



# News from Honbu

## Happy New Years!



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Issue 0020

January 2004

### Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

Happy New Years! I wish that Shinkendo will continue to grow in 2004.

Shinkendo Tachiuchi is fun to practice, however, it is important to practice more Suburi, especially Jodan-Chudan-Gedan Furidome. New Students should be practicing Suburi, Battoho, and Tanrengata- especially where the instructors are Kenshuin or Shidojin level. Advanced students should always be looking after the junior and new students.

This newsletter consists of many Japan Expo 2003 demonstration pictures from the Los Angeles Convention Center. I had the best Shinkendo students perform Shiho Barai, sort of a ceremony type way. The term Shiho Barai is meant to refer to a good luck ceremony, to cut off evil in the four directions. I think the audience really enjoyed the demonstration. Back in the 1980's, I participated in many Japan Expo demonstrations. In the future I plan to have more demonstrations at the Japan Expo.

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Here are some important dates. Instructors, if you see any errors, please let me know.

April 15	Alabama-Georgia seminar
June 10-15	Iowa seminar
May 10	Shosai (Shinkendo 15 <sup>th</sup> anniversary)
October 20	Taisai (Kaiso's birthday)



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# Honoring Traditions in a Modern World

By Matthew Lynch



Shinkendo is a traditional martial art. That does not mean that it is an out-dated art, or that it no longer grows and develops. The Kuyo Junikun (twelve precepts of Shinkendo) teaches us the concept of “Setsu,” which can be translated as “accumulated experience, or wisdom.” As individuals, our knowledge and skills grow and expand every day. We learn from our mistakes and improvise new ideas. It is also essential to a traditional martial art that its practitioners continue to evaluate and revise that art over time, so that it does not become static or obsolete.

Many people think of tradition as a “snapshot” of life in Japan around 1600. That is not accurate. The nature of traditional martial arts in Japan (and anywhere else, really) includes continued growth and change. In truth, that which we call tradition encompasses over a thousand years of constant development, up to and including today.

Shinkendo students of ten years ago may not recognize much of what happens at Honbu Dojo these days. Our protocol and methods have changed over time, as our location and circumstances have changed. New kata and forms supplement or replace older ones as Obata Kaiso continues to analyze and modify our art. Even after thirty years, Obata Kaiso strives to be a better teacher each day, and this means that some things are done differently today than they were even a few years ago. Perhaps this may upset some students who feel that things were better “back in the day,” but I say, how fortunate I am to study under Obata Kaiso today, when he has had that much more time to improve his own teaching techniques.

In Shinkendo we learn the reasons behind the traditions we observe, and abandon those traditions which no longer make sense, or which never did. For example, in many laido schools, a tradition in the last 50 or so years has been to begin kata from the kneeling position, or seiza. We do not know where exactly this tradition began, but since it makes no sense (a Samurai does not wear a katana indoors, and does not kneel in seiza outdoors), we do not honor this tradition. On the other hand, the traditions behind formal dress and etiquette in Shinkendo make a lot of sense when properly explained, and so we continue to practice them.

Shinkendo has become a world-wide art, which does honor to its Japanese roots, and strives to improve upon itself each day. Our school must continue to change and grow, even as its founder, teachers and students continue to change and grow.

That is the traditional way.



# Japan Expo 2003

By Michael Shu

Photographs by Mike Krukowski



On November 16<sup>th</sup> 2003, Obata Kaiso, Honbu Dojo, and regional members demonstrated at the Japan Expo, one of the largest (if not the largest) Japanese events in Los Angeles. The Japan Expo is an annual event held at the Los Angeles Convention Center which showcases Japanese culture, artwork, media, and businesses.



We were scheduled to perform at 4:00 PM so everybody participating was called to the Dojo for practice around 1:00 PM. After timing the schedule and arranging who was to do what, we loaded the targets and split up into carpools to head over to the convention center at around 2:00.

The stage was large and black and there was a curtained area in the back for group to get prepared. In a curtained off area in the back I noticed the “Sailor Moon” cosplay group that came before us a few Sundays ago at the Orchid Festival in Little Tokyo (check the December Issue).

Before us was a very interesting show of ‘chambara’ performers from Japan. They used stunt swords to act out battles in the style of the old ‘chambara’ (samurai/swordsman) movies, thus their name. It was interesting how they had a candle remote controlled to fall apart in a classic “delayed cut” effect, even though the angle of the cut the performer made was way different from the candle’s.

