

# Taimyo

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## What would you have done if you had attended BS kangeiko 2010?

by David Franklin



Perhaps I have some karmic relationship with Tony Hammick (former head instructor of British Shintaido). In advance of the kangeiko, I called Ula to ask what the usual custom is in Britain regarding wearing *hakama* (traditional baggy pants used in several Japanese martial arts) when one is not actually teaching or examining. By chance, Tony had just dropped his *hakama* at Ula's (he's retiring it permanently it seems), and she offered to bring it for me to wear. I had also arranged to borrow a *bokutoh* (wooden

sword), and by chance I ended up borrowing one that used to belong to... Tony Hammick.

I had never been to Douai Abbey in Woolhampton, where British Shintaido has been holding this annual event for perhaps 5 years. From the name, I imagined it might be a Zen Buddhist centre, and the name "dou ai" could mean 道合 (literally "path-unification"), or perhaps 道愛 (literally "path-love"). It turned out that either of these meanings would have been suitable for the event, even though they have nothing to do with the actual name of the abbey, which is pronounced more in a way that describes the portly build and complexion of one of the monks who I glimpsed briefly (i.e., "doughy").

At the opening meeting, Minagawa-sensei asked everyone to share something of their hopes and expectations for the event. Many people mentioned aspirations quite naturally suited to the new year, such as finding renewal, new inspiration, or shedding the burdens of the past year. Others expressed a wish to simply enjoy practicing. This latter group included me, since I'm a Shintaido instructor located far from other instructors (in the Czech Republic), and don't often have the refreshing chance to shed my role as instructor and just study and practice (without too much of a language barrier).

Minagawa also mentioned the image he had in mind for this event: "quiet light," and he referred to Psalm 19:14 (Jerusalem Bible version):



The heavens declare the glory of God,  
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork;  
Day discourses of it to day,  
Night to night hands on the knowledge.

No utterance at all, no speech,  
No sound that anyone can hear;  
Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
And their message to the ends of the world.

Strikingly, in spite of the 1st practice being outdoors in beautiful crisp bright winter sunlight,



no-one mentioned staying warm as one of their ambitions, which I suppose indicates that the idealism of the British group is leavened with a good dose of realism. With the temperature at an untypical -2° C we could justify calling the event *kangeiko* (literally "cold practice"), though up until the point when I could no longer feel my frozen fingers and toes, I was trying to tell myself that "fresh" was the more applicable word.

But it really didn't matter, because the program was so engaging that I really didn't think about it.

### Practice 1 (outside):

1. Moving Tenshingoso with one hand: only A and E: only I and O
2. The same, but with 1 main hand and other hand supporting and following. Since both hands were now moving and cutting together in the same direction, this seemed to be a kind of transitional process into *toitsu-kihon* movement. Minagawa noted that this was the first time he had shared this technique in public.
3. *Toitsu-kihon*: Eiko sei (i.e., *daijodan kiri-komi musubi-dachi*)
4. Eiko Dai

We then obtained our *bokutoh* and continued with

5. *Dai kihon* with *bokutoh*: running *daijodan*, *jodan*, *chudan*, *gedan* (all *kirikomi*)
6. Continuous Eiko *kumitachi* (partner exercise with sword), emphasising the continuity without the need for running very large distances across the whole field. With instructors and others with more experience paired with those of lesser experience (some people were using the *bokutoh* for the first time), we did this in a suitably simplified form, the people with less experience repeating the simple *daijodan* attack without changing roles.
7. The instructors - soft Eiko kumite with *bokutoh*, continuously for 15 minutes.

To conclude, Minagawa-sensei asked Ula to lead us all in *tenso-shoko* (also called *age-oroshi*), gradually pointing our swords straight up to the heavens and then cutting down to the infinite horizon. Except that somehow Ula understood that it should be Eiko Dai, which is anyway essentially the same concept, but running and yelling. So instead of a quiet, calm meditative moment, we found ourselves again running for our lives, yelling and stretching our swords out to the sky. Just as we started running, the whole valley was suddenly was filled with the raucous clanging of church bells, as if to proclaim... (see above).

The party in the evening gathered steam as we were treated not only to the sounds of Terry's guitar and melodious voices of several females in the group (Kim and Carina in particular), but we also managed to enjoy the camaraderie of singing several popular songs as a group without breaking any glass in the pictures hanging on the walls.

Speaking of which, at one point in the evening the pictures on the walls became 3-dimensional and came alive. Not because we were eating magic mushrooms – though there was speculation about the mushrooms in the (delicious!) chilli – but because we played the game "What would you have done if it had happened?" The conceit of the game is that one person must leave the room; the others imagine some unusual or fantastic event that might be happening in the room just at that moment; they call the person back, and he/she cannot ask what the imagined event was, but can only ask "What would you have done if it had happened?" From the information gleaned from people's reactions to the imagined event, she/he must guess what it was. We came up with plenty of fanciful and imaginative ideas, needless to say accompanied by lots of giggling and laughing. Here are a few samples: What would you have done...

...if Masashi had been abducted by aliens?

...if we had all suddenly become invisible?

