toyokazu taught that in the beginning one must learn proper shooting technique, and then after sufficient skill is acquired one will be able to shoot naturally without thinking about it. Awa, however, extended the concept of "nothing is needed" to an extreme by interpreting it to mean that from the beginning no technique is necessary.

On the basis of his misunderstanding of "nothing is needed," Awa began to call *kyūjutsu* "a kind of hereditary disease (*idenbyō* 遺伝病) that regards technical training as an art" and began to preach his own style of "*shadō*" 射道 (the way of shooting), which he characterized as being "austere training in which one masters the study of humanity" (*ningengaku wo osameru shugyō* 人間学を修める修行). As a result, the *kyūjutsu* community treated him like a lunatic, and on occasion people even threw rocks at him when he went to places where traditional *kyūjutsu* was firmly entrenched. Honda Toshitoki 本多利時, the grandson of Honda Toshizane and the person who later became headmaster of the Honda-ryū, harshly criticized Awa's style of shooting, saying that Awa shot merely as his whims and moods moved him. Ōhira Zenzō 大平善蔵, who was Awa's senior among the disciples of Honda Toshizane, was just as critical. In reference to the doctrine of "putting an entire lifetime of exertion into each shot" (*issha zetsumei* 一射絶命; sometimes translated as "one shot, one life"), which Awa later expounded, Ōhira said that it was idiotic to tell people to just persevere until they dropped dead (SAKURAI 1981, p. 162). Honda's other disciples were equally merciless in their criticism of Awa.

Awa's advocacy that people convert "from *kyūjutsu* to *shadō*" began during an intellectual climate when Kanō Jigorō 嘉納治五郎 (1860–1938) was enjoying great success with his Kōdōkan 講道館 school of *jūjutsu* 柔術, which Kanō referred to as "*jūdō*" 柔道. In one of the manuscripts

that he left behind, Awa wrote, "To give the closest example, the reason why Kanō Jigorō's Kōdōkan school of *jūdō* is praised not only in Japan but also in foreign countries is because, first of all, it is taught as a Way (*dō* or *michi* 道), and rather than restricting its techniques to just one lineage or style alone it blends the strong points of all schools" (SAKURAI 1981, p. 145). In short, Kanō's successful conversion of *jūjutsu* into *jūdō* prompted Awa to come up with his own ideas for transforming *kyūjutsu* into *shadō*.

In 1920, during Awa's forty-first year, he had an "eccentric" エキセントリック experience that proved to be decisive. To borrow Sakurai's words, Awa experienced a "great explosion" (*daibakuhatsu* 大爆発). Sakurai, using some short compositions and drawings left by Awa as clues, describes this experience as follows:

> Late one evening, the family was fast asleep, all was wrapped in silence, and all that could be seen was the moon peacefully illuminating the evening darkness. Alone, Kenzō went to the archery range and with his beloved bow and arrows quietly faced the target. He was determined. Would his flesh perish first? Would his spirit live on?
>
> No release (*muhatsu* 無発). Total focus (*tōitsu* 統一). He was determined that with this shot there would be no retreat, not even so much as a single step.
>
> The bitter struggle continued. His body had already passed its limit. His life would end here.
>
> Finally: "I have perished." Just as this thought passed through his mind, a marvelous sound reverberated from the heavens. He thought it must be from heaven since never before had he heard such a clear, high, strong sound from the twanging of the bowstring and from the arrow piercing the target. At the very instant when he thought he heard it, his self (*jiko* 自己) flew apart into infinite grains of dust, and, with his eyes dazzled by a myriad of colors, a great thunderous wave filled heaven and earth. (SAKURAI 1981, pp. 159–60)

This kind of mystical experience very often forms the starting point for the founding of a new religion. For example, the story of the morning star flying into the mouth of Kūkai 空海 (774–835) during his religious austerities in Murotomisaki 室戸岬 resembles Awa's experience.

After his "great explosion," Awa began to preach that one must "put an entire lifetime of exertion into each shot" (*issha zetsumei*) and that one can "see true nature in the shot" (*shari kenshō* 射裡見性), the two ideas that later came to form the core of his teachings. Sakurai explains the essential point of these teachings as follows:

> Even though we are speaking of the power of Nature, one must train one's mental energy (*shinki* 心気) and generate spiritual energy (*reiki* 霊気) [in order to unite with this power]. In this way one enters the Absolute Way (*zettaidō* 絶対道) that eliminates all relativity (*sōtai* 相対). Space (*kūkan* 空間) is destroyed as one passes through it. Then for the first time one becomes wrapped in the radiance of the Buddha (*Budda no kōmyō* 仏陀の光明) and can perceive the self (*jiko*), which reflects the radiance of the Buddha. At this moment the self is both the self yet not the self. (SAKURAI 1981, p. 164)

While *kenshō* (see true nature; i.e., attain awakening) is a Zen term, it is practically impossible to detect any Zen elements in Awa's teaching. Surprisingly, it appears that Awa never practiced Zen even once in his life. SAKURAI (1981, p. 223), who has conscientiously studied Awa's life, wrote that "No evidence can be found that Kenzō ever trained with a Zen priest." Moreover, SAKURAI (p. 266) also states that "While Kenzō used the phrase 'the bow and Zen are one' (*kyūzen ichimi* 弓禅一味) and used the philosophical language of Mahāyāna Buddhism in particular to describe *shadō,* he did not approve of Zen unconditionally."

