

taiko taiko

Summer/

Autumn 2003

issue No. 24



In the pursuit of taiko knowledge and world domination with our... one million Yen!!!!!!



IN THE LAND OF THE RICE 'N' DRUM...

After months of planning and anticipation, we embarked on our official Mugenkyo Japan Study Tour in April. It was an amazing experience: an intensive two and a half weeks, precisely scheduled to fit in the maximum number of meetings and greetings, & a happy home-coming for Neil & Miyuki, who'd lived for two years in Fukui. We visited Taiko factories and centres, saw Taiko played at concerts, at "Matsuri" (festivals), and had intensive workshops with the best teachers in Japan.



*"Honey, I shrunk Mugenkyo..."
At the Asano Taiko factory with Mr Asano*

4th - Asano Taiko Factory - Matto, Ishikawa prefecture
One of the two major Taiko drum factories in Japan, Asano Taiko has a 400-year history of drum making - the techniques passed down through the generations of the Asano family. When the family business began, they made all kinds of leather goods, specialising in leather armour worn by the samurai. After the Taiko "boom" in the 1950's, they now make Taiko exclusively, supplying thousands of groups. After a hearty lunch with Mr. Asano, the managing director, we went on a tour of the Taiko factory. They happened to be reskinning a huge Taiko, over 5 feet in diameter. According to Mr. Asano, the number of Taiko groups in Japan is now at the 10,000 mark - and he's had to develop new "fast-drying" techniques to supply the ever-growing demand for drums. The 3-woman Taiko group - Hono-Daiko, old friends of ours - are based at Asano Taiko, and were rehearsing in a new member, who turned out to be an old acquaintance of ours - an ex-member of Wadaiko Ichiro, who toured the UK, and performed at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre about 5 years ago - the very concert that inspired both Teresa and Adam to take up Taiko! We marvelled at the connection & joined in on Hono-Daiko's rehearsal, under the watchful eye of Mr. Asano. Afterwards we were like kids in a toyshop - we tried out the different drums in the drum museum & drooled over the Taiko in the showroom, and then bought bachi drumsticks, videos and teaching materials, for use in the Dojo back in 'Bonnie' Scotland.
www.asano.jp

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"TAIKO TAIKO" is the quarterly newsletter of Mugenkyo and the Mugen Taiko Dojo, publishing information about the group and Taiko Dojo activities, the art form of Taiko, and Taiko events in the UK.

MUGENKYO Taiko Drummers

Established in 1994, MUGENKYO is Europe's first professional Taiko drum group, performing at theatres, concert halls, festivals and events throughout Britain and Europe. MUGENKYO's aim is to develop Taiko as a European art form, through performances and joint projects and collaborations across a wide variety of artistic disciplines

www.mugenkyo.com



The MUGEN TAIKO DOJO is the first purpose-built Taiko Centre in the UK. Located in rural Scotland, it is a place where

people gather from all over Britain and Europe to learn about the art form of Taiko through residential workshops and regular classes. It is also the permanent base and training space for Mugenkyo. The Dojo's extensive outreach programme takes Taiko to schools and communities, creating a greater understanding about Taiko throughout the UK.

www.taikodojo.com

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Thank you to those of you who sent in donations towards the cost of this newsletter:

Mrs Audrey J. Devine, Miss R. Pring, Margaret Berry, Mr & Mrs T.H. Evanson, Mrs Hilary MacPherson, John & Jane Hill, Pat Taylor, I. Sturrock, Alex Weeks, Jo Pineau, Mrs Gale, Baker, Mrs S.M. Sharman, Helen Goodchild, K & S Grandfield, Pamela Duke, Evelyn Brookes

Please remember, it costs money to put out a newsletter. Please help us to continue, by sending donations - a book of stamps, postal orders or cheques (made payable to Mugenkyo), all gratefully accepted.

