

SHUMEI'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

# SHUMEI

VOL. 294 FALL 2011

## **A Message for the West**

Kaicho–Sensei Hiroko Koyama

## **Beauty's Gift to the Environment**

Sensei Alan Imai

## **Shumei & the Rodale Institute**

The Story of a Friendship

Sensei Chisako Fukushima

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THE COVER: A curving stone path and a vibrant splash of autumn flora as seen from above on the grounds of Shumei's International Center, Misono. The photo was taken by Don Riedel, SHUMEI Magazine's photo editor.

PAGES TWO AND THREE, INSIDE SPREAD: Another, closer view of Misono's foliage. The leaves of the Japanese maple, which line the stone walkway leading to the Grand Plaza and Meishusama Hall, respond to the first chill of fall with a spectacular array of red and green hues and tones. Koike Sumio captured this image.

# Attachment & Faith, Humility, & Humor

Roy Gibbon & Atsushi Fujimaki (USA)

With this edition, SHUMEI Magazine publishes its tenth and last excerpt from "An Offering of Light," by Roy Gibbon and Atsushi Fujimaki. This last selection is based on Meishusama's<sup>1</sup> teachings on Attachment and Faith, Humility, and Humor.

Next year we look forward to publishing excerpts from a new edition of English language translations of the teachings of Meishusama. The book, entitled "The Essential Teachings," was edited by Atsushi Fujimaki and Roy Gibbon, and is due to be published in early 2012.

The following text has been edited for use in SHUMEI Magazine.

## Attachment and Faith

We grasp at pleasure, while running from pain. This leaves us at the mercy of change. There is no security in this way of living because everything is unpredictable. That which brings us joy today may be gone tomorrow; family, friends, and even our physical body. Therefore, to depend solely on transitory things for happiness guarantees suffering.

Most suffering is not caused by the actual circumstances we encounter, but by our attachment to transitory things. By insisting that life conform to our personal desires, our attachments, we set ourselves up for frustration, anger, and depression. In reality, life does not usually turn out exactly the way we hope. Sometimes it is better, sometimes worse. The more we cling to personal desires, the more we suffer from anxiety about the future and regret over the past.

Attachment is the underlying cause of much suffering visited on other people and on themselves, and of much bitter strife.

—*Meishusama. Egotism and Worldly Attachment, The Hundred Teachings*<sup>2</sup>

Usually desires are driven by blind momentum, not wisdom. Sometimes desires seek to fulfill authentic needs, other times they chase whim and fancy. Most have experienced times when following desires has led to disappointment and disaster. Sometimes, it is better not to get what we want.

Part of the problem is the assumption that the world is a dangerous place, full of chaos and accidents, devoid of meaning and purpose. In such a bleak world, it seems we have no choice but to struggle desperately for material survival.

Meishusama counters this materialistic view of life by teaching that the physical dimension is a field of effects, not causes, and that the true cause of everything is found in the spiritual world. Looking inside our minds, we discover that everything we expe-

1. *Meishusama* is an honorific often used by Shumei members when referring to Mokichi Okada, Shumei's founder. Meishusama means Master of Light.

2. The Hundred Teachings of Meishusama is an unpublished compilation of various writings and recorded talks by Shumei's founder that was created by Shumei after Meishusama's passing.

## “Unless we create an atmosphere in which people can share laughter openly, the door to the heart cannot open.” —Meishusama

rience originates in our own consciousness. Nothing exists until it registers in our consciousness. Our inner experience is the subjective aspect of the spiritual world; our outer experience is the objective aspect of the spiritual world. If we do not experience something, at least hear or read about something, how do we know it exists? This question is mirrored in the Zen Buddhist *koan* or riddle: “If a tree falls in a forest and nobody is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” Everything starts with our experience. To an extent, we create our own reality by what we experience and how we interpret it. We then draw those things to us that resonate with what we hold within our consciousness. Thus, the nonphysical dimension is the cause, and the physical is the effect.

The universe is not composed of blind forces acting upon inert matter. In reality, these forces and substances are but gross expressions of subtler realities that are not easily perceived by ordinary consciousness. Quantum physics reveals that the universe is an endless ocean of particles invisible to our senses; that each particle is comprised of still-tinier particles; and that, at deeper levels, these particles are made up of pure energy. Similarly, Meishusama saw Spirit in all things. To him, the world was conscious and intelligent. The further we expand our own consciousness, the more we can perceive this conscious intelligence operating through all things: in ourselves, in others, and in all creation.

All experiences and events in our lives have meaning, whether recognized or not. The world is fundamentally spiritual, although it may seem solid and stable when perceived by the senses. Everything is permeated by Light. Understanding this can transform cloudy skies of doubt and fear into the clear heaven of faith and trust. Instead of struggling with life, we cooperate with it. We begin to trust that life will do what is best, and will give us those experiences that are most appropriate for our spiritual growth and overall happiness.

Faith is different from belief, which is based on preconceptions. Many of us cling to various predetermined ideas and opinions for the security they offer. But hidden within these fixed beliefs are seeds of doubt, whereas faith is free of doubt because it is based on trust in the unknown. To have faith is to let go and allow the universe to unfold in its own way.

The primary aim of faith must be to remove self-will and worldly attachment from the hearts and minds of people.

—Meishusama. *Egotism and Worldly Attachment*,  
*The Hundred Teachings*

Not being attached to outcomes promotes inner peace, which gradually spreads outward to the world around us. Faith does not need to control life, but instead flows gracefully with the natural unfolding of events.

Thus, as the feelings of attachment are swept away, the spirit ascends higher and higher in the spiritual world.

—Meishusama. *Egotism and Worldly Attachment*,  
*The Hundred Teachings*

Of course, this does not imply that we should be careless. Life is full of challenges, so it is wise to be cautious. By preparing for the worst, we give ourselves the luxury of expecting the best. It is always good to save money, buckle seatbelts, and lock our doors at night. This frees us from worry, allowing us to meet whatever comes our way. Instead of blind faith, we should adopt pragmatic faith, which entails taking responsibility for the details in our lives. Humans were given intelligence in order to use it.

Faith is not unusual. To trust we will continue to breathe throughout the night while sleeping is an act of faith. To trust the bank with our money, to trust our car to run safely, and to trust that water will pour from our faucets, are all acts of faith. Even trusting that the sun will come up each morning demonstrates faith. We could not function without trusting various things to operate correctly.

True faith encourages detachment from results, allowing us to live a more harmonious life. Faith, then, is the trusting but detached relationship between desires and outcomes. When we are inwardly detached, our behavior becomes relaxed rather than compulsive and stressful. Detachment should not be confused with apathy, which is motivated by resignation, fear, or laziness. Authentic detachment expresses itself as either action or inaction, depending on circumstances. And, it is deep inner faith that supports this detachment.

I think that faith is the only possible way to help the world, which has lost and abandoned all its moral values.

—Meishusama. *Good and Evil*,  
*The Hundred Teachings*

There are times when circumstances require decisive action. However, if done with faith, this action will not come from closed-minded willfulness, but from open-minded awareness. We each need to do our part while trusting God to do the rest. Instead of doubt, we need faith. True faith puts us in alignment with the higher power that directs all things. We become agents of a higher will. However, even when we act with faith, there is no guarantee that events will turn out well. Regardless of the immediate outcome, we need faith that eventually all will be well. In other words, we turn the final results over to God.

The key is to recognize that everything is in God's hands.  
—Meishusama. *On Removing Egotism and Worldly Attachments, Kannon's Way*<sup>3</sup>

This is not simplistic positive thinking, which artificially superimposes positive interpretations over negative experiences. Although a positive attitude is good, when taken to extremes, it can lead to mental blindness and the unwillingness to deal with the darker aspects of ourselves and others. With faith, however, we do not need to have an answer for everything, nor do we need life to always go our way. We no longer demand that life conform to our personal agenda. Faith trusts that all is the way it should be, and that all is well.

We must reach the mental and spiritual condition in which we do what we can as mortals and leave the rest in the hands of the Almighty, having perfect trust in God.  
—Meishusama. *The Glory of Faith, The Hundred Teachings*

## Humility

If you stay on the path with neither a selfish nor egotistical heart, your life will be blessed with success and will flourish.

—Meishusama. *Izunome: The Movement of the Universe, Kannon's Way*

Meishusama put great emphasis on humility. Humility has to do with our sense of self-worth, how that sense arises, and consequently, how we see ourselves in relationship to others.

Those who lack humility live in a painful world of insecurity and low self-esteem. They feel their personal attributes—being intelligent, attractive, successful, or more skilled in a variety of ways—define their worth. They judge themselves by these attributes, and feel that others judge them the same way. Thus, they are compelled to compete, striving to elevate themselves above others, to be better than or best. They see others only as competitors for status and admiration.

God dislikes self-conceit very much.  
—Meishusama. *Self Restraint, the Hundred Teachings*

A humble person's sense of self-worth is not based on personal attributes or accomplishments, but on a recognition that we all have an innate self-worth, irrespective of what we do or have. Humble people are aware of the inner needs and desires we all share—the need to love and be loved, the desire for happiness, freedom, security, meaning, and purpose. This gives them empathy for others. They understand that at our core, we are all the same.

3. "Kannon's Way" was published by Shumei in 2005. As the title suggests, the book contains teachings related to balance, flexibility, order, moderation, and humor, each of which represents an important aspect of Kannon's Way or *Izunome*. The teachings compiled in the book are mostly excerpts from a wide range of Meishusama teachings including question and answer sessions between Meishusama and his students.

If you let pride into your heart and turn your back on God, you will crumble when the crucial moment comes.  
—Meishusama. *Poems of Inspiration, Miakarishu*<sup>4</sup>

When we think we are better or worse than others, we reduce others and ourselves to mere two-dimensional egos instead of multi-dimensional human beings with thoughts and feelings.

If we do something exceptionally well, it is fine to appreciate our accomplishment. This only reflects healthy self-esteem. But these accomplishments do not make us qualitatively superior to others.

Showing off ones achievements makes one look vain and egotistical. Modesty is best expressed by leaving one's achievements unknown.  
—Meishusama. *Izunome: The Movement of the Universe, Kannon's Way*

We can only be humble when we no longer identify ourselves with shame, guilt, vanity, and pride. Even the inclination to identify oneself as humble negates true humility. To be humble is to not identify with anything in particular. It is to be selfless.

Humble people radiate purity and innocence. Identification with our personal attributes on the other hand, is a type of spiritual cloud<sup>5</sup> that obscures our Divine Spirit. When we are truly humble, our Divine Spirit shines through in brilliance, without effort or self-consciousness. To find true happiness, we must be satisfied with not standing out, with being just one among many. Humility and selflessness is the doorway to contentment.

Though I am no more than a grain of sand on the shore, please accept this token of my Makoto.  
—Meishusama. *Harmonize with God's Will, Miakarishu*

## Humor

An environment where you can enjoy things with cheerful laughter, and where you can make others laugh in the same way, will naturally lead to a heavenly state. In this way, laughter contributes to the resolution of disputes and to the creation of a peace-loving atmosphere. And to establish peace on earth, it is necessary to eradicate conflicts.

—Meishusama. *Roundness, Kannon's Way*

Understanding that life is ironic and full of unexpected contradictions encourages a humorous attitude towards our experiences and brings joy. Humor is based on incongruity and surprise. It arises from the sudden perception of two things that do not really belong

4. The "Miakarishu," often referred to as the 'little blue book,' is a collection of Meishusama's poems that are chanted daily throughout the year during Shumei Sampais. It also contains poems for special occasions, such as marriages and memorials, as well as the three major chants used by Shumei.

5. Mokichi Okada 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.

together, such as a team of military generals caught wearing ballet tutus or flames coming out of a showerhead. The greater the discrepancy between what is expected and what actually happens, the funnier the result. Oftentimes there is a dark component to humor, such as when a dignified person slips on a banana peel and falls on the floor, or when someone's pants fall while they are giving a speech. One of the reasons we find such things funny is because we see ourselves in them. Because similar things have happened to us (although usually in a less exaggerated manner), we can identify with the victims and their reactions of anger, frustration, and embarrassment. Such dramatized situations can help us recognize our own exaggerated self-importance and foolishness. It also helps to know that we are not the only ones who suffer cruel indignities.

Life is ironic. Despite our best efforts, things rarely turn out the way we expect. One may wonder if there is some tormenter hiding somewhere in the sky who actually enjoys giving us mismatched socks and leaky umbrellas. Yet, one must ask why it is that we get so angry when annoying things happen to us, but find it funny when similar things happen to others. Maybe it is because we do not take others' misfortunes as seriously as our own. As the American humorist, Will Rogers, once said, "Everything is funny as long as it is happening to somebody else."

