



Daienshu 2018 participants

Notes on the Daienshu at the Pioneer Centre, 1-3 June 2018.

Ibuki, "the Breath of Life".

By Carina Hamilton

BSC practice before the Daienshu on Friday afternoon

Present: Minagawa Sensei, Ula Sensei, Dan, Charles, Peter, Terry, Viola, Geoff Fitch, Geoff Warr, Alex, Susan, Carina, Craig.

Terry led the warm up including massage. Ula Sensei & Minagawa Sensei led the keiko based on the four techniques (waza) currently studied by BSC students: No 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the Kenjutsu Nidan Kunitachi curriculum.

Reference was made to the Kyukajo, 9 cuts of the Shintaido graduate and instructor programme and how they relate to the 22 techniques in the Shintaido Kenjutsu Nidan kunitachi programme. Explanations were given for the following terms:

Uchi-tachi: the attacker/giver person who initiates the cut (sword of dignity)—could be seichuken/ daijodan/ tsuki.

Shi-tachi: defense/receiver/space managing person who responds to this (sword of service)—any of the 22 kunitachi techniques.

We practiced: Stepping with bokken on our own, forwards and backwards freely through dojo space, connecting Bokken to body as one, moving from centre, not from arms. All cuts were used, Chudan, Jodan, Gedan, Daijodan. We did the same with partner, holding both bokken together, taking turns cutting/receiving any direction of cuts.

Contents

01 Notes on the Daienshu at the Pioneer Centre, 1 to 3 June 2018.
Carina Hamilton

07 Nagako's Departure to Scotland
By Pam Minagawa

08 Helping Shintaido Grow
Peter Furtado

11 How the calligraphy design developed for the ESC Semi International 2018.
Masashi Minagawa

12 Tirrenia 2018 A personal reflection
Charles Burns

16 Mugen Workshop
Susan Lacroix

17 Shintaido Has Arrived In Scotland
Nagako Cooper

19 Examinations Report Programme, Contacts & Classes

Continued from page 1

Sword programme no. 1 (Ichi no Tachi) and no. 2 (Dotoh). Preparation for Uchi -tachi: practiced on our own how to combine stepping with sword movement: Seichu-Ken (stepping with right), Daijodan (stepping with left, Kiri-oroshi (stepping with right). Then, kumite practice for No 1 and No 2, first repeating one technique only, then working towards alternating between techniques with every attack/defense.

Daienshu Opening Ceremony

Participants: Minagawa Sensei, Ula Chambers Sensei, Dan de Beaux, Charles Burns, Peter Furtado, Terry Bickers, Viola Santa, Geoff Fitch, Geoff Warr, Alex Hooper, Susan Lacroix, Carina Hamilton, Margaret, Sally Mitchell, Sally Sharpe, Cynthia Wheelan, Charlotte Stace, David Cooper, Craig Thorn

Welcome: Developing the theme of 'Ibuki'—our attention will be on the breath; how is the breath involved in our movements, taking note of where we are Now. Awareness of how one can move from worrying to calmness through the breath.

Ula's description of Ibuki: the breath represents a theme of something new and fresh, a metaphor: breath/puff/blow/ playing wind instrument; the 'breath of Qi that comes from the Heart'. (see also the articles in Taimyo 61 that go further into the description of this theme)

In this Daienshu we will learn to be together as an instrument. Be aware about what you think of this new step into new life; what is your experience of this?

Keiko 1 on Friday 1 June, Sports Hall, 8—10pm

Gorei: Ula Sensei

Warm up

- 1) Sitting on chairs in a circle.
Stretches sideways, forwards, backwards, finishing with water flicking and foot stamping, arms stretched, Mexican wave side stretch, koshi warm up arching the back, massaging of knees, leg stretches on the side of the chair
- 2) Standing we held hands and counted as we kicked; then unifying swaying and relaxing

Main keiko

- 1) Breathing practice, optional sitting on chair or standing.
Breathing into belly and out, breathing in: raising shoulders—breathing out: relaxing shoulders, breathing in—hold breath—breathing out'
- 2) Breathing combined with reaching positions of 10–point meditation:
Breathing in: opening hands, palms facing forward (spreading light/ Hoko-i)—breathing out: relax hands
In: moving arms out to side, palms facing up (brightening world/ Shosei-i), out: relax
In: moving hands together above head (top of heaven/ Tencho-i), out: relax arms
In: moving hands above head and down in front into diamond mudra (Kongo-I), out: arms to side, spreading light position, relax
- 3) Kumite:
From 'Kongo-i' (diamond mudra) to Hoko-I (spreading light) to partners
Breathing in 'Ah' as in Tenshingoso, and breathing out back to 'Um' (back to back)
- 4) Walking Tenshingoso with sound, soft and louder: a beautiful, magical space was created, awareness of the calmness and breath
- 5) Wakame Kumite: "Gauguin touch", making contact whilst breathing IN; considering past, present and future in the movements.

- 6) Kongo-i kumite, similar contact to Kiri oroshi kumite, receiver holding wrists of person cutting who reaches up to tenso ➡ top of heaven mudra, then brings hands down into diamond mudra in front of the body, then down into spreading light mudra.
- 7) All together in a circle: 10 point meditation, Twice.

