

SHUMEI'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SHUMEI

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THE BENEFITS OF FINANCIAL MELTDOWN

Sensei Eugene Imai

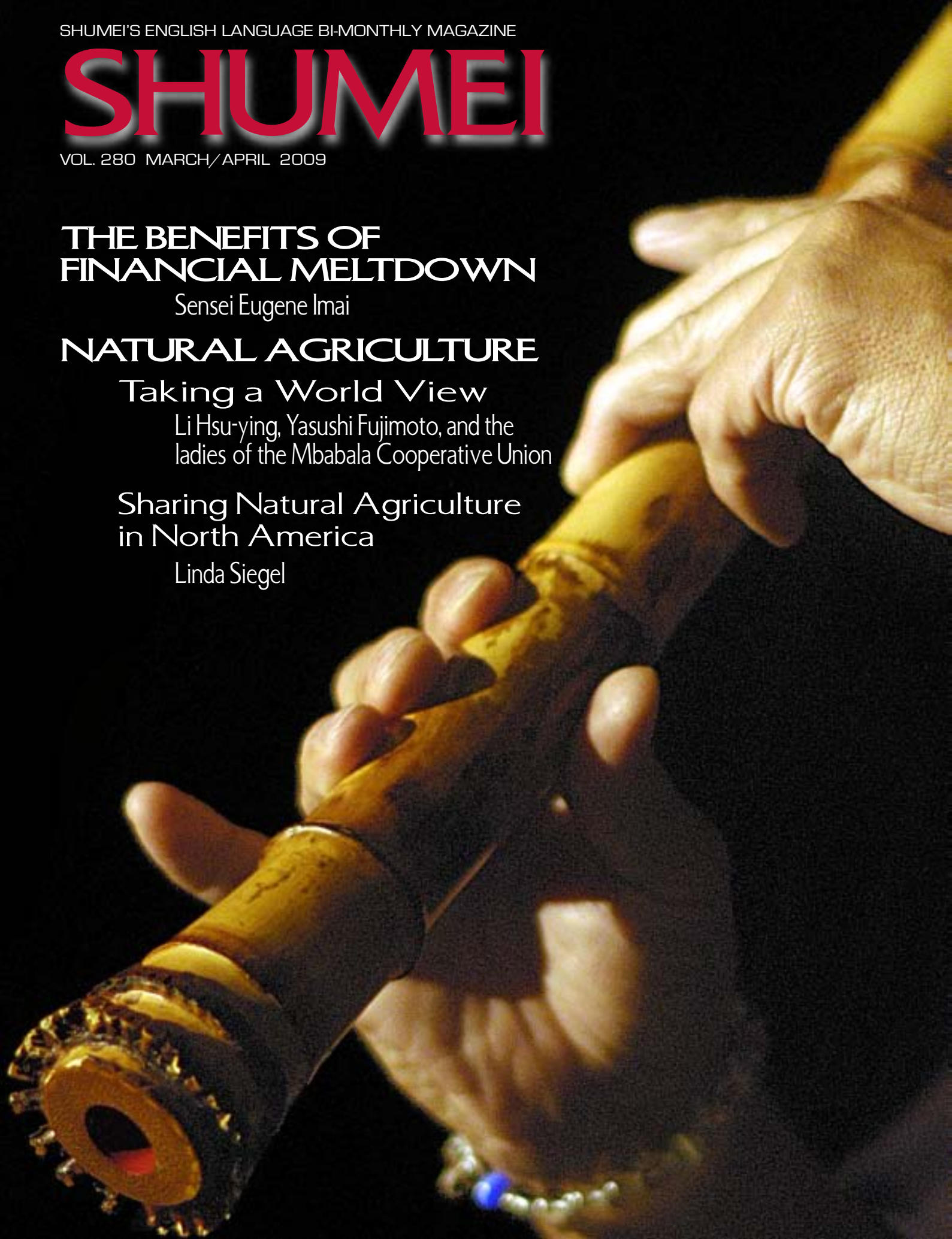
NATURAL AGRICULTURE

Taking a World View

Li Hsu-ying, Yasushi Fujimoto, and the
ladies of the Mbabala Cooperative Union

Sharing Natural Agriculture
in North America

Linda Siegel



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: This issue's cover image was captured on Saturday night, October 11, 2008 at the Hollywood Center's banquet in honor of the 16th anniversary of Shumei America's National Center in Pasadena. Musical entertainment was part of the festivities, and photographer Paul Maska was quick to catch this detail of a wooden flute being played at that evening's open-air entertainment.

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CONTENTS

KANNON'S WAY 3

The Benefits of Financial Meltdown 4
Sensei Eugene Imai

NATURAL AGRICULTURE REPORTS

Taking a World View 6
Lee Shun Ying, Yasushi Fujimoto, and the ladies of the Mbabala Cooperative Union

Sharing Natural Agriculture in North America 9
Linda Siegel

Chou Tsubasa Monogatari 11
Touched by the Wings of a Butterfly
Andrea Claassen-Hansen

THE ARTS

The Music of Tōru Takemitsu 13
A Celebration of 'Ma'
George Bedell

"END QUOTES"

Yamaoka Tesshu: The Last Poem 15

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EXCERPTS FROM MEISHUSAMA'S TEACHINGS ON Kannon's Way

This is the twentieth installment of excerpts from the “Kannon’s Way” teachings of Shumei’s founder, Mokichi Okada, known as Meishusama, and it is the second installment to appear in this publication in 2009. We are honored to present these writings to English language readers for the first time.

The texts used in these excerpts were translated, abridged, and edited by Atsushi Fujimaki and Roy Gibbon for use in SHUMEI Magazine. They were extracted from transcriptions of speeches, question and answer sessions, or from Meishusama’s own writings.

The excerpt below comes from a transcription of Meishusama’s verbal response to a question asked during a meeting, which concerned people who had received Jyorei and died despite receiving the healing prayer, and the attack Meishusama’s organization received in the press afterward. The session took place in 1953.

Maintaining Moderation

I talked about the fundamental attitude necessary for you to have when practicing Jyorei, specifically in relation to its healing powers. What I said was solely in response to the reports I heard from you today. Originally I did not expect to have to touch on this subject. So I shared my thoughts, using words that came naturally to me.

It is true that you can learn very significant lessons from such incidents. If you understand this, your failure to strictly instruct members of your group to immediately seek medical attention when necessary will help you to do better work in the future. Understand that God sees everything and also knows how you can best learn and grow from experiences. If you sincerely accept your failure and continue to work hard for others, it is still possible for you to purify the spiritual clouds¹ that have accumulated as a result of such events.

In addition, once you have learned how to be more daijo² in the practice of your faith, you will be able to help people more effectively. As a result, you will see a lot of progress in your work. I would like you to be more aware of the profound way that God is working, not only through easily recognizable events, but also through everything that happens around you. It is all related to God’s work. Everything always contains some unique and interesting factor that you can appreciate. But most people cannot understand this truth and are easily prone to confusion, distress, and anger. Furthermore, some, although firmly believing in the correctness of what they are doing, often go overboard. About the profound nature of God’s work, the

1. Mokichi Okada, known as Meishusama, used the term ‘spiritual clouds’ to describe the impurities that obscure people’s spirit and distort their awareness. Such clouds are the source of all human misery.

2. Daijo is a principle of Buddhist origins adapted by Mokichi Okada. Daijo is horizontal in nature and represents a spiritual expression that is tolerant, adaptable, inclusive, and wide. It is liberal, expansive, and appeals to reason. Its complement is the principle of shojo.

Oomoto³ scripture Ofudesaki offers some insightful words: “A fool may become a great person, whereas an exceptional person may become a scoundrel.” This phrase is very simple, yet contains a profound depth of meaning. I was quite impressed by it.

As I always say, when I see people suffering because of doctors’ poor treatment, I can hardly contain my rage. On the other hand, I cannot deny that the more ineffective doctors’ treatments prove to be, the more valuable our healing work becomes in comparison. If doctors could easily cure the sick, then that might be the end of it, and nobody would ever come to visit us. There would be no room for us to play an active part in healing the sick. In a sense, I could say that we should greatly appreciate these doctors’ limited results. Interestingly, when I ask doctors about the purpose of medical science, they unanimously answer that it is to help humanity be free from illness. But if sickness is eradicated completely, they will lose their means to earn money for food.

Having listened to my talk, you have probably noticed that my attitude toward medical treatment is more daijo than shojo.⁴

Although it is true that we should leave everything within God’s hands, we must make every effort possible to help people. It is of course never right to do nothing and to just count on God’s grace to take care of our problems. In other words, it is absolutely necessary for us to do everything we can with all our effort, while simultaneously trusting in God to do what is best. What is essential is to know how best you can apply either daijo or shojo, depending upon the situation. Yet even in cases where you think the daijo approach alone is sufficient, you should not ignore shojo. The point is that it is not appropriate to let the shojo attitude dominate. Daijo should be the primary attitude and shojo the secondary one. That said, there are often cases where I feel it challenging to pick the right approach, either daijo or shojo, and must alternately switch from one to the other depending on necessity. Although difficult, I still find joy in searching for the best way to deal with a particular situation.

