



SHUMEI'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SHUMEI

VOL. 266 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2006

A SHARED VISION Shumei & the United Nations

Alice Cunningham &
Dena Merriam

AN ANNIVERSARY IN AMERICA

Kaicho-Sensei's Message
to Shumei America

TAIKO
Awakening the Spirit
Koji Nakamura

SHUMEI MAGAZINE is the English language publication of the Shumei Family for the international Shumei community. Our purpose is to inform through the presentation and discussion of Meishusama's teachings, and by being a forum for the voices of Shumei's members and friends.

OUR PURPOSE: Shumei America is a spiritual organization comprised of people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds who transform their lives and the lives of others by focusing Divine Light.

We provide an environment for spiritual growth by practicing Jyorei as a purification of the spirit, appreciating art and beauty, and promoting Natural Agriculture.

ABOUT THE COVER:

'Mother and Child,' by sculptor Giacomo Manzù, presented as a gift to the UN from the government of Italy in 1989, now stands in the North Garden of the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. A mother, with arms stretching out to heaven, gives her infant the gift of flight. The sculpture is a fine metaphor for Shumei's hope for the future of the world and its young, an aspiration we wish to realize through our association with the UN. Please see story concerning Shumei's work as an NGO on page 4. Photo by Andrea Brizzi. (UN Photo.)

SHUMEI MAGAZINE STAFF

Editor: George Bedell

Text Editor: Gerard Rohlfing

Photo Editor: Don Riedel

Editorial Facilitator: Eugene Imai

Agricultural & Environmental Editor: Alan Imai

Cultural Events Editor: Jane Imai

Youth Editor: Akemi Imai

Contributors: Pauline Lomas & Patricia McNaughton

Editorial Consultants: Atsushi Fujimaki, Roy Gibbon, & Linda Whitaker

Japanese Language Editors: Hidetoshi Yano & Max Kondo

Editorial Assistants: Bibi Chapman, Robbie Christianson, & Sandra Snyder-Traverso

Photographers: Ron Cunningham & Paul Maska

SUBMISSIONS: We welcome all submissions. However, before submitting articles, please read our Shumei Magazine Guidelines, which can be obtained upon request at Shumei.America@charter.net. We prefer that all submissions be sent to us by e-mail.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: To cover postage and handling, subscriptions to SHUMEI Magazine can be obtained for \$20.00 per year (\$30.00 if outside the U.S.). Please make your check payable to SSA. Send your request with your name and address to: SHUMEI Magazine Subscriptions Dept., 2430 East Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, California 91107.

EDITORIAL POLICY: Shumei is a spiritual and humanitarian organization committed to furthering the well being of all humankind. Reflecting this, the editorial stance of SHUMEI Magazine is apolitical and nonpartisan. Nor do we support one religious point of view over another. However, we recognize and respect the rights of individual contributors to express their own outlook in matters concerning social justice and humanitarian efforts, and their entitlement to uphold their own beliefs. Therefore, the implied or explicit views expressed by our contributors do not necessarily represent those of the Shumei organization or the editorial staff of this publication.

CONTENTS

Kannon's Way	3
A Shared Vision	
Shumei and the United Nations	4
Alice Cunningham and Dena Merriam	
An Anniversary in America	8
An Address to Shumei America	10
Kaicho-Sensei (Ms Hiroko Koyama)	
Silent Treasures of Smiles and Kindness	12
Eriko Ando	
Taiko—Awakening the Spirit	13
Koji Nakamura	

SHUMEI CENTER LOCATIONS

ASIA:

Hong Kong Center

111 Chuk Yeung Road, Sai Kung HONG KONG
Phone: 852 2792 1998 Fax: 852 2295 0370
E-mail: hk567@netvigator.com

Manila Center

Shumei Philippines Inc.
Unit 906 Tower B, Valencia Hills Condominium,
Valencia Corner. N. Domingo St. Quezon City,
PHILIPPINES
Phone: 63 2 721 7337 Fax: 63 2 725 2576
E-mail: shumeiph@pldtdsl.net

Singapore Center

Block 911, Tampines, Street 91, #08-101
SINGAPORE 520911
Phone: 65 6785 8942 Fax: 65 6260 7307

Taipei Center

No. 3 Lane 90 Tienme East Road Taipei City TAIWAN
Phone: 886 2 2872 1152 Fax: 886 2 2874 0369

EUROPE:

Adapazari Center

Korucuk M-2 daire 8 Adapazar
Sakarya TURKEY
Mobil: (+90) 544 557 2482 & (+90) 544 557 2483
E-mail: ozono@superonline.com

Belfast Center

55 Lakeside Dr., Belfast, N. IRELAND BT10 ONU
Phone & Fax 01232-601184

Frankfurt Center

Thomas Mann Str. 1
60439 Frankfurt am Main GERMANY
Phone: 49 69 570 00123 Fax: 49 69 576 350
E-mail: frankfurt@shumei.eu

Istanbul Center

Cihangir CD No. 6 D:4
Beyoglu, Istanbul 34433 TURKEY
Phone & Fax: 90 212 293 0603
E-mail: shumei-tr@hotmail.com

London Center

Flat 5, 25 Adamson Rd, London, NW3 3HT, U.K.
Phone: 44 207 483 2700
Fax: 44 207 483 4981 E-mail: london@shumei.eu

Milan Center

Via Mauro Macchi 26
20124 Milan ITALY
Phone: 39 0267078964 Fax: 39 0266719212
E-mail: milan@shumei.eu

Paris Center

20 rue Réaumur 75003 Paris, FRANCE.
Phone: 33 (0)1 47 03 40 88 Fax: 33 (0)1 47 03 33 32
E-mail: paris@shumei.eu

NORTH AMERICA:

Shumei America National Center

2430 East Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, California 91107, USA
Phone: (626) 584-8841 Fax: (626) 584-8846
E-mail: Info@Shumei.org

Hollywood Center

7406 Franklin Ave.
Los Angeles, California 90046, USA
Phone: (323) 876-5528 Fax: (323) 876-7961
Shumeihlwd@sbcglobal.net

New York Center

165 Elizabeth St., 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10012, USA
Phone: (212) 219-2737
Fax: (212) 274-1055

Pennsylvania Center

38 Conrad Rd., Alburtis, Pennsylvania 18011, USA
Phone: (610) 845-7297
E-mail: shumeipenn@aol.com

San Francisco Center

405 Serrano Dr. Apt. 6A
San Francisco, California 94132 USA
Phone & Fax: (415) 585-8548

Shumei International Institute

3000 East Dream Way Road
P.O. Box 998, Crestone, Colorado 81131, USA
Phone: 719 256-5284 Fax: 719 256-5245

Toronto Center

32 Brimorton Drive
Scarborough, ONT MIP 3Y9, CANADA
Phone & Fax: 416 438-0167

Vancouver Center

4461 Cambie Street, Vancouver B.C. V5Z 2Y8 CANADA
Phone: 1-604-875-6123 Fax: 1-604-875-6123

Victoria Center/Pender Island Farm

2235 Port Washington Road
Pender Island B.C., V0N 2M1, CANADA
Phone: 250 629-6283 Fax: 250 629-6287
E-mail: p.island@cablelan.net

SOUTH AMERICA:

Sao Paulo Center

Av. Brig. Luis Antonio, 1930 Bloco I-121
CEP : 01318-909
Bela Vista-Sao Paulo-SP, BRAZIL
Phone and Fax 55 11 3253-7335
E-mail: shumeibr@uol.com.br

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

International Center and Home Offices

2 Shinen, Shigaraki-cho, Koka-shi, Shiga
529-1814 JAPAN
Phone: 81 74 882-3121 Fax: 81 74 882-2922
Misono International Department e-mail:
kokusai@shumei.or.jp

SHUMEI'S WEB SITES:

Shumei: www.shumei.org

SII Crestone Center: www.shumeicrestone.org

Shumei Taiko Ensemble: www.shumeitaiko.org

Shumei Arts Council of America: www.shumeiarts.org

Information concerning Jyorei: www.jyorei.org

Natural Agriculture: www.shumei-na.org

If you have questions about the Shumei organization, please contact us by e-mail at: info@Shumei.org

Excerpts from Meishusama's Teachings on Kannon's Way

This is the sixth of six installments of excerpts from the "Kannon's Way" teachings of Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, that were scheduled to be published in SHUMEI Magazine during 2006.

The following address was delivered by Meishusama at the opening ceremony of the Kannon Society of Japan on the evening of January 1, 1935. The Kannon Society was the first spiritual organization that Meishusama founded.

The text is not a literal translation of the original speech. In consideration of the historical context in which the speech was delivered, some additional information has been added for the sake of better understanding by non-Japanese readers. The translation below has been edited and abridged for Shumei Magazine. The full English translation was provided at the Grand Sampai at Shumei's International Center, Misono, in 2004, where the speech was read in full to those in attendance by Shumei's president, Kaicho-Sensei. The three poems that end the text were written by Meishusama under the title, "The World of Light." They can be found in a collection of Meishusama's poems entitled "Miakarishu," on page 44. These poems were not part of Meishusama's original address to the Kannon Society. They were added here because of their close relation to the message of his address.

Creating the World of Light

The aim of the Kannon¹ Society, relying on Kannon's power, is to create a World of Light, a world that is spiritually illuminated, with no darkness such as suffering, crime, and vice. This is the world that since ancient times many sages, saints, and great religious leaders have dreamed and preached of, and made rigorous efforts to realize. However, such a world has not yet been realized—not even one remotely similar to it. So naturally, it is difficult for people to place much faith in something as intangible as an ideal world. But here I say to you that with my understanding and the manifestation of Kannon's miraculous work, this ideal is possible, and we can without doubt move rapidly towards it.

Just seven years ago, I experienced a revelation through Kannon, who is also known as Izunome.² I was told of God's great plan for a world of Light, and that I would play a role in its creation. This was a very astonishing experience. I found it difficult to understand why this was happening to me, and tried to dismiss it. However, since that day I have been shown a series of unimaginable things, all of which were highly meaningful and yet beyond description. I gradually began to understand God's plan and the work I would be doing. After some time, I became convinced that Kannon has been preparing me as an instrument for this divine task.

Often, I am looked upon as being an easy-going person, and I think this is true with regards to the surface impression that I give. But honestly, I am a person who is at times inclined to be a bit too cautious, caring about the tiny details, and therefore I can also appear to be a hesitant person. Because I am such a person, Kannon's spirit had to show me ample evidence that would induce me to accept the work that needed to be done. What amazes me is that the things that have been shown to me by Kannon are now unfolding before my eyes.

The ancient prophecy about the coming of the world of Maitreya,³ or Heaven on Earth, will indeed be realized. I have clearly come to under-

stand what I am supposed to do with respect to this divine work. Kannon's absolute power is the catalyst that is using me to generate and help realize this prophecy.

Now the time has come, and the absolute power of Kannon, the compassionate power of God, will be more clearly revealed to the world. It is a manifesting force that will unite the elements of Daijo and Shojo.⁴ Our organizational objective is to bring this about.

I would like to describe the two types of faith we see these days, Shojo and Daijo. First, Shojo faith can be portrayed as a self-centered faith, which is only concerned with individual interests and benefits. It is likely that those who practice this faith will show concern over their family, but at no time do they have any serious considerations about society, country, or humanity. This is also a faith that includes gratitude. Gratitude expressed seems splendid, but it is solely related to family matters such as health of family and success in business.

On the other hand, the Daijo faith is concerned with much broader issues. People who practice this type of faith are constantly concerned with social problems. Although they care about the big issues of the country or the world and devote themselves to finding solutions, they tend to forget about themselves and even sacrifice their relationship to their family. This faith, associated with a passion for working to help many individuals, seems very respectable, but yet it does not perfectly accord with truth from my perspective. Of course, there are times when this Daijo faith has real value, but it does not have practical value all the time.