Why, then, did Herrigel associate Awa's teachings with Zen? Before getting to that question, let us follow Awa's life to its conclusion. Herrigel became Awa's student one year after Awa's "great explosion" and one year before Awa began to talk about founding Daishadōkyō 大射道教 (Great Doctrine of the Way of Shooting)—a proposal that provoked fierce opposition among Awa's students at the Number Two College and at Tōhoku Imperial University 東北帝国大学. In 1927, in his forty-eighth year, Awa overruled the bitter objections of his students and formally established a new organization named Daishadōkyō.[4] Awa's students at the Number Two College later testified that Daishadōkyō consisted of "archery as a religion," that "the founder [of this religion] is Master Awa Kenzō," and that "the master described his rounds of travel to provide guidance (*shidō suru* 指導する) in various regions not as [archery] lessons (*keiko* 稽古) or as instruction (*kyōju* 教授); he said that he was doing 'missionary work' (*fukyō* 布教)" (SAKURAI 1981, pp. 210–11). Thus, it is clear that Awa's Daishadōkyō possessed religious characteristics.

The year after Awa established Daishadōkyō, however, he fell ill.

[4] *Translator's Note*: When HERRIGEL discusses the "Great Doctrine" in *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953, pp. 19, 20, 27, etc.) the actual referent is Awa's Daishadōkyō, not Zen. The name Daishadōkyō might be more accurately translated as the "Doctrine of the Great Way of Shooting," but I have decided to follow the form found in the English language version of *Zen in the Art of Archery.*

Although at one point he appeared to recovery miraculously, from that time on he remained in a partially incapacitated condition until his death. Awa died of illness in 1939 during his sixtieth year. Today there are many practitioners of Japanese archery who are disciples or grand-disciples of Awa's disciples and who practice archery in the style of Awa's Daishadōkyō. Nonetheless, as a religious organization, Daishadōkyō died with Awa.

The Encounter of Herrigel and Awa

The discussion can now return to Eugen Herrigel, the author of *Zen in the Art of Archery*. Herrigel was born near Heidelberg in 1884. At the University of Heidelberg he first studied theology but later switched to philosophy. Academically he belonged to the Neo-Kantian school of philosophy. At the same time Herrigel confessed: "Even as a student I had, as though propelled by some secret urge, been preoccupied with mysticism" (HERRIGEL 1953, p. 29; 1956, p. 56).[5] The mysticism to which Herrigel referred was that of the German mystic Meister Eckhart (1260–1327). As a result of his interest in mysticism Herrigel became interested in Zen, which he thought to be the most mystical of religions, and through Zen he developed an interest in Japanese culture. In 1924 Herrigel obtained a position as a lecturer at Tōhoku Imperial University in Sendai, where he taught philosophy until 1929.[6] After he returned to Germany, he took a professorship at Erlangen University, retired in 1951,[7] and died in 1955 in his seventy-first year.

Herrigel explained how his interest in Zen prompted his decision to travel to Japan as follows in *Zen in the Art of Archery*:

> For some considerable time it has been no secret, even to us Europeans, that the Japanese arts go back for their inner form to a common root, namely Buddhism.... I do not mean Buddhism in the ordinary sense, nor am I concerned with the decidedly speculative form of Buddhism, which, because of its allegedly accessible literature, is the only one we know in Europe

[5] *Translator's Note:* In his original essay Yamada cites only Japanese translations of Herrigel's works. In preparing this version I have added references to the English-language translations of Herrigel's works (if available).

[6] *Translator's Note:* The statement in the 1953 English-language translation of *Zen in the Art of Archery* (p. 31) that Herrigel taught at the University of Tokyo is incorrect.

[7] *New Note for the English Translation:* My recent research has revealed that Herrigel's retirement was in 1948.

> and even claim to understand. I mean Dhyana Buddhism, which is known in Japan as "Zen."
>
> (HERRIGEL 1953, p. 21; 1956, pp. 44–45)

Today, I am sure that most people would object to the assertion that "all Japanese arts can be traced back to Zen." Herrigel acknowledged that his views on this matter resulted from the influence of D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966):

> In his *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, D. T. Suzuki has succeeded in showing that Japanese culture and Zen are intimately connected and that Japanese art, the spiritual attitude of the samurai, the Japanese way of life, the moral, aesthetic and to a certain extent even the intellectual life of the Japanese owe their peculiarities to this background of Zen and cannot be properly understood by anybody not acquainted with it.
>
> (HERRIGEL 1953, pp. 22–23; 1982, pp. 16–17)[8]

We can divine from the above passages that Herrigel, influenced by D. T. Suzuki and driven by his own "preoccupation with mysticism," tried as hard as he could to detect Zen elements within Japanese culture. Herrrigel writes in more detail concerning his purpose in visiting Japan:

> Why I set out to learn *kyūjutsu* and not something else requires some explanation. Already from the time I was a student I had assiduously researched mystical doctrine, that of Germany in particular. However, in doing so, I realized that I lacked something that would allow me to fully understand it. This was something of an ultimate nature, which seemed as though it would never come to appear to me and which I felt I would never be able to resolve. I felt as though I was standing before the final gate and yet had no key with which to open it. Thus, when I was asked whether I wanted to work for a space of several years at Tōhoku Imperial University, I accepted with joy the opportunity to know Japan and its admirable people. By so

[8] *Translator's Note:* Yamada cites the Japanese translation of "Die ritterliche Kunst des Bogenschiessens" (The chivalrous art of archery, 1936; Japanese translation 1941, revised 1982). Since that work is not available in English, I have quoted the English-language translation of *Zen in the Art of Archery*, which contains an identical passage. Subsequent cases of this practice are not noted, but should be obvious from the publication dates of the works cited. Regarding D. T. Suzuki's influence on Herrigel, a footnote in the English-language translation of *Zen in the Art of Archery* (p. 22) gives the following publication dates for Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: First Series 1927, Second Series 1950, Third Series 1953. Actually, all three sets of essays were published in time for Herrigel to read them before writing his first account of Japanese archery. The dates of first publication were 1927, 1933, 1934.

