



SHINTAIDO OF AMERICA

Fall 1989 Newsletter

San Francisco, California

Coming to America

Two Japanese Masters discuss Teaching in the U.S.

Teaching a Japanese traditional art form to American students is like starting a garden in an uncertain climate. Two Japanese masters, Haruyoshi Ito, instructor of Shintaido and Yuriko Doi, instructor of Noh and Kyogen theater, discuss the frustrations, as well as the joys of bringing their Asian art forms to Western students. This dialogue is moderated by Libby Zilber, member of the Theatre of Yugen.

Ito: I came to the United States to teach, but I also came to learn. My journey to this country has been a kind of "return to self."

In Japan, the *sensei* system can inflate a teacher's ego. One can become removed and distant. Here, you don't have all that respect and power, but you have an opportunity to learn.

Initially, I was curious to see how Japanese teaching methods would work with American students. I became very frustrated and I got angry quickly. I lost many students at first. I found that I had to rethink my approach. However, the students who did manage to stay with me learned a great deal. It was an accomplishment for them.

Doi: I found that American students want to advance too quickly --- often before they have laid the proper groundwork. It's frustrating. Students don't realize that it takes at least a year

of study before one can even begin to understand the art form.

In theater we also have to think about educating the audience. So even if an actor understands "introverted energy," the audience may not. Audiences in the West are used to seeing action and movement. They think the (Noh or Kyogen) actor is just standing there. Sometimes I want to give up! Occasionally I add movement, something flashy to at least attract the audience.

Zilber: How did you change your teaching to adapt to American students?

Ito: At first, I used to explain a particular movement by telling students how to use each muscle. Later I tried using examples from nature. I would tell them that this movement is like a bird or a wave or a tree. They instantly understood. I also realized that I had been trying to teach too much, not giving students a chance to digest the material.

Doi: I found that I had to explain more to the Western students. Traditionally in Kyogen, the master doesn't explain. Students just copy.

Ito: Of course, I explain more to American students also. Another technique which I found useful is what is called *kugirigeiko* or *warigeiko*, which means breaking up a movement

into small steps. That way, it's easy for anyone to learn, regardless of their natural ability.

Zilber: What other adjustments have you made for Americans?

Ito: When I think a Western student is working hard I always encourage them with words like, "That's it, keep going." But sometimes that student will start to believe he's talented, when really he's not. In Japan, students are almost never praised.

Doi: Right. In Japan, teachers are most severe with the most talented students.

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Coming to America, from page 1

Ito: Students in Japan are happy if they are complimented once in six months. Japanese like the challenge of a tough teacher.

Doi: Criticism helps the student develop an aesthetic eye. If the teacher praises too much, the students get lazy. They relax. They stop.

Zilber: I discovered that a lot of responsibility for learning is placed on the student...

Doi: Right. You have to depend on yourself. In this country we expect to be taught and when a student doesn't learn, it's considered the teacher's fault. In Japan, a student learns by himself. The teacher is merely passing on suggestions.

But going back to an earlier question... one difference I've found among actors in Japan and here is the use of facial expression. In Japan, actors keep a straight face, especially in Noh. But when I tried to keep actors here from using their faces, they would tense up their bodies. Finally I said go ahead and use it if it feels natural, but remember don't depend on your face. It is no more important than any other part of the body.



Yuriko Doi is the artistic director of San Francisco's Theatre of Yugen, which she founded in 1978. She is a student of Noh master Shiro Nomura and Kyogen master Mansaku Nomura. Theatre of Yugen members have been studying Shintaido since the summer of 1988 to develop their *koshi* and *hara* power.

Ito: When a master performs, he expresses himself with his whole presence.

Doi: You see this presence particularly in older performers. Physically an 80 year old master actor may be weak, but he has a strong presence.

(Doi and Ito discuss the difference between natural and stylized movement.)

Ito: In Shintaido, you learn to control natural movement. For example, a student may be naturally inclined to lean back when he kicks. But for the kick to be effective he will have to force himself to lean forward.

"In this country we expect to be taught and when a student doesn't learn, it's considered the teacher's fault. In Japan, a student learns by himself. The teacher is merely passing on suggestions."

Doi: Yes, you have to go beyond nature to create natural movement. You have to train unnaturally.

Ito: Stance is particularly important in Shintaido. A centered stance is actually leaning forward slightly. If you do that, you cannot be pushed over.

Zilber: Physically, Asian and Westerners seem to be different. Japanese are lower to the ground.

