



BODY Dialogue

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Special 2012 International Shintaido Gasshuku Edition



PLAYING WITH LIGHT

by

Jane Muramoto Yung

I am the floater. One who has floated in and out of Shintaido over the past 30-plus years. Back then I was a striving media professional (public TV producer) looking for ways to balance my life. Shintaido exposed me to movement, discipline and freedom within form. What's not to love about connecting with others and the universe? Shintaido's Japan roots captivated my 3rd generation Japanese American upbringing.

Over the years, I married, raised 3 children and managed to stay sane. Every few decades a Shintaido class, workshop or gasshuku enters my life again. Each time, I marvel at the muscle memory, the body memory, the spirit memory.

Tenshingoso. Kumite. Eiko. Wakame. And my favorite, hikari.

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TO FLOW OR NOT TO FLOW, THAT IS THE QUESTION

by

Annelie Wilde

Aoki sensei asks what is my opinion of Zuiryuko –To live in accordance with the flow. My opinion is; it sounds nice. Meandering along like a babbling brook seems like the easier softer way until you end up at the bottom of the hill or in a hole in the ground. The bottom of the hill could lead to the great wide ocean; the hole in the ground could become a swamp in which case you are stuck in the mud. Which way is right to go with the flow, like my husband Kesh who never gives up, who always keeps going towards his goal, flowing around obstacles, wearing down rocks if need be, or to build a dam like I do? I resist and let the water build up, climbing up walls until it forms a tsunami of force and breaches the dike and clears away everything in its path. Go with the flow or resist? Each way can be right depending on the person and the time and the situation.

Likewise Aoki sensei asks what is my opinion of Sokushin Sokubutsu espoused by the monk Hojo, which he defines as mind/heart is Buddha in and of itself as opposed to Hishin Hibutsu, the philosophy of the monk Baso which he defines as ultimate truth is neither heart/mind of Buddha. I am in agreement with Hojo, who when told that his philosophy was outmoded and that his master had moved beyond to a deeper and contrary understanding replied "that old man is fine with Hishin Hibutsu and I am fine with Sokushin Sokubutsu."

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Special thanks to Soichiro Iida, Robin Luley, and Charlotte Stace for use of their photos from the 2012 International Shintaido Gasshuku in this issue of *Body Dialogue*!

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

The next issue of *Body Dialogue* will be in January 2013. Please submit articles, poems, pictures to the editor at newsletter@Shintaido.org. Deadline for submissions is November 15, 2012.

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My Journey to Sonoma

by Vera Costello

The Sonoma gasshuku was for me a capping of a long sojourn into Self, a going underground, that lasted about 10 years. Various events precipitated Michael DeCampo and I taking a reflective sabbatical in 2002. We deliberately did very little, outwardly. Stopping is not an easy thing for the modern person to do. Looking back, this process was fed by a few threads: the new cosmology that's come out of modern physics (eloquently articulated by Brian Swimme, Thomas Berry and others); an influence by Krishnamurti's writings to 'stop', echoed in Aoki-sensei's book about stopping "the automatic acts of each day, surrendering yesterday's happenings..." (p.59); the dictum to live sustainably – like the New Scientist magazine issue around that time, to "rethink everything" about the way we live and operate as a society; and an inchoate knowing that we are entering a new human and planetary era. But it wasn't an "A to B" linear process.



Vera Costello

Free time proved to be a fecund period that allowed things to bubble up-including deep psychological insights. On the sustainable living front, I coined the term 'enliveliness' and became my own guinea pig, finding creative ways to reinvent daily living and livelihood. This part of the journey felt creative and struck a chord with others that I invited into learning circles. Then three events triggered a prolonged period of personal vulnerability – my brother's sudden suicide, my father's flippant and deeply hurtful judgements of me, causing me to experience a 'shempa' – a Buddhist term meaning a deep reaction to something someone does or says; and the loss of meaningful work.