> doing I had the hope of making contact with *living* Buddhism, and just the thought that by such contact I might perhaps come to understand in somewhat more detail the nature of that "detachment," which Meister Eckhart had so praised but yet had not shown the way to reach, made me very happy.
>
> (HERRIGEL 1982, pp. 23–24; emphasis in the original)

Here I would like to cite one episode that led Herrigel to passionately seek out Zen after he arrived in Japan. Early during his stay in Japan, while he was meeting with a Japanese colleague at a hotel, an earthquake occurred and many guests stampeded to the stairs and the elevators:

> An earthquake—and a terrible earthquake a few years before was still fresh in everyone's memory. I too had jumped up in order to get out in the open. I wanted to tell the colleague with whom I had been talking to hurry up, when I noticed to my astonishment that he was sitting there unmoved, hands folded, eyes nearly closed, as though none of it concerned him. Not like someone who hangs back irresolutely, or who has not made up his mind, but like someone who, without fuss, was doing something—or not-doing something—perfectly naturally....
>
> A few days later I learned that this colleague was a Zen Buddhist, and I gathered that he must have put himself into a state of extreme concentration and thus become "unassailable." Although I had read about Zen before, and heard a few things about it, I had only the vaguest idea of the subject. The hope of penetrating into Zen—which had made my decision to go to Japan very much easier—changed, as a result of this dramatic experience, into the intention to start without further delay.
>
> (HERRIGEL 1960, pp. 1–3; quoted in ENOKI 1991, pp. 200–201)

Herrigel discussed his desire to study Zen with a Japanese colleague. That colleague advised Herrigel, a foreigner without any Japanese language ability, that he should "first choose an artistic endeavor (*geidō*) that has been particularly strongly influenced by Zen and, while you are practicing that, approach Zen at your leisure in a roundabout way" (ENOKI 1991, p. 202; cf. HERRIGEL 1953, pp. 31–32). Following that advice, Herrigel decided to learn *kyūjutsu*. To study *kyūjutsu* Herrigel sought instruction from Awa, who taught archery at Tōhoku Imperial University where Herrigel was employed. Herrigel chose *kyūjutsu* because he previously had practiced target shooting with firearms and he assumed that target shooting with a bow would prove

to be similar. While there is no evidence that Herrigel ever actually practiced Zen during his stay in Japan, there exists a posthumous collection of Herrigel's essays entitled *Der Zen-Weg* (1958; translated into English as *The Method of Zen*, 1960). From these essays it is clear that Herrigel read extensively about Zen.

Herrigel relayed his request to be accepted as Awa's student through Komachiya Sōzō 小町谷操三 (1893–1979), a colleague (and eventually a professor of international law) at Tōhoku Imperial University. When Komachiya had studied at the Number Two College (which prepared students for Tōhoku Imperial University) he was enrolled in Awa's first *kyūjutsu* class. In 1924 both Herrigel and Komachiya became instructors in the Faculty of Law and Literature that had been established only the previous year. Sakurai states that "Komachiya simply met Awa again for the first time in twelve years. At that moment there was no way that he could have been aware of the development and changes in Awa's state of mind since their last meeting" (SAKURAI 1981, 285). Simply as a favor to his new colleague Komachiya acted as the go-between for Herrigel to become Awa's student. Looking back on the situation that prevailed at that time, in 1940 Komachiya wrote:

> I think it was the spring of 1926. Herrigel came to me and said, "I want to study the bow (*yumi* 弓). Please introduce me to instructor Awa." The bow is difficult to approach, even for Japanese. I wondered what had caused him to want to try his hand at it. When I asked him the reason, he replied: "It has been three years since I came to Japan. I have finally realized that there are many things in Japanese culture that should be studied. In particular, it appears to me that Buddhism, Zen most especially, has exerted a very strong influence on Japanese thought. I think that the most expedient way for me to get to know Zen is to study archery (*kyūdō*)."
>
> (KOMACHIYA 1982, pp. 69–70)

Awa, however, refused Herrigel's initial request. He said that he previously had a foreigner as a student and there had been some sort of problem. Komachiya subsequently prevailed upon Awa, who agreed to teach Herrigel on the condition that Komachiya take upon himself the responsibility of interpreting. Thus, Herrigel began taking lessons in archery from Awa once a week. While Herrigel struggled to understand *kyūjutsu* rationally, Awa responded to him with words that transcended logic. Taken by itself, this conversation between Western culture and Japanese culture is extremely interesting and is a major reason why Herrigel's book was such a great success from a literary

point of view. At the same time, however, it is probably more appropriate to see Herrigel not so much as a logician but as a mystic who idolized Meister Eckhart.

Consider the characteristics of these two protagonists. There was Awa who was trying to make archery into a new religion and Herrigel who had no way of knowing about Awa's idiosyncratic nature. There was Herrigel who ceaselessly searched for Zen and Awa who by no means affirmed Zen. What were the conversations between these two men actually like? Without analyzing this issue it is impossible to properly evaluate Herrigel's account of his experiences. For the purposes of this analysis I will reexamine two of the most dramatic and inspiring mystical episodes redacted by Herrigel. I will cite the translations of both his first essay on Japanese archery, "Die ritterliche Kunst des Bogenschiessens" (The chivalrous art of archery, 1936), and of his later, expanded version that appeared as *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschiessens* (Zen in the art of archery, 1948). First, I will reexamine Herrigel's account of "the target in darkness."[9] Then, I will analyze Awa's doctrine of "*It* shoots," which Herrigel saw as the central pillar of Awa's doctrine.

