



SHINTAIDO OF AMERICA

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ITO'S STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I

When I took a trip to Mexico last summer, I was still looking for my next goal to reach. But when I had a meditation on the Teotihuacan Pyramid, I understood that my philosophical searching age was finished. What I need from now on is not on the surface.

Recently, I have felt that there is something within me which only I can transfer to people. That is, exactly what has been transferred to me from my ancestors. Now I have confidence to start my own school where I can express or transfer "something". This "something" can never be expressed or described in words. The only way I can transfer it is through body movement, through correcting people's posture, form and movement.

II

About Master Funakoshi

If you are familiar with the history of karate, you may know that Master Funakoshi is the first person who organized today's karate program, after he had studied three major fighting techniques in Okinawa.

Originally, he was an instructor of the Shurite school which was known for its quick and sharp movements. After he became a master of Shurite, he had an aspiration to organize all of the martial arts in Okinawa. He was open and humble enough to ask for special instruction from his rival school, Nawate, which was known for its slow and steady movements. It was extremely unusual for a martial artist, who were generally conservative and stiff-necked, to do such a thing in that age.

If you write karate in English, it does not make any difference, but originally karate's kara(唐) was the character for China and karate was known as the fighting technique which came from China. But when Master Funakoshi set up his new program, including Shurite, Nawate as well as Chinese styles, he used a new character for kara(空) which means "empty." Thus, karate in this age means "empty hand." Even though the meaning of karate became very popular as free-hand fighting techniques, I wonder how many karate instructors understand Master Funakoshi's wish he put into the letter kara, which he took from the Buddhist Hannya sutra, one of the most respected sutras in Buddhism.

Just as Gurjieff went to Paris, the center for artists at that time, after he had found the secret truth in Tibet, Master Funakoshi also had a destiny to follow and went to Tokyo with his new method. He was unusually brave to do so at that time when Okinawa was looked down upon by the great martial artists in Japan.

By the humbleness he showed when he went to his rival school, by the bravery with which he followed his destiny, and by the hope which he expressed in the character he used for karate, I think he is respected as the founder of karate in this age.

Accomplishment of Master Egami

Even those who are very familiar with the history of Japanese martial arts, do not know that Master Ueshiba Morihei, who is well-known as the founder of Aikido, was originally a successor of the Shin-kage-ryu Sojutsu (spear technique) and that Master Inoue Hoken, who is respected among Aikidoists as the first disciple (uchi deshi) of Master Ueshiba, was originally the successor of the Itto-ryu kenjutsu (sword technique).

Before World War II, as the highest disciple of Master Funakoshi, Master Egami was appointed by the Japanese army as the coordinator of all the martial arts in Japan. Later, when he was 40 years old, he became a disciple under Master Inoue, who had started Shinwataido, emphasizing the idea that heiho (兵法), war strategy, should be heiho (平法), tactics to engender peace.

Fortunately Master Egami who was following the wish of Master Funakoshi and the true meaning of "karate" could exactly adjust his philosophy to Master Inoue's and finally received all of the grace of traditional martial arts which had been passed down to Master Ueshiba and Master Inoue.

Shintaido and Master Aoki

I don't think it is only me who has found and secretly enjoyed the soul relationship between Dostoyevsky, Beethoven, and Van Gogh. But if someone found the common truth which they shared, it would be almost impossible for him to deny their influence into his life, even though he is an oriental martial artist. Sometimes I think Master Aoki was a sprout which came out in oriental soil sharing roots with these Western seniors.

As the head instructor of the Shotokai karate school, Master Egami's freedom to directly develop a new holistic martial art was limited. Master Aoki was appointed to study and test all of the ideas which were collected by Master Egami. It was a heavy but graceful duty to complete Sogo Budo, or 'holistic martial art', during his apprenticeship period.

People who have read the Shintaido book must already know how hard and rich this training was. It was a great honor for me too, to be allowed to study with them, about twenty years ago, at a time when these two masters had their most harmonious relationship.



Ito-sensei, during one of his examination at the S.S.I.