We are currently in a season of temperature variation, and there are days when right after we feel warm, we then feel cold, and vice-versa. So on days like this, I have to change my clothing a few times. But this is the weather I consider the best. If weather is simply either cold or hot, I do not regard it as good weather. Humans have a tendency to focus more on the negative side of things rather than on the positive, and they like to complain. But if they become completely too satisfied with everything, it is then difficult for them

3. The Shinto-related faith that Meishusama adopted in 1920. After achieving executive status in 1929, he headed the Oomoto organization’s Hanzomon center in Tokyo until his resignation in 1934. The word ‘Omoto,’ means ‘foundation’ or ‘origin.’ The organization was founded by Deguchi Nao (1837-1918). Today, it is headquartered in Kyoto Prefecture and, with a membership of close to 170,000, stands as a strong advocate for world peace.

4. Shojo is a principle of Buddhist origins adapted by Mokichi Okada. Shojo is vertical in nature and represents a spiritual expression that is principled, restrictive, narrow, and disciplined. It is conservative, introspective, and appeals to the emotions. Its complement is the principle of daijo. Mokichi Okada taught that both horizontal daijo and vertical shojo must be in harmony for a spiritual pursuit to succeed. The symbol of such harmony is the cross.

to pursue change and progress. In this sense, experiencing dissatisfaction is rather necessary. Although satisfaction and discontent contradict each other, and harmony between the two is unlikely, what is important is to handle both effectively as the situation demands. Just like driving a car, if you fail to steer properly while heading down the street, you will run off course. It is almost inevitable that you will sometimes encounter things that make you feel dissatisfied. When this happens, just accept your feelings as they are. While doing so, you will experience something that makes you feel satisfied.

When you suffer from sickness—let us say the condition is very serious and you are at the point of death—you wish to be saved even at the cost of all your assets. But once you have passed the critical stage and have come to the point where you do not have to worry about dying, your greed will grow stronger again. You will start thinking about how your money should be spent on this or that. In the meantime, you will forget completely about how you were formerly willing to spend it all to live longer. This kind of attitude is commonly seen in most people. And I myself have had the same experience. It is actually true that after I recovered from an illness that had been diagnosed as incurable, I thought exactly the same way. I think it is almost unavoidable that greed of that kind revisits people and gains power over them after their recovery from a dire illness. So what becomes important in a situation like that is to put greed under control by just accepting it as it is, and, at the same time, express gratitude for the blessings one has received.

I know there are people who, even after their lives have been saved, easily dismiss the great significance of this and neglect to express sufficient gratitude for their good fortune. Some people might promise that if their life were saved, they would make a large donation as a token of gratitude. But when the time comes to make this donation, they usually spend less than one-third of what they originally promised. Concerning this ten-

dency, I have recently spoken and written about ‘re-purification’ as a possible consequence. The point that I wanted to make clear is how significant it is to maintain moderation. Once people lose moderation and go to extremes in one particular direction, they invite problems. Maintaining moderation leads us to the spirit of Izunome.⁵

I once saw a piece of calligraphy by Yamaoka Tesshu⁶ which consists of one boldly inscribed Chinese character meaning ‘moderation’ followed by a sentence of much smaller letters that reads, “Everything in life depends upon this one word.” I felt this calligraphy expressed what we all need to learn, and was deeply impressed. The Chinese character meaning ‘moderation’ is such a striking word. ‘Moderation’ is one of the principal characteristics of Izunome, and can be used when one needs to define Izunome in a single word. This can also apply to the degree of temperature, particularly to the moderate temperatures of spring and fall. In other words, moderation means to be impartial, and helps us to place things in their correct perspective. People who understand ‘moderation’ are regarded very favorably. But unfortunately not many people understand ‘moderation,’ and the majority of them tend to be partial, and thus easily fail or become stagnant.

Today’s talk might have sounded a lot like preaching, which is very common to religious and moral groups. Since I seldom talk this way in our organization, I thought that in order to maintain balance, it might be a good idea to give it a try sometime.

June 1, 1953

5. The spirit of Kannon is referred to as ‘Izunome.’ The term denotes following an unbiased, middle path: a moderate course of action that is neither shojo nor daijo, but a combination of both, depending on the circumstances.

6. Yamaoka Tesshu (1836—1888), also known as Ono Tesutaro, was a renowned Zen master, swordsman, statesman, and calligrapher during Japan’s Meiji Restoration. He was one of the leading figures responsible for the modernization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration of the latter 19th century.

The Benefits of Financial Meltdown

Sensei Eugene Imai (USA)

Sensei Eugene Imai is the Director of Shumei America and the Director of Shumei’s International Department. He is Shumei’s first American Sensei. The theme of the following text derives from two speeches that Eugene Imai gave at the Shumei America National Center in Pasadena, California during the January and February Monthly Sampais of 2009. Eugene Sensei reworked his speeches into the following article.

It was like a dream. We had been seeing so many construction projects rising everywhere we went in the U.S. The price of houses was shooting up ludicrously and peo-

ple were buying many new luxuries with a seemingly endless supply of credit from Visa and Master Cards. Our financial and political leaders encouraged consuming and replacing old stuff with new as a means of supporting the economy. It was considered a virtue to overextend oneself. Greed was good. The roads and freeways were clogged with gas-guzzling recreation vehicles, mostly containing a lone driver talking on a cell phone. Homeowners were drawing money from the equity of their homes as if their houses were cash machines, all to buy more and more stuff. But it turned out to be just a dream after all.

And then, suddenly, we all awoke to this present financial disaster. Now we are in the middle of an unprecedented economic crisis

that is affecting not only the United States but also the entire world. Many people are losing their jobs, and our daily lives are becoming extremely difficult. It is impossible to see any glimmer of light at the end of that deep, dark tunnel ahead. Some say it is a once in a century economic dilemma. And as with all other dilemmas or purifications,¹ we are experiencing pain and suffering. My heart goes out to those who are suffering at this time.

But how can we look at this purification and find a way out of it?

Reflecting on the teachings of our founder, Meishusama, I would like to share some of my thoughts concerning the current

1. The concept of purification is one of the major tenets of the Shumei philosophy. It is the process by which spiritual impurities are dissolved. It is a cleansing process that sometimes includes unpleasant side effects.

crisis. When we face purification, whether it is sickness or financial, we need to deal with it on two levels, the physical and the spiritual. If I cut my little finger on the physical level, I would use a bandage to protect the injured area and try not to use that finger until it was healed. On the spiritual level, I would try to learn something from this inconvenience, such as being grateful for the many small things that I was doing with a fully intact finger, all the while never thinking about how fortunate I was. I would apologize to the little finger for ignoring its existence and the great job it had been doing for me up to this point. I would thank God for giving me such an incredible body. I would thank my two daughters who wash dishes for me, and would slow down and give more appreciation to every moment of my life. In this way, I could benefit from the adversity and grow out of it by taking it to a spiritual level. Such is the beauty of purification.

Meishusama said that all suffering is a process of purification. Instead of looking at our difficulties as problems, we should welcome them as an 'opportunity for growth.' Because it is so painful, it is easy for us to become upset and grumble. We tend to look for somebody to blame, or try to find something to stop the pain immediately. As we face this historical worldwide purification, all of us need to go deep inside ourselves, both individually as well as collectively. What do we have to learn and gain from this catastrophe?

Firstly, I suggest that we practice 'gratitude.' No matter how much we lose, we still have something left. We should give gratitude for what we have instead of complaining over what we have lost or do not have. We always pay attention to what we do not have. This is the time to be grateful for the good things we are given, our family and friends, for instance. Gratitude gives us hope and connects us to the divine. With a negative attitude, we will accelerate a vicious, downward circle; with a positive attitude, we could create a better future.

Secondly, we need to redefine what 'prosperity' means. While we were trying to build prosperous lives and create a prosperous country, we might have been too materialistic and sought out 'plenty' rather than what is 'sufficient.' According to Meishusama, wasting is an evil. We have to learn how to be satisfied with 'sufficient.' Our greed is endless, so we have to learn how to tame our appetites. Meishusama teaches us that when the amount of impurities in our souls and bodies reaches a certain crit-

ical level within a system, a process of natural purification begins to take place to maintain the well-being of the system. I believe that one reason for the current financial purification is due to our culture of waste. We manufacture so many unnecessary things and then throw them away unused while so many people in other parts of the world are dying of hunger and want. Our way of life must be overhauled and corrected. We have been contributing to a sickness that has all but ruined our society, and this financial purification we are experiencing now is telling us that we have to stop, think, and change our lifestyles.

Thirdly, we have to contemplate the meaning of 'possession' and 'ownership'; this is related to my second point, 'prosperity.' I believe we are obsessed by the idea of possession. We hoard possessions because they make us feel rich and prosperous. But this too is a dream. Upon waking, we discover that in reality we really do not own material things. In fact, modern physics tells us all material is energy in transition. Possessions themselves are an illusion of sorts. When we die, we have to leave it all behind—even our bodies. We have to understand that all materials are on temporary loan for us to use wisely while we live here on earth. God gives us these materials to fulfill our purpose on earth. We are here to help realize God's ideal, which is the creation of Heaven on Earth.² We have to use all the materials, such as our bodies, houses, cars, and money for that purpose. We should constantly ask ourselves if we are using our bodies and our money wisely. We must ask ourselves whether or not we are abusing our bodies or misusing our money. If so, our behavior is not in accord with God's will or plan, and therefore such a lifestyle is not going to be sustainable. As we experience the pain due to financial and material want, we might benefit by re-examining the meaning of ownership.

