



The Canadian Isshinryu Way Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu.ca

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Focus and Choice

"You need to focus on..." is a common phrase in any Dojo. Sensei regularly draw attention to areas that a student can improve on.

When choosing what to focus on, choice and preference should be included. Everyone does better at tasks they are personally motivated by and excited by. Don't be afraid to focus on what you like even if it may appear to be the area of greatest need.

For example, if you need to work on your basics, but you really like fighting (not uncommon) that's fine, work on your fighting. Improving your fighting and movement will also improve your basics. As you get better at punching, all your punches will improve. The same applies to your foot work, blocking, awareness and focus in your techniques.

The same logic can be applied to any area of the martial arts, even physical training to get stronger and faster benefits all areas of the martial arts. The martial arts is a whole body endeavour which includes the mind.

Thinking about your personal interests and what you are most interested in doing is your task. Figure out what you want to work on, and do it enthusiastically.

Make the choice of what you are going to work on and truly focus on it. Bringing excitement to your own personal training and thinking will help you become a truly great martial artist in your own way.

Choose your path to success and take it!

Essential Isshinryu has been Released!

For more information on the first Canadian Isshinryu book, visit www.essentialissheinryu.com!

ATTENTION NEEDED!

Do you know of someone great in Canadian Isshinryu? If so, please e-mail Sensei@issheinryu.ca with the contact details to be profiled in future newsletters.

Upcoming Events

Seminars

Hanshi Mady in Berlin, Germany—May 16th-21st

Spring Kobudo Camp—

Ryukyu Kobudo Tes-shinkan—April 13-15—Sensei Donald Shapland

Tournaments

33rd Annual Issheinryu Hall of Fame—July 27th and 28th—Chattanooga, TN

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Improve small things and big things will change



Taira Shinken

Understanding the history of Isshinryu and karate can provide the Isshinryu Karateka with a greater knowledge of the masters of Karate and their contributions to creating Isshinryu. Understanding the people involved leads the student and instructor alike to a deeper respect for the evolution of the art.

Taira Shinken (June 12th, 1897- September 3rd, 1970)

Who he was

A Kobudo instructor of Shimabuku Tatsuo and largely responsible for the preservation of Okinawan Kobudo.

Key Instructors

Funakoshi Gichin—Founder of Shotokan and mentor in Karate. Taira was Funakoshi's live in student for 8 years.

Kenwa Mabuni—Karate instructor as well as Bo and Sai, he helped to refine Taira's techniques, after his studies with Funakoshi.

Yabiku Moden—An expert in Okinawan Kobudo, and Taira's primary Kobudo instructor. It was his instruction that fueled Taira's passion to preserve Kobudo.

Key Students

Shimabuku Tatsuo — The founder of Isshinryu learned all the advanced Kobudo of Isshinryu from Taira.

Akamine Eisuke — Taira's top student and successor to his lineage. He continued to teach on Okinawa and spread help spread Kobudo training worldwide.

The Individual

Rather than outline the training and many details of his life, which exceeds the space allocated for this article, I will instead share a specific incident from his life.

Taira began his martial arts studies as a result of circumstance. As a young man Taira took a job working in a sulfur mine located on Minamijima, a nearby island. There happened to be a horrible accident when a beam collapsed in a mine shaft where he was working. He survived, but he received numerous injuries including a badly broken leg which left him with a limp for a time. After his recovery, he found himself treated poorly at other jobs as a result of his poor physical condition. In order to improve his condition, he traveled to Japan with the intention of studying Judo. Upon arriving, however, he met Funakoshi Gichin and, after a brief demonstration, he was so impressed with Funakoshi's system that he became his live in student.

After eight years of live in study, Taira had become one of Funakoshi's top students and with Funakoshi's support he began to study at a nearby dojo, the Dojo of Yabiku Moden. Under his instruction he was able to both learn and quickly master the use of the Bo, Sai, Tuifa, Nunchuku and Eku. In 1932, Taira Shinken was given permission to open a dojo of his own teaching karate and kobudo. In 1933, Yabiku officially recognized Taira with a formal teaching license from his organization of Ryukyu Kobudo.

Never satisfied that his skills were perfected, he continued his studies in 1934 under Kenwa Mabuni honing his skills in kata as well as his Bo and Sai technique. His studies continued with Kenwa until he finally decided to return to Okinawa.

The next newsletter will continue to provide Kobudo masters that helped to shape Isshinryu. Kobudo is an important part of Isshinryu Karate, and it's history and included aspects are important knowledge for student of Isshinryu.



