

INTERNATIONAL SHINKENDO FEDERATION



Shinkendo • Toyama Ryu

NEWSLETTER

ISF • AB • KTRR



Aikido • Aikibujutsu

ISSUE 0049

國際真劍道連盟

SUMMER 2010

Words From Obata-Kaiso

My schedule from April to June has been very busy; there were few days of rest between the flights. My health and physical condition were very good, my energy was high, and I believe the seminars went very well.

From April 14th-21st, my wife and I traveled to the Netherlands for a seminar. It was my wife's first time there. A couple hours after we landed, the airport shut down, due to the volcano eruption, for five days. My wife left for LA and I left for Poland on the 21st, the day the airport re-opened for flights. The seminars in the Netherlands and Poland had over 50 participants. I plan to return to Poland and the Netherlands in 2011.

This year was the first seminar held in England hosted by Sensei Byron Shepherd, where I visited from May 19th-30th. It was an open seminar since it was the first Shinkendo seminar. During the three days, the weather was very sunny like California, and it was mostly sunny during my stay. Before the seminar, I had lunch with the third Yoshinkan Kancho, Mr. Shioda. Mr. Shioda's father was the founder of Yoshinkan Dojo, Mr. Shioda Gozo, and I often took care of him inside the dojo while I was an uchideshi. During the open seminar, about half the participants were Yoshinkan Aikido members. The participants enjoyed the seminar, both the Shinkendo and Aikibujutsu aspects. Next year, I plan to go to England in May and November, and I plan to teach Shinkendo, Aikibujutsu, and Bojutsu. On the 29th, before my departure, I attended Sensei Byron Shepherd's wedding. Congratulations!

After resting in Los Angeles for two days after the seminar in England, I traveled to Canada, where I visited from June 2nd-7th. I traveled to Canada in 2008, 2009, and 2010, and, as a result, the students there have really grown. Another branch is also planning to open there.

I then traveled to Chicago for June 10th-14th. This was my first seminar in Chicago, hosted by Sensei Trevis Crane. I saw many familiar faces from the Illinois area, and had a very advanced training session of Shinkendo and Bojutsu.

Currently we have visitors at Honbu from Australia and Japan. I will be leaving for Hungary on June 27th.



PUBLISHER
Obata Toshishiro-kaiso

EDITORS
Yoko "Marimo" Obata
Michael C. Shu
Nicholas Lauridsen (Chief)

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Joost Berkhout
Michiel Boere
Mischa de Brouwer
Craig Golding
Isabel Hegenbarth
Jason Ives
Chrissa Katrini
G. Konstantin Laskaris
Nicholas Lauridsen
Joseph Lopez
Dr. Guy Mayeda
Kerry O'Regan
Cuc Phan
Lise Phan
Gniewomir Samonczuk
Byron Shepherd
Susanne Stangl
Eric Stieg
Robert Wilkins

Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Shinkendo

By Jason Ives
Honbu Dojo

Shinkendo Marks Its 20th Year

On the 10th of May, 1990, Obata Toshishiro-kaiso began using the name “Shinkendo” to describe his new martial art. Twenty years later, Shinkendo has grown to become an international federation of dojos all dedicated to the preservation, promulgation, and research of authentic Japanese budo. The success of such an achievement by Obata-kaiso, his family, and his dedicated students is almost beyond the ability of words to describe. Yet describe it I will as best I can to honor the brilliant generosity of Kaiso, whose gifts to us are beyond measure – especially that gift of teaching us to give, or as he often likes to say it, “please take care of each other!”

While we shared a small party after class on Monday the 10th to honor this year’s anniversary, the big celebration was planned for Saturday of the coming weekend, during the height of Honbu’s May Instructors Seminar. Instructors and their senior students began arriving on Thursday, sparking that familiar feeling of crescendo, building energy as we joined in training on the mat. Welcoming old friends and seeing new faces make seminar time so exciting! I was very happy to see Sensei Trevis again, who over the course of several seminars I’ve become acquainted with both on and off the mat. For Shihan David Birdsell, one of Kaiso’s most senior students, I was the new face, since my time in Shinkendo to date is only two and a half years, whereas he has been studying Shinkendo longer than some of our younger Honbu students have been alive! It was a great honor to meet Dr. Birdsell, and I felt additionally privileged when he allowed me to drive him to his car Friday night. Even during our short trip, he mentored me with his example and kind advice.

Saturday was the first full day of the seminar.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Craig Golding
Dr. John Liu
Jozef Lukaszewicz
Amy McKenzie
Yoko “Marimo” Obata
Marita Pao
Cuc Phan
Lise Phan
Shinkendo Germany
Shinkendo Greece
Shinkendo Hungary
Shinkendo UK

Unfortunately, I couldn’t be in attendance this year, but I was anxiously awaiting the start of the party that evening because it was our chance to introduce Kaiso to our 11-month-old son, Jordan. After my family finished our preparations that evening, we left for Honbu. Many people had arrived by the time we got there, the seminar attendees were washed up and dressed for the occasion, and, thanks to long-time Honbu student and professional restaurateur Richard Blanke, along with many others who contributed to the food and drink of the occasion, we had one of the best spreads of my experience at Honbu.



The first to greet the tiniest little man at the party, our son Jordan Rain, was Richard’s wife, Betty. Not only was it Jordan’s first introduction to the lovely Betty, it was ours too, but she so quickly charmed us all that she had Jordan up and away in her arms in just a few moments, carrying him about and introducing him to everyone else within reach. Mrs. Sensei was next to carry Jordan, treasuring his presence and teaching him all those little lessons of dignity and affection which are the hallmarks of the Obata family. When he was finally returned to my arms, I took him to Kaiso for introductions. It was such a pleasure to see Kaiso smile and test his little arms and legs, commenting on how



babies grow and sharing with us the unspoken pleasures of fatherhood.



Good food and good company, the celebration of twenty years of hard work and dedication all reaching a peak on this night, the time had come for a toast. I found an empty bottle and focused the attention of the room by ringing it with my key chain.

“A toast to Kaiso and twenty years of Shinkendo!”

“Jinsei Shinkendo!” cried the room in response, and there was ringing and cheers.

Before the energy of the toast had subsided, Nicholas-sensei seized the moment and gathered the room about Kaiso, requesting that he tell stories of his life, the wonderful inspiration for his art. We heard of his adventures, old and new, treasuring each little detail of the telling. I felt like I wanted to stay in the moment forever.



Obata-kaiso leads a remarkable life. As Kaiso states in his book *Shinkendo Tameshigiri*, “Life is an art created by every individual. Plan ahead and open up the way for your dreams and pursuits – you can only live once.” I believe Kaiso has achieved union with his art – he and Shinkendo are one and the same, and his life and dream are flourishing. As his stories remind us, this dream is not just

one of the last twenty years, but one of his entire lifetime since childhood, a dream of fearless inquiry and dedication. Yet the most important reminder of his life’s work to me is its charity. Greater than beauty and perfection of technique, greater than invincibility of strategy, greater than accolades and rewards, to me his life’s work is about sharing the fruits of his life-long labor with everyone. It is about creating a generous society, a society where we “take care of each other,” a society where Shinkendo and all of the arts are pursued with fearless inquiry and dedication and the fruits of our labor are shared one with all. Jinsei Shinkendo!



Shinkendo Sosetsu Kinenbi

By Nicholas Lauridsen, Honbu Dojo

This year, 2010, marks the twentieth anniversary of Shinkendo, or *Shinkendo Sosetsu Kinenbi*. For students and practitioners, May 10th will always carry special significance as a kind of budo holiday, as it is the day that this art so many of us practice and cherish daily fully came into being. This anniversary also presents an occasion for each of us to reflect upon how far we have come in our own studies, to understand the significance of Shinkendo in our lives, and to re-dedicate ourselves to our training, no matter where we are in the world or the length of our experience in the art.





It is hard to imagine that the art of Shinkendo was introduced to the world a mere two decades ago, a brief time for any new art or practice to gain recognition and prominence, especially considering the extent to which the art has proliferated all over the world, including dojo established in such disparate locales as Quebec, Athens, and Moscow. That this past year has also seen the tally of

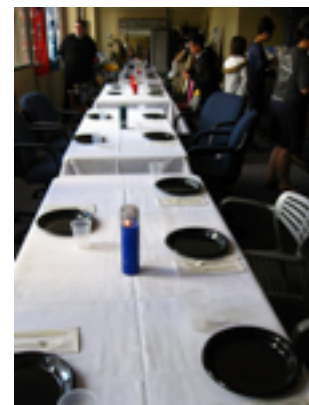
Obata-kaiso's many plane trips for seminars soar well past the 200 mark is also testament to enduring interest and student dedication to Shinkendo.