The Target in Darkness

The first incident, "the target in darkness," concerns the following event. In his 1936 account Herrigel explained how he spent the first three years of his training under Awa shooting at a cylinder of tightly wrapped straw (*makiwara* 巻藁) from a distance of about two meters. Then, after three years when he was permitted to shoot at a target on the archery range (which is twenty-eight meters long), his arrows did not reach the target no matter how many times he shot. Finally, Herrigel asked what he needed to do to hit the target. Awa told him, "Thinking about hitting the target is heresy. Do not aim at it." Herrigel could not accept this answer. He insisted that "If I do not aim at the target, I cannot hit it." At that point, Awa ordered Herrigel to come to the practice hall that evening. Herrigel explained what happened that night, as follows:

> We entered the spacious practice hall adjacent to the master's house. The master lit a stick of incense, which was as long and thin as a knitting needle, and placed it in the sand in front of

[9] *Translator's Note:* "The target in darkness" (*anchū no mato* 暗中の的) is the title of the eighth chapter (pp. 96–110) of the Japanese-language edition (1956) of *Zen in the Art of Archery*. In the English-language translation (1953), which is divided into a different number of untiled chapters, it corresponds to pages 79–88.

> the target, which was approximately in the center of the target bank. We then went to the shooting area. Since the master was standing directly in the light, he was dazzlingly illuminated. The target, however, was in complete darkness. The single, faintly glowing point of the incense was so small it was practically impossible to make out the light it shed. The master had said not a word for some time. Silently he took up his bow and two arrows. He shot the first arrow. From the sound I knew it hit the target. The second arrow also made a sound as it hit the target. The master motioned to me to verify the condition of the two arrows that had been shot. The first arrow was cleanly lodged in the center of the target. The second arrow had struck the nock of the first one and split it in two. I brought the arrows back to the shooting area. The master looked at the arrows as if in deep thought and after a short while said the following...
>
> (HERRIGEL 1982, pp. 46–47; cf. HERRIGEL 1953, pp. 84–85)

At a practice hall in the dark of night, a master archer demonstrates before a solitary disciple. Facing a target that is practically invisible, the master shoots an arrow and hits the mark. Then, the master's second arrow strikes the nock of the arrow that is in the center of the target and splits it. Anyone would be moved by this story.

Nonetheless, so as not to be carried away by emotion and lose sight of the true nature of the matter, I attempted to verify the "rarity" of this occurrence by quantifiable means. It is unclear what Awa's rate of accuracy was at that time, but assuming that it was close to 100 percent, his hitting percentage would be a regular distribution of 99.7 percent, equal to what is called 3 sigma in statistical terms. I posited that the arrow was 8 millimeters in diameter and that it was shot into a standard target, which is 38 centimeters in diameter. Then, I used 100,000 computer simulations to find the probability of an archer with a 99.7 percent hitting average being able to hit the nock of the first arrow with his second arrow. These computer simulations yielded a 0.3 percent probability of the second arrow hitting the nock of the first one. Even viewed from a statistical perspective, it can be said that the "target in darkness" incident was truly an unlikely occurrence.

One must also note that practitioners of *kyūjutsu* in Japan share the common understanding that shattering the nock of one's own arrow is a failure of which one should be ashamed, since the archer thereby damages his own equipment. The "target in darkness" event was by no means an achievement of which a *kyūjutsu* practitioner would boast. Herrigel wrote, "The master looked at the arrows as if in deep thought."

Perhaps Awa was secretly thinking, "Blast! I have ruined one of my favorite arrows!" In fact, Awa did not speak of this episode to anyone except one of his most senior disciples. Is it possible that Awa did not want to divulge that he had shattered the nock of his arrow because he regarded it as something of which he should be ashamed?

Regarding the "target in darkness" episode, in 1940 Komachiya gave the following testimony: "After reading Herrigel's [1936] essay I asked Awa about this incident one day. Awa laughed and said, 'You know, sometimes really strange things happen. That was an a coincidence.'" (KOMACHIYA 1982, 99). Also, Anzawa Heijirō 安沢平次郎 (1888–1970), Awa's most senior disciple and the only person to whom Awa revealed this incident, said that Awa told him the following account of what happened:

> On that occasion I performed a ceremonial shot (*reisha* 礼射). The first arrow hit the target, and the second arrow made a "crack" sound as though it had struck something. Herrigel went to retrieve the arrows, but after a long time he did not return. I called out, "Eugen! Oh, Eugen!" Then I said, "What is it? How come you do not answer?"
>
> Then, well, there was Herrigel sitting down directly in front of the target. I went up to him like this. [Awa imitated someone walking nonchalantly.] I said, "What is the matter?" Herrigel was speechless, sitting rooted to the spot. Then, without removing the arrows from the target, he brought them back....
>
> Awa said, "No, that was just a coincidence! I had no special intention to demonstrate such a thing."
>
> (quoted in KOMACHIYA 1965)

These are the words that Awa used when speaking of this incident to Anzawa. They are extremely simple and easy to understand. In short, it was a coincidence. There is not even the minutest whiff of mysticism. The words that Herrigel attributes to Awa, however, have a completely different ambience. In Herrigel's account, Awa supposedly said,

> You probably think that since I have been practicing in this training hall for thirty years I must know where the target is even in the dark, so hitting the target in the center with the first shot was not a particularly great feat. If that was all, then perhaps what you think would be entirely true. But what do you make of the second shot? Since it did not come from *me*, it was not *me* who made the hit. Here, you must carefully consider: Is it possible to even aim in such darkness? Can you still maintain that you cannot hit the target without aiming? Well, let us

> stand in front of the target with the same attitude as when we bow before the Buddha.
>
> (HERRIGEL 1982, pp. 47–48; emphasis in the original)

These are extremely mysterious words, very difficult to understand. What, exactly, accounts for the discrepancy between the words that Awa used when speaking of this incident to Anzawa and the words that Awa used in Herrigel's quotation? This question hinges around the issue of translation and interpretation. Ordinarily, Awa's instructions to Herrigel were mediated through the interpreting provided by Komachiya. During the night of the "target in darkness" incident, however, Awa and Herrigel were alone. In 1940 Komachiya testified as follows:

> Herrigel's [1936] essay describes an incident when, in pitch darkness, Awa lit a stick of incense, put it in front of the target, and shot two arrows, hitting the nock of the first arrow with the second. It also recounts what Awa said at the time. Since I was not there to act as a translator that evening, I think that Herrigel, relying on his own ability to interpret the Japanese language, understood all of that by means of "mind-to-mind transmission" (*ishin denshin* 以心伝心), as truly amazing as that is. (KOMACHIYA 1982, p. 98)

Today, we cannot know what sort of conversation, in what language, took place between Awa and Herrigel on that night. Nonetheless, it is easy to imagine that Awa, speaking a language that Herrigel did not understand, experienced great difficulty in explaining this coincidental occurrence. The coincidence of the second arrow hitting the nock of the first arrow produced a phenomenal space, an emptiness that needed to be given some kind of meaning. At that moment the lack of an interpreter was crucial. Since an extremely rare incident occurred, perhaps it was only natural for Herrigel to imbue it with some kind of mystical significance. His introducing the Buddha into this story, however, merely amplified its mysterious quality to no purpose.

Language Difficulties

Since my analysis of the doctrine of "It shoots" also involves issues with Herrigel's understanding of Awa's language, before going further I wish to discuss Komachiya's interpreting in more detail. As noted above, Komachiya always mediated between Herrigel and Awa in his role as interpreter. After Awa experienced his "great explosion," he fell into the habit of using many words that were difficult to understand. Komachiya offers the following reminiscence:

> At every lesson Awa would explain that archery (*kyūdō*) is not a matter of technique (*jutsu* 術) but is a means of religious training (*shugyō*) and a method of attaining awakening (*godō* 悟道). Indeed, like an improvisational poet, he would freely employ Zen-like adages at every turn. When he grew impatient, in an effort to get Herrigel to understand what he was saying, he would immediately draw various diagrams on the chalkboard that was hanging on the wall of the practice hall. One day, for instance, he drew a figure of a person standing on top of a circle in the act of drawing a bow and drew a line connecting the lower abdomen of the figure to the center of the circle. He explained that this figure, which represented Herrigel, must put his strength into his field of cinnabar (*tanden* 丹田; i.e., lower abdomen), enter the realm of no-self (*muga* 無我), and become one (*ittai* 一体) with the universe.
>
> (KOMACHIYA 1982, pp. 86–87)

Regarding his own personal difficulties in understanding Awa's use of language, Sakurai wrote: "At first I struggled to understand due to the abstruse nature of Awa's instructions. I was able to grasp an outline of Awa's teachings and persevere at practice only because I relied on senior students to interpret his meaning for me." In reference to Awa's writings, Sakurai concluded that "Their logic is not rigorous, and long sentences, in particular, exhibit a lack of coherence" (SAKURAI 1981, pp. 6–7).

Apart from the difficulty inherent in Awa's manner of lecturing, there is at least one passage in Herrigel's account that suggests that Komachiya's translations were not always entirely appropriate. Herrigel wrote:

> Thus, the foundation that actually supports Japanese archery is so infinitely deep that it could be called bottomless. To use an expression that is well understood among Japanese masters, when shooting a bow everything depends on the archer becoming "an unmoved center."
>
> (HERRIGEL 1982, p. 13; 1953, p. 20)

Contrary to what Herrigel asserts, teachers of Japanese archery do not understand what meaning he intended to convey by the words "an unmoved center" (*unbewegte Mitte*; Japanese, *fudō no chūshin* 不動の中心). They do not use that expression to describe any specific moment in the sequence of shooting.[10]

[10] I suspect that Komachiya selected the words "an unmoved center" to convey the concept normally represented in archery by the technical term *kai* 会 (literally, "meeting"; see

Komachiya explicitly acknowledged that his interpreting frequently distorted the meaning of Awa's abstruse language. Komachiya wrote:

> For that matter, in those days, there were many occasions when Awa would say something that seemed to contradict what he had taught previously. At such times, I did not interpret for Herrigel but remained silent. When I did that, Herrigel would think it strange. He would insistently ask me about what Awa had just said, which left me feeling completely flummoxed. Even though I felt bad for doing so, I would say, "Oh, Awa is just extremely intent on his explanation, and he is repeating what he always says about putting an entire lifetime of exertion into each shot (*issha zetsumei*) and that all shots are holy (*hyappatsu seisha* 百発聖射)," and put a brave front on the situation. Essentially, as Awa expounded on the spirit (*seishin* 精神) of archery, he would become spontaneously excited, and, wanting desperately to express his feelings, he would use various Zen terms. Without realizing it he would say mutually contradictory things. Even today I think that both Awa and Herrigel knowingly let me get away with my translation strategy of "sitting on and smothering" [difficult sentences].
>
> (KOMACHIYA 1982, pp. 87–88)

Komachiya, his offense in part motivated by conviction, covered up Awa's contradictory words and attempted to translate Awa's meaning instead. It would be unjust, however, to unilaterally criticize Komachiya alone for any misunderstandings. Herrigel quotes one of Awa's lectures as follows:

> If the target and I become one, this means that I and the Buddha become one. Then, if I and the Buddha become one, this means that the arrow is in the center of an unmoved center, which is both existent and nonexistent, and thus in the center of the target. The arrow is in the center. If we interpret this with our awakened consciousness, then we see that the arrow issues from the center and enters the center. For this reason, you must not aim at the target but aim at yourself. If you do this, you will hit you yourself, the Buddha, and the target all at once. (HERRIGEL 1982, p. 43)

Awa frequently expressed himself with cryptic words like these. If we put ourselves in the shoes of the interpreter who had to translate

SHIBATA 1982a, 102). *Kai* refers to the state of being in full draw and applying continuous effort to the right and left to bring the opportunity for the release (*hassha* 発射) to fruition.

them, we can see that his free translation resulted from no malicious intent. Komachiya was a man of sufficient ability to become a professor of international law at Tōhoku University. He interpreted as he did because of his inherent diplomatic sensibility and consideration.

