



SHINTAIDO OF AMERICA

WINTER 1986 NEWSLETTER

NEW ENGLAND

SHINTAIDO SURVEY: COLUMBUS DAY GASSHUKU OCTOBER 1985

Preface: After six years of erratic involvement in the world of Shintaido, I have recently started asking myself some fundamental what, why, how questions. It is my experience that such questions are not easily discussed between Shintaido practitioners. Feeling lonely, I began to ask myself what methods can I use to find out if others share similar concerns to myself. I have hit upon two methods: the first was to take a survey at a workshop last October; the second is to publish the results with a hope that they will stimulate written responses.

SURVEY RESULTS: During the Columbus Day Gasshuku, I interviewed 35 Shintaidoists and asked them all eight questions. Multiple responses were given for many questions. Here is a summary of their answers.

1. How long have you been doing Shintaido?

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| a. 1 to 5 years | 18 people |
| b. 6 to 10 years | 10 people |
| c. 11 to 15 years | 4 people |
| d. less than 1 year | 2 people |
| e. over 16 years | 1 person |

2. How did you get introduced to Shintaido?

- a. Through personal contact = 21 people
- b. Advertisement in paper = 6 people
- c. Others: poster, lecture, demo's, and karate.

3. Why do you do Shintaido? This list gives the number of times someone mentioned a particular response. Some gave several responses to the question.

- a. Personal development = 19 responses
- b. Relaxation/release of stress = 13 resp
- c. Fitness/exercise/health = 13 resp.
- d. The spiritual experience = 13 resp.
- e. The community experience = 10 resp.
- f. Other comments: increase confidence, creative outlet, self expression, cross-cultural experience, good interpersonal communication, because it's crazy, don't know, my job, enjoy learning the forms, enjoy teaching, a habit. (Total number of responses = 98)

4. What do you like best about Shintaido?

- a. The group exercise/energy/feeling = 12
- b. The meditative/spiritual content = 7
- c. Specific forms named = 7 responses
- d. It stimulates spiritual growth = 5
- e. The feeling afterwards = 4 responses.
- f. Other comments: the uniform, the philosophy, the physical exercise, a

synthesis of the traditional martial arts, a structured way of learning from others. (Total number of responses was 46).

5. What do you like least about Shintaido?

- a. Specific form named Eiko =9 responses
 - b. The business and organizational side=5
 - c. It is inaccessible to others = 4 rsp.
 - d. Loss of contact with reality = 3 rsp.
 - e. Other comments: forced to confront own weaknesses, having to practice on own, when people do not give to the group, relating to martial art feeling as a woman, getting up too early, cold fingers, Shintaido program is too big.
- (Total number of responses was 33).

6. Do you keep a record of what you learn?

YES: 18 people

NO: 17 people

7. What do you do with those learnings?

- a. Apply them to my life = 10 responses
- b. Review them for understandings = 8
- c. Use to help teach = 8 responses
- d. Use to help learn from the forms = 3
- e. Other comments: nothing, to see if on the right track, to share knowledge collected from other groups.

(Total number of responses was 32).

8. What would you like to change in the method of instruction?

- a. More flexibility/spontaneity = 10 resp
- b. More consistent use of terminology between instructors = 3 responses
- c. More demonstrations by instructors=2
- d. More criticism from instructors, plus the criteria for their judgement = 2
- e. Other comments: method cannot be changed, nothing, get harder keiko, more breathing/seiza instruction, method is always changing so cannot say, find way of qualifying instructors even though they cannot do all the forms, instructors

should have permanent press hakamas. (Total number of responses was 21).

MY GENERALIZATIONS OR "INSIGHTS" FROM THE DATA:

Most people are introduced to Shintaido through personal contact. The initial impression newcomers get is a verbal description from a Shintaidoist. The impact of this description depends upon the clarity and enthusiasm with which this person explains what Shintaido is, and how he or she personally benefits from doing it. (Note: In carrying out the survey, I was very surprised to discover that people with less than six years experience were much clearer about why they do Shintaido than those with more experience.)

