



BODY Dialogue

Aoki Sensei's Lecture: Kumite, Meditation, and Tenshin

Matsuri Gasshuku, Shuzenji, Japan
5 May 2004

lecture by Hiroyuki Aoki

Interpreted and translated by Lee Seaman

Compiled by David Franklin

[Editor's note: this is a transcript of a lecture by Mr. Hiroyuki Aoki, the founder of Shintaido. Some of the content relates to the practice of mudras and Shintaido meditation techniques. This article is presented for the insights it may provide into the philosophy of Shintaido, and not as instructional material or a manual for practice. We suggest that practitioners interested in studying Shintaido meditation seek in-person guidance from a qualified instructor.]

Thank you very much; it's nice to be here tonight. I wanted to say something first about listening to translators. I'll be speaking for about two hours: that's an hour, and an hour for interpretation. But that's an extremely long time for an interpreter to work. So I want you to listen really hard. Recently I've been somewhat removed from the main core of Shintaido. I've been working with children in the Philippines and with calligraphy. But when I saw you all today, I realized that the

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Master Instructor H.F. Ito: When the Right Time Comes

*Based on Ito's Remarks at the Closing Ceremony
January 2005 Pacific Shintaido Kangeiko
Mt Madonna Center, Watsonville, California
interpreted by Lee Seaman
notes taken by David Franklin
edited by Bela Breslau, Tomi Nagai-Rothe,
& Juliette Farkouh*

There's a saying that in life you can't understand certain things until the right time has come. This gasshuku really brought home the meaning of this saying for me.

o The healing sword:

"Hitofuri no tachi no kiseki wa kigo de aru!"

"The locus described by the swing of the sword is itself a sign."

I first heard this phrase from Aoki-sensei when I was in Rakutenkai. When I was in charge of Shintaido headquarters in the beginning of the 1970s, I used it as a slogan for Shintaido in Japan. It just seemed like a cool and powerful phrase but I never searched for any deeper meaning.

Jump ahead to 2005 and Christina Cross's presence at this gasshuku. This the first Shintaido event Christina has attended in 15 years. Some of you may not know her and her history. She was a driving force in the early days of Shintaido of America in California. It was a time that was very much like Rakutenkai for the Bay Area. There was a strong pioneer spirit in Shintaido then, soon after I first arrived in the US and, in fact, at that time our organization was called "Rakutenkai Shintaido of California."

It means a great deal to me to have Christina back. Thankful is not a big enough word to describe what I felt when I saw her practicing with us. My appreciation also goes to Byron Russell and Naomi Caspe who encouraged her to come to this gasshuku!

Saturday night after Michael Thompson's lecture I talked with
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SHINTAIDO FARM UPDATE

In May of 2005 we broke ground on a new Shintaido center in Deerfield, Massachusetts, the first dojo in the United States owned by Shintaido members and dedicated solely to the practice of Shintaido.

For more information on the Shintaido Farm, please see the News item at <http://www.shintaido.org/news/index.html>. Also, please check the web site for an announcement of an Opening Day ceremony for the new center.



We need your help. Please come see the Shintaido Farm, practice here, and think about how you would improve it—what you personally could do to help us make this a better space.

We're hoping that this place will be a center from which ripples of Shintaido will emanate in an ever widening circle. Please come join us! For questions, please contact Bela Breslau or Stephen Billias at 595 River Road, Deerfield, MA 01342. Phone: 413 773-1926

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

The next issue of *Body Dialogue* will be in January, 2006. Please submit articles, poems, pictures to the editor, Roby Newman: namwen67@mindspring.com or 650 340-1792. Deadline for submissions is November 15, 2005.

Published by Shintaido of America (SoA), a non-profit organization which produces educational materials on the practice and teaching of Shintaido.

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Aoki sensei lecture

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goal of opening the heart and opening the body is really being carried on by you. When I used to do Shintaido more actively as an instructor, I worked hard to get people to open their bodies and their hearts. But now I'm working really hard to get them to open their wallets [for charitable donations *BD Editor*].

I think you've all heard rumors about what I've been doing with Tenshin and calligraphy, and you may feel that I'm talking a lot about Tenshin. But that's okay, I heard of a priest who talked about nothing but Jesus Christ for fifty years! [laughter] Anyway, tonight I'll be talking about Tenshin philosophy. And we'll be talking about kumite in keiko, and about meditation.

I want to talk about the relationship between these three points. I want to start with the relationship to kumite, and some discussion of why that is so important. In kumite timing is essential. Then I'll go from there to meditation, and finish up with Tenshin.

At first in practice, you work on adapting to your partner. The level above that is to actively meet your partner. When you get to a higher level than that, you actually make contact with the person before you meet them. If you get to that level, you'll be able to meet people where they are. That leads to a very close relationship with nature. And from there, in Japan we talk about Dai Shizen or "Greater Nature," or the world. If you meet with Greater Nature, it's really a meeting with the world, with the cosmos. And then you come to understand the importance of being unified with a kind of universal energy, a great large energy that exists at this level. That's what we call "Tenshin."

"Rakuten" -- the translation is "paradise," but actually it means "heavenly happiness" -- is where this happens. I think all of you have heard the word Rakutenkai, the name of the original group that founded Shintaido. I wanted to call our new group *Rakutenkai*, but unfortunately the word "rakuten" has come to have a lighter meaning in Japanese recently, so we decided not to use "Rakutenkai" and called it *Tenshinkai* instead.

Now I'd like to talk about something that really has the most application for the advanced people. If you are a relative beginner to Shintaido, it may be hard for you to understand, but I encourage you to pick up on what you can, and jump on the understanding of the people around you, and catch that wave. When we do kumite, we bow first. And then after that there's the feeling of starting, ready to go. The feeling begins like a little shoot coming out of the ground. Sometimes in English you say "on your mark, get set, go." If we use that as an example, "on your mark" is the very beginning of the energy or the force to go forward. And the next one is the full feeling, the full readiness of being ready to attack or move forward. Then the brain gives the instructions to the muscles to

move. There is ki -- the ki energy -- "manki" means to be full of ki, and "rikki" means to have the initiation of ki. And after the brain says "go" but before the body actually moves, there's always a little interval. Just like when a batter hits the ball, there's always a little bit of time before he can actually run.

