



SHINTAIDO OF AMERICA

August 1987 Newsletter

San Francisco, California

Shintaido is Anthropocosmically Symbolic

lecture by Michael Thompson

Two years ago I gave a lecture at an East Coast gasshuku (workshop) in which I tried to explain a phrase coined by Aoki-sensei in the Shintaido textbook: "The locus of one swing of a sword is a sign." (The Japanese word *kigo* was translated as sign, but it can also mean symbol). This phrase is confusing because it seems incomplete; a sign or symbol of what? Since then, I have done some research, especially in the writings of the French anthropologist of religion, Mircea Eliade, and have come up with some tentative answers which I would like to share with you today.

In his book *Images and Symbols*, Eliade lists four characteristics that he says are inherent in any truly religious symbol.

The first is that it will *express a deeper or hidden life that cannot be expressed through ordinary language*. It is something you can perceive with your five senses that cannot be expressed through ordinary language.

The second is that it is something that can *express a paradox such as the unification of opposites which in reality are conflicting or contrasting*. A familiar example might be the yin/yang symbol wherein opposites such as night and day, dark and light, male and female are unified.

The next characteristic is that a symbol will *have many levels of meaning*. So it is not a simple $A = B$ equation. $A = B, C, D$, etc., and of course A . (Eiko is just Eiko!)

Lastly, a religious symbol can *transcend language*. Language tends to objectify, to erect a kind of wall around the thing, person, idea it seeks to define or designate. The use of symbolism can tear down these walls and allow us to experience something inexpressible directly.

True poetry is full of this kind of religious symbolism even when the topic is not specifically religious. In fact, Henry Miller once wrote that religious truths could only be expressed through art and almost never through organized religion because art shows man trying to understand his place in the universe.

Although Eliade does not talk about the symbolism of body movement, there is no doubt in my mind that Shintaido embodies the kind of symbolism he writes about. The goal of a symbol is to enable us to unify with realms (of reality, of consciousness) we cannot experience through ordinary means. Eliade does write of the symbolism of the body which he calls "anthropocosmic symbolism," symbolism that unifies man and the universe. It seems

to me that this is just another way of saying an expression which is familiar to Shintaido: "the body is a message of the universe." I would like to turn to this symbolism with the caveat that we are not just talking about the body that we are constantly enjoined to keep "fit" or young."

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Sensei Care

by Leslie Goldberg

Editor's note: Over the years, American Shintaido has been developing a form for its workshops and retreats which is based on forms used in traditional Japanese arts. Head Instructor H. Ito has coined a term "gasshuku kata." Gasshuku means retreat or workshop and kata means form. Sensei care is an important part of this gasshuku kata and recently our resident reporter Leslie Goldberg interviewed Ito on the subject of sensei care.

The concept of sensei care does not come easy for a lot of American Shintaido students. No matter how much one might love and respect an instructor, the idea of anticipating his needs and essentially waiting on him or her is foreign to most of us.

After all, this country is based on individuality and freedom. In the last two or three decades, women and members of minority groups especially have fought against subservience in all

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Shintaido Terminology

by Faith Ingulsrud

The Shintaido program in the West uses scores of Japanese words to describe the forms and sensibilities of this new system of body movement. This column initiates the effort to compile a kanji glossary of these terms. We hope not only to provide illuminating information about the words, but also to establish a forum for the discussion of issues relating to their use and to improve our understanding and communication of Shintaido ideas.

KEIKO: Practice, training study

kei	ko
稽	古
think	old
consider	

Studying forms passed down through generations of masters. Practicing and reflecting on the old forms.

SEIZA: Sitting in kneeling position

sei	za
正	座
righteousness	seat
justice	cushion
positiveness	
genuine	

Seiza literally means "correct or formal sitting."

MOKUSO: Meditation

moku	so
黙	想
keeping	idea
silence	concept
	thought

In mokuso (meditation), you visualize in silence.

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The specific image I would like to explore is that of "ten-chi-jin" — heaven, earth, man(kind) which is a key element of all mystical philosophy. For example, a 15th century mystical poet in India wrote: "The body is my scripture, herein the almighty has written his message." Of course, there are many levels of interpretation beginning with the structure of the spine itself extending from the archaic tail bone to the brain.

