



Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

My European seminars started in 1995. My first visit to Europe was Germany, where they were hosting the Budo expo. The following year, I visited Düsseldorf, Munich, Paris, and Marseille. It has been 10 years since I first went to Europe, and I have repeatedly traveled to many countries: France 6 times, Germany and Switzerland 4 times, Hungary for 4 consecutive years, Netherlands for 5 consecutive years, and once to Belgium.

I visit twice a year, usually covering one to two locations a seminar. I usually travel by plane, but I have traveled through the countries by train and car many times. Some of my videos were made in France, my Aikido book has been translated in French, and the Shinkendo book has also been translated into Hungarian. Shinkendo is featured in the French martial arts encyclopedia and I have also been featured on the front cover of martial art magazines in England, Germany, and Hungary.

From the US, Yukishiro, Tony Cortina, and Henrik Mangseth have accompanied and helped me at seminars. Mike Kyoshi Sensei from Oakland, Rebecca Wong, Lou D'Agostino Sensei, Randy Beard Sensei and students, and Lillian Bloom have all participated in my seminars in Europe. Some of them have seen the Rhine River, Seine River, Donau River, castles, mountains with me.

It is my pleasure to feature the voices of European Shinkendo and Aikido students in this month's newsletter. Our international federation continues to develop with their hard work.

I hope Shinkendo and Aikido will continue to grow and be strong in Europe.



The 1995 Paris Budo Exhibition

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1st European Kangeiko: Munich/South-Germany with Brent Hire Sensei

By Peter Felber, Shibucho and Christian Woerl, Fuku-Shibucho & Translator
Shinkendo-Club Katana - Munich Dojo, Fuerstenfeldbruck - ISF German Branch

Under the supervision of Hans-Joachim Deuser Sensei (Chief German Branch) the dojos in Bavaria (state in south-Germany) grew steadily in the last years. So it was our turn to organize a weekend-seminar this time. The Munich Dojo, led by Peter Felber and Christian Woerl, invited the European Shinkendo-ka for the first Kangeiko from January 23rd through 25th.

Brent Hire sensei was the technical supervisor, who came with a student from Amsterdam. On Friday we had a special Aikibuken Keiko only for instructors. Because of his Aikido-experience, it's up to Christian Woerl to create an Aikibuken-group here in Munich.

On Saturday and Sunday, we focused on Shinkendo. We worked intensely hard, from *Senbongiri* (1,000 *suburi*) on Saturday morning to *Tameshigiri* on Sunday evening. Brent's departure was planned for Monday.



Brent Sensei is landing in Munich!



Brent with his favorite food "Bierhaexle"

Apart from the Dutch Shinkendo-ka, Josef Sturm Sensei and some of his students from Switzerland joined us as well. Of course, Karl Heini sensei from Straubing, Bavaria and his enthusiastic followers also took part.

Everybody was fully satisfied, so we can call the Kangeiko a test for our seminar with Obata Sensei in September this year. Everybody was in a very good and relaxed mood, I'm sure we will have a great seminar in September.

Here the official announcement: During Oktoberfest-time (I think everybody knows Oktoberfest in Munich, if not have a look at www.oktoberfest.de!) we will host our seminar with Kaiso from September 24th to 26th. During Oktoberfest, the Munich area is very crowded and lacks accommodations. So we have to book everything as soon as possible. At the end of February we will hand out the official invitations. If you want to take part at this very special seminar, please sign up as soon as possible.

Training at the Shinkendo-Club Katana

Margareta Kofler – Shinkendo-Club Katana, Munich

Our Dojo held the greatly successful Kangeiko winter training from the 23rd to 25th of January, in which our chief European instructor from Amsterdam, Brent Hire Sensei, participated.

About 35 people came to train, including members from the Munich/Fürstenfeldbruck and Straubing Dojos, Gregor from Bonn, and one member from Brent's dojo in Amsterdam. The leader of the Swiss Dojo Josef Sturm was also present with some of his students.