"It Shoots"

Now, we can analyze the doctrine of "*It* shoots." In Herrigel's account this doctrine is introduced during a period when Herrigel had been unable to loose (i.e., release) the arrow skillfully no matter how many times he tried. He asked Awa for help, and the following dialogue ensued:

> One day I asked the Master, "How can the shot be loosed if 'I' do not do it?"
>
> "'It' shoots," he replied....
>
> "And who or what is this 'It'?"
>
> "Once you have understood that you will have no further need of me. And if I tried to give you a clue at the cost of your own experience, I would be the worst of teachers and deserve to be sacked! So let's stop talking about it and go on practicing." (HERRIGEL 1953, p. 76; 1956, pp. 126–27)

Although troubled by this instruction, Herrigel continued his archery lessons. Then, one day when Herrigel loosed an arrow, Awa bowed courteously and broke off the practice. As Herrigel stared at Awa in bewilderment, Awa exclaimed, "Just then 'It' shot!" Herrigel was thrilled. He wrote, "And when I at last understood what he meant I couldn't suppress a sudden whoop of delight" (HERRIGEL 1953, p. 77; 1956, pp. 128–29).

This dramatic event constitutes the central episode of Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*. Therefore, it should be evaluated very carefully. What, exactly, is meant by "*It* shoots"?

I have two reservations regarding this doctrine. First, there is no indication that Awa ever taught "*It* shoots" to any of his disciples other than Herrigel. Second, the phrase "*It* shoots" is nowhere to be found in Herrigel's 1936 essay on Japanese archery, which served as the preliminary draft for the expanded account in his 1948 book, *Zen in the Art of Archery*.[11] The first reservation is based on a thorough reading of

[11] *New Note for the English Translation*: This assertion in my original essay is not correct. At the time I wrote it I relied on Shibata Jisaburō's Japanese translation (HERRIGEL 1982 [1941]) of Herrigel's 1936 essay since Herrigel's original German-language text could not be located in Japan. Recently I found the German publication in a remote Japanese library.

Sakurai's 1981 treatise, which with its extensive research constitutes the definitive account of Awa's life and teachings. In this work, the doctrine of "*It* shoots" appears only in relation to Herrigel.

Concerning my second reservation, notice how Herrigel's two accounts of the "target in darkness" incident differ between his 1936 essay and his 1948 book. As noted previously, in his 1936 essay Herrigel quoted Awa as having said:

> But what do you make of the second shot? Since it did not come from *me*, it was not *me* who made the hit. Here, you must carefully consider: Is it possible to even aim in such darkness? Can you still maintain that you cannot hit the target without aiming? Well, let us stand in front of the target with the same attitude as when we bow before the Buddha.
>
> (HERRIGEL 1982, pp. 47–48; emphasis in the original)

In Herrigel's 1948 account in *Zen in the Art of Archery*, this quotation was changed to the following:

About that same time Okumura Kiyoko 奥村紀代子 sent me another copy from Germany. On the basis of my analysis of Herrigel's German text, I must add this new note to revise the English version of this argument.

In Herrigel's 1936 essay the word "it" (German *es* or *Es*) appears twice in connection to shooting. On the first occasion Herrigel wrote: *daß es nun an der Zeit wäre, wenn "es" schösse* (1936a, p. 202)—which Shibata translated into Japanese as *mō hanareru toki da to iu koto o* もう離れる時だということを (1982, p. 35; "already being time to loose [the arrow]"). A few pages later Herrigel wrote: *Ich wußte ja: ich habe nun erfahren, was es bedeutet, wenn "Es" schießt* (1936a, p. 206)—which Shibata translated into Japanese as *Jitsu ni irareru to iu koto ga donna imi ka, watakushi wa ima koso shitta no de aru* 実に射られるということがどんな意味か，私は今こそ知ったのである (1982, p. 49; "At that moment I really knew what is meant by shooting"). Shibata did not translate "*es*" or "*Es*" as "it" (Japanese, *sore* それ) in either of these two passages.

Next I checked how Shibata had translated these same two passages in his first Japanese rendition (also 1936) of Herrigel's essay. In his initial translation Shibata rendered the first passage as *ima koso "soro" o iru toki da to* 今こそ「それ」を射る時だと (HERRIGEL 1936b, p. 1020; "that now is the time to shoot 'it'"). He rendered the second passage as *Jitsu ni watakushi wa "sore" o iru to iu no ga donna imi de aru ka, ima koso shitta no de aru* 実に私は「それ」を射るといふのがどんな意味であるか，今こそ知ったのである (HERRIGEL 1936b, p. 1027; "I really knew at that moment what is meant by shooting 'it'"). Although the 1982 reprint of Shibata's 1941 translation was revised to conform to modern orthography (see SHIBATA 1982b, p. 108) the translation of these two passages is essentially the same in both editions. It is clear, therefore, that Shibata revised his initial translation of *es* and *Es* from "it" (*sore*) into other expressions in 1941 when he prepared Herrigel's essay for publication as a book. In his afterword to the 1941 translation Shibata (1982a, p. 101) wrote: "Afterwards I realized that my initial translation of many passages was inadequate. I hoped that I could publish a revised and corrected translation." In other words, Shibata must have decided that his initial translation of the German *es* as "it" (*sore*) was mistaken.