The most frequently stated reason for doing Shintaido is personal development. However, this was closely followed by relaxation, exercise, the spiritual experience, and the community feeling. It is possible that some of these reasons conflict with others. How does a person doing Shintaido for personal development relate to someone doing it for the exercise and community feeling? Most people gave several reasons for doing it, so somehow their needs are met in the variety of activities offered.

I had expected people to complain about the business and organizational side of Shintaido, but I had not expected that specific forms, particularly Eiko would be named as the thing people liked the least. Glory be!

The comments on changes in the method of instruction indicate to me that people would like a more American approach to learning: more spontaneity, better coordinated instruction, and more

information in the form of demonstrations and criticisms.

That's how I interpret that data. How do you?

Please write to me at this address:

Jim Cumming

RDS Box 17

Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

FIRST THERE IS A MOUNTAIN, THEN NO MOUNTAIN, THEN THERE IS

**by
Anelie Wilde**

Alchemy is an out of date science. It is the study of gold - specifically how to produce gold from base substances. It was a popular pursuit in the Middle Ages. Today we are more "sophisticated" and know that gold is an element, a pure substance, that cannot be broken down or synthesized. Sometimes, however, we shed the sophisticated veneer of rational, modern man and look upon the world with the eyes of a child. Shintaido encourages us to keep in touch with the child within us and shed the brittle veneer that dulls our sense of wonder and constrains our body's natural movements.

It was Shintaido that brought a mixed group of people of various ages, shapes and sizes to Spring Hill, Massachusetts on Columbus Day weekend in 1985. That weekend we were surrounded by gold. Shimmering on the horizon, heaped in the woods, scattered on the grass were pale lemon gold birch leaves, fiery red gold sugar maple leaves, burnt brown gold oak leaves and dull orange gold beech leaves. A very special kind of alchemy occurs every Autumn in New England.

The New England chapter chose Spring Hill for its Fall gasshuku for its location and for its very special feeling. The Spring Hill building is located on top of a hill affording a splendid view of all the fall colors covering the gently rolling hills of Northern Massachusetts. The building itself has a hand hewn appearance and was obviously constructed with care and thought to fulfill its function as a retreat and meditation center. Living and sleeping areas were completely wrapped around with huge windows that afforded a panorama of woods and field and sky. The warm and friendly atmosphere and initial fair weather helped us to quickly create a gasshuku spirit. At Friday evening opening ceremonies, Ito-sensei reminded us that at a gasshuku there is no guest status. For a good gasshuku experience everyone must cooperate and participate fully and not only in keiko. By conserving your energy you only cheat yourself.

Pleasant as the surroundings were, Spring Hill lacked one important ingredient, a good dojo. The surrounding fields were steeply inclined and mined with rabbit holes. It was a challenge to students and senseis alike to practice Shintaido in a stony parking lot and a too small gymnasium. However our spirit was good and the obstacles were overcome.

During Friday evening keiko we were treated to a magnificent display of stars. As we studied variations of mochikae someone turned off surrounding illumination. Lacking competition from earthbound illumination the stars seemed to multiply and move closer to the earth to fill our hearts and souls with wonder and reverence. Ito-sensei had Faith read to us Psalms 19:14.

The heavens declare the glory of God,
The vault of heaven proclaims his
handiwork;

Day discourses of it to day,
Night to night hands on the knowledge.
No utterance at all, no speech,
No sound that anyone can hear;
Yet their voice goes out through all the
earth,
And their message to the ends of the
world.

To prepare us for hoshiotoshi or knocking down stars, he told us also of the Italian painter Fontana, who painted a canvas all gold and then cut through the canvas to reach the other side. Our objective was to scratch out a mere 1000 stars. There were so many stars in the heavens that night that even if we had each succeeded in our task none would have been missed.