When Buddhism moved from India to China it was greatly transformed in part because the Chinese weren't very comfortable with the metaphysical abstraction so dear to the Indians, preferring a more concrete and "down-to-earth" approach. Since their language is ideographic wherein pictures represent ideas, it was natural that they preferred to stay close to home rather than taking off on abstract metaphysical speculations.

The word for heaven, *ten*, is a picture of a man with his arms outstretched standing under something (天). So *ten* is something both visible and invisible: sky, cosmos, space. *Chi* (地), on the other hand, is all flesh and blood. It contains two elements, one (土) representing earth, dirt; and the other (也) representing generation or cyclical time. So you might say that *jin*, according to this idea, exists somewhere between the realms of time/space and timeless infinity. These apparently irreconcilable dimensions can be wedded in man but he can only become aware of it when he becomes *homo symbolicus*.

The specific *ten-chi-jin* image relevant to the martial arts is that of a straight line extending through the earth, through man (人) to heaven. This is a familiar symbol — the axis mundi — which forms a part of the mystical vocabulary of many ancient cultures. All movement to be true, must incorporate this relationship, and it can be found in Shintaido updated, as in various ancient disci-

plines. It is the way modern man can express Eliade's "anthropocosmic symbolism."

In the 20th century we often hear about how alienated modern man has become: alienated from nature, from God, from his fellow man and, ultimately, from himself. A way to express this more simply would be to say that *jin* has been cut off from *ten* and from *chi*. We have isolated ourselves, through our *hubris* or overweening intellectual and technological pride, from our real selves. This is one reason the opening feeling of Shintaido's movements is so important. Body movement allows us to bypass that part of our being/ consciousness that dissects, objectifies and destroys.

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One way to evaluate the various types of body movements proliferating in our time (in itself, a healthy sign) might be to see whether they reflect or contain *ten-chi-jin* philosophy without which they might be good for developing certain "useful" qualities and personal well-being, but without which they cannot affect consciousness, in other words, can have no symbolic value.

I don't think it is so difficult to achieve the union of *jin* and *chi*. The growing ecological movement is testimony to the fact that we have become, as a species, aware of the need for this union for our survival on this planet. Much of Shintaido keiko is geared toward the attaining of this unification, and this helps to explain why we would much rather practice outside than indoors.

The unification of *jin* and *chi* can be achieved with time and a willingness
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to continue past self-imposed limitations. But this unification is only half the story and can easily degenerate into a kind of mindless romanticism or cultishness in the absence of the *ten* element.

The original nexus in which Shintaido was developed in Japan was called *rakutenkai*, which might be translated as the "enjoy ten group." Of course without *chi*, the philosophy of *ten* can also degenerate into otherworldliness and abstraction. But without it there can be no inspiration and no real progress. Of course *ten* is the underpinning of Shintaido's movements and of Aoki-sensei's philosophy. For it is the world of silence, of nothingness, which gives birth to the symbol and to which the symbol points. *Ten* is expressed most directly in the language of Shintaido by *eiko*, which is translated as "glory" and which contains the Chinese ideograph *hikari* (光) or 'light.' It is the way we can express and discover the world of *ten*.

Two of the movements of tenshingso, *ah* and *um*, also express this *ten-chi-jin* philosophy. But Aoki-sensei also added *A*, *E*, *Oh* because we have to live and act in this world. Much of human history might be represented as an attempt to express *A*, *E*, and *Oh* without *Ah* and *um*. In other words, the alienation of *jin* from *ten* and *chi*. So we come back to the point of having to complete the symbol, to expand our horizons, to redefine our concept of self, other, nature and God. All this through body movement? So far I haven't found a better way, or at least a way that helps to avoid the pitfalls of ego-centered self-delusion that have gotten us in the mess we find ourselves today.