At the Honbu Dojo, of course, the Shinkendo anniversary is certainly a momentous event, since those in Los Angeles have the unique opportunity to celebrate with the art's founder in attendance and honor his efforts appropriately and personally. A small party was held at the Honbu Dojo on the actual date of the anniversary, but the official celebration was scheduled to coincide with the May instructors seminar occurring a few short days later. The timing was perfect, as the occasion was elevated even further by the presence of many long-time, dedicated instructors traveling to Honbu from different parts of the country (and even other countries), a number of whom have participated in Shinkendo since its inception.



James Huang-sensei and Matthew Lynch-sensei, long-time students and instructors, were indispensable in organizing the event, and the former was responsible for chauffeuring Obata-kaiso and Mrs. Sensei to the dojo for the celebration. Upon arriving, Obata-kaiso and Mrs. Sensei were greeted by a tidy crowd of students and their

families, all lined up on either side of the dojo entrance and spanning the entire breadth of the building – quite a sight, no doubt, in the middle of Little Tokyo!



With the assistance of Richard Blanke (including the loan of tasteful décor from his restaurant), the social area of the Honbu Dojo was transformed into an elegant dining hall, replete with candles and white tablecloths. The feast contributed by the Honbu members (including Richard, who is a professional chef and restaurateur) was eclectic, bountiful, and delicious, including everything from sushi to Mediterranean fare. Even with numerous tables set up, there was not quite sufficient seating space to accommodate everyone in attendance, so a number of upstanding individuals cheerfully consented to partake in the “standing room only” celebration.



While everyone was enjoying the dinner, James-sensei read aloud a selection of correspondence that had been submitted by students and instructors from around the world in commemoration and celebration of Shinkendo's anniversary. Without exception, the cards and letters were heartfelt and moving, and perfectly reflected the importance of Shinkendo in these students' and teachers' lives.

The presence of several generations of students and instructors (and their families and spouses), combined with these genuine outpourings of sentiment and appreciation dispatched from places as remote as Poland, made it clear

exactly how fortunate we are to not only be practitioners of Shinkendo, but also part of the Shinkendo community.



As a way of further commemorating this important anniversary, members of the Honbu Dojo presented Obata-kaiso with a dojo *kanban* (signboard), a traditional fixture of a martial arts dojo.



Considering how far Obata-kaiso's art has come in the past twenty years, and how well the world has received it, we can only look forward to what the next twenty years hold in store for us and Shinkendo.



The Eyjafjallalökull Experience

By Michiel Boere, Joost Berkhout, & Mischa de Brouwer
Shinkendo Delft, Netherlands

Obata-Kaiso Seminar, The Netherlands April 2010

On Thursday, April 15th, 2010, Kaiso and Mrs. Sensei arrived at Amsterdam airport for a one-week seminar in the Netherlands, followed by a one-week seminar in Poland. Less than eight hours later, Amsterdam airport, and most other airports in Europe, closed due to ash from the Icelandic Eyjafjallalökull volcano, which covered most of Europe.



Out of the 60 registered participants, 24 were foreign, from seven different nationalities, and most of them planned to travel to Holland by plane. It was heart-warming to find that many of the Nature-struck participants decided to endure 11-hour car or train travels to still be able to join the seminar. In the end, only six participants had to cancel their participation.



The seminar on Shinkendo, held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, was organized by the Shinkendo Dojo of Delft, a small historic city in the west of Holland. The seminar on Aikido, held on Monday and Tuesday, was organized by the Shinbukan Dojo of Amsterdam.

Friday morning was dedicated to a sightseeing tour of Delft, visiting museums and sites with historical relevance to the Netherlands.



The afternoon was the official start of the seminar in Delft. In addition to several advanced techniques, Kaiso dedicated a large portion of the class to demonstration-style technique sequences. The Shinkendo Dojo has applied them already last month, when we performed in the Delft botanical garden, at the invitation of the yearly large Bonsai exhibition. The evening dinner was characterized by a very informal and pleasant ambiance with Chinese food.

On Saturday, due to the unavailability of a large sports hall in Delft, we had to use the main sports hall of the European Space Agency in Noordwijk.

The techniques taught, both on Saturday and the following day in Delft, emphasized advanced tomo-e and several kata, as well as repetition of the demonstration techniques. After the menjo and photo-sessions (held after lunch due to earlier departure of the participants travelling far), the seminar continued with Toyama Ryu techniques, also partly in demonstration style.

On Monday and Tuesday, we focused on Aikido in Amsterdam. This was for a new group of students; not so many people do both martial arts at the same time. We are quite happy that some additional 20-25 students took the opportunity to be taught by Kaiso and Mrs. Sensei. So in total some 80 students participated in both seminars. We had some beginning students join the seminar. It is always fun to introduce new students to Kaiso. We usually build up the tension and expectations just before the seminar and it is great to hear afterward that they were very much impressed by the level and techniques that were taught.



We spent some time in Amsterdam walking through the city, and (people who visit Amsterdam should know this) your visit is not complete without a tour through the canals.



The weather in Holland has been dry and sunny, but also it has been a lot colder than usual in April, which was rather unfortunate, as this time of year the west of Holland is covered by tulips and other flowers, grown here for the export of the flower bulbs. Next year, Kaiso will visit The Netherlands (and England and Poland) in May, and we expect higher temperatures and more flowers then.

This seminar was once again a confirmation of the group spirit that exist within dojos, but even more the international spirit of Shinkendo. Next to forging good techniques and budo spirit, we also spend a lot of time forging bonds between the dojos.

On Tuesday, April 20th, the air traffic above Europe slowly started to take off again, and on Wednesday the 21st, in a very hectic airport, Mrs. Sensei was able to leave Europe on her way back to LA, and Obata-kaiso embarked on the second week of his April visit of Europe: Poland!

Bavarians Go To The Netherlands

By Isabel Hegenbarth & Susanne Stangl, Munich

It's always nice when springtime comes – especially concerning Shinkendo training. Students slowly wake up from hibernation, their fitness level is rising and – best of all – Shinkendo seminar season starts. Because of the fact that in 2010 Obata-kaiso is holding several Shinkendo seminars in Europe, we had to decide which of them to attend. In prior years, we attended seminars in Germany, Switzerland, and Hungary. This year we decided on the Netherlands.

We decided to cover the distance between Munich and Delft (about 900 km one way) by car. That turned out to be a good idea, as the eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjall paralyzed the complete Northern European air traffic system – luckily not until Kaiso and Mrs. Obata had already landed in the Netherlands!

So on Friday morning at 4.00 am, a somewhat bleary-eyed three-(wo)men crew from Shinkendo Soryukan Munich headed for the Netherlands, where we arrived nine funny hours later. We even were in time to chat with old friends before Kaiso opened the seminar around 4.30 pm.

Already during the very first seminar session, we got a lot of input, including three new forms of Rokudo. After

three hours of training, we went to dinner at a Chinese restaurant nearby. Mrs. Obata asked all attendants to give a short introduction of themselves. That was quite a good thing, because you got an idea of who everybody was and where they came from.



The next day, training took place at a very exclusive location: the European Space Agency. The day went by in a hurry, repeating and improving familiar techniques and learning some new ones. Although we were pretty tired, we spent the evening doing some sightseeing and walking through the picturesque streets of Delft. On Sunday, we unfortunately had to leave after the first training session because of our long way home.



Even though we spent almost more time in the car than practicing Shinkendo, the trip to Delft was worth it! Obata-kaiso taught us a lot of important details

concerning techniques, as well as the way of training correctly. Sensei told us once more to focus on Kihon and safety, and showed us how we could improve our “style” by watching each other.

Our thanks goes to Kaiso and Mrs. Sensei for an inspiring weekend, as well as to Mischa de Brouwer-sensei and all the Dutch Shinkendoka for the great organization – the atmosphere at the seminar was extraordinarily nice!

My Introduction to Shinkendo

By Chrissa Katrini, Shinkendo Athens, Greece

First of all, I would like to salute everyone who belongs to the Shinkendo family.

My name is Chrissa Katrini, and I am a new member of Shinkendo, as I have started taking private lessons five months ago at the Shinkendo Athens dojo, the only dojo in Greece!