5th/6th - Kodo Village - Ogi, Sado Island
Mr Akamine gives us the grand tour of Kodo Village



We were very honoured to be invited to Kodo Village - this is an honour not extended to just anyone, and we'd timed our Japan trip around this invitation. We were met off the ferry by Takashi Akamine - the manager of the Kodo drummers & coordinator of Kodo's European and American tours - who showed us

the best hospitality throughout the weekend. When Tagayasu Den gathered up a group of idealistic young men & women in 1970 & settled in an old schoolhouse on Sado Island, to begin their many years of hard training in the traditional Japanese folk arts, little did they know that decades later they would become the most famous Taiko drum group in the world, touring all corners of the globe. The legend of Kodo (originally Ondekoza) has reached mythical proportions & here we were, at the heart of the myth - in Kodo Village itself. After years in the freezing cold schoolhouse, and with the success of their world tours, Kodo bought acres of land and started constructing a village for the 23 players and 28 staff that comprise the Kodo family. We stayed in the guest house - a traditionally constructed Japanese house with "tatami" reed mat floors, "shoji" paper screens, "kotatsu" heated low table, "futon" to sleep on, and even an "ofuro" Japanese bath - lovely! Akamine-san showed us to the Kodo rehearsal room - shaped like a huge church - with wall-to-wall Taiko drums. They left us to play on the drums (imagine being let loose in the church of Taiko!), while they went to take their turn at cooking, as all cooking & cleaning is done on a rota system. It was soon dinnertime in the communal dining hall & we shared in the washing-up duties. After dinner, some of the members of Kodo gathered with us in the rehearsal room and we performed for each other. Only a few days before, Kodo had performed to a sold out audience at Carnegie Hall, New York, and here we were - at our own personal concert. We were so impressed by their focus - they put as much energy and sweat into that performance for us as they would have for a full concert hall.

The next day Akamine-san took us to the apprentice-training centre. There we learned more about their two-year training programme, which involves lessons not just in Taiko drumming, but also in all aspects of Japanese folk arts and even in tea ceremony and etiquette. There is no heating in the school-house, and on Sado Island the winter weather is extremely harsh.

There is no television & no drinking & smoking allowed, and again the trainees live communally. Apprentices run for 10km at 5 am on weekdays. On Sundays they are generously allowed to sleep in till 7 am! We were shocked to find out that even the office staff at Kodo are required



to complete one year of the *An impromptu performance of Miyake!!!* programme, so as to find the people who are able & willing to fit in with the Kodo lifestyle & philosophy. In sharp contrast to the spartan environment of the apprentice-training centre, we were then taken for a luxurious bath in the "onsen" hot spring pools and sauna, followed by a sumptuous traditional meal of crab, sashimi raw fish and other culinary delights.

www.kodo.or.jp

14th – Kabuki Festival, Shiga Prefecture – see special festival feature in next issue.

15th – Kyoto Taiko Centre, Kyoto

The Kyoto Taiko Centre is probably the largest teaching centre for Taiko in Japan, directed by Mr. Higashi, with a packed schedule of 36 classes a week: children, adults, introductory, advanced, for seniors and classes for the disabled. The Kyoto Taiko Centre has made huge strides in making Taiko accessible to all – which has not been without criticism from some of the more conservative quarters of the establishment. They have a huge selection of Taiko videos & also sell instruments etc. Their current website is mostly in Japanese, but they are now developing an English language website, which will hopefully be on-line soon.

www.taiko-center.co.jp/engindex.htm

Hachiman Taiko Matsuri in Shiga Prefecture – see our full feature on this 1200-year-old festival in the next issue.

At the Drum museum with Mr Miyamoto and Mrs Ochi.

