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MASASHI MINAGAWA SENSEI at 60

March 21st is Masashi's 60th birthday, the moment when, in Japanese tradition, you complete your life cycle and revert to childhood. This issue focuses on the man who has proved such an inspiration to British Shintaido. Here members, and friends from around their world, offer birthday greetings. On page 9, he tells us the story of his keiko life in his own words, from the day he met Aoki Sensei for the first time.

Fittingly, the very first tribute is from Aoki Sensei himself, founder of Shintaido.



**Dear Minagawa Sensei,
Happy 60th Birthday!**

In Japan there is a way of thinking that, according to the more than 3,500-year-old Chinese calendar, life completes one cycle every 60 years and hence everything

becomes anew at the age of 60. In this sense, the 60th birthday is a magnificent celebration in both Japan and China.

Minagawa Sensei, you contributed to the development of Japanese Shintaido tremendously as director of the Japanese Shintaido



Photo Nagako Cooper.



Aoki Sensei presents Minagawa Sensei with a katana or sword, December 2008.

main office at the time Shintaido was founded.

There were many, many times that you offered me your warm support personally and I really cannot thank you enough for all you have given me.

One of the times was when I came down with a serious burnout syndrome, right after I had developed Shintaido and was about to finish completing the main keiko curriculum.

Up to the day before I had been a courageous shogun fighting at the forefront of many soldiers following behind; but now I fell into a state where I was totally burned out after a huge victory. I lost confidence, could not be with people, and did not know what was going on with myself. My body started to deteriorate day by day. Nowadays the burnout syndrome is recognized as a serious disease, like other diseases such as panic disorder. But at the time, there was no such recognition in Japan, even among medical doctors. Furthermore, not one of my Shintaido friends knew that I was so damaged mentally, as they were all still very young.

I had totally ruined my health and although I was able to do *keri* above my head before, I could only kick 60 centimetres high. So I decided to start running in order to rise up again from this mental state. But whereas I used to be able to run around the field 5-10 times in *kaikyaku zenshin*, I could not even run round more than once (about 300 meters). So I started to extend the distance gradually and was finally able to run about 17 miles to your house.

I also started to do other exercises such as jumping in a squatting position,

doing sumo with you, and walking by the river that ran in your neighbourhood carrying a bag packed with stones so heavy that I could hardly pick it up. I then gradually started to extend this distance too, mile after mile, to about five miles.

During this whole time, you and Pam kept supporting me in all aspects.

Soon I flew to the United States and travelled about a year moving south to Mexico and then to Central and South America, still in my worn-out state. Although I was much improved thanks to you, I still had not yet recovered completely mentally. During my whole trip, you supported me tremendously both spiritually and financially. And thanks to this trip, I was able to overcome my mental state and rise up again, and this is entirely thanks to your warm support. During this time, I was also able to complete the whole system of Bojutsu and Yoki keiko that we are practising today.

I praise from the bottom of my heart the extremely honourable glory that you were given at the International Meeting in Italy last year.

It also makes me happy to see you leading a happy life blessed with a wonderful wife like Pam and wonderful children with lovely personalities: Masahiro, Joshua, and Emi.

Unlike paintings, the value of life cannot be measured by the size of the canvas or thickness of paint. Perhaps there are many difficulties living in England in terms of language etc. However, I cannot admire enough how you have led your life until today without ever giving up your sincerity and kindness even once.

This new cycle of life that you are entering on your 60th birthday.. I truly hope from the bottom of my heart that you will continue to lead a life where you warmly take those who are suffering or facing difficulties in life into your arms as you gently wipe off their tears.

Once again,
happy 60th
birthday to you,
Minagawa Sensei.
HIROYUKI AOKI

Masashi's keiko, International 2008, Verbania. Photo P Stage.



Masashi is a phenomenon! Down to earth and ordinary and extraordinary at the same time; easy-going but also tough of spirit and determination; serious about Shintaido and his dreams for the world but playful and crazy too. I commend you Masashi for staying on your true path, for your dedication to your master and his original vision; the sacrifices you have made are far outweighed by the joy and love you create. With love and dedication, **BELINDA FRENCH**

Happy 60th, which I dimly remember as being some kind of plateau. MICHAEL THOMPSON

I had known Masashi Minagawa Sensei for a long time but had a chance to practice with him in 1999 during a Soei kumibo workshop. I was attacking with morote tsuki and he was receiving freehand kohan. Kohan means tiger in action, and the feeling I got from the way that he was welcoming me was of a big hug and nice flight through the air and landing on the floor – like a tiger playing without using its claws. Inside I felt great laughter and joy. That was a gift. Thanks Masashi Sensei and happy birthday. **GIANNI ROSSI**

In the autumn of 2005, Nagako and I went to a ceilidh at Horsley Village Hall – a small village not far from Stroud. Suddenly Nagako came rushing over to me clutching a piece of paper. She had found a notice advertising Shintaido bohjutsu classes there in that very same hall! She couldn't believe it. After four years of committed Shintaido practice in the Tokyo area with Okada Sensei through the mid-nineties, Nagako never expected to re-encounter Shintaido in Britain.

