BODY Dialogue

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Shintaido and Autism (a very personal view)

by Charles Burns

Charles Burns practices Shintaido in Great Britain.

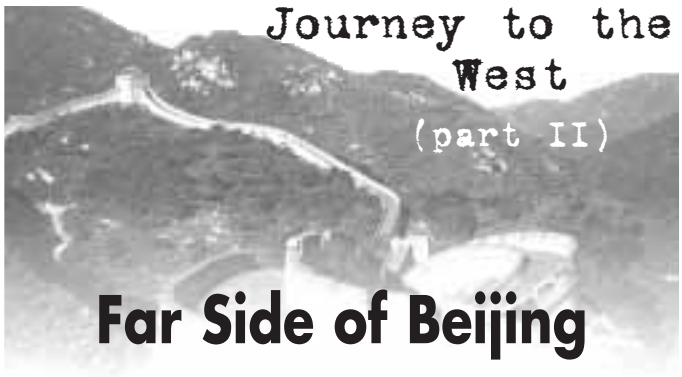
They say children grow in the image of their parents. In my case this simple observation has led me on a particular journey of self discovery which I could never have expected to make, and which still leaves me staggering under its implications!

Nicholas was born to Kazumi & me in 1991, and right from the start he seemed to be subtly different in some indefinable way. He was, in fact, an ideal baby. Quiet and self-contained (except when hungry!), he adapted easily to our routine and then kept us to it. Left alone in a cot he would lie awake and stare for hours, as though mesmerized, by the pattern on the inside of the hood. Always smiling, always happy, and yet curiously quiet, living silently in a world of his own.

He was late doing everything. Walked at 18 months, uttered his first words at 2 1/2, but couldn't really string a sentence together until he was 4. Nicholas is the only child I've ever heard of who quite literally learned to use a computer before he learned to talk! He always preferred to play on his own,

Continued on p. 3

INSIDE



Far Side of Beijing

by David Franklin

When H.F. Ito, master Shintaido instructor, generously offered me a frequent flier ticket to Beijing if I would come as translator and logistics and travel assistant, I knew it was a rare opportunity. My interest in Chinese culture started in high school when I was studying Tai Ji (T'ai Chi), and I am close to fluent in spoken Mandarin. An old friend of Ito-sensei's from the Shotokai Karate days, Mr. Miyamoto, had been in Beijing for about a year, researching Tai Ji and the origins of some Shotokai kata *(forms), and teaching Shotokai at Qing Hua University. I also had some contacts with artists near Beijing, and went about a week before Ito to get oriented and make contact with them.*

The first thing you notice, especially if you are (as I am— and jetlag only helps) in the habit of going outside first thing in the morning for a bit of exercise, is that China really has a culture of body movement. Every morning the parks are filled with mostly middle-aged and old people exercising individually and in groups, including Tai Ji, Tai Ji push-hands, and other martial arts; fan dancing, *qi gong* (movement/breathing exercises to circulate vital energy), standing meditation, sword and staff forms, singing, chanting and vocalizing; also badminton, ballroom dancing, and small ensembles playing traditional Peking Opera music. Many parks also have exercise machines that you can use for a variety of stretching and range-of-motion exercises (thus fulfilling one of the phrases used to describe Shintaido, "a playground for grown-ups").

And then there are what I call the "light-saber grandmas." I saw several elderly ladies gathering one morning in the park. One pulled from her handbag what at first looked like a weird gun. A flick of the wrist and it expanded into a sword. The other ladies produced identical segmented telescoping

Continued on p. 7

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Shintaido and Autism

continued from p. 1

and would spend hours repeatedly driving toy cars in straight lines across the floor.

Kazumi became very concerned, and her concern increased as the years went by. He seemed to grow out of one obscure phase after another, but always into yet a third.

For myself I didn't mind so much. My own parents kept saying: "Oh don't worry, but he's just like his father at that age, and he grew up OK!"

As grandparents all over the world do, of course.

The Montessori nursery school couldn't teach him, nor could his primary school. In Year 2 Nicholas was placed on the special needs register (although his school neglected to tell us about that!) as he couldn't (seemed to them like wouldn't) concentrate on anything, or finish any of his work. He was often left on his own in the reading corner, reading and re-reading books until he exhausted all their library.

To me it seemed as though he was teaching himself to speak by reading.

It was about this time that Kazumi began to read about Asperger Syndrome.

Often described as "able autism", Asperger Syndrome describes fundamentally autistic people who somehow seem to have the ability to cope with their difficulties, and thus contribute to the real world. It's a difficult thing to sum up, but it seems to be far more common than the more extreme "classic autism" which is very obvious to spot in young children.

Natasha and Charles

Asperger's children are typically quiet, aloof, individuals, often very talented in certain obscure ways, but seeming oddly handicapped in the matter of social interaction. Apparently unable to give or receive visual, non-verbal clues as to how they are feeling, they are prone to a very literal interpretation of language, and are often quite unable to see the effect they have on other people. Asperger's children often become overly attached to routine, and obsessed with apparently meaningless repetitive tasks.

The main difference between autistic and Asperger's children seems to be a matter of IQ. Although both children lack empathy for others, and are cut off from the world of intuitive communication, the Asperger's child uses his higher IQ to compensate for this lack (in much the same way that a blind man may uses his hearing to compensate for his lack of sight). In this way he is able to make sense of the social world around him, albeit more slowly and deliberately than the other children around him. Whereas autistic children tend to withdraw from this world altogether (without a lot of patient work from those who care for them), the Asperger's child is often outgoing and sociable by nature, but lacks completely the social skill and imagination necessary to interact successfully with others.

The causes of Asperger Syndrome, like autism, are obscure, but it does seem linked to a strong genetic pre-disposition in some families.

Kazumi found a lot of information about Asperger Syndrome, and presented it me one evening, saying the description seemed to fit Nicholas like a glove, and perhaps we should seek a diagnosis for him. As I read it I experienced a shock of recognition which I'll never forget, and then the doors seemed to close in my mind, and I rejected it utterly.

"This isn't Nicholas" I said, "Our son doesn't have this kind of problem at all!"

The awful truth was that it wasn't my son I seemed to be reading about, but me!

What followed were some of the worst years of our lives for Kazumi and myself. That our marriage survived at all is a miracle, and testimony to Kazumi's tolerance and stamina. Kazumi went ahead and sought a diagnosis anyway, and the process turned out to be a long and painful one. She did this with no support from me, and in the teeth of opposition from Nicholas's school, who insisted that such things should best be left to professionals.

In the course of the battles which followed it became clear that Nicholas' school was letting him down completely. Nicholas became increasingly unhappy, and his sister (not Nicholas) told us about the bullying he was being subjected to on a daily basis. Asperger's children are quite clearly different to other children, and so become a magnet for the worst kind of teasing that can happen in any school.