...if a huge snake had suddenly slithered out of the fireplace?

...if we had suddenly found a dead monk in the room?

...if the room had suddenly turned upside down and all the furniture were on the ceiling?

...if all the paintings in the room had suddenly come to life?

This last one began with an almost shocking moment of psychic link-up, when the idea came to me but then I thought the better of saying it, because I had already suggested several things earlier in the game. And then Charles said exactly what I was thinking; it had come to him, it seemed, at precisely the same moment. I suppose such "psychic" things happen to us constantly, but this time I really sat up and took note of it. Wow!

## Day 2

Early the next morning, some people got up in the winter blackness to go to the abbey and hear the monks do Matins, a kind of chanting ritual (others of us – yours truly included – remained like dead monks in our beds until a more reasonable hour). Not that I slept in exactly; I managed to join everyone out there in the frosty morning air to practice Taimyo, watching the gorgeous deep blue of night give way to the glow of the pre-dawn sky and the bright just-past-full moon. It was noisy as hell, what with all the birds screeching and and twittering and the constant stream of jets on their daily migration in and out of Heathrow. Somehow I hadn't noticed them up till now (the jets, that is). Too busy making our own sounds, I suppose.

During lunch, a quite interesting but somewhat controversial conversation erupted about the difficulties of growing larger Shintaido groups and the marketing and exposure of Shintaido to a wider public. I will try to summarise some of the points that were mentioned. (Disclaimer: the points may not be in the actual order in which they occurred. I have re-interpreted them, and in some cases their resemblance to real points, living or dead, is purely coincidental).

- Since the 1970s, real net income (that is, the relative cost of living compared to wages, adjusted for inflation) has gone steadily down in both the U.S. and Great Britain. In practical terms, this means that many people are working longer hours just to stay afloat, they have less leisure time and less disposable income, and the costs of

renting dojo spaces are relatively more expensive. It's objectively more difficult to grow a group now than in the past.

- As a student, I wish I could attend more Shintaido practices each week, but they are scattered about in different places. Why aren't there any full-time professional Shintaido instructors who offer classes in a dojo space dedicated to Shintaido? This would make it possible (indeed, necessary) to offer more classes, which would allow helps groups to grow and would help individuals to study more intensively and make better progress. Yoga, T'ai Chi and similar classes have grown in popularity in recent years; they are often completely booked, and there are instructors who make a living at it. Shintaido is a great and rich practice with many benefits. If they can do it, we can do it to, we just have to learn how.

- It is frustrating that we seem to have this same conversation again and again.

- It takes a long time to "grow" a Shintaido instructor, perhaps 8-10 years.

- It's very difficult to explain what Shintaido is and what the benefits are.

Perhaps the zeitgeist is simply not ready for Shintaido, or Shintaido is not suited to this age. The early days of Shintaido in the 60s and 70s were a time of big cars, economic growth, and naive consumption, so the expenditure of energy on demanding yet seemingly frivolous activities like jumping *up* the slopes of steep hills and so on was more suited to that era. Now the talk is all about conservation, saving energy, saving resources, economic contraction or slow-down, etc.

- If Shintaido is the kind of thing that will never be attractive to many people because it's too strange or too ill-defined, then it's just necessary to get a very large number of people to try it, knowing that only a few will stick with it.

- An area of great interest in the further development of Shintaido is bringing it to specialised communities in a workshop format. In other words, Shintaido has great value for people working in fields such as social work, hospice care, conflict resolution, safety training, etc. This can be a way to bring Shintaido to people who will recognise its practical value in the world, and also a way to bring them into Shintaido.

- As an instructor, I don't feel a need to grow the group very large. I am satisfied with a small group of 4-5 people.

- As a (different) instructor, I feel that I can grow and develop myself more effectively through the challenge of giving *gorei* to (leading) a somewhat larger group. It's important to me to have a larger group so that even when several members are absent due to illness, work, etc. there are still enough people to generate a feeling of excitement and enthusiasm. If the group is small, it's more difficult to attract new people. Their first impression is likely to be negative – that because it's not popular, either the discipline or the instructor is not good. Likewise, it's easier for new people to enter a larger group because it makes a better first impression, and also because it's easier to remain anonymous while one gets used to the various procedures, rituals and actual practice.



### Keiko 3

The third and final practice was in a nearby gym, and seemed to be focused mainly on taking the big feeling of practicing outdoors and reifying it into the more precise and formal technique of using the *bokutoh*. It concluded with Peter, Ula and myself in a 3-way partner exercise that started as *san-nin ichiretsu* ("three in a line"), but we just kept going and then after a while – I don't know what happened exactly, but something changed.

I didn't feel tired, I didn't feel excited, in a strange way I would

say didn't feel anything. Except the flow. I felt that I could have continued forever. The next day my legs were quite a bit sorer than they have been for a long time, and I had some difficulty navigating stairs. I love that feeling. It brings back memories.

## Winter light - Reflections on the Kangeiko

by Viola Santa

When I saw that the weather forecast for the Kangeiko weekend was promising sunshine and blue sky I was especially looking forward to practicing outdoors on the big field that by now holds quite a few good Shintaido memories for me.