Shortly after, Nagako contacted Masashi (whose phone number was on the poster) and discussed the possibilities of starting a daytime Shintaido group in the Nailsworth area. A hall was found and a three-week taster set of sessions was arranged. We just carried on from there and here we are over three years later with the Nailsworth Lightwaves comfortably established.

Until recently, Masashi has been travelling up from Bristol every week with Katrina. Katrina is now "our instructor" and Masashi joins us once a month. We feel very privileged to have had this regular contact with Masashi over the past three years and we thank him for his wonderful commitment to our group – for his lightness, laughter and spontaneity. Many, many thanks to you, Masashi, and our very best wishes for a wonderful birthday! **DAVID COOPER**

Masashi is many kindnesses, much laughter, always present, good friend and always we bow to each other with great affection and deep respect. Masashi IS the embodiment of Shintaido. Happy Birthday! **RUTH TREVENNA**

I had had some interaction with Masashi before, but it was on this day he came into my life in a big way. It was in Bristol, a summer workshop with Ito Sensei. And we were studying receiving tsuki – "deposit and withdraw" was Ito's image for how to receive a continuous tsuki attack. I was feeling the heat and wondering whether I would be able to perform when my turn came to demonstrate in kumite. Apart from being unsure about the technique and timing, my biggest worry was getting tired.

It was my turn. Who would be my partner and would I be able to keep up? It was Minagawa Sensei. (Panic ... a general instructor, very senior, powerful.) I was to receive first. We bowed and immediately a bolt of lightning was coming my way. As

he approached I realised this was no ordinary tsuki. It was not the tsuki of overpowering, of challenging, of wild energy; this was the tsuki of joy! Masashi's face was smiling as he ran towards me and when he approached he whispered: "Enjoy!" In that moment not only the kumite, but my whole keiko life was transformed forever.

I had been given the spirit of joy in keiko, in kumite, and I was able to relax, be myself and participate fully. It no longer mattered whether I performed or not for the onlookers, only our world mattered, giving, receiving, exploring the space.

I have seen Masashi's gift at work many times since. People will remember the last keiko of the Shintaido Forum: it was simple, unified and full of joy and everyone left feeling more positive, more alive than when they had started.

But that is not all. Masashi has been a very tolerant and encouraging mentor, never imposing his ideas but always receptive to mine. When I am off the mark he gently steers me to a better position. He is so humble, always wanting to be a servant for us in British Shintaido, generous with his Shintaido experience, with his time. This is a real model for us in these times when materialism and quick results are the expectation. He has taught me that what is worth having is worth working towards –



Masashi and Nagako Cooper.

the mastering a kata or a kumite is a process not an end in itself, and can be refined, polished, reviewed and adapted according to one's understanding. That is why in Shintaido even familiar forms are filled with richness and depth. Masashi has often spoken about being at least four years behind Aoki Sensei in his understanding of something that Aoki sensei wanted to share. To me it is a sign of Masashi's greatness that he gives so much thought to develop and understand the meaning of what Aoki Sensei has given us, not for himself but so that we in turn can benefit from it.

Not long ago Masashi asked me to reflect about how Shintaido has entered my life, how do I apply it in my work and family relationships. This is a question that requires expanding keiko out of the dojo into other areas and bringing the philosophy of unification and Shintaido practice completely into my life. It is a challenge I gladly take up. Through knowing Masashi I know that keiko can transform lives for the better, inside or outside of the dojo. I am still receiving Masashi Minagawa's tsuki of joy to this very day.

May you enjoy your new cycle of life, Masashi. Thank you for the many years you have been an inspiration to me. **ULA CHAMBERS**

Just as a bird coming out of its shell receives a permanent imprint of the mother's eye, so I have the imprint of the two instructors of my beginnings in Shintaido. Masashi was one of them and I keep a very fond memory of his Monday "class for beginners". Through it and through various occasions in daily keiko life – as he was also the office manager – Masashi gave me exactly the right amount (i.e. a huge amount) of "hittobito-ware" feeling to go with the strong "ten-chi-ware" I received from our other instructor Masatake Egami. Both of their feelings have stayed with me. We are very lucky to have Masashi with us in Europe to keep strong and warm the horizontal feeling of *Hittobito-ware* in our Shintaido. Masashi, as you are, according to Japanese tradition, entering the "age of wisdom" I am sending all our love from Coye la Foret and I am much looking forward to the exciting future of our young Shintaido community. **PIERRE QUETTIER**

On behalf of the Board of Directors and membership of Shintaido of America, please extend our best wishes for a happy Kanreki to Masashi Minagawa. We look forward to receiving his wonderful gorei during his visit to America this October, and we hope that he continues to teach and spread Shintaido for many years to come. **STEPHEN BILLIAS, President Shintaido of America**



Kumite with Bela Breslau, USA.

