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Please note closing date for July 2012 issue: 1 June 2012



Chiba Sensei with Jürgen Schwendinger (uke), Austria Summer Camp, July 2008

Photo: Sylvia Taraba

Transmission - Part III

The relationship between the Sensei and the Student

Christophe Peytier now addresses the topic of the Sensei-Student Relationship

In the transmission of traditional arts in Japan, the Teacher-Student relationship is a cornerstone of the construction. Let us remember that the training usually lasts around twenty years. During that time, a relationship will develop, with very particular roles assigned to each party. The Sensei must help the student to express all his potential. In fact, the ideal of a Sensei would be to develop students better than himself. This is the mark of a true great Master: the 'little masters'



Christophe Peytier

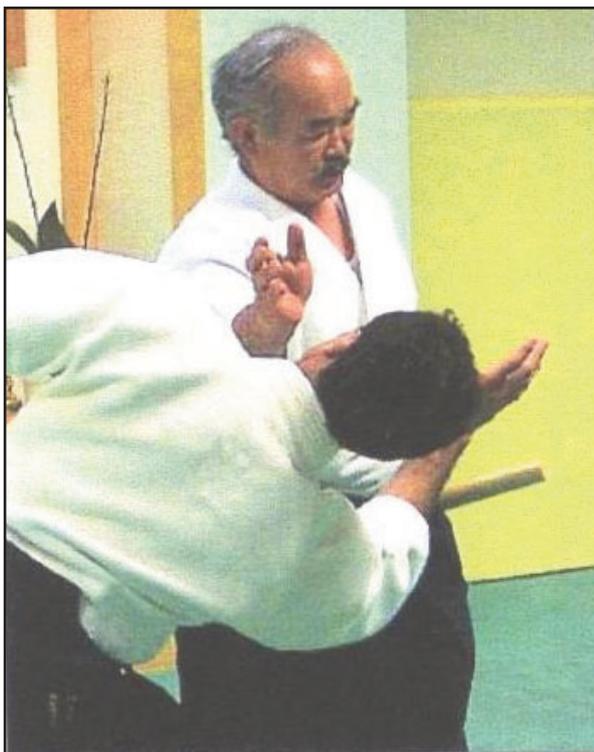
want to keep some things for themselves. On the other hand, the student will display an immense respect for his master, going so far as to handle the smallest details in the life of the latter. It may lead to a situation of quasi-slavery. This relationship used to exist also in our Western world. For example, the builders of cathedrals in the XIIIth century were well known for the extremely complex relationship

that united them, developing some very closed circles, with initiation rites, and very strict and rigid rules. These Master-Disciple relationships were progressively substituted by a Professor-Student relationship, with the development of universities, at the end of the Middle Age (or even before with some early universities such as Louvain, Salamanca or Coimbra).

The two fundamental reasons supporting the creation of universities were:

- a) The willingness to enlarge the curriculum and the variety of disciplines taught.

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Chiba Sensei with Christophe Peytier (uke)

Photo from Christophe Peytier



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Photo: Franco

Editorial

In 2011 we continued to work towards developing a stronger and more unified and efficient European body.

The First Birankai Europe Summer School 2011 with Shihan TK Chiba 8th Dan and Shihan Etsuji Horii 7th Dan, Aikido Kobe Sanda Dojo, Kobe, Japan, was hosted by British Birankai and held in August in Worcester, UK. Chiba Sensei has directed that the annual Birankai Europe Summer School be held in the UK for two more years.

Since July 2010, we have amalgamated the two newsletters Shiun and Musubi to produce a united Birankai Europe Musubi. Our present project to update the Continental Europe website to reflect this new cohesive European body is in progress.

Our thanks to Jenny Curran as she completes her stint of recording for posterity all BB summer schools since 1997. She has mentioned that she enjoyed being a part of the summer schools and she will sorely miss the camaraderie and all the friendships she has nurtured over the years.

On behalf of Birankai Europe Shihankai I would like to thank all members for their support and loyalty over the years and we look forward to working together in 2012.

Have a Happy New Year. ☺

Dee Chen

Transmission - Part III

continued from page 1

- b) The necessity to scale to an increasingly large number of students.

Indeed, one of the main limiting factor of the Master-Disciple relationship is its inherent lack of scalability, since the depth of the established relationship demands a strong inter-addiction: the master must be sensitive to each step in the development of his disciple, the disciple will be submitted to the orders of the Master and give everything he has in this relationship, often to the detriment of the individual liberty, for each of them.