I started Japanese martial arts 17 years ago, practicing Karate, and now for the last three years, I have been practicing Kyokushin, which I love very much. But even if I am a new member of Shinkendo, I dare say that it takes my breath away, just like karate! It is very difficult, but simultaneously it is something magical... something worth spending all your life practicing.

As all people have dreams to fulfill, so did I, and one of them was to practice the Japanese sword. I searched thoroughly for schools that specialized in the katana, but none of them represented my way of thinking. So I lost hope and advised myself to give up searching and continue only with Kyokushin. Then one day, a miracle happened for me and my dream came true! As I buy every month a magazine which specializes in martial arts, just to become familiar with the different styles, there I found the advertisement of my sensei, G. Konstantine Laskaris, which would change my life even more...

What I first appreciated about my sensei was the fact that he corresponded immediately to my first e-mail, talked to me with respect, and invited me, and even insisted on my attending a lesson at his school in order to make the best decision whether to start Shinkendo or not. To tell you the truth, my mind was already made up before meeting him, but I went anyway just not to be negative about it.

There I saw a person willing to give his Shinkendo knowledge to everyone that would appreciate it, a kind, simple figure with no egoism, with positive thinking and a great ability to transmit his knowledge. He responded to everything that I wished he would, and so I started lessons right away!



I am very proud to be a member of the International Shinkendo Federation. I love everything that it represents: power, modesty, self-discipline. I like its harmony, the variety of different moves and strikes that it has, and most of all I love the way that Shinkendo makes me feel... I am very proud to be a member of the Shinkendo Athens dojo!

I wish that someday Obata-kaiso will come to Greece – it will be a great honor for us. I hope that someday he will hold seminars at the Shinkendo Athens dojo and be very proud of his student Konstantine Laskaris, because he deserves it! For me, the most important thing when

starting a new martial style is the sensei – a bad sensei will never make you love what you are doing. I think that I was blessed, because, thank God, both my Kyokushin sensei and my Shinkendo sensei are the best and are great motivations for me to carry on and become a better student and person!

Thank you all!

Jinsei Shinkendo!

My First Honbu Visit

By Lise Phan, Arcueil Dojo, France

Although I started Shinkendo in 2004, I never had the opportunity to practice at Honbu Dojo. I felt very frustrated when I couldn't come with Olivier, Stéphane, and Cuc in July 2009. (I'm still studying and I was then in internship). As I didn't want to wait any longer, I asked Kaiso if I could visit him in February 2010. Finally I went to Los Angeles between the 1st and 11th of February, and everything happened so quickly! I was in exam period until the very last week before my departure, so this was only in the plane that I realized that I was going to stay ten days in LA under the guidance of Kaiso and his family.

I arrived at the airport without any problems, and during the way to the hotel I was able to get a first glimpse of LA by night. The urban atmosphere is so different from Paris! I arrived at the Little Tokyo Hotel at 7pm, tired but happy.



Despite the jet lag, I woke up early the next day. I believe I was too impatient to see the city to waste time sleeping. So I spent the morning walking around Little Tokyo and Downtown. I've been pleasantly surprised by the metro and the bus of LA. The network allowed me to move easily, even if it sometimes took me a little time to get my directions.

The first training session came at last. I confess I felt a little stressed at the idea of having difficulties with communication and being completely lost. I arrived at the beginning of bojustu training. As I hadn't really practiced bojutsu before, I merely observed the basics under the guidance of Mrs. Sensei and Nicholas-sensei. I really liked it.



Then the Shinkendo class began. Performing battoho, I felt that I had not recovered from the journey yet... I believe that Jim and Mike-sensei realized this too by practicing ippon dachi and ippon dachi henka with me!



At the end of the training, I learned that the dojo location would move to 2nd Street at the end of February and that I would have the opportunity to see the shooting of the new Shinkendo demo video.



I was really busy the following days between training and sightseeing. I am sensitive to architecture and I could see many interesting things like the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Public library (where I was very happy to see an exhibition of an architect I admire), and the Getty Center. It's really a great place and the surroundings are very nice for a walk. I only regret bringing some bad weather with me: it was raining half of the time of my stay... Friday was one of the rainy days and I would never have imagined seeing Los Angeles and the museum in so much mist!

Each training was an occasion to improve my balance and my kamae. Yoko-sensei gave me much advice that helped me become more comfortable in my movement. I don't know if it was visible when I was there, but I felt the difference back in France. I also practiced tachiuchi with a lot of Honbu students. Everyone was very kind with me and I really enjoyed myself.

On Saturday, Kaiso, Mrs. Sensei, and Nicholas-sensei gave me a ride to see the pacific coast. I visited Santa Monica and Venice Beach, where I was treated to lunch at a very good restaurant. It was really delicious, but I was full before the end of the meal, there was so much to eat! Then we went to Farmer's Market, Hollywood, and Griffith Park. The view from there was so wonderful. It was no longer raining at the end of the afternoon, so I could see a very beautiful sky.



On Sunday, I was lucky enough to be there for the shooting of the promo video. I had a lot of fun in watching it, and it's always very impressive to see Obata-kaiso doing tameshigiri.

The last three days passed so quickly! I kept practicing shiho and shin gyo so, but I also was able to practice battoho with an iaito. I am grateful for Nicholas-sensei's and Jason-sensei's patience and guidance, which allowed me to gain confidence and understand what I need to improve. The last day before coming back to France, I had the opportunity to do tameshigiri under Kaiso's lead, and it was a good way for me to practice the precision of the cut.



I really want to thank Kaiso and Mrs. Sensei for being so welcoming with foreign students. It was a real pleasure to be there during those ten days. Thank you also to Yoko-sensei for her advice and the day spent at Disney studios, and Nicholas-sensei and Jason who helped me be more

comfortable with an iaito. Thank you to all the people who took time to speak and practice with me: Mike-sensei, Matthew-sensei, Isabelle, John, Marta, Jim, Masa, Gabriel-sensei... I really enjoyed being with you. I hope I will have the opportunity to come back soon to see you again, to practice more and to see the new dojo location.



Greece's One-Year Anniversary

By G. Konstantine Laskaris
Shinkendo Athens, Greece

June 5th, 2010 marked the one-year anniversary of the official start of the newest branch of the International Shinkendo Federation, Shinkendo Athens, Greece.

In May of 2009, after many years of planning and preparation, I moved from the United States to Athens with the scope of opening the International Shinkendo Federation's first branch dojo in Greece. Through my years of research, I had realized that, in general, there was an interest in the martial arts in Greece, but there was definitely a vacuum in terms of schools offering the art of true Japanese swordsmanship. People here had a desire to learn Japanese swordsmanship, but, other than laido and Kendo, there was a definite lack of options.

Once I arrived, and after a considerable amount of legwork, one short month later, on June 5th, 2009, I was able to gather six students and thus teach the first-ever Shinkendo class on Greek soil. Needless to say, that was a very proud and exciting day for me and for my students, not to mention a historic day for the ISF. Years of hard work and dedication had allowed me to start fulfilling my dream and goal of teaching Shinkendo in Greece.

From the very first day I started learning Shinkendo, I knew right away that I wanted to become a teacher of Shinkendo in the future. As well, I had always considered someday moving to Greece, the country of my parents and grandparents. In fact, I specifically remember discussing these exact plans with Obata-kaiso and Mrs. Sensei one evening in 2006.

Many years have passed from the start of my Shinkendo training. Most of them are full of fun and fond memories of friendships made, seminars attended, skills learned and honed, philosophies deepened. As well, many of them were fraught with some difficulties and obstacles – be they financial troubles, various injuries and health issues, or even ill-intentioned people who, under the guise of doing good, were actually doing harm, trying to keep me from accomplishing my goals. Thankfully, none of those negative issues had the power to stop me from moving forward. So, with lots of planning ahead, hard work, and a little luck, I was able to reach the point of writing this article discussing the first anniversary of Shinkendo Athens and the introduction of Shinkendo and the ISF to a new country, Greece.

I would like to quote Obata-kaiso from his book Shinkendo Tameshigiri – Samurai Swordsmanship & Test Cutting:

“Life is an art created by every individual. Plan ahead and open up the way for your dreams and pursuits – you can only live once. People should endeavor to live a life without regrets, a life that will satisfy them when they look back upon it, a life of accomplishments and achievements that make them proud. When traveling toward a goal, you may encounter many obstacles, one after another, that will slow your progress – but that is life. By following the spirit of *Jinsei Shinkendo*, you should never be discouraged, never step aside from your path, and never give up when new obstacles block your way. No matter how hard it is to reach your goal, the way to it will always be accessible. A student should make efforts to walk on his own, step by step, on the road to success.”