Just after Masashi and Pam moved to England, they came to the kangeiko on a dank day in a South London park. In the long twilight, Masashi did kumite with each one of us in turn. His koshi was bouncing, sparkling and shining as he lit up the gloomy evening and made each person distinct, unique and beautifully glowing. Playing with light, indeed. Thank you. **PETER FURTADO**

When I lived in Nailsworth I was unbelievably lucky to have weekly classes with Masashi. I was about to get married and Masashi gave us a wonderful ceremony on Rossilli beach with flower offerings from our Shintaido friends; we finished with a kneeling Tenshingoso kumite. Later as Jamie's father could not attend the registry office, Masashi agreed to be Jamie's witness and it felt very apt; he also gave us a beautiful calligraphy of 'Happiness' which we shall always treasure.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Masashi taught our group about grounding in the here and now and finding our ground even when things around are getting shaken up and people are freaking out! It was very comforting in those difficult times.

We often had discussions about the meaning of things, significance of religion, the influence of Buddhism on us personally. So often Masashi had an amazing tale to tell: 'I have just come back from meeting the Dalai Lama in Dublin and I shook his hand!' or voice workshops with Chloe Goodchild, the impact of Tenshingoso on a crippled woman at a seminar in Canada, the vision of flowers falling during the Royal Opera House reconciliation concert with Chloe.

There was the experimental dance with Alex Howard (ballerina) to the rapturous drumming of Nick Twilly. There was bringing the baby to keiko; nowadays two

children, and they are made to feel welcome and part of the proceedings!

Our keiko was not solely dictated by form but by the message that the heart matters, the spirit of Shintaido, the encouragement, the connectedness of people to each other. There was always laughter. There was allowance for being under the weather; I kept going knowing that I would feel refreshed afterwards. The keiko was adapted to fit the need of those present, be it in a chair, taking it easy and encouraging by doing it together. And there was always 'feedback' after kumite. Masashi had a way of knowing just where we were at. Kindness. Thank you. **CARINA HAMILTON**



B-60 Omedeto! H.F. ITO.

One of my clearest memories of Minagawa is of him sitting under a shade tree with a group of students after a hot afternoon keiko at Marin Academy in San Rafael, California. Someone asked him about when Shintaido was most useful, and he said: "Shintaido is not for when you are happy. Then you don't need it. Shintaido is for people who are desperate in some way. Then it can really help them!" **STEPHEN BILLIAS**

The ten years I have known Masashi have had big ups and downs, and time and again I have turned to my keiko to help me understand and live my life to the fullest. Masashi's warm, kind and patient presence has supported my journey, and I am deeply grateful to him for being who he is and doing what he does. He has been a model for me in so many things, and especially in instructing Shintaido and teaching shiatsu. He has really helped shape my life, both inner and outer over these years, so ... a huge, enormous and heartfelt "thank you" is due. **JAMIE HAMILTON**

In the early 1990s we invited Minagawa to be guest instructor at the San Francisco Bay Area's kangeiko. The gasshuku got off to a poor start: rain forced us to squeeze into a small space that doubled as a cafeteria. People were disappointed and energy was low.

Minagawa and I were sitting quietly watching the pouring rain. I was experiencing some angst about my role in the organization and struggling for inspiration that would help guide my gorei for the first keiko. I decided to share my doubts asking, "Have you ever thought of quitting?" I assumed he would laugh and say something like "Oh, of course not." But he surprised me and with a knowing smile on his face said, "Yes, every day."

The first keiko went along quite well. **JIM STERLING**

My first and fondest impression of Masashi originates from a journey we made together from Bristol to the Gower Peninsula. I had met Masashi a number of times previously, but this was a definite first for prolonged one-to-one contact. I was slightly apprehensive and anxious, wondering if we would endure uncomfortable

silences and struggle to communicate. Within a very few minutes, all anxiety was gone, and we were engrossed in conversation which, for me at least, was absolutely absorbing. Although I don't have full recall of the details, I do retain a vivid sense of the themes, which covered the grand subjects of Shintaido philosophy, practice and applications. All of this proceeded nicely as we travelled down the motorways.

The situation and atmosphere changed as we started down the small country roads of rural South Wales. Masashi was clearly immersed in, and committed to his role and responsibilities as navigator. As in epic poems, it felt as if the Gods, Elements and Great Nature all conspired together. They combined to ensure that every single village we travelled through, every signpost and each point of destination comprised placenames written exclusively with combinations of L's and R's, interspersed with LL's and RR's. The situation produced inevitable results. By the time Masashi had delivered his Japanese rendition of the totally unpronounceable, choices for turnings and all sense of direction were lost in vast waves of convulsive laughter. The intensity of these joy filled memories is a very real presence in my body and mind to this day. The fact that we arrived at our destination, safe and on time, I take as compelling evidence of Divine Guidance.

I feel enchanted with the Japanese notion of a 60th birthday heralding a gateway to second childhood. In Masashi's case this is enhanced by the fact that he, more than any other person I know, has succeeded in holding on to the epitome of the childlike gifts, to experience and to share pure joys, boundless wonder and infinite love. Happy Birthday, Masashi.