Saturday afternoon was a blue sky keiko punctuated by red, gold, orange and green. After "French style warm ups" led by Martine Breant we followed Ito-sensei to the hill, ostensibly for "hard" Shintaido. Ito encouraged us to find a place in the sun with a view of the surrounding hills and fall foliage and began to tell us of his Grand Canyon river experience with Jay and Sarah. He said the trip down the river could be seen as a metaphor for life. It starts easily, gets hard, then harder, then very hard, and at last it becomes easy again and then it ends. As Ito-sensei progressed further into the canyon he became aware that he was descending deeper into the earth as more and more older rock formations were exposed. Realization dawned that although Ito-sensei had travelled all over the world, he had previously only seen the

earth's surface or skin. Descending into the earth felt like meditation. It reminded him of the spaceship earth image. Although technology has improved life in many ways it has also had detrimental side effects. How can people deal with these corrupting side effects? One way is to study Shintaido. Sometimes Shintaido may be a source of embarrassment to you. People may laugh at you. But actually you belong to an advanced group. Later, people will look back and say 'those people were advanced'. Ito-sensei then instructed us in standing meditation. It was surprisingly simple to stand perfectly still. It was a rare opportunity to be at one with the earth.

Sunday evening was an occasion for a party for some and evaluations by Robert Breant for others. All of us were treated to the rare entertainment of a Michael Thompson lecture. As usual Michael told jokes and fooled around and acted as if he is incapable of being serious about anything. However, in between the jokes he had some serious messages to convey. He asked what the point is of practicing with a boh in the 20th century? It is useless as a means of self defense. It is not particularly aesthetic and cannot be used in a dance form. But, in keiko it can be used as a tool for changing consciousness. Therefore the practitioner has to give meaning to the movements. The movement must be the most beautiful movement you can make and also must be made with meaning and intent. Otherwise it is merely a false symbol. If your own personal experience with Shintaido remains in keiko it is reduced to a form of escapism. Everyone has to work out how to take their experience from keiko into the real world. He also likened a gasshuku to a group brain. The pooled energies can

create something new that cannot be created alone. Therefore in kumite the feeling should be "I-Thou" not "I-It".

The Columbus Day gasshuku was special for many reasons; the alchemy of the leaves, the spirit of the participants, but especially for the gorei of Ito, Robert and Martine. Ito-sensei introduced Martine and Robert as "A Shintaido couple - the best there is." They certainly lived up to the expectations created for them. Martine inspired those of us that feel crushed by the boh by her example, and by her teaching, and everyone was inspired by her beautiful and precise form. Robert, whose reputation for strength and stamina had preceded him, demonstrated generosity of spirit and thoughtfulness. His generosity was particularly evident during evaluations. Even after explaining in detail each person's evaluation, he gladly remained to answer question after question late into the night. In his opening remarks Robert spoke about the paradox of a so-called civilized society needing both a large military and police presence. He said that this contradiction of civilization and aggression in our society is reflected in ourselves. Allowing us to express this aggression in martial arts would help us study this paradox and so achieve harmony. If we don't confront this aggressiveness within ourselves we will never reach a deep level of expression and so will always remain superficial. To change society we must begin with ourselves and we could begin with ourselves in this gasshuku. So we did.....



ZEN STORY

by

Michelle Grenier

It was pouring rain, we were doing boh nagewaza. "Why am I here?" I asked. It was the same question I had asked as I deplaned at Orly, in Paris, only five days earlier.

It was the same question that had been asked by Aristotle, Descartes, Berkeley, Gertrude Stein, and Jimmy Buffett. But none of them ever did boh nagewaza in the rain for two hours. But they are all wise men and women, or rich.

Sitting on the clay surface watching each group take their turn for the final demonstration made me very happy. There were children doing boh with Martine, beginners doing Eiko, advanced students doing nage, and then there were those who had worked with Mieko doing softer Shintaido, holding each others' hands and following the movement, the flow. They were all older women, at least 50 in age, and they were beautiful! All generations of a society communicating through the body, the spirit. Shintaido.

Coming back to the answer to the question "Why am I here?", it becomes clearer and clearer as I watch one group follow another onto the field.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

by

Michael Thompson

1986 will mark the 10th anniversary of the incorporation in California of what is now known as Shintaido of America, an event we will be commemorating at our national gasshuku to be held in New England in August.

