



OF AMERICA

Fall 1991 Newsletter

Shintaido on the Continuum

Fighting Art—Self-defense—Martial Art—Spiritual Practice

From a workshop with H. F. Ito, March 30, 1991

A Development from the Fighting Arts and Self-defense

Shintaido is not simply a fighting art—although it has its roots there. In the “fighting arts,” the only criterion is winning by using whatever techniques are most effective. There is no need for philosophy or morality as long as one wins.

If you add morality to the criterion of winning, you have the concept of “self-defense.” For example, someone acting “in self-defense” tries, if possible, only to defend him/herself without killing the other person. Although this philosophy contains the idea that some kinds of behavior are more morally acceptable than other kinds, it still does not require a person to examine his/her motives and thus begin a process of spiritual development.

Martial Arts and the Two Principles of Energy Use

A crucial difference between the martial arts and fighting arts is that the martial arts make use of two basic principles concerning the use of energy. While the fighting arts are not particularly concerned with the way energy is used as long as the result is winning, the martial arts require that we learn:

- A) How to get the most effective result using the least energy, and
- B) How to transform negative and destructive energy into positive and constructive energy.

These two principles are examples of what I term the “scientific” aspect of the martial arts. Using these principles, we can gauge fighting techniques to see whether their energy use is refined enough to classify them as a “martial art” rather than mere brute force.

Philosophy of Life Exchange

The martial arts also contain a spiritual philosophy of “life exchange,” a concept which transcends the usual notion of self-preservation or self-protection. For example, if someone comes to attack us with a sword and we cringe and hide or try to escape and protect ourselves, we are almost certain to be cut down. But if we give up the idea of protecting ourselves and enter directly into the situation, in a sense offering the other person more of a chance to kill us while also trying our best to kill him/her, in fact we have a better chance of surviving.

Out of this simple survival situation emerges a philosophy of “life exchange.” If we try to save ourselves, we end up dying in a selfish act of self-preservation. But if we recognize that the other person is trying their best, giving it their all with the pure intention of attacking, how could we be so selfish not to do the same? If we likewise generously offer up our lives to them, we not only have a better chance of saving ourselves—we also

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know that even if we die, we will not die thinking of our petty little selves.

This is why the samurai considered it so dishonorable to die while running away like a coward: it was considered selfish in relation to one's opponent. To fight until the end, even if it was completely a lost cause, was considered noble. Knowing that the other person was willing to give their life in the attack, you were also willing to give your life in receiving the attack—that was the "life exchange."

The two principles of energy use plus this philosophy of life exchange are the main characteristics that set the martial arts apart from the fighting arts and give the martial arts a level of spiritual dignity. But in order to engage the process of spiritual development, there is one more issue that needs to be addressed, which is the issue of timing.

A-B-C Timing and Spiritual Development

At the Pacific '90 Gasshuku in July 1990, Aoki-sensei introduced the concept of A-point, B-point, and C-point timing. The A-point, for example, refers to the moment when a wild west gunslinger's hand starts to move toward his holster. B-point is when he draws his gun, and C-point is when he pulls the trigger. Or in the case of a samurai, A-point is when he makes the decision to attack. B-point is when he draws his sword, and C-point is when he raises it overhead to begin the actual attack. Obviously, this image of the sequence of events can be used to think about many everyday situations.

Many martial arts claim to include an aspect of spiritual development as part of their program. However, their techniques are based on a reaction that occurs somewhere between B-point and C-point timing. Usually they begin studying C-point timing, and after a

long period of study covering ten or twenty years, they may reach B-point timing.

In real life, by the time a situation has escalated to the stage of B-point, it is very difficult to negotiate a resolution, and by the time it reaches C-point, it is probably too late to diffuse a conflict without violence. If "guns" have already been drawn, all we can really hope to do is beat the other

"If I enter at the point of A-timing, I am already existing side-by-side in my partner's universe before the attack even begins."

person in pulling the trigger. Therefore, no matter how lofty our original intentions were, if our technique is based on B-point or C-point timing, we are reduced to acting according to a "survival of the fittest" philosophy.