作 動	発 動	満 気	虚	立 気	虚	構 え る	礼
sado	hatsudo	man ki	kyo	rikki	kyo	kamaeru	rei
action	action initiated: C-timing	get set: B-timing	gap <small>(the more you concentrate, the more there will be gaps)</small>	on your mark: A-timing	gap — mind is absent	get ready	bow

Points of timing in kumite

We have the bow or rei over at that end [points to wall chart]. Then there's the "on your mark, get set, go." And there's a space between "go" and actually going. So imagine you are watching a cowboy western. The doors swing open, and a guy walks into the bar. The door opening when the tough guy comes in -- that's rei. He walks in the door. And he gets ready to grab his gun, like this -- that's "on your mark," when his hand starts to move, or it's almost starting to move. It's like a declaration of war. When his hand actually touches the pistol, that's "get set." That's "manki." Not "monkey," "manki." [laughter]

This is when he actually draws his gun. By the time you get to the IIC (International Instructor Council) level, you should be able to understand that first timing. So if somebody's coming from behind you, you can catch their feeling. When I'm in the dojo I can catch just about 100% when people come from behind me. But when the room changes and the environment changes, it's quite different. The details are available in Japanese and English in this little book, which is available for sale through the office. If you want to develop the ability to catch this sort of thing -- we call it "A timing" -- you have to first be able to really unify with your partner.

Oh, I forgot one thing -- this position of "rikki," this "on your mark" position -- it moves. It shifts all the time. Sometimes you have the "on your mark" position, the A timing, before the bow. That would be like somebody walking in through the bar door with their hand already on their pistol. There are people like that, too. So you really don't know where "rikki" is going to happen on this timeline [points to wall chart]. I worked with someone who was using a pistol and drawing on me from behind me. He was really fast. He could draw in about 3-tenths of a second. But we tried it

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forty times, and I was able to avoid the bullet every time. (Please don't worry, they were plastic bullets!) So then the number two guy in the United States, who could draw in 0.007 seconds, came to try it with me. Most people take longer than that to blink.

I was about 53 years old then, and it was the tensest kumite I've ever had in my life. He told me that, out of a hundred shots, if I could avoid even one he would consider himself defeated. But actually I got about 6 out of 10. What I learned from him is that he didn't have any "rikki" or "manki." Those weren't present in his movement at all. In order to become a champion in the United States, he had to work extremely hard to delete those from his movement. Also, the pistols they use for that kind of practice are really short, and they don't pull them out, they just turn them in the holster. This is what I saw in the old movies [mimes drawing gun from holster]...But they do it like this [mimes turning gun without drawing]. Really difficult to catch that feeling.

It's very important to be in unification with your partner in order to get to that kind of sensitivity. So it's interesting while you're doing kumite to continually keep checking yourself, and see how well you're doing, how well it's working in your body, how well it's working in your partner's body. That's the purpose of kumite.

At first I couldn't get it at all, and I really had to spend some serious study time trying to work on how to catch that feeling. We have lots of keiko in Shintaido for getting from this area [indicating "kumite" on the wall diagram] to Ten. But the best way to practice this, to get this feeling, is through Meiso or meditation. [Indicating diagram] Going this way, through kumite, we have keiko of movement. Going this way, through Meiso, we have keiko of silence, or stillness. So this (kumite to Ten) side is analytical, or divided. This (Meiso to Ten) side is holistic or integrated. The holistic or integrated side has to do with incorporating, including, and being unified with everything around you. And as we go that way, gradually more and more movement comes out, and gradually it becomes more and more detailed. Again: to get connected to Ten, the best way is through meditation.

I'd like to talk a bit about which meditation techniques are useful. We have the Taimyo kata in Shintaido, and within the Taimyo kata we have the ten-part meditation. And you may have seen this particular mudra [demonstrates], it's not actually part of the ten-part meditation in Taimyo. It's called "Ji-on-in." A really simple way to look at meditation is it means sitting down and doing Mokuso. First when you do Mokuso, you bring everything down. Your feeling down, your thinking down, your expression down, your breathing down, everything comes down. And then naturally your body becomes very quiet.

When you do that, gradually you forget yourself, and you become one with the things that are around you. In a way, your body becomes immaterial, and your spiritual being

becomes the important thing. Then you'll have a situation where you begin to see things individually and very clearly. This is really important, so let me go over it one more time. First, close your eyes. Let your feeling go down. Let your breath go down. You get very quiet. As you become quiet, your self vanishes. As your self vanishes, the boundaries between you and other things also vanish. When that happens, you begin to see the people around you, each person, as a very clear individual. And at the same time, you begin to perceive the echoes between one person and another, the way we affect each other, the way we relate to each other.

Karl Jung gave a very interesting example that relates to what we're talking about. He said the islands in the ocean look as if they're independent, but actually below the water they are all connected. I was impressed when I read this. It's a deep perception and extremely accurate. But to tell the truth, Jung wasn't the first one to say it. A Chinese philosopher had that insight about 2300 years ago, a famous Taoist philosopher named Zhuang-zi (Chuang Tzu). When you get that quiet and unified, you begin to see the other person very well, and you can also see their movement very well. But don't forget that even if you get very good at this in the dojo, it may not work outside. So please remember, we may think of these as very separate parts of the practice, but actually they're one keiko.

I never used to say much about meditation, and when the former Technical Committee was actively working with me, we didn't talk about it much there, either. We didn't need to: we were doing such strong gedan-barai and attacks, really hard keiko, that we would get to this state without having to do what we think of as meditation. Now I'd like to talk about four different postures for meditation. These are from within -- well, three of them are within the ten-part meditation.

To get connected to *Ten* (heaven) the best way is through meditation.

Each of these ends in "-i". So when I say this meditation pose [demonstrates] is called "Ji-on-i," the "-i" on the end means "posture." "Ji-on" is the name of the concept, and we call the posture "Ji-on-i". Other postures have names like "kon-go-i" or "jo-shin-i". These postures are not very difficult to do, but they're extremely difficult to write about and talk about. So let's just do them.

Ji-on-i. Right hand in a fist, left hand covers it. Your fingers should be at about eye-height. Bring both hands up gently. The written Chinese characters actually mean "to lift something heavy." In terms of Yin and Yang, this is a Yin pose. You want a strong posture, the same kind of posture you would use if you were lifting something heavy. Eyes should be closed or just a little bit open. This is a pose of taking in energy from the world into your own body. Ji-on-i is a useful

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posture if you have lost confidence, or if you are feeling internal or don't have enough energy. It's very good for bringing energy into your body. From this posture you're protecting yourself while attacking, while giving, while moving out, so it's good if you need encouragement.

Kon-go-i. This is a Yang posture. If you've gone to Japanese

金合位	<i>kon gou i</i>	diamond position
净心位	<i>jo shin i</i>	pure heart position
無相位	<i>mu sou i</i>	no thought position
慈恩位	<i>ji on i</i>	mercy position

位 *i* = position

印 *in* = mudra

temples, you've seen the temple guardian statues. Some of them have their mouths open, and some of them are closed. Those stylized lions or dogs -- some of them have their mouths open, some of them are closed. This one's open. So reach up, completely high. Now bring it down. Your elbows are apart. If you go from above down, naturally your elbows will be up, and that's correct. But if you move your hands up from a lower position, your elbows will drop, and that's not correct. This posture is done in kaiho-tai (open) koshi, just like Tenshingoso. Feet are just a little bit wider apart than normal stance, and open. And your belly sticks out a little. But if your belly already sticks out, I'm not sure how to advise you on this point. [laughter] Please work it out for yourself.