The way Brent Hire Sensei spoke of the philosophy of Budo sports and the Shinkendo techniques was well appreciated by all of the enthusiastic Shinkendo-ka. We sincerely thank Brent for the successful collaborative training with our instructors Peter Felber Sensei, Christian Woerl Sensei, and Stephan Neumann Sensei.

At this occasion, I would also like to mention the warm welcome given by Peter Felber's wife, Doris, which allowed Brent to enjoy his stay as he did.



The event took place in a sports centre in Fürstenfeldbruck just outside of Munich. The centre is situated in an idyllic place near the forest. A three day training-camp with Obata Kaiso will also take place here next October. We are all very excited about this coming event, which will also be a reason to celebrate his 10th jubilee. Of course Brent Hire Sensei will be present again.

I would like to mention a few facts regarding our Munich Shinkendo classes that take place twice a week—on Wednesday (from 7 pm to 9:30 pm) and on Friday afternoon (two hours in the judo hall):

The number of students has grown constantly since the creation of our association. Most newcomers arrive during times of Shinkendo-training. Our instructors divide the group between beginners and advanced so that no one feels left out.

Good news is also that the number of women in the dojo is growing too. As one of the first lady members in the dojo of Munich, I must say that this sport is not only a man's sport. Since the training always runs smoothly, it is appropriate for women, as well as our younger members and beginners. Young people and adults find in this sport a way of escaping the daily routine and are able to get rid of stress and stiffness.

Did You Hear The Grasshopper?

By Namle de Visser – Shinkendo Itten Dojo, Netherlands

It was thirty years ago when I first entered a dojo and started martial arts training. The urge to train was inspired by 'Kung-Fu' the television series with David Carradine. As a little boy, I was naturally very excited by the fighting highlights in every episode, but mostly I was actually waiting for the flashbacks.

These scenes brought us back to when the young Kwai Chang Caine received his training in the Shaolin monastery. Who cannot remember the blind master Po, who one day summons the young Caine to close his eyes and describe the sounds that he can hear? The boy says he hears people that work the land, the murmuring of water and the sound of the wind in the trees. When the master then asks whether he can hear the grasshopper that is sitting next to his feet, the pupil opens his eyes in surprise and utters: 'Master how is it that you can hear these things?' and the old man replies: 'My dear boy, how is that you can not?'

I started practising Shinkendo three years ago under the guidance of Alec and Walter Sensei who were supervised by Amsterdam's Brent Hire Sensei. What I have found to be great about Shinkendo-training is that it brings core techniques of my previous training back into its original context, the survival skills of the medieval Japanese samurai. The strong formal moves of Karate-do blended with the fluidity of Aikido; the basis of the punch, the block and the footwork, it is all right there at the source.

Shinkendo proves to be a new experience and gives me insights that deepen my appreciation of martial arts. Working with the sword develops the awareness in regards to the integration of technique and body movement, and thereby the extent to which energy can flow. The sword, as an extension of the body and gives the whole system direct feedback by amplifying every detail. Most obvious is that the sphere or our reach increases around about a meter, and with this, the laws of physics dictate an increase in the transmission of power.

This is something to keep upfront in a dojo filled with moving bodies and *kiais*. The right practice of Shinkendo sharpens the organs of perception and can lead the practitioner back to what is important here and now. We all have the experience of training at home, being 'living room-samurai', and how we, in a moment of unawareness, killed a damn good lamp. The sword is unforgiving and, when my feet are on the ground again, I ask myself the question; 'Did you hear the grasshopper?'

In finishing off, I like to thank Obata Sensei for his continuing work of preserving the beauty and wisdom of Japanese swordsmanship.

Domo arigato-gozaïmashita



Shinkendo in Hungary

By Roland Lajos - Hungary head instructor
Translated by Peter Lukacs

Autumn of 1998. After having managed to make contact with Kaiso, I took part in a seminar in France. Some of us have started practicing at home.

August of 1999. I traveled to the Honbu, and for one month had the opportunity to learn from Sensei. More than four years have passed since then.