Morning Practice, Saturday 2 June 7.30am

Two options were available

1) Gorei: Peter Sensei, outside facing the field

- Diamond Eight Cut with open hand. Peter's gorei taught how to cut the diamond in the imagination as a small flower size diamond, then a tree, then a mountain and then as big as the world! We then reduced the size of the diamond, until once again it was a small flower. The final sequence was cut with one finger.
- We did two sequences for each image, first cutting the diamond, then polishing it. At the end of each sequence, Peter said: "Now, see your diamond", so we took time to see what we had 'polished'.

2) Gorei: Susan Sensei, in Maple Hall

- Seated Tenshingosō. Warm up sitting on chairs, which was energizing and brought the body to life; moving forwards and backwards, warming hands and 'rubbing fire'. The report from this session was that a wonderfully gentle and healing magnetic space was experienced.
- Silent Tenshingosō, then with voice; pair work seated, 1 person giving and one observing what they felt.
- Meditative and in unison, becoming more aware of energy being sent, received and encompassing.
- Tenshingosō + vocal canon, strong awareness of energy within the group.
- Other comments were that the experience was reassuring, bonding, encouraging and affirming 'like a morning blessing'.

Keiko 2 on Saturday 2 June, Sports Field, 10.15am — 12.45pm. Diamond Mudra theme

Warm up Ula Sensei

- Kumite Ah—Oh leaning on partner's back
- Group circle; holding hands.
- Stretching Achilles in pairs and Quads in four's.

Main Keiko. First part: Gorei: Ula Sensei

Without bokken

- Tenso —Shoko—Um
- Tenso — Daijodan cut, with one, two and three steps (same leg leading); forwards and backwards
- Kumite: both Daijodan cut, one person steps forward, one back aiming for feeling of unification
- Tencho-i ➡ Kongo-i ➡ arms to side, repeated
- Tencho-i ➡ Kongo-i ➡ Seichuken with step (right or left)
- Continuous stepping: Kongo-i —Seichuken with step — Kongo-i —Seichuken with step



Ula and Charles demonstrating

Main Keiko. Second part: Minagawa Sensei

- 1) Standing: Diamond Eight Sei with open hands, little finger side leading as blade, note: separate hands for final cut!
- 2) Diamond Eight Sei with walking, eight steps for each cut, walking up and down
- 3) In groups of 4 —5, one person uses Diamond Eight Cuts to cut group
- 4) Practiced opening the Diamond Mudra and stepping from Kongo-i to Seichuken with bokuto/bokken—preparing with imagination (Ah) raising point to Ten, lowering to Kongo-i then point forwards level with one step.
- 5) Work with partners to focus direction of Seichuken.



Minagawa and Chambers Sensei

Exams on Saturday afternoon, Sports Hall, 2.30 —3.30pm

Viola, Terry, Carina, Dan and Cyril Geoffrey took the Kenjutsu Shodan level exam: Diamond Eight Cut followed by Shoden no kata (part one of Hagakure —no —kata; shoden means ‘first part’; Hagakure no kata means ‘hiding behind the leaf’). This was the first time Shodan exams were taken in the UK: ‘not the goal, just the beginning’.

Previous notes from Ula about Diamond Eight One/ Sei:

Main points comprise a centred formal version, with the gaze out to the front all the time. Make cuts clear and precise to the end. The form of the kata will be more angular; precise movement on outside — big wide expansive feeling inside. The cuts need to be precise (straight not wobbly) with clear changes between each one (take care not to twist your sword before the cut is complete). It seems easy but actually is demanding in concentration and precision. This is why the kata are required for the advanced levels: Sei for Shodan level, Dai for Nidan level.

Keiko 3 on Saturday 3.30 —5.45pm

Gorei: Ula Sensei

- * Kumite Wakame: ‘Seaweed like a willow’
- * “Rossi’s Stepping”¹ with bokuto—unifying practice.
 - Hold bokuto away from your body with kongo-ken feeling. Stepping forward and backwards, following the bokuto—then it follows you
 - Find a connection with your sword—use the space freely
 - Keep the sword vertical, like bumper cars (like the wire that goes up to the electricity)
 - Turn it horizontally, lined up with the hips; follow it round turning, stepping, ‘like a waltz!’
 - Look for the horizontal, diagonal, Gedan; move your own body keeping the bokuto still, keep a vertical angle within your body.



Ula and Viola

Then kumite with both bokutos together, let your partner follow in different positions, be it Chudan, Jodan or Gedan, switch the leader and the follower. Then change partners.

¹Style of stepping practice developed by Giovanni Rossi to help unify bokuto/ bokken with our centre and koshi.

Continued from page 5

Wakame with bokuto keeping in mind the phrase: *Byakko* (May peace be on earth). Tsuki: to the centre of gravity, not avoiding, accepting

Then senior practitioners went to practice (led by Minagawa Sensei) the Jissen Kunitachi number 1 to 5 (waza), in response to Daijodan attack, defensive/receiver:

- No.1 Ichi no Tachi "Tenshin -Ken"
- No.2 Dotoh
- No.3 Gasshi-uchi
- No.5 Kasumi

With the following 3 arrangements for No 3 and No 5: 1) Otoari (making sound with Bokken) 2) Slow and precise 3) Normal speed, but no sound (Otonashi Waza).

Ula Sensei worked with non-BSC students to introduce Shoden no kata. We studied the first "arm" of the kata using the open field and trees to direct our cut, first with open hands and then using the bokken. Attention paid to the step, turn and cut. We finished with the three Jodan Kiri komi cuts with the sounds 'ey, ya, toh.'