Even I (in denial as I was) could see the necessity of moving Nicholas, and so at the end of Year 3 we transferred him to a private Steiner school, which was like a breath of fresh air. This was soon followed in Year 4 by the medical diagnosis that Nicholas did indeed have Asperger Syndrome.

For Kazumi and me the whole subject of autism became like a minefield, something we just couldn't speak about without all

Continued on following page

POEM

Soei Kumibo Part I

Once during practice I looked up,
Gasping for breath,
My face a mask of sand,
Caught a glimpse of pink horizon
Under gray sky,

And thought myself like that soldier
In Capa's photo from the Spanish Civil War.

His name is Federico Borrell Garcia.
The photo is called: "Death of a Loyalist Soldier".

He's just been shot, arms flung back,
Still holding his rifle,
Passing from life to death.

'He's so open!', I think.

But I'm not really like him,
I don't want to be like him,
Dead, that is, nor even so passionate
That I end up sprawling,
Falling, surprised,
Into eternity.

I just want to change my life but keep it.

Stephen Billias
September, 2002

Shintaido and Autism

continued from p. 3

kinds of horrible arguments. And gradually it seemed like those arguments were all that was left of our relationship. I was caught in turmoil, recognising more and more the parallels between Nicholas' problems and my own childhood, and yet unable to talk about this to anybody, let alone Kazumi. My behaviour became worse and worse, and there followed a series of incidents (which I won't include here out of sheer embarrassment!) which eventually led us to seek help from a marriage guidance counselor in an effort to keep the family together.

It didn't help much. Our counselor was of the opinion that the only way she could really help was to help us separate! I refused to even contemplate this. I couldn't imagine life without Kazumi and the children. She also expressed the view that I should seek psychiatric help, as I seemed quite unable to appreciate the effect of my actions on Kazumi (shades of autism there too).

Spurred on by our imminent separation I did in fact seek such help. There at last I was able to talk about my own fears of Asperger Syndrome, and from that came my own referral to a specialist in autism. My own diagnosis, being carried out privately, was swift and sure. According to Mary (the specialist I met) I presented as a classic case of undiagnosed Asperger Syndrome.

Now, how is such a thing possible? I can't answer that. How

Nicholas has been in Steiner education for three years now, where he's been getting just the combination of artistic and movement-based therapies that I should have had

can one live all one's life with such a thing and not know it? I can't answer that either, except, of course, that I always did know. As soon as I heard of it I recognised it, and all my life I have regarded myself as being oddly different, somehow an island, apart from other people.

I remember the meeting with Mary very clearly. It took the form of a long, unhurried conversation, which covered pretty much everything. Mary was very interested in my past, and we talked about my whole childhood from my nursery school (I was the only child I've ever known to be expelled from nursery school! Not really for being naughty, but simply for sitting on my own and refusing to take part in anything at all) to my primary school, and in particular about my adolescent years at boarding school. I won't bore you with all the details of those years. Suffice to say that Mary brought out many further parallels between Nicholas and myself that hadn't occurred even to me.

Continued on following page

Shintaido and Autism

continued from previous page

Of course, it was during those school years that my interest in art began, and art is still the guiding light of my life today! At boarding school art was a kind of defense mechanism. Both a way of expressing my feelings, and physically a way of hiding from the school (the art room was a kind of backwater, not highly regarded by the predominantly sporty types who were my schoolmates.) Mary was interested in my obsession with art, and explained to me that many people with Asperger Syndrome do in fact excel in such fields, precisely because of their ability (or need?) to shut themselves off from the world, and concentrate entirely on their chosen subject.

She couldn't really imagine a more appropriate life for me than a Fine Art education combined with the Shintaido I was practising at college. She felt that I had done very well in somehow finding my own way to cope with my autistic problems

We also talked about my time in art college, which was when I discovered Shintaido. Kazumi and I were at art college together. Although she doesn't practice any more, Kazumi was in fact my first Shintaido *sensei*! I remember my art student days as a wonderful time, when I finally seemed to "come out of my shell" and start to make friends with those around me. I lost much of the clumsiness and awkwardness which had so dogged my childhood, and began to enjoy myself, both my art and the feeling of "being me."

Again Mary found this very significant. She explained to me that young people with Asperger Syndrome benefit from a intensive combination of artistic and physical movement-based therapies. She couldn't really imagine a more appropriate life for me than a Fine Art education combined with the Shintaido I was practising at college. She felt that I had done very well in somehow finding my own way to cope with my autistic problems.

We talked a lot about Shintaido. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Mary had never heard of it. I described to her the combination of soft, meditative movement; and open, expressive forms that we practice. Also a little of the history and origins of Shintaido. Mary felt it sounded like an ideal therapy for autism in general, and I began to wonder if this was a direction Shintaido should consider in the future? It seems that my discovery of Shintaido was in every sense a happy accident.

Looking back at my early days in Shintaido, it does now make sense. My big problem has always been communication, both with others and with myself (ie: understanding my own feelings). In Shintaido I found *kumite* (partner practice), which helps me to communicate with others, and meditation (to communicate with myself). I also found Eiko (a basic Shintaido technique), which makes me less afraid, and a whole range of movements loosely called Hikari, which seem to bring it all together and help my understanding of communication as a concept. Through Tenshingoso (a basic Shintaido form) and Shintaido Karate I have learned to control my body, improve my posture, and lose forever the awkward way of moving of my childhood (for which I was mightily teased at school!). Through *bojustu* (wood staff) and *kenjutsu* (wood sword) I have begun to find my power.

We talked about my life since art college. Of how I coped with being a father, and of the ten years I spent earning a living as a street portrait artist in Covent Garden. (I was known there as one of the best!) Of how this led to my current occupation as a silhouette artist. Those who know my present work will recognise an uncannily autistic element to the many thousands of silhouette portraits I cut each year. Those who see me working often ask me:

"Don't you ever get bored, doing the same thing over and over?"

My answer always comes from the heart:

"No, I never get bored".

Charles, Nicholas, and Kazumi

You see Asperger Syndrome, like autism, is a life-long condition. One can learn to cope with it, almost to the point of normality, but not to eradicate it. I think this was the thing which most frightened me, and made it such a hard thing to contemplate, let alone accept. However, it

Continued on p. 6

Shintaido and Autism

continued from p. 5

does seem as though I'm in good company. As Mary said, many autistic type people seem to excel in all kinds of fields. Famous examples of those suspected of suffering from Asperger Syndrome include Albert Einstein and Bill Gates! For those interested in things artistic Peter Blake, Andy Warhol and Gary Numan are known to have the condition.

It is now nearly a year since this diagnosis. I have been alternating between periods of deep depression (thinking this is something I can never get rid of) and periods when I feel quite empowered (thinking that this has given me the knowledge I need to cope far better than I ever have). In fact, both are true.

