

# My Experience with Taimyo

A Talk by H.F. Ito

captured by Sylvie Alexandre and edited by Tomi Nagai-Rothe

I started studying Taïchi in 2002 with Master Ma. I was able to extract the essence of Taïchi as a result of my Shintaido experience which provided me with this ability. However, as I practiced I realized that my Shintaido was immature. Up until that time I had thought Shintaido was the best and highest form.

Shintaido practice invites you to keep surpassing yourself and to go further, faster, stronger. This is very good for developing your abilities when you are young and healthy, but for weaker bodies, it is difficult. At some point I realized I had studied enough of the martial approach and no longer needed to practice Taïchi as such, but what I really needed to do was to nourish my humanity.

Hideko Hokari was a Japanese Shintaido instructor who taught housewives in the late 1980s. Her students could not practice *Kaiho-Kei* Shintaido, so she began suggesting different techniques to experience the essence of Shintaido. She made them jump upright, for example, hands placed on the hands of a partner, very softly, to release tensions. She then let them continue this soft movement, with a partner gently pushing the other's body. This is how she discovered a new way of approaching *Wakame Taiso*. Her teaching was much appreciated and very successful.

Master Aoki then realized it was necessary to modify the program for these women, first from *Hikari* to *Wakame* (which was a soft form of *Hikari*) with a very similar effect in the body. He started talking about *Yoki-Kei* practice which he integrated into the Shintaido program. *Wakame* has influenced all the techniques of Shintaido, *bojutsu*, karate and *kenjutsu*. It was a turning point in the *Kaiho-Kei* practice of Shintaido, like a revolution – almost a catharsis. In the 1990s, Master Aoki found that everything was going too far towards martial practice. He wanted to develop a *kata*. And that is how *Taimyo* - which includes healing and meditation - was born.

In Taïchi/Qi Gong, there are two focal points: the martial aspect and wellness. In Shintaido practice, this is present in *Wakame* and *Taimyo*. After Master Aoki began teaching *Ken-Bu* as a more serious sword martial art, I thought he had not finalized his research and development of *Yoki-Kei* practice.

I really liked *Taimyo* because it allowed me to go to new environments. I realized it was a very powerful *kata* when I started to teach it to people who did not practice martial arts. I then turned to Master Aoki to find out how to make this *kata* accessible to as many people as possible. He said, "Answer your questions for yourself."

In fact, one of the main reasons I started Taichi with Master Mâ was because I wanted to deepen my understanding of *Yoki-Kei* Shintaido. By doing this I thought I could help complete creating the *Yoki-Kei* program that Master Aoki had started, but never finished.

In the big picture, the origin of Shintaido is Karate. However, the Karate taught by Master Egami was unique. When Master Aoki and I left Shotokai and started the Shintaido movement with other founding members of Rakutenkai, our friend Miyamoto – my 5 year *kohai* at Chuo University Karate Club – chose to stay with Master Egami. Even today he is considered one of the best disciples of Master Egami.

When Master Egami was at the end of his life, Miyamoto asked, “Master Egami how should we continue our Karate training and what future direction should we take?” Master Egami’s final words were “Start looking for a Chinese Tai Chi master who can teach you how to make a painless *Gedan-Barai* and who does not hurt anyone in the process!” He asked Miyamoto to look for this technique especially in Taichi. So Miyamoto started looking for someone who could teach him. It was about 10 years after Master Egami’s passing that he found Master Mâ Chang Xun whose technique and philosophy fit Master Egami’s charge.

Miyamoto started visiting Master Ma in 1992. Since then, he has visited Beijing twice a year in order to study with Master Ma. In 2002 Miyamoto invited me to Beijing where he was living as a guest professor at Shinwa University. As a celebration of my *Kanreki* (60th birthday) he introduced me to Master Ma to express his appreciation of our long time friendship.

Because I had studied Shintaido, various meditation forms, and traditional Japanese body care methods that are similar to Taichi, practicing a new form allowed me to have other sensations and I absorbed a great deal of information.

I have been practicing Shintaido for 50 years and I think my understanding of the martial arts philosophy of living at the edge of life and death is quite good. Knowing the martial applications allows you to have a precise vision to focus your attention. If you focus this kind of attention far beyond the martial applications it becomes a way to see what takes place on earth, and the exchanges that take place between oneself and the different living organisms that create the balance of life: the living balance.

Most of the time I feel that my body and mind are at the center of the very fact of being. With this very particular focus, when we practice in a group. When we are together, I am no longer at the center, I am simply a part. Imagining a partner while practicing Taichi *kata* is very practical for finding this world at the center of being.

When you receive someone's attack, rather than counter attacking, Master Mâ's teaching is to open 命門 [the gate of life](#), located at the level of the lumbar vertebrae. When you close the pelvis, you can really feel how to keep the door of life open. When we open this door, we are naturally fed with universal energy.

In Shintaido we alternate between *Kaiho-Tai* and *Yoki-Tai*. The biggest secret in the *Yoki-Tai* is keeping the door of life open. If you practice *Taimyo* with *Kaiho-Tai*, you will never appreciate what Master Aoki wanted to teach us by creating this *kata*.

After having had serious health issues and the experience of approaching death, I could no longer appreciate *only* the martial techniques. Through my experience I was able to rediscover the value of soft, fragile, and weak. The more fragile, the better it is. My Taichi practice helped me understand the value of *Taimyo*.

Practicing Shintaido in its *Kaiho-Tai* version for many years, I never experienced emptiness. When I started to study Taichi, I started to enter the world and the philosophy of *Mu* and of *Um*. It is a place that is really without ego. The more I practiced Taichi, the more I enjoyed *Taimyo* and *Yoki-Kei*. And the more mature I became.

So keep practicing and cultivate your *Yoki-kei* practice to understand deeply.