P.S. Before writing this, I was talking with Malka, my wife, about the task at hand. She insisted that I add that every time I have returned home after spending time with Masashi, I come back "beaming and glowing". It's true. GEOFF WARR

I have two memories of Minagawa Sensei. First one: I participated in a Daienshu right after I began Shintaido. I was really a beginner. It was a very nice spring day, we practised on a big sports ground of Asama-sanso on a mountain. There were very few other beginners.

In those days a *goreisha* used to have us do much jumps for a long time, especially these very dynamic ones, like *kaikyaku-zenshin-sho* or Shintaido jump. I was terrified, waiting to be commanded by the *goreisha*, whose order is sacred, especially to the Japanese mind. When Minagawa Sensei came to look after us and asked us to jump. I decided to try hard and I felt pain in my thighs even before I started jumping. I said to myself, 'courage, Mieko; go ahead!'. But contrary of what I expected, he made us do it only a few times! He even said to us, 'very good!' All that I remember of this keiko, was that he was always very warm and gentle and severe not at all. And from then to now, my impression of him hasn't changed at all.

The second point: when I began Shintaido in Japan, Minagawa Sensei was manager of the Shintaido office. He always received us with a warm smile. Sometimes I saw him wearing a business suit, because he had a job with a company. His suit did not look right on him at all: his legs filled completely his trousers. In particular his thighs, which were very big thanks to Shintaido's *Shin-shin-kaihatsu-taiso*, bulged through them. I was afraid the seams would break open before my eyes. Unfortunately I haven't had a chance to see him wearing a suit since then. I don't know if things have changed. How are his thighs now? MIEKO HIRANO



MASASHI MINAGAWA SENSEI IN HIS OWN WORDS

Masashi Minagawa Sensei describes his keiko career. This is an edited version of a recent interview, with Masahiro Minagawa as translator. The rest of this interview will appear in a future edition, and the complete text is on the BS website.

Thank you for agreeing to talk to us. Please tell us how you met Aoki Sensei.

In my first year at university (1967) I joined the karate club. The club-leader Ishikawa-san had studied with Aoki Sensei; Matsuhashi-san, a member of Rakutenkai, taught our regular classes, and Aoki Sensei came to oversee the group and teach at workshops and gasshukus.

I met Aoki Sensei in the summer gasshuku of my second year. The first impression was one of awe. He made an incredible impact. It was not just his aura, but his physique: he was very powerfully built, and people were saying he was Number One in the karate world, so there was an element of fear amongst the senior club members – not for me of course because I was only a beginner. Even so, I felt the vibrations.

During that gasshuku, Aoki Sensei was speaking to a group in the hall. All the *sempai* sat at the front, and as a beginner I was right at the back in a corner. As he was speaking, I got a feeling that everyone in the room had disappeared and it seemed as if there was a pathway opened up and he was speaking right in front of me. I had an image of a tightrope, stretched taut between the two of us. Even though he was addressing everyone in the room, he seemed to be answering the questions I had inside, Who am I? What is life?, and giving hints and answers to my personal questions. At one point he told a funny story and everyone laughed, but I couldn't laugh, I feel he was talking seriously to me even if he was smiling. I was very shocked.

At that point he wasn't my *sensei*, so I thought this guy – not my master yet – was an incredible person, he wasn't just knowledgeable in karate but there was something else about him.

About 20 years later Aoki Sensei spoke to me about this occasion; he saw me in the room and he thought, what an interesting boy, so he 'hooked up' with me; and he remembered I was wearing a red shirt.

What sort of keiko did you do in those days?

At that time my body was very stiff, so both Aoki Sensei and Matsuhashi Sensei told me I needed to put in many times the effort in keiko, to get to the same level as everyone else. We used to do *kaikyaku-zenshin* with boh; everyone else would be holding one boh but I was given three, and one of them was Aoki Sensei's boh – which was very thick and heavy. And if I let it touch the ground Aoki Sensei would be angry and threaten to attack me with his boktoh, so I had to make a huge effort not to let the tip drop; if I ever stopped then gravity would naturally let the boh fall so I just had to carry on going forwards to keep it up. And at that point there was no *jumbi-taiso* warmup, so at the beginning of the keiko we would jump around the hall in *kaikyaku-zenshin* until our bodies became soft. People usually did ten circuits of the sports hall, but I had to do 20 circuits, within the same time. At first I couldn't manage it, but as we went on I came to believe I could get to the same condition as everyone else. But by the

beginning of the keiko proper I was really tired and all over the place.

This was the point in Aoki Sensei's career when he was starting to move away from Shotokai karate to Rakutenkai, but it was before the birth of Shintaido. Our club was called *Sogobudo* (holistic martial arts). We would study lots of different styles and martial arts, sword, boh etc. We had a focus on karate but it was a long way from the image people have now, and probably had then: many people were shocked at the type of keiko we did. We were doing *kaikyaku-zenshin*, squat jumps (rabbit jumps) or find a very low *kibadachi* and do *tsuki* for almost an hour. We didn't do many things that would be classed as techniques; we did those sort of exercises and *kumite*. My friends in the club would often complain this wasn't karate. They sometimes asked to be taught more karate techniques.

How did you first experience Shintaido's unique forms?