Open your eyes wide for this particular movement. Most people, when they close their eyes, tend to go inward. This is an eyes-wide-open movement. Your line of sight should be across your fingertips, out into the distance. If you are in a chair, it's a good idea to start sitting like this (leans forward), then straighten your upper body (sits up straight). If you sit in a chair, it will help to put a hard pillow under the back part of your hips. If you are in seiza [sitting on the floor with feet tucked under], put a cushion between your hips and your feet. This will stretch your back a bit and let your stomach come out. Maybe I'm making you nervous, talking so much about stomachs? [laughter]

Find a spot on the wall, and sight through your fingers, so that between the two fingertips you have that spot lined up. It's a good idea to turn off the lights and use a candle, because a candle moves. Even if there's no draft, it will move a little, so it's interesting. Also, you can use the candle as a way of measuring, if you want to meditate for a certain amount of time. After doing a little work with a candle, you can find out how long it takes to burn down a certain distance and

then you can use that as an approximate measure of how long you have been practicing. This kind of meditation is good practice for making yourself stronger. Your existence, your being, becomes much stronger from this training. If you work with a lot of people and you need to encourage and support and direct them, I highly recommend this practice.

Jo-shin-i. This posture is good for purifying your heart. The first two are different but they're both more confrontational. The third one is a healing posture. It's very good for ordering, purifying, and deepening the energy in your body. It will give you a gentle and peaceful heart. As you enter deep meditation, you will be able to truly see the goodness, or the Buddha nature, in each person. And as you go deeper and deeper, you'll not only be able to bring out the goodness in other people, but also to become more unified with nature.

Right hand on top, left hand on the bottom. Very gently. Actually, I was thinking about this when we created Tenshingoso, and I was thinking about having it come from here (indicates location of Jo-shin-i) and then down. We don't do that now, we go straight down. But this posture is hidden within Tenshingoso in the transition from O to Um.

Muso-i This is probably the one you are most familiar with. The hands turn like this (demonstrates) from jo-shin-i into Muso-i. The beginning and end of Tenshingoso are Muso-i. This is a particularly important pose in Shintaido meditation. It's especially good for becoming completely *mu* or completely *ku*, completely empty or completely nothing. But if you find it's very difficult for you to get there, and you're practicing and practicing and practicing and not making it, don't worry about it. Just keep in mind that it would be nice if you get there sometime, and don't worry about whether you make it or not this time. Just practice.

Traditionally, the word "in" is used to translate the Sanskrit term "mudra," which means seal, mark, or gesture, such as the traditional hand gestures seen in Buddhist and other iconography. The word "-i" means posture, position, or stage (of consciousness). Because in Shintaido we believe that our whole body acts a mudra which works like an antenna for receiving as well as forwarding messages, we use "-i" instead of "-in."

I forgot to mention this earlier, but this (demonstrates Ji-on-i) is a *jigo-tai*, a defense posture. Kon-go-i is a kaiho-tai posture. Jo-shin-i can be done in two postures, one is straight, seiritsu-tai; or you can also do it yoki-tai. When you do yoki-tai you just want to let go a little bit.

If you are doing a lot of keiko, I recommend the top two. But if you want to not think about keiko, to relax and enjoy yourself and have a nice feeling, I recommend the bottom two. And the bottom one I think you can see is completely yoki-tai. When you're doing meditation practice, please pick a place that is not too cold, not too hot, not rainy, and not uncomfortable. Pick a nice place to practice. But, I don't know why, I heard of somebody recently who was developing a practice of

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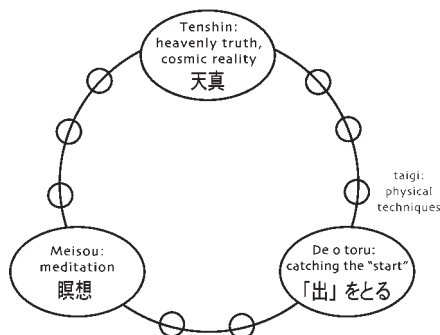
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standing in waterfalls in the middle of winter. [laughter] NHK, which is a big broadcasting company in Japan, wanted to do a program on waterfall training. So they had me come. It's the middle of winter, and I'm in the waterfall and out of the waterfall and in the waterfall and out of the waterfall. It took all day: my face was completely blue, I was frozen to death, and when they broadcast it -- it was about ten seconds.

Once you start meditating, you can't move until you stop. Not at all, not even if there's an earthquake. If you're interested in doing meditation, it's a good idea to make a schedule. Of course this doesn't apply just to meditation. It works for other things too. If you don't have a regular schedule, you'll lose track, and you won't practice regularly.

There's one more thing I'd like to say about meditation poses. There's a very famous French thinker, an actor I believe, who said, "I don't cry because I'm sad; I'm sad because I'm crying." I thought about that. There are a lot of statues of bodhisattvas doing meditation, and they show us good postures. Those represent the experiences of very high-level buddhas, who have reached a level of spiritual development that is expressed in that posture. By watching and copying the postures that they use, or the postures that are shown in those statues, you can experience the world that those buddhas or bodhisattvas have entered. So if you find some of these practices that you can follow, some statue that you can copy, it will be very useful for your practice. There are a lot of statues of Japanese buddhas in the Boston Museum [of Fine Arts]. By looking at those statues, or by practicing the mudras that we have described here, it's possible to reach a level that you couldn't imagine.

Now we're getting to the third part -- remember we had the three circles? We're getting to Tenshin now. In order for us to go through keiko to get to Tenshin, to get to that high number three level on our chart, first we have to get rid of any tension in our bodies. Next, adjust or regulate your



breathing and quiet your body. Next, quiet your heart. You do that by dropping your feeling. As a result of that, we enter a very deep world. Most of us though, don't have a great many hours during the week to practice, so we need to find some way of also doing it in our regular lives. It's your life, so it's important to live it as fully as possible.

I'm sure you want to make your heart pure and to make your thinking as pure and clear as you can. It's particularly

difficult to have a pure heart or a clean heart as we get older. I remember the feeling of being young and having a very pure and clean intention. But it seems like the older I get, the harder it is. Maybe it's sin, or maybe just things stacking up, but it's difficult to keep a pure heart. Especially when we get past 60, you have to work hard to be reborn and re-dedicated to this desire.