Morning Practice, Sunday 3 June, outside, 7.30am

Taimyo with Viola Sensei

This was a very beautiful start to the day, the swifts kept us company swooping across the field in the morning sunshine

Keiko 4 on Sunday, Sports Field, 10am -12.30pm

Gorei: Minagawa Sensei

- Warm up included massage on the ground & rolling on grass
- Solo Wakame, then with partner
- Walking Eiko Sei: Ah & Eh with one step
- Kenkai Hoko: walking flower meditation
- Walking with bokuto individually in any direction
- Then cutting each other as a group 'like a pool of piranhas'

Then we split into two groups; Minagawa Sensei with the advanced group practicing the Nidan programme, including introducing No 4, followed by demonstration of technique: Kasumi, Dotoh



Daimond Eight together

The less experienced group continued to work on Shoden no kata, using open hand, fans and bokken to assist the cuts. The group studied the continuation of the kata from the link Jodan Kiri komi cuts, into the next "arm" and the turn with Gedan cuts.

To finish: Diamond Eight Sei performance by Shodan level practitioners, remembering Masashi's parting phrase: "Let's Move Together"!

Summary

This was an inspiring, gentle and deep Daienshu, radiating a feeling of warmth, optimism and friendship. Thank you to our team of wonderful sensei. The following excerpt from the Daienshu welcome pack truly inspired a new gentleness and reflectiveness in our practise together (CH) during this event:

Ibuki : the breath of life.

It inspires poets, artists, philosophers and seekers. The property of breath is ascribed to God and creation. Its rhythm of rising and falling is the very pulse of life. All traditions recognise an eternal ebb and flow that is intimately connected with the breath. When we bring our consciousness to breath we unite with this inner tide. Every breath out brings a release, a profound cleansing, whilst the in-breath allows us to open ourselves and allow brightness to enter.

During his time of gathering together, let us reach a deeper understanding of our own breath through the practice of Shintaido movement and be inspired to find the gentle rhythm of our deeper life.



Calligraphy by Minagawa Sensei

Ula Chambers

Looking ahead to the future: Nidan level curriculum

Diamond Eight Cut Dai and Jissen Kunitachi no.1 to no. 22 (a choice of these according to exam committee advanced request) e.g. For the 2018 examination the selected techniques (waza) are Ichi no tachi, Dotoh, Gasshi-uchi, Ryuhi, and Kasumi with the following 3 arrangements: 1) Oto-ari (making sound), 2) Slow and precise 3) Normal speed, but no sounds (Otonashi Waza). For the exams at the International event in 2020, examiners will ask examinees to perform any three of the 22 waza programme with 3 arrangements.

Carina Hamilton 

Nagako's Departure to Scotland

September 2018

By Pam Minagawa

We gathered in early September to say goodbye to Nagako as she left Stroud for a new life in Scotland.

Nagako has been a shining light in Stroud, running 2 classes each week, a Gentle Shintaido class on Thursdays and the Lightwaves class on Fridays. Fortunately Susan Lacroix has taken on the Gentle Shintaido class and Peter Furtado has taken on the Lightwaves class, so Nagako's hard work and devotion has not been in vain. We all miss her very much but wish her a successful new life in Scotland. We look forward to seeing her again soon at BS events.

Pam Minagawa 



Helping Shintaido Grow

Peter Furtado

In October we held a discussion day to consider the perennial question: how to help Shintaido grow in Britain. Seven people attended, and many others submitted ideas in advance. In the morning we talked mainly about how we felt about Shintaido in Britain today (positives and negatives!), before getting onto more practical questions in the afternoon. It was, we all felt, a constructive day and a real dialogue, so thanks to everyone who contributed or sent wishes to the day.

FEELINGS ABOUT SHINTAIDO IN BRITAIN:

POSITIVES

- * Shintaido allows me to open to the cosmos. It is simple, relaxing, and releases angst and tensions. It allows me to be focussed, to be myself.
- * Shintaido provides an optimistic and inclusive social experience. It provides deep contact and long-lasting friendship
- * Shintaido teaches movement that is effective, helps me be free, and to integrate body, mind and emotion.
- * Shintaido puts me 'in the zone', connects me with people, and provides the challenge of the new, while expanding the realm of the familiar. It allows me to translate abstract philosophy into practical action.
- * Shintaido is the most profound and thought-out personal development programme I've seen anywhere on earth.
- * I can trust Shintaido because of the personal integrity of its teachers.
- * Shintaido is optimistic, grounding, accepting of everyone.
- * Shintaido helps attune your sixth sense (both in the martial arts context and in relation to the divine).
- * Shintaido:
 - Clears embedded blocks and negative beliefs
 - Heals mental illness
 - Re-programs the brain
- * Shintaido allows us to explore being vulnerable, being terrified, feeling truly alive by facing death.

NEGATIVES

- * The feeling of obligation around teaching, and the sense of personal failure when a class folds.
- * Not enough people to practise with, and the burden of keeping a class going.
- * Fear that Shintaido might fizzle out.
- * The focus on exams and internal process / organization has detracted from outreach.
- * Difficulty in saying what Shintaido is. Worry about how it comes across to others, what it looks like.
- * Obligation to contribute to the organization; it requires time and can be personally challenging

- * My own reluctance, and the perceived reluctance of others, to put in the necessary time to run and develop the organization. Want to spend Shintaido-time on keiko.
- * Factions / conflicts, especially at upper levels, leading to confusions, evasions, deceit and discomfort.
- * No sense of unity – we are like a lot of cars moving in different directions.
- * Lack of keiko that is genuinely transformative (as was once the case). Sense of floundering around since the Japanese hierarchical system was abandoned (late 1980s?)