I don't believe either Ito-sensei or I could have imagined how difficult it would prove to be to implant Shintaido in American soil when we decided to join forces in San Francisco in 1975. As president and co-founder of Shintaido of America I take a small degree of satisfaction in the fact that we are still around after ten years in an age of fifteen minute fame, that we have hosted an international gasshuku and published the English version of Aoki-sensei's textbook.

During the past year I also had the occasion to visit and practice with Shintaidoists in Japan, France and England. One thing that impressed me was the fact that the "base" of practitioners, particularly in France and Japan has greatly expanded in recent years. Gasshukus are attended and enjoyed by people of all ages and physical condition as keiko is adapted to fit people's needs rather than being the semi-private domain of a relatively healthy and motivated minority. It seems that Aoki-sensei's great vision of Shintaido being a "way" or culture available to all is coming closer to realization, at least in those countries. It definitely gives us something to aim at.

Of course, the core of keiko remains the same and there should always exist the possibility for those who wish to specialize or pursue their "tao" through the martial arts as arranged in the Shintaido system to do so, and we are very fortunate that our head instructor is eminently qualified and dedicated to providing that kind of education. But there should also be room for anyone to enter and study in a way appropriate to his or her needs and condition.

I think this will be the main task of the future, in addition to the application of the methods and lessons assimilated in

keiko in social, political and existential arenas. In that way a system of body movement can indeed become a kind of culture which will accurately reflect the "message of the universe."

I hope that more and more people will join us in this adventure and that those who are already "veterans" will increasingly purify their vision through Shintaido keiko and take the lead during the next decade. Should this occur, I am sure we can pass through that critical point beyond which progress and growth occur in leaps and bounds rather than inch by inch. This is now beginning to happen in Japan and France, and there is no reason we should not soon begin to enjoy the fruits of our ten year effort. The important thing is to "aim high and keep running." See you in August.

SHINTAIDO TEN: RETREAT WITH MASTER AOKI

August 14-17, 1986

at Franklin Pierce College
in Rindge, New Hampshire.

Sponsored by Shintaido of America
and

Hosted by the Shintaido groups of
New England.

The name Shintaido Ten is a play on words; ten refers to the 10 year anniversary of Shintaido of America, and also to the Japanese word for heaven, as in Tenshingoso. But even more, heaven sounds like "haven", which is a kind of retreat, and this event is essentially a retreat, an opportunity to step back from the real world, or perhaps into it, depending upon your perspective.

Please start to make arrangements in your schedules now, so you can attend this historic event. We will be studying under the direction of Master Aoki, the founder of Shintaido, and marking the anniversary of the incorporation of Shintaido of America as a non-profit organization ten years ago.

Registration materials will be distributed in early March. Expect to pay \$100 to pre-register, and hold a place. The final fee will be set and announced in April, when the results of pre-registration are available.

Plans are underway to employ a conference model in structuring the schedule of events and activities. All students will be able to search out classes which fit their level of experience and interests, within the limits of the schedule.

Again, please make initial arrangements to attend Shintaido Ten during the weekend of August 14-17, Thursday through Sunday. More information will be circulated in March.

LOCAL NEWS



BERKELEY GROUP by Bela Breslau

The Berkeley Shintaido group has about 20 members. Throughout 1985 we met on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings on the U.C. campus. Bela Breslau is the instructor, telephone (415) 731-9364.

The Berkeley Shintaido Group was fortunate to have Nori Harada, who received a shodan degree (first grade) in Shintaido Bohjutsu from Kato University, as a special instructor for the past few months. He was in Oakland studying English and plans to study car design at the Art Institute in Pasadena, CA this spring. Everyone appreciated the natural but beautiful form he introduced to our keikos.

In September of 1985, the Berkeley Shintaido Group organized a one-day boh workshop. It was the first time we invited Ito-sensei and the first time we used video so that students could see themselves. We found that showing the video opened up a great forum for Ito-sensei, one from which we could gain unexpected benefits.

In May of 1986, Berkeley Shintaido Group will organize the Memorial Day Weekend gasshuku in the Bay Area. This is an annual event sponsored by Shintaido of America and the General Membership meeting will take place during this weekend. We hope to have a good turnout.