We were called up ahead of schedule at 3:45 PM and we started out with a group performance of some of the tanrenkata. It was one of the few times we actually had enough space to fit so many people on stage

so it was quite a sight.

Then James Huang, Matthew Lynch Sensei, Saito Sensei came up and demonstrated some battouho tameshigiri. There were three targets in a row (one for each cutter) and sometimes cuts were timed so that there would be a sort of wave from one side to the other.

Then I was up to perform all 10 Tanrenkata... with an iaito! I did this before at the Orchid Festival but this time it was in front of 200 plus people! You can see the sweat dripping from my forehead.



After that, James Huang (Honbu Dojo) and Brian Drake (Tsukikage Dojo) faced off, displaying different sets of tachi-uchi.



Audiences were then treated to a demonstration of Soutai with Obata Sensei and daughter Yoko. Soutai is when two cutters face each other with two targets in between. It is extremely tricky to both cut at the same time and maintain rhythm. Yoko then cut tatami targets solo.

Saito Sensei, Matthew Sensei, Nicholas, and I then went up to perform a new square formation known as shiho barai in which we performed kagami-ishi and battou-henka.



Saito and Nicholas then wowed audiences with their advanced tachi-uchi. After they left, Obata Sensei came up to perform tameshigiri. Lightning quick on the tatami mats and cutting cleanly and powerfully through thick bamboo, Sensei garnered a large applause after each set.



We bowed out as a group and cleaned up. While cleaning up many individuals came up to get pieces of the bamboo and tatami mats. Once such child got a large chunk, we told his parents to be careful with it.

We attracted a lot of attention to Shinkendo that day and cleared half of our supply of pamphlets (and that's a big supply). It was a great rush for everybody to be performing at such a big venue and the Honbu Dojo hopes to have the opportunity to perform at such an event in the near future.



## Astronomy Section

### Light Speed

By Fred East and Jonathan King

Just thought I'd respond to the relative speed question.  
(250km/s as a fraction of the speed of light)

I have to say I normally steer clear of math things as a past-time as I have to do it all day in my job. But this one's a bit different I think, unless I had too much biiru last night.

Taken as a standard bit of maths since the speed (velocity is speed in one direction, is that right? The universe is curved therefore light travels in a curve, even if it is of infinite radius) of light is 300 000km/s then  $250 / 300000 = 8.3$  recurring  $\times 10$  to the power of minus 4, the fraction is  $1/1200$

But since the speed of light is the same from any reference point (I think Einstien said something like that) then I'm not so sure any more.

I suppose it depends on where you are when you make the correlation but then again maybe the answer will always be the same, relatively speaking.

Thanks for interesting stuff.

Regards  
Fred East  
Kenbukai dojo



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Great job Mr. East. Let's assume for the moment that the calculation is in Euclidean space so we need not worry about the curvature of space-time; we ignore radial motion about the galactic center, and approximate that relativistic effects don't become important until about 1/10th the speed of light. 1/1200th the speed of light is correct. A tip of the hat to you on a job well done Fred!

Jonathan M. King  
Honbu Dojo

## 'Thy Pen is Mightier' Section



### Tameshigiri:

#### Freedom from thought

By Shaffee Bacchus of Shinkendo New York

After seeing tamishigiri by Obata Sensei, I was completely awed by the speed, economy and precision of movement they demonstrated. My imagination played games on me and I became afraid to blink lest I miss some crucial point. Now I struggle to recall the events as precisely as they occurred and realize that the only "person" who can truly do so is the "target." Therefore I have no regrets with regards to my poor recollections and have composed this prose instead.

The hidden steel greets the universe awoken from its stillness by danger no longer contained.  
Heat creeps along its length, and slowly the once cold steel begins to glow with life.....

There is no hesitation; the mind is clear and free, focused and aware the sword becomes an extension of the body. No distinction between arm and sword is known, smoothly they flow from the saya, man and steel, they are the same, sharp and strong they dissolve the distance.

Everywhere at once and yet hoping for mercy they beg the universe to free them from this course, for death or birth lies on the horizon.

Slowly, the darkness falls upon them and into the smooth saya rest is offered.

Who was he? What happened, not one of the many witnesses can agree, but breathing softly in the darkness every moment is relived.

No regrets, but emotions remain, lingering, the force has been disturbed and there is a stifled cry in the wind, but the calm returns,  
the heart pure no more is thankful for the comfort of a peaceful mind.