HOW TO DESCRIBE SHINTAIDO

To talk about Shintaido we need to be clear about the base (Ten-Chi-Hitto bitto-Ware-Ittai, or unification with yourself, other people, the earth and the cosmos; then the expressions of that base (Eiko, Tenshingoso, Meiso).

To describe Shintaido attractively we need to focus on the impact it has on practitioners and how they feel while and after practising. We need to avoid saying “not this, not that” (i.e. not describing it in terms of other activities). Eg:

“Shintaido is a physical activity
Based on the Martial Arts, focused for self-development rather than self-defence.
It offers collaborative experience and friendship,
A sense of being fully awake,
And a deep feeling of unification with yourself, other people, the earth and the cosmos.”

THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP GROW SHINTAIDO

After reading the minutes of the previous Growth Day held in 2015, we noted that many of the action points had been taken forward. We agreed, though, that we need to narrow the focus, not to explore too many big ideas.

British Shintaido will grow when the instructors truly challenge their students; but they will only be able to challenge the students when they truly challenge themselves again in keiko. Instructors should be encouraged to plan a daily programme of hitori-geiko.

BSC should establish a system of instructor supervision to support the hitori-geiko program, and to support assistants in setting up their own classes.

BS is happy to provide financial and resources support instructors to set up demonstrations, introductory workshops and new local classes, and that all BSC and BS members should be reminded to support all outreach efforts.

Instructors should be encouraged to take the initiative in making contact with suitable conference centres like Hawkwood or Woodbrooke to a view to adding Shintaido to the programmes they offer.

We need an educational book for students, written in English rather than translated: What is Shintaido? This would not be a specifically instructional manual, nor a collection of inspirational pieces like Cutting the Grey Sky; but would explain, in simple terms, the philosophy of keiko, and the meaning of our practice, Tenshin, life exchange etc. Ideally this would be written by a Doshu?

Another book project is a simple guide to putting Shintaido at the heart of life, along the lines of the Quaker Advices and Queries.

Continued from page 9

Children's classes are often seen as a new area for growth, as kids' Shintaido will also draw in their parents. There is considerable interest in developing a curriculum for children, and a new coaching qualification for working with children.

British Shintaido has a new website but has a very weak presence on social media which may be putting off potential interest. We should find a member who has an interest in social media, who can work with the Management Team on suitable content to enliven our social media presence. Ideally we would also have a weekly email to supplement our biannual Taimyo.

We need better visual content, both for social media and for teaching purposes. There has been a perennial problem in getting good photos.

Shintaido worldwide has a very poor video presence on YouTube. We should use existing, high-quality material created for BS and ESC DVDs, slicing these up and posting on YouTube channels. Additionally, we should make brief teaching videos of specific exercises, perhaps made in association with introductory or outreach workshops. Also collect short video clips of practitioners describing how they feel after keiko.

It was suggested that we should set up a permanent National Shintaido centre; while this is welcomed by all, it is recognised this is a long-term vision which should not be forgotten; however there are no action points.

And here's a practical message from Stephanie Roinier on how she's helping Shintaido grow:

November 5th, 2018

Greetings from Brazil!

I sent you this and to chat regarding your email, about how to expand Shintaido. Something I see happening for children.

I'm currently staying in an equine therapy centre for children, called Passo a Passo, in Itatiba. Doors are opening big time here and with Oscar I was showing what Shintaido is to the president of the centre. We work with children and they will expand to traditional schools. She loved it and we discovered that there is a Shintaido community in Sao Paulo, 90 minutes from here. Nagako put me in touch with Clelie who ran it, but she is now back in France.



Introducing Tenshingoso to children in the equine therapy school in Brazil.

I'm planning to go to India in January, and hope to go on to Japan, where I hope to learn more so that I can share Shintaido better with the children. But I'm aiming to be back in Brazil in January 2020

This place has lots of potential and yesterday we chatted that I will come back to work with them bringing voicework, movement, meditation etc. I truly believe that this is going to be big. I just know that I found the perfect place to flourish... Exciting!!! So let's chat more regarding practicing more with children and...giving certificates to children.

Peter Furtado 

How the calligraphy design developed for the ESC Semi International 2018.

Masashi Minagawa (translated by Nagako Cooper)

統一体 (Toitsu tai) ~ 一体 (Ittai) ~ 一 (Ichi)

Last year, Gianni, the event manager of ESC Semi International, asked me what would be a good Japanese word for the theme of this event.

The word “統一体 (Toitsu tai)—Unification” came straight into my mind, which I shared with him. I was then asked to write this word in calligraphy.

To tell the truth, It was harder than I thought to express the image of the theme I had in my mind through calligraphy. I wanted to express the pure joy children show when they are absorbed in something they enjoy. However, my desire to make the calligraphy visually pleasing seemed to prevent this expression.

I felt that the character “統 (To)” that I had written (which also has meanings such as “ruling, governing and uniformity”) had an egotistic or self-centred quality. I was hoping to get new inspiration by making a pre-event visit to the dojo in Tirrenia and practicing with the Italian members there. Despite this I still couldn't come up with any fresh inspiration.

When I had almost given up hope, just the night before I was leaving Italy, I realised that I had been tied down by my fixed idea of the calligraphy “統一体 (Toitsu tai)” that I had written, and that “統 (To)” needed to be dropped.