In the university club there naturally was a hierarchy; the club leaders would be senior students and at weekends would go to be taught directly by Aoki Sensei. I remember I had overheard conversations they would have afterwards, how they had been made to make strange noises like A and E. Then I was introduced to Eiko myself.

It made a big impact on me. Although I didn't understand, I felt this was an incredible keiko, and in time I became saved by Eiko. My life opened; the doors opened.

In the late 1960s, the student movement was continuing, and the university was closed. But as it was a public university they went through the charade of opening to let everyone sit exams and then graduate. When you graduate, you start thinking about what career you will go into; I was no different. Most people had decided they would leave university and join a company and keep going on along the rails; I questioned that. While others were looking for jobs, I was still focusing on keiko.

At that time, the first Sogobudo *daienshu* was about to take place. The Rakutenkai people and the gasshuku team were running a preparation gasshuku for that *daienshu*. The keiko went on into the night and then there would be meetings till very late. At

Nogeyama Park, where Eiko was born.



that point it seemed to me that everyone else was emanating light but I couldn't see myself in that; I felt that whenever I clenched my fist for *tsuki*, my hands were dirty and I was surrounded with a negative aura. When Aoki Sensei saw my dark face he laughingly suggested I do one lap of Eiko; it was in Nogeyama Park behind Aoki Sensei's house, the place where Eiko was born. The park has changed a lot since then: at that time it felt like a huge space but looking back now it seems small. One circuit was maybe 400-500 metres, so I did that. During this Eiko, it seemed that the scales peeled off from my eyes, all of my dirtiness was washed from my body and the tears fell from my eyes, washing my body. When I returned to the Rakutenkai group, whereas previously the light shining from them had been so bright I felt I couldn't join them, now it seemed as if the light had disappeared and I could join in. And I was told 'welcome back' by everyone. At that first *daienshu*, they were doing the very first exams to become instructors, and the curriculum was Tenshingosho and Eiko, and I was very moved by the movement and the beauty of, in particular, Tenshingosho.

I had been struggling with what to do with my life, but after that *daienshu* it became clear that I wanted to give my life to Shintaido. And I went to tell that to Aoki Sensei. That was a mistake because Aoki Sensei hasn't forgotten and even now, I have to carry on going. So, as I was moved by that Tenshingosho of those instructors all those years ago, I decided that when I did my Master Instructor exam in 2004, I gave my own Tenshingosho to Aoki Sensei.

Tell us some of what you have seen of Aoki Sensei's special abilities

As Aoki Sensei's assistant I would often walk behind him holding his bag, and he would talk to me and show me things to do with ki energy. Once we walked in Shinjuku and came to a busy crossing; I had a heavy bag and people bumped into me but Aoki Sensei could just go straight through the crowd and no-one would be anywhere near him. On another occasion, however hard I tried to catch up with him my legs felt more and more heavy; he would experiment and show me those techniques of energy-work. There were lots of interesting things. He could point out people who might be trouble, see connections between people in the street.

Once in a summer workshop we were in the country surrounded by rice fields, so when we did meditation there was a lot of croaking from frogs. He decided to stop them and they suddenly fell silent. Then he made them croak really loudly. I don't know how he did that.

If there was a lot of noise coming from someone's room during the night, he could direct his energy to calm it down. These things sound bizarre; but I have witnessed many things like that. Aoki Sensei could use different techniques to gather people, or disperse people; it was all to do with the way he directed energy. Now whenever I give *gorei* I try to keep the image of what Aoki Sensei did in my head. It's a matter of expanding your consciousness.

In the late 1970s I had another profound experience. As part of Aoki Sensei's rehabilitation after his travels in South America, we would do what we would now call *renki*, sumo pushing. At first we did it on flat ground, but as he became stronger we did it on a slope by the river. I pushed down from above, he pushed up. Finally I was thrown completely by Aoki Sensei. It felt to me as I got up that my surroundings had vanished. Maybe it was only imagination, but it seemed that Aoki Sensei had also disappeared, and a big field opened up in front of me, as far as the eye could see. Maybe



for the first time ever, I felt I could walk alone over this great world. I felt released and free on the physical plane and spiritual plane. Even now, I try to incorporate this idea within my kumite practice to get my partner to experience this state.

Why did you decide to come to Britain?

At the 1988 international in Japan, each national group did a presentation, and because I was married to Pam I was involved with the presentation of the British group as well as the Japanese one. While I was doing this I had a feeling that maybe I would have more to do with this group of people in the future.

Some time after, there was a meeting in Hokari Sensei's house; Ito Sensei had been invited back from America to attend it. During that meal Hokari Sensei and Ito Sensei both spoke very passionately about their Shintaido and their mission. I was moved by what they had said and decided to leave Japan too.