If we could give up our incessant demands for life to turn out the way we want, maybe we could find a bit of humor in all the imperfection that exists around us. The difference between drama and comedy is the level of personal involvement in the story. The less involvement, the lighter the story tends to be. Often, with the distance of time, we are able to laugh at a painful incident that earlier we took very seriously. When we make jokes about ourselves, people usually laugh. When we make jokes about others who are not present, people will often laugh as well. But when we make jokes about those who are present, they will usually not laugh but instead be offended.

Humor depends upon one's ability to stand back and experience from a distance. Laughter arises when we look at things from a detached perspective.

We can use laughter to neutralize the frustration and hurt that life sometimes brings. It can be beneficial to take a moment and imagine that one's life is a comedy and that one is eating popcorn while watching it. See how silly you look with that frown on your face and your fists pounding on the table. Then ask yourself, "What's so terrible about a flat tire, a burnt pot of rice, or a bad haircut?"

Humor is the reward we receive for relinquishing our heavy chains of expectation and attachment. Humor brings pleasure and enjoyment to the most trivial of things and, most importantly, frees us from morbid self-preoccupation.

Laughter is the source of good health for everyone.

—*Meishusama*

Meishusama was renowned for his sense of humor. A friend who came to visit him one evening left with a stomachache because of the non-stop laughter. Meishusama's jokes ranged from the ironic to the absurd and from satire to slapstick. He commented that most religions were sadly lacking in humor, but that heaven was full of laughter. Even during the depths of war and governmental oppression, he was able to find things to laugh about.

Laughter creates fun and relaxation. Unless we create an atmosphere in which people can share laughter openly, the door to the heart cannot open. Arguing and finding fault in others only helps keep that door closed. We need to become increasingly good-humored and magnanimous. A generous-hearted person has a bright glow about them, and without brightness we cannot open the doors of Heaven.

—*Meishusama. Opening the Door of Heaven, Kannon's Way*

Laughing at ourselves when things go wrong may not change the circumstances, but at least we will not suffer internally. That is one of the most significant benefits of humor. Humor transforms darkness into light. Humor does this by acknowledging darkness rather than by ignoring, denying, or repressing it. Some of the best jokes come from fear, pain, or anger. Bad circumstances offer some of the best opportunities for making good jokes because humor thrives on darkness. Humor accepts negativity while simultaneously liberating us from the suffering that accompanies it. Humor shows us that we can be happy whether it rains or shines, whether we are rich or poor, or whether we are healthy or sick.

Malicious humor, however, derives from a closed heart. People use sarcasm to ridicule others so as to cover up their own shortcomings. If people expand their consciousness, they would see themselves in others rather than judge them. Their laughter would be a sign of friendship, not animosity. It would express sympathy. This type of humor has a healing effect on everyone.

Humor delights in the incongruities of life. A joke has the astonishing power to transform a potential catastrophe into a liberation. Humor widens our perspective so that we see things within a larger context. It helps us accept our day-to-day existence with a light heart and even mind, and promotes an easygoing tolerance of others by bridging our mutual differences. According to Meishusama, laughter is one of the best ways to deal with adversity and abuse.

Once you learn to deal with slanderers by laughter, your character is guaranteed to improve.

—*Meishusama. Responding to Slander, Kannon's Way*

Laughter pulls us out of our heads and into our bodies. It leaves opinions, judgments, and agendas behind and returns us to our senses, allowing us to enjoy the here and now. When we laugh from our hearts, we are like children, full of innocence, wonder, and delight.

Laughter is flowers in heaven.

—*Meishusama*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For information about purchasing the unabridged, paperbound version of "An Offering of Light," please contact us by e-mail at [info@Shumei.org](mailto:info@Shumei.org) or by phone at 1 (626) 584-8841 between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM (PST, USA). You might also check with your local Shumei Center for copies.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

# A Message for the West

Kaicho-Sensei Hiroko Koyama (Japan)

Each year Shumei's president, Kaicho—Sensei Hiroko Koyama delivers speeches at Shumei anniversary celebrations in Europe and America. Together, these addresses can be thought of as Kaicho—Sensei's yearly message to Shumei's western membership. They are usually informative and topical, often relating to events that occurred throughout the preceding year. They also relate these events to the ideals of Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, whom members refer to as Meishusama.

This year, speeches were delivered at the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Shumei EU in London and during the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Shumei America's National Headquarters in Pasadena, California. The following is an edited compilation of both addresses.

*Ms Hiroko Koyama is the current president of Shumei.<sup>1</sup> Ms Koyama is the daughter of Shumei's first president and spiritual leader, Mrs. Mihoko Koyama.*

**R**ecently, we witnessed a series of disasters caused by the incredible power of nature, as well as some caused by man. Such violence, natural and manmade, is caused by the lack of spiritual consciousness. All over the world, we are experiencing many manifestations of purification.<sup>2</sup>

In August, riots spread throughout London. As civil unrest escalated, the images of brutality deeply shocked the world. Looting and arson were largely committed by young people. One news article pointed out that the violent crimes were caused by the maladies afflicting current democratic society and were fueled by a nihilistic vision held by today's youth.

In the northeast United States, earthquakes are rarely a concern. But on August 23, a five and eight-tenths magnitude tremor struck Virginia. It had been 67 years since the area last experienced an earthquake. It also had been 26 years since a hurricane approached New York City. It was the first time in history that a mandatory evacuation was ordered in that city. All major airports were closed. On the afternoon of August 27, all public transportation came to a halt, and most bridges and tunnels were closed. It was this year that New York City commemorated the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Earlier, a massive earthquake and tsunami struck greater northeast Japan on March 11. More than fifteen thousand people lost their lives and still over four thousand people are missing. And there is no telling when the resulting nuclear crisis will end. Since these disasters, we have received many thoughtful messages and prayers from people all over the world. People wish for a speedy recovery and actively perform volunteer work. I thank everyone who gave their support.

I will share with you one of Meishusama's teachings:

The aim of Shumei is to create paradise on earth. It has been working to promote a spiritual culture that is in tune with the developments of the material culture of the modern world. A paradise on earth is a world in which there is no sickness, no poverty, and no war; a world that fully expresses the ideals of humanity.

1. *Kaicho—Sensei* is a title used when referring to Shumei's current presidents. Today, Ms Hiroko Koyama fills that role. The word *Kaicho* means president. The word *Sensei* means *master*, in the sense of being a teacher.
2. The concept of purification is a major tenet of Shumei's spiritual practice. It is a process by which spiritual, physical, and emotional impurities are dissolved. It is a cleansing process that usually includes unpleasant effects. However, its results usually are for the best.

This paradise on earth is similar to “the enlightened world” of which Gautama Buddha preached, “the Kingdom of Heaven” that Jesus Christ foretold “is at hand,” as well as, “the world of peace and harmony” that Nichiren<sup>3</sup> proclaimed, and “the world of the Kanro-dai for all” declared by the founder of Tenrikyo.<sup>4</sup> The only issue is the question of when it will occur.

Those great saints and teachers, mentioned above, did not tell us when a paradise would come. However, I have come to the realization that the time is extremely close. If you consider what this time means, you must know that the end of Buddhist practices, ‘the complete decline of Buddhist doctrines’ of which Gautama Buddha referred to, and ‘the end of the world’ or ‘last judgment’ as appears in the teachings of Jesus Christ, is imminent.

That a paradise can come about on this earth is a great blessing for humanity. But before an ideal world can be created, the old world must be cleared away, just as we need to tear down an old house completely and clean and purify the land before building a new one. Of course, there must be many valuable things in the old house, and they should all be preserved. And it is God who decides whether things are beneficial or not. Accordingly, people must become worthy of being preserved for this new world. In short, they must be of benefit to it. If they are, they will be able to come through the time of the great change with ease and pass every one of the tests that God will set for them. The most essential thing for people to successfully pass through this critical transition is a sincere faith in God.

The people who will safely pass through the great change are the ones who qualify to live in a world free from illness, poverty, or conflict. What this means is that people need to become healthy, free from want, lovers of peace, and haters of strife. Anyone who fulfills these three requirements will not be allowed by God to perish, and they will be fully welcomed in the world to come. I believe, on this point, that there is no discrepancy between the plans of God and the ideals of humankind. Is there any means to gain these three requirements? Faith is the path to them. It guides people to gain all three of these requirements, calling down the grace of God upon them.

In January of 1994, my mother Kaishusama<sup>5</sup> told Shumei members about a vision Meishusama once had. In the middle of night, Meishusama's aunt noticed that he was crying. She asked him what happened and he replied that he just saw a tragic vision

where many people were suffering. He told her that it was a vision of the Last Judgment. Kaishusama told us that the Last Judgment will transform our world and it is imperative that we all prepare ourselves for the change. Kaishusama continued to tell us that we have to commit ourselves to help with this spiritual transformation. She shared this message with our members throughout 1994. Then in January of 1995, at the New Year round-table discussion, she told us, “I have said everything I need to say to all of you. Please continue to work hard for spiritual transformation.” This was her last statement at the discussion. I thought that everything we need to know, was said in this profound yet simple message.

On January 17 of that year, at 5:46 AM, a major earthquake struck the greater Kobe area of Japan. I immediately thought that Judgment Day had come, as if Kaishusama had been sharing a prophecy with us.

Sixteen years later, on March 11, the day the powerful earthquake hit Japan, we were hosting a preview reception of our spring exhibition at the Miho Museum.<sup>6</sup> I was struck speechless by the destruction shown on television. Devastating events remind us that human beings are utterly helpless in the menacing face of natural disasters. The only thing I could do was pray. We were not able to contact all of our members and friends in the region at first and all we could do was wait to hear from people in the affected areas. Shumei Centers in these areas were sending lists of people unaccounted for and I continued to pray for their safety. Gratefully, many Shumei members and their families escaped harm. Of course, some lost their homes or suffered serious damage to their property and their communities. But it was apparent that their suffering had been reduced significantly through divine grace. I am grateful for God's blessing and continue to pray to Meishusama with gratitude.

Here are some of our members' stories:

Mrs. Shimizu and her daughter attended the Ancestor's Ceremony<sup>7</sup> at our headquarters in Misono on the tenth and were heading back to Sendai by airplane from Osaka the next day. Their flight was scheduled to land at 2:55 PM—just nine minutes after the earthquake was to strike. However, their flight was delayed due to mechanical trouble so they were in the air when the earthquake hit and the plane was able to safely return to Osaka. If their plane had landed as scheduled they would have been on the runway when the tsunami hit the airport.

Sadly, one of our members from Otsuchicho lost his life. He was riding a fire truck when the tsunami swept him away. He dedicated his life to helping others until the last moment. So many people were missing in his town but fortunately his body was discovered ten days after the quake and he was able to receive a proper funeral and blessings for his soul. Although it is customary in Japan to cremate bodies of the deceased, because of the

3. Nichiren (1222–1282) was a Japanese monk credited with founding *Nichiren-Kei sho shūha* or Nichiren Buddhism, a highly influential branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Among its tenets is that all people have an innate Buddha nature and all are capable of achieving enlightenment.

4. Tenrikyo is a religion established in the 19th century by Miki Nakayama, referred to as *Oyasama* by her followers. It is the largest religion founded by a woman. Central to its beliefs is the idea of leading a joyous life through acts of charity and mindfulness.

5. *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.

6. Designed by famed architect I.M. Pei to house the Miho Collection, the museum is nestled among the wooded slopes of the remote Shigaraki Mountains. Its style is at once fully contemporary, while remaining faithful to traditional Japanese architecture. For more information in English, please visit [www.miho.or.jp/english/](http://www.miho.or.jp/english/).

7. Ancestor ceremonies are special observances held at Shumei Centers to honor departed family members and friends whom members wish to pray for and remember. This ceremony is observed primarily in Asia, but recently has been introduced to western members.

overwhelming number of unidentified bodies, local authorities had to begin burying them. Therefore, we are very grateful that he received a proper funeral and cremation.

Mr. Wakabayashi, a member of the Shumei Taiko Ensemble,<sup>8</sup> and his mother lived in Ofunato City in Iwate Prefecture.