It came to me that I could become free by letting go of the character “統 (To)” and transforming “統一体 (Toitsu tai)” into “一体 (Ittai)—Unity,” which is a word that is a part of the Shintaido principle of “天地人々我一体 (Tenchi hitobito ware ittai).” I shared these thoughts with Gianni. We then decided that it would be better to drop even the character “体 (Tai)—Body, Form,” which also seemed to hold fixed ideas within us. In the end, we agreed that when you let go of all the unnecessary things, only the character “一 (Ichi)— One, Oneness” is left. This finally felt right. We decided “一 (Ichi)— One, Oneness” for the calligraphy design while still keeping the theme as “統一体 (Toitsu tai).”

I was satisfied with this “一 (Ichi)” calligraphy, which is accessible to all. For me, this one line contains everything, it is the “Line of Life”—the starting line, the goal line, the beginning and the end. It is my Golden Line, the Diamond Eight, One swing of the sword, and “Ichi no Tachi”—the first movement of Jissen Kunitachi.

At the ESC Semi International event this autumn, we will gather together in Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance. The General Instructors will share with you the fruits of their practice. I am looking forward to this time together. With “Oneness” in our hearts, let's enjoy the harvests of Shintaido.

Masashi Minagawa 



Ichi Calligraphy. Artist unknown

Tirrenia 2018 A personal reflection

Charles Burns

I attended the recent ESC event in Tirrenia with some trepidation. Over the last couple of years my own Shintaido career (if one can call something a career which never earns anybody any money) has tanked. Yet another class collapsed, for lack of students, and left me wondering if I can ever make it work. Does anybody really want me to teach them Shintaido?

This is a question I'm used to, I usually resolve it in the end, but this time it feels different. I'm in my late 50s. Any attempt to start a new class now will probably not take off until I turn 60. Is teaching such a physical art really an appropriate activity for a tall, awkward Englishman in his 60s? If not, what was I doing boarding a RyanAir flight to Italy to attend another worldwide Shintaido instructor's conference?

Some readers may know that I earn my living as a silhouettist, cutting portraits out of paper with a small pair of scissors. It's an odd way to make a living, but not quite as odd as being a Shintaido instructor. I feel fortunate to have found an art I love, which has opened many unexpected doors for me. I've enjoyed a certain amount of success in my chosen profession.

This leads me to speculate: as a silhouettist, I wonder if I could expect a 4-dan grading? I would love such an accolade, were it to exist! But, who would award it? It goes against every tenet of art and culture to award such a prize to oneself! One cannot, no matter what the circumstance, be both examiner and examinee. Such validation must always come from outside.

Even if such an award did exist, by what standard could it be judged? Who could write down the criteria: the exact combination of speed, accuracy, likeness and sensitivity required? What role would there be for presentation, and the artist's rapport with the public? Quite apart from that, what about the emotional effect on those who receive their silhouettes? What guarantee would there be that such standards could be codified and passed successfully onto future generations? Would they still have any relevance in, say, 100 years time?

Finding an objective measure of quality in art has always been notoriously hard. Finding an agreed standard, which automatically overrules the opinion of those less qualified, is even harder – some might say impossible. In our post-modern world the very idea of such a standard can seem like heresy. We all feel entitled to hold an opinion about the work of artists we like. We assume our opinion to be as valid as anybody else's.

For better or worse, this is the task which ITEC (the International Technical & Exam Committee) has appointed itself for Shintaido. ITEC consists of those who hold a 4-dan grading in one or more of the main Shintaido subjects. They have set out to create a lasting, measurable, and reproducible standard by which those who practice Shintaido can measure the quality of their practice, and by which others can measure their suitability to teach this art to others. At the higher levels, the exam system they control even measures the suitability of an instructor to teach others how to teach.

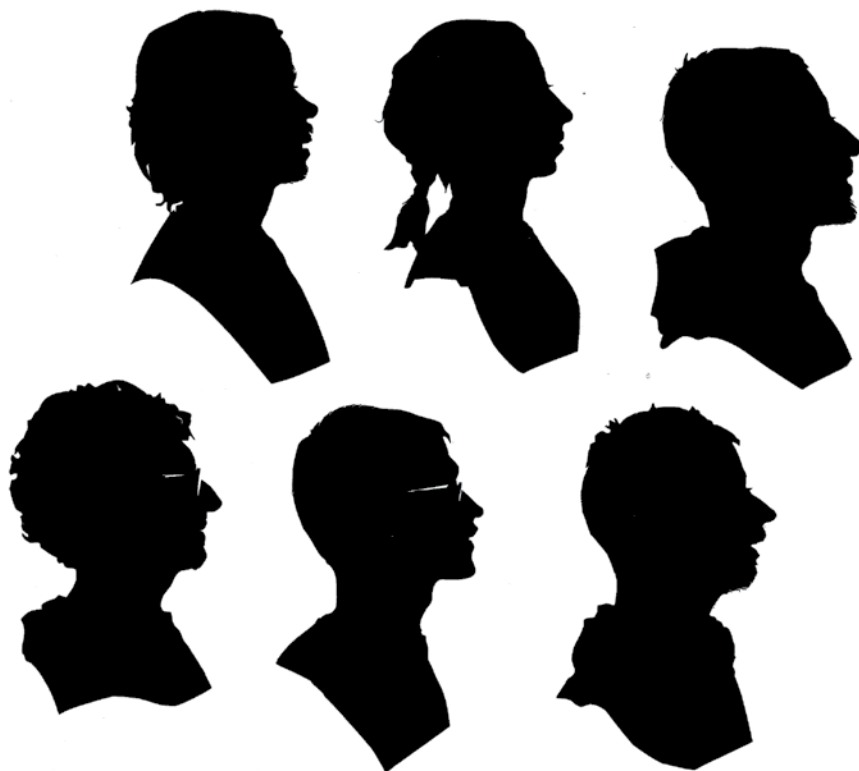
ITEC was much in evidence at the event in Tirrenia. Most of them were physically present, and it was great to see them all again. After more than 30 years of practice I consider many of them to be old friends. I have held a long-standing ambition to be among their number myself one day, if I am ever judged worthy. Over and above their physical presence, their recent research – mostly in the field of kenjutsu (sword practice) – formed the basis for everything we practiced in Tirrenia.