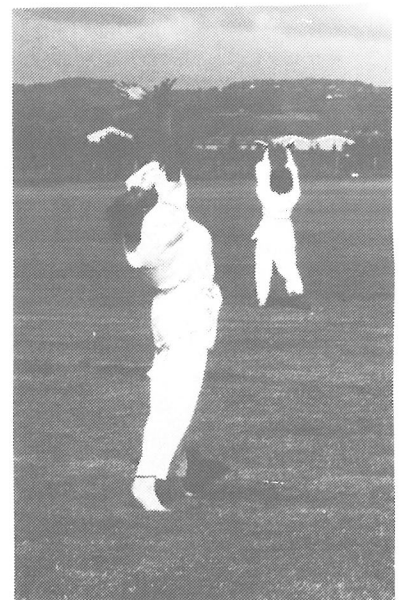
If I can enter my partner's universe at the point of B-timing, I can stop the momentum of her attack without having to resort to an overwhelming technique. All martial arts aim for this. But if I enter at the point of A-timing, I am already existing side-by-side in my partner's universe before the attack even begins.

This represents a world view in which we can negotiate "from the same side

of the table." We can have a chance to see things from the same point of view before a conflict develops. Of course it does not completely eliminate the potential for conflict. But it does help to make negotiation a more realistic alternative.

Shintaido is based on A-point and B-point timing. In Shintaido's *yoki-kei* (soft movement) curriculum especially, students *begin* by studying how to respond with A-point timing and then develop B-point and C-point timing responses.

In this way, Shintaido body movement can demonstrate a concrete example of realistic ways to resolve conflict without violence, and provide an alternative to conflict with peaceful co-existence. But in order to put this into practice, we must abandon our outmoded ideas of self-preservation. We must sensitize ourselves to the intentions of others, and act on this sensitivity by jumping into the future with both feet.



OFF THE BEATEN PATH: THE 1991 NATIONAL GASSHUKU

by David Franklin

This year's national gasshuku, hosted by Shintaido North East, was held at the Mt. Hermon School in northern Massachusetts from June 27 to 30. Nearly seventy participants from the Northwest, Southwest, San Francisco Bay Area, Quebec, France, Japan, Washington D.C., and yes—the Northeast—enjoyed instruction by Connie Borden-Sheets, Tetsuo Hanaki, Mieko Hirano, Haruyoshi F. Ito, Pierre Quettier, Friedemann Schulz, Jim Sterling, and Michael Thompson. The program also included a discussion on (or off) the theme topic, a video of Bill Moyers interviewing the Dalai Lama, and a drumming workshop led by Michael Wingfield.

The Dalai Lama (on videotape) led off the discussion by reminding us that a rich or complicated philosophy is completely unnecessary to solve the world's problems; in fact, if it is an obstacle, it should be dealt with mercilessly. What is important is compassion and a path with heart. During the discussion, our group found that it could not really say what "heart"

or a path with "heart" really is. On the other hand, we found that we could not say what Shintaido is either (we tried).

The Afro-caribbean drumming workshop, which including singing and dancing as well as drumming and clapping, was an opportunity to learn some basic rhythms, to listen both to oneself and the group simultaneously, and finally to get carried away by the group energy as the "workshop" became a jam session that lasted late into the night. It was also a chance for some new leaders to emerge from unexpected quarters (I didn't know Quebec was so close to the Carribean).

Immediately after exams, Mr. Ito shared some of his observations about the U.S. national character. He suggested that our culture does not foster a strong awareness of death and the existential question it poses, which is: how can we live our lives in the face of death? Those interested in this question, he mentioned, might want to read the book *Eroticism* by French author Georges Bataille.

Few who were there will forget the spectacular climax on the final morning. In his book *The Practice of the Wild* (which inspired the "off the beaten path" theme), Gary Snyder reminds us that in order to go off the path and into the wild, we must first be firmly *on* the path. Only then, in going *off* the path (in other words, out of our habitual way of thinking and living), can we arrive at a condition where every step we take becomes a path and every place we go can be called "home." I think the last Shintaido keiko of the gasshuku gave us a taste of what one might be likely to go through during those first few halting steps off the beaten path.



Exam Results

**June 1991
SoA Examinations —
Northfield, Mass.**

Shintaido Provisional Instructor

Christophe Bernard
Laurence Mourey
Chris Nash

Shintaido Assistant

Michael Bogenschutz

Shintaido Karate

David Sirgany	9 kyu
Christophe Bernard	8 kyu
Lee Ordeman	8 kyu
Connie Borden-Sheets	2 kyu

Correction: The Exam Results printed in the Spring 1991 SOA Newsletter were incorrect. Below are the corrected results.