In some ways it affected Kazumi more badly than I, as she began to feel that my (many) shortcomings as a husband were here to stay, and there was no hope I'd suddenly become a better person. With time though, we've both begun to understand that this has been at the root of many miscommunications and problems between us over many years, and with understanding has come a little hope. We've been fortunate in finding new marriage guidance from somebody who specializes in Asperger Syndrome marriages (who could believe there even was such a thing!), and we're beginning to pick up the pieces.

Nicholas has been in Steiner education for 3 years now, where he's been getting just the combination of artistic and movement based therapies that I should have had. He will stay there until he's 14 (year 9), and after that we hope he'll re-join a more normal secondary school to take his GCSE's and A levels. By then I think he'll be far better equipped to deal with the social whirl of a large school than I was. Unlike his sister Natasha, Nicholas has shown scant interest in Shintaido, but he's still young, and I hope that may change in the future.

For myself, I know now that Shintaido will always be a part of my life. I doubt that I will ever scale the heights and become a great Shintaido *sensei* of the future, but for me that's not so important. Just to be there and be doing it on a daily basis is what's important. The times when I've been practising Shintaido have been times of enormous growth and optimism in all areas of my life, and the times when I haven't… well, they haven't. •••

FROM MARIAN CROSS

Marian Cross sent out the following announcement after her husband Dr. Jim Cross died in August of this year. It is so much more than an announcement. It is a tribute to Jim Cross and also for me, a tribute to Marian and her family and the way in which they were able to surround Jim with their love as he died.

Some who were involved in the early days here in California know Christina Cross. She practiced Shintaido for many years and was president of our group. Her parents, Jim and Marian Cross, lived in Lodi. The house that Marian describes below has a special place in my memory. And, it is now where Christina and her family live.

Jim and Marian supported Christina and as a result they supported all of Bay Area Shintaido. They opened their beautiful home to us on many occasions over many years. In particular, I remember a bo gasshuku in 1985. I don't remember the number of people who came, but it was a pretty good size group. We enjoyed their pool, their jacuzzi, we slept in their living room (I seem to remember some one sleeping under a grand piano). We came back from practices at a local school and cooked big meals for the group. (We broke their garbage disposal!) Through it all, they were happy to have us there, and we had the incredible good fortune of getting to know and enjoy Jim and Marian Cross.

—Bela Breslau

Announcement

After four years of confinement due to strokes, Jim is finally free. As we had planned for several weeks, we took him home (Christina, John, Will & Susanna's) to the place he had built and the trees he had planted and nurtured since 1959. Although he had become more withdrawn these last few months, he knew he was there. The caregiver lifted him into the gerichair.

Wednesday afternoon (August 21st,) we wheeled him out to the redwoods where we sat with him for four hours on a perfect day: weather, temperature, air quality and movement. He hardly opened his eyes, but he visibly relaxed. Christina, Lisa, and I were there.

On Thursday morning, Sarah and Mona arrived, and he opened his eyes each time one of us came to be with him, holding our hands as we took turns.

On Friday we took turns sitting with him and holding his hand without speaking so as not to call him back.

Saturday morning he was clearly leaving us, so all four girls and I stayed until he was gone. It was noon. We are sad because we will miss him, but we rejoice in his freedom. Please be happy with us!

There will be a Celebration of his life service on Friday, September 6, 2 p.m. at Lodi First United Methodist Church, corner of Church & Oak Streets.

Our family sends thanks to you for the support and love we have received during Jim's long siege. We will keep in touch!

Much love, Marian

Far Side of Beijing

continued from p. 1

swords, and they began practicing Tai Ji sword form together. When they finished they collapsed the swords and tucked them back in their purses and handbags.

Even our beautiful Shintaido appears in comparison… like a blunt instrument, though at least one that's generally pointed in the right direction. On the other hand, this very bluntness is one of the strengths of Shintaido…

Through studying Shintaido, I consider myself a competent movement professional. But I recognized that culturally we are at a disadvantage: the exercise techniques practiced by the average Chinese grandma are so sophisticated, developed and subtle compared to the idiotic and mechanical activities that pass for "training" even of professional athletes in the USA. The Chinese are also highly focused on the therapeutic value of body movement as a way, not only to maintain health, but to recuperate from serious illnesses. They are generally aware of the need for a calm and focused mind to obtain therapeutic effects. They know there's a lot more to it than checking your pulse rate. I did not see even once a sight which is common by the banks of the river in Cambridge: a face contorted with pain, sweating and grimacing through an exercise regimen. This is the expression that results when the person's mind is forcing the body to perform mechanically without listening to the body's messages.

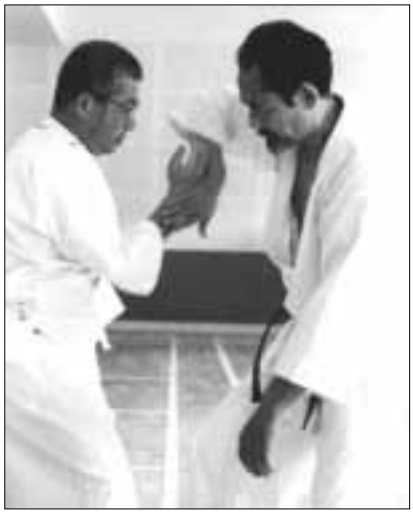
Even our beautiful Shintaido appears in comparison— I am loosely interpreting the polite comments of a Tai Ji master for whom Ito demonstrated Tenshingoso (a basic Shintaido form)— like a blunt instrument, though at least one that's generally pointed in the right direction.

On the other hand, this very bluntness is one of the strengths of Shintaido, in comparison to the sometimes baroque intricacies of Chinese *qi gong* and martial arts. Most Chinese exercise movements are smooth, graceful, and relatively contained. They fit into a context where there are a lot of people around, and so the outward expression, while often beautifully expressive and artistic, needs to avoid "breaking the *wa*" or disturbing the peace. Maybe the intensity turned inward is one reason why the Chinese became such experts at so-called "internal arts" such as Tai Ji and *qi gong*. In other words, there is no Eiko in China. (Eiko, one of the basic techniques of Shintaido, could be described as running toward infinity, one's total being outstretched, yelling to the sky).

Of course, there appears to be no need for Eiko in China. The closest thing one can see to existential angst are karaoke pop-song videos with a clearly derivative aesthetic and lyrics like "Turn off the light, the bright light pierces my eyes." Thousands of bicycles, cars and city buses weave effortlessly and harmoniously together in the flow of a dusty, sweaty rush-hour commute. No road rage, no yelling, no feeling of impending violence (how different from my home town of Boston!). The basic social fabric is still intact: people know their neighbors, acknowledge each other in public space, and have authentic pride in the widening circles of neighborhood, city, and (perhaps with some caveats) nation.