But as I said before, the Symbol *Ah* is also just *Ah*. *Eiko* is just *Eiko*: running, stretching, yelling, breathing, suffering, enjoying, being imprisoned, being free. As Verlaine wrote, "Tout le reste c'est de la littérature." All the rest is literature. □

SoA Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was again held during the Spring Gasshuku over Memorial Day weekend in May.

Board of Directors: We would like to extend a warm welcome to Irene Hadeishi who has agreed to be on the Board this year. The other members of the Board who have served before are welcomed back: Bill Burtis, Lee Seaman, H. Ito and M. Thompson.

Officers appointed: Bela Breslau, president; Rosemary Sterling, vice president; Bob Howald, treasurer; Kazu Shibao, equipment manager; Jim Sterling, SoA SIC coordinator.

Exam Results

Bo Exams

Ben Schiresen	4 kyu
Connie Borden	6 kyu
Friedemann Schulz	6 kyu
Lori Breant	8 kyu
Stephane Seddiki	9 kyu
Tom Stinnett	9 kyu
Leslie Goldberg	9 kyu
Jacques Seddiki	10 kyu

Karate Exams

Jim Sterling	5kyu
Ben Schiresen	5 kyu
Claude Breant	6 kyu
Ton Stinnett	7 kyu
Kazu Shibao	8 kyu

New Assistants

Eric Avildsen, Worcester
Connie Borden, San Francisco
Jennie Day, Union, Oregon
Leslie Goldberg, San Francisco
Faith Ingulsrud, Worcester
Tom Stinnett, San Francisco

Gasshukus Past

SoA First Advanced Workshop held just prior to spring gasshuku. Twenty instructors and assistants attended. SIC (Shintaido Instructor's Council) America established.

The SoA Annual Spring gasshuku — Memorial Day Weekend. Hosted by Bay Area Shintaidoists, 50 participants trekked north to Anapolis California. Practice was held under giant redwoods and on the wild and windy Gualala beach. Thank you to H. Ito, R. Breant and M. Thompson for the great instruction.

Meditation and the Harmonic Convergence. In S.F. Aug. 9 - 15 from 5:30 to 7:00 each am. Didn't think this was an outreach effort, but 30+ gathered each day. Is this because of our unexpectedly good timing with the harmonic convergence?

European Summer Shintaido. Both the English and the French hosted national events with founder of Shintaido H. Aoki. H. Ito of America and Hideko, a senior instructor from Japan also instructed. The English came away with 3 new provisional instructors and the French got 12!



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forms. Yet sensei care is an important part of Shintaido training and according to head instructor of American Shintaido Haruyoshi Ito, sensei care can, in fact, enhance personal freedom in that a person may be liberated from the constraints of narrow self-interest. "When you empty yourself out, you become *muga* which is translated as nothingness or no being," said Ito. "That is the point when you may experience your original self which is

"When Aoki-sensei and I do a gasshuku together, we feel like we're on the front lines of a battlefield."

called *shinga* or *taisa*. The original self is the same as nature. It's another level of freedom — freedom from the ego."

Inner disciple

Although simply speaking, sensei care is keeping the instructor comfortable and happy so that he is more willing to share his knowledge, the practice of sensei care is rooted in the rich Japanese tradition of *uchideshi*. *Uchideshi* means "inner disciple."

Years ago, when a master of a particular traditional Japanese art, whether it was tea ceremony or Noh theater or martial arts, wanted his son to begin training, the father would send him to the home of another master to become that master's *uchideshi*. Essentially the boy would become the master's personal servant.

The *uchideshi* would do things like draw the master's bath, perform household tasks and take care of guests' shoes. Eventually he would prepare tea for the master and take care of his kimono. The master might be very harsh, even beating the boy. "If the *uchideshi* complained the master would say, 'Fine, you don't have to stay,'" said Ito. Ito explained that if the *uchideshi* ran home to his

family the father would usually send him back to the master.

After the *uchideshi* successfully completed his first couple of years of this training, he would be permitted to clean the dojo and watch the *keiko*. He would finally be allowed to see how the sensei taught. He might only watch and not practice for as long as five years.

When he was finally allowed to practice, he would learn much faster than the ordinary student said Ito. "From the beginning he knew how to study and he knew how to teach."