It is obvious to me that both the Daijo and Shojo faiths are somewhat distant from the truth, and being separate, they cannot fully respond to God's plan. An ideal type of faith is one that is neither exclusively Daijo nor exclusively Shojo. People of the faith we practice here show remarkable flexibility. They are fully capable of adopting the Daijo or Shojo approach depending on time and situation, doing this in almost the same manner as one choosing to wear the appropriate clothing for a specific temperature or season.

The self-centered Shojo faith cannot help humanity transform spiritually. Instead, self-interest naturally leads to friction and conflict amongst people everywhere. These problems are inevitably a contributing cause to wars.

At the other extreme, people of the Daijo faith tackle these problems by sacrificing themselves. Their attitude and actions appear to be very admirable, and we know that many individuals in history have devoted their lives to helping humanity. But, despite their great deeds, an ideal state of the world has not resulted from their tremendous efforts. It seems clear that the Daijo approach alone cannot be the true solution at all.

So, I feel sorrow to see people practicing this kind of faith. It sounds very fine to make sacrifices for the greater cause, but those who are actually pursuing it eventually face an impasse. As they involve their family, friends, and associates in the same logjam, they cannot avoid causing discord with people to whom they relate. And because their mindsets are so deeply absorbed in the Daijo faith, they simply believe they are working faithfully for God in a just and righteous way. It is often observed that they even take any difficulties they face as necessary trials given by God. But, the harder they try to work for God in this manner, the more they become misunderstood and isolated. Eventually, they come to various dead ends and need to be supported by others. This type of thinking can be seen in every religion. If this is reality, how is an ideal world possible?

In creating a heavenly world, it is crucial to focus on an ultimate unit around which our world is constructed and organized. That unit is every one of us: each individual. The world is made up of people who form countries. Countries are composed of cities, towns, and villages. Cities, towns,

1. Although "Kannon" is the Buddhist deity of wisdom and compassion, in this speech Meishusama interprets Kannon as a manifestation of God's compassion.

2. The term 'Izunome' denotes following an unbiased, middle path: a moderate course of action that is neither Shojo nor Daijo, but a combination of both, depending on circumstances.

3. Maitreya Bodhisattva, known as 'Miroku Bosatsu' in Japan, is the future incarnation of Buddha, who will liberate the world after it has sunk to its lowest level of corruption, thereby heralding in a golden age, Heaven on Earth.

4. Meishusama's way of using these terms is quite different from the general usage. Daijo and Shojo are Buddhist terms: Daijo is called Mahayana in Sanskrit, and means "Greater Vehicle"; Shojo, in Sanskrit called Hinayana, means "Lesser Vehicle." These terms are often used to describe the two main schools of Buddhism. Meishusama, however, expanded their meaning to incorporate two distinctive attitudes and qualities of life.

and villages are made up of families, and families are made up of individuals. Therefore, if the individuals who comprise the basic unit cannot be helped, there is no way to help the entire world. The Shojo faith, which emphasizes only the benefit of the individual, and the Daijo faith, which sacrifices the individual, are both mistaken and not complete. In order to achieve complete relief, the world and the individual must be equally helped. When the individual is helped and elevated, then by extension the world may be helped and made whole. Accordingly, the first emphasis must be on helping and perfecting the individual. For example, if one takes a single family as a model of the world, when the family achieves an ideal state and is supported well, so too, others in the world are helped, as well.

Creating the world of light seems to be very difficult, but I truly believe that it is not. All that is needed is to inhabit the world with family units that are free from illness, poverty, and strife. Then the world will be in a state of true peace. The power of Kannon has to do with the world and with the light from the East. And regardless of when and where this expression originated, the fact that it was coined at all is profoundly mysterious.

I would like to briefly discuss some things about our world history. In the beginning, civilization arose in the East. For a long time, it flourished in these regions and began its gradual spread westward. Eventually, each of the civilizations in those areas reached a peak, and subsequently, this multicultural legacy came to a culmination in the Roman civilization. This mixture is what we consider the basic foundation of present-day Western civilization. In terms of God's plan for the world, this has a profound significance. Two great civilizations had emerged, the vertically inclined Eastern, and the horizontal Western. To express it in different terms, Eastern civilization is characterized as Shojo, and Western is Daijo by nature. Eastern thought is complacent and insular, while that of the West tends to flow out laterally. In either sphere, however, when a civilization grows up to its full maturity, it ends in an impasse. This is the condition of Western civilization we see at present. My point is that both Shojo and Daijo civilizations are inadequate. We must ask, then, where can either of these civilizations go?

Here I state once again the mission of the Kannon Society. It is to carry out God's divine plan to unite these two great civilizations. The movement toward such a union is taking place here in Japan, and the time for such a union is now. In a metaphorical expression, there will be a marriage. A jewel-like child will be born upon the consummation of this marriage, and this miraculous offspring will be a genuine civilization, the long-awaited ideal world, a paradise

on earth, the world of Miroku.⁵ The strength to achieve this unprecedented birth originates in Kannon's power.

The modern crisis we are experiencing these days is the agony of giving birth to such a civilization. Now is the time when the lateral and vertical aspects will be combined in a cross of perfect balance. This is the end of the old civilizations, but at the same time, it is the beginning of a new civilization. The emblem of the Kannon Society is the swastika, which has been known in the East for ages. It has this meaning: two bars are joined to shape a cross, the ends of which are bent in a way suggesting rotation. Rotation denotes God's plan, and with the indicated direction being clockwise, this symbolizes the motion of creation. Once the cruciform is effective, tremendous power is generated. This is the power of Kannon, or the power of the light from the East.

Over time, civilization advancing and flourishing in the West has reached the point of ninety-nine percent completion. This shows a parallel to the current state of the world, overly influenced by material culture. The light has now appeared in Japan. The light from the East will bring new life and vitality to Western civilization, and create an ideal world in which vertical and lateral aspects exist in harmony. Out of this process a path of light will flourish and move towards the West.

I cannot emphasize enough the significance of today's inaugural ceremony, which clearly marks the beginning of our colossal task of creating the world of Light. To carry out our task, we surely need to rely on Kannon's power, and step steadily forward using it as an instrument of Kannon. To reach an ideal world, we will eliminate the three great disasters caused by wind, water, and fire, and also the three lesser disasters of famine, sickness, and war. Then we will finally be able to create an ideal state, which is free from sickness, poverty, and strife, a world of perpetual peace. This is what I mean by the world of Light.

*After thousands of years of waiting,
A bright, shining age draws near.*

*A great luminous world, a cloudless state
Of beauty, crystalline and pure.*

*Light will brighten the whole earth
So that no impurities remain.*

5. 'Miroku' is the Japanese word for 'Maitreya.'

A Shared Vision

Shumei and the United Nations

Alice Cunningham and Dena Merriam

Alice Cunningham is Shumei's Executive Director of International Affairs, a nongovernmental organization that has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. She is the Shumei UN representative for their NGO activities and Shumei's president's executive assistant. She also travels extensively throughout Japan's Natural Agriculture farm network and is an advocate for sustainable living. She has been affiliated with Shumei since 1993.

Dena Merriam is a partner and the Senior Chairman of Ruder Finn Inc., where she works in

cultural marketing, creative services, corporate responsibility, and with religious and nonprofit organizations. Ms Merriam has worked with many corporate foundations and government organizations on social and global issues and has been involved with numerous projects with the United Nations. A long time friend of Shumei, she works with the Shumei Cultural Foundation to implement a global communications program to foster greater appreciation for the arts and to engage dialogue between the spiritual and cultural worlds.

We would like to present a vision of what we can accomplish through Shumei's involvement with the United Nations and how this involvement can become a platform for bringing Mokichi Okada's¹ philosophy to the global community. This truly is a great opportunity for us, and it is up to each one of us to examine and maximize this opportunity. No matter where you are or what you do, whether you are in New York City or Los Angeles, whether your work is local or international, your effort will affect the success of our vision.

1. Mokichi Okada is Shumei's founder, known to Shumei members as 'Meishusama,' an honorific that means 'Master of Light.'

We will share with you how our Non Governmental Organization (NGO) status came about. It all started at the grand opening ceremony of Shumei's Crestone Center.² Maurice and Hanne Strong³ were special guests at this event, at which Mr. Strong gave the keynote address. While Maurice and Hanne were speaking with Shumei's president, Ms Hiroko Koyama,⁴ Maurice suggested that Shumei share its wonderful ideals with all the people of the world through the United Nations. He explained that Mokichi Okada's philosophy applies to everyone in the world, not just to a limited group of people. He said that Shumei's message needed to be shared globally. Impressed by what Maurice Strong told her, Ms Koyama decided to apply for NGO status with the UN.

When we were preparing the application, we realized it was imperative that we explain who we are, and what we do, in a universal way so that any-

2. Shumei's Crestone Center is the headquarters of the Shumei International Institute.

3. Maurice Strong, Under Secretary General of the United Nations, is the President of the UN Peace University. His wife, Hanne, is president of the Manitou Foundation, and was instrumental in the founding of Shumei's Crestone Center.

4. Ms Hiroko Koyama is the current president of Shumei. She is known by the honorific 'Kaicho-Sensei.'

one not familiar with Shumei, such as those at the United Nations, could clearly understand our activities and how we can contribute to world peace. To do this, we first needed to understand what the United Nations does and how it works. Then we needed to understand what NGOs do to support the UN, and how we could work with the UN in the most effective way.

We will share two statements with you. One is from the *UN Charter*, the other by Mokichi Okada.

To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.

—UN Charter, *Article I*

It is vital that the big powers of the world of the future avoid trying to spread their colors to other countries and instead try to make those other countries' colors brighter and more beautiful. This kind of policy will follow the will of God and bring the New World. —Mokichi Okada, *God the Artist*

As you can see, there is a common vision shared by the United Nations and Shumei, both in regard to respecting the diversity of nations and in our aspiration to achieve world peace.

You might ask what the UN does and why the UN is important. Now sixty years old, the United Nations is the only institution we have that is truly international; it is the only international organization where world leaders and representatives come together to discuss global issues and initiate efforts to further world peace. Although you might not hear much in the media about this, through non-public discussions with nations, the UN has actually prevented many potential conflicts from erupting. Also, UN peacekeepers are deployed to areas of conflict throughout the world, actions that have lessened or prevented violence. Another benefit we receive from the UN's efforts is the safety of our global airspace; because of agreements amongst countries, we can fly throughout the world. Even critics of the UN agree that it is essential that the UN exist.

Recently, through the private sector's support, NGOs have become more important in continuing the UN's work. There has been a huge growth in this development over the last ten years, primarily due to the leadership of the current Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who has done much to encourage the participation of NGOs in the UN's work.

However, the current number of NGOs with consultative status with the UN is only 2,719. Considering the millions of NGOs that exist in the world today, it is obvious that the UN is very selective when choosing which NGOs get consultative status. Receiving NGO status with the UN is not easy. It usually takes two to three years for the applications to be processed, and then only a handful of those who apply are granted the status. Therefore, it is close to miraculous for Shumei to be granted special consultative status in just one year.

And the timing could not have been better. We were granted NGO status right before the

Hiroshima Youth Summit. When the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was planning the Asia Youth Summit, Shumei volunteered to host the event in Hiroshima. However, we had not been granted NGO status, and the UNDP office in Japan did not know anything about us. It would have been very difficult for us to receive partnership status as a sponsor for this event. If the UN said "no" to our offer, we would not have been able to host the Summit. However, just in time, we received the letter granting our NGO status and were able to present ourselves as an organization recognized by the UN. The Youth Summit was certainly a great way to start contributing to the work of the UN.

II.

There are three main ways NGOs can influence or enhance the work of the UN: First, by participating in or hosting events, such as the Hiroshima Youth Summit. Second, by being involved in 'on the ground' grassroots projects. Third, by influencing policy decisions.