Economy of Motion Part Two

By Jason Miller

This continues Jason's article from the last newsletter, if you haven't read it, head to Isshinryu.ca and read up.

2) Straight-line attack

"The fastest point to the opponent's face is a straight line fired from the practitioner's centre line". - Philosophy from Wing Chun, and passed down to other martial arts such as Jun Fan and Jeet Kune Do.

A more direct means of saying the same thing: "Simplicity is the shortest distance between two points." We are trained that often the best method of attack is to use "closest weapon, closest target" which flows naturally to this concept of economy of motion.

The best example is the leading straight punch. It is the fastest of all punches. It requires minimal movement to deliver, it goes directly to the target, and is the most accurate. The movement starts with the fist in its rest position without any obvious preparation (aka "telegraphing") and because it is so unexpected, it can strike the opponent before they are even aware that an attack has begun and leaving them with less time to react with a block due to the shortened distance of the attack. All of this combines to increase the likelihood of success in the technique.

Master Shimabuku takes this concept one step further in the Isshinryu style of karate with the vertical fist, one of the trademark elements of the style. The Isshinryu fist is compact and is launched directly from the ready position to the target (solar plexus). It is not drawn back, nor relocated to another location, nor is it thrown in the corkscrew style that we see commonly in other styles, therefore eliminating wasteful movement.

The straight-line punch is only one example of this principle. We can also see this straight-line attack in our kicks: mae geri (front-snap kick) which is fired straight out, directly from the hip to the target, and in our sparring technique with the straight-line jab launched directly from the shoulder to the intended target just to name a couple of examples.

3) Biomechanical efficiency

One of the other key components to training the body in economy of motion comes from having a good understanding of biomechanical efficiency. The martial artist trains to ensure that when they move, they only move the body parts necessary to complete the technique being applied. Those body parts are trained to fire in sequence, and to follow the same direction of the movement, where no other body part is moving counter to the technique such that it would reduce the final amount of force directed to the target.

Our muscles must work in unison. In order to move a joint, muscular tension must be changed on both sides of the joint, requiring teamwork to coordinate the simultaneous movement. For the martial artist, because of years of practicing the movement over and over again these biomechanics become more natural, resulting in an increase in speed, endurance, power, agility and accuracy in the movement. Our brains are trained to send properly coordinated impulses at the right frequency and intensity, and to make impact at the final moment or to stop a movement at the exact fraction of a second when these impulses and muscular tensions are no longer required.

Another key distinction to Isshinryu highlights this principle further: our upright stances. The upright nature of our stance provides us with a good base-line from which to deliver our techniques quickly and efficiently. It is balanced. Because of this, we spend less energy trying to maintain our balance and our stance, thus enabling more fluid movements and allowing us to conserve our energy for other purposes.

The martial artist also trains to preserve their maximum acceleration until the last point of contact. We are taught that the power in our kicks and punches should be delivered only at the last moment of contact with the target. This ensures that we inflict the most damage to our opponent while conserving our energy during the delivery of the technique until it is needed at that last possible moment.

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Economy of Motion Part Two Continued

By Jason Miller

4) Breath Control

Breath control is another key area to martial arts training. By maintaining a smooth and steady breath, the martial artist is able to conserve their energy and stamina, is better able to deal with pain, and is therefore able to deliver more power in their strikes. To elaborate on a previous point about preserving acceleration until the last point of contact, our martial arts training also teaches us to breathe out at that moment of contact - whether striking or defending - in order to further aid in obtaining maximum output with minimal energy expended. Mostly importantly, good breath control allows the fighter to remain calm and focused.

5) Momentum

Momentum plays a huge role in martial arts training. Not surprisingly, the concept is deeply rooted in Newton's laws of motion. Newton's First Law can be applied in two opposite but related manners: both in terms of the energy required to start, maintain and accelerate movement and also in terms of the energy required to stop that movement.

Momentum also comes into play with Newton's Second Law: Force equals mass times acceleration ($F=ma$). Or, simply: the larger a body in motion, the more force that will be required in order to stop it. Our body has much more mass than the fist by itself. Therefore, when we originate the motion from within our body - rather than only from the arm - we are able to generate more power. Our training teaches us that the power comes from our hips and from putting our entire body behind a technique. Even the simplest of punches demonstrates this: seikan oi tzuki. By starting the movement from our hips and twisting the body behind the punch, we get more power behind the technique. But we still haven't achieved maximum power because this technique places the forward foot and hand on the same plane. We are limited in how much body mass we can put behind the movement. With seikan gyak tzuki (feet and hands are opposite), on the other hand, momentum is conserved by the natural progression of the body. It is built

up through the continuous motion of activating one side of the body and then the other. In the end, the hips are better able to twist and put our full force behind the technique. The energy is conserved throughout the movement. The key point, however, is that the motion must start in the lower body and work its way up, thus building momentum behind the full mass of the body.