I would like to share another piece of good news, which also happens to be a first. On June 12th, 2010, two of my students, Ektoras Bousoulas and Christos Antonopoulos, both dedicated and talented individuals, tested for their Ichimonji ranking, our first-ever test for ranking in Greece and for Shinkendo Athens. I'm proud to say they did quite well, with favorable results. It was an exciting moment for them and me, as well as for our newer students. It gave them a firsthand opportunity to see how testing is conducted, a luxury Christos and Ektoras did not have. It also has given the newer students something

to aspire to and work toward, as their testing dates are not too far off in the future.

I truly look forward to seeing where the future leads us all at Shinkendo Athens. In the short term, I, of course, look forward to finding a permanent location for our dojo and gathering more students to whom I can teach Shinkendo. In the mid- and long term, I will do all I can to help establish the ISF throughout the rest of Greece and elsewhere if possible. Also, and as quickly as possible, I would like to be able to invite Obata-kaiso to Greece for our first-ever Shinkendo seminar here. That will be a fantastic day for us!

I would like to give my deepest and sincerest thanks to Obata-kaiso for giving me the ability and equipping me with the knowledge and skills to be able to have become a Shinkendo instructor, which has allowed me to fulfill one of my life's dreams. And thank you to everyone else in the Shinkendo family who has helped me reach this point. Without your support, advice, and friendship, I would not have been able to make it here. Remember to always keep moving forward, with positive intentions, not allowing anything or anyone negative to stand in your path. Always keep your goals in sight, and, with hard work and good planning, they will go from hopes for the future to present-day reality sooner than you may think.

Jinsei Shinkendo!

A Warrior's Heart Revealed

By Eric Stieg

It is said that a master's true heart is revealed whenever he steps onto the mat to teach and share with others. His passion, invincible strength, valor, conviction, and willingness to help others are evidenced and cultivated through the students. If every student will become like his teacher, then Shinkendo is an art that will transcend time and remain deeply rooted and preserved in tradition.

Over the weekend, we were fortunate to host Obata-kaiso at Seikishin Dojo in Morgan Hill. Over and over again, I heard people say, "I just want to give him a hug," or "his passion is incredible," or simply, "I love his humor." Kaiso, I believe your heart is revealed when you work with each of us and draw out our very best.

You bring a lightness to the air in the dojo, whether doing cartwheels around the training room, getting us dizzy doing footwork drills, or telling us, "speak to your bo – become friends with it!" And yet, you bring a substance and yearning to our training that is addictive, an energy that is unsurpassed by skill or wisdom.

Wisdom that bridges us to the warriors who have come before us. Wisdom only found after countless hours of training. Wisdom sought by many, but found by few; duty, courage, benevolence, morality, truthfulness, honor, loyalty – and a relentless passion to see others succeed and be fulfilled as we reach from within.

If a person's quality of life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence, then we are truly blessed to have Kaiso among us. Kaiso, you have helped each of us to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

From all of us at Seikishin Dojo in Morgan Hill, thank you for your willingness to share, having a kindred spirit, revealing your heart, and being the warrior we all aspire to become.

Why I Study Shinkendo

By Kerry O'Regan, Shoshinkan Dojo, Massachusetts, MA

I study Shinkendo primarily because it is not something that comes naturally to me. Through practicing other martial arts, I have acquired a level of physical knowledge about myself that I have come to treasure. Shinkendo, which does require one to be comfortable in the workings of one's body, adds an additional element to the way I have to operate to succeed. I have had highly limited experience in formally using any sort of weapon in a martial art and I have used the challenge of the learning curve to motivate myself to work harder at trying to master the skills I am lacking in Shinkendo. I have to work to be comfortable using the sword as it is not something I naturally understand or possess skill in wielding. When I first began, the sword was something that felt awkward and uncomfortable to work with because of its unfamiliarity. Through practice I have come to see that, while it may not feel as natural to me to use an inanimate weapon instead of my body alone, there are definite merits to studying sword craft. The challenge is something I enjoy as it allows me to pit my competitive spirit against myself.

Shinkendo also serves the purpose that Taekwondo and Hapkido have served. The martial mindset as well as the attitude I adopt while training serve to calm me, and I find it to be a spectacular stress-reliever. Practicing Shinkendo is one of the only outlets I have found which allow me to not think about anything other than the immediate and present moment. I enjoy martial arts, and more specifically Shinkendo, because the art is something that is constant and logical, which I find to be grounding. I enjoy the structure through which I learn Shinkendo. Shinkendo is a safe outlet for stress and a healthy way for me to work out problems internally.

This art is also very different than the two I practice in addition. Taekwondo was my first experience in martial arts and I have grown accustomed to the way we train and the philosophy behind our art. Hapkido is entirely different from Taekwondo except in its language and the general organization of the training, which is part of the reason I began to practice it. Shinkendo is founded in a different language than the one I am used to speaking and responding to in martial arts, and some of the general methodologies are vastly different than I am used to. These differences are challenges which I chose to rise to, and I enjoy the process of learning in the new style I have chosen.

In Shinkendo, I am essentially learning a new way to learn. Never before have I learned without the aid of language. In my other arts, I have become accustomed to the Korean language to the point where I often find myself teaching a class primarily not in English. Japanese has not been as thoroughly engrained in my study of Shinkendo, but I have had to learn to associate the unfamiliar words with their corresponding actions. With Shinkendo, I found myself learning the actions and then connecting them to words in the alien language. This challenges my memory, and I love challenges.

A final and crucial reason I chose to continue my study of Shinkendo is the people who are a part of the experience. The Shoshinkan Dojo is a comfortable environment for study. Sensei Shaffee Bacchus encourages all of his students to grow and succeed (even the lack of criticism has me baffled and off-balance). The other students are kind, respectful, and dedicated people who I have either become friends with because of Shinkendo or have forged a stronger friendship through study.

Essentially, there is no reason for me not to study Shinkendo, and I am deeply interested in the cultural background behind the art. Despite the fact that I am not choosing to major or even study culture and history at university, they have always been interests of mine. Through Shinkendo and my other arts, I am able to learn a bit more about other cultures and a bit of their history. Japan in particular has interested me recently, and while taking a course to fulfill a requirement, I ended up doing extensive research on feudal Japan and Japanese military tactics.



Law & Reiho

By Joseph Lopez
Honbu Dojo

Jinsei Shinkendo. Shinkendo is life, life is Shinkendo. As a Shinkendo-ka of only six months, I have come to realize the truth of these words, which echo so very well the axiom “life imitates art imitates life.” There are many elements of my Shinkendo practice which have enhanced my everyday life and, likewise, I incorporate many of my life experiences into my Shinkendo practice.

The parallels became more evident when we learned about dojo *reiho*, or etiquette. Nicholas Lauridsen-sensei of Honbu Dojo took the time to give us a formal lecture on *reiho*, which, as he stressed, is something that should be intuitively learned through common sense and basic manners. For instance, watch and learn from your senior students. Respect those who are senior to you because they have more knowledge, and it is from them that you will learn.



When Nicholas-sensei asked for volunteers to contribute to a newsletter about *reiho*, the first to volunteer was Dr. Guy Mayeda, a fellow Shinkendo-ka at Honbu Dojo. Dr. Mayeda mentioned that he saw many elements of *reiho* that could be used in his residency training programs at the hospital. This brought to mind my own observations that many elements of *reiho* seemed to parallel my own professional life.

I am a practicing attorney, newly admitted to the California State Bar at the end of December 2009. Literally days thereafter, in early January 2010, I joined Shinkendo and was welcomed by Obata-kaiso as the first new student of Honbu Dojo for 2010. My admittance into both the State Bar and Honbu Dojo began at almost exactly the same time, and my growth and development in both has been concurrent.

Many people look at the legal profession with a strong sense of cynicism, and it is warranted. The legal profession

can be corrupt, disenchanting, and downright unfair. Part of the reason I became a lawyer was to advocate for things I believe in. Laws can be challenged and changed, and we in the United States are given broad powers under the First Amendment to voice our disagreements, however unfair and unjust we might view the system.



However, as an attorney, you are duty-bound by the rules of professional responsibility. Many a lawyer has fallen victim to hubris, or become drunk on power, only to realize that these rules are not unofficial guidelines, but statutory requirements for which you could be fined, disbarred, and even imprisoned. Just as *reiho* is not supposed to be optional for Shinkendo-ka, the rules of professional responsibility are not optional for attorneys. Nowhere is this more evident than in the courtroom.