The first type of involvement was fulfilled by Shumei's participation in the Hiroshima Youth Summit. Through this summit, young delegates were able to engage in dialogues and exchange ideas. Some of the delegates were able to participate in the Shumei Home Stay Program⁵ and visit the Miho Museum⁶ and Kishima Island.⁷ When Barbara Hachipuka,⁸ a Zambian delegate, visited Kishima, she was very much inspired by the practice of Natural Agriculture⁹ and asked Shumei to help women farmers in Zambia through Natural Agriculture. This eventually led to Shumei's Zambia Project.¹⁰ This is a great example of a concrete project that grew out of the Summit. Without the Hiroshima Summit, we probably would not have met Barbara, and Barbara would not have discovered Shumei Natural Agriculture. The event presented a great opportunity for both Shumei and other delegates to share ideas and create a new project that will help support a sustainable future for the world.

A good example of the second type of involvement, a 'grassroots' project, is a project called the Greenbelt Movement, founded in Kenya by Wangari Mathai in 1977. You might have heard of her. She saw the strong need to plant trees in Kenya, which was suffering from a severe drought.



She started by organizing a small group of Kenyan women, who began to plant trees throughout the country. Years later, she had created a network of six hundred communities that have planted over thirty million trees. Her project raised the environmental awareness amongst the people in Kenya. She also worked in partnership with an environmental program set up by the UN in Nairobi. In 2004, she received the Nobel Peace Prize.

One of the best examples of NGOs influencing UN policy is found in the international campaign to prohibit landmines. This began with a group of NGOs that were concerned with the terrible damage caused by landmines. As you might know, there are many undetonated landmines in the world today. They cause many deaths and serious injuries. The campaign began in 1992 and put such pressure on world leaders that by 1995, 136 countries had ratified bans on landmines. This was the first time in history that a weapon has been successfully prohibited.

There are so many global challenges that the statistics can be overwhelming. Among the many causes of environmental degradation are global warming, deforestation, population growth, water shortages, hazardous chemicals in our environment, desertification, topsoil loss, loss of biodiversity, and our over-consumption of natural resources. Besides these, we also have poverty, illness, and warfare. Here are some alarming statistics:

- Each year we lose 25 billion tons of topsoil. If we were able to retain this topsoil, we could feed 700 million out of 820 million people who go hungry every year.
- There are 70,000 different types of synthetic chemicals released into our environment each year.
- We are losing tens of thousands of animal and vegetable species each year.
- There are approximately 1.3 billion people who have to survive on less than the equivalent of one American dollar per day.
- Close to 80 percent of diseases in the developing world are caused by a lack of clean water.

In India, people have been pumping so much well water that the water table has lowered drastically and wells are running dry. Many scientists concur that to restore well water to its original level will take about a thousand years.

5. Through Shumei's Home Stay Program, visiting members and friends can find accommodations in Shumei members' homes.

6. The museum designed by I.M. Pei to house the Shumei Art Collection. For more information concerning the Miho Museum, please visit www.miho.or.jp/english.

7. Kishima Island in Japan's Inland Sea, is one of Shumei's major Centers. A nature preserve, it is used as a retreat, a children's summer camp, and for the practice of Natural Agriculture.

8. Barbara Hachipuka is program coordinator for the Mbabala Women Farmer's Cooperative Union in Zambia.

9. Natural Agriculture is a spiritually based horticultural practice created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada.

10. Please see the September/October, 2005 and the May/June, 2006 issues of SHUMEI Magazine for stories concerning Shumei's Zambia Project. Both issues can be found in PDF format on Shumei's website: www.shumei.org.

In Japan, sixty percent of the food is imported, the greater part coming from the USA. Unlike India, Japan does not face the problem of dry wells, because water is not used to produce most of the food the Japanese eat. Yet, the US is pumping so much well water from the ground that one day that nation will face the same water shortages as India. When this happens, there will be no more food for export, and many scientists predict that if the USA stops exporting food to Japan for more than three days, the entire population of Japan will go hungry. This is very frightening.

The United Nations' response to these global challenges was to set up the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Every year, world leaders come together to discuss world issues. In the year 2000, responding to these and other global challenges, the UN issued these goals:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- Achieve universal primary education.
- Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve maternal health.
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other pandemic diseases.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Build a global partnership for the advancement of developing countries.

The UN would like to achieve these goals by 2015. The goals are ambitious and not possible without help from the private sector and NGOs. It will take Africa at least a century to achieve these goals without help from the rest of us.

These goals are good and noble; however, there is a problem with all their obvious good intentions. The problem is that they only address challenges on a superficial level. They only pose glazed-over solutions to the problems they address, and do not really look deeply into the root causes of these problems. It is here that Shumei can make a major contribution.

The majority of these Millennium Development Goals are geared toward the challenges found in developing countries. But let us take a look at some of the challenges developed countries such as Japan and the USA face: air pollution, water pollution, industrial pollution, negative environmental impact on other countries, over-development, urban sprawl, apathy for environmental protection, and high suicide rates.

There is no need to explain air and water pollution or all the many industrial pollutions, as everyone is already aware of these issues, but other issues that should concern us are less well known. An example of the industrialized nations' negative environmental impact on other countries is the excessive logging Japan and other developed countries have done in Southeast Asia. Excessive logging, sometimes illegal, has caused the recent devastating landslides in The Philippines, in which many lives were lost. It is said that this logging took place decades ago and has long since been stopped. Yet, obviously, the forests are still not restored to their former condition.

Another example of negative environmental impact on other countries is oil spills from tankers. Recently, Japan has seen increases in oil spills by foreign tankers in the Sea of Japan due to the heavy vessel traffic there. The USA also has its own share of oil spills that have caused tremendous environmental damage.

One of the most important environmental challenges developed countries need to address is apathy. This is a universal problem, but certainly more so in the developed countries. Most people really do not understand the serious effect these problems have on our planet. It seems that if people cannot see, feel, or touch these problems, these problems are not real to them. Many people do not think much about it when they dump chemicals down their drains. They do not realize that those chemicals are actually damaging our oceans. There are now so-called 'dead zones' in oceans, where nothing grows, and these dead zones are getting larger and larger by the year.

Apathy is contributing to environmental degradation, and we really need to raise people's awareness. A key element of the Shumei Natural Agriculture movement is to raise the consciousness of people, teaching them to respect nature and live in harmony with it. Shumei needs to share this sensibility with others so that people will gain an overriding respect for nature.

One other unique challenge we see, especially in Japan and Taiwan, is the high rate of suicide. Japan has the highest suicide rate of all developed countries. Over 30,000 people end their own lives every year. This indicates that we are suffering not just from exterior damage, but from damage inside ourselves, as well, and it also shows that people yearn for internal happiness. While most people might not identify this desire as spiritual in nature, it is spirituality that is needed badly to obtain internal happiness. Indeed, spirituality is the key to overcoming not only our internal problems, but also all the external problems we face today.

Looking regionally at Asia's challenges, perhaps it is not an overstatement to say that these are also the whole world's challenges. India's rapid population growth and China's incredibly rapid economic growth will put an enormous strain on our resources over the next fifteen to twenty years, more so than we have ever witnessed in history. At China's current growth rate, by 2030 its need for oil will exceed what the entire world produces today. Currently, world production of oil is 84 million barrels per year. In roughly just twenty-five years, China alone will need 99 million barrels.

Looking at these statistics, we might come to recognize the sad state of our planet. At the rate we are going now, the earth can no longer sustain itself. It is time to take action. We need to shift from our over-consumptive lifestyles to those that are more sustainable. This shift must occur to ensure the health and safety of future generations.

It is in this respect that Shumei has so much to offer. We already have the wisdom of Mokichi Okada to guide and help us create a sustainable way of life, and we need to promote his idea of a sustainable lifestyle.

So the question now is what Shumei can do to help solve all these problems.

As mentioned earlier, it is true that the UN cannot address these problems without the support of civil society. Humanitarian organizations do much good, but they also are somewhat limited by their perspectives. Most such organizations concentrate on sharing food, planting trees, giving financial aid, and distributing seeds. Recently, more and more genetically modified seeds are being distributed by these organizations, and this type of aid does not create a real change in people's thinking and the reality of people's lives. Also, such genetically altered seeds might well cause larger problems in the future.

At the Second Africa Youth Summit in Morocco, a Nigerian delegate explained that Niger had been experiencing terrible drought and desperately needed help. We all talked about the things that could be done, such as raising money and sending food. Then the delegate told us that neither money nor food would get to the people who need those most, because of governmental corruption. The Nigerian heard about Shumei's Zambia Project and asked if we could start a similar effort in Niger. Of course, it is not all that simple but the possibility is exciting. If the Zambia Project is successful, it might become a new kind of model project for the rest of Africa. In order to address the problems that Africa faces it is critical to bring new vision and new thinking that will break through some of the old bureaucratic patterns that have been proven not to work.

What is Shumei's unique role? It has been a year and a half since Shumei obtained its NGO status. It takes time to understand how to work within the system of the United Nations, but there is tremendous potential here. Shumei understands the importance of addressing not just a problem's symptoms, but the root cause of the problem, as well. Here are examples of why people fail to understand the root problems:

No understanding of interconnectedness. People do not realize that a drought in Africa actually affects all of us. If a part of our body is injured, it affects the entire body. The same holds true for the world. If one part of the world has a problem, it will affect the entire world, because we are all connected. Shumei already exercises this wisdom.

Lack of harmony with Nature. We are out of touch with nature. Humans seek to dominate nature, not work in harmony with it. This is an area in which Shumei can contribute greatly.

Lack of understanding of the spiritual nature of all life. People do not see the connection between what happens in the material world and what is happening in the spiritual one. When people close their eyes to spirituality, they are not going to contribute to the betterment of the society. They do not see that the roots of all society's problems are spiritual in essence.

Overemphasis on material things; the need to balance the material with the spiritual. This can be very challenging to talk about in public. But we are finding ways to do so in a comfortable manner. We have found that speaking about Natural Agriculture is a very good entry point by which people can come to understand the importance of spiritual issues.

Through our work with the international community, Shumei can address the roots of many of the problems that face the world today, not simply their symptoms. Our goal is to do this by promoting: an awareness of life's interconnectedness; a way of life that is in harmony with nature, based on a Natural Agriculture lifestyle; healing methods to purify one's being; balancing the material with the spiritual; and art and beauty as a means of gaining insight into the spiritual nature of life.

It is often frustrating when policymakers approach problems with a superficial solution, rather than looking deeply into their causes. There is currently a huge campaign at the UN to stop malaria. Malaria is an enormous problem in Africa right now. The only solution provided so far is to send bed netting soaked in pesticides to African nations! So, African kids are now sleeping under pesticide-drenched bed nets. They might not get malaria, but there is a good chance they will have other problems as they grow up. This is obviously not the proper solution to the problem. It is rather like treating an automobile accident victim's superficial scrapes and bruises while ignoring his or her life-threatening internal bleeding. A holistic vision is needed. But very few NGOs exercise a holistic approach. They often advocate one particular issue such as women's rights, wiping out AIDS, and so on, focusing on one pet issue and trying to solve just one problem. Yet, without a holistic vision, we cannot begin to heal the world's suffering. This is where Shumei has a very special mission. We can advance a comprehensive and integrated approach to solving global problems.

III.

Let us look at how far Shumei has come in the last ten years. When the Miho Museum opened, it completely changed the course of Shumei. Shumei could no longer remain a self-enclosed organization centered in Japan. The world was at its doors, and Shumei was opening itself to the world. Because the Miho was such a huge success, people heard about us. People visited the museum and as soon as they walked into the entrance hall, with its splendid view of the Shigaraki Mountains, they glimpsed Meishusama Hall¹¹ and the Joy of Angels bell tower¹² in Misono¹³ over the peaks surrounding the adjoining valley. Naturally, they were curious and wanted to know what those structures were all about. Questions were asked, and we needed to find a way to explain ourselves to them and the rest of the world. First, we started integrating ourselves with interfaith communities. Then we developed a partnership with the Rodale Institute.¹⁴ This was a very important step for us.