This type of relationship used to be very present in our Western world, but has almost disappeared nowadays, however it continues to exist in Japan. In Europe there has been some famous cases of such relationship amongst artists and craftsmen. For

example, the very famous violin maker Stradivarius, in the late XVIIth century, was signing his early pieces 'Antonio Stradivari - alumnus Amati' (Student of Amati), when in turn, fifty years later his student Carlo Bergonsi would sign his pieces with the mention 'sotto la disciplina de Antonio Stradivari' (under the discipline of). Niccolo Amati, Stradivari's master, was a first class violin maker (in fact the direct descendant of the inventor of violin!) and indeed during the first twenty years of his creation, Stradivari's violins clearly resembled those of his master. But progressively he developed his own style. That is the exact process: a master needs to foster the development of his disciple, up to the point where his student will be able to breakthrough and fly with his own

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Transmission - Part III

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wings, potentially becoming even better than his master. Or not. The disciple must submit himself to a rigorous discipline of imitating and learning, until the moment where he will be ready to develop his own style, to recover his freedom. One needs to support a lack of liberty for many years before being able to express its own talent, and therefore attain true freedom. This appears paradoxical, for sure.

When one deals with the spread of oriental martial arts, one cannot lose sight of this Master-Disciple relationship. In particular, we must ask ourselves: how can this type of relation continue to exist, considering that nowadays martial arts are spreading worldwide?

How can a European or South American teacher transmit oriental martial arts? It seems to me that there are two trains of thoughts: the first way of thinking is to say that this Master-Disciple relationship is not a mandatory factor in the transmission. That techniques can be learned by students and

that it is enough to show the movements and correct the techniques until the proper level is reached. That the deeper aspects of the art will be discovered by the students after many years of practice, independently of the teacher. The other way of thinking insists on the necessity to preserve the Teacher-Student relationship, otherwise a part of the art will be lost from one generation to the other.

Considering what was said in the first part of this article on the 'collection of conditions', it seems to me very clear that the Master-Disciple relationship will be a key element in the capacity of a Sensei to put his students in the desired conditions, as well as the capacity for the students to leverage these conditions. For example, as I was once walking next to my Sensei in the street, I remember becoming conscious that I needed to walk slightly behind him on the left side. I became aware that in the old times, the young disciple need to do the same with his master, since the weak side of a Samurai was on the left

and behind: it was possible, from this spot, to pull the scabbard, leaving the samurai in the impossibility to draw his sword without cutting his own belt. I felt that, to walk, this position was the proper one. My teacher never taught me that. But one day he made me understand that this was the proper way, thus I was on the right track.

One could argue that this is an obsolete attitude, and that no one walks in the street with a sword anyway. Sure, but the process of remaining vigilant, to discover a martial position, to feel that one's master remains sensitive to one's progresses, even without exchange of words, corresponds well to the idea here expressed regarding this Teacher-Student relationship.

In conclusion, it appears clearly that this relation (whether we call it Master-Disciple, or Teacher-Student) is a key relationship to foster the 'collection of conditions' that will allow the disciple to reveal his maximum potential through serious practice, until going beyond the mere techniques. This relationship develops with, on the one hand, the decision from the Sensei to do everything to help the practitioner, and, on the other hand, the decision for the practitioner to choose a particular Sensei.

Each one of them is a link in the chain of transmission, and therefore must be conscious of his responsibility, vis-à-vis the masters of the past, and the students of the future, that eventually will turn the next masters. ☺

**Christophe Peytier 4th Dan
Sanjukan - Lisbon
Birankai Portugal**

The first two chapters of this triptych is dedicated to the theme of Transmission (see Shiun July 2009 and Jan 2010), and cover the aspects of the Transmission from the Sensei's perspective, then from the Student's perspective. In this final chapter Christophe Peytier addresses the topic of the Sensei-Student relationship. ☺



Photo from Christophe Peytier

Christophe Peytier and his student Joao Moita (uke) 2002



Stuart Lovering explores the sacred trust between teacher and student

The Teacher-Student relationship

to me is an aspect that has been so important in my Aikido path, one which I am

now in the pursuit of helping others to follow. Some people will look at this as how the teacher should act ethically, but it is something that both teacher and student need to consider, something that can be easily forgotten from the student's view.