Regarding ownership on a personal level, I reached a certain 'enlightenment' of my own last year. I had been driving a 1995 Toyota Camry with 180,000 miles on it, and was planning on replacing the old car with a new one. Here in the Los Angeles area everyone has to have a car to survive; it is a car-oriented culture, and my mind was set to think that way. Because my elder daughter, Akemi, was reaching an age at which she needed her own car, I began thinking about what would be best for both her and me. (Luckily, my wife, Jane, has her own car.) In the end, I decided to give up the idea of having a car for

2. 'Heaven on Earth' is a term often used by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada (Meishusama), to describe his vision of a future world free from illness, poverty, and strife, and filled with joy and contentment.



Sensei Eugene Imai

myself, and instead bought a small fuel-efficient Honda that made my daughter very happy. You cannot imagine how delighted and free I feel by not owning a car. Now I am more encouraged to walk (I now walk at least forty minutes a day). When I need to, I take a train or bus, even within Los Angeles. I want to set a good example for my staff and other Shumei members by taking more public transportation. Since I walk more, my health has improved. I began talking about the benefits of walking with people I meet, and have noticed that more and more people are walking these days.

Besides the health advantage, I was able to take care of an ego issue. Because I do not own a car, I do not have to compare myself with other people while driving or pumping gasoline at the gas station. When I need a car, I borrow a car from my wife or daughter. So when I pump gasoline into my daughter's very small Honda, I do not have to feel embarrassed because it is not my car. I am free from the exhausting and stupid show-off mentality, and find that I am spending more of my energy on important things. The car issue might not sound that important if you do not live in the Los Angeles area, but wherever you might live, I invite you to give up some material thing that you think very important to your life. You might be in store for an incredible experience.

As economist Paul Romer said, "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste." Why not make this current global financial crisis an opportunity to change our life styles and value systems for the better so as to create a great new civilization—a creation that must start with each one of us, you and I.

NATURAL AGRICULTURE REPORTS

Taking a World View

Lee Shun Ying (Taiwan), Yasushi Fujimoto (U.S.A.), and the ladies of the Mbabala Cooperative Union (Zambia).

The following article derives from three reports and a letter that Shumei's President, Ms Hiroko Koyama, known to Shumei members as 'Kaicho-Sensei,' read in Meishusama Hall in Misono on December 23, 2008. The following contains material by Lee Shun Ying of Taiwan, Yasushi Fujimoto of the U.S.A., and a letter from the Mbabala Women Farmers' Cooperative Union of Zambia. Their texts have been edited and abridged for use in SHUMEI Magazine.

A Report from Taiwan

Shumei's Taipei Center recently celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. After the ceremony, Shumei's President, Ms Hiroko Koyama, met with new members. She also had a chance to meet some nonmembers who were greatly impressed by Shumei Natural Agriculture.¹ One of these people had learned about Natural Agriculture from Lee Shun Ying and proceeded on to do volunteer work at Mr. Li's farm. Lee Shun Ying and his wife Chen Hwei Wen have been committed to Natural Agriculture for the past eight years, and have been a positive influence on Natural Agriculture's growth in Taiwan. He has arranged tours from Taiwan to Misono, the Miho Museum, Shigaraki no Sato, and Kishima Island.² The visitors were greatly impressed.

1. 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.

2. One of Shumei's three major Centers, Misono is the organization's International Headquarters and Spiritual Center in the Shigaraki Mountains of Shiga Prefecture, Japan. The name 'Misono' means 'Sacred Garden.'

The Miho Museum was designed by I.M. Pei in the Shigaraki Mountains of Japan to house the Shumei Art Collection. The collection contains antiquities from

Afterwards, some began to practice Natural Agriculture and even bought farms. Ms Koyama asked Mr. Lee how he managed all his activities on behalf of Natural Agriculture, and later received the following report from him.

I started farming not only to grow vegetables, but also to use the farm for educational programs. I created ten different curricula, among them: An Introduction to Natural Agriculture, The Importance of Healthy Eating, Seed Reproduction, Conventional Agriculture's Future, The Dangers of Genetically Modified Foods, The Dangers of Postharvest Chemicals, The Global Food Problem, and The Psychological Side of Agriculture. I also give lectures to people who visit my farm. Sometimes I am asked to give talks at schools, Parent Teacher Association meetings, and community colleges. During these sessions, I talk about things I learned from Shumei, and share information I received from Shumei's Natural Agriculture Department. I also show Japanese TV programs related to the subject.

When groups visit my farm, I give them a tour during which I explain the importance of eating healthy food. I offer a lunch prepared with food grown through Natural Agriculture. Sometimes in the afternoons we make toys with materials we found in nature, we bake, or we take part in farming activities.

I offer a special cooking program for children and families. We cook with vegetables harvested from my farm. This allows people to understand the whole process, from where food comes from to how it is cooked and how it is enjoyed. This program has become very popular.

throughout Eurasia and ancient Egypt, all of which were chosen primarily for their inherent beauty.

Shigaraki-no-sato is a cultural heritage site near Misono and the Miho Museum, where two traditional Japanese farmhouses have been relocated and restored, and where a model Natural Agriculture farm is located. Because of its natural beauty and historical interest, people visiting Shumei's International Center and the Miho often tour the site.

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 and research of Natural Agriculture.



Lee Shun Ying

Visitors and volunteers come to know about my farm from magazine references, TV programs, books, and my Internet blog—which has received about 280,000 hits so far.

The 'Back to the Farm' movement is becoming a very popular trend in Taiwan. It seems that today more and more people want a life that involves farming. Many visit my farm because of this trend. Some start by working as volunteers for a few weeks or months. I train them so they will be able to manage their own farms and organize tours of their own.

I organize tours of about fifteen to twenty non-Shumei members. Twice a year, there, we have tours of Japan, on which we visit Misono, the Miho Museum, Shigaraki-no-Sato, Kishima Island, and several Natural Agriculture farms. About eighty people have joined these tours. When visiting the farms, we meet with both farmers and consumers. This experience allows the visitors to feel the spirit of Shumei Natural Agriculture. After these tours, some visitors have become Shumei members, started practicing Natural Agriculture, and now are enthusiastically spreading the word about Natural Agriculture.

A construction company is helping me build accommodations to house volunteers. I think even more volunteers will come to my farm to learn Natural Agriculture. I hope my farm will be a good model, much like Shigaraki-no-Sato, and that it will play a prominent role in disseminating information about Natural Agriculture.

The construction company's president is a nature lover and has wanted to create a nonprofit organization geared towards the protection of our environment for some time. One day this past year, he asked my wife to give a lecture about Natural Agriculture. This was how we first met him. I asked him if he would give me a model house that was scheduled to be demolished. He agreed, and we discussed my plan to move the model house to my farm and reconstruct it after making some alterations. He then volunteered to refurbish the original house that is already on my farm, as well. We now are planning to build a kitchen where we can hold cooking classes.

The construction company's president thought he should learn more about Shumei's spiritual practices before beginning the reconstruction and refurbishing, as he wanted the model home to reflect Shumei's spirituality. So, he visited Misono and the Miho Museum with some of his employees. He wanted to interact with Japanese people, so he brought tea ceremony utensils from Taiwan and demonstrated the Chinese Tea Ceremony at the Miho Museum, Shigaraki no Sato, and Kishima. He was impressed with everything he saw and did.

In another city—Hsinchu, in northern Taiwan—our Natural Agriculture activities started with the encouragement and cooperation of yet another construction company. We started there with a five-acre farm. The construction company has now set up a project known as “The Agriculture Community,” consisting of twenty-four houses and farms. All the residents living in



Volunteers and student farmers sort seeds for next year's harvest.

this community practice Natural Agriculture. The president of the construction company is a deeply spiritual man, who values a harmony between nature and buildings. So he understands the concept behind the creation of the Miho Museum, which was designed to be in harmony with its natural surroundings. He has given lectures and has had meetings about this subject many times; the result being that more and more people have come to share our ideas and support our projects. The construction company supports Natural Agriculture in other ways as well, such as hosting lectures and lending prospective farmers land at no profit. One of the company's employees, who joined us on one of our tours of Japan, received an ohikari and then bought a new farm on which he practices Natural Agriculture.

Natural Agriculture started in Jiayi County in south-central Taiwan with about three-and-a-half acres of rice paddies, and one-half acre of a pineapple farm. Three Shumei members and seven nonmembers work there. Three of the nonmembers have been to Misono. People from very different walks of life live and work in Jiayi. They include the owner of a bookshop who is also an environmentalist and civil rights activist, a professor, a journalist, and a teacher, who all share the philosophy of Natural Agriculture. Rice is harvested twice a year. Its taste has gained quite a good reputation. And an article about the farm and its delicious rice has appeared in a local newspaper.

Elsewhere, in southeastern Taiwan, a resident of Taitung named Mr. Lin quit his corporate job and purchased farmland to start cultivating star fruit and pineapples. Mr. and Mrs. Lin became Shumei members after their return from a Japanese farm tour. Mr. Lin once gave a testimonial at Misono about his transformation from corporate worker to farmer.

The Lins are an inspiring model whose example motivates other Shumei members to start their own operations. Now four people outside of Shumei also run independent farms. They get together at Mr. Lin's house once a month for a potluck party. It is a casual event where as many as forty people might show up. The friendly atmosphere of these events helps like-minded people socialize and create

an atmosphere in which unique activities emerge naturally. The present operations encompass thirteen producing sites of differing scale. Consumers crave wholesome produce, and backyard gardening is also gaining wider popularity.