The Hungarian branch of Shinkendo fortunately had reached the point in which we were able to invite Obata Sensei to host seminars annually starting in 2000. Thanks to this we have created a tradition of International Shinkendo Training camps under the direction of Sensei. The week consists of a minimum of two trainings a day, giving a good opportunity for students from Hungary and abroad to escalate their skills and knowledge. It has given me great pleasure that, although distance is not short, every year students came from the USA, Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, England, and Slovakia.

From the year 2001 Aikibuken was added to the seminars' schedule. Moreover, this year Bojutsu was taught for the first time. The average number of trainings per day increased to 3; that is five to six hours daily. I hope that Aikibuken and Bojutsu will become as popular in our country as Shinkendo, which now has three branches—two in the countryside and one in Budapest.

In July 2002, we have published Obata Sensei's Shinkendo book in Hungarian language, which is still available in the book stores. Although it has not become a bestseller, it is popular in the martial arts society.

In the first half of July 2004 we plan to host the 5th International Shinkendo Training Camp led by Obata Kaiso. I hope this year's event will have the same popularity as the past ones, and that it will give the same contentment as before.



日本テレビ攻撃 **Nihon TV Attacks!**

By Michael Shu – Honbu Dojo
Photographs by Dennis Cheng

On February 26th, the Honbu Dojo came into the spotlight of Nihon Television's Los Angeles crew. They were gathering material for a story on the study of Japanese martial arts in America. The edited news story was broadcasted March 1st on Japanese television's channel 4 as well as on channel 18 in Los Angeles. Anybody who was able to catch the broadcast and tape it, please send it this way!



During the week of the shoot, announcements were made in both the Aikido and Shinkendo classes to make sure we had a full dojo. During each class, Obata Sensei had us practice techniques in certain positions to best show what we know to the camera.

Advanced students were drilled especially on tameshigiri. Singled out were Nathan Scott Sensei, Saito Sensei, Matthew Lynch Sensei, Nicholas Lauridsen, and... me? I've only recently started cutting with my new sword and I'm to go in front of national Japanese Television already??? At least my sword was sharp enough to hide bad form.

The routine was that after two lines of people perform solo forms, one line turned around to perform tachi-uchi with the line behind. Then everyone else would kneel down as individual groups came up to perform advanced tachi-uchi. Then came in the cutting.

Obata Sensei first came up with the idea of a long line of targets and cutters cutting at the same time. Later he changed the idea to a staggered double layer. We were to perform *battoho santengiri* and *hoshya-kaeishi* in this formation. Then *soutai* was to be performed, in which two targets are shared by two cutters. Obata Sensei would then cut mats and bamboo, concluding the shoot.

Of course, like most plans, some new things popped up unexpectedly on shoot day.

About five crew members came with two cameras. All were fluent in both Japanese and English so communication was very easy for both Obata Sensei and the American students. An occupationally attractive female reporter was there to interview us. But first, the action.



Unlike what was planned, *tai-sabaki* A and B were performed with and without swords at the beginning. Not being in Aikido, this was a bit of a challenge for me and I screwed up once—hopefully the camera didn't catch that. The planned routine of solo forms then *tachi-uchi* went accordingly. The class was tense and I could swear I could feel the nervous energy from everybody (or was that just me?). Everything went smoothly, however.

When *tameshigiri* came up, the film crew wanted to get a close-up of us taking out our swords and putting them into our obi. Then we got into position and proceeded to show the *tatami-omote* who was boss. I was rather stingy on how much *matt* I cut and Obata Sensei corrected me on this. Then we set up for *soutai* and I was called up to cut with Nicholas (!!!). I had practiced with *bokuto* earlier that week but expected Nathan Scott Sensei would take my place. So I just went out there and did my best, but had a brain-fart and forgot a *kiriage*. Thankfully it isn't really noticeable to viewers but Obata Sensei really drilled me on that one and I felt bad I didn't do it perfectly.