16th – Miyamoto Taiko Factory, Tokyo

It was great to see Mrs. Ochi again, the curator of the Drum Museum at the Miyamoto Taiko Factory, who had shown us so much kindness in the past and support when Mugenkyo were a fledgeling group.

www.miyamoto-unosuke.co.jp/e-taiko.htm

In the evening we joined in with Amanojaku's rehearsal. Those of you lucky enough to have caught Amanojaku's show at the Edinburgh Fringe last year can attest to Amanojaku's amazing skill and stamina. They are one of the top Taiko groups in Japan, and good friends of ours. The rehearsal was a vigorous workout, but it was nothing compared to what was in store for us the next day...

www.pat.hi-ho.ne.jp/amanojaku/Estart.html



Anyone for an arm wrestle? Still smiling after a workshop with Amanojaku.

19th – Asakusa Taiko Jam Concert, Tokyo

As a fitting last night in Japan, we attended a concert by Leonard Eto, supported by Gocoo. This was the face of modern Taiko: Gocoo played African grooves on Taiko drums, dressed up in skin-tight neon patterned techno club-gear. They're also on the soundtrack of the movie of the moment: Matrix Reloaded. Headlining the concert in a Southeast Asian wraparound sarong and feathered headdress, Leonard Eto played exquisitely layered rhythms accompanied by three delicate young ladies. Formerly of Kodo, he has embarked on a new modern direction – one of the very best Taiko players in Japan & truly inspirational.

www.leoeto.com

www.kodo.or.jp/perf/kodorelated/leonard.html

www.gocoo.tv/

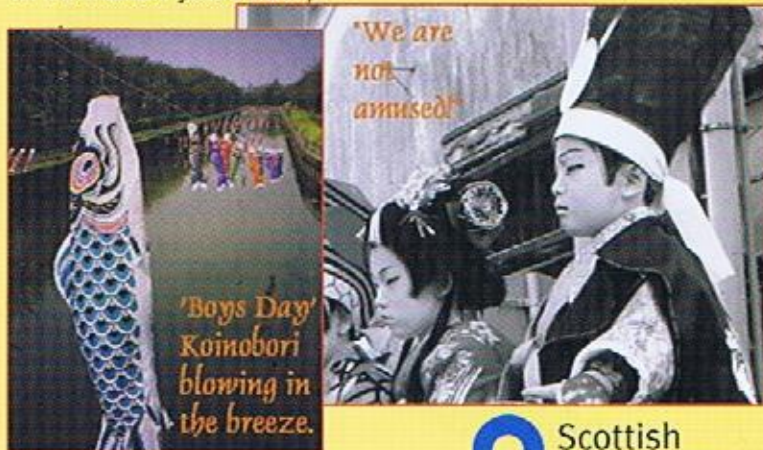
This was a great end to a wonderful few weeks. We returned home exhausted and inspired, and then jumped straight into our Spring Tour!

17th – Amanojaku Workshop, Tokyo


From 9 am to 6 pm we sweated it out with Watanabe Sensei from Amanojaku, whose smile got broader as the pain became more & more evident in our faces. It was a real test of endurance and concentration – learning new styles of playing and new rhythms, while being pushed to the physical limit. Afterwards we were treated to a sumptuous sushi meal, complete with an unending supply of warm sake, which melted away our muscle aches...

18th – National Diet, Tokyo

Neil & Miyuki had lunch at the Diet (Parliament) at the special invitation of the Shadow Foreign Minister, who had taken an interest in Mugenkyo's activities, after which Miyuki hot-footed it to her grandmother's house & Neil, Teresa & Adam had a night out with friends in Shinjuku, the nocturnal playground of this neon city. It was especially good to meet up with ex-Mugenkyo member Al Hagger (some of you may remember Al from a few years back).



'Boys Day' Koinobori blowing in the breeze.

 Scottish Arts Council

We'd like to thank the Scottish Arts Council for their support of the Mugenkyo Japan Study Tour.

The stunning Kurumaya Taiko Dojo!