My first few experiences with the courtroom atmosphere were positively intimidating. Judges dressed in black robes sat high atop benches, guarded closely by bailiffs with guns, while the accused and the aggrieved look on with somber faces. Many are allowed to observe the proceedings with relative anonymity. Such is not true for an attorney. You are front and center, the focus of all in the courtroom, especially the judge. You represent your client, and everyone who is present – peers, superiors, the public – will form an opinion of you based upon how you perform. It is therefore imperative that you maintain proper procedure. You do not approach the bench unless you are asked; you do not interrupt the judge, or opposing counsel, when they are speaking; you do not bring motions, objections, or pleadings that are improper. You are a professional operating in a regulated environment,

and if you fail to obey these rules there could be serious consequences.

When I had my first test for advancement in Shinkendo, many of my early courtroom appearances came flashing back. There was Obata-kaiso, seated atop the dais, staring down upon his students while they fought for his approval, for his affirmation. He was, quiet literally, a judge. He observed our technique, and evaluated our performances, ruling upon our advancement. Afterwards, during the reiho meeting, Nicholas-sensei pointed out that these are not the only things he was watching for. He was evaluating our reiho the entire time. From the moment you walk into the dojo you are being tested. This is true of the courtroom as well, as it is in all walks of life. People begin to form opinions of you the moment they see you. Many of the elements of reiho that I was unfamiliar with bore striking similarities to court. For instance, just as I was not to approach the judge's bench until told to do so, when receiving my certificate I was only supposed to approach Kaiso when he called my name, bow when he said "rei," wait until he was finished talking, and then receive my certificate.



Reiho is not supposed to be an optional method of protocol that we observe at our convenience – it is supposed to be as much a part of the martial art we study as the swinging of a *bokuto*. Many other elements of Shinkendo have fallen over into my everyday life, just as elements of my everyday life have fallen over into Shinkendo, so numerous that it is impossible to list them all. But the way in which I treat people in my professional, family, and personal life translates into my relationship with Kaiso, his family, and my fellow students at the Honbu Dojo, and vice versa. Through observing these parallels, such as those of the courtroom and the testing environment, I have developed a better understanding of what is meant by *Jinsei Shinkendo*.

Shinkendo, Reiho, & Medical Training

By Dr. Guy Mayeda, Honbu Dojo

Nicholas-sensei reviewed the concept of *reiho*, often referred to as etiquette, for the Shinkendo class. The Tokugawa government designated Ogasawara Ryu the official style of samurai etiquette during the Edo era. Ogasawara Sadamune (1291-1347), a samurai who founded the Ogasawara Ryu school of etiquette, originally created guidelines for proper samurai conduct when wearing a Japanese sword in public, as well as strategic considerations of sword distance and position to ensure safety when two samurai were present in close proximity. Learning proper conduct and respect inside the dojo is an important aspect of martial arts training, and requires as much attention during class as learning the technical art of Aikido or Shinkendo. Reiho actually has many implications beyond dojo etiquette, and if learned properly can be applied in our everyday lives to improve harmony both at home and work. We should remember that as students of Honbu Dojo, our actions and behavior are a direct reflection of our school and sensei.

Courtesy and Respect toward Obata-Kaiso

As students at Honbu Dojo, we are extremely fortunate to receive direct instruction from Toshishiro Obata-kaiso. The title *kaiso* means "founder of a school of martial art." Obata-kaiso originally founded the Shinkendo school of traditional Japanese swordsmanship in 1990 and later established the International Shinkendo Federation in 1994.



Everyone's full attention should always be directed toward Obata-kaiso in the dojo. If you are in the middle of a routine and Kaiso decides to clarify a point to the entire class or even an individual student, immediately stop what you are doing and sit in a *seiza* position with the sword or

bokken laid down on your right side, giving him your immediate and complete attention. After he finishes his explanation or teaching point, bow and say, in unison, “onegaishimasu,” before standing and resuming practice.

Always acknowledge Obata-kaiso first when entering and leaving the dojo, or if you see him outside the dojo before or after class. Even if you are shy or feel intimidated as a new student, it is appropriate to initiate the greeting, rather than waiting for him to acknowledge you first. Of course, if Kaiso is busy teaching the class or engaged in conversation with someone else, we should not interrupt him.



Students should also assist Obata-kaiso and Mrs. Sensei in any way they can, whether it involves carrying items into the dojo before class, carrying items to their car after class, cleaning and maintaining the dojo, making sure to pay dues on time, and even offering any special skills or talents that we may have as individuals to help improve the dojo. For example, preparing a cup of green tea or other refreshment for Kaiso to enjoy before or after class is a tradition practiced by some students to make sure he is comfortable, and to let him know that we appreciate his time and dedication to teaching us.

Mrs. Sensei also reminded me of several important concepts in Japanese society related to *reihō*:

- *Chu* – Loyalty to one’s lord or daimyo.
- *Ko* – Responsibility in caring for one’s parents or family.
- *Tei* – Reverence towards elders in class and in the community.

Dojo Formalities

Entering the dojo:

- Bow with the appropriate greeting of *konnichiwa* (good afternoon), *ohayo gozaimasu* (good morning), or *konbanwa* (good evening).



Stepping onto the mat:

- Bow before stepping onto the mat.
- Never step onto the mat with shoes or sandals.
- Likewise, never walk off the mat with bare feet; always wear shoes or sandals when off the mat.
- After stepping onto the mat, place shoes or sandals in the shoe rack, or if there is no space in the shoe rack, neatly together with the toe ends pointing away from the mat. This allows a quick and easy exit from the mat if an emergency situation arises.

Osoji – cleaning of the mats and dojo in general:

- The entire class should take responsibility for the regular maintenance and hygiene of the dojo. Kaiso or Mrs. Sensei will inform students when it is time to clean the mats (usually at the beginning or end of class). A folded damp towel is used to wipe the mat in straight rows by pushing it in front of you in a crouched position, similar to a single-person wheelbarrow race. This method of cleaning, while strenuous, is a tradition at the Honbu Dojo and should be viewed as a form of physical conditioning or martial art exercise, rather than a chore.



Beginning of class:

- *Sei retsu* – Line up by rank
- *Seiza* – Sit in kneeling position
- *Mokuso* – Deep breathing and meditation with eyes closed
- *Mokuso yame* – End of deep breathing and meditation
- *Shomen ni rei* – Bow to dojo shomen
- *Sensei (kaiso) ni rei* – Bow to sensei (Kaiso)
- *Yoroshiku onegaishimasu* – Formal version of “please teach me”; stand at attention holding sword on right side
- *Katana ni rei* – Bow to sword with blade held horizontal at eye level and facing towards you; then transfer sword to left side

End of class:

- *Sei retsu* – Line up by rank
- *Seiza* – Sit in kneeling position
- *Mokuso* – Deep breathing and meditation with eyes closed
- *Mokuso yame* – End of deep breathing and meditation
- *Shomen ni rei* – Bow to dojo shomen
- *Sensei (kaiso) ni rei* – Bow to sensei (Kaiso)
- *Domo arigato gozaimashita* – “Thank you very much for teaching me”
- *Sei retsu* – Form two lines on left and right sides in front of sensei, and sit in seiza position
- *Otagai ni rei* – Students bow across to each other, stating, “domo arigato gozaimashita.”
- Sensei exits mat while students remain in seiza kneeling position.
- After sensei steps off the mat, each line of students stands and forms a circle, then bows, stating, “domo arigato gozaimashita.”

Exiting the dojo:

- Bow at doorway and state *sayonara* (goodbye or farewell).

Awase (Harmony)

Awase describes a sense of harmony, blending, or togetherness during Shinkendo training. In an effort to achieve awase in class, students set aside their own individual agendas and focus on contributing energy, coordination of movement, and correct timing to every drill, no matter how basic or complex.

Battoho, Suburi, Tanrengata:

- Follow sensei’s count while performing the routine. Do not jump ahead in anticipation of the next movement.

- *Kiai* – Shout emitted while executing a technique. Kiai should be strong and simultaneous with one’s action to create a unification of energy. The sequence of kiai used in Shinkendo is *ei, ya, to*. It is important to execute every movement and kiai simultaneously as a single unit in class.
- Newer students should try to follow the lead and mimic the timing and technique of senior students around them. Senior students should stop and assist junior students who are unfamiliar or struggling with a new routine.
- An important part of reiho is to practice in a safe environment. Keep constant surveillance of other students and objects (walls, mirrors, ceilings) in your immediate vicinity and maintain adequate distance for your own safety and the safety of fellow students.