Ito: Because Japanese are accustomed to squatting and sitting on the floor, they have greater lower body strength. But as Asians become more Westernized, this is changing. These

days, Japanese have breakfast sitting in chairs at a kitchen table. It's hard for them to sit on the floor for more than an hour.

Circulation in the lower part of the body is not as good for modern man. In this "computer society," blood circulation is most concentrated in the brain.

I think body work such as Shintaido can be helpful for modern people --- it restores balance. It gets the blood circulating throughout the whole body. It's a more natural state.

Many Japanese art forms including theater and martial arts talk about nature but they don't really understand "Great Nature."

Great Nature is untamed, even dangerous. In Japan, what is known as "nature" is tempered, beautiful, under human control --- very different from Great Nature in the United States or on the other big continents. Human beings in Great Nature feel humbled. A student of mine who had undergone a life and death experience on the Colorado River finally understood the importance of bowing when he entered the dojo.

Doi: Natural power. In my book about my years of sailing in the Pacific, I talked about feeling that drama of nature on stage.

Ito: I believe that my experience of Great Nature has enriched my teaching.

Zilber: Is your teaching a fusion of East and West?

Ito: Shintaido is, of course, popular in Japan. But American Shintaido is, at this time, far more spectacular.

Doi: In Japan, people think it's strange that I do Noh and am involved in sailing. Sailing is considered a contemporary sport and Noh is thought to be heavy, old and slow. But I believe they are actually not so different. Noh should be modern, avant-garde theater. It's so true that it possesses simplicity, minimal movement --- but effective movement. So I believe I'm doing contemporary avant-garde theater, which has a totally different feeling from other

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traditional forms being taught here.

Ito: Shintaido also emphasizes simplicity and efficient use of energy. We try to transform the negative and chaotic forces to positive and constructive forces.

Noh and Kyogen impress me as very ecological - using less space and less action to convey a content every bit as rich and meaningful as Western theater. Noh and Kyogen may point a future direction in theater and an example for modern living.

Zilber: One last question: what do you enjoy most about teaching here?

Ito: Meeting so many different types of people. In Japan, they are all the same. Here, you can grow by interacting with many different types of people.

Doi: I enjoy seeing the aesthetics and qualities of Noh come through in a Western actor. These are universal qualities that go beyond provincial attitudes, beyond Western or Eastern culture and are equal to both. ■

Northwest Inspirations

by Michael Buckley

Editors note: Michael Buckley spent three months teaching Shintaido as well as working in Northeastern Oregon last summer. He shares some thoughts and satoris about that experience.

The Shintaido practitioners in northeastern Oregon inspired me with their heartiness and eagerness for *keiko*. Hungry for Shintaido stimulation, last summer we once drove nearly three days for a two day workshop in Bellingham, WA, with Lee and John Seaman. Each Sunday morning one student drove nearly 50 miles for the introductory Shintaido *karate* class that I taught in La Grande. Mary Helm, Bev Penz, Jonathan Mensing, John Hines and guests held classes outside, sometimes in rain, snow and darkness.

These practitioners take notes too,

writing a description after each *keiko*. They showed me that notes are an invaluable tool for learning, reviewing and as a record for future reference. While note-taking is essential where the geographical distance between instructors is so vast, it can also be helpful in other settings.

This summer I also learned some of the benefits of following the Shintaido Tao through a "*gorei kata*." Before I left, Jim Sterling *Sensei* directed and supervised my instruction, giving me a curriculum of lessons and goals. With the Bellingham workshop at a midpoint of the lessons, we met again for guidance, questions and corrections. I thereby experienced the importance of an exact curriculum. With it there was no worrying of "what next?" to take away from the moment of teaching. As a result I relaxed enough to see the flow of the students which helped me to be more attuned to them during *keiko*.

I learned that one part of teaching Shintaido is a concentration on form. Practicing to demonstrate refines one's own form. I learned that I have Shintaido in my body - I think all of us who have practiced faithfully for a few years do - which, in an appropriate context, can be shared. There is a great amount to be gained in teaching. I found that I knew more than I thought I knew. And while I'll never be finished as a student, waiting to be a "complete instructor" before teaching may be an unfortunate kind of holding back.

Returning to the Bay Area Shintaido "university" seems to be one of the most fertile areas to study with a variety of senior instructors and also Ito *Sensei*. And if I have caught some of the eager and hearty spirit of the Northeastern Shintaidoists I will make the most of my time. ■



Photo by John Hines

Reorganizing Shintaido of America

by Michael Thompson

The Shintaido Board of Directors, responding to a decision reached at a meeting of the National Instructors' Council, voted to restructure Shintaido of America (SoA) at its annual meeting held in Santa Cruz on July 1, 1989. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the nature of the changes and to provide some background to the original proposal made by Ito and myself.