Presently, I responded to a deep inner urge to take myself on a trip around the world to visit Shintaido friends. Some of you will recall me visiting you. This was a healing pilgrimage indeed -the tacit tolerance Shintaido people have for such vulnerability was palpable. Still, the process went deeper and I recall a moment in 2006 when time seemed to stop, literally come to a standstill. As if in slow motion, I had the opportunity to 'start afresh' and do each act with untainted feeling - making a cup of tea took on tones of Japanese tea ceremony - a mindful meditation. New work allowed me to grow gradually more robust over the years. I can't describe all the ins and outs of this journey – a lot of groping but I trusted the 'self-organizing' function of life – somewhat like compost where all the various layers of material and a multitude of micro-organisms that just know what to do.

The last part of this cycle was the most intense. The workplace that had sustained me became savagely hostile. It took all my resilience, keiko, meditation, imagery, self-talk, self-encouragement and vigilance –to stand my ground. Worn down, I felt somewhat ambivalent about this gasshuku but I knew I had to front up and just be there. I can't say what happened or pinpoint a magical moment when everything changed (although a fit of overwhelming laughter during one kumite was 'interesting') but afterwards, everything was different and I knew I was above ground again. While we are moving our bodies and interacting with each other during gasshuku, something at a Being level is working mysteriously, for which I feel profoundly grateful.



Playing with Light

Continued from p.1

I think this is why I was most “moved” by hikari moments at the recent 2012 International Gasshuku. On the far side of the examination field were two grown American men and their partners playing with light. They and we spectators were surrounded by green grass, tall trees, blue skies, a gentle breeze and warm sunlight. Resoundingly connected, they moved as weightless as air, defying convention and gravity. My thoughts were elevated to theirs.

The next morning, at the final morning keiko, I had the good fortune to be paired with Stephen Billias, one of the men. With complete trust, we played with light. When it was my turn to lead, I thought the sunrise was peeking through the gray clouds, for I thought I saw sunlight on the treetops. With big imagination and a smile, I wanted Stephen to feel the golden morning sunlight, too. However, after yame, I looked up and was surprised to still see a full gray sky, along with one tree that had a few aged, yellowed leaves. With big imagination, anything is possible. Yes? No? Yes.

I thank the Shintaido founders, instructors and practitioners for doing what you do. You are the healers and connectors in your respective communities, through hands-on movement, healing and bridging communities. In that spectacular poster of Ito-sensei meditating in the waterfall, the caption reads: SHINTAIDO - The body is a message of the universe. To which I'll add: the universe is/has always been the universe; the message has always been the same: we are one. I may not be at many future Shintaido events, but the admiration, gratitude, muscle, body and spirit ties remain. I am content with my spiritual journey exploring martial arts and calligraphy at the SF Konko Church. I remain a non-member of any organized religion, but I feel very comfortable with the Konko community. After the Gasshuku, I realized that Shintaido is not "my community" but that there are certain individuals that I truly feel close to and admire and always will.



My Gasshuku Experience

by Nicole Beauvois

One of the greatest strengths of Shintaido is the kumite, I think, the direct encounter with the other, without words, just direct transmission from body to body, spirit to spirit... or - everyone will be better found the words I'm sure. As for Tenshingoso and Wakame, they are the two precious treasures.

I feel a great sense of gratitude for the work of Aoki Sensei, Ito who know to convey the philosophy and techniques of Shintaido. I have a feeling of gratitude also to all our friends high levels instructors who continue so generously to support the movement since 25, 30, 35 years and sometimes much more, and all instructors who continue to give their time to share Shintaido with as many students as possible, each one with his talent and his own pace. They are real seeds of happiness that were planted and continue to be sown, sometimes very quietly.

The organization was perfect. Places allowed the meetings, the shares. The food was very good (a bit too much for my hips), rooms (3 stars) and the beautiful dojo. So thank you! Thank you to Cheryl, Jim and all the organizers! Your work has enabled the upstream flow, that of water, throughout this event. And thanks for taking good care of persons arriving from abroad



To Flow or Not to Flow *Continued from p.1*

Kesh flows like water and slowly and surely wears down obstacles in his path while I resist and build up a dam and wait until there is too much pressure and then erupt in a great roaring torrent. Hishin Hibutsu or Sokushin Sokubutsu? You choose according to your nature. The important thing is to know what your nature is and to be aware of what you are doing.

Which brings me to Aoki sensei's last question "What is the meaning of practicing Shintaido in my life?" and "What kind of relationship should I have with Shintaido?"