At the opening meeting Masashi used the image of *Winter Light* to set the theme for the Kangeiko. Whilst I can't remember what he actually said about it, I instantly had a clear image of a very beautiful, gentle light in the winter sky. It was subtle, not hot or imposing itself yet undoubtedly present, loving, reassuring and patient. Somewhat distant and very near at the same time.

There was a beautiful moment exactly as we were finishing the outdoor keiko when the sun was just setting in a pale purple sky and the church bells nearby started to ring for several minutes.

Parts of keiko however felt very challenging to my tiring legs and aching arms. There were particularly a couple of times when I was "lucky" to share a loong kumite with instructors, who kindly helped me go beyond my comfort zone, which left me feeling exhausted and grateful to stop, and soon after quietly satisfied.

It's a kind of challenge I wouldn't want to openly ask for in my *sane* mind, but *beyond* my mind seems to be of a different view. Pulled between heaven and earth I really appreciate such kind and skilful support.

In the closing meeting I was a bit disappointed that I couldn't find anything specific to say about the weekend, I just knew I had had a good time, had enjoyed the singing and games in the evening and was happy to have bought a Bokuto.

It wasn't until the following afternoon sitting on the beach back home in Hove when the beautiful *Winter Light* around me seemed to bring me the following message: That there is the capacity in me to bring down and share this light and that I could believe in my ability to do this even if it seems dark around me. (hm, it felt real and like I didn't need to be in denial of that (anymore). There was a sense of responsibility without the heaviness)

That same evening (just as all the snow started) my boyfriend's 80 year old father, who normally is also the carer for his wife, got very ill. We both moved in with them for a few weeks, which was very challenging for everyone. That's when I felt that this *Winter Light* was really there with me and I was strangely enjoying to be there and to be able to offer my support and love to them. It felt surprisingly effortless and natural and also they really accepted my help.

Even though I was quite exhausted by the end (my boyfriend's father is now better), I feel inspired and very grateful to have had this experience. Another good kumite.

Thanks again for everyone's kindness and support.



*Attendees at the BS Kangeiko 2010 (all photos by Charlotte Stace).*

# What is a Cut?

## *An exchange of ideas by e-mail which preceded the kangeiko*

This exchange was prompted by Peter Furtado who was curious about the true nature of cutting...

### *1: Violence and Peace*

When I was mulling this stuff over pre 'Sword and Flower' Daienshu, my thoughts were about attitude and intention, and how they give meaning to an act. The same outward/physical act can have opposite meanings according to the intent of the actor. A cut could be hostile and aggressive, with the ambition of causing harm or damage. The desire may be to cut to the quick. The surgeon's scalpel could be used with murderous intent. It could equally be used to lance a poisonous boil, to cut out a malignant growth. And, the intention may be malign but the outcome accidentally benign, or the other way round. So, we cannot guarantee the outcomes, but nevertheless must take responsibility for our sense of purpose and our conscious intentions.

All of this connects in my mind to delivering Safety First Training. There the message is that, when dealing with violent and dangerous situations, bad things can happen by accident. But, if people try their best to apply the best available techniques, with an honest desire to help and not to hurt, who can ask for anything more. And, indeed, the intention has a weight and substance and a genuine significance.

So much for underlying motives. Now for your fundamental questions about what is actually happening when cutting without direct contact. Is anything happening? Are we indulging in an act of voluntarily shared illusion or delusion? Maybe. But I think not. I believe that when we have skin to skin contact, for example in Tenshingoso Kumite, there is a palpable sense of entering, inviting in, welcoming in, offering and exchanging energy. At times this feels as if there is a magical quality. At times it feels as if it is a kind of physical illustration of what empathy can and does mean. I also firmly, and fondly believe that skin contact is not essential for this process to take place. It can, and I believe does happen in all forms of kumite, sometimes just a little, sometimes gently, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes overwhelmingly. There's no knowing in advance, although its a pretty safe bet that if your Kumite partner is Masashi, Ito, or the Boss, powerful stuff will happen. In the past, my mental construct about what is occurring in this kind of situation leaned mostly towards the magical. However, having read a lot of stuff by Daniel Goleman, the Dalai Lama, Yongey Rinpoche and all that crew, I now see that there are available explanations that are to do with mirror neurons and all sorts of brain circuitry, which is quite amazing, but not old fashioned magic dependent.

For me, this all boils down to a deep seated belief that the experiences of cutting, and being cut are:

- Powerful
- Life affirming
- Liberating
- Dangerous i.e. to be treated and enacted with serious respect.
- Joyful
- And Absolutely Real.

Geoff Warr

### *2: The S.S. Great Britain*

After coming back from our household visit to Brunel's S. S. Great Britain in Bristol. What an amazing ship she was!

As you all might know, S.S. Great Britain was the world's first great ocean liner, a steamship built with iron with a propeller.

So why am I talking about it? What is the connection with her and Shintaido??