Afterwards, Obata Sensei cut mats and some bamboo, skillfully as ever. Then I was called up again, this time to demonstrate Obata Sensei teaching me *tameshigiri*. I was to do two *santengiri* on each side, and when I went up, I missed on one of the six cuts! Argh! Thankfully as the student being taught, I guess I have more room for error.

Next up was Matthew Lynch Sensei, who was to be taught *inazuma* (lightning). This was Obata Sensei's special cut of *kiriage* on the lower half of the target before doing *yokogiri* on the top portion. Very few Shinkendo-ka can perform this feat on the first try, and Obata gave a flawless demo for Matthew—a tough act to follow. Matthew was successful with this cut before, but I guess the pressure was on and he was unable to complete the *yokogiri*. Hey... *you* try doing *inazuma* on a half-mat.



We then cleaned our swords and bowed out. Interviews were then conducted with Nathan Scott Sensei and Nicholas. The focus of report seemed to be on foreign students of Japanese martial arts in the wake of *The Last Samurai*. While those were going on, the cameraman for the second camera let me record his footage onto my camera. Our class picture was then taken for both the TV personnel and our webpage.

Obata Sensei then did an extended interview as others retired for the night. He was really enjoying answering questions and conversing with the interviewers. It really made me wish I were fluent in Japanese. Lined up on the table were a slew of Sensei's books as well magazines that Shinkendo was featured in. Most of them were out of print and Nathan seemed a little nostalgic when he saw those.

The shoot was a nerve wracking experience due to the fact that we were to be on Japanese national television. Some, like me, will definitely wish they performed better—but that's what editing is for! It was an exciting experience nonetheless, and one which we hope will further promote our art. I'm sure this won't be the last TV special of our school.

NOT YET THE LAST SAMURAI

By Florian Hoppenthaler,
Shinkendo Dojo - Straubing, Germany

A year ago we heard that there would be a big Hollywood-Samurai-Movie coming up in January 2004. First we thought, "oh no, let's hope Hollywood doesn't screw it up like usual..." But when we saw the first stills from the movie, we realised that it had to be at least a little bit traditional and "realistic". So we soon decided to use this movie to promote Shinkendo in our area. Fortunately we knew somebody who worked at the local cinema and were able to propose our idea to the manager. She instantly agreed.

Now we had to choose our program. The problem was that the stage in front of the screen was only about 8 meters wide and 3.5 meters long. In addition there were school holidays until the 6th of January and the premiere was already on the 8th, which means, that we only could use our Dojo/Gym for one day! We simulated the stage with tatami-mats and started our preparation, which didn't end until all the wives, girlfriends, and non-performing-Shinkendoka (the test-audience) were satisfied.

Then our time came. When we arrived at the cinema, the manager showed us the current program-flyer of the cinema, which announced our demonstration today. It was even mentioned on the internet-site. We were able to practise the program one more time on the real stage before the audience was able to enter, so that we could check if there was enough distance between audience and screen.

The people entered and the lights were turned off. The commercials started just as usual, followed by the movie trailers. Now it was our turn. We entered the stage and performed the usual greeting-ceremony. Our speaker explained clothing, greeting-ceremony, Shinkendo itself and some other details to the audience, who became totally silent. The demonstration started with a suburi, followed by a Goho Battoho. Then, two of us performed a Kagami Ishi Usen/Sasen, starting face to face, so that the "mirror-effect" was obvious to the viewers. Next was the Tanrengata Jugo. We demonstrated the Tachi-Uchi with an Isonami and an Ippon-Tachi-Uchi, because these were the ones that best fitted the slim stage.

We continued the demonstration with Aikibujutsu and Tantojutsu, which really impressed the audience. But you heard "ouch" only from the viewers, who thought that this would hurt very much. Our speaker told them that the right way of falling has to be trained and protects you from getting hurt. We received a huge applause from our audience and left the stage.