Shintaido finds the questions I need to ask – it does not provide the answers. The questions are different for each practitioner. The questions are not necessarily formulated in words because Shintaido is a path not an answer. It is not a smooth or clear or easy path. There are blind alleys and dead ends. Sometimes we have to go in reverse to go forward. Shintaido showed me where I had set my limits and pushed me through those limits. Shintaido taught me that I had been living entirely in my mind and that the physical body has wisdom too. Shintaido cracked open the hard defensive shell I had grown and opened me up enough to take the next big step into another community of lost souls seeking answers.

In this other community I was able to formulate the question, "Who am I and what am I meant to contribute?" The answer turned out to be very simple, "I am Annelie and I am supposed to be fully and entirely Annelie." Coming back to Shintaido practice helped me define who Annelie is. I learned not to want to be someone else. My task is to be right sized not desiring to be bigger than the sum total of my talents but not settling for being smaller than what I am capable of either. I believe that we all fall into both traps at various times of our lives. Wishing to have the gifts and talents of someone across the room we ignore or worse yet despise the gifts and talents we have been given. Shintaido is particularly good at expanding horizons, not allowing us to settle for being small, kicking us out of our comfort zone. It is also brutally efficient at ego deflation. Don't come to Shintaido looking for affirmation or ego boosting. There is no lasting satori here. Shintaido is not an end; it is a beginning. When the hallway of life seems to consist only of closed doors, Shintaido is an open door.

In answer to the last part of Aoki's question, "what kind of relationship should I have with Shintaido?"

I think it is one of gratitude. Gratitude for opening up my heart and mind from the stuck place it was in. A grateful heart lets me contribute according to my talents. A grateful heart keeps me from delusions of grandeur. My relationship or my gift if you will seems to be to write stuff like this. My challenge is to remain fearless in eiko. What is yours?

Gasshuku Impressions

by

Tania Alice

I want to thank from my heart all senseis, organizers and participants of the Gasshuku.

When I arrived, a practitioner of the new Shintaido here in Brazil, I felt immediately that I had joined in a large family with incomparable joy, and I quickly made a place in it.



Each kumite gave me the impression that I could play a melody on an instrument that I did not know and that it was my turn to be an instrument of this music, which, like *eiko*, makes us feel the beauty, power and generosity of life.

The meetings were bright and unforgettable and I know that we are all connected, beyond the borders of the country, and that the collective energy is moving forward toward reinventing the world.

Thank you very, very much to each of you!



The Many Languages & Cultures of the Shintaido One-World Community

by
Jennifer Wilkov

While the movements of Shintaido are universally the same, it's amazing how many different cultures it is practiced in. By cultures, I'm referring to countries, languages, religious beliefs, genders, ages and stages of life. I believe this adds multiple dimensions to our keiko experiences that may tend to go unnoticed at times.

At the Shintaido International Gasshuku, this was easy to see, observe and appreciate. The beautiful distinction within the Shintaido community is that we don't need to hold the same beliefs, speak the same language, or be from the same country, age or gender to practice together. In San Francisco in July, we had Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Shinto, Hindu, Muslim and other religions present doing keiko together. Those who spoke French practiced with a partner who spoke Japanese, English, German, Portuguese or Italian. Even within our own languages, you could see those from France practicing with those from Quebec or with Clelie who is French-speaking and now lives in Brazil.

Within Japan, England and the U.S., we came from different cities and states – from Yokohama and Tokyo to Bristol and Brighton to Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., Washington state, California and more. We even had the joy of practicing with those who came from Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Italy.

From every corner of the continents we came to enjoy one another and practice Shintaido. It never mattered whether a partner spoke the same language or not. Together we massaged, laughed, ran and raised our voices as we delighted in the warm-ups and keikos led by different instructors from different countries.

In Shintaido, we not only promote peace and the idea of a one-world community – we reflect it. We live it.

As we saw during the very first keiko with Jim Sterling, Sensei, giving gorei and again at the end of the gasshuku with Aoki Sensei giving gorei as we ran eikodai, we could see all of the ages, shapes, sizes and genders of all of us who take the time we have in this life to come together from all of these corners of the planet to practice and make Shintaido a part of our lives.

