SHINDO CYCLE
& THE CODE OF BIKE-SHIDO

BY LUIS VIVANCO

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED
To all the Samu-cyclists out there for whom the act of pedaling a bicycle is not simply the turning of a crank, but one element of an ongoing effort to unify mind, body, and spirit.

Published in Burlington, VT
© 2018 by Luis A. Vivanco
All rights reserved.
About a year ago, I began training karate...

...It is called Shotokan. Its origins are in Okinawa...

It demands great physical exertion and precise technique.

The essence of technique is kime, focus, and the concentration of power.

But the true goal of karate-dō—the pathway of karate—is perfection of character...

...which requires respect, discipline, and strengthening spirit, heart, and body, as if they were one.

We practice kihon...

...which refers to "fundamentals"...

...of balance, stance, blocking, and punching...

At the dōjō...*

*"the place of the way," the space where we train.
... and kata, or forms...

*begin

Hip sideways!

Lower stance!

... kumite, or sparring...

... too low...

Higher kick!
More relaxed!
Lean back further!!

... and Sensei* imparts important lessons.

True karate is based on bushido, the Samurai code of honor...

... its goal is self-improvement and mastery.

You must thus not only apply it here in the dojō, you must also apply it in your daily life!

*teacher
Well, yes, I am... I am trying to imagine what that looks like...

You look confused.

Here's your bacon and eggs, kids...

Yum!

Do you remember what bushido is?

Not really, Sensei.

Okay, let's review...
BUSHIDO

Seven Essential Principles

SEIJI
Right decision, rectitude

YARI
Bravery, heroism

JIN
Compassion, benevolence to all

REIJI
Courtesy, right action

MURATO
Truthfulness, utter sincerity

HEIYO
Honor, glory

CHUJI
Devotion, loyalty

The highest purpose...

... of the Samurai--and the Karate practitioner--is to develop complete virtue in thought and action, fostering:

• Self-control
• Strength
• Wisdom, and thus enabling them to maintain calmness...

12TH CENTURY SAMURAI

... even during hardship.

TAIRA NOTADAMORI

FUNAKOSHI HIGUCHI
(1868-1957)

FOUNDER, SHOTOKAN
And so, with that at the back of my mind...

I'm sore...

Karate was hard last night...

...I set off one morning for work as I usually do,

But I feel relaxed now...

...by bicycle

And along the way, a car suddenly turned in front of me!

Aww, c'mon!

A right hook!
With a quick swerve, I avoided a nasty collision.

I'd normally yell, or flip them off...

In spite of it all, I was calm, present, and focused.

Sensei once told us, "Harmonizing mind and body creates hei joshin, or "ordinary everyday mind"..."

...a bushido idea...

Pedaling on, I pondered the connections...
...between cycling and karate-do as pathways to heiōshin.

...because they teach control, and how to give up control... because they cultivate strength and confidence in one's abilities... because they teach humility,... because they train us to see mind and body as an extension of the spirit... because through repetition, the body learns to move effortlessly... because they...

It's a greeting, in Japanese. → wa???

I am a Samurai

Well, yes.

But I want to tell you, this code of bushido is not anachronistic. The Samurai live, some of us ride bicycles now.

We practice bikeshido

I am going now.

→ Really?

→ Bike-shido?

→ Wait. What are you pointing to?

It is the kamon, or crest, of the samu-cycle. You will know more if you dedicate yourself to our ways...
A sense of wonder and curiosity washed over me...

Accompanied by an unexpected awareness of...

...transfiguration.
I had become...

...a...

...SAMU-CYCLE!

Who needs a sword...
When you have a bike?
Mommy, what's that Samurai doing there?

Oh, what a rich imagination! He's just a guy on a bike.

Say, mister, are you a superhero?

No, young friend, I'm just an everyday cyclist.
I practice bike-shido

What is that?

It's all on this scroll...

Wow! What does it all mean?

Let's review...
The foundation of bike-shido is integrity and uprightness, with a bike!

The habitual use of a bicycle is not merely about getting from A to B...

...it is a moral commitment to a way of being in the world.
Cycling with courage is not about conquering the world,

but inviting its challenges, contours...

...and unknowns.
In polluted and dehumanized spaces, everyday use of a bicycle expresses...

...kindness and goodwill...

...toward earth and community.

The compassionate cyclist develops power, strength, and convivial relations to help mend an injured world.
The cyclist's honor is demonstrated by the ability to endure insults and provocations without drawing attention to others' failures.

Excuse me. Like you, I'm just trying to get somewhere. By law, we're both entitled to this street. Stay safe and have a nice day!
The road -- and the bicycle itself -- will expose false confidence...

... and rebuff the insincere rider.

A samu-cyclist is utterly truthful. If she says she will ride 100 miles, it is as good as done.
Glory comes to the cyclist who rides fast and far...

...but true honor is reserved for those who follow bike-shido, even when the larger society devalues its ways.
The cyclist is loyal to the training of mind, body, and spirit through self-powered movement...

...as well as to the bicycle itself, whose reliability depends completely on devotion to the arts and discipline of ... regular maintenance.
So you see, young friend, that is bike-shido!

Young friend?? ...where'd he go?

BEEP!

Umm... right?

HONK!

HEY! Get a move-on!! You've been sitting there forever!!

HONK, HONK, HONK!

BEEP BEEP!!

Hooonk!

THE END
W.W.S.C.D.
What Would Samu-Cycle Do?

Urban riding brings special challenges to the Samu-cycle. Here's what you need to know.

Urban cycling is yet another opportunity for you to seek perfection of character. Always foster self-control, strength, and wisdom in your riding practice.

Essential Do's & Don'ts

1. If a driver cuts you off...

   Don't
   - Hurl the driver out of his car at the next intersection and cut off his head with your katana.

   Do
   - Practice rei/gi.
     - Thank him for not running you over.
     - Speak respectfully. No sarcasm.
     - Refrain from violent behavior. You are a peaceful warrior!

Samu-Cycling | April 2018 | 38

"I try to prioritize jin, or compassion." - Eric, NYC

"Emphasize what you have in common, a shared agreement of safety for all." - Peggy, Burlington, VT
2. Should you ride on the sidewalk?

**Don't**

Sneak up behind walkers on the sidewalk and startle them or insist they get out of your way.

**Do**

Ride on the road. You are strong and fearless. Use your virtue and power to fight for bike lanes, because many others want to ride but are afraid.

3. When the night falls. What then?

**Don't**

Ride without lights. You are not a ninja, assassin-for-hire who slinks around under cover of darkness. No way!

**Do**

Lights are a righteous weapon for protecting yourself and others. Also, being visible and recognized for who you are reflects your honor and sincerity.
Welcome to a world in which some unexpected relationships reveal a practice of profound meaning.

\[
\text{bushido} = \text{CYCLE} \uparrow
\]

Luis Vivanco lives in Burlington, Vermont, with a garage-full of bikes. They are not all his, mind you. A few belong to his wife, Peggy, and their kids, Isabel, Felipe, and Camila. He teaches cultural anthropology at the University of Vermont.