Tachiuchi:

- *Tachirei* – Standing bow. Sword should be carried on left side with blade edge up. It is disrespectful to look at your opponent or partner while bowing. Distance between training partners should be 1.8 meters or the length of one tatami mat; this allows adequate time and distance to prepare for any unanticipated attack by the other partner. Bows should be simultaneous, with the junior student following the lead of the senior student.
- Basic tachiuchi should focus on harmonizing all aspects of movement, kiai, distance, and energy between the two partners practicing together. Part of the blending or harmonizing during tachiuchi requires a compromise in skill level when advanced and beginning students practice together. New students should again try to mimic the timing and technique of more advanced students to raise their skill level. More advanced students should help maintain appropriate distance or *maai* during the routine and readjust to a slightly lower skill level for purposes of safety and harmony, rather than overpowering newer students.

- Conversation should be kept to a minimum during *tachiuchi* and constant alertness and attention should be maintained toward your opponent at all times (never let your guard down).



Promotion Ceremony:

- When receiving certificates of promotion from Obata-kaiso, the class usually lines up by rank in a standing position or seated in *seiza*.
- When Kaiso calls out your name to receive a certificate, immediately respond with a strong “hai!” Walk briskly in front of the line of students to the center of the line, then turn toward Kaiso and walk forward, stopping about 1.8 meters or one *tatami* length in front of him. Stand at attention.
- When Kaiso gives the command “rei,” bow respectfully.
- After he announces your name and the rank being awarded, step forward to receive the certificate. While being handed the certificate, extend first the left hand and then the right hand to formally receive the document, and then bow and say “*domo arigato gozaimashita*” before stepping back. When excused, walk backward to the center point in front of the line of students so that you do not turn your back to Kaiso. Then turn and walk briskly back to your original place in line.

Reiho in Everyday Life

Though originally developed for samurai, the Ogasawara Ryu school of etiquette eventually spread throughout Japan for all classes of citizens to adopt as a focus of respect and dignity. Nicholas-sensei reminded us that Honbu Dojo is a school where we have the privilege of learning the **art** of Shinkendo – an important distinction from a gym or fitness center where one works out with a main focus on strength and conditioning. Obata-kaiso frequently reminds us of his precept *Jinsei Shinkendo* (Life is Shinkendo). He hopes that, through training and

discipline in Shinkendo, his students will develop and follow the path of *katsujinken* (the sword that preserves life by promoting dignity and love) and thereby create a strong positive impact on society and the world.

Some examples of *reiho* learned while growing up and in Shinkendo class:

- Reverence towards elder – their wisdom is invaluable.
- Protect children and the weak from both physical and emotional harm.
- Maintain a constant awareness of your surrounding environment or situation.
- Study and understand both your friends and your competition; sometimes the distinction is not always clear.
- Safety should have the highest priority in determining your actions and decisions.



Application of *Reiho* in a Physician-Training Program

Every July 1st, my partners and I accept two physicians to spend one year with us as residents or fellows in an educational training program called Interventional Cardiology. Each of these physicians has already completed at least six years of residency training beyond medical school in internal medicine and general cardiology. The seventh year of training, which they spend in our program, will focus specifically on procedures performed in the catheterization lab to open blocked blood vessels in the heart, legs, and other parts of the body. There is tremendous pressure on these physicians to participate in as many procedures as possible during this last year of training so they will be competent when they enter practice the following year. Many of these procedures are very technically challenging, and the stress

level can be quite high as most patients are extremely ill and unstable when they require an intervention.

My challenge as their instructor is to remind residents that our care of these patients extends beyond whatever technical procedure they require. For example, patients seen in the emergency room with a heart attack first need a quick general review of their medical history and physical exam to make sure we do not encounter any unexpected complications during their procedure. Patients and their families are also very scared and emotionally fragile at these times. While making sure they have a reasonable understanding of the procedure to which they are consenting, we also need to reassure them that they will receive the best care possible during their hospitalization. That medical care and diligence must continue even after completing the procedure and until the patient is discharged home from the hospital. The residents learn early on during their year of training that to be successful, an interventional specialist must provide care for the entire patient as a human being, addressing both their emotional and physical needs. They also realize that learning the technical skill required to successfully and safely open a blocked artery, while important, is only part of their responsibility as that patient's doctor. Our residents' understanding of this and many other aspects of *reiho* in patient care develops during their year of training, and hopefully will continue to evolve for many years throughout their career.

Confessions of a Shinkendo Novice

By Robert Wilkins, Shoshinkan Dojo, Massachusetts, MA

Having just finished my second full week of Shinkendo training with Shaffee Bacchus-sensei here at the Shoshinkan Dojo in Boston, Massachusetts, I thought I'd share with you, my fellow Shinkendo practitioners, some of the thoughts that have been going through my mind these last weeks. But before I do that, perhaps it would be best to tell you how I came to find the Shoshinkan Dojo, Bacchus-sensei, and Shinkendo.

Actually, it all started a little over three weeks ago, when a friend of mine who lives in Portland, Oregon, had mentioned that he was considering taking up the martial arts again after a few years hiatus. Knowing of his extraordinarily keen interest in traditional martial cultures, I'd mentioned to him that since he was also a

very great admirer of the late author Yukio Mishima, that he might want to consider finding a traditional Japanese teacher to instruct him in *kenjutsu*. As I had the time and energy, I made some quick searches on the Internet, but failed to turn up any licensed *koryu* practitioners in his immediate area. Oh well, I thought, guess it just wasn't his day, when I remembered Shinkendo. Shinkendo, I thought, might be just what he was looking for. With that in mind, I headed over to the Shinkendo homepage to try and see if there were any licensed Shinkendo dojos near him. Unfortunately for him there weren't, but, very fortunately for me, I saw that there was a licensed dojo in Boston, Massachusetts of all places!

Now as I've been training in Aikido for a while, and knowing of Obata-kaiso's reputation, I thought to myself, I must, at the very least, pay this dojo a polite visit. So, to that end, I emailed Bacchus-sensei asking him his permission to come and watch a class the following week. Bacchus-sensei responded promptly in the affirmative, so I made plans to come and watch the next scheduled class, which happened to be on the following Wednesday.

Well, that "next Wednesday" rolled around pretty quickly, and I soon found myself on my first train ride to the Shoshinkan Dojo. I knew from the pictures that were posted on the web that the Shoshinkan Dojo was located in a large brick building that serves as the local Chinese cultural center in Boston's Chinatown district. Following the directions posted on the dojo's website, I made my way to the corner of Kneeland and Tyler St., walking the few short blocks to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association building, where the Shoshinkan Dojo is located. Finding the dojo on the third floor, I introduced myself to Bacchus-sensei. After accepting my introduction, Bacchus-sensei then proceeded to give me a concise overview of the Shinkendo curriculum, explaining how the five separate disciplines contained in it each supported and strengthened the other. As class was about to begin, I took my seat and watched as Bacchus-sensei and his students bowed in. The lesson started with some stretching exercises, and then proceeded with a number of footwork drills. Following those came some *suburi*, followed by some *battoho kata*, and then some *tachiuchi kata*. Being duly impressed by both the clarity of Bacchus-sensei's teaching that night, as well as the energy displayed by the students, I decided to enroll that night.

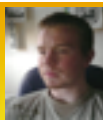
That Wednesday night was almost two full weeks ago as I'm sitting here typing this now. Since then, I've been

keeping myself pretty busy reading Obata-kaiso's book Shinkendo – Japanese Swordsmanship, trying to familiarize myself as best I can with the Shinkendo philosophy/syllabus and practicing the battoho and tanrengata happogiri kata that Bacchus-sensei has taught me. One thing that really stands out about the Shinkendo curriculum is the absence of any seated batto techniques – something which I'm very grateful for as all my years of seiza are starting to catch up with me. Something else that I noticed immediately is the lack of any extraneous movements in the batto kata. They all seem very efficient and devoid of any ostentation and pretense, as do most of the other Shinkendo kata I've seen so far. Definitely some good stuff here.

Anyways, here's hoping I get the chance to train with my fellow Shinkendoka and Obata-kaiso in the not-too-distant future!