Participants in Berkeley Shintaido Group's one-day boh workshop included Rosemary Roe, Clytia Montlor, and Marcy Pecora of the Berkeley class.

SHINTAIDO OF LOS ANGELES

by

Jean-Pierre Marquez

Shintaido of Los Angeles was officially formed over the holidays and plans to organize more classes for the new year. At this point there is one class, Sundays at 8:00 on the beach in Santa Monica.

We began the new year with our first official kan-geiko, concurrent with Bay Area Shintaido's, on the 5th through 11th. As of this writing, the first keiko has taken place, with five members joining S.O.L.A.'s instructor Jean-Pierre Marquez in the pouring rain. The focus was on Eiko and Shoko-Tenso, along with Daijodan kiri oroshi, followed by a quick jump in the ocean. Brrrrrrrrrr.

This was our first official kan-geiko in Los Angeles and we would like always to do it at the same time as the San Francisco group and share in their spirit. I wish everybody a happy, healthy, and holy New Year. Keep on practicing, keep on communicating, keep on celebrating life. Gambatte! Our mailing address:

Shintaido of Los Angeles
519 So. Fairfax Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90036

SHINTAIDO OF WEST LOS ANGELES

by

Claude Breant

We officially announce the opening of Shintaido of West Los Angeles. There will be two classes weekly for the present time on Thursdays 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. and on Sundays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with a third one starting at a later date.

The two classes now scheduled will be held at:

11054 W. Pico Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90064

which is located in the West Los Angeles Karate School dojo.

For further information contact Claude Breant at (213) 390-4696.

SHINTAIDO OF TUCSON

by

Jay Zuckerman

Hopefully things will be looking up for Shintaido of Tucson in 1986 with our first class of the revived Shintaido group on Jan. 3rd. Daniel Snyder and I will be teaching every other session so we can have the benefit of being both student and teacher. Many people have expressed interest in keiko, so time will tell.

The core of our group consists of Daniel, Jay, Sarah, and Mark Black. Several former students have said they will participate in addition to the new recruits. We have printed a leaflet inspired by the Worcester group's, and have been posting them around town.

Keikos are on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 6:00 p.m. at Canyon Ranch Spa, 8600 Rockcliff Rd., Tucson, AZ. For more information, call (602) 881-3335.

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BLUE MOUNTAIN SHINTAIDO

by

John & Lee Seaman

About thirty people practice Shintaido in Eastern Oregon, in three groups. The La Grande class is mostly college students, and meets every Wednesday evening in the

college gymnasium. Halfway class, one hundred miles away (How's that for dedication!--Ed.), meets the second weekend of the month on Saturday night and Sunday morning (members provide sleeping space for people coming from other groups for the weekend). Baker class has been suspended until the worst of Winter is over; instead, we have small practices here and there as weather allows. John and Lee Seaman lead the groups with help from senior student Jennie Day. You can call us at (503) 562-5712.

We're pretty remote, but we welcome anyone passing this way who would like to practice with us. Also, because a large number of Shintaidoists here are students, they will be moving away from here and may be by to practice with you!

Anyone interested in Shintaido and horsemanship will want to read Sally Swift's Centered Riding. Her ideas on mind-body harmony are very much in line with Aoki-sensei's.

See you all in the Spring or in August!

WESLEYAN GROUP

by

John Brinsley

The Wesleyan Karate and Shintaido Club in Middletown, CT., had its first ever gasshuku December 6th through 8th when we invited sensei Jean-Pierre Marquez from Los Angeles.

The group, led by John Brinsley and Zacky Rozio (James Wiester is currently studying in Kyoto, Japan), consists of twenty or so members, all of whom attended the seminar with sensei Marquez.

The focus was on basic karate kihon and kata. The five keikos were extremely helpful for a group which started from

scratch only a year ago. A wonderful group feeling pervaded the gasshuku, carrying over into finals week.