When the Miho sent an exhibition of works from its collection to Europe, we were able to bring to Europeans the concept of beauty's spiritual essence and its ability to uplift people's hearts. When the Shumei Taiko Ensemble performed at the Parliament of World Religions at Cape Town, South Africa, more interfaith communities were introduced to Shumei. And of course, a very large step was taken when we opened the Shumei International Institute's headquarters in Crestone, Colorado. The opening of our Crestone Center was a challenging step for Shumei's president, Ms Hiroko Koyama, to take, but it showed great vision. In the wake of the Center's opening came a vast expansion of our international work, and eventually our relationship with the United Nations.

This in turn led to our involvement with the Youth Leadership Summits. It is very exciting to work with these young leaders, because these young people are our future. If we can help the next generation, we can realistically hope for a shift in policy direction and the eventual healing of our planet. And Shumei plays a major role in these summits.

When the first Youth Leadership Summit was held in Senegal, a few young Shumei members and Sensei Alan Imai¹⁵ attended. Alan Imai led a session on Natural Agriculture. As mentioned before, Barbara Hachipuka, a delegate from Zambia, attended Alan's session and spoke with him. But nothing happened for a while after that. Then, when Shumei hosted the Asia Youth Leadership Summit, Barbara and a few of the African delegates were invited to attend in order to strengthen an Africa-Asia relationship. It is very important to build ties between Africa and Asia, because these two continents can share so much, and have so much to offer each other. The delegates visited many places in Japan including Kishima Island, where they saw Natural Agriculture being practiced. As explained earlier, this was the beginning of Shumei's Zambia Project. The Zambia Project is a tremendous step for Shumei, and it presents the possibility of bringing a new direction to the work of the UN. Recently, a planning meeting took place at the UN for the upcoming Global Youth Leadership Summit. At this meeting, Barbara showed a video featuring the Zambian women farmers, all of whom were very thankful to Shumei for its help. It was a very touching video.

The UN officials were very pleased that the Hiroshima Youth Summit had a substantial outcome, with 1500 women farmers now practicing sustainable agriculture. With Shumei's help, farmers' cooperatives in Zambia are able to grow maize without using expensive and environmentally damaging industrial fertilizers or other commercial agricultural chemicals. At least 1400 farmers are now practicing self-sustainable Natural Agriculture.

We organized and presented the first Natural Agriculture show in Zambia this last summer on July 20, 2006. This is part of an effort to recapture the Zambian farmers' heritage and share their culture with others. When Alan first visited Zambia, he asked the farmers about the traditional methods of farming in Zambia. The farmers could not give him examples because their past has been wiped

out. Their written history starts when the British arrived, and their indigenous culture was never passed down to them. Because of the questions Alan asked, the farmers now want to recapture what remains of their culture.

So the Zambia Project is not just about a farming method; it is also about how one can live one's life in relationship with the earth, nature, and one's own heritage. In this way, Shumei Natural Agriculture can help us address the root causes of the many complex problems that face society.

An important aspect of Shumei Natural Agriculture is prayer. When we were in Japan in November of 2005 participating in the Shumei Natural Agriculture Conference, Alan asked everyone to pray for rain in Zambia. As you might know, many Shumei members and friends prayed for rain to end the Zambian draught. The rain came. Barbara told us that when the rain fell she could feel the connection between Zambia and all the Shumei Centers throughout the world. We are all spiritually connected. All this started at a summit in Hiroshima. It reinforces our sense of the bonds of affection shared by the whole human family, and how we all must work together for our common good. Just as we all feel that Zambia is part of our Shumei community, the lady farmers of Zambia feel the bond they have with Shumei despite our vast separation in geography and culture.

Again, each one of us has an important part to play. It is possible that the action of people in Europe, industrialized Asia, and the USA could cause dramatic climate changes in other parts of the world. So the drought in Africa is not just a local problem in Africa; it is our problem too. We are all connected, and our behavior in the developed world affects other parts of the globe as well. We all have to work together.

The answers to our problems are not easy. It is going to take the next generation much effort and creativity to better the world. It requires more than action, it requires nothing less than a change in our consciousness. To simply state the Millennium Development Goals of the UN is just a beginning, a bare minimum of what needs to be done. We must change not only our behavior but also our way of thinking. An essential way to change ourselves and the world is by sharing our love. Unless our hearts are open and giving, we cannot heal the world.

It is very important to realize the power of individual effort. We talk a lot about 'acting locally and thinking globally.' All this simply means is that what we do in our immediate surroundings affects the entire world; what we do in our daily lives affects the whole planet. Realizing the relationship between what we do and its impact on the world is the first step. Many people, especially the young, ask what can be done to improve the world. There are many things we can do, some simple and some complex. You can devote your entire life to public service, or you can just say your daily prayers and share Jyorei.¹⁶ Most important is one's state of consciousness and the love we carry and share when practicing Shumei's philosophy. There is tremendous power in our actions when we do this. Just cultivating a small Natural Agriculture garden in

11. Meishusama Hall is the centerpiece of Shumei's International Center at Misono, Japan. Designed by Minoru Yamasaki and built in 1983, it holds over 5,000 people and is used for both daily sampsais and special events throughout the year.

12. 'Joy of Angels' is the name given to Misono's carillon tower. The structure was designed by I.M. Pei. Its 50 bells were cast at the famed Eijsbouts Bell Foundry in The Netherlands.

13. Misono is Shumei's International Headquarters and Spiritual Center in the Shigaraki Mountains of Japan.

14. Founded by J.I. Rodale in the 1930s and headquartered in Pennsylvania, USA, the Rodale Institute works with people worldwide to promote regenerative food systems that renew environmental and human health.

15. Sensei Alan Imai currently serves as International Programs Director of the Shumei Natural Agriculture Network, and as Executive Director of the Shumei International Institute.

16. Jyorei is divine light, directed by a member of Shumei to another person. Repeated sessions of Jyorei might bring improvement in physical and emotional problems, and the enhancement of one's general well-being.

your back yard or on your patio, doing your part to purify soil, or simply sharing your love with the earth instead of treating it like an object to be used and cast off, is enough to have a positive influence on our planet. We are all capable of greatness.

And we all have to realize the importance of the next generation. When we talked last January in Japan with some of Shumei's young members, we were very moved that so many wanted to make a difference in the world, and how deeply they felt about Mokichi Okada's philosophy. It felt as if we were planting seeds for the future. Shumei has great work to do in this world. And the UN can be an important platform from which we can do this work. There are many fine individuals working at the UN who have a great deal of influence, and our NGO partnership with them will bear wonderful results. We would like to give Shumei youth the opportunity through our NGO status and through the Youth Leadership Summits to mobilize their efforts for a better future. This is a long-term effort. Through these summits, the UN is identifying young people from the international community who might make a difference in the world, and building a global network among them.

And we would like to help our youth create an environmental vision that will guide their generation so that they not only understand the problems they face but also find creative solutions to them. At the Global Youth Summit in New York City this year on October 29–31, 2006, there was an exhibition of our young people's visions of solving our current problems and finding new ways of addressing environmental problems. Barbara was there to present the Zambia Project so that people could experience it visually, giving the project greater impact.

In Japan last January, many young people asked us what they could do to change the world for the better. Because many of them did not speak English and did not have connections to the international arena, they wanted to know what they could do as individuals. We told them simply to start talking to the people around them, share their philosophy with as many possible. If you raise the consciousness of one person, that person in turn could influence a whole new group of people. If one person realizes that his or her individual actions affect the whole world, that person can have a huge impact on society. Person by person, awareness is passed on. Here in America, we are a multicultural society and have more opportunities to influence people of different cultures. Sharing a philosophy and information can be very powerful. Some people might think that genetically modified seeds are the only solution to the poverty in Africa, as they increase crop yield. Yet, if we address the root cause of the poverty instead of focusing on quick fixes, if we convince people that we are all connected, and if we understand that sowing genetically modified seeds in Africa affects the rest of the world, then we might begin to put our energy into something more beneficial for all of us.

During the Hiroshima Youth Summit, one of the young people raised the question: how do we overcome apathy amongst our peers? One of the speakers responded that first we must have conviction ourselves. This is true. When we meet a person with great conviction and determination, it is

inspiring. If one has strong convictions, one will inspire others. And this is all done through personal exchanges. When you see someone determined to make a difference, you are inspired. We have to work deeply within ourselves to develop this kind of determination. We have to *live* a philosophy and not just talk about it. We have to demonstrate and practice it in our lives. It is only then that we can begin to hope to change the world. So, let us examine two practical steps we can take to live out Shumei's spiritual sensibilities.

Be informed. We are doing a series of programs with youth in Japan. One deals with being informed about current world issues, among them avian flu and climate change. Each group takes an issue and comes back with a solution. First, they learn about the issue, then examine what experts are saying about it. Finally, they present their own solutions—how Shumei would address the issue. In this way, our young people learn to apply Shumei's sensibilities to very specific issues.

Stay connected. One of the most important things that participants in the youth summits gain is the contacts they make. Keeping up with the international contacts and being part of the network is very important. Being part of a global network allows young people to share thoughts and ideas worldwide. One of the most beautiful things to come out of the UN's Youth Leadership Summits is the relationships that develop amongst young people. Our present generation of young people is the first truly global generation. They can communicate with each other around the world through the Internet. They are building a global network, and that is a very powerful thing.

Another important step is to work on a specific project, because we must go beyond theory. As we all practice Mokichi Okada's philosophy in our daily lives, it is important to have both local projects and, when possible, international ones. If there is any message to remember it is this: If each one of us makes the effort, we can change the future. If all of us make an effort, we can transform the future for generations to come.

Ultimately, it is not in the power of governments or political leaders to make a lasting difference in the world. It is up to all of us to make that difference. It is we, the public. It is all of us who know and understand the issues, and who make the effort, who will change the course of our future.

AN ANNIVERSARY IN AMERICA

Photos for following four stories by Paul Maska

A Celebration of Light and Love, the theme of the fourteenth anniversary of the Shumei America National Center, came alive punctually at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 21, at Shumei Hall in Pasadena. Three beats of a taiko drum resonated in

the sanctuary as the curtains parted revealing Kaicho–Sensei (Ms Hiroko Koyama), Shumei's president, and Sensei Eugene Imai, Director of Shumei America, seated at opposite ends of the stage, while three members of the Center's offering team, in white morning coats, placed gifts of flowers, decorated foodstuffs, and rice wine on tables set up before the hall's Scroll of Light.¹

Ms Koyama, despite a harrowing schedule, has come to America every anniversary since becoming Shumei's president to officiate at the anniversary's main ceremony. She led the guests in chanting and gave all Jyorei. As in past years, her kind presence lent this event a brightness and dignity.

Following the blessing of Jyorei, Sensei Eugene Imai welcomed all and introduced a special guest and friend of Shumei, Ms Ardath Rodale, Chairman of the Board of Rodale Inc., who earlier this year did Shumei a great honor by writing about our organization in the February issue of Prevention Magazine. The article, "Love and Healing," made Shumei and its ideals known throughout North America, and has significantly increased interest in our organization and its work.

Eugene Imai then introduced Ms Koyama, who greeted the guests and then delivered her annual message, which highlighted Shumei's accomplishments and challenges at this time in our organization's history. The text of her speech immediately follows this report.

Before the ceremony came to a close, Eriko Ando, a young Shumei member from San Francisco, gave a testimonial about her life and struggles as a deaf person. Ms Ando's address follows Ms Koyama's in these pages.

The main ceremony was marked this year by a grace and simplicity that lent the whole weekend a subtle and luminous beauty. Even the



Guests wash their hands and mouths at the National Center courtyard's fountain before entering Shumei Hall for the anniversary ceremony.

weather obliged—the daytime skies were bright and calm, temperatures moderate. Later, as might be expected for this time of year, the nights were a bit chilly, and guests from out of town were advised to pack an extra jacket or sweater.