That's because when I stood right in front of this mighty ship under the sea level, (you can go under the water level without getting wet!) I discovered the most perfect curved lines of Tenshingosho "E"!!! I just could not stop moving my hands, doing an "E" cut on the spot, imagining this great ship cutting across the vast ocean, moving into the unknown territory of the sea, and bringing more than 180 passengers across to the new world. It is said that she was so strong that even after 30 years of sailing she didn't need any major repairs. So strong and effective, yet at the same time, delicate and beautiful. I felt that that's exactly what Shintaido can bring us. I had an image of Aoki sensei building this great ship called Shintaido for us all, so that anyone who has an aspiration can get on board and start sailing to the new world!

I used to often imagine the beautiful lines of Mt. Fuji when I did "E", but from now on the image of S.S. Great Britain will stay with me.

Nagako Cooper

*It occurs to me that if you were to stand inside the ship facing forward the curves of the bow would make a perfect Tenshingosho "I"...*

Charles Burns

### 3: A Reply

Thank you Geoff and Nagako for beautiful and interesting responses to my questions. I would like to add my own answer, actually - one which came to me a couple of nights ago.

I was doing a late-night keiko (the first for several weeks, and it was a lovely evening, with an apricot quarter-moon just rising and mist on the ground) and concentrating on finding an effective cut. Of course, it turned into Eiko. I cut down from heaven, down to the infinite horizon, and ran forward at the same time, towards that infinity. Just like always. But when I got to the point of stopping my run, my Eiko changed. I didn't focus on that horizon, on infinity, or the future. Instead, I started thinking about the 'thing' I had cut through to get there. You can't cut effectively without cutting something. What is it exactly? Is it the doors of perception? Or the limits of this whole imperfect and changeable world? Or is it me, my negativity and compromises and disappointments, all the things that hold me back?

I had an image of the story of Sleeping Beauty, where a hedge of thorns and brambles grows up around the sleeping girl, but when the prince arrives and starts to cut his way through, it magically parts to let him through. So, for the first time, when I came to the end of my run, I didn't do the usual shoko focusing into the glorious future. Instead I turned and confronted the stuff I had cut. Whatever that stuff was, I could feel it as something almost material and saw that it was a vital part of Eiko - a part I have always previously ignored.

It was a powerful moment, partly because I had been running towards some bright lights and when I turned back into the park, it was very black.

I didn't know what I had cut, but it felt like an unacknowledged part of me and my world. It may be the part of me I would rather get away from, I don't know. Whatever, it felt as if eiko - keiko - would be richer if I could incorporate a sense of this stuff in my practice. My question 'what is a cut?' might be better as 'what are you cutting'?

If, when doing Eiko solo, you are engaging with and therefore accepting - eventually in my case, after a quarter of a century - and perhaps ultimately changing those aspects of yourself that keep you earthbound, then perhaps, when cutting a partner doing kumite, you are doing the same with and for your partner.

It would explain why it feels as if kumite makes change possible (if not inevitable); why, as Geoff says, a cut from a Doshu can be so shocking.

Does this resonate with anyone else?

Peter Furtado

# Shintaido 2010

Daienshu in Ramsgate 26 - 28 March

**Venue:** Ramsgate

**Keiko:** Westwood School &/or local beach weather permitting.

**Price:** £150 per person incl. of keiko, B&B accommodation and all meals.

Examination fees are *separate*.

**This year we are privileged to have two of the most senior Shintaido instructors in the world join us for our Daienshu: Ito sensei and Minagawa sensei!**

**'Joyful Shining keiko' is this year's theme.**



We welcome both beginners and people who have some experience as well as all those who wish to take **exams**.

Do not miss this chance to deepen your keiko!



For more information, contact Geoff Warr on [gandmwarr@btinternet.com](mailto:gandmwarr@btinternet.com)  
[www.shintaido.co.uk](http://www.shintaido.co.uk)

# Comments on a beginner's experience of Shintaido and Taimyo so far.

by Susan Lacroix

I have been attending the shintaido bojutsu classes and practising taimyo with occasional lessons from Masashi for a few years now. What has happened and what have I learnt in that time? Has something changed in my practice and me? I would answer, yes, even if it is not so easy to be precise about what and how or how much.

On a basic level I have never returned from a class without feeling energised and inspired, however tired I had been before. This immediately shows me that my usual idea of my energy is very partial and narrow.

I have come to trust more in the actual forms themselves even when it seems that not only do I not understand them, especially in taimyo, but also when I feel unable to embody them. Occasionally the movements seem to do themselves, and when I manage just to follow them, they can express a meaning which my ordinary mind cannot apprehend but recognises in some way. The rhythm of the movements then seems to come effortlessly and there is a different quality to them and in me. In those moments there is more unity in me. At the same time I have come to see that form is a means, and that after a time it is possible to discard the form, as when one moves from sei to dai to free expression.

There is also a different relationship to the world. I mean that instead of a horizontal relationship where everything is seen from 'me', I become a place between above and below, there is a vertical dimension. When I am aware of this, especially if it happens out of class, the world changes for me.