Everyone used to call me sensei but I thought they didn't really see me. I was with Aoki Sensei a lot and I felt maybe people just called me sensei to massage my ego and from my association with Aoki Sensei, not in my own right. As Aoki Sensei's assistant I was often present at his meetings with his visitors, and I became good at telling who really understood what he was talking about, who was receptive, and who was just paying lip-service, saying yes but thinking on a different lines. So I didn't believe in judging people from titles and outward appearances, and I wanted to test my own

Shoko at the BS kangeiko, Douai Abbey, January 2009.

quality by going abroad. Ito Sensei and Aoki Sensei both used to talk about 'my Shintaido'; and so I wanted to step into my Way, too.

In 1989 my mother was sick, so we waited until 1990 to move to England, and my role became one of running the international Shintaido movement. British Shintaido was focused around Tony Hammick and I didn't want to interrupt what he was doing.

How did your keiko life change in England?

I wanted to examine 'my' Shintaido. Yet from the Shintaido perspective I was the General Instructor from Japan and I didn't want to get in Tony's way; so what I did was to introduce Shintaido to a completely different group. My work today with the learning difficulties people comes from that, trying to introduce Shintaido in an environment where no-one else would go. It was Belinda who first introduced me to them when she took me along to an open day, and instead of doing a demonstration myself, I tried to involve everybody there. I had had some previous experience with people with learning difficulties. In the 1980s I spent a lot of time with a child who had Aspergers. He was the son of the priest at the church I went to. I had seen it was possible to find a true understanding of each other on a soul-to-soul level by practising Shintaido together. You don't do it in the technique or outward show, but you need to go into each encounter very seriously, in a wholehearted manner, in order to find that soul-to-soul contact. You can't communicate by words and these people can't move very well. There were many times when I struggled, but I learned a lot from them: especially I learned the true meaning of the word 'patience' from these groups. I learned the meaning of words like 'observe' and 'patient' and 'accept'.

The purpose of a keiko is to grasp the purpose of that particular keiko: that's what I have learned from teaching the learning-difficulties group. They can't run when they do Eiko. In fact it took me ten years to introduce Eiko to them. I had assumed that they couldn't do Eiko and it took me ten years to change my mind. Freedom is about the release of that one thought or feeling. Then I realised that even if just by connecting and holding hands and doing some movement together, it was enough for them to get the feeling of Eiko.

It can be very beneficial while you have youth on your side to do intense physical keiko; but as you get older your body can't do it, so it's necessary to adjust the practice. There's no point in practising a celebration of body movement if you are actually damaging your body in the process. Yet as you become older your keiko becomes deeper because of the life experience that you carry around, and that can contribute to the depth of the keiko so it's not necessary to make it physically tough.

Can you sum up how have you changed, and Shintaido changed, over 40 years?

Aoki Sensei said the body is like a representation of the universe so it is affected by its environment. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of mass production and growth and expending energy; of course we were young but external circumstances were like that too. Today the emphasis is on ecology and conserving energy, so naturally it's popular to do keiko like meditation which fits in with that mood.

It's interesting to be able to look back from the outside and see what affected what; but one of the purposes of Shintaido is to *feel* the energy of the time with your own body, and to feel what kind of energy the time actually needs. Aoki Sensei is always one step ahead, always looking for the keiko for the age that is coming. The body is the message of the universe – that's what I believe Aoki Sensei is trying to teach us. MM

KANGEIKO 2009 - Peter Furtado

It was cold – very cold – just as it should be, beautiful, clear and with crunching frost underfoot. And though we had a smaller group than 12 months previously (this was January 3rd, and many people were still away), we welcomed the new year with warmth, positive energy and inspiration.

Returning for the fifth time to the self-catering cottages of Douai Abbey, we soon had a cosy atmosphere (encouraged by improvements to the cottages themselves since we were last there, including far better washing facilities and a cooker that actually cooks), and at the start of the first keiko we all stated our hopes for the year. Given the amount of negativity around in the media and world at large, everyone was impressively optimistic, and the kangeiko strengthened and enriched that feeling. Geoff Warr managed the food with exceptional calm, spreading reassurance from his chair by the cooker, while Mandy had us competing cheerily for the title of Shintaido Trivial Pursuits champion.

Keiko was simple and clear – each time beginning with 20 minutes of meditation, then stepping and cutting, in the first indoor keiko; Eiko dai and Eiko kumite out of doors in the second – but inspiring and rich.

Part of that inspiration came from the beginner's mind of Dave Hampton, who turned up knowing nothing about Shintaido other than what he had gleaned from the website, but whose commitment and enthusiasm for what he had gotten into was infectious; and part from the teaching of Master Instructor Masashi Minagawa. He began the first keiko by reading from T.S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, explaining how this poem had been sent to him by several people independently last year, just as he had completed his long researches to develop the programme of Tenshingoso arrangements. He then spoke about Amaterasu, the Japanese goddess who had three gifts for humans: a mirror, a sword, and a *matagama* or fetus-like jewel that is also the soul. Masashi



Eiko: photo Dave Hampton.

described a meditation in which this jewel entered his body through his mouth and lodged in his centre – and throughout keiko he encouraged us to move, hold our swords, step and cut with our consciousness focused on this point.

For me at least, this gave a new and more powerful quality to the cut.