There's something you should know, though, if you are really interested in having a pure heart and going into this deep place. If you really reach Mu, or "Munen Muso," this feeling of being empty and clean, and people look at you who are not empty and clean, their own selves will come back at them, like being reflected in a mirror. So people who have impure intentions themselves will look at you and misunderstand what you are doing.

It's hard to think about or talk about -- a difficult topic. But I want you to be aware that sometimes when you're quite clear in your own self, others will look at you from outside and project their own feelings onto you. And then they will be convinced that you have these feelings. If the world were full of good people, we would never have this problem. But there are some people who are just not quite that good. So maybe this will be of use to you if you ever encounter this situation.

There's another thing I'd like to mention. Sometimes when you are around people who are working intently on their own personal practice, those people may seem cold, or uncaring, or not really caring about us. That is the kind of work I'm inviting the members of the former Technical Committee to engage in. Anyway, if you keep going with all of this, even though there will be confusion and complications, you will get to a point where you are released into a much larger world. And you will find that your soul will leap into a new universe of freedom. I look forward to seeing all of you reach into that bright, wide universe of freedom.

[Aoki Sensei then led the group in meditation. BD Editor] ●●●

When the Right Time Comes

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Christina, and we caught up on news and what's happening in our lives. It turns out that just before this gasshuku she caught a cold, and was thinking "Maybe I should stay home?" She wasn't sure what to do. She wanted to attend, but she also wanted to take care of her health. So in her mind she imagined doing Tenso and Shoko - a sword movement which she studied more than 20 years ago when she was actively practicing Shintaido. Her cold subsided and she was able to come with her kids to the gasshuku.

When I heard Christina's story, I reached another level of understanding of Aoki-sensei's phrase "the locus of the swing of the sword..." When I was in Rakutenkai, I simply appreciated this as the words of a multi-talented artist, drawing an image in space with a sword instead of a painting brush. After listening to Christina's experience, I started appreciat-

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When the Right Time Comes

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ing it as the words of a medicine man who can change the direction of people's lives and the dimensions of their world by sharing a simple exercise.

In fact, for the last 10 years, besides introducing Shintaido as physical exercise, I have often used Tenshingoso and Eiko as a tool of white magic, to celebrate weddings, purify people's homes & properties, and to create a bridge to Ten/Heaven/Paradise for people at the end of their lives. I kept pushing myself. I simply believed that the harder I worked, the more effective my white magic would be. After listening to Christina's story, I understood that we need very little "power" to change our destiny. We only need to do Tenshingoso & Eiko sincerely and innocently.

o The Sensei-Student Relationship

After Michael's lecture [Michael Thompson, Shintaido Master Instructor], Pia asked: "What is this connection, this exchange between instructor and student?" I immediately started to think about how I would respond to that question. In his lecture, Michael mentioned the phrase: "I would like to believe..."

The relationship between teacher and student does not guarantee that the teacher has the answers and the truth. We would like to believe that the teacher has some of the truth. The student/teacher relationship is built on the shared desire that the teacher will give something true. As teachers we desire to give it, and as students we desire to receive it, and that interface builds and vitalizes the student-teacher relationship. That's what provides the strength of the connection. The following is a poem by Louis Aragon, which I read in Japanese in the 1980s:

*Manabu towa, Shinri wo Mune ni kizamu koto!
Oshieru towa, tomoni Kibo wo kataru koto!!*

In English (my translation):

*Leaning is engraving "truth" in your heart.
Teaching is a conversation of shared hopes.*

I am grateful for Pia's good question which reminded me of my favorite poem and allowed me to appreciate Aragon's message once again.

o "Tonton" Thompson

For those of you who are newer to Shintaido, you may not know Michael Thompson all that well. You may not know how many Shintaido "children" Michael has: he was always good at finding bright young men and women and helping them grow. Some were his students from the beginning and others were already studying Shintaido with me or with other instructors when Michael's influence helped them develop. These "children" include David Franklin, Gianni Rossi, Funakawa Atsushi, Tony Hammick, Michael Bogenshutz, Shin Aoki (and maybe some of his students), Eva Thaddeus, Margaret Guay, Jennifer Hicks, and many others, too many to mention. So, now when I think of all the people he has helped to grow in Shintaido, I say to myself: "Wow, Michael is really something!"

...We need very little "power" to
change our destiny. We only need to
do Tenshingoso & Eiko sincerely and
innocently...

Michael waits until the time is right. Or maybe he waits until the right young man or woman comes along. I think this is what Michael is especially good at, being able to help shape and carve the person to be the best they can be.

I realized at this gasshuku that I was one of these people who grew up under Michael's guidance. From my point of view, I moved to California and started teaching Shintaido 30 years ago...but, from his point of view, 30 years ago Michael scouted me from Japan and started shaping and carving my talent with his "passive" approach.

o Grace from the Grand Maestro

If you know about the Shintaido of America Board of Directors, you may know that Michael and I are lifetime members. Since I had a martial arts background before Shintaido and had done it for a long time before Michael, I might have been a little better at demonstrating the martial side of Shintaido than Michael. But, his intelligence/aesthetic sense/direct insight by which he can find what/who is genuine and who/what is fake is much sharper and more correct than mine. As a board member, Michael's advice has always been spot on, really accurate. I think our combination was essential. If Michael and I had not worked together, Shintaido would be nothing like what it is today.

So I want to mention the length of our history -- for 30 years we've been working together. I want to thank Michael for all his contributions to Shintaido of America, and I want to celebrate his Doshu/Shintaido Maestro (the highest rank of Shintaido Instructor) examination that happened at the Matsuri gasshuku in the Spring of 2004. And finally, by reviewing our 30 year partnership, I have started realizing how much grace both of us have received from another man. He is the one who engraved truth in our hearts by sharing his Faith, Hope, and Love more than 30 years ago, the one who found us, kept us around, put us together, and helped us become the best people we could be! His name is Hiroyuki Aoki.

Thank you, Aoki-sensei! You are our Grand Maestro!! ●●●

Cycles of Inquiry:

Tenshingoso and Action Research

Luis Kong, Ed.D.

While completing my doctoral dissertation in Adult Education at National-Louis University in Chicago, I began to see the uses of Shintaido as an action process in educational research, as well as an energizing and sustaining force during my studies. Being a research scholar and a Shintaido practitioner was a synergistic combination—one fed the other. This article will discuss the use of Tenshingoso as a powerful mirror for research.

The Process

My primary research method was Action research. This type of research focuses on a particular social or organizational change as an outcome of the research study. This research process, used in education and in business, is a constantly evolving cycle as new knowledge is discovered through inquiry. During the course of a study, attention is paid to the patterns and themes that emerge from interviews, observations, dialogues and document analysis. Both the researcher and participants attain an increasing awareness and knowledge as a consequence of their mutual interaction; action research is grounded in people's experiences.