The fluidity of body and mind or spirit that can be possible in others is inspiring and shows me how stiff I am in my body and even more in my attitudes and mind. The attempt to let go and follow the energy, listening to the other, in class, has tremendous relevance for my work with homeopathic clients and has helped me to see the consultation as a form of *neriai*, with benefit to me and hopefully the client. Something can let go a bit more easily these days and there can be a new warmth and sense of connection with others. This has been enhanced by the patience and generosity of the other people in the class, which leads to a feeling of being accepted. I know that my movements show exactly how I am so there is little possibility of hiding myself. This is both daunting and liberating.

A difficulty for me remains a tendency to miss the 'target,' when bringing my bo down in an exercise such as *dai jodan*, through the imagined idea that I might hit and hurt someone. The understanding of sending energy and intention through the bo, and the beneficial effect of that on the other person has become more real for me, although I still revert to the habitual behaviour. But I feel this has somehow helped me to begin to become clearer and more direct in daily life.

It has been very exciting to witness the changes in other members of the class as we go on, in their manifestation of shintaido and in themselves. This shows me that change is possible and is encouraging.

I am also given the gift of feeling gratitude, something which is rare in my daily life. While also feeling some sorrow at the shortcomings of my practice I know that my only way to express this gratitude is to continue to practise as I can, with no expectations.

# Keiko and group culture

## Thoughts on creating successful group dynamics in Shintaido groups

Pierre Quettier

In France we too have a history of breaking our organisation - twice. The last time I was really involved and participated in creating the situation. It evolved and came to an end, so we had to break it. I then wondered what had happened, finally reached some understanding, and would like to share this.

I have an idea of what we call a *disque* in French. There are two directions:

1. the social (horizontal) aspect of the practice;
2. the psychological (vertical) aspect which is the development of the person.

I came to the conclusion that both are linked. The social and cognitive need to be linked if we want an interesting learning situation.

For the vertical aspect the researcher called Gregory Bateson has a nice theory of learning and communication. The basic idea is *meta*; what do you learn when you learn something? You learn that 'thing' but you also learn from the context itself of learning. When we teach we tend to forget the context we are creating and end up saying 'do what I say and not what I do'. However, students learn more from the situation than from what you say. That's his basic idea.

He came up with several levels. You can read his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972). He said we learn basic stimulus-answer-reinforcement, the basic education. However, because things are always evolving, we tend to infer a basic law; so if I learn in a rich environment, I will think the world is rich; if I learn in a harsh environment, I will think the world is hard. I create my beliefs about the world from the *situation* of learning, rather than what I have been taught.

Then the question is, is there a meta level, another level after this? Yes, there is. What makes my world and my beliefs is me. I am the level creating the unity of this belief system.

Then, can I go beyond myself? But here Bateson has no answer. When we learn Shintaido or meditation, we know that there is some kind of consciousness beyond ourselves. I am the same now as when I was 18 or 25; but I am also not the same. We are always the same but we are different too. In some situations, I tend to be a certain person and in others I am a different person. So I am not one, I am many.

What makes me one is a level of consciousness which is beyond zero. Bateson doesn't talk about that, but he does talk about Zen. By doing basic practice we learn some things from the practice itself and some things from the way our teachers behave. This creates our social personality and from this we somehow become really used to this world. But this is not the real world, there might be another and we have to go beyond it. I think our *keiko* is a place where we can experience all these levels and create learning of a very high standard from body practice. So for me, this is the only theory I have to explain why we can learn from our body. One level builds the next, and so on. When we live in *keiko* (and all this practice makes the first cycle of learning) our *keiko* space is included in our social life, our own relationship with the teacher, relationships between teachers, between people, all are somehow linked with what *keiko* teaches us. This social space is connected to the beliefs we are building up. The *keiko* may be aiming at some sort of world but if our social life is different then the way we behave in Shintaido society may be different too. Organising *gasshukus*, coming to *keiko*; these are learning spaces too.

Then can we make a connection between what's happening in *keiko* between partners, and what's happening in the group? Sometimes group life is really very different from *keiko* life, and if that's the case it doesn't work for very long. It teaches something very different, that the teaching is wrong, if there is no connection or harmony in the group.

Finally, outside group life there is society and our wider culture. The foundations of Shintaido lie in Japanese culture. Many things that go without saying for Japanese are included in both our group and *keiko* life. We don't always know where these come from but they are there, things like bowing to a room seem strange to us. You're supposed to do it in *keiko* and discover what it means, but other things may not be so interesting, or may not fit. How can we change them? You can't change the *keiko* too much or it won't be Shintaido any

more. The French tried this, saying “This isn’t French culture so we won’t do it, bowing to the *dojo* is stupid” but found if you don’t do this you will miss many important things about *keiko* space. You cannot lightly discard this part. So we don’t know what to discard and what to keep, it’s a problem.

Personally I tried discarding everything: *hakama*, bowing to *dojo* etc; but this didn’t have a good effect on the group, nor on myself, so I thought ‘now I understand what it’s for, even if I do it differently.’ Gradually I have either found a French way to do what’s interesting in *keiko*, or I keep it the Japanese way but now can explain it. As an instructor I had to do this, my own teacher couldn’t teacher me that. I had to discard the unnecessary, and follow my own experience.