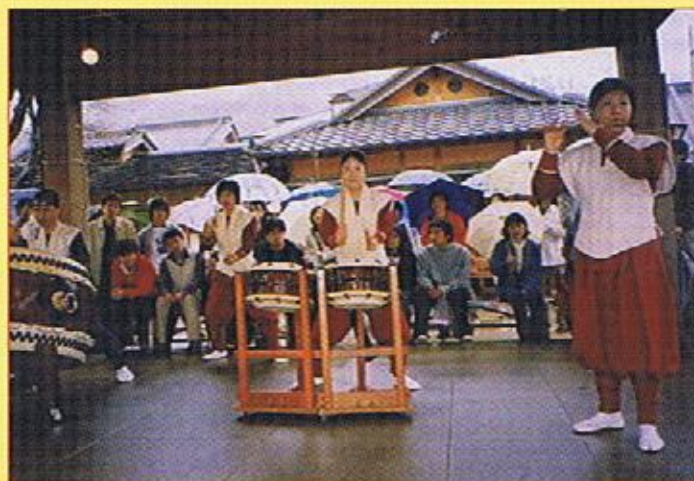
Neil & Miyuki lived & studied Taiko in Fukui in 1992 – 1994. Although they'd been back a couple of times, this was the first time they'd returned to Fukui since Kurumaya Sensei had toured with Mugenkyo in 1997 – 1999. It was an extremely emotional & powerful homecoming – returning to the source – where Mugenkyo was born & where the groups' roots lie. We had intensive lessons with Kurumaya Sensei again – this time at his newly constructed Kurumaya Taiko Dojo, in a beautiful valley alongside a river, at the foothills of Miyama, just outside Fukui. We sweated through hours of practice, and also spent hours listening to Kurumaya Sensei talk about the spirit of Taiko – the Zen concept of MU (empty mind - empty heart), the importance of MA (the space between the notes) – and of KI (life force - energy). Again we felt grateful to have encountered such a wonderful teacher – a teacher who taught not just the rhythms, but also the philosophy behind the rhythms. This spirit has defined the Mugenkyo style of playing and teaching since the formation of the group in 1994.

10th / 11th – Katsuji Kondo Workshop and Shin On Performance, Ise-shi, Mie Prefecture

Next stop Ise, home of the Grand Shrine of Shinto, where we were met off the train (weighed down by suitcases & back-packs) by a camera crew who were filming a documentary on Shin On (God Sound).

We took part in a workshop with Shin On, taught by Katsuji Kondo, an ex-member of Kodo & the workshop was filmed for national TV – a little nerve-wracking, especially as half of the workshop involved learning a folk song – in Japanese! The next day we visited the Grand Shrine of Ise, home of the Shinto religion, and where Shin On were performing for the tourists that day.