The ITEC vision is to create an art both effective - in that it changes the lives of those who practice it - and yet accessible to people with a wide range of body types and conditions. They recognise that Shintaido, as it exists today, is incomplete. Based on the inspirational genius of one man it remains unique and unparalleled in many ways, yet surprisingly deficient in others. Sooner or later, most Shintaido instructors become aware of the deficiencies as they seek to answer questions from their students.

It is the job of ITEC to find and adapt new techniques, filling in the gaps and blending them seamlessly with the fabric of Shintaido. They are working to create a coherent curriculum which maximises the benefit of Shintaido for all who practice. This curriculum needs to be broken down into simple stages and so teachable to a recognisable standard all over the world. It needs to be accessible to anybody with the desire to learn and the heart to teach.

The reason this is important is because Shintaido is not like cutting silhouettes, or any other form of visual art. The artist is the instructor, and the canvas is their students. These students, in effect, are both the medium and the viewer. They are used to create the art (without them, keiko would be impossible - as I can testify) and yet they are also the intended audience for that art. For this reason the responsibility of the instructor, and hence the need for quantifiable standards and gradings, is huge. As a silhouettist the worst that can happen, if I do my job really badly, is that I destroy a sheet of paper. For Shintaido instructors the worst that can happen, if they do their job really badly, is that they destroy a student.

High-level Shintaido instructors are extraordinary people. After long years of personal practice, and the dedication needed to establish a Shintaido career, Shintaido seems to magnify their personalities. They become larger, brighter versions of themselves. Such Shintaido personalities are hugely attractive. This is one reason why I, and many others, long to be one of them. Wouldn't it be great if I too could shine with a light to bright, could burn with that Shintaido flame?



*Silhouettes of the Italian organising team, cut with scissors during the final lunch.
This team were the undisputed stars of the show.*

Continued from page 13

And yet the work of ITEC comes at a huge personal cost. The task is immense, and the debates that take place within the Shintaido elite can be taxing and soul-destroying. To apply oneself fully to the task at hand takes every ounce of personal energy. It takes the kind of commitment only a true believer can offer. It becomes an all-consuming passion, taking every moment of spare time and occupying all waking thoughts. It leaves no space for creativity outside the Shintaido world. Instructors become immersed in a collective act of creativity, each with their own view of how best to improve the oeuvre of Shintaido.

Some of the bewildering complexity surrounding this collective act of reinvention was evident in Tirrenia. There was an ETC meeting, a KTF meeting (which somehow became confused and thought it was an ITEC meeting) and an ESC general meeting. These took place alongside ISP exams, ESC exams, and exam-deliberation meetings, as well as various levels of keiko – so much keiko – some open to sandan, some open to shodan, and the rest open to all.

It's hard to say whether such complexity is really necessary. It has evolved over the years as some forums thrive and others reach a dead end. Periodically the various groupings reinvent themselves under a new name, yet always with the same people. Thus the complexity grows.

The complex scheduling required for all these meetings was handled with aplomb by the Italian organising team, who were clearly the star attraction of the event. The meetings I took part in were interesting, but often less attractive, revealing a simmering tension between these various groupings and the questions of how to apportion budget between them.

Some instructors last longer than others in this hot-house environment. As one prominent ITEC member would say:

“we are used to people walking away”

The constant exodus of those dismayed by this gargantuan task, once they finally catch a glimpse of it, has been a feature of Shintaido for decades. Sometimes this happens because of personality clashes. As the personalities grow the clashes get bigger! At other times it's simply because the task seems to be unending and thankless. When will the task end? When will the curriculum be finished? When will they finally be able to say:

“This is Shintaido. Look, we finished it!”

One of my abiding memories of the event is of us all walking to the beach, through Tirrenia, dressed in keikogi and carrying bo. I was talking to one ITEC friend about humanity, and the kind of creatures we are. (This kind of conversation happens a lot at Shintaido events). We both remarked on the almost universal intelligence and kindness of individual human beings, compared to the evident stupidity and selfishness of large groups. I meet a lot of people in my work, some quite well known. When met in person they all seem to be making rational and intelligent life decisions based on their needs and the needs of those around them. This contrasts glaringly with decisions taken by governments and large corporations, which even a child could see are mean spirited, stupid and frequently dangerous. The decisions currently being made on our behalf about the environment and climate change are two of the most obvious examples. At the very top level, international diplomacy often seems to take place on the same level as two-year-old toddlers screaming at each other:

“But it's mine! I don't want to share!”

It would be funny if the need to share our planet's limited resources weren't so serious. We discussed all this during a 15-minute walk to practice bojutsu on the beach.