We have to be clever and honest in experimenting with this. Discarding things can seem to have a good effect on the group but in the long term can be difficult. The way a teacher lives his own life creates a different world, so that can have a big effect on the group. It depends on the world you want to create. In general it’s better for a teacher to live a moral life.

We have to be aware of the connection between these three aspects. When we are teaching something from a different culture within our own culture there are bound to be cultural issues in what we do. We have to be clever.

What we learn from *keiko* is how to learn; how to learn quickly and how to change quickly; even if I just look at something I learn from it and I get the essence of its importance. What is important is to be ourselves and to learn from each other. I will do like you in order to learn from you, and once I learn I will stop doing it like you. This is *kata* culture. There is often the idea that we do Shintaido so we are all one, all together and must understand each other, but this is wrong. When we organise things internationally we see how different we all are. At that time we can’t be conservative with our own culture, we have to be clever. We have to be able to learn.

For me, the most important concept of our own era is the hyperlink, we have to learn to hyperlink to each other! You can surf the web in an empty manner, or zap through the TV channels, but if you don’t build up your own integrity or way of interpreting things, you cannot gain anything from it. When we have our own understanding of things, we can hyperlink to anything:

- Self-awareness.
- Three dimensions
- Keiko* Teaching systems, the *kata* system
- Social system
- Cultural system

We have to think, our social life and performance integrates the others. It needs thinking about, trying out, discussing.

## Festival Avtisma

### *Introducing Shintaido at an event in Slovenia*

by Charles Burns

Those of you have been reading Taimyo for sometime will have read intermittently about the work I have done presenting Shintaido at Autscape, a series of annual autism related conferences organised in the UK. Last summer I was contacted by the organiser of a similar event in Slovenia and invited to exhibit some of my paintings there. The event was to take place in September 2009 and was described as a ‘Festival of Autism’. The idea seemed to be to put the whole subject of Autism related conditions in a more positive light by showing the huge range of creative abilities as well as disabilities associated with it.

Hearing about the nature of the event it occurred to me that Shintaido might interest them too, and so I told them about the workshops I’d presented at Autscape. I explained my feeling that Shintaido had been a huge benefit in learning to cope with the condition myself, to the point where only those who know me really well can tell there is any kind of problem at all. Although there is no way to scientifically prove this kind of benefit (it could be that I would have developed this way in life even without Shintaido

practice) I do feel it to be true on quite a profound level. I find the evidence in my own *hitori-geiko* which has shown me so often that when I'm practicing on a regular basis things tend to go well for me, and when I'm not, they generally don't.

The organisers were interested in the idea and agreed to add a Shintaido workshop to the conference timetable. Soon afterwards they reported that about 30 people had applied to join the workshop, wondering if perhaps this was too many? I told them it was, so we agreed I should run two workshops and limit the numbers to 20 people each. Looking at the conference website (even when translated badly into English by Google, see inset) I could see they had done a very professional job of promoting the workshop and integrating it into the structure of the event. I began to get the feeling that this was going to be a rather different experience than events I've attended in the UK, where that kind of corporate style publicity is quite rare.

The actual event took place in Ljubljana (the capital of Slovenia) and did indeed turn out to be very different to the Autscape events. There, there have always been a wide range of people, mostly adults, almost all diagnosed (or self diagnosed) as having some kind of autism related condition, as well as a few carers who were attending the event to look after certain individuals. Over the years I have formed a particular way of working with this group and I felt confident I could transpose those skills to another event. However in Ljubljana there were far less people on the autistic spectrum and far more 'autistic professionals' or carers of various sorts who found themselves in charge of children (mostly) with various autistic problems. In addition I discovered the two Shintaido sessions had been scheduled back to back, one at 4pm and the next at 6pm with just 15 minutes in between!

In each group there was just one individual with autism, and I could see it would be a challenge to integrate them into the keiko, event though these were the people I felt most able to teach.

The audience had mostly been attracted to the event in order to learn new techniques to help them in their work. This was quite a new group for me, and I did have a moment of self doubt as this became clear. It was a challenge to know what to show them, but I decided to stick to my original *keiko* plan (see inset 2, overleaf) as this was a tried and tested formula for me and I had no desire to experiment on the spot. This turned out to be a good thing and the two simple keikos both went well, with initial reactions of surprise (and some hilarity) giving way to a deep sense of quiet and concentration during the *renki-kumite* exercise. One person who was acting as my interpreter actually took part in both keiko (over 3 hours practice in total) and was very enthusiastic afterwards.

At the end of each keiko we did a short Q&A session, mostly through the interpreter, and what impressed me about all those there was their sincerity and desire to help, but also their overwhelming need to find some way (any way) to make genuine human contact with those in their charge. Most of them had not expected to spend so long in physical exercise, but had expected some kind of talk with practical demonstrations, but all

### Festival Avtisma, Ljubljana, September 2009 from [kultura.avtizem.org](http://kultura.avtizem.org)

The theme of this first festival was dedicated to autism culture and the artistic creativity of individuals with autism. In the last decade or two, the public have been able to meet a lot of artists with autistic spectrum disorders. Their talent has been freed of the negative and "eccentric" overtones, a sign that their art (paintings, photographs, sculpture, music, drawing comics, etc..) has become a legitimate art form. For these individuals there is a double benefit: their talent in the arts is a source of both income and independence, this is an important tool in their effective integration into society.