On the 11th, Mr. Wakabayashi's mother was at the fishing port in town harvesting sea kelp. Right after the earthquake hit, she hurried back home to collect valuables while the tsunami warning was being issued. When she tried to flee, water already had reached her garden and her knees folded under her. Fearful for her life, she escaped through her backyard towards a train station platform on higher ground. People already on the platform pulled her up just as the tsunami reached below her feet. Her house is located on fairly high ground. Although Mr. Wakabayashi had experienced several tsunamis in the past, this was the first time his family's house was damaged by one. The framework of the house was saved but the inside was a mess. The telephone system was down so there was no way for Mr. Wakabayashi to contact his mother. Every time the devastation in his hometown was shown on television, he worried more for her life. He could not confirm her whereabouts for three days. Even though many roads were still closed, a member from our Morioka Center drove all the way to his mother's town and found her in a shelter. Mr. Wakabayashi was so relieved and grateful when he learned his mother was safe.

His father, who had been a fisherman, passed away last year. Mr. Wakabayashi is thankful that his father, who loved fishing, did not have to witness the devastation of his town's fishing port.

His relatives also escaped harm. His cousin was just returning from fishing when the earthquake hit. So, he quickly turned his boat around and headed for open water. Though many boats sank in the tsunami, his escaped. He spent a night in the boat and safely returned to the harbor the next day.

When Mr. Wakabayashi went to his hometown to deliver supplies to the disaster victims, he could not stop crying. Witnessing the level of devastation, he felt fortunate to have found faith. If he had not joined Shumei, he would have been a fisherman like his father and may have been at the fishing port when the tsunami hit. He received a divine blessing.

The earthquake and tsunami wiped away most of the coastal area of the Miyagi Prefecture. But the tsunami's damage was not limited to the coast.

Mr. Sugimoto and a coworker were travelling by car to Sendai City in Miyagi. Mr. Sugimoto was driving. They were about four kilometers or two and one-half miles inland from the coast when the tsunami warnings were first issued. When he looked at the ocean, the waves were no more than 10 to 15 centimeters, about four to six inches high. Therefore, he did not think he needed to worry and kept on driving. But, within seconds, the water rose to approximately two and one-half meters or about eight feet. When the wave hit, traffic was heavy and many cars, buoyed up by the sudden flood, started floating like boats. His car

was swept away in the rapids. Many cars around them were smashing into each other. He tried to get out, but it was impossible. He and his colleague thought they would not make it. Accepting their fate, they somehow felt calm. Then the car stopped a moment as it hit the wall of a private home. He knew this was the only chance they had to escape. Since his car window was not power driven, he rolled down the window and was able to get out. At that moment, his car sank into the deep water. He and his coworker clung to the wall of the house. The water level was rising and it seemed that they had nowhere to go. Then he saw the roof of a close by house. They climbed the wall and tried to make it to the nearby roof by using debris in the water as stepping-stones. As soon as they were on the roof, the debris washed away. The water level was still rising as they removed the window of the vacant house and got into the second floor. There, they waited for help. A day and a half later, they were rescued.

Mrs. Naganuma, who lived in Ishinomaki City, had been sharing Jyorei<sup>9</sup> with a bedridden 94-year-old neighbor man almost every day. When the earthquake hit, she and a next-door neighbor escaped to higher ground. But her husband went to their elderly neighbor's home to help him. The house was situated on higher ground, so Mr. Naganuma moved the old man to the second floor, thinking that he would be safe. Then he hurried back to join his wife. While escaping, he saw his own house demolished by the tsunami in seconds. Later he noticed the old man's house was also washed away. He had thought the old man would be safe on the second floor. He then felt terrible about leaving him alone in his house. However, when Mr. Naganuma and his wife made it to a shelter, he learned that the old man had been rescued. He was grateful for God's blessing and thanked Meishusama.

The Hitachi Center is located in the northeast region of Ibaragi Prefecture, approximately 30 kilometers or about 18.5 miles from the capital city of Mito. The Shumei Center sits on a cliff about 23 meters, about 75.5 feet above sea level. However, it is only about 100 meters, about 110 yards from the coast.

The tremor was much larger than anything experienced there before. But the Center, a one story wooden house built 25 years ago, suffered minor damage. It lost a few roof tiles. Of course, the interior of the building was in disarray but the damage was slight compared to what the surrounding buildings suffered. The majority of coastal areas in northeast Japan suffered major damage from the tsunami, but amazingly only the area below the cliff where the Hitachi Center is located, escaped severe damage. Though high up on a cliff, it must have been frightening to be so close to the coast.

Not far from that Center is the Tokaimura Nuclear Plant, the first nuclear power plant built in Japan. According to the Chief of Tokaimura Village, if the tsunami had been just 40 centimeters or about 16 inches higher, Tokaimura Nuclear Plant would have been in the same situation as that which caused the Fukushima Nuclear Plant disaster. The Hitachi Center and the Tokaimura Plant are only six kilometers, about three and three-fourths miles from each

8. The Shumei Taiko Ensemble was founded in 1982. Since then, the drum corps has become one of the foremost practitioners of one of the world's oldest, yet modern, living musical traditions.

9. Jyorei is the spiritual practice of sharing Divine Light, administered by Shumei members. Repeated sessions of Jyorei might bring improvement in physical and emotional health, and foster spiritual refinement and growth.

other. I cannot imagine what would have happened if the water had been any higher. A few of our members work at the Tokaimura Plant. Gratefully, they all were safe.

Despite the widespread devastation, the Hitachi Center, its members, their families, and their friends escaped major damage. We are sure that Meishusama was protecting them. The Hitachi Center brought Divine Light and blessings to its surrounding area.

In Watari-cho, about 25 kilometers or close to 15.5 miles south of Sendai City, 254 people died. In some areas, the surge spread five kilometers or about three miles inland and flooding devastated the region. A Shumei member, Mrs. Abe lives there and a Scroll of Light<sup>10</sup> has been enshrined in her home since 1996. Her house was spared devastation and in limited areas around her residence a total 120 houses were saved from destruction. After the tsunami, they remained standing as if nothing had happened. This was a blessing. The area is not on a hill and is very close to a river. Yet, not only houses, but farms and rice paddies escaped damage. Unfortunately, many other homes in the surrounding area were lost.

I now will share with you a report concerning Hurricane Irene that I received from Kenji Ban.<sup>11</sup> Kenji lives in the Catskill region of New York State, approximately 165 kilometers or about 200 miles north of New York City.

There is a shallow stream across the road from Kenji's home. It is a small stream and usually the water is only knee level. However, Hurricane Irene caused the lake that feeds it to overflow and the stream's water level rose rapidly to between three and four meters or about 10 to 13 feet. The stream swelled to ten times its usual width and became a gushing rapid. It was clear that the river would overflow and Kenji was certain his house would be flooded. But the river burst out onto the opposite bank from his house and he and his family escaped the flood. After the hurricane passed through, he went out to check his neighborhood. He could not believe the level of damage.

A nearby bridge, just 50 meters or about 55 yards from his home, collapsed and its entire structure was swept away. Many homes, bridges, and roads near the river suffered major damage. Sadly, one person was killed when his home was washed away. Shumei members, Eri and Kazu Domae, live in a house on the same side of the street as Kenji. The homes are only about 100 meters or about 110 yards apart. In between the two houses is a housing complex for farm interns. No buildings between the Domae and Ban households were flooded. However, just 150 meters or about 165 yards from the Domae home was a different story.

Neighboring towns down stream suffered severe damage. In the town of Windham the main street was completely flooded and in Prattville half of the town was swept away. Both the Do-

10. 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 significance but the central character always signifies Divine Light.

11. Kenji Ban is a horticulturalist who heads the Catskill Mountain Foundation's Natural Agriculture Farm. The progress and success of that farm, including its plans for expansion, are largely due to his efforts. Kenji first came to the Catskills in 2000 and quickly became the Natural Agriculture Farm's manager.

A fortuitous rainbow encircles the sun in the bright skies over Shigaraki on May 15, 2011, Kaishusama's 101 birthday and the date of the Miho Institute of Aesthetics' topping off ceremony.

mae and Ban homes have Scrolls of Light and Kannon Screens<sup>12</sup> enshrined in them. Both the Domae and the Bans are grateful for the Light and blessings they received during this crisis.

When Shumei members have Scrolls of Light enshrined in their homes and offer grateful prayers every day, both they and their surroundings are purified with Divine Light. Working hard to contribute to spiritual transformation with sincere prayers is essential when a Scroll of Light is enshrined in a home. Divine Light will bless you, your home, and your neighborhood if you maintain a Scroll.

The earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northeast region of Japan was much larger than the Kobe earthquake we Japanese experienced 16 years ago. In addition, the damage to the nuclear reactors that caused serious radiation leaks compounded the overall problem. The magnitude of the damage is unprecedented and the Greater East Japan earthquake has become the most devastating disaster in Japan's recent history. Fortunately, very few Shumei members lived in the coastal area where the damage was most severe, but almost all who did escaped harm, and it is apparent that their suffering was reduced significantly through both divine grace and blessing.

We have made great technological and scientific advancements but we ought to remember that our lives were given to us and that we need to be grateful for life's gifts. We are all part of nature. However, our souls have been undermined by greed and a strong desire for wealth. More than ever we are seeking excessive material development and are consumed with over-indulgence. We no longer recognize and cultivate spiritual qualities. With our arrogance and desire to control nature, we have caused environmental degradation and the present climate crisis. Although the world has seen disasters and faced dangers before, they have now reached an epidemic scope. We cannot continue business as usual. The disaster Japan experienced may be a wake up call for all of us in the world.

We, Japanese, are realizing that it is time for each of us to take the initiative to make a positive difference in the world. Many of our young people, including our own Shumei youth, are participating in volunteer work in the disaster areas. As Shumei members, we are committed to creating an ideal world of truth, virtue and beauty based on Meishusama's philosophy. We will continue to pray for other people's happiness and hope we will make a difference in the world.

Within a few months, our new school, the Miho Institute of Aesthetics,<sup>12</sup> will open. On May 15 of this year, we celebrated the schools topping off ceremony. May 15 was also Kaishusama's 101st birthday. On this auspicious day, a beautiful rainbow ring appeared around the sun in the skies above. I hope this image will beautify and unite all of our hearts.

12. For more information concerning the Miho Institute of Aesthetics, please see The SHUMEI Magazine Winter 2011 Edition, Volume 291. Back issues of our magazine can be found on Shumei's main website: [www.shumei.org](http://www.shumei.org).



# Beauty's Gift to the Environment

Sensei Alan Imai (USA)

Could searching the world for good land and farmers willing to grow crops in accordance with the principles of Shumei Natural Agriculture, simply to supply two moderately sized eating facilities of an art museum in a remote area of Japan have spiritual and global consequences? Judge for yourself.

*Sensei Alan Imai serves as Director of International Natural Agriculture programs, Director of Shumei International, and Executive Director of the Shumei International Institute. He came to the USA in 1985 and became America's second Shumei Sensei.*

*The following is drawn from an address Sensei Imai delivered at Shumei America's National Center in Pasadena during the Monthly Sampai<sup>1</sup> of June 2011. The theme of that event was "How Beauty Can Contribute to the Environment."*

The poet and painter Yoh Shomei was so impressed by the Miho Museum, that he created a picture book called "The Legend of Peach Valley."<sup>2</sup> In this book he wrote, "If you seek happiness, look at beautiful things. If you seek a kind heart, reach out and encounter beautiful things. If you seek a smile, if you want to know the eternal, turn your thoughts to beautiful things. If you want to know perfection, if you want a believing heart, then look long and carefully at beautiful things." By touching beauty, we can change, and through individual change, I think we can contribute our efforts on behalf of the environmental issues we face worldwide.

If you have never seen the Miho Museum, I hope you visit soon. It is the physical and spiritual embodiment of Shumei's worldwide endeavors in the realm of art and beauty. Today, the Miho Museum's two eating venues, the Peach Valley Restaurant and the Pine View Tea Room, serve meals using only ingredients grown in accordance with Shumei Natural Agriculture.<sup>3</sup> However, in 2005, two ingredients used at the restaurants were not made this way. One was olive oil and the other, cracked pepper. Eventually, Natural Agriculture olive oil was produced in the Tuscany Region

1. Monthly Sampais are held once each month at local and home Shumei Centers. As with most Shumei Sampais, they involve Jyorei and chanting. However, Monthly Sampais also might involve special presentations and lectures, music and art events, luncheons, and other social activities.
2. Both "Legend of Peach Valley" and "Feel the Beauty" are available at Shumei America's Gift Shop. To purchase copies, please contact us by e-mail at [info@Shumei.org](mailto:info@Shumei.org) or by phone at 1 (626) 584-8841 between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM (PST, USA).
3. Meishusama developed Natural Agriculture in the late 1930s. Natural Agriculture is a spiritual practice as well as a practical means of food production. It does not use chemicals, fertilizers, and pays special attention to the farmer's spiritual relationship to the environment.