Given this tendency for large groups of intelligent humans to make stupid decisions, how can humanity find a way forward? Or, to ask a more manageable question, how can a large group of Shintaido instructors be sure they are finding a good way forward?

I have often had the experience of voting with the majority mood at a meeting only to find myself, soon afterwards, wondering why I did so. On reflection, these often seem like poor decisions. I had this experience again at Tirrenia, where meetings formed such a prominent part of the event. It's very easy for a high-ranking or charismatic instructor to sway the mood of a meeting. This becomes even easier when those taking part have been fatigued by long hours of keiko. Our bodies get soft and tired – which feels great – but our brains get soft and tired too.

This style of decision making has always been a prominent part of Shintaido culture. Today, in our high-tech age, the new way to hammer out decisions is by email. Shintaido email debates, like email debates everywhere, can be long and protracted. Some people are better at it than others, and misunderstandings abound. Email seems to have a unique capacity to foster them, so one needs to be careful what one writes.

Since coming home from Tirrenia the email forum has been strangely quiet. This often happens after large and important events, which Tirrenia clearly was. The organising team is exhausted, and so is everybody else. We all step back from Shintaido, paying attention to family and work commitments, both of which take second place in the build up to an event.

In the end, this is the greatest Shintaido deficiency of all. The constant need for reinvention and debate becomes exhausting. It takes us away from those we love, who come to resent the very word "Shintaido". Worse, it occupies all our waking thoughts when they should be focussed elsewhere. For an instructor with a 9-5 job, and the ability to switch their focus on and off at will, this might not be so bad. But for a self-employed creative like myself, needing to constantly focus on his own artistic practice, it can become a deeply destructive habit. It takes me away from the one thing which defines who I am. My work as a silhouettist is central to my life, and rightly so. Yet it languishes, abandoned for months on end while I involve myself in Shintaido events. To what end? Can I really make a difference to Shintaido? Sadly, no. Will I still end up voting against my better judgement? Sadly, yes.



*Two Shintaido instructors enjoying an Italian spritzer at Pisa airport on the way home.
A case of two otherwise intelligent individuals making an unwise collective decision?*

Continued from page 15

So, yet again, I come home tired, sad, and deeply frustrated. I love Shintaido with a passion and hate the idea of being one of “those who walk away”. The two new kenjutsu kata we learned are a real gift, and I've taken them into my heart. Yet, I feel a deep longing for the days when I could just “do” Shintaido, without all the debate and politics. I yearn to go out in the park – with only my bokuto for company – on a cold and frosty morning, practicing kenjutsu kata and forgetting about all the rest.

Charles Burns 

Mugen Workshop

Susan Lacroix

In November the final workshop in the series Mugen was given by Minagawa sensei in London.

The origin of the series was two fold. One aim was to see if people would be interested in Shintaido in London, and to develop a presence there.

The second and more important aim was to explore the theme Mugen. The word itself means both emptiness or nothingness and limit. It arose from my seeing a painting by Hakuin of three blind men crossing from one side of a chasm to the other, using a log or narrow bridge. But at the far side before they could reach the land there was an empty space, a gap. I wondered what was in that empty space and what Hakuin was pointing to. This related to several profound experiences of Minagawa sensei, all of which he expressed in the characters Mugen.



Hakuin Ekaku's painting titled, "Blind Men Crossing the Bridge"

Each workshop had its own distinctive flavour and this last one was more intimate and personal with Minagawa sensei recounting some events from his own life and stories of Aoki sensei. This was interwoven with our practice and gave meaning to the history of how we got here in Shintaido terms.

Somehow after a careful and helpful warm up which people can do at home with the help of the booklet, we managed to thoroughly review Taimyo, and Diamond Eight as well as eiko and wakame in the day! The focus was quite intense. Unsurprisingly at the end people were tired but clearly extremely appreciative.

As I was recovering from illness, at times I practised on the chair, which again reminded me how versatile Shintaido is, able to accommodate such a range of physical conditions. This to me is one of the treasures it offers. As I had not practised at all for a few weeks I was grateful to find and receive the movements and their associated experiences again. And there is always something new to discover in Taimyo and Diamond Eight.

Although the numbers of the first workshops were not sustained, many of those who came have spoken of how much they received and how they practise what they remember at home.

As for myself, what about the emptiness in Hakuin's painting? Or the bridge and the crossing? At first I tried to understand the meaning of all these, but what these workshops and Shintaido has yet again shown me is that it is the experience which counts. Clearly I cannot understand through my thinking mind. The invitation

seems to me to dare to set foot upon the bridge, in all my blindness, letting go of any idea about knowing where I am going and what I may find there; it is to go into that space and experience whatever is there. Do I have the courage for that? Can Shintaido give me enough confidence in something—trust in my body? in the universe? that I can dare this? At times I sense a possibility of something new in that direction. Now it's up to me to search for a deepening of this sense, with the help of these practices and the teaching and dedication so generously given by those who have and continue to spare no efforts to develop Shintaido.

I would like to thank Minagawa sensei for accepting the commitment to give these workshops and coming to London to do so.

Susan Lacroix 

Shintaido Has Arrived In Scotland

Nagako Cooper

It was almost exactly 13 years ago when a 'twist of fate' led me to find a poster of the Shintaido class led by Minagawa sensei in Horsley village hall very soon after we had moved to Stroud, Gloucestershire in 2005. I still remember clearly how excited I felt to find it on the board in the small village hall. I would have never expected to re-start practicing Shintaido in UK when I left the Shintaido group in Japan and left the country soon after that to live and work in the Findhorn community in the far north of Scotland in 1998.