So far the development of marketing techniques has been left up to the producers' individual efforts. However, as expectations arise, various aspects of consumer education, distribution, and public outreach need to be reviewed. Spontaneous development during an initial period no longer works. As a remedial measure, a committee has been formed to investigate how to found a nonprofit organization. In



Lee Shun Ying's wife, Chen Hwei Wen, harvests carrots with the help of their little boy.

the afternoon session after we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of our Taipei Center recently, committee members held a meeting to develop a blueprint for marketing endeavors. Later, some three hundred people joined them to listen to their discussion. Naoki Kaneko, a Miho Museum curator, was also present as a guest speaker, and made a speech entitled “Agriculture and Art.” This was followed by an announcement of recruitment to the Community Supported Agriculture committee and an election of new personnel to run it. Then, about a hundred people became official members of the CSA. Through collaboration such as this, organized people move forward to create farm profiles on a website, establish distribution networks, issue publications, and plan educational seminars.

A Few Words from Pennsylvania

One of Shumei's ongoing projects involves its partnership with a pioneering organization at the home base of the USA's organic movement, The Rodale Institute of Pennsylvania. A Natural Agriculture demonstration garden is being prepared to open this summer. Yasushi Fujimoto sent Ms Koyama a progress report in which he stated that, "The outer layer of the domed greenhouse has been finished, while another seed storage space is still under construction. A classic, wooden roof complements the contemporary design of the dome. This nice combination seen from the hill behind the site is impressive. Vegetables and flowers planted in the garden add beauty to the whole site."

A charter school has opened in the area and one of the school's staff e-mailed the Shumei Pennsylvania Center with a request to explore a possible partnership, as the school wanted to incorporate spiritual values into their classes. After searching several websites for faith-based organizations, he gained access to the Pennsylvania Shumei Center's web pages. Immediately the description of Shumei's values captured his attention. In mid-December of 2008, he paid a visit to The Rodale Institute. Shumei staff members Eileen Weinstein, Sensei Chisako Fukushima, and Yasushi Fujimoto, showed him around the Natural Agriculture garden. He discovered that Eileen had a passion for educating children by creating programs that allow hands-on experiences with nature. During the tour, the visitor was advised to communicate directly with the Rodale Institute, which directs Shumei's farm program. He declined the suggestion, saying that it was Shumei's spirituality that has touched him and that what he needed was firsthand contact with Shumei members. Mr. Fujimoto wrote in his report, "This farm will work as a magnet, drawing good-hearted people like this man. Such alliances will surely expand."

A Workshop in the United Kingdom

Another organic pioneer that Shumei is working with is the Soil Association of the United Kingdom. The Prince of Wales is the royal patron of that organization. Shumei member, Yuta Oguri, has been working with the Association as an intern. Last December 2008, he organized a presentation concerning Shumei.

For the workshop, Shigenobu Furuoka and Shinya Nakamae came to attend from Shumei's Natural Agriculture site at Harlow.³ In the presence of forty employees, Mr. Oguri used slides to explain the three principal activities of Shumei. The first topic of his thirty-minute presentation was "Shumei Natural Agriculture." Messrs. Furuoka and Nakamae each spoke for about five minutes concerning their own experiences. Mr. Furuoka's story concerned the healing effects of his vegetables on one of his consumers in Japan. Mr. Nakamae addressed the importance of the farmer fostering a caring heart. He also introduced a unique method of continuous cropping.

The next topic was that of the beauty of art, which was represented by the Miho Museum. The third was Jyorei, and Mr. Oguri offered the audience a chance to receive this healing blessing. "Words are not enough, so please try the direct experience," he said. To his surprise, most of the staff agreed to receive Jyorei.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Tom Andrews of the Soil Association's Senior Management Team, who had accompanied the association's director Patrick Holden, paid Shumei a high compliment. He said that during his stay in Japan, the most stunning thing he had experienced was the sincerity of Misono's staff, and that their conduct must be a reflection of the grace of their spirit. He found that such spiritual qualities were characteristic of the Shumei organization as a whole. He went on to say that such spiritual values were very much needed. Because of this, he declared that the Soil Association's partnership with Shumei was quite significant.

A Letter from the Ladies of Zambia

Toward the end of last year, Sensei Alan Imai⁴ passed on a 'thank you' letter to President Koyama. The letter was from the Mbabala Women Farmers' Cooperative Union [MBA-WOFA], whom Shumei assists through its

Zambia Project.⁵ The letter was addressed to Shumei members throughout Japan and the United States.

We, the members of the Mbabala Women Farmers' Cooperative Union are sending to all our friends in Japan and America, heartfelt sunshine-filled HELLOS! We write you this letter to let you know how this year has been. Since we are at the end of our 2008 journey and about to celebrate Christmas, it is appropriate to write to all of you and just let you know how everyone is doing.

Two-thousand-and-eight has been a difficult year for the women of Mbabala as well as other farmers in similar situations. Two-thousand-and-eight brought with it heavy rains. As farmers, we rejoiced because we had been praying for rain after the long 2007 drought. But to our dismay the rains would not stop, and the farmers were unable to weed their fields or harvest their maize when the time was right. So, a number of our members' crops were destroyed. In other areas of Zambia, farmers like us experienced floods and lost their homes and belongings.

Even though we are experiencing problems, we feel that 2008 has been a progressive year for the women of MBAWOFA. By being part of the cooperative we feel that we have control over our own destinies and we are happy to be actively involved in shaping our lives and our children's lives. We believe in what we are doing and are determined to teach the rest of Zambia the lesson that working together as a community can bring about development.

The Natural Agriculture Show in July was very exciting. Due to the Project Coordinator having a baby, she was unable to take an active role in the event. So, the women of MBAWOFA were given the big responsibility of organizing this project

3. Harlow is the site of a Natural Agriculture garden in the United Kingdom. It is located on about four-and-a-quarter acres of land about an hour's drive from the Shumei London Center. The land is owned by a lady who was so impressed with the concept of Natural Agriculture that she decided to allow Shumei U.K. to rent out a section of her property.

4. Sensei 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 came to the USA in 1985 and later became America's second Shumei Sensei. Although he and Eugene Imai share the same surname, they are not related.

5. Since November 2004 Shumei has worked with the Mbabala Women Farmers' Cooperative Union of Zambia. The purpose of this partnership is to pioneer Natural Agriculture in that region of Africa. The women farmers benefit by the re-introduction of heritage maize crops, which are more draught and flood resistant than conventional highbred or genetically engineered corn dependent on cost-prohibitive industrial fertilizers. Shumei will benefit from the knowledge gained by applying the principles of Natural Agriculture in a high-altitude, tropical location subject to severe draught and heavy storms.

For more information about this project please see SHUMEI Magazine's September/October 2005 issue (Volume 259), the May/June 2006 issue (Volume 263), and the July/August 2008 issue (Volume 276). Back issues of SHUMEI Magazine can be found on Shumei's official website: Shumei.org.



Farm ladies, and some future farm ladies, of the Mbabala Women Farmers' Cooperative Union of Zambia send their "heartfelt sunshine-filled hellos."

themselves. With advice and encouragement from the coordinator, we came together and created a well-organized, successful event. We are very proud of our leaders and the women for working together! At this year's Natural Agriculture Show, twenty children, ages ten to fourteen, were included in the traditional song and dance program, and their traditional attire and youthful energy made that event even more exciting.

In May 2008, Mr. Alan Imai brought encouraging news to the farmers. He informed us that our prayers had been answered and that Shumei would help Mbabala by creating a relief maize program to combat the hunger and poverty caused by the heavy 2007 rains. With the help and support of Shumei, eight maize purchasing stations were created and the leaders of MBAWOFA began buying relief maize from local farmers to help farmers that were not able to harvest. One hundred tons of maize was purchased, repackaged and stored away, and at the beginning of November the maize was distributed to over a hundred farmers in the four cooperative areas where they had the worst harvests. Our storage unit still holds about twenty tons of relief maize that we plan to distribute at the end of January.

In September 2008, Shumei once again blessed our cooperative by purchasing a four-ton truck for the MBAWOFA. The truck was received with great song and dance as the women rejoiced. The MBAWOFA truck was responsible for the relief maize collection as well as the dis-

tribution, and everywhere it went the women sang and danced and the local chiefs and headmen supported the women and blessed the truck.

Once again our project coordinator has informed us that our friends in the U.S.A. helped us to purchase more relief maize that will be distributed in January.

At this point we are finding it very difficult to express our heartfelt thanks to you, our Shumei friends in Japan and in the U.S.A. It is so difficult to express our gratitude. You have affected our lives, our families, and our community a great deal and we would like you to know that you have left an unforgettable mark on our hearts.

We thank you all for your prayers, your blessings, and the help and support you have given us. We would like to thank Mr. Alan Imai for being our guide; he is a great teacher and inspiration to us, and we would like to thank him for all the support and encouragement that he has shown.

We look forward to seeing you all in the future. Please have a blessed festive season and a Happy New Year.

The Zambia Project is Shumei's first aid project as an NGO. It started from suggesting that the women farmers start using indigenous seeds and save these seeds from one season to the next. The key to the cooperative's success was the encouragement Shumei gave these women to become independent of the control of more developed countries, which has led them to poverty. They were blessed with rain after a period of dry weather and were able to set up a Natural Agriculture Show

in Zambia last year. But this year they suffered from both flood and draught. So, Shumei provided support for them, and Alan Imai continued to give them his good guidance.