The festival theme was "Culture of autism - myth or fact?" We wanted to draw attention to the broader aspects of the culture of autism. We encouraged participants to think about whether autism may be viewed as a sort of culture. Autism, of course, is not culture in the classical sense, but a developmental difference at an individual level, caused by atypical neurology. Autism affects how an individual eats, clothes themselves, uses their leisure and interprets the world. The Center for Autism, through the works of individuals with autism shown at the festival, sought to establish a bridge between their inner world and the general public, which has until recently hardly grasped what the internal world of individuals with autism means.

seemed pleasantly surprised and full of post-*keiko* good feeling. Again and again the *renki kumite* exercise in particular seemed to have impressed itself upon them, especially as both the autistic individuals present were naturally talented at it and so many others there had experienced a new kind of communication with them.

My main misgiving was the problem I had impressing on these people that the Shintaido was for them, for their own development, rather than a tool they could immediately take and use to help the development of others. This is something I would like to discuss with other Shintaido instructors if I can. While *renki kumite* itself is clearly quite a harmless occupation, nevertheless I was nervous about the idea of professionals trying it out with autistic children in their care after only one lesson from me. Would it be of any real benefit without the years of Shintaido practice from which it springs? In addition I was concerned for the care-givers themselves, who were so centred on helping others that, a bit like new parents, they seemed incapable of focussing on themselves.

In general this was an interesting and worthwhile experiment, but one that I need to think more about before repeating. It was a high profile event and the organisers were at once kind and professional, flying both Kazumi and myself to Ljubljana and putting us up in a nice hotel, not to mention organising the dojo and an interpreter. One concern I had about the event was that the few autistic individuals present seemed to be rather 'on show', singled out as different, rather than simply valued as individuals with a different take on things. This gave me a slightly uncomfortable feeling overall which I will need time to interpret for myself.

*Renki-kumite (BS archive photo)*



### Keiko plan for Festival of Autism in Slovenia

1. Make a circle, introductions all round. What are you looking for?
2. Turning shoulders to get used to the idea of movement in a group.
3. Aozoro-taiso (blue sky exercise) to get used to the idea of moving more and using voice.
4. Short and careful kenko-taiso routine, top to toe, explaining each exercise (but not doing too many).
5. Slow kneeling meditation and bow, to create the feeling of formality.
6. Kumite: standing jump with partners (with alternate form for any with weak legs). Change partners several times to get used to partner work. Show how to loosen shoulders and connect with partner's centre (explain the idea of using the *koshi*).
7. Kihon: return to circle and do standing *tsuki*. Start very slow and gradually speed up, introducing *kiai*.
8. Renki-kumite: Various styles as time and attendees dictate
  - a. cupped hands (explain basic idea of *renki-kumite* and using the *koshi*).
  - b. hooked middle finger (following partners energy without physical force)
  - c. palm-to-palm (present this as a very advanced form)
9. Finish: repeat meditation and bow.

## A couple of Dreams

Geoff Warr

Last summer, I had two dreams. They came on consecutive nights. Each was powerfully vivid. They came when I was absorbed with thoughts and feelings relating to work and Shintaido. It was straight after the end of the school term. The first dream came when I was staying at Ula's home, the second at Masashi's.

**Dream 1:** I encounter a huge bowl, filled to the brim with a thick and nasty oil, in which are floating a few pieces of food. I know that I have to eat, despite the fact that the prospect is nauseating. How can I take any food without dropping into, and drowning in the poisonous oily nastiness? How could I manage to throw away the whole mess without making a public and painful fuss? I awaken from the dream, feeling anxious and unresolved.

I tell Ula about the dream at breakfast, and through the telling realise its connections to work issues, and feel a sense of some relief.

**Dream 2:** I encounter a fantastic mosaic cake. It comprises intricate geometric patterns, each segment of which is separate, wholesome and hugely attractive. The cake is being sliced into pieces, each of which looks complete, and seems to magically contain all the right elements in perfect proportion. I feel perplexed. How is this miracle possible? I role over in my sleep, open my eyes, and stare at Masashi's two ceremonial swords, a foot away from my face. Aah ! Its so obvious.

This second dream follows a full day and half a night of talking with Masashi and Ula about Shintaido, and includes discussions about the vast size of the entire Shintaido curriculum, the aesthetic beauty of Keiko, the challenges of taking bits and pieces from the whole that could be seen in isolation as being unrepresentative or even distorting.

The second dream gave me a great sense of comfort and re-assurance, realising how safe we all are in the hands of Master Masashi.