Shintaido Karate

Kathy Mulida	6
Bill Peterson	7
Lee Seaman	7
Mila Gelman	8
Hitomi Owens	8

Shintaido Bojutsu

Shin Schwartz-Aoki	2
Robert Gaston	2
John Seaman	3
Bill Peterson	6
Sandra Bengtsson	8
Cheryl Williams	9

Shintaido Assistant

Gabrielle Hildebrand
Tomi Nagai-Rothe
Hitomi Owens
Michael Sheets
David Sirgany

One Keiko in Japan

by Stephen Billias

Recently I spent eight days in Japan visiting my brother Athan Billias, his wife Laura, and my two and one half year old nephew Scott. I took excursions to many traditional tourist sites, including the temples and shrines of Tokyo, Kamakura, and Nikko. I saw Kabuki theater, visited the National Museum and attended the Cherry Blossom festival, but the most interesting night of my stay was the evening I went to keiko at the Tokyo dojo.

Ito-sensei had provided me with the telephone number of the dojo before I left. My brother, who speaks Japanese, called ahead and obtained instructions for getting there. On a Wednesday night I showed up, gi in hand, and was welcomed by the assistant named Keiko.

The Tokyo dojo is located incongruously above a "Mini-24" fast-food store. Like many things in Japan, the dojo is small, simple, and beautiful; it has a highly polished wood floor and bright white walls. The changing area is a narrow passage behind a row of lockers. I put on my gi and tried to loosen up, feeling large, stiff, clumsy, and very much like the beginning student I am. Twenty or so students filled the dojo, perhaps twelve or fourteen men and five or six women.

The teacher, Okada-sensei, introduced himself. He is and unprepossessing-looking man, of average height for a middle-aged Japanese. He wore glasses, and spoke softly. We chatted for just a moment then class began. Okada-sensei put a tape on a boom-box recorder and we all formed a circle

for seiza. The music was a slow classical piece, a string-quartet. Okada-sensei walked around the room as the music played and he spoke in Japanese, urging students to deeper concentration. This portion of class lasted at least 15 minutes. Okada-sensei's voice had an almost hypnotic effect, as his words and the soft slow music lulled the class into a deep, quiet state. At the end of the seiza we rubbed our legs for a minute (I was not used to sitting for so long with my legs under me) then began our warm-ups.



The warm-ups were similar to what I have learned so far in American Shintaido, and I began to feel more comfortable that I could participate without embarrassing myself. Once or twice Okada-sensei corrected movements. After warm-ups we practiced a movement which was similar to an attack and defense I have been learning in San Francisco. In the middle of class, we meditated again for at least fifteen minutes, this time without music and standing up with our hands and palms together in an attitude of prayer, first holding them above our heads, then slowly lowering them until they were in front of our faces.

After this quiet portion of class came a round of vigorous exercise. We jumped in the kaikyaku-dai movement, first with partners and then in a long chain circling the room. Okada-sensei drove everyone to the brink of exhaustion, then over the edge, until one by one people dropped out. He came up behind stragglers and pushed them to encourage them to continue. When we were all completely fatigued, Okada-sensei had us lay down and he put the tape on again for another period of meditation with music. Once again he walked in and out of the circle of prone bodies, speaking in a low insistent voice exhorted us to find our deepest focus. Then we did a sitting "Ahh" all together, Okada-sensei clapped his hands, and class was over.

After class there was a question and answer session. People were curious to know how I had learned about Shintaido (through meeting Jim Sterling-sensei), how long I had been studying (five months) and what I thought were the differences between keiko in Japan and the United States. To this last question I answered that I thought the meditative portions of the Japanese class were very effective and made for a very strong keiko.

Okada-sensei invited me to join people from the class at a restaurant a couple of doors down from the dojo, where they proceeded to try to get the *gaijin* ("foreigner") drunk on sake, but failed. More than half the class came along, and it was here as we struggled with the limitations of language, that I found out what Okada-sensei had been saying during the meditation portions of class. Halfway through the evening they switched to a stronger version of sake, *shochu*, but I was still able to hold my own. We ate and ate and ate, and drank and drank and drank, late into the night. When they discovered that I was a vegetarian they ordered wonderful items which I found nowhere else during my stay in Japan, bowls of potatoes, carrots and onions in a soy broth, steaming mountain potatoes that looked like kiwi fruit in their rough skins, which one peeled

continued on next page

and ate with just a little salt, and heaps of fresh bright-green asparagus. When I left to catch the last train connections back to my brother's apartment, everyone wanted to shake my hand and I felt that I had participated in a very special evening.