Let us look at another example where the properties of momentum aid our martial arts training and our effort to economize our motion.

"In order to increase the power in your strikes, you must add motion. But any time you start an object in motion and then attempt to stop it, you must overcome inertia. When you restart the object in motion, you must again overcome inertia. Overcoming inertia takes energy and is destructive to power. So once you have started a strike in motion, you must continue the motion through the target with no stopping in between." - The Laws of Physics for Martial Artists (by Martina Sprague)

We've seen this before; in our eight codes of karate. "A person's unbalance is like a weight". We can use our opponent's inertia and momentum against them: to parry their attack with less effort than meeting force on force. This also sets them off-balance, allowing us to direct them away from us or even into a takedown movement, all because we have redirected their momentum.

We've seen a number of examples and explanations of how scientific principles and physics apply directly to our martial arts training. It is easy to see a general, underlying theme found throughout these principles; the idea of economy of motion. When the masters created their respective arts, they intentionally deployed these foundational concepts into all aspects: stable stances used to derive more power, coordination of body mechanics to improve strength and power, transfer of that strength from one part of the body to another in a fluid, conserved motion, resistance of inertia/momentum to reduce the amount of energy expelled in starting and stopping techniques, or

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Economy of Motion Part Two Continued

By Jason Miller

using that same momentum against an opponent. The masters understood that we have limited amounts of energy available, and therefore constructed their basics and forms in a manner that reduces the amount of wasted energy. They taught their students the techniques necessary to ensure the most direct route to the target, fluid body movements from one technique to the next, breath control, efficient biomechanics, and how momentum affects both our movements and those of our opponents. By combining these sci-

entific concepts, the martial artist is able to improve their strength, avoid wasted motion/energy and is therefore better able to become a truly efficient fighter.

Comparison of Three seemingly similar Isshinryu Codes

By Simeon Ostap

The codes of Karate have been referred to as each teaching an important lesson regarding the nature of movement, opportunity, or personal understanding. In some respects the codes are also conceptualized as skills which are described as important to both ones development as a martial artist, and their success within everyday life (Fenton & Warren, 2009). The codes of Karate come up in routine classes often while students are warming up for a session of training. Personally my preference for teaching these codes has become to have students try to recall the codes, then to ask them to attempt to explain how they interpret these codes as being both a lesson for them as a martial artist, and how they each possibly represent a lesson for life more broadly. Usually three particular codes are often first to be recalled, also have a tendency to be recalled verbatim faster than other codes, and when asked for interpretations students also seem to provide similar responses for all three. These three codes are "The body should be able to change direction at any time", "The eye must see all sides", and "The ear must listen in all directions".

The Isshinryu codes of Karate are unique translations of the Chinese martial arts text the Bubishi (武備志), which was popular on Okinawa when Shimabuku was growing up and training (Fenton & Warren, 2009). It's possible, that the Sanjin-

soon education helped him develop the literacy skills that allowed him to record the translations of the precepts for his Isshinryu system, though who exactly translated Shimabuku's codes into English is not clear. Other variations that are available include Funakoshi Gichin's incorporation of the precepts into his Karate-Do Kyohan: the Master Text, as translated by Tsutomu Ohshima (1973). As well as translations of the Qing era Bubishi text is available today in English through the published translation and commentary of McCarthy (1995).

The first code presently considered, "The body should be able to change direction at any time", according to Fenton & Warren (2009) is closely related to the previous code regarding ones balance being akin to a weight, that if one is thrown to the ground one must recognize their situation and quickly recover, and interpret it more generally to teach that those who adapt to change around them as those who will have the greatest success in life. Students provide similar responses asked to interpret this code also often stressing in both fighting and real life situations the importance of recognizing when the strategy adopted are, and are not, effective. This precept is quite different from both Funakoshi's interpretation, as translated by Tsutomu (1973), as well as McCarthy's own translation of the text (1995). Published as "Response must result without conscious thought", and "Techniques

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Comparison of Three seemingly similar Isshinryu Codes By Simeon Ostap

will occur when a void is found", both seem to be making reference to Mushin (無心) a state which is regularly described as a state in which one 'simply acts' and has been mentioned along side represents a parallel in some respects mindfulness wherein one devotedly directs their attention towards their perception of what surrounds them, two processes described as requiring a great deal of training to acquire (Fenton & Warren, 2009).