## “Perhaps only art can give meaning to our ecological concerns and inspire us to help heal our mother earth.”

of Italy under the name Podere Midolla.<sup>4</sup> And now, we have our own black pepper. Before this, I had no idea where black pepper came from; it grows in tropical areas, such as Amazonia.<sup>5</sup>

And soon there is a good possibility of having Natural Agriculture chocolate added to the list of ingredients used at the Miho's eateries. This will markedly expand the museum's dessert selections. By focusing our efforts to provide basic Natural Agriculture products for use at the museum's tearoom and restaurant we receive both Light and guidance from Meishusama, and also advance the practice of Shumei Natural Agriculture.

In May of 2009, I traveled to the Brazilian Amazon, and there I ate a huge avocado—all those different kinds of tropical fruit! By bus, by boat, it took about five hours to reach Tome-acu. Tome-acu is a community that was founded by Japanese immigrants about 80 years ago. They came intending to grow cocoa beans, but the attempt failed. However, after very difficult times, they managed to grow a successful crop of black pepper instead. They were very successful until disease and insects destroyed their pepper crop. Again, there was failure but they stubbornly prevailed. Today, they still grow black pepper and cacao beans, but they do so using other farming techniques.

Mr. Sakaguchi is chairman of the Farmer's Cooperative there. His father, an immigrant, decided to live in this community and study the native Amazonian people's way of life. He developed an agricultural system known as Agro Forestry. Instead of just growing pepper or cacao beans, he learned from the Amazon's own ecosystem. To survive as a farmer, he had to learn to grow produce within the forest, not in a plot in a clearing. After more than 30 years, Mr. Sakaguchi's farm looks like part of the Amazonian forest. However, if one looks closer, one finds in this forest black peppers and cacao beans. In the early years of using the Agro Forestry method the land will still maintain an appearance of cultivated land. However, by its tenth year it will begin to resemble a natural forest. Today many Japanese-Brazilian farmers practice Agro Forestry in this area. I think it was last year that he received an award from the president of Brazil for his contribution to the recovery of the rain forests in Amazonia, while at the same time helping small-scale farmers.

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4. For more information concerning Podere Midolla olive oil, please see the article by Antonella Rastrelli entitled “Blessings Flow from Tuscany's Midolla Groves” in the 2011 Winter Issue of Shumei Magazine [Volume 291]. Back issues of Shumei Magazine can be viewed and downloaded at Shumei's main website, [Shumei.org](http://Shumei.org).

5. Amazonia is a tropical forest that covers vast areas of the Amazon River basin of South America. This rainforest encompasses five and a half million square kilometers or about one and four-tenth billion acres. Although nine nations have land within the Amazonian Rainforest, Brazil contains over half of it. Amazonia is the largest and most species-rich rainforest in the world. A good deal of the fresh air in South and North America is generated by vegetation in Amazonia.

By the end of 2009, we were able to ship Natural Agriculture cacao beans to Misono.<sup>6</sup> I think this was a success that brought us closer to making our own Natural Agriculture chocolate. At the time, I did not know how cacao beans were processed into edible chocolate. Initially, we had a difficult time. For all of 2010 we were looking for a way to make chocolate from our beans. First, we did not know how to remove the skins that coat the beans. Only large companies had the machines needed to make fine chocolate. We searched for a small factory to do this, but could not find any. However, we did find an organic chocolate store in Boulder, Colorado and from the people there we got information that led us to a company in Berlin. Unfortunately, we only had 100 kilograms or about 220 pounds of cocoa beans to be processed and the company's minimum order was 3,000 kilograms, well over three tons!

Finally, with Mr. Sakaguchi's help, we met Adriano, who designed a machine to process cacao beans in smaller quantities. His invention was not for large-scale use, but for the increasing number of people interested in gourmet chocolate. Chocolate from different regions of Brazil can be fed to this machine, each sample coming out in the same form. From there, each piece can be tasted and assessed more fairly and the difference between cacao from different areas can be appreciated. In May of this year, 2011, I visited the inventor's chocolate factory in São Paulo. At my first tasting, I could taste the difference between chocolate made from cacao beans coming from different areas.

At the end of 2010, the inventor provided his machine to a small Brazilian chocolate maker in São Paulo, and I visited that chocolate maker in May of this year.

I met Mr. Sakaguchi at the Shumei São Paulo Center to discuss making chocolate for shipments to Japan. Afterwards, we visited the factory where the company's equipment was demonstrated. The space looked more like a home than a factory. Actually, the company has a large factory but we met at their model home, which is used to display chocolate making in a residential setting. There we met the president of the company, Adriano, who guided us through the chocolate making process.

Afterwards we went to a factory to see how chocolate is made. First, we had to select the cacao beans. All the beans have to be the same size so that they roast evenly. After the selection, the beans are roasted. Then, they go into a machine that removes their skins, which are sucked out by a vacuum system. The beans then are broken up into small pieces and fed into another machine. Then maybe in 20 minutes or so, they are cut into very small pieces and the butter inside the bean begins to run out,

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6. Misono is Shumei's International Headquarters and Spiritual Center in the Shigaraki Mountains of Shiga Prefecture, Japan. The name Misono means Sacred Garden.

making the chopped beans very moist and sticky. It is at this stage that sugar should be added, if one is using sugar. So, the sugar and cocoa mass can be put together smoothly.

After this, the product is reduced to a paste. Then it goes into another machine for eight to ten hours to make it smooth and foamy. This melted cocoa paste is poured into the mold. The temperature of the melted cocoa is very high. However, before it cools off it is put on yet another machine that trembles like an earthquake. This shaking motion allows the tiny air bubbles that have formed throughout the cocoa paste to float to the top and escape from the paste. The paste is then put into a refrigeration unit to cool off. When it cools and is cut into small pieces, we have what we all recognize as chocolate. This is only the first stage of chocolate making.

The second stage occurs when the chocolate is sent to distributors where the chocolate is designed by adding milk or butter to suit the customer's individual taste.



Sensei Alan Imai

Usually only large factories have the equipment necessary to make cacao beans into chocolate. It took us one year to find a company that provided equipment on a small scale for making samples for small cacao farmers and university departments that study chocolate.

Because of Mr. Sakaguchi and Adriano's friendship, Adriano said it did not matter how many kilograms we had; that he would produce our chocolate no matter how small the quantity. That is how Natural Agriculture chocolate came into being. The next time you are at the Miho Museum, try it.

Since the Miho Museum works hard to provide its guests with something special from Brazil, such as chocolate, cacaos, black pepper, and coffee, we are able to meet farmers and those interested in environmental issues. Our Natural Agriculture programs in Brazil began in a city named Itatinga, in the State of São Paulo. It is located in a region very famous for its Eucalyptus trees. These trees can be harvested seven years after being planted. Because the planting and harvesting of groves is staggered throughout this seven-year cycle, harvesting takes place every year. Cultivating eucalyptus is a 24 hour a day, 365 days a year operation. Every day of every year trees are cut and shipped out of Brazil for use in papermaking.

Eucalyptus trees use so much water that even the company that cultivates them claims that they are contributing to the global warming. Eucalyptus forests are sometimes called green deserts, because they suck up so much water. Itatinga is a very important area for providing water to Latin America's largest city, São Paulo, Brazil. However, the ground water is drying up. The people of Ipatinga are concerned about their environment and the protection of the original forests in the area.

In 2007, we met the city officials to learn more about their plans. One effort involved planting trees at least 100 feet out from the banks of the rivers that flow by the city, so as to protect the water. Mr. Fui was hired by the city of Itatinga and is a specialist in farming and forestry. The plan involves the principle of Agro Forestry. Trees would be planted and organic vegetables cultivated between them, thus protecting the water system and supplying nu-

tritious food. Shumei was invited to be a part of this project. So, in May 2008, we sent Mr. Flavio Fujita as a Shumei representative to work with this project. Mr. Fui learned about Shumei Natural Agriculture and eventually joined us. Now instead of organic, he helps Flavio plant trees and grow vegetables on the riverbanks in accordance with Natural Agriculture principles. Although Mr. Fui makes tremendous efforts to achieve his goals, it seemed for a while that each time an election came, the city officials changed and so did city policy. He wanted to continue contributing to the environment and community, but it all depended on who the city leaders and mayor were and how they changed policy. Fortunately, about two years ago, not the city government of Itatinga, but the state government of São Paulo became interested in the project. So now, no matter who the mayor and civil leaders of Itatinga are at any time, the state government will continue to support Mr. Fui's project. His efforts are now bearing fruit.<sup>7</sup>

One success involves a large section of land that was leased out to a paper company. Eucalyptus trees were planted and their need for water absorbed a whole lake. The lake at one time fed a river, but as the Eucalyptus roots drew in its water, there was little left of it but a small swamp. The state government moved in and told the paper company to cut down the eucalyptus and stay away from the water. When I returned to the area this year, the lake was gradually retaining water again. So, some good things are happening in Brazil.

The state government and Mr. Fui work together. The state put up a fence to mark the area beyond which the paper company cannot plant eucalyptus. Between the fence and the water, environmentally beneficial trees were planted. However, these trees need to be taken care of. They have to be given water. With vegetables planted amongst these trees, the situation is ideal. The people who farm the vegetables, also take care of the trees by giving both trees and crops water. Eventually, the trees will grow into a forest and the farmers will move on to a new spot on the river's edge to grow more edible plants and trees. So, because of those involved with Natural Agriculture, environmental protections, and state government all working together, healthy vegetables are provided to local kids at school meals, which is where a good portion of the produce goes.

In Brazil, plants grow fast. You see some small trees and vegetables just planted, and the next year, you see a jungle. All the different fruits and vegetables are growing very well. There are many vegetables, and the trees grow so fast. Casaba melon grows quickly as well. They recently harvested a crop and I tasted some at Shumei's São Paulo Center. It was so good. I am very happy, not just with the chocolate and black pepper, but also with the environmental activities that Natural Agriculture is supporting in Brazil. To think that the source of this abiding concern for the environment came from the need of an art museum to provide visitors with the best that the art of cooking can offer is amazing and hopeful.

Perhaps only art can give meaning to our ecological concerns and inspire us to help heal our mother earth.

7. For more information about Shumei's efforts in Brazil, please see Sensei Alan Imai's article, "In Brazil: A Natural Agriculture Report" from the July/August, 2007 issue (Vol. 270) of SHUMEI Magazine. Back issues of our publication can be read and downloaded from Shumei's main website: [www.shumei.org](http://www.shumei.org).



Shumei's Flavio Fujita at work on the Agro Forestry project in Itatinga in which trees are planted and Natural Agriculture vegetables cultivated between them, thereby protecting water resources and providing healthful food.

ecologist, feminist, activist, environmentalist, human rights campaigner, and author.<sup>8</sup> Her latest book is entitled "Earth Democracy." I first met her in December of 2009 in Copenhagen when she joined a symposium that Shumei hosted.<sup>9</sup> Wherever she goes, people follow; when she enters a hall, the place is packed; and when she finishes her talk, people are moved. She is very busy, but found time to visit Misono this year. Nineteen years ago in Rio de Janeiro an Earth Summit was held, at which she worked hard to make an impact on how people think about environmental issues.

In June of next year, 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, known informally as Rio 2012 or Rio+20, will be hosted by Brazil in Rio de Janeiro. This will be a 20 year follow up to the

historic Rio de Janeiro 1992 Conference on the Environment and Development that Dr. Shiva attended.

Many are concerned about the environment. But at the same time there are those in the Brazilian government, as in most other national governments, who are even more concerned with technological development or personal issues than with the state of the ecology. Thus, the conference is coming together very slowly. But we have a saying, "like-minded people work together," and these like-minded people want to make our mother earth beautiful for future generations.

I will paraphrase a section of the speech that Vandana Shiva gave when she came to speak to us in Misono this year:

Most importantly, I think that if the environmental movement does not have more impact, it's because it functions only in the narrow material world, and does not touch the deeper, spiritual power of personal transformation. You are the spiritual movement that defined natural farming as the way of your spiritual life on this earth. You haven't turned your back on the world. You haven't hidden in a monastery. You live your life, but you bring spirituality into daily life. I think this philosophy and style could infuse the rest of the agricultural movement, sustainable agricultural movement, and the ecological movement. I think it will make a huge contribution. That is why I repeatedly say, please take a leadership role for the summit in 2012.