More importantly, China still thinks like a famine economy, which is reflected in a cuisine which is mostly rice and vegetables, with animal protein as a condiment rather than the main bulk; everything from zippers to shoes to appliances still gets repaired rather than discarded; a common greeting is "have you eaten yet?" (to which you must say you have, even if you haven't). I felt comfortable in an environment where it's OK to chew with your mouth open, talk loudly during meals, and pick food off the common plate. The most important table manner is to keep refilling everyone's bowl, even if they're not hungry (how like my Jewish mother, her mother, and her mother's mother…)

This famine culture is also reflected in exercise and martial arts movements which are generally efficient, concise, and conservative. Tai Ji and *qi gong* especially are about gathering, circulating, and conserving energy, but not about expending excess energy. In America, where we are generally over-fed, over-filled, and information-saturated, blowing off steam is essential for many people. There is a need to expel the excess lest it become toxic. In a famine culture on the other hand, there is no excess steam to blow off. They are still hungry for sustenance, goods, and information. I don't mean to reduce the philosophy of Eiko to mere stress-relief through primal screaming, only that turning one's being inside-out and bearing one's existential soul to the heavens is particularly radical in China, a culture whose identifying historical monument is a GREAT WALL meant to define the inside as IN and keep the outside OUT.



Mr. H.F. Ito and Mr. Tomoji Miyamoto practice Tai Ji push-hands

In fact, I learned, there is no *the* Great Wall of China. There are many Great Walls, at least fifteen or twenty different ones, built or re-built during different dynasties in different places, all vaguely in the same region and aimed at approximately the same direction

Continued on p. 8

Far Side of Beijing

continued from p. 7

(North or North-west), all intended to keep various nomadic peoples out. Some of the Great Walls, originally built of rammed earth, are now no more than grass-covered ridges extending across the plains. An old cow can walk over it and barely moo with exertion. Other portions, near Beijing, are constructed of stone and brick on mountains so steep and treacherous it hardly seems a wall ten meters high can add any additional obstacle for an invading army. And in fact it proved to be ineffective; legend reports that Genghis Khan said "the wall is only as good as the army that defends it" before sweeping south-eastward to take over all of China (plus big chunks of Asia and Europe).

With China rapidly becoming a capitalist economy, there are an increasing number of both ambitious yuppies and uprooted poor peasants seeking work (or begging on the streets) in large cities. The people who were 20 when the Tian An Men Democracy Movement (and subsequent massacre of the protesters) occurred are now 33, and are an emerging middle class. Increased openness to the West is stimulating the urge to be consumers— but the goods to be consumed are often lacking. I don't know if all this makes for a society in need of Eiko, but I did have the chance to contribute in some small way. I think I was driven in part by the feeling that most other Shintaido *kata* would be like "bringing coals to Newcastle," but Eiko would be eternally radical. In any case: the story of how Eiko came to China…

Goat herder in the eastern suburbs of Beijing. The sign on the wall behind is an advertisement for China Mobile cell phones.

I knew I was really in China when I found myself hurtling across the countryside perhaps 40 miles outside Beijing in complete blackness of night (though it was only perhaps 9 pm) in a sort of three-wheeled taxi— basically a motorcycle with a big tin can attached to the back— with an artist I had met just minutes before, going who knows where, and the smell of pig manure or some equally fecund agricultural product blowing heartily through our nostrils. I am a long way from Home, I thought. I am deep in it now. I am completely in the hands of my host, a man whose phone number I got from a friend of a friend, who is now pedaling his bicycle furiously through the darkness to meet us at the other end of this so-called "taxi" ride.

Meng Lang is a poet, a Chinese ex-pat who lives in Boston. He was expelled, and is not allowed to return to China, because of his involvement with the pro-democracy student movement in 1989. He had given me the number of Xu Zhi Wei, a photographer who lives in the village of Song Zhuang Cun, east of Beijing. Many artists who live there used to live closer to the city; but due to a combination of rising cost of living, areas the government has taken over by eminent domain for development (the Olympics are coming to Beijing in 2008, and the whole city resembles a construction zone), and the need to be away from the eyes of the authorities, they have moved to this cluster of villages, to live among country people and factory workers. Housing is relatively inexpensive, and they are creating their own community of culture. The commute to the city is about one hour by public bus.

1989: One protester halts a column of tanks near Tian An Men Square.

I had a few days before Ito's arrival in Beijing when I would be on the job as his interpreter and travel assistant. I spent some time being a tourist, and I figured I would call Xu Zhi Wei, perhaps meet him for tea or coffee, and get some tips on the Beijing art scene— galleries or performances to see. Next thing I know I am being jostled shoulder to shoulder among the 60 or so people wanting to get on the bus that by our standards should hold about 30. Xu Zhi Wei and his friend Yi Ling are on already; I must get on, or I am lost; the door looks impossible and I push my way towards an open window where the more determined passengers are climbing in.

There is something odd about boarding a Chinese bus— not just climbing in through the window (quite common when there's too many people trying to board through the door), but the *yin* and *yang* of human interaction. Approaching the window is all-out, dog-eat-dog competition. Being polite or restrained will only leave you standing in the wash of exhaust fumes as the bus pulls away. With my host already on board, "failure is not an option" as someone at NASA once said, and I push my way to the front. Once I get to the front of the crowd and thrust my bag up through the open window, everything changes: my bag is seized and lifted in; as I clamber up the outside of the bus, helping hands are extended not only by those already on board, but I am pushed and lifted up from below by the people I have just elbowed in the ribs. And this is not just being nice to the foreigner, as I see when I turn to help the next person board through the window— this is how it's done. Once you struggle to the top of the heap, everyone you have just been competing with becomes your ally. All of this with lots of

continued on following page

Far Side of Beijing

continued from previous page

boisterous yelling and (to me), a curious type of physical aggression without emotional anger.

I sit next to a young worker, a man in his mid-twenties who is a welder. He has come to Beijing from a rural area of far province— a common scenario— lives in the 'burbs and commutes into Beijing for work. He is very curious about America, and asks a lot of questions that strike me as intelligent, though maybe not educated. He is especially curious about the relationship between whites and blacks, racism, and the civil rights movement of the 60s. My inability to answer, or the need to oversimplify some answers, makes me realize three things: (1) I need to improve my Chinese, especially vocabulary; (2) America is very heterogenous, so most generalizations are false; and (3) I have some huge gaps in my knowledge of basic facts about my own country.

Journal entry, 5/7/02: Crazy ride on taxi, public bus (climbed in thru window), 3-wheeled motorbike. At Xu Zhi Wei's house, met wife, father, cute kids. Then by bike in dark to another friend's house to stay.

Journal entry, 5/8/02: Xu Zhi Wei introduced me to many artists. Bought supplies and did performance at Cheng Li's studio. After, they asked me to demonstrate Shintaido. Did Tenshingoso Sei and Dai, plus Wakame-taiso. Drank beer (big bottles).

Once you struggle to the top of the heap, everyone you have just been competing with becomes your ally. All of this with lots of boisterous yelling and (to me), a curious type of physical aggression without emotional anger.