This year the ceremony and the National Conference, which followed it the next day, were simultaneously translated into Chinese and Japanese to accommodate members of Shumei's

1. A Scroll of Light is a revered scroll usually placed above an offering table in a Shumei Center or home. The Chinese characters depicted on it vary in number and significance but the central character always signifies Divine Light.

Three beats of the taiko drum delivered by Hunter Loyd open the anniversary ceremony in Shumei Hall, Pasadena.



Seated in Shumei Hall, guests wait for the stage curtains to part and the ceremony to begin.



John Marcus (left) and Shervin Shafaie of Pasadena's offering team finish placing food and flowers on offering tables shortly after the anniversary ceremony opens.



Chinese community and visitors from Japan. Visitors from other parts of Asia, South America, and throughout Europe were also present.

After a light luncheon of Natural Agriculture² and organic foods and beverages, guests could attend two concerts scheduled for that afternoon in Shumei Hall. Both were open to the public. The first was a short, half-hour performance by artists from various taiko groups both from America and Japan, led by taiko master Koji Nakamura. The program consisted of two contemporary pieces composed especially for Shumei. The goal of all our organization's taiko artists is to elevate the spiritual sentiments of their audiences through the vibrations of traditional Japanese percussion instruments, creating a bridge across which diverse peoples can reach that universal understanding and harmony that exists beyond words among all of us. Judging from the sounds produced that afternoon in the hall and the audience's responses, these ambitions were more than met. The thunderous taiko performance contrasted nicely with the equally precise and energetic, but much quieter, playing of the Avanti String Quartet in the afternoon's second musical offering. "Rejoice" was an all-Mozart concert honoring the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth. Avanti's program consisted of two string quartets, K. 157, written when Mozart was still a youthful prodigy of sixteen, and K.458, composed in 1784 when Mozart was a happily established family man living in one of Europe's major music capitals of the time, Vienna. The Avanti Quartet was founded in 2004 by four women of formidable musical credentials and extraordinarily diverse backgrounds who came together in Southern California to share their happy passion and technical aplomb. Their

2. Natural Agriculture is a spiritually based horticultural practice created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada. The essence of the Natural Agriculture approach is having reverence for nature and cultivating the food crops in a manner close to how plants thrive in a natural setting.



Kaicho-Sensei views "The Fire Next Time" exhibition with artist Kamran Moojedi.

love of music-making was evident and their joyful spirit infectious as they played in Shumei Hall, a venue well-suited for chamber music with its crisp acoustics and intimate space.

In conjunction with the two concerts, an exhibition entitled "The Fire Next Time" was on view in Shumei Pasadena's Foyer and Upstairs Galleries. The works were by the Persian-born artist Kamran Moojedi, and contained a series of large prints motivated by the great San Bernardino Mountain fire of 2004, which left the forests surrounding the artist's home a vast graveyard of charred trees. Of the two years Mr. Moojedi spent working on the series, he said "Time and again, I returned to the burned forest as if mourning the death of an old friend, and then something magical happened: I noticed new growth. There was a rebirth, patient and slow." The works on view were surprisingly delicate, subtle, and life-affirming, considering the sense of devastation and loss that motivated them.

By nightfall on Saturday, a fellowship banquet was getting underway at Shumei America's first Center located at the foot of the Hollywood Hills. The comfortable old mansion with its quarter-acre garden was a perfect setting for a night of good food, live music, and homespun entertainment. Ms. Koyama, the guest of honor, arrived at 6:00 p.m. and the celebration continued under clear evening skies and mild breezes.

The next day, Sunday, October 22, began with morning Sampaï³ at the Pasadena Center at 9:00



Cellist with the Avanti Quartet performs Mozart in a concert entitled "Rejoice" in Shumei Hall, Pasadena as part of the anniversary festivities.

with Ms Koyama leading the chants. Directly following morning prayers and the exchange of Jyorei, Shumei America's National Conference began with greetings and opening remarks by Sensei Eugene Imai. This year's annual conference was less freewheeling and more scripted than in previous years, with the gratifying result that it began on time and ended on time. Punctuality aside, the material presented was a rich assortment of what Shumei America has been up to during the last years, and presented a clear view towards what the future might hold for us.

The first speaker was Sharon Franquemont, a writer and lecturer who has been instrumental in the development of Shumei's SILC program, which hosts seminars and workshops to promote leadership values and skills. Her presentation was entitled "The Dot in the Circle," which explored the relevance of Mokichi Okada's⁴ thoughts of life and spirituality for both Shumei and the world. All of Ms Franquemont's considerable motivational skills came into play, and her presentation got the day's program off to an uplifting start. The text of her speech will appear in the next issue of Shumei Magazine.

Ms Franquemont was followed by Ron Helgesen, of Shumei's International Department, who gave an update on Shumei America's outreach programs, and then Tom Ryu, a major player in Shumei's Hollywood Center, who reported on the activities that had taken place during the past year at the Hollywood Center.

Koji Nakamura, a master taiko artist and the first leader of the Shumei Taiko Ensemble, then gave a presentation on the role that taiko⁵ music plays in building character and promoting well-being among the drummers who perform this music. His presentation was assisted by Akemi Imai, Youth Editor of SHUMEI Magazine, and Hunter Loyd, taiko artist and prominent member of Shumei America's Youth Group. The text of Mr. Nakamura's presentation appears on page 13.

Since nurturing the young and promoting their welfare are among Shumei's most heartfelt and abiding concerns, the conference would not have been complete without hearing from a youthful voice. That voice belonged to Lauren Tang of New York City, who spoke of a trip she took with other young people to Shumei's retreat on Kishima Island⁶ in Japan, earlier this year. Her presentation, entitled "A Trip of Gratitude," will appear in a future issue of SHUMEI Magazine.

A video entitled "Nurturing Beauty" was the Shumei American Art Council's offering at the

conference. It explored the Council's goals and activities throughout recent years. The video laid particular emphasis on the Council's Children's Concert Series, which introduces school children throughout the Los Angeles area to the highest quality music available, in a concert setting. Together with the fine concerts and exhibitions that the Arts Council sponsors for audiences of all ages, this series for children has been an unqualified success, and has brought credit and acclaim to Shumei America.

Arthur Kikuchi, who runs Shumei's Natural Agriculture Farm on Pender Island in British Columbia, and is the Secretary of Shumei Canada, spoke next. His presentation, "A Respect for Nature," presented Mr. Kikuchi's convictions concerning how a diet and environment based on reverence and respect for nature promote both physical and spiritual health. Mr. Kikuchi is presently working on a book, "A Guide to Health: the Truth about Health and Diet from Meishusama's Words," which is due to be published next year.

The final speaker of the day was Sensei Alan Imai, a significant presence for Shumei in North America and throughout the world. Alan Imai currently serves as International Programs Director of the Shumei Natural Agriculture Network, and as Executive Director of the Shumei International Institute in Crestone, Colorado. He is a dynamic advocate for Natural Agriculture and, by extension, a promoter of social and economic justice in the developing world. His speech, "The Shumei Way," concerned Shumei's involvement in advancing Natural Agriculture as a practical solution to economic and environmental problems in the developing world. Here in America, Shumei members are particularly proud of Natural Agriculture's achievements in Turkey and the Philippines, and its helping hand for the lady farmers of rural Zambia. Alan Sensei's message was both timely and very well received.

After the conference came to a close, a youth gathering and a visit to the Getty Museum in Westwood rounded out the Sunday afternoon for those who did not have to meet flights, begin long drives home, or those who simply wanted to rest.

Many thought this was the best anniversary Shumei America has held. It was definitely one of the best planned large events at the American National Center. This in part was due to nearly a year of planning and weeks of daily briefings with staff members, and the coordination skills of those in charge of the celebration. For those who have worked on previous anniversaries, much of the stress endured in pulling together such events was absent, and the staff was free to enjoy as well as facilitate the anniversary. The guests also seemed to genuinely enjoy themselves. Beyond the good planning, there was a spirit of grace and cordiality that permeated the entire proceeding. It was a time to renew commitments to Shumei's ideals and to catch up with old friends. It seems as if a new, higher benchmark has been set by this year's celebration, and we hope that next year's will exceed it.

An Address to Shumei America

Kaicho-Sensei

The following address was delivered by Shumei's president, Kaicho-Sensei, at the Shumei America National Center in Pasadena on Saturday, October 21, 2006 during the main ceremony honoring the Center's fourteenth anniversary. The text has been edited for use in SHUMEI Magazine.

Our mission is to create the ideal world that Meishusama taught us about, utilizing our three main activities: Jyorei, Natural Agriculture, and the appreciation of art and beauty. Jyorei is the art of life. Natural Agriculture is the art of Agriculture. And the Miho Museum represents art and beauty, which uplifts the spirit.

Our members can share Jyorei with anyone—any time and any place. In our organization, Jyorei is usually given with the purpose of healing sickness, but in reality it has significance far greater than that. This significance is, in short, that Jyorei is a means of creating happiness. Sickness is in fact a process of physical purification caused ultimately by the need to dispel the clouds accumulated in the human soul. Not only sickness, but also all kinds of human suffering stem from this same underlying cause. Thus, poverty and war, too, are signs that a process of purification is taking place, and so it is obvious that there is no essential difference between sickness, poverty, and conflict.

The most basic of all means of purifying the body and soul, of course, is sickness, as it is connected with the basic problems of life and death. If we can only find a way of healing sickness, then it is inevitable that cures for poverty and strife will follow. And if this is achieved, humanity will have found the necessary conditions for happiness. Moreover, the fundamental cause of unhappiness is spiritual clouding. And there is a sure means of clearing this clouding of the spirit; there is Jyorei. So you can see that Jyorei is not just a means of healing an individual's sickness.

From early on in the 1930s, Meishusama developed a system of food production called Natural Agriculture. It advocates a natural growing process without the use of industrial fertilizers and agricultural chemicals.

Meishusama said, "Natural soil has all the components needed to produce healthy vegetables to nourish and sustain humans and animals. Soil left to its own devices is full of nutrition. However, people have mistakenly assumed that fertilizer provides nourishment to crops, and have used all sorts of man-made fertilizers. The result has been that the essential nature of the soil has been almost destroyed. So in order to strengthen the soil itself, you must avoid mixing anything impure into the soil. You must use only natural compost. You must purify the soil as much as possible.

3. Sampai is a special time or place set aside for honoring God with reverence and gratitude. It is an occasion dedicated to receiving Divine Light for spiritual illumination and overall happiness.

4. Mokichi Okada is Shumei's founder, known to Shumei members as 'Meishusama,' an honorific that means 'Master of Light.'

5. In Japanese the word 'taiko' simply means 'drum,' but in recent years it has come to signify a particular style of modern ensemble performance involving traditional Japanese drums, flutes, song, poetry, and a good deal of modern stagecraft and performance practices.

6. Kishima is an island in the Inland Sea of Japan, and one of Shumei's major Centers. A designated nature preserve, the island is used as a retreat, a summer camp for children, and for the practice of Natural Agriculture.



Kaicho-Sensei greets guests before delivering her annual address.

We do not know exactly why it happens, but, obviously, slight changes occur in the mulberry leaves when chemical fertilizers are added to the soil. And these slight changes are passed on to the silkworm that eats the mulberry leaves, and on to its cocoon, and on to the silk, and finally on to the kimono fabric itself. It must be a very small difference, yet it causes enough of a change in the feel of the silk for someone who has not been in textile business for thirty years to notice.

If you think about this, it is frightening. Because it means that not only the mulberry leaves that the silkworms eat have changed in the last thirty years, but that all the vegetables that human beings consume must have changed as well. It means that the eggs we used to eat and the eggs that caged chicken lay these days must be different as well. It is the same for fish. Wild fish and the farm-raised fish are not the same. It is said that current farm-raised fish are vaccinated.

If silkworms are affected by the changes in the mulberry leaves, it is no exaggeration to say that the human beings who eat eggs, fish, and vegetables are affected as well. Then the cocoons that silkworms spin, and the silk thread made from these cocoons, can be compared with our behavior—what we think, what we say, and how we act.