During my stay in Japan my brother gave me a guidebook to carry around with me, that gave the local history and interesting details of many of the sights I visited. Somewhere in that book I found the following quote, which I believe is reminiscent of the Japanese saying used in Shintaido, "one life, one chance" and also reverberates with the intensity of feeling I encountered in the Tokyo dojo:

*I, who am only one
Have but this one life to live
If I cannot live this precious life to
the full
It would be better not to have lived
at all.*

Yuzo Yamamoto
Robo no Ishi (A Pebble By the
Roadside)



LEARNING FROM NATURE

Nature can be a valuable source of inspiration through observation. We can learn from geese:

As each bird flaps its' wings it creates an "uplift" for the bird following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if the bird flew alone. LESSON: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of another.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the "lifting power" of the bird immediately in front. LESSON: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go (and be willing to accept their help as well as give ours to the others).

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position. LESSON: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks, and sharing leadership; with people as with geese, we are interdependent on each other.

The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage these up front to keep up their speed. LESSON: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging - and not something else.

When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation, or catch up with the flock. LESSON: If we have as much sense as geese, we too, will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.



(reprinted from the California Nurses
Association Newsletter, issue 1, 1991)

SUCCESSFUL AGING

Our bodies change noticeably as we grow older—that's universal. People who are older are more prone to disease, and the body gradually loses its ability to adapt and repair itself. There is a limit to our biological life-span—yet some people are vigorous at 80, while others seem old at 60. As one researcher recently wrote in the *Journal of Gerontology*, "aging itself is not uniform." How does a person stay healthy over the span of life?

As our bodies change, so do our brains. As years pass, the brain may decrease in weight, and the interconnections among neurons may be reduced. But the brain has a quality called "redundancy." That means the brain starts out with enough extra neurons that it can undergo cell losses

in some areas and still function well. According to Dr. Marian Diamond of the University of California at Berkeley, there's mounting evidence that so long as disease does not intervene, the brain retains its capacity to grow new anatomical connections, to learn, and to function at high levels. While wisdom is not a universal trait in older people, or the exclusive property of a few of them, good judgment and mature understanding may deepen in the latter half of life. Perhaps this is why society assigns no age limits to certain jobs, such as judgeships. Mental capacity does not necessarily deteriorate, especially in people who continue to learn and think, who are well nourished, and who exercise their bodies throughout their lives.

Research has demonstrated—and

we've often reported—that there's a strong association between regular, vigorous exercise and successful aging. Some preliminary research even indicates that exercising can improve brain function in older people. Robert Dustman at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Salt Lake City showed that sedentary people age 55 to 70 who embarked on a program of vigorous exercise displayed a greater improvement on a battery of neuropsychological tests than non-exercisers in the same age group. The tests measured response time, memory, and mental flexibility.

(Excerpted from the University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter © Health Letter Associates, 1991)



Shintaido Haiku

1

My body is lumber
its grain length stiff and knotted,
weight pulling me down.

My spirit as well
sinks to a shallow bottom,
no hearth to fire.

My therapist says
I think you might find it good.
Eventually, try.

2

Martial arts. The words
conjure up karate chops;
Enter The Dragon.

Before we go in,
shoes removed and bodies bow,
a sign of respect.

My gi is all white.
With towels, our arms as brooms,
we clean the dojo.

3

Open hand - no contact.
Warm ups and basic movements;
beginner's keiko.

My second week,
my pants on backwards, too loose,
slip to my koshi.

These feet are Chaplin's,
pause and stumble, but yet
they stretch to their toes.

4

Tenshingoso - lift
the soul to heaven from earth
while giving up self.

In "Um" position
I am waiting to release
a glorious "Ah."

Here, no one is strange.
A scarecrow down from his pole,
my palms circle up.

5

Sweat pools, drips, pours
through clefts of my face and chest,
like rain down canyons.

Exhausted, meiso:
hips low, my fingers spread wide -
invisible tether.

My back on the floor
I hear a flight of wild geese
fade in the distance.

6

Kumite. At first,
odd twistings of wrists and arms.
A clumsy spider.

Listen. My partner's touch,
the way buds open to spring
is becoming mine.

We move together.
I am trying, remember:
one and one is one.

7

Wakame seaweed
at the ocean's edge, blowing,
shifting in the sand.

Seiza to finish.
Breath and peace, mokuso rei.
A smile will leak out.