**Tenshingoso is a movement toward
an appreciative future where the
importance of our past experience,
our stories of success, instigate a
flow of inspiration toward our
dreams, values and ideals...**

My research focused on immigrant civic participation in citizenship schools, particularly how participants of these schools develop leadership skills to become involved in community action and decision-making. Action research is a cyclical process comprised of identifying an issue, finding the facts, planning a course of action, taking the first action, evaluating the action taken, revising the plan and taking a second action, and so on. Although following these steps is important, the process is not linear. What is important is the quality of the information derived from the inquiry and how it will be used to make a significant and positive change in an organizational system.

The Movement

How does Tenshingoso fit into this picture? Tenshingoso is a movement toward an appreciative future where the importance of our past experience, our stories of success, instigate a flow of inspiration toward our dreams, values and ideals which in turn "slice the sky" in exploration of creative leader-

ship and sustainable resources. In time, this exploration will lead us to embracing the universe as we give back to all things. Tenshingoso is a holistic, relational action-oriented practice that engages our surroundings and the people in it. Through this lens, Tenshingoso has been useful in my research as a platform from which to leap into inquiry.

The process I used for my research study was closely aligned with the five Tenshingoso movements of Um, A, E, I, and O. I have interpreted these movements as core phases in my research process, with each phase representing a cycle that builds upon the previous phase. My action research process, Cycles of Inquiry, consists of five phases: Origin, Conception, Learning, Knowing and Doing. I connected each Tenshingoso movement phase with a research process, for example Um with Origin and A with Conception. I used the Tenshingoso movements to help me conceptualize each phase and assist me in focusing deeply on each area of my research process.

Cycles of Inquiry

UM - Origin:

Every person sees reality with his or her particular lens; there is no such thing as a neutral observer. I begin to sort my origin (i.e., race, class, culture, life experiences) by settling into my place of stillness or "UM," focusing on the self with questions such as - Who am I? What is my story? What are my significant memories? How do those remembrances influence my life today? This stage is about going back to the source. Our origin is a place of discovery.



A - Conception:

Conception is about pursuing one's dreams and asking sustaining, life-giving questions. The reality people create is preceded by the questions asked. In conceiving my study, I chose to look for citizenship schools with successful experiences in mobilizing immigrants to become more active participants in society. I experienced the "A" in Tenshingoso as a creative opening and a chance to envision my dream for this research. What questions did I need to ask? By reaching behind me and by trusting in my past experiences and knowledge, I could look upwards into the creative heaven for inspiration on ways to explore the world. The critical question I initially asked was - What do the experiences of immigrants within grassroots citizenship programs teach us about

Continued on following page

the development of healthy, visionary human systems capable of enduring contributions toward social change, community collaboration and leadership? This question evolved into other questions as I progressed through the research study.

E - Learning:

As in Tenshingos "E," the learning phase of the study took me from the conception of pursuing my dream and questions for the study to investigating the world and connecting with a selective sample of people. In research, this step comes about in the form of interviews, conversations, focus groups, observations, field notes and publications. I am reaching out and exploring the world by using the research design created in the conception phase. The participants are learning about my sincerity and intention in pursuing my research and in turn, I am learning about them. This is the place where I can make changes in my approach as I find new resources and connect with others. This is a significant phase where relationship plays an important role.

I - Knowing:

After I reach out and explore the world by asking questions, engaging in inquiry, and connecting outward, I bring back that information for evaluation and reflection. In a matter of speaking, I reach out in "I" to expand and enrich my interpretation of what I have learned. This type of initiative and collective knowledge helps me regain a connection with reality, and was repeated several times in my research until I was satisfied with my findings. In order to engage deeper in the knowing, it was important to engage in dialogue about what I found with the participants of the study and other persons who could shed light on the themes, patterns and categories discovered in the learning process. The cycle of "E" and "I" can repeat as many times as it is needed to gain a deeper understanding of what has being inquired about and to begin to design a course for leadership and action.

O - Doing:

This research phase unifies what has been learned from critical reflection and dialogue on the themes and topics of the findings, and brings them back to creative action. In Tenshingos, I reach up with "O" to the creative universe, embracing all that I know and then acting on that knowledge to make an impact on the world by giving back to it. This is a circular process that touches on all previous phases. I am using what I know to make an impact in society through social and organizational change: in my research, the knowledge I gained will provide me with the steps to build a stronger immigrant rights movement through citizenship schools that involve participants in civic and political activities such as voting, rights-based advocacy, and leadership skills. Doing is about taking our dreams and realizing our destiny through leadership in action to bring about change.

The Mirror

Tenshingos is a mirror to the action research process, involving both the researcher and participants in the cycle of discovery and doing. Tenshingos kumite or partner practice could be said to have this quality, as everyone involved is an active part of the research process. By immersing myself in learning through the phases of investigating my origin, discovering and conceiving my dreams, learning from inquiry, critically reflecting on the deeper knowledge of what I am studying, and finally, acting on that knowledge, I can make an impact in an organization, a relationship, and the world.

Postscript

Tenshingos provided a way to visualize every step of the study and allowed me to remain focused on my research. My doctoral experience has in turn energized my Shintaido practice. Anyone interested in my research study - Immigrant Civic Participation and Leadership Development in Citizenship Schools -go to www.instituteforcommunitylearning.org. I would be interested in any feedback on the five phases of the Cycles of Inquiry I have devised. Last, but not least, I was awarded a doctorate in education on May Day 2005. ●●●

Foreign Exchange

[This winter I began an email exchange with Koichiro Fujii, a Japanese graduate student in the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Chicago. Koichiro had ordered a few items from the online bookstore. As we exchanged emails about his order, he began to write about his experiences with Shintaido, both here and in Japan. I found Koichiro's writing to be both elegant and insightful, and have compiled some of his emails into the following article. Body Dialogue Editor]

Koichiro: Recently I have been practicing Shintaido and Jodo alone by the shore of Lake Michigan (our campus is right on the lake shore and we even have a beach) and I enjoy it because the lake and the sky is so beautiful, but I still haven't the guts to do Eiko Dai alone with voice in public. I don't even know if it's appropriate to do that, not just from the public's perspective but from my inner perspective of not wanting to be too out of sync with the environment and the people around me. Does Shintaido have any instructions about practicing Eiko Dai alone in public? I would be interested to know.

BD Editor: I wrote Koichiro some words of encouragement. Here is his next response.