I can no longer assert that the notion "*It* shoots" is entirely absent from Herrigel's original 1936 essay. This notion abruptly appears in two passages without any attempt to explain its meaning or to attribute special significance to it. In 1936 Herrigel was aware of "*It*," but beyond two short clauses where he mentioned it in passing he did not discuss it.

> But the second arrow which hit the first—what do you make of that? I at any rate know that it is not "I" who must be given credit for this shot. "It" shot and "It" made the hit. Let us bow down to the goal as before the Buddha!
>
> (HERRIGEL 1953, p. 85; 1956, pp. 141–42)

In response to these two reservations, the following hypotheses can be suggested:

1. Herrigel fabricated the doctrine of "*It* shoots" when he wrote *Zen in the Art of Archery*.
2. Miscommunication occurred between Awa and Herrigel concerning "*It* shoots."

Let us examine the first hypothesis. If Herrigel created "*It* shoots," then he must have conceived of it during the twelve-year interval that separated his 1936 essay and his 1948 book. The first hypothesis can be countered by saying that the essay format did not allow Herrigel to discuss archery in any great depth and detail, or that Herrigel himself was unable to completely solidify his understanding of "It" at that time. Moreover, Herrigel declared in his foreword to *Zen in the Art of Archery* that "The narration in this book contains not a single word that was not said directly by my teacher. I have not used any metaphors or comparisons that he did not use" (HERRIGEL 1956, p. 37).[12] Assuming that this declaration can be believed, I think that we can discard the first hypothesis. As I have already stated, however, Komachiya mediated between Awa and Herrigel in his role as interpreter, and I have doubts concerning the accuracy of his interpreting. These considerations lead me to conclude that the words Herrigel remembers are not the words that Awa actually spoke. That was not Herrigel's responsibility, however.

Now let us consider the second hypothesis. Concerning "*It* shoots" (*'Es' geschossen*; Japanese *sore ga iru* それが射る), NISHIO Kanji (1982, p. 32) points out that "We do not really know whether Awa actually said the Japanese word 'it' (*sore*) or whether Herrigel merely inserted the German-language third person pronoun for some Japanese words that were spoken to him. The German-language third person pronoun '*es*,' which corresponds to 'it' (*sore*), is an impersonal pronoun that expresses something which transcends the self." Concerning this point, Feliks F. HOFF (1994), past President of the German Kyudo Federation, offers the hypothesis that *'Es' geschossen* might have been used

[12] *Translator's Note*: Herrigel's foreword was not included in the 1953 English-language translation of *Zen in the Art of Archery*.

to translate the Japanese words *sore deshita* それでした (that's it). In Japanese, when a student performs well, it is perfectly natural for the teacher to say, "that's it." It simply means "What you did just now was fine." Perhaps these Japanese words of approval were translated to Herrigel as *Es geschossen.* Feliks Hoff suggests that this allowed Herrigel to misinterpret the meaning of the original Japanese words along the lines of "something called 'it,' which transcends the self, shoots."

While I support the thesis advanced by Feliks Hoff, I also believe that Herrigel must have anguished over the interpretation of "It." This anguish is suggested by the fact that it took twelve long years, even granting that a war intervened, before Herrigel was able to rewrite his initial 1936 essay on Japanese archery, which contains no mention of "It," and publish it as *Zen in the Art of Archery*, which has "It" as its centerpiece. This point is corroborated by the following statement, found in Herrigel's foreword to *Zen in the Art of Archery:*

> Over the past ten years—which for me were ten years of unremitting training—I made greater inner progress and even more improvement than before. From this condition of greater completeness, I acquired the conviction that I was now capable of explaining the "mystical" central issues of *kyūdō*, and thereupon resolved to present this new composition to the public. (HERRIGEL 1956, p. 36)

If the words that Awa cried out when Herrigel made a good shot were "that's it" (*sore deshita*) then they must have indicated a subjective "quality" that only a person accomplished in that art can understand. Judging from the context, the first time Awa praised Herrigel by saying "*It* shot" was when Herrigel was still practicing before the cylinder of straw (*makiwara*) and had not yet been allowed to shoot at a standard target. In other words, he had not yet advanced to the level of competency required for target shooting. It is utterly inconceivable that "It," which indicates a spiritual condition sufficiently advanced to involve something that transcends the self, could have made its appearance at a time when Herrigel had not yet progressed beyond being a beginner. It is far more natural to conclude that Awa simply praised Herrigel by saying, "That was good."

Herrigel, however, came to the following conclusion regarding the nature of "It":

> ...and just as we say in archery that "It" takes aim and hits, so here [speaking of Japanese swordsmanship] "It" takes the place of ego, availing itself of a facility and a dexterity which

> the ego only acquires by conscious effort. And here too "It" is only a name for something which can neither be understood nor laid hold of, and which only reveals itself to those who have experienced it. (HERRIGEL 1953, p. 104; 1956, p. 165)

Apparently "that's it" was mistakenly translated as "it shoots." Compounding this error, Herrigel understood "it" to indicate something that transcends the self. If that is what happened, then the doctrine of "*It* shoots" was born from the momentary slippage of meaning caused by the (mis-)translation of Japanese into German, which created an empty space that needed to be imbued with some kind of meaning.

