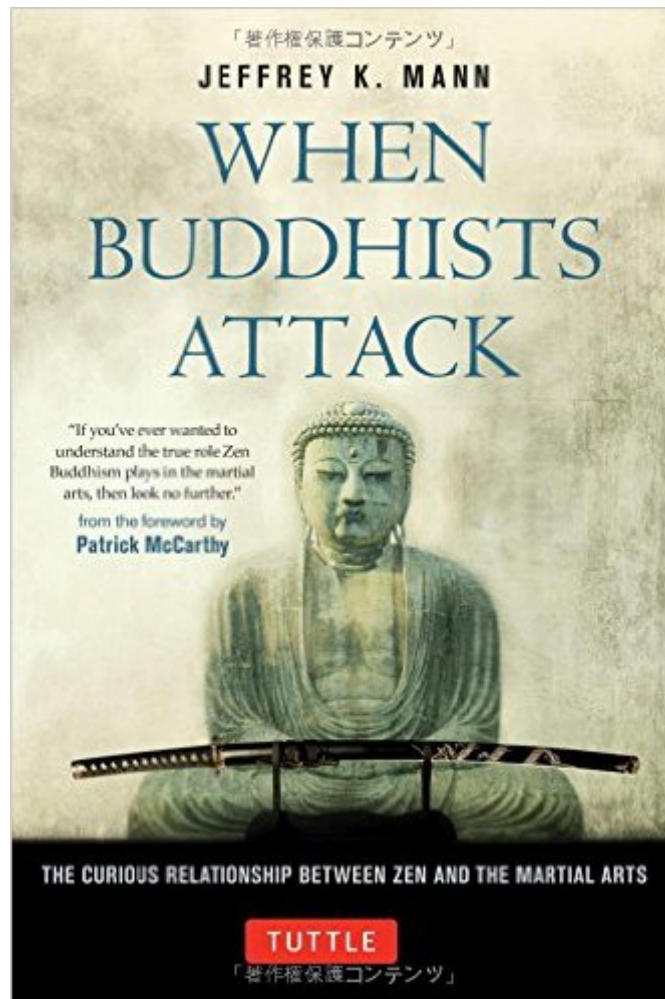


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When Buddhists Attack: The Curious Relationship Between Zen And The Martial Arts



Synopsis

Uncover the historical truth about Buddhist warrior monks with this informative and enlightening book. Film, television and popular fiction have long exploited the image of the serene Buddhist monk who is master of the deadly craft of hand-to-hand combat. While these media overly romanticize the relationship between a philosophy of non-violence and the art of fighting, *When Buddhists Attack: The Curious Relationship Between Zen and the Martial Arts* shows this link to be nevertheless real, even natural. Exploring the origins of Buddhism and the ethos of the Japanese samurai, university professor and martial arts practitioner Jeffrey Mann traces the close connection between the Buddhist way of compassion and the way of the warrior. This zen book serves as a basic introduction to the history, philosophy, and current practice of Zen as it relates to the Japanese martial arts. It examines the elements of Zen that have found a place in budo "the martial way" such as zazen, mushin, zanshin and fudoshin, then goes on to discuss the ethics and practice of budo as modern sport. Offering insights into how qualities integral to the true martial artist are interwoven with this ancient religious philosophy, this Buddhism book will help practitioners reconnect to an authentic spiritual discipline of the martial arts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jeffrey K. Mann is a Doctor of Religious Studies who has spent much time studying the Japanese martial arts. He has also investigated Zen practice and the history of Zen, and *WHEN BUDDHISTS ATTACK* (an intriguing title) is subtitled *THE CURIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ZEN AND THE*

MARTIAL ARTS. (I suppose WHEN ZENJI ATTACK would have been too esoteric a title.) WHEN BUDDHISTS ATTACK put me in mind of the many pop-culture references to Zen and to martial arts that have (for better or worse) permeated Western culture. Does anyone really think that feeding their dog ZEN PUPPY DOG TREATS is going to make the dog more mindful? I was reminded of Mr. Miyagi's response when Daniel-San asked, "I always thought karate came from Buddhist temples and stuff" in The Karate Kid: "You too much TV." Regardless of the fact that a cookbook entitled THE ZEN OF ITALIAN FOOD is in print, the complex interrelationship between Zen and the martial arts deserves responsible investigation. After all, the Buddha himself was of the Hindu Kshatriya Warrior Caste. Mann spends a little too much time in the early pages of the book recounting the legends surrounding the Buddha's birth and life. As an ordained senior Zen student, I have yet to meet a Zen teacher, Oriental or Occidental, who accepts the story of the Buddha's life literally in the same sense that many Christians accept the canonical gospels as providing the facts of Jesus' life. Very little is known about the Buddha, actually, beyond the bare facts that he was born, lived, preached, and died approximately 2600 years ago.

Mann's book considers one of Asian history's intriguing little questions: How is it that one of the most pacifistic of world religions, i.e. Buddhism, came to be integrally connected to some of the world's most fearsome and devastatingly effective warriors? Specifically, the author looks at the connection of Zen Buddhism to warrior traditions like the samurai of Japan and "to a lesser extent" the Shaolin monks of China. It should be noted that while Zen was one of the most firmly established intersects of Buddhism and martial arts; it's not the only one. Branches of Vajrayana (esoteric) Buddhism had their own warrior-monk traditions which he mentions as well as Shugendō's (combines Buddhist, Shinto, and Taoist elements) warrior connection. The book is heavily weighted toward the Japanese martial arts. This may be in part owing to the author's particular background, but also because many of the works that establish this firm connection between Zen and martial arts are Japanese (e.g. works by Takuan Sōhō, Yagyū Munenori, and even Miyamoto Musashi.) It's worth noting that both Buddhists and modern martial artists have tried to downplay or outright deny the connection between these traditions. However, Mann suggests the connection is undeniable in the face of historical evidence, and that it even has a logic that belies the apparent contradiction. (Note: Presumably many Buddhists deny this connection because they want to distance themselves from the taint of violence, and many modern martial artists deny it so their religious students won't ditch the art because it isn't 100% secular [or based entirely in the student's religious belief structure.]

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