Four months. A first bridge
to a higher place in reach,
without and within.

robby newman
6/24/91

Equipment

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

Japanese (wide) gi pants	\$35.00
Korean gi outfit (includes top, narrow pants, and belt)	\$25.00
Bo	\$55.00
Bokuto	\$70.00

Tabi, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and sweatpants are 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 Avenue
San Francisco CA 94132-3032.
(415) 239-4132
(Call for sizes, colors, and shipping)

Book/Booklets

Shintaido: A New Art of Movement and Life Expression \$15.00

* *The Zero Point of Consciousness and the World of Ki* \$5.00

* *Improvisation and the Body* \$3.50

* *Tenshingoso & Eiko* \$10.00

* *Origins: A History of Shintaido* \$7.00

Set of four booklets* (special price) \$21.00

History of SoA \$3.95

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

Video Texts

Kenko taiso video \$35.00

Kata & kumite video
(*bojutsu, karate, kenjutsu*) \$70.00

(price includes postage and handling)

SoA BOARD TO SPONSOR SHINTAIDO MAGAZINE

In a meeting at the national gasshuku in June, the Shintaido of America Board of Directors accepted a proposal by publications director H.F. Ito to discontinue the national newsletter and instead publish a Shintaido magazine twice yearly starting in 1992. It is hoped that the move to a magazine format will expand the audience for Shintaido of America's national publication while still providing Shintaido practitioners with a forum for communicating their thoughts and experiences.

Though the title and exact format of the magazine are still under consid-

eration, the Board of Directors is recommending to regional representatives that each region initiate or expand its own regional newsletter to carry out some of the functions that have been in the past performed by the national newsletter such as gasshuku reports. The national magazine, which will still be received by all Shintaido of America members, will focus on Shintaido-related topics of more general interest.

Please send your suggestions for the title of the new Shintaido of America magazine to: Shintaido of America Publications, P.O. Box 22622, San Francisco CA 94122. The winning and runner-up suggestions will receive prizes!

These are the membership categories effective for 1992 as decided by the Board of Directors:

Shintaido Instructor	\$150.00 annual membership
Shintaido Assistant	\$100.00 annual membership
Shintaido Advanced Student*	\$50.00 annual membership
General Member	\$30.00 annual contribution
Full-time Student	\$15.00 annual contribution
Contributing Member	\$50.00 annual contribution
Sustaining Member	\$100.00 annual contribution
Patron	\$500.00 annual contribution

- * Shintaido advanced student is a new category:
- must first be a general, contributing, sustaining, or patron member
 - must take a Shintaido evaluation with 2 junior (or higher) instructors
 - are not members of the National Instructors' Council
 - may attend local advanced workshops, but not national advanced workshops.

It is time for Shintaido of America to clean up its mailing list. Please help us to save paper and postage! Please return this form to Shintaido
P. O. Box 22622 San Francisco,
CA 94122 by October 20th. If we *don't* hear from you, we'll assume that you'd prefer to be dropped from our mailing list. Please check a box!

- ☐ Please keep me on your mailing list!
- ☐ I would like to receive your events information only!
- ☐ I would like to receive your events information as well as
Shintaido of America's national magazine.
Enclosed is a check for **\$15.00** for a 1992 subscription
- ☐ I belong to S. of A.'s National Instructors' Council as a—
☐ instructor ☐ assistant ☐ regional representative
- ☐ I will keep my S. of A. membership in 1991-92 as a—
☐ Full-time student with \$15.00 contribution
☐ General member with \$30.00 contribution
☐ Contributing member with \$50.00 contribution
☐ Shintaido advanced student with \$50.00 contribution
☐ Sustaining member with \$100.00 contribution
☐ Patron with \$500.00 contribution
- ☐ Please delete my name from your mailing list. (Save paper and our planet!)

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Shintaido in the United States

Calendar

Southwest Shintaido

With groups in West Los Angeles,
and Gardena CA, and Tucson AZ.
For information contact:

Southwest Shintaido
1460 West 182nd Street
Gardena CA 90248
(213) 532-1654

Shintaido Northeast

With groups in Durham and Ports-
mouth NH, Cambridge and Worces-
ter MA, and Burlington VT.
For information contact:

Shintaido of Central Massachusetts
46 Cherlyn Drive
Northboro MA 01532
(508) 393-3575

Pacific Shintaido

With groups in San Francisco,
and Berkeley CA.
For information contact:

Pacific Shintaido
630 Silver Avenue
San Francisco CA 94134
(415) 586-1177

Northwest Shintaido

With groups in Bellingham and Spokane
WA, and La Grande OR.
For information contact:

Blue Mountain Shintaido
3012 Wilson Avenue
Bellingham WA 98225
(206) 676-8543

1991

October

12-14, Semi-national gasshuku in
Cape Cod, Massachusetts

1992

January

5-11, Kangeiko in San Francisco

12, SoA national exams in San Fran-
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