Shinkendo Seminar in Poland

By Gniewomir Samonczuk, Seidokan Dojo, Poland



On the 24th, 25th, and 26th of April, students of Swietochlowice Seidokan Dojo, Seijokan Gliwice Dojo, and Budokan Bytom took part in the largest swordsmanship seminar to take place in Poland within the last five years. Kaiso Toshishiro Obata – one of the greatest swordsmanship masters in the world – came to the Silesia region in Poland. Under his supervision, over 40 students from Świetochlowice, Gliwice, and Bytom trained in Shinkendo for three days. During the seminar, Kaiso expressed his satisfaction with Shinkendo's growth in Poland; he also appreciated the spirit of Polish Shinkendoka and the organizers' efforts to arrange

everything – Michal Flasz, Danuta Flasz, Janowicz Sławomir, Gembrowicz Tomasz, and Gniewomir Samonczuk. Furthermore, he conducted testing for several Polish instructors – Gniewomir Samonczuk of Seidokan Dojo, Danuta Platek of Flasz of Seijokan Dojo, and Sławomir Janowicz of Budokan Dojo. Apart from them, Vadim-sensei and Siergiej-sensei from Ukraine, as well as Ben-sensei from Belgium, also took their exams. Moreover, two instructors, Tomasz Gembrowicz and Marek Mielczarek, have officially registered their dojos and requested names. Thanks to that, we now have the Hojokan Dojo in Siemianowice and the Shinjokan Dojo in Radzionkow.



During the seminar, Polish Shinkendoka were mastering and learning more and more advanced aspects of Shinkendo. Apart from swordsmanship skills, Kaiso has underlined the role of Hachido and Kuyo Junikun, which are based on old samurai philosophies. Their purpose is to ensure that skills gained through training are used properly and that those skills can improve our life outside the dojo as well. Kaiso emphasized many times that Shinkendo consists of two swords – one of them represents skills, weapons, and physical fitness, and the other reflects our mind, knowledge, and wisdom. Thanks to them, Shinkendo students can deal with obstacles much more easily, not only in the dojo but in their daily lives as well.

As Shinkendo offers professional study of many aspects of swordsmanship, the seminar with Kaiso was devoted to teaching all of them. Thanks to this, during the seminar all students could practice ashi sabaki, suburi, battoho, tachiuchi, tanrengata, and, for more advanced students, some tameshigiri as well. Kaiso told us many times that he wishes that his students practice and fully understand the art of the sword, and that is why he wants to teach all

aspects of kenjutsu, and not just focus on isolated elements.



Nevertheless, the seminar with Kaiso, even apart from swordsmanship and philosophy, gave us also another type of knowledge. Sensei decided to show us mistakes that some people tend to commit while sitting in seiza. Because some people may find these things unimportant and boring, Kaiso decided to show the consequences of disobeying those rules. In general, we can say that all people enjoyed watching the performance, except for one guy – the one Kaiso used to demonstrate such consequences! Through this demonstration, Kaiso explained how we should care about our safety and movement, and how should we always be capable of defending ourselves effectively without hesitation.



Of course, in addition to the Polish students present, the seminar was attended by Ukrainians, Greeks, Germans, Hungarians, Dutch students, even people from Belgium and the Czech Republic, as well as international student Françoise Niglaut. The presence of so many advanced instructors from all over Europe has raised the level and

nobility of the seminar to an incredible extent. It helped Polish students walk away at the end of the seminar with one more big, full box of swordsmanship and budo knowledge.



Kaiso and our guests were content with the trips arranged for them during the seminar by organizers. Thanks to them, they were able to learn a little bit about Polish culture and history, as well as the Polish mentality. Kaiso and guests were pretty curious about the living style in Poland. We were very happy to hear them appreciating our hospitality, although we can assure you all that next time you will be hosted even better! Everyone had a great time, and cultural and linguistic barriers disappeared very quickly due to kiai and the sounds of swinging bokken, giving testament to the fact that Shinkendo is one big global family.

Butterflies Ate My Brain!

By Craig Golding
Shinkendo Melbourne, Australia



Crikey! What a time was had in the USA! If I didn't take notes, it would all be a blur punctuated by moments of amazement, joy, fascination, and fear! Just as well I did take notes, a worthwhile pastime to incorporate into every day, and highly recommended for anyone else jet-lagged with wide eyes but a fuzzy brain.

You may be saying about now, "Man, what is this guy talking about?" Well, let me explain, especially the title. Sensei Howard Quick and I travelled from Australia to the Honbu dojo for two weeks of training. Now Sensei Quick has trained at the Honbu dojo many times before, but this was my first, not only to the Honbu but also to the USA, so a big "Yo sup? sup? to ya'll..." (Something I overheard in a Subway store and I guess it's a kind of greeting!)



My small but beautiful hometown is a long way from the Honbu dojo in LA, in more ways than one – distance, food, and culture being a few. The distance factor affects

your sleep, and therefore your concentration. This, combined with the severe case of nervousness associated with a new student training at the Honbu dojo for the first time, resulted in a forgetful clumsiness that rivals an amnesic elephant in a china shop! As soon as I stepped onto the mat, my brain seemed to fly out the window, carried away by stout nerve-induced butterflies.

So, the training: was it all worth it? Too right, mate! The amount of information you learn from Obata-kaiso and his whole family in just two weeks of training is immense, sometimes overwhelming, and well worth every effort you expend to get there. I was frustrated with myself when I realised how many things were wrong with my basics, from sword kamae to ashi sabaki to tanrenyata, but most importantly safety. You have no chance at blocking a sword if yours doesn't meet it!



Acting as Sensei Quick's personal photographer, I snapped away, taking plenty of photos while he trained in Aikido. Sensei Quick has travelled to the Honbu dojo for training before, and on some occasions has finished up with no photographic records to take home, so I wasn't going to let that happen this time. He really enjoyed the Aikido/Aikibujutsu training, picking up new techniques in no time. I didn't train in the Aikido/Aikibujutsu as I have no experience in it whatsoever and didn't want to risk an injury that would interfere with Shinkendo practise, but I will practise ukemi as best I can and be ready for the next visit.

Obata-kaiso mentioned quite a few times that you must concentrate as best you can while training. To do this, you must leave all of your worldly thoughts and problems outside the dojo. Maybe you had a speeding ticket on the way to training – it doesn't matter, clear that from your mind and focus only on your training, the ticket will be waiting for you later! We study Shinkendo; what could be more important than concentrating while using a sword? Concentrate on safety, your sensei, your partner, your surroundings, the other students, everything! Listen intently and remember. It sounds difficult, and I admit that I struggled many times, but I can truly say that the more you practise, the clearer it becomes. If you bring your troubles to the dojo, it won't happen – too many clouds to see the sky!



The atmosphere of training at the Honbu dojo is further enhanced by the nature of Obata-kaiso, his family, and the Shinkendo students themselves. They are helpful and friendly, often going out of their way to help us with transport, camera-hunting, or show us a good time at breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and barbeques with excellent food and great company. I have to say a huge thank you to Jason, Isabelle, John (and Martha), Gabriel-sensei, Matthew-sensei, and Nicholas-sensei (thanks for your patience and kind words!). If I have left anyone out then I do apologise profusely, sumimasen.

I thank Sensei Howard Quick for all he did – booking flights and accommodation, escorting me to tourist sights he has already seen, and generally putting up with me as a roommate. The whole trip was made more enjoyable by someone who has done it before and can steer you past a few of the pitfalls associated with travel and LA in general. A huge thank you, and at least I didn't snore!

I offer my most humble and deep thanks to Obata-kaiso and his wonderful family. Kaiso and Mrs. Sensei kindly drove us around the LA area, looking at Malibu Beach, where I collected a souvenir rock, the Santa Monica Pier, Venice Beach (for LA's best freak shows), Griffith Observatory, the Santa Barbara Mission, and Solvang, to name a few of the sights. Sensei Quick and I feel very honoured to have shared so much time on special days with Obata-kaiso and his family; they are moments that will never be forgotten. It is a huge privilege that I, a very small part of the Shinkendo family, will treasure always and look back upon them with great fondness. Again, I'm sorry about the watermelon; perhaps the directions were too good! Domo arigato gozaimashita!



A quick word about Saki-san. Visiting from Tokyo for the second time, Saki-san is training at the Honbu dojo for three months, a huge commitment from such a long

distance. We enjoyed her company and I'm looking forward to her visiting Australia. Just let me know before you come and I'll start stocking up on food...