Isshinryu's "The eye must see all sides" is apparently related both to the one previously explained, as well as the final code of the eight which is covered following this one. It is argued that ones ability to change directions at any time would be useless should one not know why they are doing so. The underlying lesson is said to be that one should be completely aware of their surroundings at all times (Fenton & Warren, 2009). McCarthy's (1995) translation, "See what is unseeable" and Funakoshi & Tsutomu (1973) "the eyes do not miss even the slightest change" are, despite the three all being related to sight, are distinct both from the Isshinryu version as well as one another in a subtle fashion. Also, when attempting to interpret all three together, as do Fenton & Warren (2009), alternate versions of the codes don't seem to compliment each other as nicely but instead seem to be completely independent lessons. Firstly separating the translations from one another Funakoshi's precept regards attention and focus, rather than what is on a face level in the Isshinryu system associated with perspective. Clearly, both in a martial and more general context, both taking different perspectives on issues and paying attention and focusing on the present task are valuable skills. Compared to the English translation of the Bubushi which directs one to 'See the unseeable' is not clearly about ones focus or the effort they take to fully comprehend something, seems to be considerably more esoteric. It's possible that seeing what is unseeable relates in martial situations to attempting to discern your opponents deficiencies, particularly when an opponent is quite accomplished a fighter and has trained to a point where their techniques do not have any observable openings in them. McCarty (1995) after listing the Quanfa precepts discusses strategies and stresses "I cannot emphasize enough the importance of taking advantage of an opening, and do

not forget that the opposite also applies to you; always be aware of openings you present your opponent".

"The ear must listen in all directions" is interpreted, in both combat situations as well as regular life, as a lesson regarding how conflicts can be avoided when one is aware of their surroundings (Fenton & Warren, 2009). This is a critical lesson in karate and life, as the advent of being physically attacked as well as encountering disaster in daily life, are better avoided completely than addressed in a reactionary manner. Along with this interpretation comes the notion that to understand a situation better allows one to make appropriate decisions and more likely to be the master of the present situation. Funakoshi & Tsutomu (1973)'s own version of this code is very similar to that used in Isshinryu, "the ears listen well in all directions". The change in words is interesting, and may be completely superficial. Whether saying that one 'must' listen in all directions, or specifying that they do it 'well', is difficult to discern. Students asked for their interpretation often suggest in fighting situations ones opponent may have a companion who will attempt to attack them from the side or back while they are occupied. Attempts in sparring classes to test whether individuals are able to do this usually shows that individuals walking towards you don't make a whole lot of noise while they do it. Interestingly students' interpretations of this code do tend to be in line with the overall notion that situations that are not advantageous should be pre-emptively avoided.

The idea that one can use their sense of hearing to perceive someone approaching may or may not be true, could or could not be a skill one could develop, however it often requires only a single two on one match to learn the more probable lesson behind the codes of Shimabuku and Funakoshi. On the other hand, compared again to McCarty's (1995) translation, 'Expect what is unexpected' provides a considerably different maxim, which introduced to students would almost certainly elicit different interpretations than that one should anticipate danger or tribulation from their senses and

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Comparison of Three seemingly similar Isshinryu Codes

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react upon it. Instead the Bubushi translation suggests one must be prepared for circumstances which arise without warning. Stepping on a misplaced toy at the top of a staircase, though we will likely be angry at the 'toy-leaver' can be interpreted as a situation in which one's attention to detail can allow them to avoid injury. The Quanfa precepts however describe a very different situation in which an event has purportedly happen which could not have been anticipated.

The codes of karate are interesting and, undoubtedly, are interpretable in a great many more ways than are provided presently. It is appropriate to think of some codes as being joined together in teaching important aspect of the same fundamental values, which are demonstrable through one's behaviour in life and in situations of combat. However, it could also be claimed that much of our understanding of these codes is restricted by the particular translation used by our respective styles. It

is incredibly important in trying to fully understand these precepts as they have been translated by other practitioners. Through entertaining more diverse explanations of their meaning, the lessons they attempt to teach, and the skills which we ought to develop, we can develop more direct methods to teach these fundamental principles to students.