The one question I try to get other students to understand is, why should we as teachers give to them what we have taken years to learn? What does a teacher gain from it? It certainly is not money; otherwise there would be a dozen limos outside the dojo. That is why it becomes such an intimate relationship. Because it is something very close to the teacher, that they are giving to the student with nothing, but the feeling of pride, in return, like a father or mother watching their child achieve something for the first time.

As a teacher we, like parents, have to find a happy medium in the way we treat different students, as each have different needs. To start with we wouldn't put too much on them until we have found what they are looking for from their training. For example friendship, security, knowledge or even family intervention, which I have found



Stuart Lovering

becoming more popular over these last few years. All these factors have to be considered as well as each of them having to be treated differently. The strongest one of all is friendship, which is built up over the years and not just weeks.

This journey often fully begins when the teacher is involved in visiting another dojo, to teach on a course, and has asked a student to assist them through the duration. Without the interference of other students the teacher is able to give time to that student, guiding them through what they should be doing in terms of acting like a Kenshusei. Through this, the student gets an understanding of how the teacher wishes to be treated whilst they are under their instruction, which, in my mind, prepares them for being more martial in the dojo. In time, with the student developing this way, the student and teacher become closer.

At this time the teacher is able to encourage the student to assist him/her in bringing other students in closer to him/her. This builds not only on student-teacher relationships, but student-student relationships too.

Why do we need such a close relationship during the learning phase? Students, who have been practising Aikido for a while, would already have felt the ups and downs of some situations in their practice, both inside and out of the dojo. This is where a strong friendship is so important, as individu-

als may feel they are not a part of the dojo or can even drift down the wrong path and not realise it. We, as instructors, can only show the students our understanding of Aikido, which is a very small part. With being close to the student we can guide them through these difficult times. It is entirely up to the student to experience the mysteries Aikido brings to them. However, with the relationship teachers and students have, the barriers that can be produced by issues arising can be brought down. This sort of friendship only comes about after a long duration, as trust from both sides must have been experienced and developed by both.

Students and teachers alike should be grateful, even for hardship, setbacks, and bad people causing you to have such ill feelings. Dealing with such obstacles is an essential part of your training in Aikido and makes you into a stronger person in life.

To me the one thing that an instructor requires from a long standing student is loyalty, as all the hard work that has been achieved becomes a major part of the progression of a dojo.

As O-Sensei once said, "Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love." ☺

**Stuart Lovering 4th Dan
Tudor Grange, Central Aikikai
British Birankai**

(Essay submitted for 4th Dan testing at BE Summer School, Aug 2011)

Photo: Thomaz Jopek



Stuart Lovering with Eddie Macaller (uke), Cocks Moors Woods Aikido Joint Course, Nov 2011

Modesty and self-examination feature in the armoury of the teacher



“The path to enlightenment is endless and this applies to all people, teachers included.”



Theodoros Tempos

Let's face it. Being a teacher is a big responsibility. After all, a teacher is just human, with all the inabilities of one, who has to somehow overcome them, at least up to a level.

So which is the combination of the characteristics, that make a Good Teacher?

- A Teacher must have students, otherwise a teacher he is not.
- A Teacher must never forget that he is a Student.
- A Teacher should NEVER take advantage of his students in any way.
- A Teacher should be truthful to himself and acknowledge the imperfection of his being.

He should be very strict about himself and always perform self-examination.

- A Teacher should be truthful to himself and his students and never pretend to be someone he is not.

Aikido can be a spiritual path, but this doesn't mean that one that practises the art is by definition a spiritual person. A good teacher doesn't need to pretend to be spiritual. He only needs to be honest and modest about his spirituality, whichever that is. After all, practising Aikido three hours a day, year after year, is a spiritual act on its own.

- A Teacher must be aware of the amplified goodness or badness that he can transmit and act with compassion.

For his students, a teacher is a big mirror. Whatever he does or not, has a direct impact on them. If through his teaching he is arrogant and self-centered, his students will most definitely reveal their own egocentricity and arrogance. His openings will, in most cases, become their openings too!

- A Teacher should never demand from his students things that he is not willing to do either.

- A Teacher should be strict and don't accept any compromises about his teaching methods, but at the same time he must be gentle and sensitive so he can foresee and judge the condition of each and every one of his students and the difficulties they might be experiencing.