When one works from a negative place, when one works from the place of fear or because one hates something, one cannot sustain one's energy. That energy is not creative energy, and it burns out. Your work with beauty begins from a very positive place. This ability to see beauty, live beauty, create beauty is what humanity is hungry for, because we are immersed in so much ug-

Dr. Roger Payne, as you might know, is a marine biologist who has been studying whale acoustics for over 40 years. About ten years ago, he began a worldwide study by collecting baseline data on pollution levels in whales, a creature he has tried to save along with the great beast's marine environment for over four decades. Dr. Payne made speeches, wrote books, and talked to people, but people did not change the way that they thought about the whales or the oceans.

He was very impressed by the songs the whales sang, and he recorded those sounds so people could listen to the whale's haunting music. Its beauty touched people deeply. It was the beauty of the whales' songs, not scientific facts, that changed their attitudes. It was not the evidence of science, but beauty that changed the way people thought about our oceans and their inhabitants.

Last year, in November of 2010, Dr. Payne visited Misono to speak to young Shumei members. During his presentation he stated:

We need a new story to live by, a story that says that we are not the stars of the show, but just another pretty face, not nature's master, but her subject. It is only when we have that story that the show can go on. Science can tell us what's wrong, but it cannot find that story for us. It is through beauty and art that we will find a new story, for when we see that something is beautiful, we soon believe in it. It is sensibility to the beauty in nature that will give nature a chance to save us from ourselves. The biggest step we can make toward saving ourselves is to love and cherish nature, and the path to doing that is illuminated by a sensibility to beauty, to the beauty of nature. I have seen no approaches to transmitting that truth that are as effective as the Miho Museum."

He was impressed by the Miho Museum. In the same way as the sound of the whales, the Miho touches people's hearts and changes the world.

At the beginning of April 2011, Dr. Vandana Shiva from India visited Misono. I think many of you know her. She is a philosopher,

8. Please, see Dr. Vandana Shiva's article, "Making Peace with the Earth" in the Summer 2011 Edition (Vol. 293) of SHUMEI Magazine. Back issues of SHUMEI Magazine can be read and downloaded from Shumei's main website: [www.shumei.org](http://www.shumei.org).

9. Please, see Alice Cunningham's article "What the Copenhagen Conference Means for Us" in the May/June 2010 issue (Vol. 287) of SHUMEI Magazine. Back issues of our publication can be at Shumei's website: [www.shumei.org](http://www.shumei.org)



liness. We are unable to distinguish between what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is tasty and what is junk food, and what has quality and what lacks it. I think this too is something you can bring to the world movement. Celebrate the beauty of the universe. Celebrate the beauty of every child's smile. Celebrate the beauty of that which we can share with our creative hands. In my view, that is the most important solution to poverty. Beauty is the most important cure for poverty.

As Dr. Shiva says, "Beauty can be a huge contribution to the world environment." As Meishusama once said, "Natural Agriculture is the art of agriculture."

**Editor's Notes:** Because of its remote location, visiting the Miho Museum entails at least a full day for most of its guests. A journey there can acquire the aspect of a pilgrimage. And as with conventional pilgrimages, hospitality and nourishment are essential to the process of reaching the journey's end. This nourishment is provided by two fine eateries located in the Miho complex, the Peach Valley Restaurant and the Pine View Tea Room.

Arriving at the Museum, visitors first come to a reception pavilion and a circular courtyard amid cedar trees. It is here that guests can rest from their travels and find refreshment in the Peach Valley Restaurant before going on to the Museum's main building. Here one can enjoy a meal of udon or soba noodles, pasta with fresh vegetables, or the venue's specialty *onigiri-zen*, a plate of variously flavored rice balls served with seasonal vegetables, miso soup, and the Museum's special tofu. The *onigiri-zen* has a historical significance for the Miho. Before construction began and the area was still a wilderness, rice balls wrapped in bamboo leaves were what were usually served to the planners scouting the site. Lighter fare of cakes, ice cream, and beverages can also be had at Peach Valley. On temperate days, one can lunch under a parasol on the reception plaza.

Pine View Tea Room is set within the museum's main building in a spacious area where gentle sunlight shimmers through the leaves of an enormous grouping of bamboo. This airy venue's name derives from the splendid view it offers of the serene, pine-

covered slopes of the Shigaraki Mountains. Here one might take time to relax while enjoying a light meal of sandwiches, delicate Japanese sweets, rich cakes, ice cream, and drinks.

It is said that a meal's flavor comes from the heart of the cook, and all the food and beverages offered at the Museum are homemade, including the soy sauce, vinegar, sweet rice wine, and other condiments. Because only produce at the peak of freshness is used, a certain talent for improvisation is required in its preparation. Staples of the menu change from season to season. The vegetables used in a pasta dishes, for instance, will vary according to season and availability.

Containers filled with fruit and vegetables arrive at the kitchens daily, each individually wrapped and placed in neat rows as if they were precious stones or art objects ready for exhibition. The care taken with the food's preparation verges on the reverential. Great care is also taken in the choice of ingredients. The spring wheat used for making breads, pastries, and noodles is a hard red variety grown especially for the Museum on two hundred acres of rich, pure soil in Alberta, Canada. It then is ground at a small mill in Japan, expressly to the baker's specifications. A pleasant walk from where guests are served leads to the Museum's bakery, where a variety of breads and pastries are prepared and brought, still warm, to the tables. Varieties of wild yeast are cultivated on site using grapes and strawberries, and each culture imparts a specific flavor to the bakery goods.

The long, white daikon radishes come from Tsumagoi Billage in Gunma Prefecture, where the black, loamy soil is perfect for growing flavorful vegetables. The sautéed eggplant is of the round, meaty American variety, cut lengthwise so that each slice has a portion of the more flavorful stem side. The tofu served is unique to the Miho Museum. Made from select *osode no mai* soybeans from Hokkaido, Japan, it is prepared by hand in an exacting fashion in a small plant that is located, like the bakery, on the museum grounds. Exceptionally sweet and creamy, it is as much a delight as a dessert. Even the food's presentation comes in for particular attention. All the dishes, cups, and chopstick holders are superbly crafted ceramics by Tsumura Shiro.

If all this seems a bit extravagant, it should be remembered that the Miho Museum was designed to delight all the senses, including those of taste and smell.

The Miho stands as the embodiment of the harmony that can exist between nature's beauty and the beauty of man-made objects and buildings. The integrity of its concept remains constant throughout, aiming to afford the visitor the experience of excellence in every respect, including the refreshments that are served. All food is cultivated in an environment free of industrial chemicals common to modern agricultural practice, which seems to have sacrificed taste and even health to profit and convenience. And now all of it is the product of Shumei Natural Agriculture. This approach aims to insure that the food prepared at the Museum is as harmonious with nature as the architectural setting of the Museum and is entirely in keeping with the Miho Museum's mission. The fare offered at Pine View and Peach Valley is excellent. Fresh, wholesome, and delicious, it is nourishment as much for the soul as for the body, and it is meant to be savored. ■

# Learning to Observe Beauty

Akemi Imai (USA)

While working as an intern at the Miho Museum, a young woman with no scholarly background in the visual arts comes to learn how to look at objects of art and experience their mystical qualities.

*Akemi Imai recently graduated from the University of Southern California with a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations. She is currently exploring different career opportunities, most recently working as Fellowship Program Coordinator at the Catskill Mountain Foundation's Natural Agriculture farms. Ms Imai is also the Youth Editor of this publication.*

From the beginning of February until the end of April of this year, I did a special internship at the Miho Museum. One of my initial concerns about doing an internship was that I had never studied art in school so my scholarly background in the visual arts was close to nil. However, this turned out to be somewhat of an advantage since I was able to focus on the artworks' inherent beauty and not rely on the history or meaning of their design and function

as the complete essence of the artwork. Despite my concerns about whether I was qualified to study and work at the Miho Museum, I wanted to do the internship because I felt it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The Miho Museum does not offer internships as a permanent program. Therefore, I felt that if I were to defer this chance, I would forever lose the opportunity to study at the museum. I was also unsure of what I wanted to pursue as a career, which further pushed me toward an internship as a way to

help identify where my strengths and passion lay.

I arrived in Japan at the beginning of February when the winter season was still alive and strong. Besides adjusting to the sharp difference in climate, particularly the constant presence of snow, I found myself immersed in the unique culture of Misono.

My internship began at Misono; to truly understand the Miho Museum, one must begin from Misono. I studied the his-



Akemi Imai, center, leads a tour of museum visitors from Australia in the Miho Museum's entrance hall, with its distant view of the tops of Misono's carillon and Meishusama Hall over the pine-clad mountains.



The Miho Museum's Standing Kannon-Bosatsu (Sanskrit: Avalokitesvara) was made roughly between the 10th and 11th centuries AD, during Japan's Heian Period. Constructed of a single block of wood, it stands 87.5 centimeters or about 34.5 inches tall.

tory of Misono's construction and the meaning behind the various structures that occupy the Sacred Garden. My one-month study of Misono's construction culminated in an English language tour of the structures that comprise the Heavenly Garden. This was a profound experience because I had never really thought about how Misono came to be. Misono had always been that special, sacred place nestled within the Shigaraki Mountains, and seemed to have always existed there forever. By understanding how Misono was created—the miraculous stories that surrounded its construction—I began to see Misono with new eyes. All of those structures that I was familiar with took on a greater significance. Now, I appreciate and treasure Misono even more. I was also able to do hoshi<sup>1</sup> with the hoshisha of Meishusama Hall<sup>2</sup> for two weeks. There, I experienced a taste of the hoshisha's daily routine. I particularly remember the emphasis on greetings at Misono. As I walked by people during my journey to Meishusama Hall for morning sampai, I would always exchange greetings with every person I saw. Exchanging greetings with others means acknowledging the people who work beside you every day, and creates a very upbeat atmosphere. At times, I would find myself greeting strangers on the street during my days off.

1. Hoshi is volunteer service, sometimes described as sacred work that Shumei members perform on behalf of the Shumei organization and Shumei's mission to promote the betterment of humankind. Hoshishas are Shumei members who perform hoshi full time.
2. Meishusama Hall is the centerpiece of Shumei's International Center at Misono, Japan. Designed by Minoru Yamasaki and built in 1983, it is considered one of the modern world's foremost engineering feats. The interior is a vast, light-filled space with glass walls that encircle most of the interior, allowing visitors to enjoy the surrounding gardens and mountains. The most sophisticated construction techniques and the finest materials were used to create the hall. It holds over 5,000 people and is used for both daily Sampais and special events throughout the year. At the focal point of the hall's interior is a large wooden statue of Shumei's founder, Meishusama, which usually resides behind a golden screen.

Beginning in March, I worked at the Miho Museum full time, writing reports on the artworks I studied and helping with certain staff positions such as working at the audio guide rental booth. I also participated in morning and evening hoshi at the museum. I wanted to be involved in the daily operations because experiencing these kinds of tasks offers a different insight into how the Miho Museum operates that is not visible to most visitors. The same building has a very different feel when one becomes involved backstage. I am grateful to the museum staff for allowing me to work with them and for the warmth they showed to me.

During my internship, I studied mostly artworks from the South Wing, which houses beautiful artifacts from the ancient civilizations of the world. The gallery rooms are divided by region, including Egypt, West Asia, Greece, Rome, China, Persia, and South Asia. From each of these galleries, I selected two or three artworks to study thoroughly. Three months is not enough time to do a full study of even the few works I selected, but I wanted to come away with a broad knowledge of the treasures in the collection. Another objective was to have a well-rounded selection of artworks that I can draw upon when conducting museum tours. From these artworks, I learned how to look at beauty. Since I did not study art academically, I relied mostly on my own aesthetic sense to help me observe and analyze these artworks along with personal research of the history and meaning behind the artwork.

I would like to share how I studied these artworks. First, I identified my favorite angle or detail of the artwork. By searching for the perfect angle or specific details, one observes the entire object from all angles and focuses on its details. Second, I found what I specifically liked about the artwork. One day, I did a fun exercise with one of the curators where we picked a gallery and then identified our favorite artwork. After finding our preference, we explained the part that we specifically like the most. This exercise prompts one to not only observe the artwork from all angles and identify all details, but also measure it against one's personal aesthetic senses. By doing this, one develops a more intimate connection to the art. Lastly, I tried to imagine how the artwork was used or viewed at the time it had been created. This last step further engages one's imagination and attention to the artwork. By imagining how the artwork was used when it was created, one involves the more academic facts about the work and uses that information to enrich its inherent beauty. A research method focused only on the facts informs a person of the background of the artwork—where it came from, what material it was made from, how it was used—but does not reveal much about the actual piece itself. The way I observed art at the Miho Museum is not unique; I think it is a method everyone uses whether consciously or not.