A Review of Isshinryu Karate: as told by Steve Armstrong

By Greg Saxe

Introduction:

Steve Armstrong recounts and discusses his experience meeting and learning from the Okinawan karate Master, Shinkichi 'Tatsuo' Shimabuku, the developments of Isshinryu karate and gives us a glimpse into a world seldom seen by Western martial artists. Armstrong breaks his book into two parts; an initial sketch of the Master, Shimabuku and his becoming a revered karate sensei, and then in part two, his own experiences as a student of Shimabuku, both in Okinawa and then in the United States. The main premise of this book is to tell the story of Isshinryu karate, and more importantly to tell how martial practice becomes more than a way to fight, but a philosophy, a way of life. My intention with this review is not to summarize the chapters and verse contained in the book, but to reflect on the themes and messages that spoke to me when reading Armstrong's writings. Primarily, I will discuss the concept of encompassing as illustrated

through the eight codes of Isshinryu and the character sketch of Tatsuo Shimabuku told in this book. Encompassing:

The term encompassing requires a definition before I can draw reference to the codes and Isshinryu as a philosophy. Essentially, encompassing is a large term meaning 'both/and', as opposed to 'either/or.' It is in this way that Armstrong relates a story about the development of a martial art that looks to include the most effective ways to achieve its goals. He discusses how on the surface Shimabuku designs a synthesis of several martial styles that includes both hard and soft techniques to form a new style of karate; but when we look deeper, it is an approach to attacking all of life's challenges. The eight codes are the means by which Isshinryu karate ties the physical to the spiritual and makes it a complete art-form. Through the remainder of this discussion I will point to examples from the book

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A Review of Isshinryu Karate: as told by Steve Armstrong

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where Shimabuku or a code is discussed and how they point to an encompassing perspective on life and martial arts.

Tatsuo Shimabuku:

Armstrong paints a picture of a man in Shimabuku who is multi-faceted. He says "The inner man: country boy, farmer, warrior, husband, father, friend, student, teacher and Master. Who is he... the immature heart of the boy evolves naturally into the mature heart of a man." We see throughout Armstrong's depiction of Shimabuku that he is a man who possesses incredible strength and power, and yet speaks softly and forgives quickly. A master martial artist, and yet smokes cigarettes during a lesson while sitting on the floor. A man of slight build, he commands great respect and holds himself with tremendous confidence. I would not call these so much paradoxes as complimentary qualities that prove to those who knew or met him the capacities of one who is trained and accomplished in karate.

The dream or "mare of the night" as Shimabuku put it, which he had in 1954 of the Mizu-Gami that unites his vision of Isshinryu karate speaks greatly to the concept of encompassing. We know this vision to represent the crest or patch that Isshinryu karate-ka sow to their gi. Oriented in the form of a vertical fist – the trademark difference of technique between Isshinryu and other forms of karate – the Mizu-Gami and picture surrounding the water-goddess, depicts the synthesis of hard and soft that is fundamental of this new style of karate. Without going into the already known details of the crest, I want to discuss the impact that Armstrong's analysis of the Mizu-Gami and Shimabuku had on me. I thought it was key to understand the spiritual side of Isshinryu karate and the significance that it has had in my life, without my even knowing it – at least not consciously. One can see that after a few years of consistent, or in my case, not so consistent practice of karate that there is a learning that happens in spite of oneself. Armstrong talks about Shimabuku dreaming the Mizu-Gami from an unconscious place, an involuntary act much like breathing or one's heart beating, and how this happens from automatic acts. I can relate this to my own practice in that there is a sense of calmness and confidence that has evolved without my focusing on it or being conscious of it is just there. Even in my kata development, I have become more proficient in learning

the movements and retaining the lessons taught. It wasn't that long ago that a kata would take me several months to internalize and have it become physical memory, not conscious remembering. A place I saw many of my fellow karate-ka ahead of me, and was envious of... a place I find myself today.

The last piece I wanted to elaborate on regarding Master Shimabuku was how his evolution really shows the 'both/and' of human nature. The name that he adopted as a young teen, Tatsuo, was that of a powerful, untamed boy dragon – wilful and uncontrollable. Yet he develops through years of martial practice into a clam and distinguished karate master. Steve Armstrong puts it well when he says "the dragon is a martially-minded child, while the Mizu-Gami represents a socially-minded adult." The both/and idea here is that Master Shimabuku doesn't leave one behind in place of the other, but includes them both in the whole picture of himself, never making excuses for either; this is the true picture of human nature.

The Codes:

Armstrong presents many examples throughout the book that seek to explain the meaning of the eight codes of Isshinryu karate. At first read of the codes, one would interpret them in a strictly martial way – speaking only about fighting technique or karate practice – when only few of them in this book actually illustrate anything physical. Most of them speak to ways in which Shimabuku or one of his students dealt with life on life's terms. This approach by Armstrong helped me to develop a deeper understanding of each code, and in turn how Isshinryu could apply to living life in general. More importantly, in the examples and discussion that follow, I could see how having an encompassing approach to managing life's struggles would enable me to experience things more completely by incorporating 100% of who I am. Below is a discussion of some of the more impactful examples I found in the book.