Koichiro: The video and the Body Dialogue arrived today. Thank you so much for these items. I wanted to see the video because they didn't teach us Taimyo back when I was practicing in college. The interview article with Okada Sensei was also very interesting. I was intrigued when he

Continued on following page

said "If Shintaido is marketed well, it will spread to many different countries." Actually, that's what I study here at Kellogg. One of my concentrations is public/nonprofit marketing, which is using marketing techniques to disseminate ideas and practices in the society.

Also, thank you for your explanation on Eiko Dai. I think it's true that people in America are more lenient toward trying out new and different things. The environment is always important. But what I'm really talking about is Eiko Dai alone WITH the voice, to run around alone in a public space with your hands raised to the sky and yelling at the top of your lungs. (Sorry, I couldn't think of a more modest way to describe it.)

I guess my concern is less about embarrassment than about whether this is really an appropriate thing to do. Shintaido talks about Unification of Heaven, Earth, Others, and Self, but how can you REALLY unify yourself with others if you're freaking out your neighbors in the park? You can explain to them if they ask, but a lot of people are just going to run away and won't want to talk to you. (But then again, maybe that wouldn't be so in America.) It's a difficult question for me. I don't know, I should just clear my head and practice more. I can't argue the fact that I enjoy keiko. It's not good to start thinking too hard about these things in the middle of the night. As my mentor priest (I'm Catholic) told me, "When you're confused, don't think at night. Always think in the daylight."

BD Editor: We exchanged a couple more emails. Koichiro mentioned that he was about to go diving in the Bahamas on a spring break trip. That led to this email:

Koichiro: Is it true that Iruka (Dolphin) Kumite is actually a part of the Shintaido practice now? I happened to be reading a diary of a Shintaido practitioner in Tokyo on the web, and in it I read that Taro Sensei (Aoki Sensei's son) introduced Iruka Kumite and Takigyō (Waterfall Training) as part of the Shintaido curriculum. From what I understand, it seems like Dolphin Kumite is actually swimming with wild dolphins in their natural environment. Dolphins are so sensitive to human activity that swimming and interacting with dolphins in water is considered a form of Kumite in Shintaido. Wow, talk about being off the wall! You never know where Aoki Sensei's creativity is going to take us. I may not see dolphins



in the Bahamas, but I know I'll be doing a lot of Shark Kumites! (I'll keep my hands to myself, though.)

Sixties Flashback

Changing the subject, I read your article "Shintaido, the Sixties, and Me" in one of the *Body Dialogue's* past issues. I found it fascinating that you actually lived through the dreams and the turmoil of that time. I always had a deep longing for the 60's and the Beat culture, so much so I even spent the summer two years ago in Berkeley, living on Telegraph Avenue with three rock musicians.

I guess I am in a way grateful for the fact that I can start my adulthood with the clear and sober notion that if you really want to change the world, you have got to look at the reality, its power structure. You can't just dream and expect to lead the world to happiness with poetry and music. We all build on learning from the past generation. That's why with all my counter-cultural inclinations, I studied law and took up my job in the government. That is my kumite, my kumite with the society that I am willing to bet my life on. If I can contribute anything to the Shintaido movement that started with Aoki-Sensei proclaiming "Let us be the light of the world", that is how I would do it.

BD Editor: On his return from his diving trip, Koichiro had some additional thoughts about his practice.

Koichiro: After I came back from the Bahamas I kind of got sidetracked from my practice because I sprained my foot jogging and couldn't do my regular practice. Because my injury prevented me from moving around I concentrated on practicing chudan-zuki (middle-level punch) from kiba-dachi (horse-riding stance). After a while I realized how until now I had been careless and ignorant about the movement of the upper body and arm. When I used to practice in college I concentrated mainly on the movement of the lower body and how the movement of your whole body comes in synch with it. I was careless or unconscious about how I thrust my arm forward because basically I was only taught to do it "naturally." But now I discovered that I couldn't really describe what "natural" movement of the arm meant.

If this were tai chi I would have detailed instructions on how every muscle in my arm should move and feel so that I can replicate the most effective tsuki. But in Shintaido, we were (at least I was) just told to exhaust ourselves out until the body becomes completely relaxed and the natural movement manifested itself. Maybe I've gotten lazy because I'm getting old, and I'm not complaining because I love the intensity of Shintaido, but is this (exhausting ourselves out until the naturalness spontaneously takes over your body) the only way in Shintaido to reach the "natural" movement (especially in Kaiho-kei)? In Tai chi, they seem to have a much more organized and sophisticated methodology that consciously lets you replicate the natural movement.

So what happens when I get too old to do Shintaido jumps or meiso (meditation) jumps? Would I no longer be able to reach my natural state of body movement? Should I train so hard while I'm still young that when I get too old to do strenuous exercises, my body would still remember what the natural movements were like? Wow, I'm really getting sidetracked. I can almost hear my Jodo master yelling at me, "You think too much! Don't think, practice!!" ●●●

Celestial Hikari

By Joe Zawielski

I want to relate an interesting story about the ending of my father's life. My father had been having health issues for the past two years, mostly concerning his heart. His last trip to the hospital was a 911 call from my mother: dad was having lots of trouble breathing and his blood pressure was extremely low. He was admitted into the hospital and the doctors wanted to do all sorts of tests and procedures on him; the bare truth was that his heart was giving out.

We decided that it would be best to have dad spend his last days at home under hospice and his family's care. He had to wait a few days in the hospital for things to be arranged at home; they were keeping him comfortable, mostly by giving him oxygen. We would visit and talk with him, dad only being able to talk a little bit before he was out of breath and needing to replace the oxygen mask. October 31st was my dad's birthday and we all went up to visit. After kissing and greeting my dad that morning he touched my hand with an excited look on his face and said that I would not believe what happened to him that morning. It was then that I realized that he was speaking to me with no shortness of breath, the oxygen mask off to his side. His eyes were bright and he was animated and beaming.

My father told me that early that morning my mother had come in, given him a kiss, and then left the room. Shortly after she left a "China man" (dad's words) came in, sat at the foot of his bed, and told him that a couple would be coming in to work on him and that he should accept the "treatment" because it had previously helped him (the Chinaman). He then got up and left the room. Shortly afterwards, an Asian woman and man came in. The woman sat beside my dad and held his hand while the man went to the bottom of his bed and started working on his lower legs. My father, whose parents were immigrants from Poland and Russia, did not look at Asians as healers or mystics. My dad said that his massage felt great and that the next thing he knew he felt like he was free from gravity and floating above the bed, moved this way and that by the man working on his legs. When we asked how he felt during this, was he frightened, dad responded that he was not frightened at all and that it felt great. They finished with him and left without a word.