Another very profound experience I had during my internship was physically feeling the power of art and beauty. As I continued my studies at the Miho Museum, I began feeling a tangible energy emanating from several of the artworks in the museum very similar to the energy I occasionally feel when receiving Jyorei. I think beautiful art gives off a similar energy to Jyorei. It is a basic principle of Shumei that art has the power to

purify and uplift our soul. Beauty is a very important presence in our lives that must not be neglected because it has such a profound effect on our souls.

The first time I clearly felt this energy from a work of art was from a Japanese wooden statue of a standing bosatsu or bodhisattva<sup>3</sup> that had been exhibited for the first time in the special Miho Grandama<sup>4</sup> exhibition room dedicated to Kaishusama.

To my rational mind, this was not a very remarkable-looking statue. It was rather plain and had a simple, severe expression. However, the moment I stood right in front of it, I felt an incredible laser-like pressure hit my forehead. It was so palpable and sudden that I knew it was not just something I imagined. For some reason, I was able to feel a powerful energy from this standing bosatsu. In hindsight, I am reminded of advice that Kaishusama gave people on how to appreciate art. It is best to regard a work of art with the open-mindedness and innocence of a young child. Perhaps because I had no previous knowledge of the standing bosatsu, I was able to feel its energy so clearly. I am grateful to this wooden bodhisattva for so clearly making me realize that art emits a tangible energy that can be felt when one truly focuses on the artwork itself, independent of its background information.

After this encounter, I started feeling a similar energy from other works of art. This energy feels like a tickly pressure between my eyebrows, and its strength varies depending on my state of mind. For it is very possible that all of the artworks are emitting the same powerful energy that the standing bosatsu emitted and I can only feel a percentage of this energy depending on how sensitive I am to the artwork. Other people feel a similar energy when gazing upon artworks at the museum. The Miho Museum's artworks possess a very special energy.

During my internship, I noticed that regular visitors to the museum often prioritize the special exhibitions since they are already familiar with the permanent collection. However, I hope that visitors will continue to appreciate the high quality of the permanent collection that Kaishusama wished to share with the world. Even if one is familiar with the silver Horus, the Gandhara Buddha statue, or the Assyrian wall relief, I think such familiarity should be approached as a challenge to discover a new angle or detail that will further enrich your relationship with these artworks.

The lessons I learned through interacting with the staff and the artworks have strengthened my conviction of the necessity of art and beauty in my daily life. I hope there will be more interns in the future who can experience their own miracles and revelations during their time at the museum in the mountains and then share their stories with the world. ■

3. In Buddhism, a bodhisattva (*bosatsu* in Japanese) can mean either an enlightened being or sometimes one who is on the path to enlightenment. It is a name given to anyone who, motivated by great compassion, wishes to attain enlightenment for the sake of all living creatures. In some strains of Buddhism, it can mean a person who has already achieved liberation but remains in the world to help others achieve enlightenment as well.
4. Miho Grandama: *Arte della Luce*, was a special exhibition commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Miho Museum's founder, Mrs. Mihoko Koyama (Kaishusama) in 2010.

# The Story of a Friendship

Sensei Chisako Fukushima (USA)

A friendship evolves and a partnership thrives in a Pennsylvania garden. Sixty years after the founder of Shumei and the founder of the Rodale Institute first corresponded, a Shumei Natural Agriculture Garden yields produce and enlightens visitors on the grounds of the Rodale Institute's headquarters.

*Chisako Fukushima became a Shumei Member in 1990. She came to the USA from Japan in 1997 and since 1998 has lived in Pennsylvania, where she works at the Rodale Institute. Ms Fukushima is the first and youngest woman Shumei Sensei to reside in the USA. Her duties include looking after Shumei's activities on the East Coast.*

*The text of the Sensei Fukushima's article first appeared in Shumei's Japanese publication, Rakuen, along with other stories concerning the Natural Agriculture garden at the Rodale Institute. It has been reprinted here with that magazine editor's kind permission. The other stories that appeared in Rakuen will be published in the upcoming Winter Issue of SHUMEI Magazine. The following has been edited for use in this publication.*

## J.I. Rodale and Meishusama

Shumei formed an official partnership with the Rodale Institute (RI) in 1998. However, the first time the two organizations joined hands was more than 60 years ago when J. I. Rodale and Mokichi Okada, Shumei's founder, exchanged special correspondence through the mail.

In 1950, Frank S. Booth, an advisor to the Nichiro Fishing Company, introduced the book, "Pay Dirt" written by J. I. Rodale, to Tsugumi Sato, President of Yukijirushi Dairy Company in Hokkaido. Mr. Sato visited J. I. Rodale and his farm in the same year that he published the Japanese translation of Mr. Rodale's book.

In 1951, a summary of "Pay Dirt" was cited in a publication of Sekai Kyuseikyō.<sup>1</sup> It was entitled "Paradise on Earth and Nature Farming." Mokichi Okada stated the following in its preface.

I reviewed the situation of agriculture abroad and found that as indicated in this book, many professors and practitioners agree upon and support my idea of farming. I feel this book is an excellent way to get more of the Japanese to understand my ideas. Therefore, I highly recommend this book.

1. The name Sekai Kyuseikyō means Organization for World Transformation. Founded in 1950 by Meishusama as an umbrella organization under which all groups that depended upon his guidance could be organized. Shumei initially was part of this association but became independent in 1970.

In the same year, two of Mokichi Okada's staff visited Mr. Sato in Hokkaido to introduce Mr. Okada's ideas and farming practices. Mr. Sato promised to write to J. I. Rodale about Mokichi Okada and the farming methods he developed in Japan.

In September 1951, Mr. Okada told those who gathered for his guidance at his office in Atami<sup>2</sup> that he had received a letter from J. I. Rodale a couple of days before. The letter said that Mr. Rodale was very happy to locate someone in Japan who shared his ideals and goals. Rodale also suggested that he would like to cooperate with Mr. Okada to strengthen and further develop an agricultural movement. Mr. Okada told the group of his vision that in the future an agricultural revolution would definitely take place throughout the world.

In November 1951, in a discussion between Mokichi Okada and some members at a meeting in Mr. Okada's office, one of the members asked him to write more details about the negative effects of chemical fertilizer upon human health, and the relationship

between the health of the soil and human health. Responding to this, Mr. Okada said, "I haven't written about that yet, have I? Then, I will write more forcefully next time. However, I feel what Mr. Rodale wrote in his book is enough. Don't you think so?"

### Togo Sensei visits Rodale

Mr. Okada passed away in 1955. Thus, two of the 20th century's major advocates for sustainable, natural, and healthy food

cultivation were never to meet or keep up a correspondence. Mr. Rodale passed on in 1971. Although the benefits that might have come had the two men formed a deeper relationship was never to be, both founded strong and vibrant organizations that certainly will long outlive them. Both the Rodale Institute and Shumei continue to hold deeply shared affinities. In July 1996, the late Sensei Satoshi Togo, then Director of Shumei's Natural Agriculture Department, formed a tour of the USA for Japanese Natural Agriculture leaders to visit successful organic farms, among them the Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania. Sensei Eugene Imai<sup>3</sup> and Sensei Alan Imai were part of the group, guiding the people from Japan. This was before the Miho Museum's opening in 1997, and during that year the Shumei Family Collection was exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Although there were Shumei Centers in the USA and other countries already, it was around the time when Shumei opened up its doors to the world in the areas of art and Natural Agriculture.



Sensei Chisako Fukushima

On July 22, 1996, Sensei Togo and his tour group visited the Rodale Institute. John Haberer, the former president of the Rodale, had many things on his schedule that day, but decided to take an hour to talk with the group. John recalled the meeting in his article for SHUMEI Magazine in 2000.

Well, that hour turned into almost three-quarters of a day. Something invisible, a sort of chemical, a spiritual thing, held me there. A fire began to burn inside of me yearning to learn more about what I was hearing about your organization, the good work you were doing in Natural Agriculture and how you were going about doing it. But there was something more than that. Something that is hard to explain, something that came to me through the words, the facial expressions, the sincerity, and conviction expressed by Mr. Togo. Throughout the meeting, there was a bonding between the two of us. Something again that I cannot explain, but something which was real and mutually respectful. It was like a magnet drawing each of us together.

Unfortunately, Togo Sensei passed away the following year. So, it was the only time the two met. Yet, it was a significant event for the partnership.

## Development of Shumei Natural Agriculture in Japan

In January of 1998, Ms Hiroko Koyama, Shumei's president, visited the Rodale Institute for the first time. In April of the same year, the two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding at the Miho Museum, which had just celebrated its grand opening. The goal of the project was to promote Natural Agriculture activities in Japan. Representatives from the two sides formed an advisory committee and they agreed to meet twice a year. The committee set goals and objectives, planned activities, and reviewed their progress.

The committee recognized Mr. Yoshino's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) group in Chiba, Japan as an excellent example of this sort of project. Members of local Shumei Centers were involved in the CSA as distributors and consumers. The committee organized workshops for Shumei Centers throughout Japan to provide opportunities to learn about CSA systems, the history of organic agriculture, global environmental issues, and the international organic movement. Visiting successful organic farms in the USA and learning new communication skills were part of the programs, too. Participants included representatives of farmers, distributors, and consumers from local Shumei Centers. Many Japanese visited the Rodale Institute where the workshops were held during the first few years of this project.

The committee also organized workshops just for farmers, as well as for future leaders in the area of Natural Agriculture.

These well-designed workshops broadened the participants' horizons and made them realize that there were people and groups on the other side of the globe who were just like them, working hard for similar goals.

In 2000, staff members and board members of the Rodale Institute visited Japan. Six groups were formed, and each group was invited to Misono, the Miho Museum, and local Shumei Centers

2. Atami is a small city by Sagami Bay, seventy miles southwest of Tokyo. It was chosen by Meishusama in 1944 to be one of his twin earthly paradises.  
3. Sensei Eugene Imai was the first Shumei Sensei to live and work in North America. Currently he is the Director of Shumei America and the Director of Shumei's International Department. As a citizen of the USA, he is Shumei's first American Sensei. Although he and Sensei Alan Imai share both surnames and American citizenship, they are not related through family.



Founded by J.I. Rodale in 1947s, the Rodale Institute is headquartered amid the fertile splendor of rural Pennsylvania. The Institute works worldwide to promote regenerative food systems.

and farms. Many people flew over the Pacific Ocean between Japan and the USA that year. We came to know each other's country and culture, and we became friends. The partnership project was well implemented, and many Shumei CSAs were born in Japan. Each Center adopted the idea of a CSA and developed its own system according to its unique situation.

Consumers were invited to farms and learned how hard and time consuming it was to weed, cultivate, and harvest vegetables. Much seasonal produce started to come to the CSA members. Consumers came to know which vegetables were in season and which were not. Gradually, they realized that they needed to adjust to what nature provided them in season, and shifted their consciousness closer to nature. Consumer education was a key for successful CSA activities. Members learned about a correlation between health and diet, and about environmental impacts of agro-chemicals. Many Shumei Centers also recognized the importance of educating the new generations, and prepared programs of gardening and cooking for them.

## World Wide Web

In 2001, the Institute launched a children's educational website, Kidsregen, to teach children the connection between healthy soil, healthy food, and healthy people. The contents included gardening, food, fitness, and art. Its downloadable paper crafts, games, and recipes were very popular among children, teachers, and parents. One

of the website's highlights was the letters sent by children from around the world. Shumei children wrote about their gardening experiences. It was a bi-lingual; their stories were shared in English and Japanese. A girl in Hyogo, Japan wrote that she enjoyed growing vegetables through the Natural Agriculture methods in her home garden with her parents and brother, and told how eating proper vegetables healed her atopic dermatitis. A young boy in Fukuoka, Japan wrote that he did not feel like going to school for a while, but changed his mind after participating in Natural Agriculture camps. He regained his appetite and was able to go back to school. These websites served as platforms from which to disseminate many stories to the world.

In 2002, another website, New Farm, was launched for farmers. Organic agriculture had become one of the fastest growing industries in America, and this website provided good information concerning organic farming. In its international section, Lisa Hamilton<sup>4</sup> wrote a series of articles about Natural Agriculture farmers in Japan. Her articles were compiled and published as a book called, "Farming to Create Heaven on Earth" in 2007.

Shumei was the major sponsor of these websites, as they understood the significance of the projects. Shumei was also responsible for the Japanese language pages of both websites.

4. Lisa M. Hamilton is a writer whose work focuses on food and agriculture. 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."