Since this re-encounter took place, it seems that my Shintaido and my life has been through so much transformation on so many different levels, thanks to my fellow travellers of the way/Dou-yu 道友, the wonderful masters/Dou-shi 導師 and my family and friends.

It was hard to say good-bye to the Lightwave Shintaido group which kept going for the past 13 years, the Gentle Shintaido group which I started 5 years ago, and British Shintaido College members when we left Stroud to move to Dumfriesshire, Scotland in September. However, I was grateful to be able to hand the two classes over to Peter and Susan respectively, who are both very inspiring teachers with rich experience.



Last weekend, Patrizio and Stefania who organised the ESC Semi International event in Tuscany came to visit us all the way from Italy. We did a first group keiko inside the "Peace Pole Henge" at the Allanton Peace Sanctuary together, and also in the Bronze Age Fort on top of a hill overlooking the Glencairn valley. I strongly felt that practicing together with them helped to anchor the first Shintaido impulse in the land of Scotland!

The other night, Ula and I tried our first Skype Shintaido session, Ula holding a table knife and me holding my bokken in front of the screen! We practiced Jissen Kunitachi beyond the distance of over 500 miles, which was successful and helped me for hitori keiko afterwards.

David and I had a meeting this morning with Julie who works for Active Schools & Communities, Dumfries & Galloway" which we got to know through our sons' school. We are now planning to offer introductory Shintaido sessions in primary schools and secondary schools either in PE lessons or as after school activities,

Continued from page 17

as well as in community settings for adults, to seek the possibilities to start regular classes. They are funded by Sports Scotland and promote a variety of sport activities in schools and communities by organizing club activities, etc. and advertising and marketing them.



It is still early days here, but I'm looking forward to new opportunities to share Shintaido with school children, young people as well as adults.

You'll be very welcome to come and visit us here in Dumfriesshire where it's famous for the land of Robert Burns ("Auld Lang Syne" was created when he lived in Ellisland Farm, almost next door to the Allanton Sanctuary), beautiful lochs and valleys, and "Belties" (black cows with a fat white belt on!). I'm dreaming of having a Shintaido event here in Scotland someday in not far distant future.

With my warmest greetings on St. Andrew's Day,

Nagako Cooper 



Examination Report

Examination took place on 2nd June 2018 during the Daienshu.

Examiners: Masashi Minagawa, Ula Chambers

Kenjutsu

Carina Hamilton	Shodan
Dan des Baux	Shodan
Geoffrey Fitch	Shodan
Terry Bickers	Shodan
Viola Santa	Shodan

Examination took place on 2nd November 2018 during the Semi-international event in Tirrenia, Italy

Examiners: Haruyoshi Fugaku Ito, Masashi Minagawa, Pierre Quettier.

Kenjutsu

Alex Hooper	Nidan
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British Shintaido diary 2019

5th- 6th January	Kangeiko at Douai Abbey including BSC Winter Keiko. Kangeiko led by Masashi Minagawa & Ula Chambers.
17th February	BSC Spring Keiko at Cholsey Hall, Oxfordshire 10am-4pm
10th March	Kenjutsu workshop at Almondsbury Hall, Bristol Led by Masashi Minagawa
3rd- 5th May	Daienshu at Emerson College, Forest Row, East Sussex including BSC practice on Friday afternoon time t.b.c.
9th June	Kenjutsu workshop at Almondsbury Hall, Bristol Led by Masashi Minagawa
13th October	BSC Autumn Keiko 10am-4pm venue t.b.c
1st to 3rd November	"Gentle Shintaido" European Shintaido Event in Reims, France

Programme, Contacts & Classes 2019 Programme.

Please Visit the events pages on www.shintaido.co.uk for further details

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Stroud 'Lightwaves'	Peter Furtado	07967 396 984	peter@shintaido.co.uk
Stroud 'Gentle Shintaido'	Susan Lacroix	07590 368 998	slacroix@btinternet.com

Regular Classes

Classes led by current BS instructors or assistants. Shintaido classes and their venues may change, so please check before attending an unfamiliar class.

Tuesday	Bath, University of Bath.	8.00–9.30pm	Bath Bojutsu Club
Thursday	Stoud, The Endowed School Upper Hall Walkey Hill, GL5 3TX	10.30–11.30am	Gentle Shintaido
Friday	Lansdown Hall, Stroud, GL5 1BB	2.00–3.30pm	'Lightwaves' Class
	Reading, Clayfield Copse playing fields	7.30–8.30am	Shintaido/Bo tutorial
Weekends	Specialist classes with any BS Instructor. Available by appointment.		
By arrangement	Brighton, shared Shintaido practice welcome, contact Viola (07717027869) or Terry (07946338161)		



Resonate with nature

With Masashi Minagawa and Ula Chambers

Celebrate the start of the New Year, with three Shintaido practices (two outdoor, weather permitting) and shared living with Shintaido friends in a warm cosy cottage.

Begins Saturday 5th January at 12.45 pm with a light "bring & share" lunch, and finishes Sunday after lunch. (Or stay for the BS AGM 4-5pm)

Location: Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton,, RG7 8TQ

Price: £120 , or £100 early-bird (booked by 30th November). Contact: Peter Furtado peter@shintaido.co.uk or 07967 396 984

Taimyo 63

Taimyo Next Issue — Spring 2019. Thank you to all who contributed articles. Please send further articles, pictures and ideas to newsletter@shintaido.co.uk