www.ocn.ne.jp/~k-gumi-y/

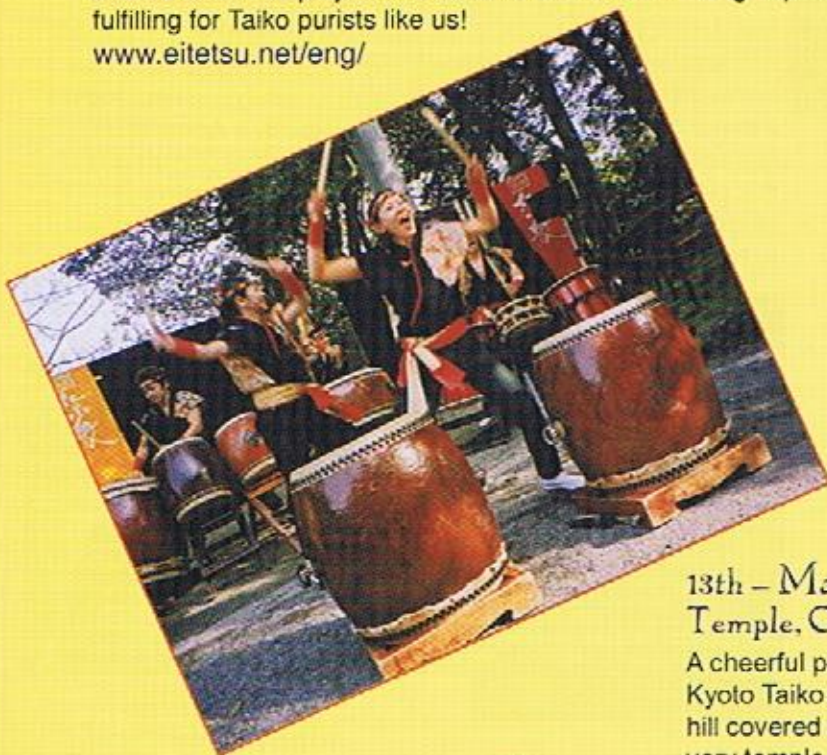


"Heaven's above, it's Shin On...!"

12th – Hayashi Eitetsu Concert, Tsu, Mie Prefecture

A joint concert with Yousuke Yamashita, an acclaimed jazz pianist. Hayashi Eitetsu is considered to be the top solo Taiko player in Japan – an amazing percussionist and excellent Odaiko player. The concert was an interesting experience, but not altogether fulfilling for Taiko purists like us!

www.eitetsu.net/eng/



Matsuri Shu give it some "welly".



Everybody loves a festival!

13th – Matsuri-shu Performance, Ishi-yamadera Temple, Otsu, Shiga Prefecture

A cheerful performance by Matsuri-shu, the performing group of the Kyoto Taiko Centre held at a beautiful Buddhist temple complex on a hill covered with cherry blossoms. For you history buffs, it was at this very temple that Lady Murasaki wrote the classic: The Tale of Genji.

www.taiko-center.co.jp/enshiwa.htm

MUGEN TAIKO DOJO NOTICE BOARD.



PROJECT

Mugen Taiko Dojo's Winter Course and Performance Project 2003/2004

A This exciting project is open to 18 — 26 year olds in Central Scotland, who have an interest in percussion & performance. Following auditions to be held in August, successful applicants will take part in 18 evening sessions at the Dojo, leading to a performance as part of a Mugenkyo concert in Glasgow in February 2004.

For the "Project Taiko Info Pack":
Mugen Taiko Dojo, P.O. Box 5124,
Lanark ML11 OWA
mail@taikodojo.com
tel: 01357 522 008

NEXT INTRODUCTORY WEEKEND WORKSHOPS...

Suitable for beginners, the workshops begin with the stance and "bachi" grip and progress step-by-step through the weekend, learning a Taiko piece from the west coast of Japan.

DATES: 25/26 October
1 / 2 November

PRICE: £90 non-residential rate (including lunch on Sat & Sun)
Residential packages available – details on request

PLACES ARE LIMITED – send now for the "Weekend Workshop Info Pack":
Mugen Taiko Dojo, P.O. Box 5124, Lanark ML11 OWA
mail@taikodojo.com 01357 522 008

FURTHER WORKSHOPS WILL BE HELD IN MARCH / APRIL 2004

FOLLOW-ON WORKSHOPS

We held our very first "follow-on" workshops in May – with 18 participants from far & wide, including Tony & Elaine who drove all the way up from the Isle of Wight! We will be holding another "follow-on" in Nov / Dec – we'll contact all ex-participants directly when the date is finalised.

EDINBURGH FRINGE FESTIVAL

We're performing at the Fringe again this year – but it's not the Mugenkyo show. Instead we've decided to put on a more informal show as the Mugen Taiko Dojo, with explanations about the background to Taiko, in a more relaxed atmosphere. If you're interested in the history & culture behind the performance, as well as earth-shaking rhythms, *this show is for you!*

Venue: The Garage, Grindlay Street Court, Edinburgh

Dates: Aug 11th - 25th (daily)

Time: 8 pm – 9 pm

Ticket price: £9 (£7)
(£5 children)

Box office: 0131 221 9009
(from 3rd August)

Order form

See overleaf for goods.