When my mother arrived and dad related the story to her, she asked the nursing staff if my father had any treatments or if anyone had been in before. They assured her that he had had no treatments that morning and that she was the first visitor of the day. My father then went on to have the best day in a very long time, cracking jokes and giving everyone a hard time like his usual self. I have never seen my father so light and free, and it was a beautiful birthday present for us all. The next day he came home under family and hospice care: he needed oxygen constantly and spoke only one or two words at a time. Dad spent more and more time sleeping and

then four days later he died in his sleep.

I find it remarkable and wonderful that my father received celestial hikari and that it had such an incredible affect on him. Hikari, a basic Shintaido movement, has a great element of trust, understanding, and sensitivity in it for both receiver and leader, a combining and blending of energies and spirits with the roles of leader and follower constantly changing back and forth. As my father was describing his experience with the Asian couple to me, I felt such joy for him. I too have felt similar during certain hikari kumites. Being weightless, free from both a physical and mental gravity, connected to something greater than myself. Dancing with Light is one way I would describe it.

We are so fortunate to have Shintaido in our lives: it has such a depth and richness not found in many places.

My father's experience really helped me through some tough times during the funeral process, and at times even now. I know he is in a much better place and that his transition, aided by celestial hikari, was smooth. I am grateful that his passing was so peaceful, and to know that what we are doing in Shintaido really does work. ●●●

Look Far!

Boh of stone in leaden arms
Tip down. Back up. Twist. Swing

"Look far!" says Sensei
Snow falls from a pine
Mind wallows in despair
Muscles ache and stomach churns
Tip down. Back up. Twist. Swing

"Look far!" says Sensei
Mind moves into the snow
"That's it!" says Sensei
Body behind, finds fresh energy
Tip down. Back up. Twist. Swing

Rob Kedoin

March 2005



drawing by Nao Kobayashi

Interview with Instructor Mike

[The following interview was conducted at the home of Connie Borden and Mike Sheets on March 6, 2005. *Body Dialogue* Editor.]

BD Editor: Maybe the best place to start, Michael, is for you to say a little bit about yourself, your background, and we'll quickly get up to how you first encountered Shintaido.

Michael: I come from the Midwest, back in Missouri; definitely a country boy. Currently, I'm working with animals as a lead veterinary technician for a hospital in Castro Valley.

BD Editor: Did you have any martial arts experience prior to being in the Navy?

Michael: No. The only kind of physical activity I did back there was a little bit of football when I was in high school, until I got hurt, then I had to stop as well.

BD Editor: Tell us how you first encountered Shintaido, when and where and under what circumstances?

Michael: It was a cold, wet winter day back in '87. Rob Gaston and I were both in the Navy along with Dirk and Lloyd. We were all bored and Rob said, "Hey, c'mon, let's try this. I've done this up in Oregon..."

BD Editor: Rob had.

Michael: With John Seaman (Shintaido instructor) and Lee Seaman (senior Shintaido instructor) who teach in Bellingham, Washington. So, out of boredom, I went, and kept going back.

BD Editor: What was your first impression of Shintaido?

Michael: A little nervous at first. People making lots of noises and running around the gym. So, I think at the time we were doing a karate class, so there was a lot of jumping and kicking. And I was not an athletic person at that point.

BD Editor: Is it true that you did Shintaido on the aircraft carrier where you were stationed?

Michael: Oh certainly.

BD Editor: What was that like?

Michael: It got us interesting looks and stares from a lot of people. We'd go up on the hangar deck, most of the time by one big aircraft loading door so we'd have some fresh air, and Chris, Rob and myself would be doing kicks, Tenshingoso; occasionally we'd get the freedom to be up on the flight deck, which would make it even more interesting, because then you've got all that big open space, horizon to horizon.

BD Editor: Did you find Shintaido was helpful in terms of your being in the military service, and if so how?

Michael: It gave me a release, a way to get rid of some of the stress of being pent up on a ship for six months at a time. You need a way to have some sort of mental break.

BD Editor: What were some of the practices that you did on the aircraft carrier?

Michael: We did a lot of Tenshingoso, but we also did karate. The staff [boh] wasn't allowed, so we couldn't do any of the bôjutsu. But we certainly did punches and kicks and kakiyaku dai and sho, both.

BD Editor: What was the reaction of your fellow servicemen and women?

Michael: We were pretty much ignored (*laughter*). That was kind of the rule on the ship, you did your own thing and you left everybody else alone. We tried to get a few people involved, I think at one point we had three or four people try it, but I guess you have to have a certain kind of mentality to stay with it. I'm not sure what that mentality is, but it's certainly different than the average person.

BD Editor: What was it that had connected you to Shintaido?

Michael: I ask myself that all the time and I find that it has evolved. At the time it was a great stress relief, a way for Rob and me to connect and keep going. Now I find it more a way to explore my inner feelings, the way I want to express things, and it gives me a way to do that in a relatively safe manner.

BD Editor: Are there particular movements you gravitated towards over the years?

Michael: Boh has definitely become my friend. There's something about that piece of wood that makes the movement seem more alive. When I move the staff I can feel the wood, the connection to the earth, to



myself.

BD Editor: We talk a lot in Shintaido about connecting to "ten" or heaven. How do you experience that with the boh?

Michael: Many of the movements cause you to reach up with the staff and just that extra six feet allows you to push yourself so much higher than you can, or at least I can, with my free hand. It seems to be like a freeway that allows you to accelerate.

BD Editor: Are there other movements in Shintaido that,

Continued on following page

over the years, you've become fond of or that challenge you?

Michael: Jumping has always been very tough. I finally figured out that it allows you to connect with the earth, to relax and go deeper. And while I usually hate meiso jumps, I still do them. Some of the other movements I've just come in contact with and just started studying, like Taimyo kata, especially Part One. It's very focused movements and extremely invigorating.

BD Editor: In your work, you spend a lot of time outdoors, in the natural world, with animals. I'm wondering how Shintaido has gotten integrated into that over time? You've been practicing now for eighteen years.

Michael: It's hard to think of doing anything for eighteen years, but the most recent example is the "A-timing" that we talk about so much: it has saved me so many bite marks from the animals I work with. I have gotten to where I can respond before they act, get my hands out of the way if the cat is going to bite or scratch. It's really become a kind of game to see how quickly I can adjust to their movements.

Their movement is so pure, and so concentrated, one thing only...

The other that was more fun was back about a year or two years, when I spent six months at the farm without a real practice partner, and in lieu of such I started practicing with our ram. Just stepping practice: as he would attack, I would step in and block. And I found that really deepened my ability to step in and focus on my partner, such that when I came back it was actually commented on by a lot of different individuals as being a very intense practice.

BD Editor: We talk in Shintaido about energy exchange in our kumite or partner practice. It sounds like you had that experience with animals, and I'm wondering if you could just say a little bit more about what that's like? It's rather unique.