The gifts of Amaterasu were echoed – returned, maybe – in 6.30am matins on Sunday morning, when the teaching was of Epiphany and the Bible reading was the story of the three magi, and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, made from humanity to the god-child. Once again, Shintaido took us new depths by bringing together insights from cultures that began a world apart.

Feeding back at the end of the gasshuku, several people commented that though it was cold, it didn't *feel* cold. Was it the meditation that warmed us up? Was it the calmness that the sword gives you? Or the garlic bread? Whatever, Masashi emphasised how strongly he now feels we have moved into a new stage, and how he wants to continue to open himself so we keep going together, spreading light to brighten society itself.

Finally, during feedback one member reported the following conversation in the kitchen. Names don't matter, but the truth it carries does:

"Do you think you ever get the chance to live your life over again?"

"Every day."

From *Little Gidding* (V), by T.S. Eliot

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown,
unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are
in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one."

Viola's Tenshingoso pentagram
in the frost.



BRITISH SHINTAIDO AGM

The AGM was held on Sunday 4th January at Douai Abbey. Detailed minutes have been circulated to members. Some of the key points discussed were as follows:

1. Aims and objectives: The management team needs to address aims and objective and statement of purpose before focusing on marketing, to avoid the confusion on what marketing. BS to work on Articles and mission statement over 2009. Geoff Warr has proposed a programme during this year, including weekend away to thrash out some of these issues.

2. Treasurer's report: There had been some losses over the year: mainly due to the fluctuation of the pound against the Euro, with a lot of international transactions associated with the International and payment of ISF fees. The budget is circulated to all members.

3 Officers: Peter Furtado and Katrina Horne are standing down as Chair and Co-ordinator. Geoff Warr is happy to put himself forward as Chair, but wanted to be certain that any other who wanted the post had an opportunity to stand. If there are any such, they should contact Peter by April 15th. In the interim Peter is continuing as Interim Chair. Volunteers are also urgently sought for the Secretary role. Katrina is taking the Interim Secretary role till the change of Chair. Treasurer: Charles is happy to restand. Terry Bickers volunteered to take on the role of Assistant Treasurer.



Ula Chambers and Katrina Horne.

4. Technical Committee and British Shintaido College: Since a substantial part of the role of the Technical Committee has largely been subsumed into the activities of the British Shintaido College, the Technical Committee in the UK has been disbanded as a separate body. However its former members, Masashi Minagawa, Ula Chambers and Cyril Geoffrey Fitch will continue many of the

above activities as part of BSC. A draft constitution of BSC is being prepared.

5. British Shintaido exams: One of the aims of Technical Committee and BSC in 2008 was to build on work done in the previous year to raise the standard of examinations. This has been witnessed by a more serious attitude by examinees to preparing for examinations and gradings, and by the high standard seen during local and national examination sessions. Students have committed seriously to their study, by being aware of the examination of the curriculum, being adequately prepared for examinations and by being aware of the required exam etiquette.

6. Revisions to Articles of Association: It was noted that BS had circulated the Articles of Association for changes to reflect the changes within the Shintaido world. i.e. the ESC (European Shintaido College) BSC (British Shintaido College), ISC (International Shintaido College). Also we noted that there was not a clause about how to change the Articles. It was agreed unanimously that a clause be added to the Articles of Association from 2003, "These articles may be amended by a majority vote in an AGM followed by a majority vote of all members".

7. Membership fees: Charles Burns proposed a change in the membership fee structure, mainly affecting instructors and assistants. It was agreed that the proposed changes be circulated to all instructors and assistants for discussion.

The Flower and the Sword

British Shintaido Daienshu

June 5-7th 2009

Douai Abbey, Reading

led by Mieko Hirano Sensei

For British Shintaido's great summer gathering or **daienshu**, we have the opportunity to study from one of the most highly qualified female instructors in the world. Mieko Hirano has studied Shintaido for many years both in Japan and in France where she now lives. This is the first time she has taught in Britain. In the gasshuku she will be teaching with Masashi Minagawa Sensei, Master Instructor.

The 'flower and the sword' refers to a vision described by Aoki Sensei when he realised that he should set up his own martial arts school distinct from karate; it also offers a metaphor for Shintaido itself, its union of the martial and the aesthetic, the natural and the technical, the sharp and the soft, the enduring and the evanescent, all united in a perpetual reaching for the light and rootedness in the earth.

The daienshu is held at the beautiful Benedictine Abbey of Douai in Woolhampton, about ten miles west of Reading in the Berkshire Downs. Beginning in the early evening of Friday June 5th, it will continue to mid-afternoon on Sunday.

Basic price: £175 (non-returnable deposit £50).

Discount for British Shintaido members: £25.

To reserve a place, contact Carina Hamilton, 9 Dene Lane, Lower Bourne, Farnham GU10 3PW. Tel 01252 728078; email carina_jamie@onetel.com.



Mieko Hirano is a Shintaido Senior Instructor and Sandan of Bojutsu. She first studied Shintaido in Japan with some Rakutenkai members, the original founding group of Shintaido. She moved to France in 1981 and now lives in the north of Paris where she teaches Shintaido and Bojutsu regular classes. She is one of those responsible for the direction of Shintaido in France and is a member of the European Technical Committee and of the Board of the International Shintaido College.