Sensei care, which can be seen as a sort of temporary *uchideshi*, also embraces this idea of learning through watching instead of by asking questions.

"In the East, especially Japan, truth is believed to be transferred through the *kata* or form or movement, not through words," said Ito. "Truth is experience."

When you do sensei care you're expected, like the *uchideshi*, to anticipate the master's needs or "read his mind." "This non-verbal communication is very important," said Ito. "It's almost the essence of martial arts, because in martial arts you've got to anticipate your opponent's attack. Otherwise how can you defend yourself?" However the goal is more than just reading the sensei's mind. The goal is one mind." said Ito. "I'm sure even with the temporary *uchideshi* system (sensei care) you can reach oneness in Shintaido if you are really serious. But the point is, when you do sensei care, you've got to aim high. If you decide in the beginning you don't want to go beyond the first level of just making the instructor comfortable, then you limit yourself."

Ito and Aoki

After many years of doing Shintaido practice and sensei care himself, Ito noted that he has often experienced "one mind" with founder Aoki.

"When Aoki sensei and I do a gasshuku together, we feel like we're on the front lines of a battlefield," said Ito. "We try to develop the best friendship, the best oneness, so that what Aoki sensei is thinking comes out of my mouth and what I'm thinking naturally comes out of his mouth."

Ito said that even when he and Hiroyuki Aoki are separated by thousands of miles of Pacific Ocean, they sometimes get a sense when something significant is happening to the other. "When Aoki sensei has experienced something bad or negative, I've felt it right away or if he experienced some enlightenment I have felt suddenly very happy. Later, speaking to him on the phone, I'd say, "Did anything special happen on, say, May 13 and he would say, "Oh yes that was when I got some satori or something."

"We developed this relationship through sensei care and by me giving him shiatsu," said Ito. Shiatsu is very important."

The actual practice

Immediately following *keiko*, the sensei care person usually will serve, depending upon the weather, hot tea or a cool drink, provide a warm damp towel for the sensei to wipe his face, and take care of the sensei's hakama.

During the workshop, the sensei care person is expected to look after the sensei's needs in general. Some special food may be served, tea during meetings or at lectures, service at the meals, special touches to the room, rides to and from the practice.

Another important function is that the sensei care person serves as a liaison between the sensei and the workshop organizers as well as a liaison between the sensei and the students. If the sensei care person hears something useful for the instructor, he can relay that back. □

Calendar

1987/1988

Oct. Advanced workshop for Instructors and Assistants, Oct. 8 & 9, Northwood, New Hampshire.

Columbus Day gasshuku, Oct. 10-12, Boston, Mass., Instructors: H. Ito, M. Thompson and Guest Instructor Hideko Hokari from Japan. Bokuto, bohjutsu, & kenko-taiso courses. Fall exams.

Nov. Thanksgiving weekend gasshuku, Nov. 27-29, Goleta, California (near Santa Barbara). Instructors: H. Ito & Claude Breant. Bojutsu program.

1988

Jan. Kan Geiko, Jan 1-3, San Francisco.

Feb. Kan Geiko, Feb. 13-15, New England.

April Japanese Shintaido National Gasshuku, April 29 - May 1st, Japan.

May International Instructors & Assistants conference, May 3-8, Japan.

Where to Find Shintaido in America

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Correction

Carol Light from England was the author of the poem in the last Newsletter. Apologies for leaving off her name.

In the Next Issue

The U.S. Enterprise and Shintaido. Leslie Goldberg will write about Shintaido and the U.S. Enterprise. Beginning with Robert Gaston who started out with the Oregon group several young men from the Enterprise have been attending S.F. classes when their ship is in port. (No this is not Star Trek, it's the Navy).