Conclusion

In spite of the fact that Herrigel lived in Japan for six years, he remained to the end a credulous enthusiast who glorified Japanese culture. For instance, his writings include exaggerations, such as "Japanese people, every one of them, have at least one art that they practice all of their lives" (HERRIGEL 1982, p. 61), and misinformation, such as "Japanese archers have the advantage of being able to rely on an old and venerable tradition that has not once been interrupted regarding the use of the bow and arrow" (HERRIGEL 1982, p. 9; cf. HERRIGEL 1953, p. 95).[13] Yet, at the same time, we can concur with Sakurai when he wrote:

> Awa did use the expression "bow and Zen are one" (*kyūzen itchi* 弓禅一致). Nonetheless, he did not expound archery (*kyūdō*) or his *shadō* as a way leading to Zen. Regardless of how Herrigel acquired that impression, today when many Japanese have the same misunderstanding we should not place the blame on Herrigel. Rather, the responsibility must be placed squarely on our own Japanese scholars who have failed to clarify the difference between the arts of Japan and Zen.
>
> (SAKURAI 1981, p. 238)

The two mystical episodes that lie at the core of Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* constitute empty signs that emerged in the empty spaces created by a coincidental occurrence in "the target in darkness" episode and by the slippage of meaning in translating "*It* shoots." Roland Barthes (1915–1980) explained that this emptiness is the well-

[13] As we have already seen, the use of the bow and arrow in Japanese archery differs depending on the objective, whether it is foot archery, equestrian archery, or temple archery; and the practice of equestrian archery died out for a period during the Muromachi period while the practice of temple archery has disappeared in modern times.

spring for the mythic function. The intentionality of individuals and the ideology of societies breathe meaning into these empty spaces, and through this process we generate our myths. In *Zen in the Art of Archery,* the individual intentions of Herrigel, who searched for Zen-like elements in Japanese archery, gave birth to a modern myth.

I do not mean to suggest, however, that Japanese traditions of archery lacked any Zen influences. There exists, for example, an archery "catalog" (*Heki-ryū yumi mokuroku* 日置流弓目録) that was passed down by members of the Heki-ryū Insai-ha in the Ikeda Domain 池田藩, present-day Okayama Prefecture. (This catalog is now stored as part of the Ikedake Bunko 池田家文庫, in the Okayama University Library.) This catalog dates to the early Tokugawa period. It includes a section concerning rapid shooting entitled *Yumi hayaku ite yokitokoro no koto* 弓はやくいて能所の事, which contains the following entry:

> Dead Bow and Living Bow (*satsujinkyū katsujinkyū no koto* 殺人弓活人弓の事):
>
> Refers to the same concept as the dead blade (*satsujintō* 殺人刀) and living sword (*katsujinken* 活人剣) mentioned in the *Wumenguan* 無門関.
>
> "Dead blade" and "living sword" are Buddhist concepts taught in tantric (Shingon 真言) lineages. We take this principle and merely rename it the "dead bow [and living bow]." It is the same principle as expressed by the saying "Rejoice in death and live (*kōshi sokusei* 幸死即生); [Try to] insure life and die (*hissei sokushi* 必生即死)." [In other words,] when one's mind is troubled by fear, one's bow is dead. When one is willing to sacrifice oneself and regards lightly the loss of one's own life, then one's bow comes alive.

This passage definitely shows a Zen influence. The *Wumenguan* (1229; Japanese, *Mumonkan*), of course, is a famous Zen text that is studied by all Zen monks. The way that it is appropriated by this archery catalog, however, refers to the mental attitude of warriors. There is nothing that can be connected to the teachings of Awa or Herrigel.

Soon after it appeared *Zen in the Art of Archery,* boosted by the widespread popularity of D. T. Suzuki at that time, became an international bestseller. Thus, the myth of *Zen in the Art of Archery* began its march around the world. Eventually, it reached back to its original source of inspiration. In 1953 D. T. Suzuki, who was then in his eighty-third year and who was impressed by *Zen in the Art of Archery,* traveled from New York to Germany to visit Herrigel, who was then in his sixty-ninth year. Herrigel related to Inatomi Eijirō, one of the people who translated *Zen in the Art of Archery* into Japanese, that "Just the other day Professor

Suzuki came to visit and we spent the entire day deep in conversation. It was most enjoyable" (quoted in INATOMI 1956, p. 15).

Zen in the Art of Archery continues to be a bestseller. The Japanese language version, *Yumi to Zen* (1956), which represents the culmination of a circular translation process that rendered Awa's original Japanese words into German and, then, from German back into Japanese, has altered Awa's words to such an extent that it is impossible to ascertain his original expressions. Yet, in spite of this fact, many Japanese rely on it to acquire a certain fixed interpretation of Japanese archery. Faced with this situation, I have attempted to present a new reading of Herrigel and associated documents from a different perspective so as to clarify the mythic function that creates our conception of what constitutes "Japanese-ness." At the same time, I have attempted to counter the tendency that has prevailed up until now to read *Zen in the Art of Archery* with little or no critical awareness.

This paper represents only a preliminary analysis of *Zen in the Art of Archery*. The next step must compare and contrast Herrigel's account with descriptions of Japanese archery written by other foreigners during the same period in order to bring to light the idiosyncratic nature of *Zen in the Art of Archery* and the peculiar way in which it has shaped foreign understanding of Japan and foreign interpretations of Japanese archery in particular. Moreover, it is necessary to reposition Herrigel's first essay on Japanese archery within the milieu of the Berlin of 1936 when the storm of Nazism was raging.[14] Finally, it will be necessary to trace the process by which the ideas in *Zen in the Art of Archery*, the revised version of Herrigel's 1936 essay, were imported back into Japan and widely accepted, creating the illusion that the archery of Awa and Herrigel represented traditional Japanese archery. I hope to address these issues in the future.

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[14] *New Note for the English Translation*: Previous scholars have pointed out that Herrigel was a Nazi sympathizer and participated in Nazi party activities on his return from Japan, but they have never discussed the Herrigel-Nazi relationship in detail. I recently discovered post-war documents concerning Herrigel's Nazi affiliation, the reasons for his inauguration as the rector of the University of Erlangen, and his general behavior at the end of World War II. I hope to publish an analysis and an English translation of these documents in the near future.

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