I should mention that besides being a Shintaido instructor, I am a member of that allegedly exotic species known as "performance artist." Performance Art, like Shintaido, is difficult to define; maybe the best definition, appropriately open-ended, is *artistic expression through action*. With this in mind, one can almost think of Shintaido as a style of performance art, with the people practicing it being both performers and audience simultaneously. The founder of Shintaido, Hiroyuki Aoki, studied visual art and drama before entering the world of Karate, and that influence is clear when we read about his aspirations in developing Shintaido. Shintaido was not invented merely to be a new and improved martial art, but maybe to go beyond the confines of the martial arts idiom entirely.

I thought of this when I went to Cheng Li's studio. Xu Zhi Wei had arranged that there would be a party. I got the impression that many of his friends were curious to meet the foreigner, plus I served as an excuse for a social gathering that would relieve the relative isolation of these former city people living out in the village. Cheng Li's studio was in a walled compound, with the studio, living spaces, tool shed etc. around the sides of the central courtyard space. The host immediately introduced himself as a Christian; nonplussed, I wasn't sure if he assumed all Americans are Christians, and meant it as a point of commonality. Or maybe (I know that as in Japan— and not without reason— Christianity has been regarded as an inroad of colonialism, resulting in the oppression of some Christian people) it was some badge of rebellion and honor to be a member of an oppressed minority. Or maybe he just felt strongly about his beliefs. He showed me some of his paintings, which ranged from traditional Christian iconography to ironic politically subversive art. One photo showed a very official-looking sign he had made and hung on the front of an abandoned factory, a relic of the Great Leap Forward.*

Performance art at Cheng Li's studio

Right next to the old signs on the factory gate that read "Long Live Chairman Mao Ideology" and "Long Live the Chinese Communist Party," the new signs read "National Art Bank of China" and "Eating iodized table salt prevents retarded babies."

They all wanted to know what I was doing in China, and the answer— that I was here to assist a Shintaido teacher— naturally led to questions about What Is Shintaido. A difficult question even in my native language, and one I have to think about every time— I've still never developed a pat answer. Shintaido, of course, is hard to pigeonhole partly because it is a tripod with each of its legs firmly planted in three different realms: spirituality, fine art, and martial arts. We in the U.S. often lean toward describing Shintaido as an offshoot of martial arts, or perhaps as an expressive movement discipline that has its roots in martial arts.

True enough, but maybe we over-emphasize one leg of the tripod because our pedagogical style is most similar to that of martial arts. The way Shintaido is taught may not be so different from the teaching of technique of Asian fine art; but unless it is presented in a way that demands a leap of imagination beyond technique, it bears little in common with the Western fine arts tradition that Hiroyuki Aoki claims as a profound source of inspiration in its creation.

I don't remember exactly how I answered (in Chinese) the question What Is Shintaido, but I think that in navigating the minefield

Continued on p. 10

* The "Great Leap Forward" of 1958-60 was a disastrous attempt by the Central Communist Party to mobilize the masses for rapid economic development.

Far Side of Beijing

continued from p. 9

of Chinese prejudice about martial arts and vital energy cultivation techniques (essentially "we invented them, and we're still the best"), I must have emphasized the expressive aspect. Whatever I said, it eventually led to me being compelled to get up, with a few beers already in me, and demonstrate some basic Shintaido. *Kaikyaku-sho* and *kaikyaku-dai* (vigourous jumping exercises) were met with polite admiration, and a question about whether elderly people can do this. Self-*wakame* (seaweed exercise) was recognized as "beautiful." Then I asked if I could use my voice without disturbing the neighbors. Someone asked if I was going to sing. "Not exactly," I said, and performed Tenshingoso Dai.

Ultimately I'll never know what impression I made. A party with 30 or 40 people all excitedly speaking a foreign language and drinking beer is not the best context to collect anthropological data. Add culture shock, the exhaustion of a long day, my being unaccustomed to alcohol, and the fact that we never really know what impression we make on others, and I can only say this: several of the younger artists, knowing I was leaving the next morning, asked if I could come back and show them some of this "xin-ti-dao" (Shintaido by another name). I said I would try.

Installation art by Cheng Li

I contacted Mr. Miyamoto, and we arranged to meet Ito-sensei at the airport, along with a Chinese friend of Miyamoto's named Shi Jin, who speaks Japanese. Miyamoto was to be our host for the next week. He was gentle, generous, and thoughtful as he introduced Mr. Ito and I to Mr. Ma, a Tai Ji master who lives in Beijing. Most of us who study Shintaido in the U.S. are used to seeing Ito-the-teacher; over the next several days I had the rare opportunity to see Ito-the-student, studying and absorbing new information. We went several times to meet up with Mr. Ma and his retinue of students, who meet regularly in a park in Beijing to study Tai Ji and the Tai Ji partner exercise known as "push-hands."

Tai Ji rhetoric notwithstanding, push-hands is a competitive exercise. The goal is to keep your balance while uprooting your partner, within the constraint of using very soft movement and no muscular effort. Of course it takes years of study, and we only met with Mr. Ma a few times. But we had a chance to get it from the horse's mouth, and I was curious about the comparison between push-hands and the *renki kumite* (lit. "continuous energy partner exercise") of Shintaido. This was introduced recently into the Shintaido curriculum, and (superficially at least), there are some parts that resemble push-hands. But is the underlying goal the same? How can we define the similarities and differences?

Tai Ji, partly because of its long history, has a well-developed technical vocabulary to define different types of strength and energy. For example, there are at least three different kinds of internal strength (internal strength generally being contrasted with muscular force, which is taboo in Tai Ji). When I tried to push Shi Jin (the friend of Miyamoto's who also studies with Mr. Ma), I learned that because he had these conceptual categories, he was able to perceive detail in a landscape of internal energy that to me was just a hazy outline, and use that perception to practical advantage— I couldn't push him, but he could push me off balance with the gentlest pressure. I had a moment of doubt; here is a guy about my age, who has been studying Tai Ji about as long as I've been studying Shintaido. He can show me what he has achieved as an objective quality of his movement. What can I show him that he can recognize? That I can yell AHHHH really, really loud? If Shintaido is effective, what is it effective for?

Journal entry, 5/24/02: Ito & I talked about Mr. Ma's way— surviving the oppressive dynasties of history by going underground, waiting, re-emerging when conditions are favorable.* What kind of character would someone develop who only did Tai Ji their whole life? Would they stop a tank at Tian An Men?

(There was one moment, during the pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing in 1989, when a single protester risked all by standing in the center of the wide avenue, a lone figure challenging a row of advancing tanks).

Part of the context for this conversation was that Ito had asked Shi Jin if Mr. Ma ever discussed the philosophical background of Tai Ji. As we learned in the last issue of *Body Dialogue*, Mr. Ma focuses on teaching the principles of Tai Ji movement. And as a result of the suppression of the Fa Lun Gong spiritual movement, Mr. Liu, the other Tai Ji master we met, has become very cautious about discussing traditional philosophy in public. Our in-depth discussion of the Dao was conducted in Mr. Liu's home, with him writing Chinese characters on the floor in chalk so as to leave no permanent record (see "Journey to the West", *Body Dialogue* No. 12). Ito seemed to be suggesting that Tai Ji, with its emphasis on circular movement, yielding to neutralize the incoming force, and circulating internal energy, doesn't develop the characteristics of attack— "attack" meaning, metaphorically, taking action to affect others or the environment.

