

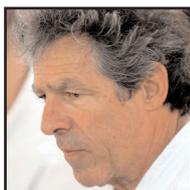
**CONTENTS**

- 1 As Birankai evolves
- 2 Photo gallery
- 3 Reflections
- 5 Round table discussion
- 6 Photo gallery
- 8 Notice-board

**Please send submissions for November 2016 issue by 31 September 2016**

**As Birankai evolves, Shihan Daniel Brunner contemplates its future**

If you were interested in Japanese martial arts, you would inevitably become inquisitive about the history of our practice.



Daniel Brunner

Where does Aikido come from, which path did our teacher follow, what can be known about his predecessors.

Before aikido existed there were other fighting techniques using weapons as well as bare hands. What were the social conditions that favoured the development of various schools of martial arts?

What drove many men (and women)

to dedicate their lives to defend with weapons their master's ideas?

Step by step we try to learn more about Japan's history. It is a vast and exciting subject that covers the conditions in which Japan was isolated from the world, then a time of relative opening, before closing up again like an oyster in the 17th century, to finally be open widely to the world in the second half of the 19th century.

As far as we can go back in time, we find that politics constantly fed on treasons, conspiracies, alliances and misalliances. The driving force appears to be the will to conquer and keep the power. We can also make comparisons with politics in our

countries. Our own history has not much to envy to Japan's concerning the foul play that characterize politics whether in the past or nowadays.

Until the end of the 16th century, martial art schools were rare. Each lord of war trained its troops in extreme secrecy, not disclosing the techniques used or the number of warrior he kept. Espionage was a profession with a future.

From the Edo period on, roughly at the beginning of the 17th century,

Photo: Beata Darowska



Chiba Sensei, Poland, August 2006

*continued on page 4*



## BIRANKAI EUROPE



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Individual article reflects the author's own views. All submissions may be edited due to space constraints and should be sent to the Editor.

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Chiba Sensei  
Poland  
August 2006



# Reflections. . .



## My promise to Chiba Sensei

As most of you are aware I met Chiba Sensei around about 1970. I must confess I was immediately drawn to him and I knew that Sensei would become a major influence in my life.



Joe Curran

For the next four decades Chiba Sensei played an important part of my life and the lives of others. Sensei as we all know was very charismatic. Sensei was an incredible aikidoka, and as a leader/teacher a man who was totally dedicated to his art. Chiba Sensei inspired a great number of people not only in the UK but world-wide due to a combination of skills and his huge personality. One could say that life with Chiba Sensei was a pretty exhilarating experience, certainly it was never dull.

Moving ahead to the recent past the BB membership were made aware that Sensei was in ill health. In due course sad to say Chiba Sensei informed the Shihankai/Teaching Committee that his condition had worsened and he had declined further treatment. This

was a message that I had hoped I would never read. A few weeks later we received the dreadful news that Sensei had passed away surrounded by his family, friends and students. I am sure like most people on hearing this news I went into shock. Both Jenny and I could hardly believe that Sensei was gone.

It is almost a year since Sensei's passing and I confess I have not quite come to terms with the fact that I and others will never hear his voice, hear his laugh, admire his waza, and be in his company again. All I have is the memory of my teacher. There is not a week that goes by where I do not think of him. I am not ashamed to say that on occasion I shed a tear when I think of him.

On one occasion we talked on the subject of our own death. I had over the years some unusual personal experiences of a somewhat psychic nature involving Sensei. I was told by a senior teacher that this type of incident was not unknown to others. Anyway on the subject of our own demise both Chiba Sensei and I agreed whoever passed away first the other would pour a bottle of beer

over the final resting place of the deceased as a token of love and memory.

I hope to fulfill and honour this pledge made so many years ago when I along with others attend a memorial service at Chogenji Temple on 5th June. While this ceremony may be a sad one I am sure that it will also be a ceremony filled with love, joy and a profound sense of loss for a great teacher and a unique man. ☯

Shihan Joe Curran 6th Dan  
Sakumei Kan, NE Aikikai  
British Birankai

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## In at the beginning - a global experience

My first opportunity to meet Chiba Sensei was in 1997. I was totally lacking in awareness at that Summer Camp so



Wellington Tsang

I wasn't certain of what was in front of me. But over the many years, I saw his written articles, his history, the struggles of establishing Aikido in the UK and USA, the formation of the Birankai and his many students.

Most importantly I saw him and his actions and his wisdom on the courses around the world.