Shintaido and Music. Ito has been teaching intensive private lessons to

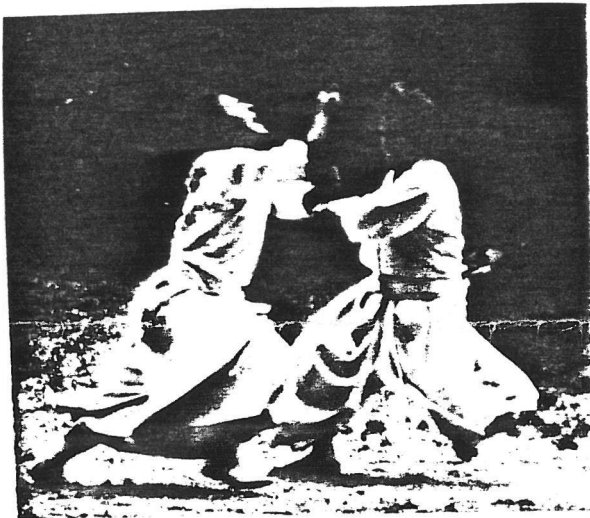
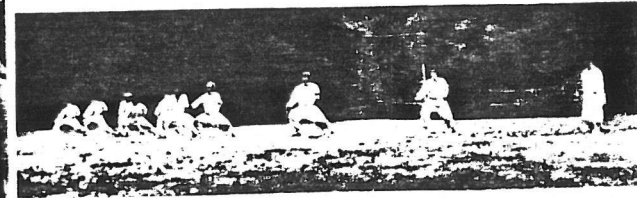
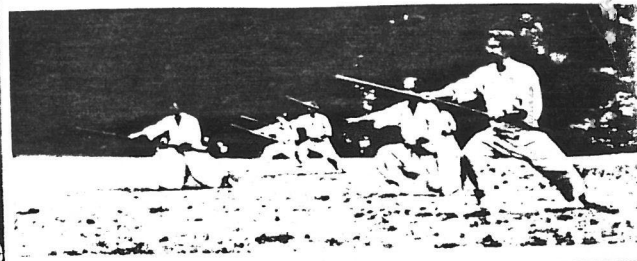
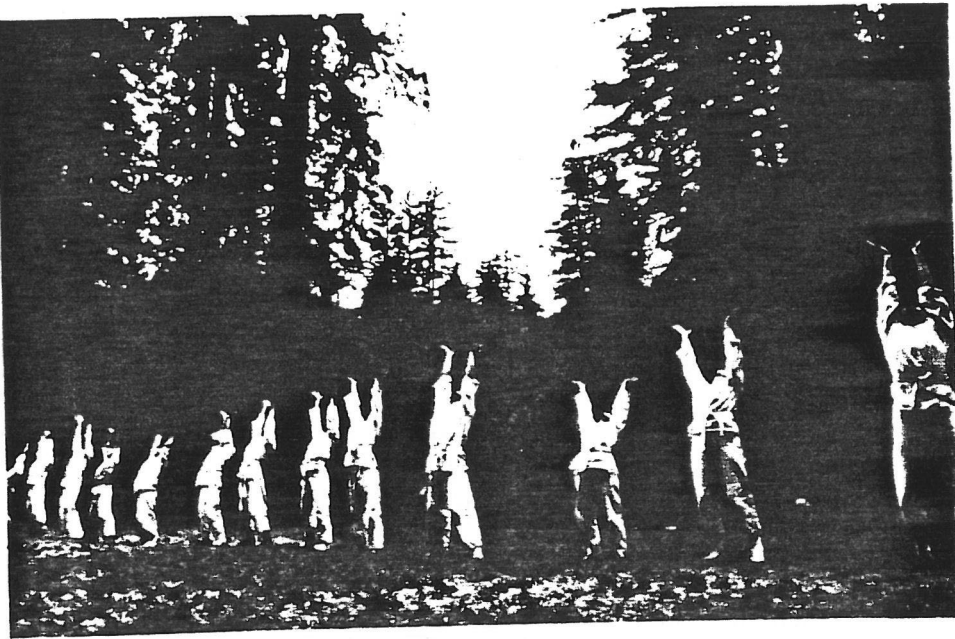
Kent Nagano, a Japanese American, who is the conductor of the Berkeley symphony as well as an international guest conductor. Michael Goldberg will interview Kent to get his comments and impressions.

Shintaido Terminology. We'll have another Shintaido Japanese lesson. Next time, the command words we all hear so often in class.

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