The group currently practices Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Our mailing address is:

Box 401 Wesleyan Station
Middletown, CT 06457
(203) 344-9146

NEW HAMPSHIRE

by

Michelle Grenier

A Shintaido class has started at the Newmarket Town Hall. Classes are on Mondays and Thursdays from 5:45 to 7:00 p.m. Keiko features softer Shintaido with lots of stretching and Tenshingoso. Michelle is giving gorei.

Meanwhile, Bill Burtis continues to teach boh at the University of New Hampshire.

Bill and Michelle hosted a Thanksgiving workshop featuring turkey and all the trimmings, gorei by Ton-ton, and meetings with Ito-sensei.

For information, call us at (603) 659-3254.

SHINTAIDO IN CAMBRIDGE

by

David Franklin

The so-called Harvard-Radcliffe Shintaido club, including many people who have no affiliation whatsoever (aside from their participation in this club) with Harvard, continues to flourish: our membership has grown by nearly 100% this year and we will start the second semester with renewed recruiting efforts.

By press time we will have hosted the Worcesterites for a pre-kangeiko weekend special on Feb. 1st, and we express our appreciation for their presence on many Sundays last spring and summer.

Keikos are Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. taught by Bill "Square Man" Burtis and Sunday mornings at 8:30 by Michael "Mike-sensei" Thompson. For more information, contact Eva Thaddeus at:

3 Sacramento St.
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 354-9109.

WORCESTER SHINTAIDO

by
Kesh Narayanan

Tom Abbott, founder of our group, continues to coordinate Shintaido at the Greendale YMCA, where the combination of keiko followed by sauna/whirlpool is hard to beat.

Until October, we concentrated on boh keikos in preparation for the bohjutsu gasshuku at Spring Hill. We are known as the stick people at the Y since we are very visible on the front lawn in the summer months.

Tom was teaching 2 keikos per week and Joe Zawielski 1 keiko per week--Joe added one more keiko per week at a local school through the Night Life Adult Education Program.

Some of the Worcester students periodically attended Michael's Sunday morning keikos in Cambridge. Now, with winter months here, we have moved indoors from boh to Shintaido. The new year's program is starting off with three keikos per week at the Y: a beginner's class on Mondays by Kesh Narayanan, Wednesday

class by Joe Zawielski and Friday class by Tom Abbott.

Please join us if you are in the area. I am looking forward to seeing you at Shintaido Ten in August. Contact person in Worcester is Kesh Narayanan at (617) 829-9324.

EAST COAST KAN-GEIKO

The official kan-geiko for the East Coast Shintaido groups will be held Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 15th and 16th, in Worcester, Mass.

There will be four keikos under the direction of Mr. Haruyoshi Fugaku Ito, Head Instructor, Shintaido of America. The keikos will include both boktoh instruction for advanced students and Shintaido practice for junior students or beginners.

The fees are \$100 for boktoh and \$75 for Shintaido (\$95 for non-Shintaido of America members), which include food and lodging.

For more information, call:
(603) 659-3254 before Feb. 10th.

NEW ENGLAND WEEKEND WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Feb. 1--Cambridge: 9:00 a.m.: Shintaido
4:00 p.m.: boktoh

March 1 & 2--New Hampshire:

April 5 & 6--Worcester:

May 3 & 4--Cape Cod:

THE MEANING OF WHITE

from
Ito's Kan-Geiko notes

In my soto deshi age (1), I was once the body guard and chauffeur for the owner of a construction company. One day I was at the construction site and giving orders to the workers on my boss' behalf. The construction workers were afraid of me and listened to me with a lot of respect. At first I thought it was because they knew I was a martial artist and studied karate, but later I found out it was because of my tabi. I happened to wear white tabi simply because of Rakutenkai (2) influence, but for them white tabi had a completely different meaning. Traditionally in Japan, artisans such as carpenters, iron workers (spider men) and masons wear tabi while they are working, but only the master artisan has the right to wear tabi which are white.

This was the first time that I began to appreciate all that was behind Aoki-sensei's wishes and how much thought and care he was putting into everything he asked of us, including the shoes which he asked us to wear while we practiced under his gorei.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain why we wear white in Shintaido; white gi's with white belts, white tabi and white hakama.