He was, in my experience, truly a Master of Masters and I was lucky to train in a school that followed him. I know that many students will not ever see him or an individual like him again, like most of us never saw O-Sensei, but we can still carry on his message: Shoshin. ☯

Wellington Tsang 2nd Dan  
South Manchester Aikido, NW  
Aikikai  
British Birankai



Photo: Wellington Tsang

Chiba Sensei, BB Summer School, Bangor 2004



## As Birankai evolves...

*continued from page 1*

conditions changed with the domination of the Tokugawa who won the biggest battles and rose to power. Not speaking of 'peace'; that was an unusual word in Japan's vocabulary of the time, conditions started to change. To stay in power, the 'shogun' constantly kept hostages from the various 'daimyos' to insure their loyalty or at least to keep them from treason.

Because the daimyos were expected to keep a samurai army, martial art schools developed. But none of them became big in number of students. The 'koryu', or ancient schools, had only one teacher, and that implied a rather limited number of students.

When a warrior was reaching the level of the sensei, he would either leave to serve under another lord

or open his own school. It was also the time for 'Shugyoshas', who were seeking improvement by defying students of other schools.

In our days, schools have completely changed their purpose, when the aim is no longer to train warriors but rather to focus on personal development. The original motivation is gone and many schools have departed from the philosophy that is at the core of martial arts. The structure of the schools has also changed, sometimes with a great number of students and as many teachers.

To come back to Aikido, we realize now that as the guide disappears crises inevitably arise. I remember the rumors that were circulating when O-Sensei died, the power struggles that took place for the nomination of the second Doshu. Some important students gathered behind Kisshomaru Ueshiba, others, beaten, left to create

their own school. Then Aikido went on and developed, the Doshu educated many students who themselves contributed in turn to its development by spreading the good word across the world.

What did these teachers retained of O-Sensei's techniques? Did they have the entire message to transmit to others?

To think that way is simplistic because it doesn't take into account individual

personalities, which in time grew and got stronger. Everyone developed his Aikido from the initial message and from what he retained from the teaching of his Sempai.

It is obvious for us that Chiba Sensei developed his own vision of Aikido based on sensations gathered at the contact of O-Sensei along with his own character and personal history. We are followers of Birankai because Sensei's message had a strong resonance within us. I think it is not an overstatement to say that Sensei had a strong character. A strong character was also needed to follow his teaching.

We are now aware that Birankai is not immune to the ups and down of history. There are rivalries, amities and enmities, natural alliances and other circumstances. All those who approached Sensei know that he sincerely and indiscriminately loved those who really studied his Aikido. But who can pretend to detain the whole of his knowledge in martial arts? Only together can we try to perpetuate his message.

The power coming from the fact that we were one of his students is vain, illusory and only brings obligations, certainly not glory. The school has to evolve or to die. What kind of evolution do we want? What can the students of today expect from the teachers who have been on the tatami for tens of years?

On the eve of the last steps of my earthly passage, I am sometimes tempted to give up everything, to only take care of my direct students and then only of those who want it. But the vision of Sensei as a little devil, constantly with me just above my head, keeps me from doing it. I would feel I don't live up to my words.

Do we then carry on? Together? Do we try and rewrite history without treason or plotting?

Sensei once told me: "Daniel, you are a naive unwavering optimist." Was he right then? ☯

Shihan Daniel Brunner 6th Dan  
Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne  
Birankai Switzerland  
March 2016

*Translated by Jean-luc Busmey/  
Norberto Chiesa*



Photo: Beata Darowska

Shihan Brunner, Poland, August 2006

# Way and transmission

Anne Ducouret organises a round-table discussion



**A**nn Jyou Kan Dojo, created and directed by Anne Ducouret, has initiated a cycle of meetings with the first round table



Anne Ducouret

on Saturday 21 November 2015 on the subject 'The Way and its practice'. Six participants opened the debate by sharing their experience, questioning and engagement in their respective path and practice: Anne Ducouret (Aikido), Christian Bleyer (Kinomichi), Dan Schwarz (Kung Fu Wushu), Denis Marquès (Tai Chi Chuan), Patrick Avel (Karate do Shotokai), Philippe Coupey (Zen). The debate went on with about forty practitioners, teachers, trainers and experts.

Anne Ducouret opened up the round table by presenting the idea that lay behind the creation of the Dojo ten years ago.

The questioning was about its name and vocation. It could neither be a commercial mark nor the name of a person because the purpose was not only to study Aikido but also to share its activity with other disciplines: it was necessary to find a common essence. It was evident that the name would include the word Dojo, "the place where the Way is studied". Today the disappearance of great masters of Aikido such as Masamichi Noro (1935-2013) creator of Kinomichi and Kazuo Chiba (1940-2015) creator of Birankai raise the question on the concept of 'Way' and its becoming.

A central question: "What is a Way?"