A couple of hints for visiting the Honbu Dojo: The Miyako Hotel is a great place to stay, and just 90-seconds walk from the dojo in Little Tokyo. The dojo is surrounded by great food and interesting shops. To communicate with home, we used Skype, a free Internet telephony program connecting via the free WiFi that comes with the hotel room, and strongly recommended to avoid those long distance call fees. All you need is an iPhone or laptop with WiFi capability and an Internet-connected computer at the other end. We used it all the time, and our families enjoyed the frequent contact, the call quality being better than a normal telephone most of the time.

After two weeks of training, we headed to Las Vegas for some R & R. We spent so much of our time sightseeing, shopping, and relaxing in the bars and pool that we didn't even spend a penny on gambling! The heat in Las Vegas and then Phoenix, AZ, where we visited next, was

incredible. It is winter in Australia, and the difference in temperature was huge; most of the time it was about 44°C (112 F) or more through the days. Finally, we spent the 4th of July at Laguna Beach, where we saw some great fireworks and met more new friends. A huge thank you to retired ISF member Gene for looking after us so well and driving us around. Keep working on that Aussie accent mate!

For all who made our visit so memorable, the only way we can repay our deep gratitude is to treat you the same when you visit Australia – a long way to come, I know, but well worthwhile if you can make it. The Australian Shinkendo Dojo is in Melbourne, with Sensei Howard Quick as Shibuchō. Melbourne has quite a few things to do and see around there, but when you get tired of cities, come to Coffs Harbour, where we have resorts, sun, surf, beaches, fishing, whale-watching, mountains, rainforests, and Australia's best weather!

Thanks again to everyone for such an enjoyable and memorable Honbu dojo visit! Jinsei Shinkendo!



Kaiso's First England Seminar

By Byron Shepherd
Shinkendo UK, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

It's always a pleasure hosting Kaiso in your home country. That being the case, to those of you who know what I'm on about, you'll know that the first time is also the hardest and most stressful. I'm sure everyone likes to think that their trip is special, but I'll venture not as special as mine.

Kaiso arrived in England for the first time on the 20th of May, 2010.



The following day, Kaiso went to meet with Mr. Shioda Yasuhiro (the third-generation Yoshinkan Kancho) in St. Albans. After a short relaxing walk around St. Albans Lake, Kaiso and Mr. Shioda went to have lunch together at the local pub, Ye Olde Fighting Cocks. The pub itself is the oldest pub in England at nearly 1,000 years of age. During lunch, both traded stories about their younger days at the Yoshinkan, and also spent some time catching up. After an enjoyable lunch, goodbyes were said and both parted company. That evening, Kaiso taught his first class ever in England.

England's first international Shinkendo seminar with Kaiso began on Saturday the 22nd of May. In total, 40 students attended. Of those 40, five came from France, accompanied by Molina-sensei; Berkhout-sensei came from Amsterdam; Jan Furste came from Germany; and Sziklai-sensei came from Hungary with a student. A number of Yoshinkan students attended as well, who came to see Kaiso for the first time.



The mat time was equally divided between Shinkendo and Aikido. During the seminar, Kaiso showed multiple variations of standard Aikido techniques, and, as there were a lot of beginners on the mat, he spent a fair amount of time covering basic ashisabaki and taisabaki exercises. During Shinkendo, Kaiso taught the beginners the basics whilst the advanced students worked their way through the tanrenkata, battoho, and tachiuchi syllabuses.

After three days of constant training, I was amazed at how much Kaiso had shown us. Having Kaiso so close and being able to see him perform is a truly unique and memorable experience. The amount I learned from just watching him move was phenomenal. Kaiso is perhaps one of the best martial artists alive today. Having someone of his calibre personally teach a small group of students solidly for three days is a privilege that few other organisations can boast (apart from us). I can vouch for the group when I say that at the end of the seminar all the students were very sad that it had to draw to a close. A few students even asked Kaiso to move to England, but regrettably he declined!

Now any ordinary man would have been flawed by 4-5 days of non-stop action, but not Kaiso. On Tuesday morning, Kaiso walked around Milton Keynes' Willen Lake and visited the local stone circle (yes, we have a few of these).

After breakfast, Kaiso travelled to Stony Stratford, where he sampled multiple England Ales and visited a local antique shop.



On Wednesday, Kaiso visited London. Kaiso first went to see Templars Church, which is the historical home of the Order of the Knight Templars. The Templars' original headquarters still exist today as part of the Inns of Court. Next, Kaiso walked to the National Art Museum, where he took great pleasure in being able to see Van Goghs, Monets, and Picassos up close. Next on the list were Westminster Abbey, Parliament, and then the Tower of London. If you think that sounds like a lot to do, then you're right, it is, and yet Kaiso still managed to teach a two-hour Aikido class in the evening. The class itself was just Aikido, during which Kaiso ran through osae techniques in extreme detail. The highlight of the class was Kaiso allowing me to feel his yonkajo at full throttle (I thought I was going to die!).



On Thursday, Kaiso visited Warwick Castle. The castle itself was built in 1088 and is today a popular tourist attraction. Next to the castle is St. Marys' Church, where

the Earl of Warwick (known as the King Maker) is displayed to the open public, still in his medieval armour. On our return visit home. Kaiso stopped off at Warwick's local antique shop, where he managed to buy himself two antique coins. The first was an 18th century £1 point coin with Queen Victoria on the back and St. George and the dragon on the front. The second was a World War II Nazi Germany coin (I don't think I need to tell you how rare they are!). Later in the evening, Kaiso taught a two-hour Shinkendo class, during which he covered some of the basic Tachiuchi.

On Friday, Kaiso visited Stratford-Upon-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare. Kaiso managed to see Shakespeare's birth home, and the grave where he is buried today. Later that evening, Kaiso taught his final class in England, a mixture of Shinkendo and Aikido. After the class, the Hungarians took Kaiso to dinner at Kaiso's favourite fish restaurant, Loch Fyne.



Now, one would think that all this would have been enough for one trip, but Saturday brought yet more joy. On Saturday, the 29th of May, I married my now lovely wife Andrea. It was a sincere privilege to have had Kaiso in England the week before my wedding, but it was even more of a privilege to have had him come to the wedding. Having Kaiso there made an already special day that much more unique and memorable. I can't express in words the gratitude I feel to Kaiso for taking time out of his busy schedule to be there.

And so, with great disappointment, we said our goodbyes to Kaiso on Sunday, when he returned back to Los Angeles.

Overall, the experience was truly unique. I speak for everyone in the UK when I say that we learned a lot from Kaiso. Without a doubt, Kaiso is a kami at martial arts, but his humanity and warmth too know no bounds. To have had Kaiso in my country for me was the stuff of legends and an experience that we hope to repeat soon.

On behalf of England, thank you very much for coming, Kaiso, and we hope that you will come again very soon.

Shinkendo Seminar in Hungary

By Cuc Phan, Arcueil Dojo, France

When I was younger, I used to practice many sports (tennis, handball, judo) and got injured very often. Now I have been practicing Shinkendo for four years, and I enjoy each training and keep safe. Shinkendo makes me travel a lot, and I love that.

I attended my first international seminar in Hungary in 2008. Then, in 2009, I went to Honbu dojo in Los Angeles, and in May 2010, to England for the first international seminar in that country with Kaiso. And I went back to Hungary in July to attend the 10th Hungary seminar under Kaiso's lead from July 1st to 4th.

This seminar was a great success. Many students came from a number of European countries: Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Russia, Belgium, Germany, France, and of course

Hungary. I was so pleased to meet all these students and practice with them!

Two other French students attended the seminar: Stéphane, who practices with me at Arcueil dojo, and Charles from Alsace dojo. During the entire seminar, Kaiso reinforced the importance of *ki*, the energy you give and energy you get. The more you give to others, the more you get from others. Also, he reminded us that Shinkendo is not only sword techniques, but also a way to become a better person.

On Saturday the 3rd, a Hungarian TV Sport channel team was present in order to make a documentary on Shinkendo and Aikibujutsu. They filmed the Aikibujutsu and Shinkendo training sessions. Kaiso and some instructors were interviewed. As the highest-ranked French students, Charles and Stéphane had the honor to be interviewed. I have to admit I am looking forward to watching the final documentary.

I am really grateful to Roland-sensei and his organization team. I had great time attending this seminar, and hope I will be able to attend next year. Thank you to all the students who took time to practice tachiuchi with me.

At last but not least thank you so much to Kaiso for his teaching and his guidance! Each seminar under his lead gives me more energy to persevere in practicing Shinkendo.

Jinsei Shinkendo!