Almost six years ago, Shumei acquired NGO status. Recently, our project in Zambia was presented as a "Featured Success Story" in the August 2008 issue of UN-NGO-IRENE Best Practice Network, a United Nations Internet newsletter.

Beyond question, last year has shown significant progress for Natural Agriculture.

Sharing Natural Agriculture in North America

Linda Siegel (USA)

Linda Siegel is the Outreach Coordinator of Shumei's Natural Agriculture farm in Santa Cruz, California and is an Editor for SHUMEI Magazine. She became a Shumei member in late 2003, after working for over three years at the Shumei International institute in Crestone, Colorado as the Institute's Operations Manager. Linda transferred to the Santa Cruz farm in May of 2005. One of her primary concerns is the well-being of children, an avocation that Linda has integrated with her regular duties at Santa Cruz by setting up a Farm to School program.

Looking back, 2008 was a good year for Natural Agriculture in North America. Shumei members, the Rodale Institute, and the Catskill Mountain Foundation all networked together in intense brainstorming sessions at four separate conferences during the last year. At each conference, Shumei members gave updates on Natural Agriculture activities at their various Centers and farms in North America, as did Sensei Alan Imai on the very inspirational, ongoing project in Zambia.

As a result of these conferences, progressive action has been taken, not only in increasing public awareness of the agricultural practice's philosophy, but in teaching Natural Agriculture to young people, interns, and others wishing to start their own gardens.

Shumei America's National Center hosted the first conference at Shumei Hall in Pasadena in January 2008. Sensei Eugene Imai hosted the event. This was the first time while attending one of our conferences that I really felt the intense desire for all the participants to decide on some cohesive action by which we could share Natural Agriculture with people throughout North America. This was also the first conference where the focus was on instigating decisive actions towards sharing Natural Agriculture in the West. The first day we spent hours working in two separate groups, sharing ideas and concerns about interpreting Natural Agriculture and exploring how we could share it properly and consistently. The following day, Sharon Franquemont¹ facilitated a "World Café" style workshop, where participants broke into nine smaller groups to further talk about how to best interpret and share Natural Agriculture in North America. Discussions centered on culture, the spiritual aspect of Natural Agriculture, economics, interpretation, and networking with other organizations. Many ideas were discussed, including various media outlets; Natural Agriculture events; internships; mentorships; and publications, such as Natural Agriculture Guidelines and a cookbook. Even the idea of opening an all Natural Agriculture restaurant was suggested. Everyone left in agreement that there was much more work to be done. And all looked forward to more networking and future conferences.

The Rodale Institute, created by visionary J. I. Rodale² in the late 1930s to research and promote sustainable farming systems, hosted the second conference, in April 2008. Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, and J. I. Rodale met and formed a friendship in 1951. In 1996, Togo Sensei from Shumei visited the Rodale Institute, and in 1998 Ms Hiroko Koyama, Shumei's President, and Anthony Rodale, then Chairman of the Rodale Institute, signed an agreement to work together. Today the Rodale Institute operates an all Natural Agriculture garden at their headquarters in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, where this conference was held. The conference began with a welcome from the Rodale

Institute CEO, Tim LaSalle, who reminded us of the need for a change in the way agriculture is practiced worldwide because of climate change, enormous environmental damage, and the carbon footprint that chemically charged, commercial agriculture creates. As he spoke, what came to mind was the rise in chemically induced pollution, whether from agricultural or other sources, that has coincided with a sharp rise in cancer and other diseases worldwide over the last fifty years or so.

For me, the most intriguing idea presented at this conference came from Lisa Hamilton,³ author of "Farming to Create Heaven on Earth," who brought attention to the fact that Natural Agriculture consumers are also Natural Agriculture practitioners. She suggested that reaching those consumers—the ones who go beyond just purchasing and consuming, who take responsibility for our environment and seek a relationship with their food and those who grow it—is key in creating a healthy, sustainable food system in North America. This is true specifically in North America because we are, to quote Lisa, "a nation of consumers."

Hopefully we are becoming a nation of more environmentally conscious and responsible consumers! With the over-inflated gasoline prices of 2008, a dependence on foreign, unstable governments to supply our oil, and the revelation that we are in a global recession, buying locally grown, environmentally sustainable food becomes even more essential. Saving organic, local variety, heirloom seeds is also of paramount importance in protecting local, regional, national, and global food supplies, since the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides is proven to be an unsustainable agricultural method. Genetically modified seed that requires such chemical fertilization is not a viable farming method if we are to keep a healthy global environment.

The Catskill Mountains Foundation, a nonprofit organization created to promote the arts, education, and sustainable living, hosted our third conference, which took place last August in Maplecrest, New York. Shumei's relationship with the Catskill Mountains Foundation began several years after we hired Ruder Finn, a public relations firm headquartered in New York City. Peter Finn, CEO of Ruder Finn, also Chairman of the Catskill Mountains Foundation, was intrigued by the Shumei Natural Agriculture

project, and in the year 2000 the Natural Agriculture horticulturalist Kenji Ban moved to New York State to work on the Catskill Mountains organic farm in Hunter, NY. By the year 2002 their farms were officially designated as all Natural Agriculture. The focus of this conference, facilitated by Peter Finn, was to share recent experiences of the various Natural Agriculture farms and gardens throughout North America; present the first ten years of activity of the Catskill Mountains Foundation; discuss the key points of Natural Agriculture, including values, achievements, and challenges; and finally to take further steps towards building a Natural Agriculture Network. Participants again separated into groups to share ideas. Out of this conference came definitive plans for more publications, an intern curriculum, and the appointment of a communication team for the network.

Finally, our fourth conference of 2008, held in October, was hosted again by Shumei America at its National Center in Pasadena. The event immediately followed the National Center's 16th anniversary. Facilitated by Sensei Eugene Imai, each farm and garden center again updated us on their activities of the past few months, and we all shared our ten-year goals for further establishing Natural Agriculture in North America. We reflected on the achievements and progress overall for our network over the last twelve months and agreed to continue sharing what we learn with each other, new ideas, our successes, and our failures.

Every individual participant has his or her own impression of what they took away from these four very productive and inspiring conferences. A new Natural Agriculture network has been created for North America, which includes the Rodale Institute, the Catskill Mountains Foundation, and Shumei Centers from the United States and Canada. New programs were created, including internships and new farm-to-school programs, and a new Natural Agriculture Family Garden Mentorship program is in the works at the Shumei Santa Cruz Farm. A new publication titled, "Natural Agriculture Guidelines" was created for farmers, and another one titled "How to Start a Natural Agriculture Garden" is in the works for those who want to start a family garden.

I have become even more convinced of the need to share the Natural Agriculture philosophy with future generations and to mentor local families so that they might create their own Natural Agriculture gardens. Through our new network, we will be able to participate in other environmental, sustainability, agricultural, and energy-focused events around the country. I

1. Sharon Franquemont is president of THE CIRCLE, the nonprofit organization that sponsors the Prayer Vigil for the Earth each year on the Washington D.C. Mall. Ms Franquemont established a graduate program in intuition at John F. Kennedy University. Sharon is the author of "Do It Yourself Intuition, You Already Know What to Do," and "Intuition: Your Electric Self." Sharon also works with the Life Science Foundation in Excelsior, Minnesota on projects related to intuition, health care, and science.

2. Jerome Irving Rodale (1898—1971) founded the publishing empire of Rodale Inc. and Rodale Press. He published many books on health. He was one of the early advocates of sustainable agriculture and a healthy diet in North America, and popularized the term 'organic.'

3. Lisa M. Hamilton is a freelance writer and photographer whose work focuses on food and agriculture. Her work has been published in periodicals including *The Nation*, *Harper's*, *Orion*, and *Gastronomica*. Her work on Natural Agriculture began with a ten-article series for *New Farm*, and developed into the book "Farming to Create Heaven on Earth."

also came to realize that what is essential to the survival and growth of our network is that we keep the lines of communication open. Inspiration often comes from sharing ideas, and I believe everyone we meet is a teacher, whether the lesson is how to do something better, how to do it right the first time, how not to do it at all, or how to keep from reinventing the wheel.

I am also convinced that the practice of Natural Agriculture in North America is analogous to a toddler learning to take its first steps. We must allow the toddler to try to walk on its own, without too much control, if it eventually is to learn how to run. If Natural Agriculture is one answer to world hunger, and is an environmentally sustainable food system, then we must encourage others to try it. We must help them in every way possible, while keeping alive the integrity of the Natural Agriculture practice.

‘Cho no Hane Monogatari’

The Tale of the Butterfly’s Wings

Andrea Claassen–Hansen (Germany)

A daughter of Hanover Germany and woman of Berlin, Andrea Claassen–Hansen was a dancer, actress, and musical performer until she took up studies in economics in 1996. She now is a business economist specializing in EU law and trade. Among her interests are theater, opera, ballet, Ashtanga yoga, Kriya Yoga, metaphysics, and writing. She became a Shumei member in October 2003.

However, it is very good to share stories about blessings you have received.