## Shumei Natural Agriculture Garden

More than ten Shumei families in New York and Pennsylvania started their Natural Agriculture practices at the Rodale Institute in 2001. Most of us were beginners. We rented some plots on the Institute's property and enjoyed growing vegetables for the first time.

During February 2007 in New York City, Hiroko Koyama visited I.M. Pei.<sup>5</sup> Yasushi Fujimoto, a Shumei staff member working at Rodale, was her driver. While they were talking in the car about our Natural Agriculture project, she said, "Oh, so it's not Natural Agriculture" after hearing from Yasushi that we were using soil amendments to start seeds and buying seeds at stores instead of saving them year after year. She was right. After this conversation, we thought we would like to have a real Natural Agriculture garden at the Rodale.

Sensei Koichi Deguchi, the former Director of the Shumei Natural Agriculture Department, visited the Rodale Institute in April 2007 to meet with Jeff Moyer, Director of Farm Operations at the Institute. There we talked about our dream garden. In fact, we hesitated to present our ideas to them about creating an official Natural Agriculture garden at Rodale, which practiced a different form of sustainable farming. After all, they were the pioneers of organic farming. Despite our anxiety, Jeff said it would be just fine.

In July of 2007, the Shumei Natural Agriculture Garden project at the Rodale Institute was launched. Eileen Weinstein, master gardener of the Institute, became manager the project. A team of about ten people from Rodale and Shumei had weekly meetings concerning the garden's design. We wanted the garden not just to be an environmentally sustainable, working garden, but a place where people experienced beauty and harmony. The theme was East meets West. The garden would display a small homestead about an acre in size that had the potential to support a family of four with fresh produce throughout most of the

5. Considered one of the greatest contemporary architects, I.M. Pei designed the Miho Museum, the Joy of Angels Carillon, and the Miho Institute of Aesthetics for Shumei.

The merger of sustainable agriculture and beauty at the Shumei Natural Agriculture Garden at the Rodale Institute.

year. The diverse landscape surrounding the garden is alive and rich with flowers, herbs, trees, shrubs, birds, and wildlife. The philosophy embodied in this space demonstrates a new and simple approach to gardening, drawn from the techniques and designs of both the past and present to produce wholesome food, while at the same time nourishing the spirit.

The garden is unique because of its energy efficient garden components. The Green Building is used to store our saved seeds, as well as to hold meetings and lectures. The outstanding feature of the building is the Green Roof. The Green Roof is covered with vegetation and soil, planted over a waterproof membrane. The Green Roof has many benefits: the natural insulation of the plants helps maintain warm temperatures during the winter and cooler temperatures in the summer; the roof's life span is increased; storm water runoff is reduced; and the roof potentially encourages wildlife. Several types of succulent plant species, chosen for their diversity and drought-resistance, color, and texture, thrive in arid roof environments.

The 22-foot Geodesic Dome Green House complements the garden with many features that support efficiency and sustainability and coincide with our philosophy. Four solar powered window vents are positioned strategically to draw air from the base of the dome and then circulate it to the top to minimize overheating. The vents open and close automatically to maintain warm air in winter and cooler air in summer. Also, a 800-gallon water tank keeps the dome at moderate temperatures, while a sub-soil solar-powered fan system circulates hot air created inside the dome from the structure's top through the soil, warming and cooling it as needed.

On August 15, 2009, we celebrated the garden's opening. We were delighted that Ardath Rodale attended the ceremony. She was Chief Inspiration Officer of Rodale Inc. and later co-chairman emeritus in memoriam at the Rodale Institute. She was such an open-minded person and a good friend of Shumei who supported the partnership projects from its beginning. Over the years, she wrote about Shumei and Jy-



orei in her regular column in *Prevention Magazine*.<sup>6</sup> She hosted students from Japan every summer. Although she passed away in December 2009, her guiding spirit is still felt.

On August 6 of this year, we held an open house to mark the second anniversary of our garden. Mark (Coach) Smallwood, Executive Director of the Rodale Institute, made the opening remarks and greeted participants. It was a good turnout. About 70 people enjoyed the program, which included a lecture, garden tour, vegetable and sweets tasting, and sales of books and produce. A woman said that the cucumber was the best she had ever tasted. Some people said they wanted to try this new farming approach. Many asked if we really could grow vegetables without any fertilizer. We were happy to answer their questions in a real Natural Agriculture garden on the grounds of the Rodale Institute. It is a blessing to have the garden available for sharing the philosophy of Shumei Natural Agriculture, which Meishusama advocated so many years ago to help the devastated farmers of Japan.

6. *Prevention Magazine*, published by Rodale Inc., is one of America's leading periodicals. It promotes a healthy lifestyle through articles concerning family health, food, cooking, nutrition, exercise, and beauty. Website: [www.prevention.com](http://www.prevention.com).

This was our second year of growing wheat. The white and whole-wheat flours are so popular and so good for baking cakes and cookies. The root cellar was a new addition to the garden this year. Eileen, our garden manager, garden interns, and volunteers have been maintaining the garden beautifully. The children participating in the summer educational program take care of their own plots in the garden with pride, and enjoy their harvests. There are three workshops each year to introduce the concept and practice of Shumei Natural Agriculture. The garden has been expanding and inspiring more and more visitors.

## Partnership for the Future

It has been 13 years now since the official partnership with the Rodale Institute began. There have been many wonderful, hard-working staff members and interns at the Rodale Institute who have inspired Shumei members. The partnership has exerted an immeasurable influence on Shumei over the years. As the world is faced with the challenges of climate change, poverty, and a food crisis, I hope this partnership will continue to grow and contribute to people's well being and the betterment of the world's food systems.

## The Gift of Song

Jillian Klarl Ellzey (USA)

*Jillian Klarl Ellzey lives in Crestone, Colorado with her husband, Bill Ellzey. She has been a Shumei member for over eight years. Mrs. Klarl Ellzey recently retired from a fifteen-year career in real estate to focus on her spirituality and her singing. In addition to teaching workshops and leading groups about exploring sacred sound, she is drawn to the beauty and transformation that happens when a community joins in creative collaboration for the good of all.*

*The following comes from a talk she gave at the June 2011 Monthly Sampai at the sanctuary of the Shumei International Institute's headquarters in Crestone, Colorado. The text has been edited for use in SHUMEI Magazine.*

**A**s many of you know, I love to sing. However, until recent times, this part of my life was secondary to making a living in the world. On my 60th birthday, I asked myself the question, "If I knew that I was going to die soon, would there be anything that I would regret not having done?" Immediately the answer came: "Exploring Creativity and the Voice." I knew then that I had to make a change in my life, and I made a commitment to myself that I would begin that exploration.

A few days later, an email arrived from Madi Sato, a friend and beautifully talented singer, songwriter, and Jyorei practitioner from Santa Fe. The subject line of the email said "Yoga of the Voice." My curiosity piqued, I called Madi to ask more about it. She told me she had been studying voice with a woman in California and that the program had transformed her life. That was all I needed. I went to a Yoga of the Voice workshop two weeks later, and it was clear from the beginning that this would be something to support me in my exploration. The creator of this program, Silvia Nakkach, has become and continues to be a significant teacher for me. And an added benefit from my attending these classes is that my daughter and her family live nearby, so I get to be with my grandchildren each time I go to California to study. How perfect is that!

Over time, I began to share the voice yoga practices with local people. Basically, they are simple, yet powerful vocal practices from different spiritual traditions that tune and open our voices. They combine four of my main interests in life: creativity, sound healing, spirituality, and vocal arts.

So, my life became very full as I continued my real estate work, which was already quite time consuming, and shared Voice Yoga on the side. A year ago, it became painfully clear that I needed to make a change. The creative work was so expansive and energizing, and my day job was not. The tension created by this would move me to make an essential shift in my life on summer solstice last year.

I chose to leave a fifteen-year career so that I could have more time for my creativity. Little did I know how dramatic this change would be—that I would be leaving not only a job, but a lifestyle and way of thinking and being in the world. My longing was to be and live my authentic, creative self.

What has been unfolding ever since is a flow of opportunities and support that I could only have imagined before. My main job has been to open up and receive it, to continue to say "yes," and to ask the questions, "How can it get better than this?" and "What else is possible?"

You might ask, "What does this have to do with Shumei?" Several years ago, my beloved Bill became a part of the Shumei family, and I watched him go through a positive change as he regularly attended Sampai, received Jyorei, and opened to the value of his own art and beauty. He seemed happier, and he respected what Shumei stood for. I was curious about this change I saw in him, and began to attend Sampai ceremonies and other Shumei events. I eventually decided to become a part of this family myself.

Shumei has been a thread that kept my singing alive by encouraging and supporting me to sing at the Anniversary events each year. Looking back, this was such an important piece in my life. I had felt shy and lacked confidence, yet accepted the invitation to put myself out there anyway. Shumei kept that candle burning in my heart as I sang at the Candlelight Ceremonies<sup>1</sup> each year.

This past year has been one of great transformation for me. My voice teacher says, if you have inhibitions or blocks to singing, the answer is to "sing more."



Jillian Klarl Ellzey

1. The Candlelight Ceremonies are vigils on behalf of world peace held at The Shumei Crestone Center, usually in conjunction with the celebration of that Center's anniversary.

## “Each event was a kind of prayer, and the power of prayer multiplied exponentially as we sang our hearts out in devotion, gratitude, love, and to celebrate life itself.”

A few months ago, during a planning meeting for this year's Shumei Anniversary, I was asked to help with three different musical events: the Kaishusama Song as a gift to Ms Koyama, Kirtan at the Interfaith Day, and Praises for the World for the Candlelight Ceremony. This was much more than I had done in previous years, and it was clear that I was to say “yes” again. The process was challenging, stretching, and rewarding on many levels. The response from the com-

munity was the gift. Each event was a kind of prayer, and the power of prayer multiplied exponentially as we sang our hearts out in devotion, gratitude, love, and to celebrate life itself. I am excited about the beauty and transformation that can happen when we join together as community in creative collaboration for the good of all. Let us continue to say “yes” to that.

So, in closing, I take a deep bow of gratitude for the garden of nourishment

and support that Shumei has been for me. Every time I come to Sampai, I give my appreciation to Meishusama for the vision and inspiration he put forth. I am thankful for the beautiful Shumei Crestone Center in which we gather as family and community, and for the invitation to us all to bring our gifts forward to share.

Thank you from the depth of my whole being. ■

## Planting a Spiritual Garden

Ping-Chuan Wang (USA)

*Ping-Chuan Wang and his wife Yi-Ying Huang became Shumei members and received their Ohikaris in October of 2010. Their passion for organic gardening started in 1997, and they have been actively practicing Natural Agriculture in their home garden for about two years. Born in Taiwan, Mr. Wang now lives in upstate New York.*

*The following text derives from a presentation that Mr. Wang gave at the Shumei Pasadena Center's 19th anniversary celebration in October 2011. His story has been edited for use in this publication.*

**L**ike many people who read or hear scenarios about how traumatic experiences in life completely change a person's attitude toward spirituality, I always treated those stories as mere wishful thinking. Rarely had I given them serious thoughts. Never could I have imagined that I would go through such a faith-changing experience at this stage of my life. It happened about four months ago.

Our relationship with Shumei originated with our first visit to the Natural Agriculture Farm at Maplecrest, New York two years ago in 2009. Back then, my wife and I had been practicing organic gardening as a hobby for about ten years. We constantly tried to condition our soil in order to be more productive. But, we always felt our garden was missing something that would really make us feel peaceful in it. Looking for more environmentally conscious ways to garden, we came across the Maplecrest farm run by Kenji Ban through the Internet and planned a visit with him. In that first visit, we were greatly touched by the natural beauty of the farm where everything seems so much in peace and harmony.

With all the heart-warming hospitality of the Shumei friends we later met at the farm, we became frequent visitors and learned the basics of Natural Agriculture. As a result, the following season marked the beginning of the conversion of our organic garden to a Shumei Natural Agriculture one. Since then, we have been enjoying wonderful changes in our garden, and we enjoy all the plants, creatures, atmosphere, and we even enjoy our minds and spirit within it.

In the summer of 2010, Kenji formally introduced us to the Shumei philosophy, including Natural Agriculture, art and beauty, and Jyorei. Being inspired Natural Agriculture gardeners who love music and enjoy taiko;<sup>1</sup> we thought it was an easy decision to join Shumei, even though we did not quite understand the profound meaning of Jyorei and its spiritual implications.