"The body should be able to change directions at any time" at first glance provides advice to the karate-ka to consider how they should be able to move to face an opponent or avoid a blow in a fight, but in his first example of this, Armstrong alludes to the nature of preparation for "life's hairpin

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A Review of Isshinryu Karate: as told by Steve Armstrong

By Greg Saxe

turns." Explaining how Master Shimabuku draws "his existence between situation and circumstance" he points to the potential lessons learned from all people we might encounter and all situations within one's life. The application of this code in life allows one to act in a confident manner without projecting on the future, but with an assurance that he will be able to handle anything that life might throw at him.

"A person's unbalance is the same as (excess) weight" can be seen to mean the opposite of this duality of which I speak. When this is considered in relation to living harmoniously in the world, we will see that it is imperative to be inclusive in our approach and incorporate all sides of our persona and those around us. He suggests that "a divided self accomplishes little," and I would agree with him and this is why a balanced 'both/and' approach allows us to benefit from all aspects of our experience and efforts.

"The blood circulating is similar to the moon and the sun" presents us with the comparison between something so vitally close to us, our own blood and two things so distant, the circulating patterns of the moon and the sun. Armstrong interprets this to mean human nature is to be trusted, just as the sun will rise tomorrow. He does however place some conditions it appears; given that we get out of our own way. By this I mean that he seems to believe that somewhere deep within us we have the capacity to have our dreams manifest, as Master Shimabuku did, when we let go of our self-consciousness.

The explanation that Shimabuku gives to Armstrong and his fellow karate-ka regarding "The manner of drinking and spitting is either hard or soft" comes closest to the concept of encompassing of which I spoke earlier. The story that follows Armstrong's failed attack on Master Shimabuku in chapter six is about destiny based on one's character, not Shorinryu versus Gojoryu, or soft blocks versus hard blocks – although these are interrelated. He discusses the idea of choices made in one's life being hard or soft and how these determine one's life's outcome. It is not a matter of right or wrong, good or bad, but a matter of the proper application at the proper time, as *you* see it. Isshinryu teaches both approaches in kata and fighting, incorporating hard and soft into its practice. "It is both soft and

hard. Now soft, then hard," Shimabuku explains when asked which one is it. Much like our earlier discussion of Mizu-Gami, the serenity of the woman's body above the rocky sea and the violence and power of the dragon writhing below the waters; she is 'both/and' not 'either/or'.

Armstrong makes a strong attempt to intertwine the codes throughout the book using examples from his exchanges with Shimabuku. Although not all of the eight codes were discussed, the four above were the most meaningful for the purposes of this essay. Much can be said about the spiritual nature of martial arts, and indeed the eight codes of Isshinryu suggest a spiritual path that seeks to incorporate both aspects of our dual nature as humans.

Conclusion and Reflection:

I stuck primarily with the earlier sections of the book for this discussion for good reason. I felt that even though Armstrong did a great job telling the story of Tatsuo Shimabuku, the roots and development of Isshinryu karate and his own understanding of Shimabuku's teachings the last quarter of the book became too political and strayed far from the idealistic, spiritually focused tale of a karate master. I felt that a third part of the book, or a second book altogether may have been more appropriate given the context of the last portions of his story. I suppose it is helpful to understand the whole picture when it comes to the modern day context of Isshinryu karate in North America – or as it was 30 years ago. I believe that the more important information for anyone looking to incorporate that information into their practice is contained in the first portions of the book. In fact I believe that this book, or at least the first two-thirds, should be mandatory reading for any lower kyu Isshinryu karate-ka. I have gained both a deeper understanding and appreciation for Isshinryu as a complete art form; mentally, physically and spiritually.



Sen

By Richard Ruberto

If you just say this word "sen" to a Japanese, they think that you are trying to tell them something about 1000 (the number). However, in karate, we use "sen" as in "*sen wo toru*", which means "to anticipate what your opponent will do". Early initiative, late initiative. striking first or striking after your opponent strikes. Not waiting to long before a counter attack is key.

There are "**Sen no Sen**", "**Sen Sen no Sen**" and "**Go no Sen**".

"Sen no Sen" is that you know what your opponent is going to do so you will strike before your opponent moves.

"Sen sen no sen" is a kind of "sen no sen". However, in this case you sense what your opponent will do. This involves your intuition.