We often hear in the news that the younger generation is committing crimes that were unthinkable in the old days. You wonder if the food they are eating today could be a reason for the changes in their behavior.

Our founder, Meishusama, also wrote about silkworms. He says in his writings, “Silkworms that are raised on natural mulberries become strong and healthy, and the silk thread they produce is thick, strong, and glossy. This silk is of the highest quality and is produced in greater quantities. This is also because there is no sickness amongst the silkworms and mulberry plants.”

This past August, the Shumei Natural Agriculture Network held a workshop in the Kansai region of Japan. Keiji Ito, a medical doctor, who was the first president of the Macrobiotic Research Institute of Japan, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Ito began as an obstetrician and started the first special food education workshops for mothers in Japan back in 1966. He is now retired, but continues to educate the public about the importance of food by offering workshops and lecture series.

The title of his speech was “How to Live Your Life Illness-Free,” and he emphasized the importance of our attitude towards life. What we think and feel affects our vital energy. Spirituality is especially important for our well-being. How do we improve our vital energy? Our thoughts, feelings, and our minds are the key.

Hate, envy, jealousy, anger, anxiety, complaints, discontent, condemnation, suspicion, illusion, cursing, nervousness, and restlessness are feelings we need to avoid. He said that we should try to use proper words at all times. We should never say things that would hurt other people. We should always be positive and try to think only good thoughts. We should always have respect and gratitude. But the most important thing is to pray to God properly and sincerely.

Dr. Ito spoke about two types of food, one that improves our vital energy and the other that destroys it. It is very important to eat staple foods such as rice or wheat every day. Of course, unbleached wheat is better. One does not need to eat varieties of side dishes.

Obviously, any artificial additives, food coloring, and preservatives are toxic to the human body. We must avoid them. Naturally processed sea salt can improve our vital energy. Artificially processed foods and sugar are the most damaging items for our vital energy.

The produce from Shumei Natural Agriculture is wonderful. You can taste the natural flavors of it. They are very delicious. If you keep eating Natural Agriculture produce, your body will surely change and you will be able to detect the natural sweetness that this food contains. Therefore, we do not need to add any sugar. Sugar can cool our body and cause digestive illnesses. It destroys vital energy and can lead to all types of illness, such as diabetes.

Dr. Ito said that for the Japanese, it is better to avoid eating meat, fish, milk, and dairy products. They are known to cause cancer.

Also, we should never eat genetically modified foods. Not only because they are toxic, but also because they can cause various types of allergies. They kill vital energy and have no nutritious benefits.

Dr. Ito believes that changing one's diet and having a spiritual orientation can heal all sickness. He believes that no medicine or surgery is necessary to heal illness. He is certain that we can have healthy bodies by eating a healthy diet and living a healthy lifestyle.

He shared with us a story that took place while he was the director of a hospital of gynecology. The chief priest of a Buddhist temple consulted with him about his wife, who was three months pregnant. The priest's wife had given birth prematurely seven times in the past, and this was her eighth pregnancy. She had received treatment in many hospitals, but none of the treatments were successful. He felt modern medicine could not help his wife and asked for Dr. Ito's help. The first advice Dr. Ito gave was to change the woman's diet. Dr. Ito had noticed that all dishes served at the temple were very sweet. All the offerings they received were sweet, and he knew instantly that the wife was consuming too much sugar. So he advised her to stop eating sugar, and to change her diet in other ways as well. He first asked her to switch from white rice to brown. He also advised her to pray to God properly and sincerely, to have a positive mind, and to remove anxiety by trusting in God. He only visited her once a week and never prescribed medicine. She delivered a very healthy baby.

He told this story in a lecture he gave as part of a workshop. Many things Dr. Ito said coincide with Meishusama's teachings. We Shumei members have Meishusama's teachings and can improve our vital energy through spirituality and Natural Agriculture. More importantly, we have Jyorei that purifies our soul and body. After listening to Dr. Ito, I felt how fortunate we are, and I am very grateful to Meishusama.

“The fundamental principle of Natural Agriculture is an overriding respect and concern for Nature. Nature can teach us everything. All the manifestations of Nature in the world are created and formed from the three basic spirits, fire, water, and earth—the spirits of the sun, the moon, and the earth. You will find the truth of this the more you examine the many wonders of Nature. Crops of course are no exception. Therefore if they get enough sunlight, if their water supply is adequate, and if the soil they grow in is pure, there will be enough crops to satisfy the needs of humanity, and more besides.”

It is also very important to use homegrown seeds from naturally grown crops. Meishusama went on to state that “Even when you have completely changed to the Natural Agricultural method, chemical fertilizer and animal manure, which are sure to remain to a greater or lesser extent in the soil and seeds, will continue to have a great influence.” Therefore it is essential not to add any fertilizer to the soil and to maintain the purity of the seeds.

I would like to share a story that I read recently. It is about a conversation between two old friends, Mr. ‘M’ and Mr. ‘K,’ concerning mulberry leaves. Mr. M and Mr. K at one time worked at the same kimono store. Mr. M had long since changed his occupation, but Mr. K still worked at the kimono store as its executive director.

It had been thirty years since the two men had last met. They drank together and reminisced about the good old days. Then Mr. M asked Mr. K if he could see the best quality kimono at Mr. K's store.

So, Mr. K took Mr. M to the store and showed him one of the finest kimonos the store displayed. Mr. M smiled and touched the seam of the kimono to feel the quality of its material. When he did, his facial expression changed and he said, “What is this?” Mr. K knew that Mr. M wanted to experience the same feel of the silk that he remembered from long ago.

Mr. K's only reply was, “You can't experience the same feel of silk as you did thirty years ago.”

“Why?” asked Mr. M. “Is it because we no longer have skilled textile workers?”

“We still have many skilled workers,” answered Mr. K.

“The kimono is of high quality, but something is different,” said Mr. M.

“It's the mulberry leaves,” said Mr. K. Mr. K went on to explain that thirty years ago all the mulberry trees were grown organically, but that today industrial fertilizers are used to grow them. Therefore, the feel of the cloth has changed.

After the workshop, I received a thank you letter from Dr. Ito. In his letter he said that the society we live in has become very unhealthy and unnatural. Very few people are living with a proper diet and a high level of consciousness. Thus, not many people can live in this world without becoming ill. He believes that Shumei members are the best candidates for leading a healthy lifestyle in the 21st century. He truly wishes Shumei to take more of an active role in demonstrating a healthy lifestyle, with healthy bodies, minds, and spirits.

Meishusama told us that "Heaven is a world of beauty." He said, "People should, within their means, make their clothes, food, and dwellings as beautiful as possible in accordance with God's purpose." And also, "We have a great need to nurture and promote a keen sense of beauty. Both on a smaller personal scale and on a larger and national one, this idea will extend a good influence beyond what most people could imagine. And not only that, for a beautiful environment is sure to have the effect of beautifying the hearts of the people who live in it, and crime and evil behavior are sure to decrease. This phenomenon alone will be one of the means of furthering the realization of Paradise on Earth."

The first president of Shumei, Mihoko Koyama (Kaishusama) mastered Japanese traditional arts, such as flower arrangement and the tea ceremony. Beautiful objects always uplifted her soul, and she wanted to share the same feeling with other members of Shumei. That desire inspired her to build a small museum to house her collection.

In 1990, she consulted world-renowned architect I.M. Pei about her idea. Mr. Pei advised her that museums today and in the future should be international in every way. This advice resonated with Meishusama's teaching of world citizenship. Therefore, the building of the museum and the gathering of its art collection progressed and grew simultaneously, in mutual accord.

Kaishusama's desire and our commitment to foster an appreciation of the arts led to the creation of the Miho Museum in 1997. When the museum, a modern day Shangri-la, opened, it featured an extraordinary collection of ancient masterpieces from all over the world.

The museum is built into the mountainside and is in full harmony with the splendor of its natural surroundings. True to Kaishusama's spirit, the museum symbolizes a harmony between the environment, architecture, and art objects.

Recently, a scholar who is studying the environment and religion visited the Miho Museum. After visiting the museum and Misono, he was so touched that he said, "This place is different from others. It is different from those of other organizations that have a relationship with Mokichi Okada or with Shinto."

One of our members asked, "What is the difference?" He replied, "It's the beauty. Through beauty, Shumei guides people to the world of truth and virtue. I sense a strong energy from the beauty Shumei presents. I felt that the Miho Museum is Kaishusama's memorial. Her keen sense of beauty, her selection of art objects, truly differs from the others. These collections repre-

sent the spiritual part of Shumei. It is an asset that we all should cherish."

The Miho Museum will celebrate its tenth anniversary next year. We have been receiving many visitors from all over the world. Many of these foreign guests have decided to visit Miho Museum after seeing a documentary called "Museum in the Mountain." The beauty and harmony that exists amongst the environment, architecture, and the collection touches people's hearts and uplifts their souls.

Meishusama said, "We wish to bring harmony to all mankind and to make the whole world into one family. Because we believe in this kind of pacifism, we recognize all religions as our colleagues, and will link hands with them in mutual amity as we go onward."

Shumei wishes to work as a partner with like-minded people and contribute to world peace through Meishusama's three main activities—Art, Natural Agriculture, and Jyorei.

Silent Treasures of Smiles and Kindness

Eriko Ando (USA)

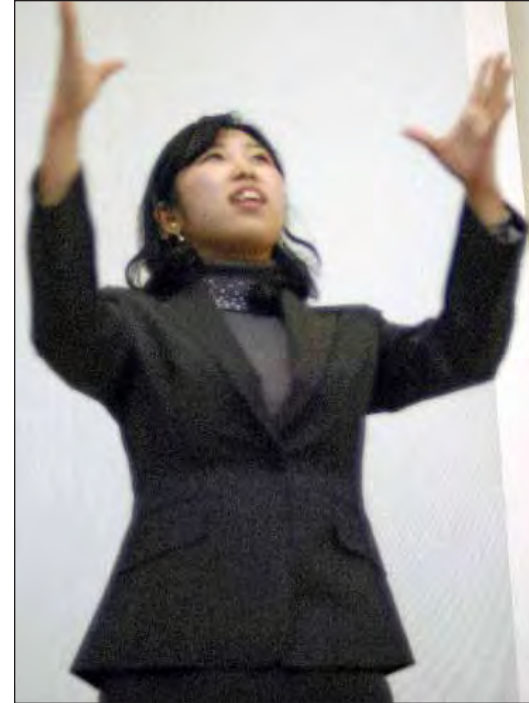
Eriko Ando is a young Shumei member from San Francisco. Presently, Eriko attends college in Fremont, California. The following has been edited for SHUMEI Magazine from an address given at the main ceremony of Shumei America's fourteenth anniversary on Saturday, October 21, 2006. Eriko, who is hearing impaired, gave her address in sign language while Pauline Lomas, a contributor to this publication, voiced her message.

I have been deaf since I was born. My mother became a member of Shumei in Japan when I was two years old, and since the age of ten I have participated in Hallelujah Camp¹ twelve times—once every summer, both as a camper and as a staff member.

I first received Jyorei during my childhood, and when I was a student at a junior high school, I wanted to receive an ohikari² so that I could give Jyorei, but my father opposed that. At school, there was a lot of conflict with my classmates, and I developed a fear of attending school. Therefore, I stayed home a lot and was filled with anxiety. It was a very stressful time. Eventually things changed, and I finally received an ohikari. When I practiced Jyorei for the first time, I was aware of the warmth of my hands, and became convinced that Meishusama was beside me at all times. There was still a lot of stress at school, but I was able to attend

1. For three days each year, Shumei sponsors Hallelujah Camp, a summer camping program for children with disabilities. Youngsters from age five to eighteen and their parents come together with a volunteer staff to enjoy the natural splendor of Kishima Island in Japan's Inland Sea.

2. An ohikari is a miniature sacred emblem worn by all Shumei members when giving Jyorei. It consists of a small parchment bearing artistic calligraphy by Meishusama and worn about the neck.