Now we were able to enjoy the movie (for free...) in Gi and Hakama. This made us feel like we were inside the movie *g*. Later a reporter of the local newspaper asked us tons of questions for the story he was writing. After saying goodbye to the very grateful manager, we changed clothes and left the cinema. We were all very satisfied because it worked out as well as we planned.

Some days later we saw the article in the newspaper. It filled almost a complete page including a big picture of us. The reporter praised us very much and quoted a viewer that said: "I hope, the movie will be as good as this...!"

The next weeks, we had several people who saw our demo visiting our training. We're already looking forward to our next demonstration, and hopefully some of our new students will also be able to show what they've learned so far there.

My Bushido

By Hans-Joachim Deuser
Shibucho German Branch

It was a cold November day in Southern Germany in 1973 when I as a young boy of 12 started my Martial Arts life on an old, hard Judo mat smelling of sweat and strewn with bloodstains. This is all I could remember from my first contact with BUDO.

The years past by and I gained knowledge in Judo and Jujutsu. I also learned more about what BUDO is like. So my desire to learn more about traditional Japanese Marital Arts grew and, of course, "the way of the sword".

Unfortunately, it had only been a few years since Kendo was first introduced to Germany, and there were very few Dojos located only in big cities. No chances for a boy from countryside to go and study. During my college years, a friend introduced me to an Aikido class. When we practiced with Bokken, my dormant desire to learn real Japanese Swordsmanship immediately came back.

After college I started studying Kendo and Iaido and this finally led me to Obata Kaiso and Shinkendo. In the mid nineties I had the opportunity to watch the Shinkendo video and afterwards I knew that I've found what I've been seeking for a very long time. So I start my study with the first German Shibucho Stefan Schmutge and in 1997 I met Obata Kaiso for the first time.

Almost a decade has passed since my introduction to Shinkendo, and since then I've met Obata Kaiso at least twice a year. In these years I've learned more than I have in the twenty years before. And year by year, the more I appreciate how truly deep Kaiso's knowledge and skills in Budo are, and how much I could learn from him. This deep knowledge is apparent in the outstanding systems of Shinkendo and Aiki-Buken. The clearness in structure and the comprehensive and diverse curriculum makes Kaiso's Budo something special in the Martial Arts world.

Not only the techniques, but also the fact that people from all over the world come together to practice, are important points for our (sword) community. To learn with and from others means to understand each other, and this is the best way to maintain peace in the world. The basic idea of **Ueshiba Kaiso** to have one "language" in Aikido to bring people together in freedom and peace is also fulfilled in Kaiso's founding of Shinkendo. I'm very proud to be part of and stand in the tradition of these great

Budo masters.

Now, when I look back in the middle of my life, the Way of Martial Arts—Budo—in good times and bad, was always a true companion in my life. And one of the important lessons that Budo taught me is that learning never ends in this life.

So let us continue on our Way for the sake of Budo and its humanity.

"Training"

Continued from page 4

The training sessions are very rich and various and in my opinion quite exhausting. I must admit that I sometimes have sore muscles the following day!

The way of teaching, the efforts and the knowledge brought to us by our instructors can vary a lot. As members, we always have the possibility to improve our techniques through practise and motivation under the critical supervision and attention of the instructors. This very often requires a lot of will and discipline.

Munich has opened a new course for Aikibujutsu. Christian Woerl received his trainer's licence from Brent Hire in time for Kan-Geiko. We already had the possibility to try out this art while attending the Shinkendo classes. Some of our students who wished to learn more about this interesting style of Budo sport have entered the course.

Thanks to Christian Woerl and Stephan Neumann, we have experienced teachers who are pleased to adapt to our level.

NEWSLETTER STAFF

PUBLISHER

OBATA TOSHISHIRO KAISO

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MICHAEL C. SHU

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

PETER FELBER

CHRISTIAN WOERL

MARGARETA KOFLER

NAMLE DE VISSER

ROLAND LAJOS

PETER LUKACS

MICHAEL C. SHU ☺

FLORIAN HOPPENTHALER

HANS-JOACHIM DEUSER