You can probably do "sen no sen" by looking at the movement of your opponent carefully; i.e., how your opponent looks at you, how he/she moves his/her body and so on. You can tell what your opponent is going to do just by looking at him/her.

"Sen sen no sen" is more mysterious.

You just sense what your opponent will do so even before your opponent does anything, you can strike. Good luck unless you're experienced in the art of kumite. This comes easiest after watching a person

fight or fighting them yourself many times. It is much more difficult fighting a person for the first time. (AKA street fight)

"Go no sen" is that you know what your opponent will strike so you let them strike, then strike back.

For example, you know that your opponent will strike your men (head) so you let him/her strike your men. Then you block it and strike his/her do (torso).

Some people use "*Tai no sen*" as well. Apparently this is kind of the same as sen. You know what your opponent will do.

This time your strike and your opponent's strike are executed at about the same time. However, your strike will be a bit faster than your opponent's so that you can win.

We must be careful though. "*Sen wo Toru*" is very important and it means you strike before your opponent. But we should not be just hitting whenever we want.

First of all, we want to be in control of the situation. Then we can take "sen" over or anticipate our opponent. In any "sen" you use, you must be in control. This is the key.

Oyama Gold Cup Results

TEAM MADY, Oyama Gold Cup results from Laval Quebec, March 9, 2012

Semi Knockdown:

Andrew Buchner 11 years old Green belt 3rd
Josh Burgoyne 13, Yellow Belt 1st
Stone Hanines, 13, Purple 4th
Mathew Taiariol, 13 Purple 3rd
Hussein Hamieh, 6, Yellow, 3rd
William Strong, 22, White, 4th
Jeff Skidmore 27, White, 1st
Tammy Miller, 36, White, 3rd

Jessica Holmes, 20, Green, 3rd

Tony Laramie, 12, Black belt, 1st
Fawaz Manfouhk, 15, Black belt, 4th
T.J. Laramie 14, Black belt, 3rd
Jason Calleja 31, Black Belt, 3rd

Knock down:

Bob Horvath, 49, Heavy Weight, 2nd
Bassem Balabaki, 33, Heavy Weight, 1st
Ali Sleiman 27, Super Heavy Weight, 2nd



Promotions at Chitora Dojo—Thunder Bay

On March 8th, the Chitora Dojo held an advanced kyu testing and all promotional candidates did extremely well. The Kata was strong and the fighting was enthusiastic. Great job to all who were promoted.

Mitchell Lambert—Ikkkyu

Camilla Tikka—Yonkyu

Carter Sakiyama—Yonkyu

Thanks also goes out to those willing to stay extra, extra late to make sure they earned it.



Promotions at Lake of the Woods—Kenora

All students did very well, it sure shows what hard work and practice can do. Also Sensei Hartley Nason presented his son Kyuss with he old yellow belt from back in the day, it was a very special moment for both father and son.

Lillie Lax - Shichi Kyu
Chase Laewetz - Shichi Kyu
Ethan Hall - Roku Kyu
Gwen MacDonald - Roku Kyu
Carlee Leduc-Bewley - Roku Kyu
Kennedy Miles - Go Kyu
Jessica Robertson - Yon Kyu

Kids:

Destiny Reeves - Shichi Kyu
Kyuss Nason - Shichi Kyu
Lexi Barnard - Shichi Kyu

Adult:

Kailie Rush - Ni Kyu
Kailey Adams - Ik Kyu





The Challenges!

This newsletters challenges were written by guest challenger Trevor Warren. If you have some challenges you'd like to pose, send them in!

Karate

Endurance is a quality that is important for any level of athlete. Not only will it allow you to work your art for longer periods, it will make you healthier and happier.

Any activity we do in karate can be an endurance activity as long as it's done long enough and with enough intensity.

Seisan kata as an endurance work out – perform the kata over and over again without taking a break in between (bow into the next repetition by bowing out of the last one). If you are doing this for exercise purposes then don't worry about getting every technique perfect. Try doing this at full intensity for 10 repetitions of the kata. Take a short break and repeat.

Kobudo

Muscular endurance is also important for overall health. In kobudo, having forearms that are strong with a lot of stamina will help you hold onto your weapon.

Sai – A simple opening and closing drill (open the sai, close the sai) will train your technique and your endurance. Try to do this for 5 min with a nice heavy pair of sai. Take a short break and do it twice more.

Bo - Hold the bo at arm's length in front of your body and twist your wrist. If you hold the bo in the middle this will be easy. The closer you hold the bo to the end, the harder it gets. Try this for 3 min at a level which is somewhat difficult for you, then switch hands. Repeat twice more.