A NEW YEAR AND A VACANT CHAIR Geoff Warr

Part of the business at British Shintaido's AGM was the election of members, generally, and the Chair specifically, for the Management Committee. By the time of this meeting, I had been "sounded out," had expressed interest in and enthusiasm for the prospect, and was within a whisker of being voted into the post. However, despite the presence of *après keiko* endorphins, I resisted. Not through any loss of enthusiasm for the job, but solely down to the fact that the significant majority of the members of British Shintaido were not there. I would feel profoundly uncomfortable to become the Chair, on the nod, and with most of the keiko community detached from the process. So, my offer was to still stand, but also to write something for Taimyo which would extend the invitation to anyone else who may be interested in seeking election to the post.

Part of the reason for my enthusiasm to get involved in the management and organization of Shintaido is that I've had a taste of previous experience, twenty odd years ago, during the era of the Board of Directors. (BoD) At that point in my career, and life in general, I was dealing with demands and pressures which felt overwhelming and often unmanageable. Life does not (usually) feel that way now, so I feel enthused to have another go.

Another factor which pulls and pushes me towards organizational involvement arises from the many conversations I've had over the past year, with Masashi most significantly, but also other Shintaido folk, about future visions of keiko development and



application. I feel that, if I'm in the position of Chair, it will motivate and enable me to support this type of development.

One of the more enticing daydreams which came to me at the Kangeiko was that a fruitful and important task of the Chair should be to undertake visits to all of the regular classes around the country, to encourage, and be encouraged by the process of practice. I can't think of many things which feel more attractive.

If it transpires that there is someone who would want, and becomes elected to the post of Chair, I'll happily give my best wishes and support. If it does come to me, I would really welcome hearing from others what they feel the post should be addressing in order to be of best service to the growth and development of Shintaido.

Brighton Ten-Chi-Jin workshop and British Shintaido Spring exams

March 28-29, 10-5pm.

Sussex University Sports Centre, Falmer.

For details, advice on accommodation and to book, contact Terry Bickers, Flat 3, 3 St Michael's Place, Brighton BN1 3FT; 10273 821477.

Saturday evening celebration
meal at local Japanese
restaurant.

PROGRAMME, CLASSES AND CONTACTS

Spring and Summer Programme

28-29 March	Exam workshop in Brighton; contact Ula Chambers
12 April	Sotai workshop with Ito Sensei, Ramsgate; contact Geoff Warr
16 May	Karate workshop, Almondsbury; contact Pam Minagawa
17 May	BSC workshop, location TBC; contact Ula Chambers
5-7 June	Daienshu, Douai Abbey; contact Carina Hamilton
11-18 July	ESC workshop, Paris; contact Ula Chambers
18 October	BSC exams, Bristol; contact Ruth Trevenna

BS Contacts

British Shintaido College:

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Jamie Hamilton and Katrina Horne.

Reading: Charles Burns 0118 947 6808 charles@shintaido.co.uk

Thames (Richmond): Daniel des Baux 07979 544442 dan@crunchbox.com

Regular Classes

eg, classes led by current BS Instructors or Assistants.

Shintaido classes and their venues do change on a regular basis, so check first before attending an unfamiliar class.

Monday: Ramsgate Tai Chi led by Tamar / Shintaido led by Geoff Warr. Contact Geoff for details.

Tuesday: Nailsworth 1.30 - 3.30pm Christchurch Hall Contact David & Nagako Cooper
Lightwaves class, Masashi Minagawa & Katrina Horne

Nailsworth 4.00 - 4.45pm (general) & 4.45 - 5.30pm (advanced)
Contact Dawn on 01453 750608 Christchurch Hall

Bojutsu for kids with Masashi Minagawa

Bath 7.30 - 9pm University of Bath Contact Ruth Trevenna Bojutsu class, led by Masashi Minagawa

Wednesday: Farnham 7.15 - 8.45pm Summer Bojutsu Outside @ Bourne Green

Contact Carina Hamilton 01252 728078 Led by Charles Burns & Jamie Hamilton

Oxford 7.30- 8.45pm Matthew Arnold School led by Peter Furtado

Thursday: Brighton 7.45 for 8.00 start till 10.00 pm.

Hollingbury Methodist Church, Lyminster Avenue, Hollingbury, Brighton. Contact Ula Chambers 01273 390541.

Saturday: Thames From 8am in the morning! The Old Deer Park, Richmond

Contact Daniel des Baux Irregular class, please call for times

Sunday: Reading 10.00 - 11.30am Balmore Park, Caversham Contact Charles Burns
Irregular class & private sessions

Godalming Late morning Broadwater Park, Godalming Contact Helen Holt
Irregular class taught by Helen Holt & Dave Shaw

Weekends: Bristol Contact Masashi Minagawa Specialist classes by appointment.

TAIMYO - NEXT ISSUE

Summer issue copy date June 30th. Please send articles, pictures, ideas to Peter Furtado peter.furtado1543@googlemail.com by then.

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