It seemed to both of us that SoA had come to the end of the first stage of its short history in this country and that it was time to enter into a new phase. Basically, Ito, I, and Bela Breslau have run things since Ito brought Shintaido from Japan more than 15 years ago. Of course others have been very generous with their time and efforts, especially in helping to organize *gasshukus* and putting out newsletters, but the main impetus and most of the ideas originated at SoA's San Francisco office. Shintaido of America, originally *Rakutenkai* Shintaido of California, has gradually evolved into the following structure: (fig. 1)

as individual instructor dues, maintaining a mailing list, etc. There is little or no possibility of exchanging information among "local" groups unless they go through the head office.

This system was appropriate as long as the majority of SoA members were concerned mainly with the study of Shintaido *keiko* itself while the larger questions of how best to organize, what the goals of the organization should be, how we should work with other national groups and Aoki *Sensei*, etc., were handled by Ito and myself. But it seems clear that quite a few students are ready to assume positions of leadership, have their own ideas about what Shintaido should be in this country — there are now more than 50 instructors and assistants, a number which will probably double by the time of Aoki *Sensei's* second scheduled visit in 1996 — and that the present centralized structure served to stifle rather than encourage participation in SoA activities. In practice, members of Bay Area Shintaido (BASEC) were filling all of the SoA administrative positions and

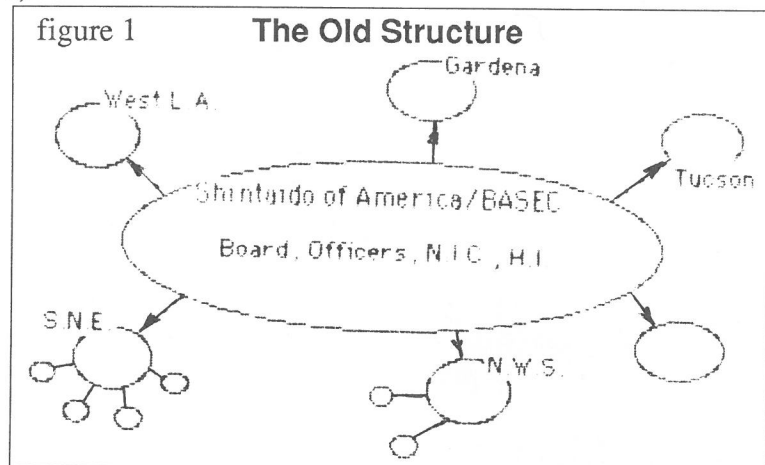
[fig. 2]. Each region would consist of an administrative body [triangles] and an Instructor's Council [squares]. At first, of course, most of those working for the group would be "squares" but in the future this might not be the case. The regional organization, as is already the case in the Bay Area and New England, would be responsible for coordinating the activities of the various local groups (cf. Cambridge, Worcester, New Hampshire, and Vermont in New England). In addition, these regional groups would be where practicing members could comprise a kind of community, choosing the kind of structure which best fits their situation. For example, they might want to form a membership group, charge dues, have general meetings, elect officers, etc.

Shintaido of America would become the federation of the instructors and assistants [squares] in each region, along with regional representatives and others recommended by the regional groups (someone, for example, who is not interested in studying Shintaido as a kind of *Shugyo**, but agrees with its basic principles and wants to work, at the national level, to further its aims). According to this schema, it would be like, as Pascal once wrote, "a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere." Of course, we still need an official address and officers, but the responsibilities would be scaled down to a basic minimum, mostly involving coordinating regional activities, sponsoring national *gasshukus*, etc.

Another image for the change taking place is that of cell mitosis whereby cells divide as exact replicates of each other rather than being

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* Special training involving the handing down of technique or knowledge from teacher to disciple and the mutual responsibilities implied in this relationship.

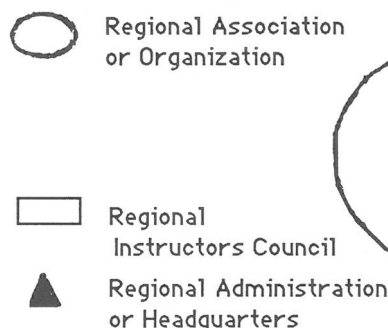


In this set-up, San Francisco is the "honbu" or head office, responsible for all SoA activities: national *gasshukus*, newsletters, equipment, collecting membership fees, paying annual licensing fees to Japan as well

Ito was obliged to fill the role of SoA president.