Name:	Merchandise	Quantity	CD	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
	T-shirts	£12	Tape	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address:	Childrens-XL-blue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total enclosed <input type="text" value="£"/>		
	Small-red	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Medium-black	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Large-khaki	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Postcode:	XL-Black	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	XXL-navy blue	<input type="checkbox"/>			

MUGENKYO
P.O. Box 5124
Lanark
ML11 OWA

All prices include VAT, packaging and postage within the uk (please allow 21 days delivery).

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to...MUGENKYO

Mugenkyo tour dates

**J
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Sun 6th	South Shields, Cookson Festival, Bent park	0191 424 7985
Fri 11th	Marlborough Jazz Festival, Priory Gardens Marquee	0167 251 5095
Sat 12th	The Clare World Music Festival, Clare Castle	0178 727 7000
Sat 19th/Sun 20th	Dublin, National Museum of Ireland	01 872 9980
Mon 21st	Worthing, The Pavilion Theatre	0190 320 6206
Sun 27th	South Queensferry, Hopetoun House Summer Fair	0131 331 2451

August

Sat 9th	Cambridge, Cambridge Corn Exchange	0122 335 7851
Sun 10th	Sutton Lawn, Notts, Ashfield Show (free)	0162 345 7339

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Sat 6th	Falkirk, Larbet, The Dobbie Hall	0132 450 6850
Wed 10th	Durham, The Gala Theatre	0191 383 0100
Thur 11th	Carlisle, Stanwix Arts Theatre	0122 853 4664
Fri 12th	Sevenoaks, Stag Theatre	0173 245 0175
Sun 14th	Truro, Hall For Cornwall	0187 226 2466
Mon 15th	Exmouth, The Pavilion	0139 522 2477
Wed 17th	Wimborne, Layard Theatre, Canford School	0120 284 7525
Thur 18th	Colchester, Mercury Theatre	0120 657 3948
Fri 19th	Swansea, Swansea Grand Theatre	0179 247 5715
Sat 20th	Tenby, De Valance Pavilion	0183 484 3839
Tue 23rd	Bangor, Theatr Gwynedd	0124 835 1708
Wed 24th	Llangollen, Royal International Pavilion	0197 886 0111
Thur 25th	Tamworth, Assembly Rooms	0182 770 9618
Fri 26th	Harlech, Theatr Ardudwy	0176 678 0667
Sun 28th	Preston, Charter Theatre	0177 225 8858
Mon 29th	Scunthorpe, Plowright Theatre	0172 484 2332
Tue 30th	Nottingham, Royal Concert Hall	0115 989 5555

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Wed 1st	Winchester, Theatre Royal	0196 284 0440
Thur 2nd	Banbury, The Mill Arts Centre	0129 527 9002
Sat 4th	Bury St Edmund, Theatre Royal	0128 476 9505
Sun 5th	Tewkesbury, Roses Theatre	0168 429 5074
Mon 6th	Birmingham, MAC	0121 440 3838
Tue 7th	Weston Super Mare, The Playhouse	0193 464 5544
Wed 8th	Hertford, Castle Hall	0199 258 9026
Thur 9th	Norwich, Maddermarket Theatre	0160 362 0917
Fri 10th	Boston, Blackfriars Arts Centre	0120 536 3108
Sun 12th	Buxton, The Opera House	0129 872 190
Thur 16th	Bowness on Windermere, Old Laundry Theatre	0153 948 8444
Fri 17th/Sat 18th	Halifax, Square Chapel	0142 234 9422
Wed 29th	Loughborough, Sir Robert Martin Theatre	0150 922 2899
Thur 30th	Wisbech Arts Forum	01480 454 778

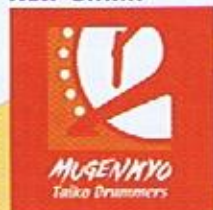
T-shirts available in:

Blue- Childrens XL



FRONT

Red- Small



Khaki- Large



Navy Blue-XXL



Black- Medium



Black-XL



CD



BACK- all sizes- same design