Meishusama, May 11, 1935

In Mayan¹ belief, all people have their place and duty in the greater scheme of things. To ensure that the sun will cross the sky and the seasons will change, it is necessary for humans to do their part. This includes participating in certain

rituals and sacrifices for the greater good. There are sites in this world where heaven meets earth, where the mortal meets the immortal. We call these places ‘sacred’ or ‘sanctuaries.’ They are also called ‘honden’ in Shintoism. In these places spirituality meets reality.

The Tzutujil Mayans of Guatemala speak of simultaneous ‘twin realities’ where the world of dreams and the world of work are likened to the opposing wings of a butterfly. The dream world is one wing and the waking world another. They believe the wings must connect at the heart of the butterfly for it to flutter and live. Real life occurs because of the interaction of the wings. The life is in the butterfly’s heart. Life, like the butterfly’s heart, is kept alive by the two mirroring, twin-like wings. Butterflies also are seen as ancestors returning for a visit to the physical world. The highest god of the Mayans is called Hunab Ku; his name means ‘galactic butterfly.’

You have a mission to strive to do God’s work.

Kaishusama, “Feel the Beauty”

In 2008 a small group of us from Berlin visited Japan. It was my first journey to that country, but it was without question my best trip ever. We participated in the Grand Sampai Tour, which included events on Kishima Island and the Ancestors Ceremony at Misono.²

Something unpredictable happens at an unexpected time.

Kaishusama, “Feel the Beauty”

We left Misono for Ushimado by the Seto Inland Sea in the evening and planned to depart to Kishima Island on the morning of May 7. We spent the night at the home of the Ishimitsu family, who live in a traditional Japanese house with very low ceilings. We received several warnings about the low ceilings, but despite these warnings I still managed to bang my head. I saw a flash and my head bent towards my right shoulder. I was in terrible pain, everything went black and I found myself on the floor. Annahh Kampmann³, who was in the group with

2. Grand Sampais are special sampais held at Misono annually in early May. In attendance are Shumei members and friends from throughout the world.

3. Annahh Kampmann was the first European to receive a Scroll of Light. She is a very active member of Shumei’s Berlin Center and was instrumental in that Center’s creation. Mrs. Kampmann has an extensive background in design and the arts.

1. Thousands of years old before its zenith between 250 and 900 A.D., the Mayan civilization profoundly influenced other pre-Columbian cultures. They had a fully developed written language and calendar, as well as magnificent art and architecture, and excelled in mathematics, astronomy, and agriculture.

us, told me later that I had been unconscious for nearly three minutes. From that moment on all my happiness turned to despair. I had terrible back pains and I could hardly move. I would start crying. All my joy was gone. I felt hopeless and was unable to perceive anything outside of myself. A strong purification had begun.

Purification is truly God’s great, great love and benevolence.

Kaishusama, “Feel the Beauty”

I cried on the fairy ride to Kishima Island.⁴ We went to Kishima’s sanctuary, which rests atop the highest point of the island. I hoped to rid myself of physical pain and thereby missed all of Kishima Island’s beauty. This time, the Amatsunorito⁵ chant could not help me and I became even more desperate. Only when we

4. Kishima Island, in the Inland Sea of Japan, is one of Shumei’s major Centers. A nature preserve, the island is used as a retreat, a summer camp for children, and for practicing and researching Natural Agriculture.

5. The Amatsunorito is an ancient Shinto chant that Shumei’s founder, Mokichi Okada, modified for use in Shumei observances. The Amatsunorito is chanted before exchanging Jyorei at a Center, and during all Shumei observances.



Andrea Claassen–Hansen perched in an ancient tree, fortunate enough to have survived a lightning strike, on the grounds of the famed Horyu-ji temple in Nara, Japan.

chanted the Zengensanji⁶ did some relief come to me. I heard a voice say, "Andrea, you feel so miserable because you are carrying other people's burdens. They can't do it for themselves. Please, don't give up now. Carry them to the Ancestor's Ceremony at Misono. It is a great honor."

Hearing this voice speaking to me, I thought I had gone crazy. I was still in tears when the ceremony ended. Takashi Hoshiyama, who accompanied us from Germany and was a very caring tour guide on our trip, saw that I was not well and took me to Sensei Eugene Imai. Eugene met me at Shinden,⁷ the sacred house containing Meishusama's Komyo Scroll, to give me Jyorei in close proximity to the scroll. I am very thankful for this honor.

This Jyorei is a sign of God's love.

Kaishusama, "Feel the Beauty"

Eugene Sensei explained that unreleased souls seized my body when I banged my head against the ceiling. My mission was to carry them to Misono. In my disbelief, I asked him, "Why me? I am not a saint!" But he replied, "Because you can." Although I had had similar experiences in Berlin, it had never been this hard. Eugene explained, "Kaishusama⁸ once had a similar experience at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. Many unreleased souls clung to her there, and she carried them to the light."

When I share a person's pain and suffering, I am choked up in deep sorrow. I want to pray so that somehow that person's life can be transformed. I want to somehow encourage that person.

Kaishusama, "Feel the Beauty"

I then understood that I had a mission. The pain I felt was the pain felt by the unreleased souls.

I asked Eugene why chanting the Zengensanji in the sanctuary on Kishima Island made me feel better. He said, "Because the Zengensanji speaks to the deceased." I knew I was carrying my ancestors' pain and other de-

spairing souls with me to Misono where they would be transformed and healed. So, I let go of all vanity. I even stopped wearing make-up.

Renounce various complaints and worldly desires and approach life with a pure heart.

Kaishusama, "Feel the Beauty"

Pride is the biggest obstacle to accepting shoji and daijo wisdom. I am grateful that Kaishusama and I shared such a similar experience. Ironically, she, a Japanese lady, had her experience in Germany and I, a German woman, had mine in Japan. There are signs that heaven on earth is possible if we all work together for each other. We are one. "In La K'ech" is a Mayan salutation meaning "I am another you."

We returned to Misono the next morning. This day brought different troubles to me, once again testing my pride. The suitcase containing my good clothes did not make it to Misono on time. So, I could not dress up for the Ancestors Ceremony⁹ in Meishusama Hall¹⁰—how embarrassing! I was in tears again, but two caretakers named Chisato and Yuki, who took care of us in Misono, managed everything. When we reached the cascades¹¹ and I had purified myself, I realized that God does not care what one wears. Praying with a pure heart is all that matters. I felt awkward entering Meishusama Hall in jeans, but everyone understood that this was not out of disrespect. We needed to help our ancestors and other unreleased souls find their way into Misono's light.

We had the most beautiful ceremony! There was taiko music, koto music, senseis in beautiful kimonos, and Kaicho-Sensei, radiant as ever, conducting a marvelous ceremony. I felt some relief during the chanting of the Zengensanji. All the ancestors I had carried with

me went to heaven with Kaicho-Sensei's powerful Jyorei. After the ceremony, the pain vanished. I felt like a new person.

Meishusama, arigatou gozaimasu! Kaishusama, arigatou gozaimasu! Kaicho-Sensei, arigatou gozaimasu! Eugene Sensei, arigatou gozaimasu! Hoshiyama-San, arigatou gozaimasu.

Misono is a place of dreams, a gateway between earth and heaven, and the most spiritually pure place I have ever seen.

Once I returned to Berlin, my sister told me that she had not been well. She said that since May 7, she had felt terrible pains in the right side of her neck. She is not a Shumei member, but I suggested Jyorei to her, and Jyorei relieved her pain. I know that our family's bad karma was healed through the events at Kishima Island and finally at the Ancestors Ceremony. And I know that the lives of my family's future generations will improve.

Your duty is not only to remove the spiritual clouds of your previous generations, but it is also to give happiness to future generations. The fact that happiness continues to grow for eternity is truly wonderful.

Kaishusama, "Feel the Beauty"

Purification and spiritual growth do not only come through physical pain, but also through other ordeals in life. The worst suffering in my daily life shows up in the 'rajistic'¹² people that I must deal with on a daily basis. These are people who enjoy seeing those who do not have their advantages or means compelled to suffer. These selfish types are caught in a vicious cycle and cannot overcome their rajistic values, and so continue themselves to suffer because they never can be satisfied. But we can help them break this vicious cycle by refusing to fight back against them. Our suffering and Jyorei are an essential part of our karmic healing.

My trip to Japan and especially my experience with other spirits opened my eyes. Now I know that my purpose in life is not rajistic but 'sattvic.'¹³ Now that I understand more about karmic healing, I suffer less. I pray for the well-being of those who mistreat others. The wings of a butterfly touched me. I am convinced that when you believe that 'In La K'ech'—'I am another



6. 'Zengensanji' literally means "A Collection of Good Words of Praise." It is a compilation of phrases from texts from chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, among the most sacred prose of Mahayana Buddhism. The text presents vivid images of an earthly paradise meant to strengthen the chanter's resolve to help create a heaven on earth. The chant was modified for use in Shumei ceremonies by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, also known as Meishusama.

7. Shinden is an octagonal structure made of white marble immediately to the north of Meishusama Hall. It houses a Scroll of Light created by Meishusama.

8. Kaishusama is an honorific name used when referring to Mrs. Mihoko Koyama, Shumei's much revered and loved first president and spiritual leader. Kaishusama passed away in November of 2003.

9. Ancestor ceremonies are special sampais held at Shumei Centers to honor ancestors, departed family members and friends who have passed away. Presently, this ceremony is observed primarily in Asia, but recently it has been introduced to western members at Shumei's London Center and Shumei America's National Center.

10. 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 both for daily Sampais and special events throughout the year.