Continued on following page

* Traditional arts have been suppressed or outlawed at various times. During the Communist Revolution, many martial arts masters were killed or fled the country. During the Cultural Revolution of 1966-69, anything traditional was taboo. During the Song Dynasty, Buddhism was suppressed. In the context of a long history, it's not unusual for some Chinese to refer to the period since 1949 as merely the "current dynasty" with a fatalistic "this-too-shall-pass" attitude.

Far Side of Beijing

continued from previous page

Both masters (Ma and Liu) came to Tai Ji because they were desperately ill and had tried other ways to heal themselves, with no results. Tai Ji practice is well-developed in China as a healing modality. Not only does the culture support the general belief that circulating internal healing energies will cure many diseases, but they know how to focus the intent of their practice in this specific direction. I felt almost jealous of their healing experiences. We sometimes hear of people turning to Shintaido in the desperation of existential angst, but does that imply that we should neglect healing the body with an attitude of "sacrificing the fingers to frostbite in order to reach the mountain peak"?

I was certain that Shintaido includes techniques that can be used for healing, but we haven't developed this aspect in depth. When I returned to the U.S. I asked myself if there were Shintaido movements I could use to heal a shoulder injury that had remained intractable for over two years, and was now deteriorating further. I designed a two-month program using Shintaido for this purpose, and I am happy to say it was 100% effective.

When we met Mr. Liu, his American student Jeff Crosland served as interpreter. Jeff also supplemented Liu's statements with some descriptions of his own experiences studying Tai Ji.

Mr. Ma pushing Mr. Miyamoto with Mr. Ito observing

Liu's teaching method tends toward an apprenticeship model, with a lot of individualized instruction. He touches students frequently, both to check their physical technique and to assess their progress in developing internal energy. He also asks them about the physical sensations they are experiencing. Based on this, he determines what stage they are at and how they should proceed forward. The students know they are on an established path with definite landmarks along the way. There are certain sensations and experiences one should anticipate at each level of achievement that serve as markers of progress.

At first I was also jealous of this sense of certainty in the progression. But reading about Hiroyuki Aoki's relationship with his teacher Mr. Shigeru Egami prior to the development of Shintaido, it occurs to me that Shintaido incorporates this paradox:

> Every morning and night I received his support and teaching, more so than any other student. But the more he showed his love, the more confused I became because I had originally chosen the creative artistic approach to learning, rather than the tao, or "apprenticeship" way ["tao," the same word as in "Taoism," literally means a path or road—Ed.]. Even after I left the karate world, this conflict continued in my mind (*Shintaido: the Body is a Message of the Universe,* p. 25)

Shintaido, by expressing all, literally pushes our individuality to the surface. It squeezes creativity out of us like toothpaste

The question that gets asked when, for example, you run Eiko, is not just how to circulate the energy— and in true Eiko, the energy must circulate, because you are going beyond the limit of what the small self can accomplish— the question becomes *why* to circulate it? As they say in the theater, what's my motivation? We can only answer wordlessly (but loudly) with our whole being, running.

The Western approach to artistic expression is profoundly incorporated into Shintaido. Shintaido, by expressing all, literally pushes our individuality to the surface. It squeezes creativity out of us like toothpaste. This is not the creativity of dreaming up clever ideas, but the creativity of our unique identity. It is the quality of our individual being that makes us totally unique, different from every other, that we could not avoid expressing even if we tried— our own flavor. This is what Mr. Aoki sometimes refers to as "hidden talent."

Countless books on Eastern philosophy and mysticism refer to the need to transcend the self or the ego in the pursuit of the spiritual path. Some tell you that behind the mask of the personality lies your true self, and the way to manifest the universal life force energy is to connect with this egoless being. The genius of the Western artistic tradition is to recognize the individual quality that we cannot avoid having in our being, the part we express in every action that makes us unique individuals, and to make *this itself* into a transcendent value. Creativity is *ki,* the universal life force.

What animates the flesh is the energy to express a new idea.

One of the younger artists I met at Cheng Li's studio was Tang Cheng, a performance artist whose work revolves around themes of environmentalism, pollution and ecology. Mr. Ito has departed Beijing, and I go back to Song Zhuang Cun and stay with Tang Cheng. The door of his somewhat ramshackle house has a small hole cut in the top, so the swallows that nest in the rafters can fly in and out at will. He shows me photos of some his street performances; in one he stands in Tian An Men Square holding an umbrella over his head. It has ribs but no fabric, and cannot protect him. We talk about how our future descendants will view us, what kind of world we will leave behind for them.

Continued on p. 13

Shintaido Through the Years: Changing Body, Changing Keiko

I invited some of our most seasoned practitioners to write a few words about how their Shintaido practice has changed over time. They have all practiced Shintaido for over 15 years— most for over 20. This is what they had to say. —Ed.

Lee Seaman
is a Shintaido Senior Instructor who lives in Bellingham, WA.

I started practicing Shintaido in January of 1976, at age 25. In retrospect, I was a head-centered couch potato, although I didn't know it at the time. After the first practice I was so sore that I had to keep coming back (it was the only way I knew to get my legs to stop hurting). And somewhere along the line during the next 27 years I started actually having a body, rather than simply a biomechanical support system.

Having a body is quite an adventure, especially for someone who isn't used to it. Food is more complicated, people are more interesting, movement is more ecstatic. And growing older is way less predictable.

For one thing, I thought that as I got older my joints would get stiffer. But hypermobility and overuse injuries are turning out to be a bigger problem— tendons and ligaments stretch too much and let the joints slip out of place. So I have to be careful not to overdo it with stretching or repetitive movements. I got a lighter *bo* (staff), and I had my *bokuto* (wood sword) cut down and shortened so that it weighs about 30% less.

I also thought that *keiko* (practice) would get harder. But actually a lot of it is easier (well, except for getting up off the ground— I clearly need to land on my feet more often!) I can see techniques more clearly, copy them faster, and remember them better. That's partly accumulated experience, but I attribute some of it to changes in brain chemistry and improved pattern recognition due to menopause.

It's fashionable these days to consider my age as the threshold of the "wise-woman" years. I don't feel very wise, but here are some things that I've learned in 27 years of Shintaido practice.

Some Is Better Than None
(but more isn't always better than some)

Like most of us, I don't have enough time for everything. It takes between half an hour and an hour a day of basic cardiovascular, strengthening, and stretching exercises to keep me fit enough to teach Shintaido, and on top of that I need to find time for my own practice. So I do stepping practice when I'm out walking, and meditate while I'm waiting for an appointment at the doctor's office. That way I can do some *keiko* even on the most hectic days, not to mention amusing the neighbors and helping bring some calm to waiting rooms. And if I do something every day, I'm less apt to try to do too much all at once.