Endurance activity is all about duration. You can't train your endurance in 5 minutes, it takes time. Set aside some time three times a week for endurance training. Your heart will thank you.

Training

There are so many ways that you can run – long distance, sprints, slow and easy – and guess what? They're all good for you. Make sure that you have a good pair of runners (this will save you from getting shin splints).

A really great running exercise is the sprint/jog routine. Start off by running at a comfortable until you reach a telephone or light pole, then sprint to the next pole. Alternate running and sprinting until you are nice and tired, then run home.



Contributors



Editor & Author—Chitora Dojo

Mike Fenton—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Mike lives with his wife Kyla and has been training in Isshinryu karate for over 25 years, and has been an instructor for over 20 years. He is currently head instructor of Chitora Dojo in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Author—Chitora Dojo

Trevor Warren—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Trevor lives in Thunder Bay with his wife Maria. He has dedicated a great deal of his time to teaching and his own training with the realization that hard work is the key to success.



Jeff Long—Assistant Editor

Jeff Long—Thunder Bay, ON

Jeff is a Sandan and Sensei at the Chitora Dojo. He's also an English major who's been helping to reduce the spelling & grammar mistakes in the newsletter.



Author—Toshikai Dojo

Jason D. Miller—Ottawa, Ontario

Jason is a student of Tim Leonard's in Ottawa, ON and recently earned his Shodan.



Author—Any Dojo

Authors are always wanted! Consider taking the time to submit something to the newsletter.

Karate Terms in this Newsletter

Chudan—Middle Level

Do—Way

Dojo—School

Furi—Swing

Gusan—Okinawan Jo

Jo—Short Staff

Jutsu—Technique

Ka—Person / Practitioner

Kama—Sickle(s)

Kami—Divine Spirit

Kanetsu—Joint

Keri—Kick

Kihon—Exercises

Kime—Focus

Kobudo—Ancient Martial Way, the term used to describe all the weapons in Isshinryu and Karate.

Kumite—Free Fight

Mae—Front

Makiwara—Striking Board

Mushin—No Mind

Naha—Port city on Okinawa

Rokushaku—Six Foot

Sama—Honorific suffix applied to a name, denotes respect

Shiko Dachi—Horse Stance

Shozenkutsu / Seisan Dachi—Small forward stance

Shuri—Capital City on Okinawa

Tatsu—Dragon

Tatsuo—Dragon Man

Tetko—Brass Knuckles

Tonfa/Tuifa—Baton with Handle

Uchi—Strike

Uchi Hachi Dachi—Inner Eight stance

Ude—Forearm

Uke—Hard block

Yubi—Finger

Yudansha—Black Belt

Zenkutsu Dachi—Forward Stance

It is important to familiarize yourself with commonly used Japanese words. Try to memorize all the words each time and you will soon have a large "karate" vocabulary.



Isshinryu.ca

Submissions

Article Submission

Articles are welcome from anyone and everyone. They can be about anything related to the Martial Arts, a technique you think is just great; A better way to do a technique; History of a Karate Master; a tournament trick that works well; ANYTHING!

All articles are appreciated as e-mail. You can send it to your instructor to proof read and send in, or directly to me. (Mike (at) Isshinryu.ca) or (sensei (at) Isshinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

Dojo Directory:

Any student is welcome at anytime to visit any dojo. Before class, always introduce yourself to the Sensei of the dojo and tell them who your current Sensei is.

For a full dojo list visit Isshinryu.ca We are getting too many to list here.

Affiliate Cities!

Abbotsford, BC

Contact: Mike O'Leary

Brandon, MB

Contact: Richard Wharf

Contact: Buzz Cox

Calgary, AB

Contact: Charles Boyd

Cookstown, ON

Contact: Harri T. Makivirta

Dryden, ON

Contact: Rick McGogy

Hope, BC

Contact: Norm Losier

Kenora, ON

Contact: Steve Davis

Contact: David White

Ottawa, ON

Contact: Tim Leonard

Quebec

Contact: Pierre Parenteau

Saskatchewan

Contact: Brian Smout

Sioux Lookout

Contact: Jim Sapay

Thunder Bay, ON

Contact: Mike Fenton

Contact: Trevor Warren

Vancouver, BC

Contact: Rachel McGovern

Windsor, ON

Contact: Albert Mady

Winnipeg, MB

Contact: Brent Horton

Canadian Isshinryu Abroad

Berlin, Germany

Contact: Ryan Boesche

Stow, Ohio

Contact: Albert Pecoraro



What is this?