Frequently, Shintaido's white costume is mistakenly identified with the white costume of the Shinto priests. Of course Shintaido was born in Japan and it is very reasonable that this interpretation would be assumed. According to my understanding, however, we are required to wear white as a memory of the revolution we made in Japanese martial arts history.

During our Rakutenkai days, Aoki-sensei asked us to give up our black belts which we had finally attained after a long and hard effort. He asked us to wear white belts and he followed this same rule. He thought the Japanese martial arts were getting weaker spiritually and technically in part because the black belt dan/kyu grading system had become inflated. In order to rebuild the Japanese martial arts, we had to leave this kind of inflation behind and go back at least a few hundred years to the era which was the source of Japanese martial arts.

White kimono was the costume of the death ceremony in the samurai era. Wearing white meant we were ready to sacrifice ourselves, to give up our lives in the quest to develop Shintaido and restore the true meaning and spirit of the martial arts in our modern age.

Also, traditionally only the martial art master who had reached the highest level had the right to wear a white hakama. Aoki-sensei wanted us to wear white hakama to prepare ourselves to re-experience all of the secret and highest level techniques of each master, just as when Elijah's disciple Elisha took up Elijah's cloak and inherited Elijah's spirit.

Jesus Christ was transfigured by a light which made his clothes become as white as the light. We chose to wear white as an expression of our faith and hopefully as a way to prepare ourselves to be worthy in the future.

These are only the points that I remember for the meaning of wearing white. I am sure if you asked other original Rakutenkai members, each of them might remember even more reasons behind wearing white.

In Japan, before one embarks on a project, one always considers three conditions: ten no toki (time of heaven), chi no ri (benefit of earth), and hito no wa (harmony of people). When we started Rakutenkai, we put a tremendous effort into trying to prepare ourselves, even into the costume we wore. Then we waited for the time to be ripe. Finally, when glory came down from heaven, all of the participants were able to accept Eiko no ken (3) without experiencing any negative physical reactions. To put it another way, even if Aoki-sensei as the conductor had a great inspiration and composition, if we as the members of the orchestra had not practiced enough or were not at a high enough level spiritually and artistically, then we would not have been able to receive and translate this inspiration.

If you were practicing Shintaido in Japan, gradually or accidentally you might have experiences which would help you to understand these ideas. But, you are living in a different culture and unless someone gives you some hints, it may be almost impossible for you to discover the meaning behind the form. Since Shintaido was born in Japan, it includes many beautiful disciplines and forms which come from Japanese culture. Bowing before entering and leaving the dojo, seiza in a circle before class begins, cleaning the dojo before and after keiko, respect for seniors and consideration to junior members, bowing to keiko partners before and after kumite, respectful treatment of keiko equipment, folding and ironing keiko gi and hakama are all examples of the influence of Japanese traditions in our practice. But please remember, just as I explained the meaning of white, behind each of these forms or customs there is also a deep philosophy so that until you digest and understand its meaning, you should not

easily reject a form or a discipline only because you don't like it or you feel that it's not your style because it's not American.

Just as an actor puts on a costume and begins to assume the character of his role, when you put on your gi, please appreciate it as an act of becoming prepared. Make yourself ready to receive. Ready to be the right person in the right place at the right time.

Haruyoshi F. Ito

Head Instructor, Shintaido of America

January 1, 1986

Notes:

(1) Soto deshi. In traditional Japanese training, a student who lives with the master as his apprentice is called an uchi deshi (literally indoor disciple). In my case, spiritually I became Aoki-sensei's uchi deshi, but for practical reasons, Aoki-sensei sent me to outside work which he thought would develop my talents. We coined the phrase soto deshi which means outside disciple.

(2) Rakutenkai means "meeting of optimists." It is the name of the organization founded by Aoki-sensei in 1965 and made up of those of us who were working towards the creation of Shintaido.

(3) Eiko no ken means sword of glory. For more detail, see Shintaido text Chapter Two, How Shintaido Was Born, page 45-49.

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Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of our newsletter.

Your publication committee,

Thomas Abbott

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David Franklin

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