I Can Do More in a Group Than As an Individual

Being part of a group is one of the biggest things that keeps me practicing. I need the life-exchange with other people in order to keep going.

I Don't Have to Know It All

At the advanced *bo* workshop in September 2002, I realize that all of us are repositories of a part of the Shintaido wisdom. I don't have to know everything about Shintaido— I just have to do *kumite* (partner practice).

The Essence of *Keiko* Is Contained in Every Part

In my first month of Shintaido, I was tremendously impressed with the openness and friendliness and warmth of the people in the group, especially the most senior people. I couldn't understand why such nice, kind, friendly people persisted every *keiko* in forcing me to do the brutally painful movement called Eiko. Well, after a while I got it, and now I like Eiko. And I try to make sure that Eiko is part of everything I teach. This year I'm learning finger-crunching techniques with the *bo* (I don't like them yet). How do I put Eiko, and the essence of Shintaido, into that technique? No chance of being bored for awhile— I'll be meditating on finger-crunching…

One of the Japanese visitors at the advanced *bo* workshop, Uchida-san, said on his way back to the airport that he thought Shintaido was like Linux, the free open-source computer operating system grown and nourished and supported by computer-savvy volunteers around the world. Uchida-san said, "Aoki-sensei laid down the basic design of the creative art form of Shintaido, and opened it to the general public. Shintaido is a creative activity which is being improved by everyone. One of the wonderful things about the activity of Shintaido is that anyone can participate, and even very ordinary people like me can be involved in its creation / creativity."

I think he's right. We're all in this together, and we all get to play. See you in *keiko*!

Stephen Billias
is a Shintaido Instructor who lives in San Rafael, California.

When I tried to write something about the theme of mature practice, everything that came out was about how hard practice used to be— the stories Jim and Bela tell of endless hopping and jumping up mountains, across beaches, around fields. Though I had a taste of that (and for that) when I started practicing, I have realized in my later days that what I really like about Shintaido aren't the physical challenges but the psychological and spiritual ones.

How do I, formerly a very private and guarded person, let myself be open enough to let another person into my world? How do I change myself from the somewhat self-centered, egotistical person that lurks on the surface to the deeper, more concerned, loving and compassionate person that I really want to be and know I can be?

Continued on following page

Shintaido Through the Years

continued from previous page

How do I connect through Shintaido meditation and Taimyo *kata* (a Shintaido breathing/meditation form) with the concepts of universal *ki* energy, cosmic consciousness, true emptiness? Those are the parts of Shintaido that resonate with me now.

Jennifer Peringer
is a Shintaido Instructor who lives in San Francisco.

Let's see, how has my practice of Shintaido changed over time? In my twenties I used to really push myself. Partly because my young body loved the athletic challenge. Also partly because I was desperate to please my teachers and impress my peers.

That changed some when I became a teacher myself; then the emphasis was more on helping others rather than propelling myself forward. But the biggest change came when I herniated a spinal disc in my mid-thirties. I could barely walk for a couple of months, and suffered the most prolonged period of pain in my life. I wondered if I would spend the rest of my life struggling to get across the street by the time the light changed, and having to lie down all the time.

Gradually my back healed, and after a couple of years I was able to start doing regular *keiko* again. But this time my priority was to please no one but myself, and especially my body. To listen very carefully at all times to my body's messages. I modified movements to reduce twisting and arching, and gave myself 100% permission to refrain from any activity that didn't feel physically beneficial. It's only in the last year that I'm beginning to consider the possibility of studying techniques involving lots of rolling again.

I'm continuing to move away from my earlier learning style of pushing myself. I'm looking instead for the way of effortlessness and grace. Let me qualify that airy-fairy statement with an example from my musical life. If I am studying a piece of music that is supposed to be fast and passionate, I make myself study it for quite some time at a comfortably slow calm pace. I have to remind myself to rein it in, because if I push too early my body will end up frozen with tension, which stops the whole learning process. After the notes and gestures are deeply ingrained in my body and mind, the speed will come naturally, fairly effortlessly. Then I can give it that final adrenaline rush of a performance-paced run-through.

As an older Shintaido practitioner and pianist, speed and muscle power are not my biggest strengths. I seek to make up for this with a deeper continuity of concentration, energy flow, compassion, and insight.

My main experience of Shintaido these days is as a teacher. My students give me a great sense of purpose for continuing in Shintaido. I love watching them surpass me! Occasionally I do *hitorigeiko* (solitary practice) or get together for *kumite* (partner practice) with a friend, or have a lesson with Mr. Ito. But I long ago stopped guilt-tripping myself about how much I do or don't practice. I do that enough already with my music, so I give myself a break with Shintaido. It's something I do for me, when I feel like it, and how I feel like doing it. It gives me a great sense of spiritual connection to nature and to other people, besides keeping me in better shape than many of my friends in their forties! I am grateful for Shintaido, and figure it's in my life to stay, in one shape or another.

Bela Breslau
is a Shintaido Instructor who lives in San Rafael, California.

How has my physical practice changed over time? Unfortunately the amount of practice gets less and less. Why is it that as most of us get older and need to keep moving more, we tend to move less? At least that is what has happened to me. It has always been hard for me to be consistent in doing *hitorigeiko.* I am more of a group practitioner. But, I do try to get out with my *bo* or my *jo* (short staff) and stretch. And I like *kata.* With regard to injuries, I have

Continued on p. 14

Far Side of Beijing

continued from p. 11

We go out to a mostly dried-up river bed called the "River of Grass" with wide-open spaces where we won't be bothered. This is the first place I have been to in China where there is no-one around and it feels possible to do Eiko without creating a major public disturbance. I demonstrate, then we do it together, then Tang Cheng does it alone. He says it seems to expend a lot of energy. He also says he it gives him a feeling of freedom.

We go to another friend's place to eat lunch. I meet more young artists, including a punk rocker and a performance artist whose work is taking samples of his own blood and semen and pouring them on himself. The conversation revolves around religion, and what our religious or spiritual beliefs are. They show me a catalog of banned artwork called the Fuck Off Exhibition (it was shut down by police a few hours after it opened), including a performance in which an artist cooked and ate what he said was (and looked convincingly like) an actual late-term aborted fetus. They also show me a book on contemporary art theory by a famous Chinese avant-garde artist of the older generation named Lao Li called *The Important Thing isn't the Art.*

The blood/semen performance art guy and the punk rocker friend give me a ride in their motorcycle-with-sidecar to the bus stop. I ride the bus to the outer edge of the city and then buy a map from a street vendor, because my old one is worn out. I get on the subway heading into Beijing, capital of the most populous nation on Earth. I wonder what will happen next. •••

Shintaido Through the Years

continued from page 13

been fortunate. I do have creaks in my knees and less strength in general. I am doing some other exercises to strengthen my abdominal muscles since that seems to be a need!