11. 'Kumo Ga Taki' is a cascade designed by the sculptor Masayuki Nagare, located on the approach to Meishusama Hall in Misono, Shumei's international headquarters. Its waters are considered sacred and, like the waters of Lourdes and Bethesda, are thought to have healing properties.

12. The term 'rajistic' comes from the Sankhya School of Hinduism. A 'rajistic' person is one that is materialistic and preoccupied with the world of the senses. This type of personality usually will hold onto his or her delusions until reality forces them to see the truth.

you’—that there will be many moments in your life when you will be brushed by a butterfly’s wings.

Let’s do something that can make everyone happy. And let’s make it fun.

Kaishusama, “Feel the Beauty”

Whenever you see a butterfly, open your butterfly heart and take the opportunity to connect with God and all His creatures.

Editor’s Note: “Feel the Beauty,” a book of words spoken by Kaishusama, from which Andrea Claassen–Hansen quotes in her article, was created by Yo Shomei. “Feel the Beauty” is available at the Shumei America National Center’s Gift Shop in Pasadena, California.

If you wish to order directly by phone, please call 1–626–584–8841 between 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (PST, USA) from Monday through Friday. You also can send an e–mail message to giftshop@shumei.org or a fax to 626–584–8846. Visa, Master Card, American Express, and Discover Cards are all accepted.

THE ARTS

The Music of Tōru Takemitsu

A Celebration of ‘Ma’

George Bedell (U.S.A.)

George Bedell is the editor of this publication. He was one of the founding members of the Shumei Arts Council of America and presently sits on that Council’s Board of Advisors. George became a Shumei member in August of 1994.

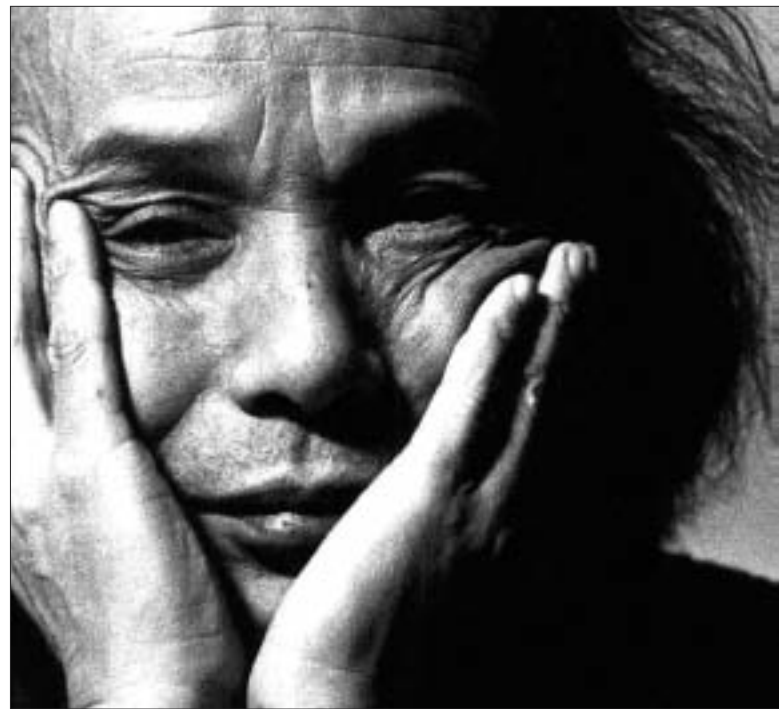
The Shumei Arts Council of America was created in 1998 to enrich the cultural life of the Pasadena and Los Angeles communities, and foster a deeper appreciation of the arts, especially among young people.

13. Sattvic is a term used in the Hindu philosophic school of Sankhya. It derives from the Sanskrit word ‘sāttvika,’ which means ‘bright and pure,’ without illusion. It is a quality of accepting reality and truth, and living life without illusions.

This mission is based on the belief that art can enlighten the hearts and minds of people, and through this transformation our community will flourish. This year marks the Council’s tenth anniversary season. It is a season that presents on three consecutive days, beginning on April 24, its most ambitious project to date, a festival celebrating the life and art of one of the late 20th century’s most renowned composers, Tōru Takemitsu. Entitled “Confronting Silence: the Music of Tōru Takemitsu,” the festival is a collaboration with two of Pasadena’s most esteemed art institutions, the South-west Chamber Music and Pacific Asia Museum.

Tōru Takemitsu (1930–1996) is considered one of the major composers of the later 20th Century and the first Japanese composer to receive wide international acclaim. His talents and interests were broad. For the most part he was self–taught and drew his early inspiration from a decidedly non–Japanese range of sources that included jazz, popular song, and the French post war avant–garde. Among the composers that influenced him in his youth were Claude Debussy, Anton Webern, and, most prominently, Olivier Messiaen. While an avid musical explorer and innovator, Takemitsu never lost touch with popular music or popular art forms. He wrote close to 100 scores for movies, among them such cinematic classics as Hiroshi Teshigahara’s “Woman in the Dunes” and Akira Kurosawa’s “Ran.” Early on in his career, his music caught the attention of such prominent older composers as Igor Stravinsky and Aaron Copland, and soon after, his position on the world stage was assured.

Takemitsu seemed a figure of near–universal sensibilities. He was a popular television celebrity in Japan, a well–received writer on aesthetics and musical theory both in the Japanese and English languages, a world peace advocate, and a noted cook who somehow managed to find time in his busy schedule to write a detective novel.



Twentieth century legend, Tōru Takemitsu.

If his earlier work appears a bit derivative and the whole body of his work eclectic and more impressionistic than intellectually driven, an early observation he made might clarify his approach to composition. Early on, he stated that he had no respect for remaining steadfast to either “trite rules” or a musical style that was “stifled by formulas and calculations.” He said that one could no better plan a piece of music before composing it than one could completely control one’s own life. In Takemitsu’s music, sound had the freedom to breathe, and it breathed deeply, unencumbered by heavy theories or dictums. And perhaps all the music that he wrote was part of one vast accolade to freedom and liberty, a celebration of the glory of pure and splendid sound. It was a sound sometimes made by traditional symphonic instruments, sometimes by sophisticated electronic equipment, and sometimes by just a couple of wooden sticks hitting each other. The sound could challenge as well as soothe and comfort the listener. There were few limitations to his talents or imagination.

Despite his being the most famous Japanese composer of his time, it was only during his later career, when at the height of his powers, that he was able to reconcile himself to the indigenous music of his homeland. For most of his life, the sound of traditional Japanese music recalled too closely the bitterness of the war years, a time in which he,

scarcely an adolescent, was conscripted into labor service as the Japanese nation faced its greatest defeat. Ironically, it was his good friend and sometimes mentor, the perennial cutting-edge American composer, John Cage, who gently prodded Takemitsu to re-examine the musical roots of his own culture. It was this rediscovery and embracing of his heritage that opened the floodgates of his mature style and presented us with some of his most distinctive and profound works. There is a pleasing cyclical quality to his body of work and his life's journey, a completeness that seems as if it had followed the natural order of things. More than a few writers and artists suggest that the end of all great artistic and personal journeys brings the traveler back to the very place where the journey began, and gives the traveler the capacity to see that place for the very first time, to find beauty in it. Perhaps Takemitsu's insights into his own musical heritage would never have been so luminous and beautiful had he not escaped to the larger, foreign world of bright and new artistic forms.

One of the concepts of Japanese aesthetics that Takemitsu explored in his mature style was that of 'ma.' 'Ma' is sometimes defined as an open space, a breath, a pause, or a silence that defines sound and is found between sounds. Although not unlike the idea of the 'void' or the concept of 'negative space' in European aesthetics, perhaps the clear difference between the western and eastern concepts can only be grasped by experiencing the art itself.

The concept can be applied to the visual as well as the sonic arts. There is a spatial aspect to 'ma.' It can be experienced within the environs of a formal Japanese garden. Takemitsu often compared composing and listening to music to strolling through a Zen garden. He thought of the sounds of his instrumentation as similar to the placement of a garden's various rocks, plants, and artifacts that together form a harmonious whole where no one aspect overpowers the others.

There is a spiritual element to 'ma' as well. The vacant space defined by these elements is rich ground for mediation, and silence is the home of spirituality. 'Ma' connects us to both the universe of the five senses and the unseen world beyond them.

For Takemitsu, 'ma' permeated the natural world, and nature was perhaps his greatest teacher. 'Ma' touches the heart of nature, a sense of nature almost lost to modern urban society. Many of Takemitsu's pieces evoke

themes of the natural world. He believed that spirits exist everywhere in nature, and each of his works was an expression of these spirits and his love of nature.

Both a concert performed by Southwest Chamber Music and a mixed media performance piece performed by various artists of various disciplines will be presented as part of the Festival. Both will attempt to present 'ma' and nature as found in Takemitsu's work. And a symposium will explore the wonder that 'ma' inspires when found in nature, and how this awe is the birthplace of art, spirituality, and science.

TÖRU TAKEMITSU FESTIVAL SCHEDULE:

The Literati of Japan (Lecture)

On Friday, April 24, between 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., writer and artist Alex Kerr will present a lecture on calligraphy, entitled "The Literati of Japan." This event will be held at the Pacific Asia Museum, located at 46 N. Los Robles Ave., Pasadena, CA 91101, Tel: 626-449-2742. Website: www.pacificasiamuseum.org. This will be the only event of the Takemitsu Festival to take place outside of Shumei Hall in Pasadena.