Exactly, a year ago in October 2010, my wife and I received our ohikaris<sup>2</sup> at the New York Center from Sensei Eugene Imai. As we



Ping-Chuan Wang

1. 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.
2. An ohikari is a small sacred emblem worn by people who give Jyorei. It consists of a parchment square bearing artistic calligraphy by Meishusama and worn about the neck, much like an amulet or scapular.

## “The desperation was too much to bear . . . for the first time in my life, I needed some higher being to lean on for both emotional and spiritual support and comfort.”

celebrated our spiritual birthday, as Shumei members refer to it, I did not feel or even acknowledge the existence or need of a spiritual world. Mainly due to my background in science, and partly because of my ego, I simply could not comprehend the function of prayer and Jyorei as anything other than providing emotional comfort and support to people who suffer. As much as I enjoyed the company and conversation at Shumei gatherings and Monthly Sampais, the shared care and devotion of Shumei friends, and as much as I admired the dedication and work of the Shumei senseis, I chanted and gave Jyorei with only the gestures and a sense of gratitude. Divine Light, to my mind, was simply a metaphor of only symbolic significance. This was about to change, however.

Earlier this year in July 2011, without any warning, my 12-year old niece Lena suddenly passed out. She was rushed to the hospital. Her heart stopped on the way. Over the next four hours, doctors attempted to rescue her by external defibrillation and cardiopulmonary resuscitation—without success. She then was transferred to a larger hospital where she was immediately hooked up to a heart and lung machine so her life could be sustained. I went to the hospital later that afternoon. Lena was laying lifelessly in the cardiac intensive care unit with all her vital organs either in critical condition or simply not functioning. When I entered the room, I was faced with a pale body surrounded and maintained by cold, flashing machines.

Lena was later diagnosed with acute myocarditis<sup>3</sup> caused by a virus from an unknown source. Looking back, until that moment, I had never realized how fragile life is. Neither had I understood what the word *helpless* truly meant. Overwhelmed, I felt as if I were thrown into an empty space without anything to grab onto. The desperation

was too much to bear and too much to hide behind my ego. That was when, for the first time in my life, I needed some higher being to lean on for both emotional and spiritual support and comfort. I prayed to Meishusama in an attempt to reach God, and sincerely opened my heart and exposed my vulnerability. I raised my hand and offered Jyorei to this lovely girl, this close friend, whom I thought of as my own daughter. What followed was a wonderful feeling of warmth and compassion that flowed through my heart and melted most of my fear and helplessness. At that moment, I realized that I found something solid and absolute to hold on to.

Encouraged by this feeling, I wrote a letter to all our Shumei friends from the New York Center to “. . . ask for your kindness and for remembering Lena in your prayers.” I clearly remember how humble and grateful I was as I tearfully sent this letter. Emails and phone calls quickly poured in. We even received prayers from strangers from around the world. We were once again overwhelmed, but this time it was by all the support, friendship, and encouragement that we received. The fact that Lena is a baptized Christian made all the unselfish prayers from our Shumei family even more deeply appreciated.

Over the next few weeks, as prayers from various groups continued and I performed Jyorei whenever I had the chance, we witnessed many miracles unfold, one after another. One by one, Lena’s vital organs slowly became functional again. While still mostly under induced coma, she was disconnected from the heart and lung machine on the seventh day of her ordeal. On the tenth day, while awake but too weak to talk, she wrote with a shaky hand, “I am hungry.” This was her first announcement after the trauma. The second statement was a simple “How are you, Mom?” which brought tears to my sister’s eyes.

The last organs to recover were her kidneys, and subsequently she was trans-

ferred to a physical rehab center as the last stop on her way to recovery. After 49 days, she was back home again. Coincidentally, her homecoming occurred during the Mid–Autumn Festival, an important Chinese holiday for celebrating the harvest with family reunions. Three days later, she went back to school with only minor signs of physical weakness, which was not too concerning as her friends fought to carry her backpack and walk with her.

I am not sure what could be a better way to end this dramatic experience for my family. It goes without saying that modern medicine, technology, and the excellent medical team did wonders in saving Lena’s life. Through this challenging journey, however, our hearts and spirits were also touched by something very high, way higher than we could have ever anticipated, something we all held on tight to in the spiritual world. We are certain that God heard all the prayers from all the different groups and churches, and answered all of them with miracles. For my family, we have certainly learned invaluable lessons about love, faith, and life. Particularly we learned about relationships, relationship within family, relationship among friends, one’s relationship with one’s inner self, and one’s relationship to God.

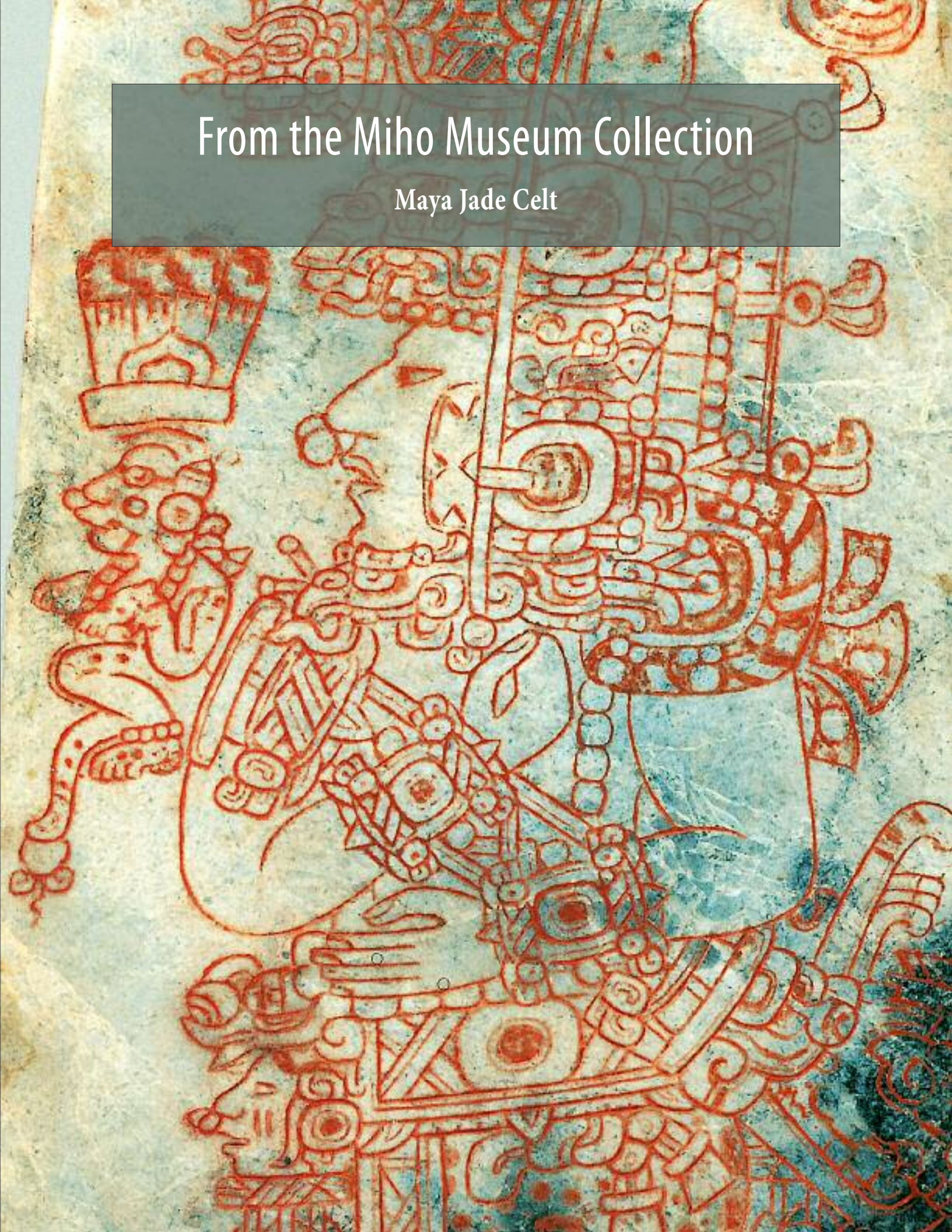
As for my wife and me, who perhaps naively joined Shumei a year ago because of our interest in Natural Agriculture, we were deeply humbled by this experience. Thanks to Meishusama, we were able to find the spirit of compassion in tough moments through chanting, praying, and offering Jyorei. We witnessed how Meishusama teamed up with other higher beings from different religions in communicating with God. We experienced how powerful Jyorei is in helping others while helping ourselves emotionally and spiritually.

Finally, we started to understand what it means to be reborn into the spiritual world upon receiving our ohikaris. And what a wonderful feeling that is. ■

3. Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle, due to a strong immune response to an infection, an allergic reaction, or exposure to certain chemicals.

# From the Miho Museum Collection

Maya Jade Celt





## Incised Celt

Maya Area (Probably Modern Guatemala).  
About 452 AD. Jade. Height: 23.2 centimeters  
or about 9.1 inches. Width: 7.5 cm or about 3  
inches. Depth: 0.5 cm or about 0.2 inches.

This Maya object was presented to the Miho Museum's visitors between July and December 2004 as part of an exhibition entitled Ancient Civilizations of the Americas. It was the first time that the Miho Museum, with its extensive collection of Eurasian and ancient Egyptian antiquities, prominently displayed pre-Columbian, Mesoamerican art objects from its collection.

The ancient Maya inhabited a vast geographic region that in recent times encompasses parts of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, in the same places where today the Mayan people and their culture still flourish long after their illustrious civilization declined.

Large Maya stone sculptures, with their portrayals of opulently arrayed figures, often accompanied by lengthy inscriptions, have proven a source of enduring fascination from the 19th century to the present day. These sculptures, sometimes immense steles, had their counterpoints in much smaller objects, such as this celt.

Jade was highly valued by the Maya people, especially the bright green variety. It was a main item of trade and much of it came from the Guatemalan Highlands. However, jade's availability seems to have been limited, which might be why so many jade objects coming from this time and place are small and retain the stone's natural contour. Celts were sliced from jade rocks into thin sections. This celt is less than a quarter inch or half centimeter thick.

This magnificent example of early Classical Mayan engraving is one of a pair of nearly identical blue-green jade celts, both depicting the same lord and his administration during a significant cylindrical time.

The object is called a celt because it resembles an axe head. The word celt usually refers to ancient tools or weapons with beveled edges made of stone or metal. However, it is now known that this thin and tapered plaque was neither a weapon nor a tool but, more likely, an ornament worn for ceremonial purposes suspended from a belt. As one looks at the figure on this celt, one sees that he wears two belts with such pendants attached. As they swung against one another at the wearer's slightest movement, sus-

pended objects such as these would have made a rich, clacking sound, particular to jade. The chiming sound must have been essential to the ritual.

After being carved, celts such as this one were suspended in groups of three from the belts of Maya rulers. Only a few survive. Each usually depicts a ruler, arrayed in an abundance of emblematic ceremonial garb. On the reverse side are striking hieroglyphic inscriptions that usually name the ruler, identify his parentage, and record significant events in his life.

Because of the widespread looting of Mayan sites and the late provenance of this object, it is extremely hard to identify with any assurance from where this object came and who is depicted on it. However, a single clue that might place it and its twin's origin comes from a fragmentary wooden lintel on which an inscribed name, Masey Chan Yopaat, matches that of the overlord depicted on this celt. Thus, it is likely that this object and its companion come from the area of El Zodz in the northern Petén District of Guatemala.

Masey Chan Yopaat, whose commanding visage might adorn this celt, was likely the ruler of the minor fiefdom of Juunat. He wears a confusing combination of Aztec and Mayan attire, no doubt reflecting the cultural influences that the Mexican culture of the highland city of Teotihuacan exerted on the central Maya area in the early fifth century AD. Masey Chan Yopaat stands on the writhing bodies of two hand-tied captives. Such cruel imagery was common for the time and can be found on much larger stone monoliths.

While the text on the back of the celt does not give the names of the vanquish enemies Masey Chan Yopaat stands on, they wear their names on their headdresses on the front side. The one to the left is named Koh Baah, which means Gopher's Tooth; on the right is Jol Mo, or Macaw's Skull. Names based on an animal's body parts were common among courtiers and members of the gentry.

The extensive text on the back of the celt opens with a description of what happened during a significant period that ended on December 10, 435 AD. What can be deciphered indicates that what took place during this time was overseen by Masey Chan Yopaat, Lord of Juunat. It further states that he cast incense and wrapped the stone, and that his supervision of the event made him the 'voice' of this important period. Unfortunately, and intriguingly, the remaining glyphs cannot yet be deciphered.



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