## The Hidden World of Hikari *The ESC Forum 2010*

The Annual ESC Forum is a unique opportunity for Shintaido Instructors, assistants (and anybody else actively teaching Shintaido) to get together and learn from each other. There are no formal gasshuku leaders, anybody is welcome to teach, or to attend *keiko* led by any other instructor, either on a theme of your choice, or a theme which reflects the theme of the gasshuku (The Hidden World of Hikari). In past years there have been a multitude of *keikos* to choose from, allowing

each participant to tailor their own gasshuku experience, attending as much or as little of the gasshuku as they wish. This year's event is to be hosted in the UK.

23rd - 25th July 2010, UWE (Frenchay campus), Bristol  
Cost £275.00 (inc full board accomodation)

To learn more about the event and register on-line please visit  
[www.shintaido.co.uk/forum.html](http://www.shintaido.co.uk/forum.html)

**Our BS examiners are:**

Masashi Minagawa (all subjects, Karate, Bohjutsu and Shintaido)

Charles Burns (Bohjutsu -up to 1 kyu, Shintaido up to 3 kyu)

Ula Chambers (Shintaido - up to assistant)

During 2009 local examinations have taken place at the Bath Boh Club and also at the Light waves group in Nailsworth.

British Shintaido has also run exam sessions in Brighton in the spring and in Bristol in the autumn. We have run sessions alongside events and also as a stand alone exam session. Most recently Pierre sensei from Paris was invited to be guest examiner so that higher kyu karate exams could be take place.

Congratulations to all who studied hard and prepared themselves for examinations, and many thanks to all those who worked to ensure the exam sessions ran smoothly.

Here are the results from this year.

**Shintaido**

Charlotte Stace	Shoto-ka
David Cooper	Chuto-ka
Mikiko Cameron	Chuto-ka
Liz Terry	Chuto-ka
Andrew Stones	Shoto-ka
Kim Chan	Koto-ka
Viola Santa	Koto-ka

**Bojutsu**

Nimi Furtado	9 kyu
James Ferguson	9 kyu
Alastair Muir	7 kyu
Anton Saxton	5 kyu
Charlotte Stace	9 kyu
Miles Bennett	7 kyu
Jamie Hamilton	5 kyu
Masashiro Minagawa	1 kyu
Andrew Stones	9 kyu
Kim Chan	9 kyu
Anton Saxton	4 kyu
Paul Buck	2 kyu
Emi Minagawa	1 kyu

**Karate**

Jamie Hamilton	7 kyu
Andrew Stones	8 kyu
Ula Chambers	3 kyu
Charles Burns	2 kyu
Mieko Hirano	1 kyu

**Exam sessions in 2010**

Following feedback from examinees, in 2010 we plan to run examination sessions during BS events. The planned dates are:

~ March 27/28<sup>th</sup> during the Mini Daienshu,

~ September 25/26<sup>th</sup> during the Autumn British Shintaido Workshop

~ July 23/25<sup>th</sup>. European Forum at the University of West England, Bristol.

Advanced level examinations (Karate and Bojutsu shodan to nidan, and Shintaido graduate to Instructor) will be held during the ESC Forum. Practitioners who have attained Assistant (or 1 kyu) and above are eligible to attend this event.

**Taimyo Editor Needed!**

Peter Furtado is the out-going editor for this magazine, this is the last edition in which he will be involved. This magazine is in needed of new blood and fresh ideas! It's the most interesting and rewarding of BS jobs, so if you're fancy a go do please get in touch with any of the Management team. Support is available.

# Programme, classes & contacts

2010 Programme (see [www.shintaido.co.uk](http://www.shintaido.co.uk) for further details)

27-28 March	BS Daienshu, Ramsgate
18 April	Karate Workshop, Bristol; contact Pam Minagawa
9 May	BSC meeting, Oxford
23-25 July	ESC Forum, UWE Bristol (Als only)
13-14 Sept	BS autumn exam event (location tbc)
13-14 Nov	BSC autumn workshop, Ramsgate (Als only)

## Contacts

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## Regular Classes

Classes led by current BS Instructors or assistants. Shintaido classes and their venues do change on a regular basis, so do check before attending an unfamiliar class.

<b>Monday:</b>	Stroud, Wynstones School, early evening. Shintaido for kids & parents Ramsgate, evening, tai-chi or Shintaido.
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Nailsworth, Christchurch Hall, 1.30 - 3.30pm, Lightwaves class 4.00 - 5.30pm, bojutsu for kids Bath, University of Bath, 7.30 - 9pm, Bath Bojutsu Club
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Farnham, Farnham Maltings, 7.30 - 9pm, Shintaido
<b>Thursday:</b>	Brighton, Hollingbury Methodist Church, 8.00 - 10.00 pm, Shintaido
<b>Saturday:</b>	Thames, Richmond Old Deer Park, from 8am (irregular class)
<b>Sunday:</b>	Reading, Balmore Park, Caversham, morning (private bojutsu sessions) Godalming, Broadwater Park, Godalming, late morning (irregular class)
<b>Weekends:</b>	Bristol, specialist classes by Minagawa sensei, contact Masashi.

TAIMYO - NEXT ISSUE Summer issue copy date August 15th. Please send articles, pictures, ideas to [newsletter@shintaido.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@shintaido.co.uk) by then.