The Pacific Asia Museum is one of only four institutions in the United States dedicated exclusively to the arts and culture of Asia and the Pacific Islands. The museum's mission is to further cultural awareness and understanding through the arts.

Takemitsu: Nature and the Concept of 'Ma' (Symposium)

On Saturday, April 25, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., a symposium entitled, "Takemitsu: Nature and the Concept of 'Ma'" will be held. The panelists are Peter Grilli, President of Japan Society of Boston; Alex Kerr, Director of the Origin Program; Jeff von der Schmidt, Artistic Director of Southwest Chamber Music; and Sharon Franquemont, Education Director of the Life Science Foundation. Martin Perlich, distinguished broadcaster, will facilitate.

Ma: Sound and Silence (Mixed Media Performance Piece)

Following the Symposium on April 25, between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m., experience a fusion of sights and sounds that capture the spirit of 'ma' in music and silence, form and space, and movement and rest. The program blends photography; dance; the art of tea; calligraphy; and music, both scored and improvisational, into a discourse on one of the guiding principles of Japanese art. The concert includes works by Takemitsu, Haruno Kira, and the world premier of a work by taiko master Koji Nakamura and koto artist Yukiko Matsuyama. Among the artists participating are Junko Ueno Garrett on piano, Koji Nakamura on drums and flute, Yukiko Matsuyama on koto, Amy Tatum on flute, composer Haruno Kira, dancer Hidesomi Bando, calligrapher Alex Kerr, photographer Sumio Koike, and Masanori Tamaki performing a tea ceremony. Production by Kouji Sh'tara. Directed by Don Riedel.

Music for the Movies: Tōru Takemitsu (Film and Comments)

On Sunday, April 26 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. there will be a viewing of the documentary film, "Music for Movies: Tōru Takemitsu," with an introduction by one of the film's producers, Peter Grilli, and anecdotes by Takemitsu's nephew, Kouji Sh'tara. The film contains clips of some classic moments in Japanese cinema, and gives the viewer insights into the means and reasons behind Takemitsu's unique sounds.

Takemitsu Concert

As the main event of the festival, a concert will be held from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. on April 26. The concert will be performed by the two-time Grammy® Award-winning Southwest Chamber Music under the direction of Jeff von der Schmidt, presenting mesmerizing works from Takemitsu's expansive and vividly hued "Bryce" and "Waterways."

Founded in 1987, Southwest Chamber Music is one of the most active chamber music ensembles in the United States, presenting its concert series throughout Los Angeles County. The ensemble provides weekly music education programs in the Los

Angeles and Pasadena Unified School Districts through Project Muse in-school concerts, a Mentorship Program, and other community events.

More Information

All events are free and open to the public. For more information concerning the festival, please call Shumei America's National Center in Pasadena, CA at 1 626-584-8841 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (PST), from Monday through Friday, or you can visit www.shumeiarts.org/takemitsu.htm.

“END QUOTES”

Yamaoka Tesshu: The Last Poem

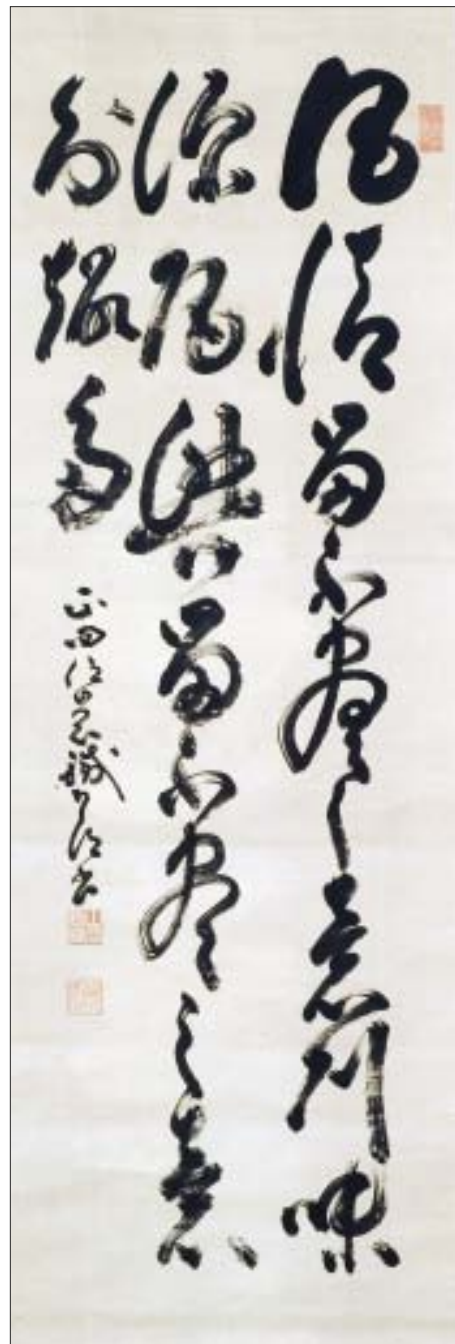
This issue's “End Quotes” comes from Yamaoka Tesshu (1836–1888), whom Meishusama referred to in his teachings on “Kannon's Way” (Please see page 3).

Yamaoka Tesshu, also known as Ono Tetsutarō, was a renowned Zen master, swordsman, statesman, and calligrapher during the period of Japan's Meiji Restoration. His birth as the son of a Samurai, with a mother who was the progeny of a Shinto priest, might have contributed to his mutual pursuits in both the martial and spiritual arts.

Tesshu was famed for his skill with the sword. He developed his own style of fencing, known as ‘Itto Shoden Muto-Ryu’ or the ‘no sword’ school, and opened his own ‘dojo’ or school of martial arts. The point of the Muto-Ryu practice comes with the realization that the enemy in combat does not exist, and all that really matters is the purity and grace of form in combat.

Late in his short life, at the age of 45, he is said to have attained enlightenment while in meditation. His revelation came after long years of dedication to his chief passions of Zen, swordsmanship, and calligraphy.

As adept at handling an ink brush as a sword, he was one of the finest calligraphers of



his day. Tesshu is known for his use of the ‘Flying White’ style, a calligraphic form known for its energetic strokes and use of negative white space to define form and create visual irony. It is claimed that he left behind him at the end of his life over one million artworks, a staggering amount that is hardly believable.

On a more worldly level, Tesshu was a bodyguard, instructor, and close confidant of the Emperor Meiji. He was also a revered statesman and negotiator, and a large influence on the modernization of Japan in the second half of the 19th century.

Tesshu had a strong, athletic build and was over six feet tall, an unusual height for a

Japanese man at that time. Nicknamed “Demon Tesshu,” he was naturally combative and competitive. Yet, he had the qualities of temperance as a fine leader and a skilled diplomat, and his kindness and generosity were legendary. He also had a reputation as a bad dresser, often appearing in threadbare attire even at the imperial court, and he was notorious for his heavy drinking. His competitiveness and love of alcoholic beverages occasionally lead to drinking bouts with the Emperor, which at least once led to a wrestling match between the two.

One wonders if the sample of Tesshu's calligraphy that Meishusama mentions in his Kannon's Way teaching entitled “Moderation” (see page 3 of this publication) might have been brushed with all the angst of the sobering clarity and firm resolve found on the morning after a night of heavy overindulgence.

The text of the sample of his striking calligraphy seen left reflects typical Zen sentiments. It can be roughly translated as:

*Not being caught in petty emotions
gives life full flavor.*

*Not wasting time on thoughtless pleasure
gives life value.*

Tesshu died of stomach cancer in 1888, at the relatively early age of 53. The day before he died, he asked why he could not hear the sounds of his students practicing in his dojo and was told that the students canceled their sessions so that they could honor him in his final hours. Tesshu then ordered his students back to the dojo to practice.

“The best way to honor me is through training,” he said.

Accounts of his end speak of a classic instance of restraint and decorum. During his last moments, he wrote out his death poem, his gently chilling last words to posterity.

*While tightening my stomach
Against the pain
I hear the crow
Of an early morning crow.*

It is claimed that he then sat down in quiet meditation until death gently slipped over him.

“End Quote” is a column that is periodically featured in SHUMEI Magazine. If you have a favorite quote or perhaps several that you would like to share with our readers, please contact the End Quote Editor: shumei.america@charter.net.

All quotes must be attributed and include brief biographical material about the author and the sender.



Hippopotamus

Egypt. Middle Kingdom (Mid-21st to mid-17th centuries BC).
Faience. Height 5.8 cm Length 12.8 cm.

Hippopotamuses lived in the papyrus-thick damp of the Nile until the New Kingdom, around 1550 to 1070 BC. They spoiled crops and were considered pests. However, the female hippopotamus was considered a symbol of fecundity. The Egyptians even had an eternally pregnant hippopotamus goddess named 'Taurt', who was worshipped as the patron of women in childbirth.

This faience hippopotamus is glazed in a greenish blue that suggests water. Depicted on its body are both aquatic flora such as lotus blossoms, and fauna such as a frog gazing up at a but-

terfly. The work has a poetic quality, and was probably meant to symbolize the bounty and life force brought to Egypt by the flooding Nile.

Objects such as this were often used as burial items during the Middle Kingdom. This hippopotamus image, as in the case of many other examples, appears to have had its legs broken intentionally, perhaps to ward off the plundering and attacks of real hippopotami.

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