In order to provide opportunities for more participation, we decided to become a kind of federation of equal associations, grouped by regions

figure 2 The New Organizational Structure



smaller or weaker offspring of a larger entity. At first, of course, there will be differences in size and organization because the groups will be at different stages of development, but, in theory, the "DNA" would be the same. The nucleus of these cells would be the squares or instructors' groups and it would be at this level that communication among them would take place.

The practical steps that have been enacted are to add a new membership category and redefine some of the old ones:

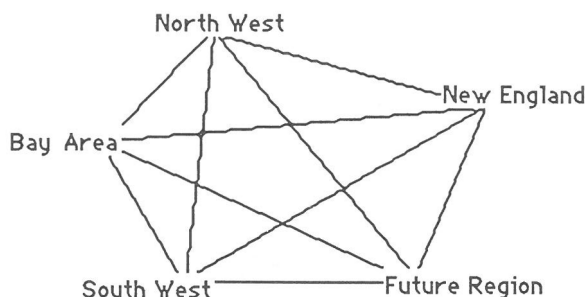
1. Full (voting) Members (\$200, instructor; \$100, assistant or regional

Only the first category has the right to vote at general membership meetings which, as in the past, are open to all and are held during the course of the national *gasshuku*. This group, in effect, constitutes the management of Shintaido of America.

The second major change is that each region should organize its own general membership meeting and elect a representative, not necessarily an instructor or assistant, to serve as coordinator between the regional group and SoA.

We still want to encourage broad participation in and concern for the affairs of Shintaido of America as possible and feel that individuals who have

figure 3 The Shintaido Network



- representatives and appointees)
 2. Supporting Members (up to \$30)
 3. Contributing member (\$31 to \$100)
 4. Sustaining Member (\$101 to \$500)
 5. Patron member (\$501 or more)
 6. Student Member (\$15)
- (All members receive newsletters

worked at the "grass roots" level previously will make the best and most informed contribution in the future. We welcome your thoughts and comments. ■

Booklets and Video Texts

There are several new booklets available now! We would like to express special thanks to Tomi Nagai-Rothe and Jim Sterling who helped us edit the text. Also we would like to send a special note of appreciation to Pierre Quetier, Shiko Hokari, Masashi Iida, and Atsushi Funakawa who checked our translations.

<i>The Zero Point of Consciousness and The World of "Ki"</i>	\$5.00
<i>Improvisation and The Body</i>	\$3.50
<i>Tenshingoso & Eiko</i>	\$10.00

If you are interested, please send a check (including \$2 for postage and handling) to Shintaido of America, P.O. Box #22622, San Francisco, CA 94122.

Two video texts are also on sale (Thanks to our video producer, Bill Burtis!)

<i>Kenko-taiso Video</i>	\$35.00
<i>Kata & Kumite (Bojutsu, Karate, Kenjutsu) Video</i>	\$70.00

(price includes postage and handling)

Shintaido in West Berlin

by H.F. Ito, the International Shintaido Emissary

Between two workshops for British Shintaido in London, I had a chance to pop out of England and visit West Berlin where Amras and Joey Weber sponsored and set up the Shintaido Introduction Workshop (Part II) during the first weekend of September. A total of 11 people came to practice with me including one Pole and three Germans who came from another part of West Germany.

One woman who came from Koln originally started practicing Shintaido in Goa, India under the direction of "St. Bernard de France"(!?) a few years ago. She said "I was so surprised and impressed by the Amras's Shintaido article in the German Macrobiotic Magazine, that I signed up for this workshop right away."

After the workshop, five of them expressed their wishes to see Aoki Sensei in England next summer. Go! Go! Germany!! Go! Go! Aoki 90 *!!

* British Shintaido will have their own national *gasshuku* directed by Aoki Sensei at the end of August in 1990. They have decided to call their event "Aoki '90."

Equipment

Shintaido of America has a selection of equipment available for purchase.

Shintaido bumper stickers	\$1.00
History of SoA	\$3.95*
Shintaido book	\$10.95*
Shintaido corduroy hats	
red or white	\$10.00
2 Hats	@\$9.00
3 or more	@\$8.00

Keiko equipment is also available.

We can mail any items to you - or you can come and get them!

Contact SoA equipment Manager Juliette Farkouh at 57 St. Charles Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132-3032.
(415) 239-4132.

*Includes shipping and handling.