Hallelujah Camp, and because I loved that camp so much and always looked forward to being with everyone there, it lifted my spirit. Something inside me seemed to be purified so that I could change and become a better person—someone with a kind heart. I believe that it was the smiles and kindness of the staff who faithfully helped me to heal my wounded emotions. Smiles and kindness are my wonderful treasure.

Thanks to my being deaf I had this chance to go to Hallelujah Camp and meet so many wonderful people there and learn many valuable things from the staff.

Now, I am happy to be deaf.

While at high school, I realized that there were no special facilities for disabled people at most universities in Japan. When visiting the USA, I learned that American society is much more agreeably supportive of the disabled, providing services for them so that they can live comfortably. As a result, I felt that I could live here more happily. So, I wanted to go to a college in the USA.

At the Hallelujah Camp, I told Kaicho-Sensei that my dream was to go to college and give Jyorei to people around the world who were unhappy. She responded by saying, "You can be a 'Citizen of the World.'"³ Her words became imprinted in my memory.

My dreams came true. My goal has been accomplished! Two years ago, I studied at a college in Washington State for nine months and later at a college near San Francisco. The college in Fremont has two hundred deaf students and provides services such as sign language interpreters, note takers, and real-time captioners for the students. On campus, I often see deaf students talking with other people using American Sign Language. The disabled seem more comfortable in the USA. Their eyes shine with joy and happiness. I hope that some day Japan will learn some lessons from America and provide better services for the disabled so that they can be independent and happy.

3. Meishusama, Shumei's founder, believed that people must look beyond envisioning themselves narrowly as members of a particular ethnic, cultural, religious, or national group and instead consider themselves as 'Citizens of the World.'

Last year, I experienced an unfortunate incident. While waiting at a Bart⁴ Station in North Berkeley, I was mugged. A man snatched my bag and cell phone. Before I knew what was happening, many people came to help me, and others chased the thief. Later I found out that some of them were seriously wounded by a knife the mugger was carrying. I could not see that happen, but I felt so sorry for them. Luckily, I had no wounds, and I was deeply grateful from my heart that I had been protected during this incident. Because I was so terribly shocked, I found it difficult to deal with. I lost my appetite and suffered physically and mentally from stress. However, Kaicho-Sensei prayed for me and I received Jyorei from her at Shumei America's anniversary last year. After that I began to recover through Jyorei and prayer. In fact one of the injured people who had helped sent me an e-mail, encouraging me. He was a police officer from New York. After that, I was able to go to school again.

Now I pray and read Meishusama's inspirational writings every day. The reading helps me relax whenever I am anxious about life. While living in Japan, I received Jyorei daily, but here I do not have that opportunity, so I give Jyorei often to friends at college. Last February, my friend Charlotte suddenly told me that she had a pain in her head. So, I gave her Jyorei. Afterwards she was surprised to feel a special energy around her upper body. On another occasion at the deaf school, Charlotte told me that she was suffering from unexpected and severe pains in her chest. I gave her Jyorei for a short time until some professors appeared, and she felt less pain. A little later, I went with her to the hospital in an ambulance. Fortunately, she did not have a serious problem and was released two days after. In the hospital, she mentioned to a nurse that I had prayed for her and the nurse replied, "The prayer worked." Charlotte is a deaf woman who has experienced much hardship in her life. She has a negative view of the world and sometimes believes that we will never find peace. I want so much for Charlotte to believe like I do that people all over the world can find happiness through Light and Jyorei. Since living in the USA, I have learned about the many kinds of problems and challenges that people face here. In addition, I have learned to appreciate the positive qualities of Japan, and I hope that I can keep the best of both Japanese and American cultures, keep the spirit of both places alive in my heart forever.

After graduation next spring, I will major in Graphic Design at another college. I am still apprehensive about my future, but I think that is normal. I will continue to do my best to become independent, and I will never give up because I have faith that Meishusama is beside me.

While living here, I hope to share this philosophy with many people—the deaf, the disabled, and my hearing friends. I would like them all to visit Shumei's San Francisco Center, our Natural Agriculture Farm at Santa Cruz, California, and the Shumei America National Center in Pasadena.

I am Eriko Ando and I am happy!

Taiko—Awakening the Spirit

Koji Nakamura (USA)

Koji Nakamura, considered one of today's finest taiko artists, was the Shumei Taiko Ensemble's first leader. Recently he was featured on the cellist Eugene Friesen's CD, "Sono Miho." Koji came from Japan to live in Pasadena with his family in 2005. Among the reasons for his move was to promote the art of taiko in North America. Lovers of taiko in America are very fortunate to have an artist of Mr. Nakamura's caliber on their soil.

The following is drawn from a presentation that Mr. Nakamura gave at Shumei America's National Conference on Sunday, October 22, 2006. The conference was part of Shumei America's fourteenth anniversary celebration. Included in Mr. Nakamura's presentation were statements by Martha Shoup, Hunter Loyd, and Hiromi Koyanagi. Ms Shoup's testimonial was given by way of a video recording, and Akemi Imai, SHUMEI Magazine's Youth Editor, read Ms Koyanagi's message. Hunter Loyd presented his own report.

Taiko drumming is quickly becoming very popular in America. It is said that there are about 200 taiko groups and 10,000 taiko drummers in the US today.

Let us first look briefly at the history of taiko. In old Japan, as in many early cultures, the drum was an intimate part of many village activities. Simple beats might be heard when hunters set out to catch prey, at the coming of a storm, or as a means of calling fisherman back from the sea. Played at harvests and festivals, the drum would imitate the sound of thunder and rally the spirits of rain into action, or scare away demons that might threaten the village. Eventually the people, thankful for the role drums played in their lives, began to believe their drums were inhabited by spirits.

Thus, taiko has always had associations with things spiritual. There are references to taiko in the creation myth of the goddess Amaterasu, first written down in the eighth century A.D. The taiko drum is made entirely of natural materials that were once alive, and because of the vital role it played in daily life, it was considered, in a sense, to still be a living thing. In its round shape we can trace an unbroken, unending, and eternal line.

In ancient villages, because the drum was used in prayers to gratify the gods in hope of a good harvest or a good catch for fishermen, it became a tradition that only holy men beat the drum. It was believed that the taiko not only heralds the spirits, but that spirits inhabit the drum as well.

Taiko drums have been played in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan since ancient times, and so taiko is considered by many to be a sacred instrument.

Taiko has been played in our Shumei sampai ceremonies since 1971. It is used to express that moment of exchange between prayers that peo-

ple offer to God and the Light that God grants as a response to their prayers. This exchange of prayers and Light happens at a very sacred moment. And Shumei's first involvement with taiko originated from this special moment. Taiko is a prayer.

Antedating the taiko at our current sampais, our taiko performances began precisely on December 23, 1982, the centennial celebration of the birth of Meishusama, our founder. This event took place at our then new headquarters at Misono. One hundred taiko, one for each year, drummed by one hundred taiko artists, performed on that day to honor Meishusama. This was the beginning of Shumei Taiko.

Since then, the Shumei Taiko Ensemble has performed in many places around the world, such as the Parliament of World Religions in Cape Town, South Africa in 1999, at the Millennium World Peace Summit of the United Nations in 2000, and again at the Parliament of World Religions held in Barcelona, Spain in 2004.

It is very important for taiko drummers in Shumei to know why we play taiko and for what purpose we drum. Needless to say, we play the drums not only for the pleasure of music and performing, but also because of taiko's more sacred meaning.

In 1999, Shumei's first taiko group in North America was established here in Pasadena at this very hall. Under the leadership of Steven Tokunaga, young drummers started to learn to play. To date they have performed in many venues, including the annual Prayer Vigil in Washington D.C., the Catskill Mountain Cultural Festival in New York State, the World Festival of Sacred Music in Torrance, California, and other cultural events in the greater Los Angeles Area. Our second taiko group was started in 2003 at Shumei International Institute's Center at Crestone, Colorado. Since then, the group has performed for a number of enthusiastic audiences in the Crestone area.

I would now like to introduce one of our lady taiko artists. She comes from Crestone. Her name is Martha Shoup. She was awakened spiritually through playing taiko. Since she started drumming three years ago, her life has changed greatly, and she has found herself transformed through her drumming.

Martha Shoup: When I first had the opportunity to play taiko at the Shumei International Institute, I lived three hours away in Colorado Springs.

I had come to Crestone in June 2003 to bring closure to the death of a very dear friend. My friend Tom had died in a climbing accident on Kit Carson Mountain. Kit Carson is one of the majestic peaks that tower behind the town of Crestone.

Tom's death occurred six months after the deaths of my father and my grandmother. I was distraught, and the accumulation of grief was overwhelming. My faith was shattered. The losses had left me reeling in spiritual doubt and confusion. Mechanically, I went to work and kept up my daily existence.

While visiting Crestone to see where Tom had fallen, I picked up the local newspaper. In it,

4. 'Bart' is an acronym for 'Bay Area Rapid Transit,' a rail system that connects San Francisco with the city of Oakland and the outlying San Francisco Bay area.

I saw an ad for taiko lessons with a teacher from Japan. He would be visiting for two months.

Let me backtrack for a moment. Ten years ago I had seen the taiko group Kodo perform. I was moved by the performance and had a desire to learn to play the taiko. Unfortunately, at that time there were no teachers in Colorado Springs, and the Kodo representative I spoke with let me know that in order to learn in their program, I had to be willing to move to Sado Island in Japan; I also had to be male and Japanese. Obviously, some of those requirements were prohibitive!

Ten years later, the class at Shumei seemed the perfect opportunity to fulfill my desire to play taiko. Besides, it was only a two-month commitment.

I changed my work schedule so I could attend class on Wednesdays. In the midst of my despair, I found my spirits lifted midweek as I prepared for my weekly pilgrimages to drum class. The six-hour round trip gave me lots of time to move through my grief.

The actual drumming, I believe, was another way my grief healed. I cannot tell you exactly how; some things are a mystery and remain so. I can tell you that the vibration I felt while drumming resonated through me in a cleansing way. This transforming experience is ongoing. There have been times when I have approached the drum with a pain in my body or a heavy heart, and after practice, whatever the ailment, it has been lifted from me.

I have had the opportunity to play the taiko for many public audiences at schools, farmers' markets, town celebrations, music festivals, and Shumei Anniversaries. I have gotten to travel to Los Angeles and Japan to learn from great taiko masters and play with people from around the world.

Playing taiko has changed my life. Many times when I perform, I am moved to tears as I pray for those I have lost and for the gratitude I feel for my life now. Obviously, I stuck with this for more than two months—in July 2006 I have been playing the taiko for three years. I have been introduced to the enlightening teachings of Meishusama. I have been exposed to the marvelous projects Shumei creates to improve the world. And the African women's project is dear to my heart. I left the city and live in Crestone, where I have a supportive community, a great job, and a connection with Japanese culture and people that I never imagined.

I approach the taiko with reverence, respect, and gratitude. One beat at a time, my faith was restored. It is an honor to play the taiko and share with others the sacred vibration that has meant so much to me.

Thank you to my teachers, Toshiki Harano, Nobuyuki Sato, and Koji Nakamura, who jumped the language barrier and whose patience has been unending.

Koji Nakamura: Martha lost her good friend, her father, and her grandmother all in less than a year. But her grief was healed. She was introduced to the enlightening teachings of Meishusama. And her life was completely changed for the better.

Hunter Loyd was one of our first taiko students in the Los Angeles area. Since starting

drumming in 1999, he has changed and grown a lot. He learned not only drumming skills and songs, but also learned of the spiritual essence of Shumei, especially through his participation in the hoshi¹ program in Misono two years ago.