Denis Marquès shows the difficulty of giving an answer by pointing out the circular aspect of the question: 'What is a Way'. In fact Chinese tradition designs the Way by Tao. But the Tao has no representation and it is said that 'to name the Tao kills the Tao'. It follows that the subject is about 'Taichi', which amounts to infinite expansion, terms that in turn do not mean anything. So we talk about ying and yang that are only words and representations... Finally, what makes sense is the life we have, the way to be in the present with the universe, with the heart. The Way is like a diamond that revolves and shows different facets. Depending on the period of life, one day we discover and another day we teach: it is always the same thing.

Philippe Coupey insists on the spiritual dimension that exists within us all and manifests itself in the 'Way'. He points to the following paradoxes: "spiritual aspect being intangible, what is interesting is the physical aspect of its manifestation; since the Way cannot be named it is better to say what the Way is not.

Dan Schwarz recalls that 'every martial art has its roots in the 5th century with Shaolin in China. It is an evolution from actual fighting, going through competition with rules, to attain a more spiritual dimension'. Patrick Avel takes as an example Shotokai Karate Do which had to find

a path between competition and self-defence becoming a way of personal development for collective use.

Historically, in martial arts, says Christian Bleyer: 'Ways were born from the encounter of the monk and the warrior leading to the elaboration of the honour code Bushido. Warrior forms, Ju-jitsu, are then discarded in order to raise men as a complete human being. In Japan, masters like Jigoro Kano (1860-1938) for judo, Gigō Funakoshi (1868-1957) for Karate Do and Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969) for Aikido endeavoured to bring about this evolution. These masters conceive martial arts beyond the sole field of practice; they include the whole of men.

They create the foundation of the Ways; they also have a vision of society. To define this development, we can situate this transformation in the prolongation of the Edo period (1600-1868). This time of political stability will facilitate the transformation of fighting techniques into martial arts.

Kazuo Chiba Sensei who was a direct student of the founder of Aikido, presents this practice as dialectic: two forces which create a dynamic tension between two poles. From this conflict comes change. For Anne Ducouret who conducts her teaching at the Ann Jyou Kan Dojo, it is a transformation process, a momentum towards a perpetual deepening of things, a path between two aspects (consciousness/perception, action/passivity, hardness/

*continued on page 6*



(From left) Patrick Avel, Philippe Coupey, Denis Marquès, Dan Schwarz, Anne Ducouret and Patrick Férioux (Moderator)



On the quest....

*continued from page 5*

softness...), and one on the back-ground of the other. Sometimes, the process itself becomes a way only at a later stage, retrospectively. And for Kazuo Chiba Sensei "the core of our activity lies on the relationship of master to student". This transmission is lived out from heart to heart.

Ways are created and passed on by a lineage of masters. Our way is to follow the steps of the other to find out what he is looking at. Thus for Philippe Coupey "my process is my disciples". He also warns against the trend of seeking somewhere else what a master has transmitted right here. He remembers the power of this quote from Deshimaru Sensei about the ways of Soto Zen, hallmark of his meeting in 1972: "there is nothing to be obtained".

Actuality has put the matter of violence in the core of our debate. It is vital for all that each individual work at his level for a creative and constructive solution to these destructive conflicts.

Other themes are awaiting development: "Ways and transmission", "The body within the Way", they will be the object of the next round tables. ☯

Anne Ducouret 5th Dan, Shidoiin  
Ann Jyou Kan Dojo, Paris  
Birankai France  
25 November 2015

*Translated by Jean-luc Busmey/  
Norberto Chiesa*

## Gen Ei Kan Aikido Demonstration at the State Horticultural Show Landau October 2015



Gen Ei Kan members



*From left:* Sandra Schumacher, Silas von Oettingen and Sophia Habath



Jo work

Photos: Achim Goldeman



Alexander Broll with ukes Ulf Paritschke and Waldemar Frank



Amanda Kolodziej with ukes Ulf Paritschke (left) and Waldemar Frank



Waldemar Frank and Julius Krebs



Alexander Broll (right) with Waldemar Frank (uke)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XH-61aQKRk>



# NOTICE-BOARD

## Birankai International Summer Camp

The registration for the Birankai Europe summer camp organized by French Birankai in Paris is now open online:

<http://www.aikido-paris-cap.org/birankaiEng2016>

This camp take place from 23 - 30 July 2016 at Maryse Hilsz Gymnasium, 34 rue Maryse Hilsz Paris 20e (East of Paris), underground Porte de Montreuil. Open to all.

This year we are pleased to invite for the second time Etsuji Horii Shihan 7th Dan from Hombu Dojo, Birankai Europeans Shihans and teachers.

Please come and enjoy the practice and social event.

Contact: Anne Ducouret [anne.ducouret@free.fr](mailto:anne.ducouret@free.fr)  
Tel:+33(0)607108474

Anne Ducouret 5th Dan  
Camp Organiser  
Ann Jyou Kan Dojo, Paris  
Birankai France

## Chiba Sensei, Poland, August 2006

Photo: Beata Darowska