Calendar

1989

October

4-6, Advanced Workshop in New England

6-9, Fall Gasshuku in New England

November

24-26, Thanksgiving Gasshuku near Santa Barbara

1990

January

7-13, Kangeiko in San Francisco

February

17-19, Kangeiko in New England

May

Memorial Day Workshop in New England

July

1-4, National Gasshuku with Aoki Sensei in Santa Cruz, CA

Published by

Shintaido of America
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True origin of Shintaido Jump

by David Franklin

The Heart of It

by Tomi Nagai-Rothe

After I come home from the *gasshuku* my heart feels as if it is twice the size of my body. It buoys me up. Walking to work I wonder if everyone else can feel it, and I think that before I must have been a grinch with "a heart three sizes too small."

I associate it with the bubble of time that swells to hold the whole *gasshuku*; all the people, the bright clear moments, that sense of floating in the air above Santa Cruz Bay. A lifetime in four days with an infinitely expandable skin.

It is the first time I have felt the *gorei* and participants form a palpable whole, a living sculpture. Michael Thompson the *sensei* calls it the "Ito bubble" and at the *gasshuku* Ito *Sensei* describes how the *sensei* gently support their student's practice while students support *Sensei* through *sensei* care. This safe harbor we create together must be the "real life" we try to define, and the place which engenders mutual respect.

During the "Sun Dance" in the first *keiko*, time, words, and everyday life burn away. And though that sacred space closes at the end of *keiko*, having broken it open makes it easier to return. Before the midnight meditation Minagawa *Sensei* asks, "How many stars are there?" During the long ecstatic *tenso* we fly up into the sky to see.

There are times when I am really afraid, of nothing in particular, and the feeling just seeps in. Maybe it is being so vulnerable, so close to death and life. I remember the phrase "And deliver us from evil" coming into sharp focus in one *keiko*, surprising me (only my non-intellectual self could explain it now).

I call it a bubble, but you could call it an aneurysm, which is a swelling in an artery. From a physiological viewpoint, the aneurysm can rupture and kill you if it doesn't subside. So, what happens when we destroy linear time? I can only point to Shin Aoki's *Tenshingosō Dai* during the examinations. For the rest of my life I will remember his "A" as it shakes the gymnasium and begins to break open the ground. I feel as though it splits me,

scraping open my humanity.

So there we all are staring down (or up) into the abyss, and then it closes. And the next day during the boh demonstrations Jim Sterling *Sensei* draws himself up so slowly to his full height

and more - until Jim isn't there anymore and we are all in the moment so intensely that it burns cleanly, without smoke.

Maybe that was when my heart grew three sizes. ■

New Officers of SoA

Board of Directors

Michael Thompson
Haruyoshi Ito
Bill Burtis
Lee Seaman
Friedemann Schulz
Nob Hadeishi (Honorably)
David Nakagawa (Honorably)

Officers

Michael Thompson	Head Instructor
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Juliette Farkouh	Equipment Manager
Tom Stinnett	Newsletter Editor
Michael Buckley	Armorer

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Eric Avildsen	New England
John Seaman	North West
Tom Stinnett	BASEC
Christophe Bernard	Southwest

Shintaido of America would like to express special appreciation to Irene Hadeishi who served as a board of director for the last two years.

SoA Exam Results

Shintaido Assistant Instructor

Joe Angello	Assistant
Debra Buddie	Assistant
Mila Gelman	Assistant
Lee Ordeman	Assistant
Bill Peterson	Assistant
Shin Aoki	Assistant

Bojutsu

Friedemann Schulz	1-kyu
Ben Schireson	2-kyu
Lori Breant	5-kyu
Shin Aoki	5-kyu
Debra Buddie	6-kyu
Robert Gaston	6-kyu
John Seaman	6-kyu
Jen Day	7-kyu
Joe Angello	8-kyu
Mila Gelman	9-kyu
Peter Nagai-Rothe	9-kyu
Charles Turner	9-kyu
Nancy Buss	10-kyu
John Hines	10-kyu
Virginia Welford	10-kyu

Karate

Claude Breant	2-kyu
Jim Sterling	2-kyu
David Franklin	3-kyu
Ben Schireson	3-kyu
Kazu Shibao	4-kyu
Joe Zawielski	4-kyu
Michael Buckley	6-kyu
Robert Gaston	6-kyu
Chris Nash	6-kyu
Friedeman Schultz	7-kyu
Kathy Mulica	8-kyu
Joe Angello	9-kyu
Peter Nagai-Rothe	10-kyu

SOUTHWEST



SHINTAIDO

THANKSGIVING GASSUKU
NOVEMBER 24-26 1989

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