Michael: It is unique, and it's something everybody should try. If you can get even a dog to jump in and play, so you can touch them without them touching you. Their movement is so pure, and so concentrated, one thing only. It was really true of the ram (its name was Nathaniel); he would focus on you to the exclusion of everything else. So that if you didn't keep your concentration, he'd hit you. And that exchange becomes very deep. I would be out there, sometimes my mom would say I was out there an hour, and it felt like ten minutes, because you're so focused on what you're doing, the energy exchange becomes so connected, so tied into your partner, that you lose track of everything else.

BD Editor: Do you and your wife Connie practice a lot together? What is it like being a Shintaido couple?

Michael: I wouldn't say that we practice a lot together. When I had the time I was going to her class. I found that

very interesting, because I find it's like two people who have been together forever, we would start and finish each other's movements. It's very easy for me to catch her feeling, her timing, and vice versa. I'm sure she gets my timing rather quickly. We've known each other for seventeen, eighteen years, at this point. So when you become that close to each other, it becomes like doing keiko with yourself. Connie's a Senior Instructor and more advanced than I am. She is more into teaching freehand and sword. There's some overlap: I do a lot of freehand and really enjoy it, but I prefer the boh. Her practice seems to be a little more serious and I seem to be a little more playful. I get this probably from John Seaman: playing and having fun is of as much importance in this practice as being very serious and working very hard towards the next level.

The ram...would focus on you to the exclusion of everything else...if you didn't keep your concentration, he'd hit you...that exchange becomes very deep.

BD Editor: You're now an instructor: say a few words about the path that you've taken to get to this point in your Shintaido career?

Michael: Well, for those who have been around for a long time, you'll probably remember me saying, when I took my assistant's exam, "I'm never going to be an Instructor, I don't want to be a Graduate, I don't want to be Provisional." I just wanted to get to the next level so I could go to the Advanced Workshop. I stayed an Assistant for about 10 years. I didn't see any need to move up, and then when I was back in Missouri this last time, I was trying to teach a class, and some of the comments of people who took the class were that they wanted a "real teacher." They wanted the title. While I don't think my practice has gone so much deeper in eight months, I thought, if I can't share what I know because of a label, then maybe I need to get the label. So for that reason I went ahead to get the Instructor's license. I could present my view, my understanding, and maybe be taken a little more seriously.

BD Editor: Do you have a plan to teach a class anytime soon?

Michael: I'm trying to get a proposal together with the YMCA: I'd love to do a kid's class, specifically kid's boh. Somewhere up to around eighteen (years of age).

BD Editor: Talk about that. This is a new phenomenon in Shintaido, we just had our Kangeiko in January with a good number of young people practicing. What is it that draws you to want to teach children and what do you think that energy has to give to Shintaido?

Michael: It's their ability to play. Kid's naturally want to play. If you make it fun, then they're going to want to stay

Continued on following page

there. I keep studying their ability to do that, and in the process, maybe teach them a little bit of respect for each other, for nature, make them a little bit more in tune with what's going on so they can make better choices.

[Note: In the Winter 2004 issue of *Body Dialogue*, Okada-sensei said, referring to children practicing at Kangeiko, "If you look closely, you will see that the children are Shintaido! Watch them play: learn from them, support them, protect them. They will grow in Shintaido; they are completely free!" - BD Editor]

BD Editor: Do you have any vision for the future of Shintaido? What you'd like to see? Practice?

Michael: Well I think that children and adolescents have to be more involved. We're seeing a lot of the people who started out in their twenties, and even maybe earlier, in their late teens, having families now. Gasshukus are very difficult for families because there's not necessarily this feeling that your kids will be taken care of. It seems to me that childcare is secondary, where this last one was a great example of what could be done.

Kangeiko allowed us the opportunity to see that the kids can actually, one, do keiko, and two, be part of the teams that help, like dojo prep. And I found that the kids were enthusiastic about it. In fact, they were the only ones that showed up for every single keiko to help me clean the dojos. By being included, they felt like they were more a part of it and less like they were being dragged to something they really weren't invited [to]. If we can continue that, I think we're going to have a better chance of keeping them interested as they grow up to continue in our Shintaido community.

BD Editor: I'm wondering if there's anything you would like to add yourself, your experience in Shintaido, what it's meant to you looking at the arc of 18 years.

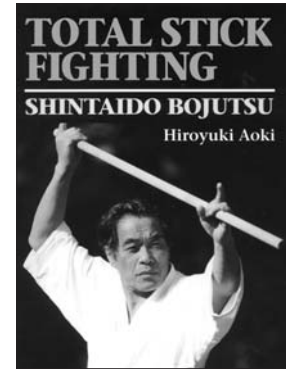
Michael: When I first started, I was a country boy from Missouri, stuck in the middle of nowhere as far as I was concerned. San Francisco being considered "nowhere." Through Shintaido I've met a lot of neat people who I found extremely interesting. It's changed my views on many topics. As you can imagine, being from the Bible Belt, I had some pretty strong opinions I found to be wrong or at least not completely accurate.

BD Editor: We talk a lot in Shintaido about opening our bodies to our partners, to nature, and certainly it can open us all to a broader experience of life.

Michael: Like I've said, I came from a small town, 3,000 people. Many of the different lifestyles here, the Gay and Lesbian community, or different cultures such as African-American, weren't prevalent in my hometown. It was a typical Bible Belt community, where the only way was the way it was preached in church. Different cultures, different ideas, were not acceptable.

So coming out here, in San Francisco, and being exposed to these different people in Shintaido, has given me a much broader base to make comparisons. It's given me the opportunity to look at some of the literature recommended over the years and given me different ideas about how to approach this journey through life. ●●●

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Released in March 2000 by Kodansha, this authoritative work covers the art of Bojutsu as practiced in Shintaido. Aoki-sensei presents traditional *bo kata* adapted for Shintaido as well as his own research and development.

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*The Shintaido
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various authors (\$20)

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DVDS

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by Hiroyuki Aoki (\$10)

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The Zero Point of Consciousness and the World of Ki (\$5)

In this interview Mr. Aoki describes his experience of reaching the "space of *mu*" (nothingness). He also discusses his unique understanding of *ki* energy (life force).

Origins, a History of Shintaido

by Shiko Hokari (\$7)

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BODY *Dialogue*

Journal of the U.S. Shintaido Movement

Issue No. 17, 2005



新
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"Shintaido" means "new body way." It is a an art form, a health exercise and meditation through movement developed in Japan in the 1960s. Shintaido grows out of the roots of ancient martial arts and meditation traditions, but the aim is to help modern people rediscover the original wisdom known by the body and realized through movement.

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