There is no judgment here. There are no religious factions or boundaries. There is no physical ability or strength requirement. There is only us – a group of human beings choosing

to connect in a fabulous open field with the blue sky above us, the green grass and ground below us, the sounds of the rushing waters on either side of us, and another great big smile to greet us as we wander through our own thoughts until we can reach that nothingness Aoki Sensei speaks so profoundly of. A smile, after all, translates in every language.

During Ito Sensei's keiko, we remembered those who have left us in their physical form and we acknowledged how we could still have them with us. This wasn't qualified by any language or condition or culture either. The patient translators made it possible for everyone to participate, no matter what language an individual spoke. We just could – and did – remember those that had passed out loud and embraced their memories and spirits throughout the rest of the keiko exercises.

Even throughout the gasshuku, translations during the announcements and meetings helped us all to connect and communicate – no matter what language we spoke. At the dining room tables during our meals, the melodies of the different languages blended as if it were like being near the Tower of Babel. French sat with Japanese. English sat with Italian and German. We heard it all including bursts of laughter in every language.

As Shintaido continues, more languages, countries and religions will join us in this amazing, multi-dimensional community. While we will continue to welcome everyone into our thriving group, we can rest assured that whether we are at the Shintaido Farm in Massachusetts, in the parks and fields of Northern California, or on a business trip to London, Sydney, Tokyo, New York, Seattle or Paris, there will be someone in the Shintaido community to reach out to so you can practice and keep your keiko going.

We truly are a fortunate and blessed group.
Cheers! Salut! Merci! Danka schein! Grazi! Arigato onigashimas! Thank you.



Remembering Tomonori Kato

by

Michael Thompson

[This past year, one of the important figures from the early days of Shintaido, Tomonori Kato passed away. Kato-sensei became a General Instructor way back in 1973. We thought it was appropriate for this special International edition of Body Dialogue, to include this reminiscence by Master Instructor Michael Thompson, of his experiences with Kato. Editor.]

When I was studying Shintaido in Japan in 1979-81, I was fortunate to be there at what may well have been the peak of the post-Rakutenkai period. There were classes almost every day, with all the top instructors at the time. The "gaijin" were especially fortunate because we could attend keiko during the day when most Japanese had to work, so we got special benefits.

As I remember, Minagawa sensei taught on Mondays, Egami (the younger) on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Aoki sensei usually took the big Sunday afternoon gorei. But, in a way, the most intriguing keiko was one led by Kato sensei on Friday afternoons. He always reminded me of the quiet Samurai in Kurosawa's signature film - the one who very efficiently dispatches various bad guys and can only be defeated by technology, i.e. the rifle.

The class was held in a Kendo dojo with an immaculately cleaned and polished wood floor. Ken Waight who was acting as Kato's assistant would lead us in warm-ups and a healthy dose of aerobic preparation until Sensei showed up, usually 30-45 minutes into the keiko. When we were done he would leave almost immediately, adding to the mystery of who this man really was.

At the end of one keiko, he led me in a kumite which ended with me lying on my stomach and him kneeling on my back while lifting and twisting my arms. I took this to be a kind of initiation and privilege although it didn't succeed in making me any less stubborn.

My second intense interaction with him occurred during a bokuto workshop when he was overseeing a late-night Shoko practice that was our (Minagawa, Tagawa and myself - see *Untying Knots* pp. 62-63) reward for our year-long preparation. He would seemingly appear out of nowhere to help us make adjustments and offer encouragements and for that, I began referring to him as the "Shintaido Ninja." And I had heard stories - no doubt apocryphal - that he could walk up walls and across ceilings.

Before I left Japan, three of us, Vera Costello, Bernard Lépinoux and I, asked him to talk about Chinese medical theory since he was a practicing acupuncturist. So, for about two months, we went to his house every week where he expounded on the topic while we took notes. It was my last meeting with him before returning to the States and I can't say it in anyway made him a more familiar presence but as Minagawa wrote me: "He was our first Shoko teacher, you said he is an invisible man. He has become a really invisible man now."



BODY

Dialogue



新
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"Shintaido" means "new body way." It is an art form, a health exercise and meditation through movement developed in Japan in the 1960s. Shintaido grows out of the roots of ancient martial arts and meditation traditions, but the aim is to help modern people rediscover the original wisdom known by the body and realized through movement.