Sometimes I wonder why I am still at it. Then, I will do a *keiko* and the uplift is undeniable, and I remember why. Stephen is also largely responsible. He encourages me, drags me out of bed and off to *keiko* and keeps me involved. Also, it's great to be able to practice informally with Sandra and Robert and to have Jim as our local instructor. And, of course, recent workshops with Ito. His teaching is astounding, amazing, incredible. I am so happy that I am at a level where I can recognize and appreciate what an opportunity it is to receive his teaching.

What discourages me? Being out of shape. Being lazy. Fear of getting hurt, especially in *bo,* which is a favorite. My naturally negative, doubtful, unenthusiastic self. On the other hand, in spite of physical limitations, I can do certain movements that I couldn't do when I was a younger less experienced Shintaidoist. At the recent *gasshuku* in New Mexico, when we saw the video of the older (70s) master Judo instructor, I thought, Oh, I guess it is OK to keep going even though I am getting older.

Saying no during *keiko* is pretty easy for me. I can pull rank. Delightfully, the sweep of a *keiko* will often just pick me up and take me along. So the spirit of the practice just takes me with it. Sometimes the body remembers and wants to enjoy itself. And, of course, having Jim as our usual weekly teacher and and such high level people to practice with on a weekly basis makes it easier too.

Bill Burtis
is a Shintaido Instructor who lives in Lee, New Hampshire.

I have been practicing Shintaido for almost 30 years. My practice has sometimes been daily and rigorous and sometimes, like now, very occasional and soft to the point of laughter.

I still have sharp mental images of certain *keiko*— battlefield images, full of sunlight and dust; sometimes, too, there is wind. In some there is also the sound of ocean waves; in one, the odd, syncopated clank of cow bells.

In all of them there are people I love. Some I still see and touch, hold their wrists and hug. Some are lost to me; at least one is dead. One I miss so much that when I think of him my throat thickens with sadness. I remember him angrily instructing a *bo* practice in Britain, and I remember him laughing joyously as we tumbled, hand in hand, down a hillside in New Hampshire.

I have seen one man and one woman turn into angels before my eyes. I have seen people fly. I may have flown myself. I have discovered that when I see things I know cannot be true, I cry. But I believe them, anyway.

I wish I could still do hard *keiko.*

All of this makes me happy. I think that is the purpose of Shintaido, always. •••

VIDEOS

***Taimyo Kata and Tenshingoso* ($20)**
Detailed instruction in Taimyo Kata, concentrating on breathing and energy cultivation techniques. Plus Tenshingoso reverse-breathing technique and seated versions of both *kata*.

***Kenko Taiso Instruction Video I* ($20)**
Produced by On-Site Enterprises, presents the classic Shintaido *kenko-taiso* warm-up sequence with detailed explanation. The 15-minute warm-up sequence is an easy-to-follow routine that is excellent for those who are relatively new to body movement.

***Kenko Taiso II & III:* ($20)**
Demonstrates a series of more advanced health exercises and stretches that two people can do together, and introduction to group warm-up movements. Also includes sections on self-massage and *seiza* meditation with the diamond mudra. Excellent for instructors or group leaders who are leading group warm-up exercises.

***Golf-Do* ($20)**
Master Shintaido Instructor H.F. Ito teaches the Way of Golf, a exercises designed to help golfers: (1) stretch and limber up; (2) relax; (3) focus and concentrate; and (4) enjoy. Using a golf club instead of the traditional six-foot oak staff, Ito demonstrates how to stretch, relax the body, and prepare the mind for a pleasurable round of golf. Golf-Do provides insights into the unification of mind and body that produces the best of golf.

***Life Burn* ($20)**
Document of the live painting / shintaido / music performance collaborations at the Theater Yugen in San Francisco in August 1992. Featuring painting by Kazu Yanagi; music by Henry Kaiser and others; and Shintaido movement led by H.F. Ito.

***Kata and Kumite* ($20)**
H.F. Ito gives instruction for *kaiho-kei* (opening and challenging) exercises with Michael Thompson and Robert Bréant. Includes: group practice, bo kata (hi no kata, kaze no kata, sho-dan, nidan), jo kata (taishi, hojo), karate kata (sanchin, tensho), kumi-bo arrangements, kumitachi (sword vs. sword) nos. 1 - 9. 120 minutes.

Set of all 6 videos above: $100

BOOKS

Cutting the Blue Sky
various authors ($20)
An anthology of the best articles from the Shintaido of America newsletter over the past 25 years, commemorating the significant milestone. The articles were written by students and instructors. There are 32 articles, 33 photos, 162 pages, grouped by topics: the roots of Shintaido, cultural clashes, spiritual development, using Shintaido in the world, and musings on timing, facing death, the invisible world of the 4th dimension, and passive resistance.

Untying Knots: a Shintaido Chronicle
by Michael Thompson ($20 / 15*)
This autobiographical memoir by one of the co-founders of Shintaido of America tells of the author's cross-cultural adventures in France, Japan, and California of the course of his 25-year Shintaido career.

Shintaido: the Body is a Message of the Universe
by Hiroyuki Aoki ($20 / $15*)
For years this textbook has served as a gateway and guidebook to the practice of Shintaido. Includes sections on the history and philosophy as well as detailed explanations of technique. 120 pages, illustrated with photos. This second printing features more information about the ten Shintaido meditation positions.

… ETC

History of Shintaido Scroll ($15.00)
A pictorial description of the cultural inheritance and history of Shintaido, from the three martial arts masters Ginshin Funakoshi, Shigeru Egami, and Hiroyuki Aoki. Created by Tomi Nagai-Rothe during a lecture and discussion on the origins of Shintaido led by H.F. Ito during the PacShin Kangeiko in 1999. 9" x 32" on gloss laminate paper.

MINI-BOOKS

Tenshingoso and Eiko
by Hiroyuki Aoki ($10)
This booklet is for Shintaido practitioners what the Diamond Sutra is for Buddhists: a concise yet thorough description of the basis of practice. *Tenshingoso* and *Eiko* are two of the fundamental movements of Shintaido, which embody philosophies and prescriptions for human growth.

The Zero Point of Consciousness and the World of Ki ($5)
In this interview Mr. Aoki describes his experience of reaching the "space of *mu*" (nothingness). He also discusses his unique understanding of *ki* energy (life force).

Origins, a History of Shintaido
by Shiko Hokari ($7)
One of the founding members of Shintaido relates the stories of Rakutenkai (the group that developed Shintaido), and of Aoki-sensei's early days.

Improvisation and the Body ($3.50)
Japanese jazz musician Toshinori Kondo discusses Shintaido, performance, and music. Illustrates how one artist benefitted from Shintaido by going beyond his limits.

Student Handbook
by Faith Ingulsrud ($3)
Written by an American Shintaidoist who grew up in Japan. Includes a glossary and description of the basic structure of a Shintaido practice.

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