Hunter Loyd: What have I learned from taiko? Besides learning to hit a drum with two sticks, I learned *makoto*.² If it were not for my involvement with taiko, I would probably not be who I am today. It was through taiko that I learned about spirituality. Through taiko I learned about makoto. If I had not had such a passion for taiko, I would have not gone to Misono. It was Mr. Nakamura who told me that to become a great taiko player, you must first raise your spirituality. I thought that maybe this is true and that it would be a great experience. So, I went. Going to Misono to do hoshi was truly a great experience, and through it I learned so many life lessons that I preserve still.

One of those lessons was makoto. I thought to myself one day as I did hoshi that I should do hoshi with makoto. But what if I applied makoto to everything I did, like taiko? And then I was awestruck by the power of doing something from my heart. It truly makes a difference. What convinced me that spirituality and taiko are intertwined was the first performance I participated in after coming back from Misono. I was asked to help the Catskill Taiko team for Crestone's Anniversary. Keep in mind that I had perhaps practiced twice during the six months I was away. Well, during my solo I really played from my heart, and played taiko in the same state of mind as I would while doing hoshi. After the performance I heard from Kaicho-Sensei that I had really improved. Hearing that convinced and inspired me. It is just as Meishusama says about art and artists in "The Role of Art:" "If an artist's mind is fine and pure, he will elevate the characters of everyone else as well. This is the noblest aspect of art, and the artist must so employ his art as to become a worthy guide for the rest of mankind."

Koji Nakamura: Two years ago, after Hunter came back from Misono, I was surprised to find that his drumming had changed remarkably, even though he had little chance to practice there. His level of spirituality and his skill at drumming both were enhanced dramatically.

Meishusama taught us that, "The mystical power that springs from the artist's soul passes through the written word, through the picture, the musical instrument, the song or dance, and plucks at the strings of the soul of all mankind."

That is to say that spiritual development is the key for the artist.

1. Hoshi is volunteer service, sometimes described as 'sacred work'; that Shumei members perform on behalf of the Shumei organization. Shumei's International Center in Misono employs hundreds of these volunteers to maintain the International Center's facilities.

2. Makoto is a Japanese word with ancient roots in Eastern terminology. The word was often used by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada (Meishusama), in his teachings; it sums up an approach to life in which each of us can find harmony with the world by practicing sincerity and truth in thought, word, and deed. Essential to the practice of makoto is consideration for others and for the will of God. Its meaning may vary according to circumstance; Meishusama used it for such things as a true heart, honesty, faithfulness, integrity, humanity, gratitude, promise keeping, and dedication to principle.

Now I would like to show you the four main elements of taiko.

KOKORO or 'spirit,' which is self-control and playing from the heart.

WAZA or 'action,' which is musicianship, skill, and technique.

KARADA or 'body,' which is physical strength and endurance.

REI or 'etiquette,' which is respect, courtesy, and unity.

Most taiko drummers are interested only in skill and physical strength, and of course strength and skill are very important elements for a taiko drummer to have. However, the study of any art is really an inner journey, unique to each practitioner. Taiko is an art form none of us ever completely 'master.' The most important part of taiko is the journey itself.

The question to ask oneself, if one is thinking of studying taiko, is what does one want from the experience? Does one want a personal challenge, self-confidence, meditation, aerobic workouts, or the discovery of a traditional art? These are all part of what motivates all taiko artists and all taiko groups. Many of the precepts involved in taiko are similar to those of other traditional arts. But taiko is not just about training or acquiring skills or learning a tradition. One who practices taiko must also follow 'the way of taiko.' And here spiritual development is key; the skills are just a means to an end.

Moreover, a Shumei taiko drummer must never forget one important and essential element. We can receive Light from God and can be enlightened through Shumei's daily spiritual practices. This is the point that makes a Shumei taiko artist different from most other taiko players.

I would like to share with you a message from a lady who came to our concert on August 25 of this year here at the Pasadena Center. She is a schoolteacher who wanted to create a taiko drumming program at her school. She had attended many performances in the Los Angeles area to find a suitable instructor. But she was not satisfied with what she saw or heard. Then she happened to learn of the collaborative concert that we held here at Shumei Hall with Makoto Taiko of Pasadena and Kokubu Taiko from Osaka, Japan. After seeing the concert, she was very touched by something she sensed was different from the other taiko performances that she had attended.

Hiromi Koyanagi: I would like to share the course of events that led me to ask Mr. Nakamura to teach traditional Japanese taiko drumming to eighth grade students.

First, I would like to give an explanation about the school where I work. I am a Japanese language instructor at the Pasadena Waldorf School. I teach Japanese to students in grades one through eight. Ninety-nine percent of the student population is American. The educational philosophy and curriculum of the Waldorf Schools was created in Germany in 1919 by Rudolf Steiner. These schools have spread throughout the world, including 130 schools in North America. In Japan, these schools are known as "Steiner Schools." The Steiner educational philosophy is often referred to as "education



Members of Makoto Taiko and artists from visiting groups who performed at Shumei Hall on October 21. Koji Nakamura is left of center, with bare shoulders and head band.

even went to the taiko festival that was held in downtown L.A. While watching the taiko performances, I felt as though there was something lacking in the performances. It just seemed as though people were playing the drums for fun. Also, when it came to explaining the origins and history of each song that was played, I felt there was a lack. The students at the Waldorf School love stories. In the fifth grade, they learn about Greek mythology, and about the origins of the earth. When I teach seventh and eighth graders about Japanese mythology, they show great interest, and at the end they applaud. So when it came to taiko, I was also searching for something along with which I could introduce stories. Then came a time when my strong wishes would soon be fulfilled.

I was fortunate to meet Mr. Nakamura on August 25, 2006 at Shumei Hall. Just one day before, when I was researching the origins of taiko online, I stumbled across Makoto Taiko. I was surprised to learn that they were having a concert the following day, and in Pasadena! The concert was going to be held close to school, so that made it even more interesting. Since it would be my first time visiting Shumei Hall, I arrived early. The first thing that immediately came to mind when I saw Shumei Hall was that of a gorgeous museum. The first person that I spoke to was Mrs. Jane Imai. I was introduced to Mr. Nakamura after the concert.

Without hesitation, I immediately told Mr. Nakamura that I was looking for a taiko instructor. Right then, Mr. Nakamura told me that he was at a time when he was thinking of spreading taiko outside of Shumei Hall. When he told me that, I was just so excited!

Before the concert, I read the program that was handed to me. The concert goals were as follows, "Our purpose is to elevate spiritual sentiment in the audience through the sound of the drumming of taiko. Our drumming serves as a bridge among different cultures for global understanding beyond language and words. Through drumming the taiko, we are able to enhance our own spiritual growth." This undoubtedly concurs with the Steiner educational philosophy.

In the program, it stated that "through the sounds of the taiko drums, we are able to express the origins of the earth, the flapping of birds' wings, lightning, and the ocean waves." I felt that this was exactly what I was looking for. After listening to the performance, I felt something special in my heart and all over my body. There was something completely different about the performance; perhaps it was the honest manners and solemn atmosphere. It definitely was something that I never felt before while watching other groups.

When I explain to my students that through the sounds of taiko, one can tell stories as well as express natural phenomena, they are able to understand and accept those concepts in a spiritual way. By experiencing taiko lessons, I believe that this will remain in the hearts of the students

through the arts," where art is integrated into all the subjects that are taught.

"It is an educational ideology or perhaps even an educational movement that makes it possible for each of us to realize our own individuality in society through the harmony between our developing mind and body." That was a quote taken from Iwao Takahashi, on the methods of the Steiner educational philosophy.

Steiner always had in mind the root of human existence, and so the curriculum is structured to comply with one's age and growth level. At the Pasadena Waldorf School, the curriculum for students, ages 7 to 14, is in accordance with their age and growth level, and the concept is wonderful.

From the first to the eighth grade, students are required to take foreign language classes two to three times a week. At the Waldorf School, Spanish and Japanese language classes are included in the curriculum. One of the main purposes in implementing foreign language courses is so students can learn more about the different cultures, languages, and customs of the world—all while learning to do so in a positive manner. One other reason is so students will be able to develop a worldly view.

The eighth grade can be a crucial time for students. They are going through many changes, and it is also a time in their lives where they are curious and eager to learn more about the world.

I thought that Japanese taiko drumming would correspond with the objectives of having foreign language courses at the Waldorf School. In other words, it would be a great chance for the students to experience something that would help them develop worldly views.

From the beginning of this year, I was interested in implementing taiko classes into the curriculum. After doing some research, I participated in practices with various taiko groups and

for a lifetime, and will contribute to their development of a worldly view.

Due to scheduling, we are allocated only a short amount of time for practices. Despite that fact, I am truly grateful that Mr. Nakamura has agreed to teach taiko to our students.

Koji Nakamura: While attending our concert, Hiromi felt something different that she had not experienced at other taiko performances. That difference was the spiritual essence of Shumei taiko.

We can pick up a common element in all three messages. Of course, spirituality is the key. But I would like to add one more thing. We taiko drummers in Shumei receive light and love, and that light and love goes deep into our souls and is also deeply bound to the sounds we make, and that light and love is shared with those that hear us. That is the essential spirit of Shumei taiko.

Since coming to live in the US, I have seen a lot of taiko performances. Every time I saw one, I sensed something different from ones I had seen in Japan—especially different from those of Shumei taiko. I have spoken with many taiko drummers in the US. Most of them say something like, "I want to have fun playing taiko." To have fun is good. I also lean heavily to this kind of thinking about taiko, because one must enjoy what one does. We are always telling each other, "You are too serious." And that is true. But at the same time I really want to share the full depth of Japanese drumming and the profound spirit of Shumei taiko with as many people as I can in the United States.

Following the spiritual path, following the Shumei way by playing taiko, gives us a chance to take one further, longer step. Music has a power to transcend the differences between cultures, religions, and nationalities. Our deepest hope is that our drumming serves as a bridge over which all people can cross to find a world of harmony and beauty that exists beyond words.

JANICE DALE TOTTEN

(March 9, 1946–November 5, 2006)

We mourn the death of Jan Totten, longtime staff member of SHUMEI Magazine and beloved friend. Jan held the often thankless but crucial task of editorial assistant and proofreader. For close to a decade, she kept our editors and writers on the mark and safe from making fools of themselves in print. She had a keen eye for detail and a true love of the written word.

Jan was a familiar presence at Shumei's Pasadena Center. She was a good friend to all of us, particularly the young students who stayed at the National Center, where she often was seen coaching them in English or helping them get through the confusing logistics of living in a new country.

During the long and hard ordeal of her passing, messages and prayers were received on her behalf from all over the world. Her kind and gentle soul is deeply missed.

From the Miho Museum Collection



Footprint of the Buddha

Pakistan (Gandhara or Swat). Gandhara period (Second or third century AD). Schist. Height 75.5 cm (29 $\frac{3}{4}$ "). Width 31cm (12 $\frac{1}{4}$ ").

As Buddhism developed, the historical Buddha began to be seen as a mythical and superhuman personage with extraordinary bodily features. Before figurative representations of Buddha existed—a practice that began in the kingdom of Gandhara (6th Century BC to 11th Century AD)—his presence was often depicted by his footprint. When placed flat, as displayed in the Miho Museum, the toes faced the worshiper; when hung, they faced downward. These images were given the same reverence and devotion as the later full-figured statues and paintings.

The Shumei Collection's footprint is carved on a rectangular slab, its border decorated with a band of meandering vines with four-petal flowers between them. There is a 'tiratna' or three-jewel symbol on the pad of the big toe and the heel, which symbolize the three 'jewels' of

Buddhism: the Buddha, Buddhist law, and the Buddhist community. The other four toes are marked with swastikas, one intriguingly facing in the opposite direction from the others. 'Svastika' means 'good fortune' in Sanskrit. At the center of the sole is a wheel, symbolizing Buddha's teachings. The wheel, being a perfect circle, lacks nothing, and it was thought that as this wheel turned, Buddha's teachings penetrated the hearts of the faithful.

The stone from which the sculpture is made is greenish schist, common to the region and containing mica flakes that sparkle when caught in the light.

SHUMEI AMERICA

2430 East Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107 USA