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However, for Master Aoki, who grew up in a post-war democratic environment and who fell in love with Western fine arts, and the story of Jesus Christ's life, it is the matter of time and the fate of genius to start his own movement, especially after he had found Eiko and Tenshin-goso, which were not understood by the other instructors of the Shotokai school.

If you read this kind of history of martial arts just on the surface, you may be reminded of the story that Jung had to go in his own direction after he finished his apprenticeship under Freud. But what I want to describe is the younger generation naturally has a wider point of view, as their world broadens, even though they are exactly following their roots.

As proof to show that Shintaido is still an orthodox oriental martial art, I would like to present two examples here.

One of the top secrets of karate-do which is called Sankaku-tobi (triangle jump) was transferred only through the Funakoshi-Egami-Aoki line and has been programmed as one of our basic movements in Shintaido.

Even though most kendoists have lost the chance to do so, any student of Shintaido will experience the great dignity of Ittoryu school when they study Shintaido kenjutsu.

III

Principle and paradox of a double-edged sword

In Aoki-sensei's textbook, Shintaido is described as a double-edged sword. For example, each form or movement must be meaningful both from a martial arts point of view and from a health movement point of view. Thus, every particular technique in Shintaido was established after it had been checked to see if it was effective enough for killer techniques to "control life", as well as for human development "to develop life".

However, some people who study Shintaido a little bit and then go on to start their own independent style have already arranged the basics of Shintaido. In these days, some of them teach techniques or movement which work well in terms of "feel good" exercises, but which have lost all their martial arts meaning. Others, teach techniques which are useful and effective in terms of martial arts, but which have completely lost the well-considered aspects for human development. Therefore, the more they practice their own arrangements, the worse they are going to be spiritually and physically.

Since people believe in free enterprise in this country, it is true anyone can start his or her own school of martial arts or exercises. But if you are going to participate in spreading Shintaido, which was founded by Aoki-sensei, I would like to ask each of you to remember the principle of the double-edged sword which Aoki-sensei put into the Shintaido program.

Let me give another example of a double-edged sword. If someone studies or practices Shintaido in a country where there are old, strong traditions and a very strict social system, they will often experience a satori (awareness) that everyone should be entitled to equal rights, opportunities and freedom of expression. However, if people who grow up in a society based on freedom and independence, always look for these same goals in Shintaido, I may say they are using a one hundred dollar bill for only fifty dollars value. Just as a chemist uses a catalyst in experiments, I am sure these people can use Shintaido to improve themselves and to let their society go beyond its limitations.

Generally speaking, when the well-controlled society or person reaches certain limitations, we may have to break certain traditional restrictions or taboos which inhibit free-thinking so that new ideas will surface to improve society and the individual. On the other hand, when people reach limitations because they misunderstand freedom, interpreting it as selfishness, and they misunderstand independence, as only individual profit, society needs certain restrictions and the individual needs to develop consideration for others so that we can go beyond these limitations to build a new society and new individual selves.

For those who study Shintaido in the United States in this age, I recommend the study of well-developed consideration and discipline more than the aspects of freedom and independence in Shintaido. This is especially true for those who have studied for more than two or three years and who are still willing to continue. If the advanced student forgets these aspects, there is no way to develop a new stage for Shintaido of America and to give a good influence to this society.

IV

Truth is not information. Even if you collect a lot of information, you can never reach Truth; you will be a walking encyclopedia. In the Shintaido book, Aoki-sensei said, Truth never comes to you unless you approach it. I am not going to twist Sensei's word, but let me give you a word of warning: If your way of approach is wrong, the truth will elude you. As Emily Dickenson has written about Beauty:

Beauty - be not caused - It is -
Chase it, and it ceases -
Chase it not, and it abides -

In the same way, if you find the correct way to approach Truth, you can live with it. I believe the basic way to approach Truth is related to the attitude of a child who wants to study and who is filled with both curiosity and awe. This attitude is automatically apparent in his or her physical posture. That is why in Shintaido, to acquire the correct form, posture and movement is very important.

If you are still willing to study these kinds of basics, please come to talk with me or invite me to talk with you. I am available here as a Shintaido missionary from Japan.