- A Teacher could and probably should be social with his students, but never mistaken himself that he can be friends with them or vice-versa. Unfortunately a student-teacher relationship although it is a very intimate one and can affect both sides deeply, in most cases it cannot become a friendship because it may jeopardize the balance and lead to painful misunderstandings. ☹

**Theodoros Tempos 2nd Dan
Athens Aikido
Hellenic Birankai (Greece)**

(Essay submitted for 2nd Dan testing in Oct 2010)

2012 BIRANKAI INTERNATIONAL COURSES

- 3-5 Feb** **Birankai Europe Zen Sesshin** under the direction of Genjo Marinello Osho, Abbot of Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Temple, Seattle, USA
at I Shin Juku Dojo, Tatenhill Village Hall, Burton-Upon-Trent, DE13 9SD, Staffordshire, UK
Website: www.britishbirankai.com Contact: onedojo@gmail.com Mobile +44(0) 7932 666 801
- 2-4 March** **Birankai Europe Teachers' Seminar** with Birankai Europe Shihankai
Venue: Sportschule Edenkoben, Villastraße 63, D - 67480 Edenkoben
www.swfv.de Tel: 06323/9403-0
Website: www.aikido-landau.de/neu/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/birankai-teacherseminar-2012.pdf
Contact: Alexander Broll: alexander.broll@arcor.de Phone: +49 6341 55 900 98
- 8-13 June** **Birankai North America Summer Camp 2012**, at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY
Website: www.birankai.org/EventSchedule.php
- 21-27 July** **Birankai Europe Summer School 2012** with Shihan TK Chiba 8th Dan, Shihan TS Miyamoto 7th Dan Hombu, Japan and British Birankai Shihan and instructors organized by British Birankai
at University of Worcester, Worcester, UK
Website: www.britishbirankai.com



Finding your own way through the martial arts

Shihan Daniel Brunner examines three important books

When a beginner enters into a dojo for the first time, he doesn't know anything about what will happen.



Shihan Daniel Brunner

In the best case he comes with the preconceived idea that Aikido is a Japanese martial art dealing with a soft approach to that past era, the feudal time of Japan.

Apart from how to behave in a dojo, the first thing he will be taught is ukemi, then the way to attack and how to move. From the moment one says: "you have to attack like this or like that" a system has been established.

From that moment, it will be necessary to repeat endlessly the movements, defined attacks and conventional defences until an illusion of harmony is felt. When the movements are done well, quickly and without any apparent clash, when uke is ejected three metres further and gets up unharmed, then the technique has been well executed.

This corresponds to the definition of a system.

However, if one of the partners, or opponents, or enemies, changes even a touch of this agreed behaviour, then the whole system breaks down.

If we think that the practice of a martial art at the time when it was not forbidden, meant under some conditions

the loss of life of another practitioner, we realize then how much we differ in our present notion of a martial art.

The martial arts schools were developed during the 17th century, the era of Miyamoto Musashi, Yagyu Munenori and Takuan Soho. Each of these three essential figures of Japanese feudal history wrote about his own martial experience. These books are the most important in the translated literature, and are relatively graspable for attentive readers.

Each of them wrote from personal experience, in fact rather different from one another.

Takuan Soho, Zen Master, probably never used a sword; his mind was his weapon, and he devoted a number of his reflections to analyze the swordsmen's behaviour, giving them advice in order to improve their approach to life and death. He wrote *The Unfettered Mind*.

Miyamoto Musashi, the most popular, lived a solitary lifestyle, without taking any students nor teaching his method. Only towards the end of his life, he devoted himself to painting and poetry, and he wrote *Go Rin No Sho*, the book of the five rings.

Yagyu Munenori was in charge of the Yagyu Shinkage Ryu, an important school still active nowadays. In addition to this he was an important advisor to the Shogun and lived amongst his entourage. His book is in two parts, the first of which is *The Sword of Life*.

These men lived during times frequently upset by recurring wars. We wouldn't know about their experience if they had not integrated the mysteries of battle techniques during their never-ending training sessions, and trying out their knowledge in combat.

The training sessions haven't changed a lot. Only we respect our partners a little more and try to avoid the injuries that could handicap us in the dojo as well as in our daily lives. This training is essential for a good understanding of the techniques and for good control of uke as well as of ourselves.

The martial arts of ancient times would require us to be confronted by people who haven't the same outlook as us, who don't obey the same rules and who wouldn't be afraid to be injured or to hurt us.

I must confess that this is not my area of study. I have been pursuing for years an unattainable perfection. To be inside a system doesn't prevent us from thinking about what we are doing: is it correct to stop an effective shomen-uchi because of a wrongly evaluated distance? Is it ok to correct a gyaku hanmi attack if we don't correct ai hanmi? Why is a yokomen-uchi ok on one side and wrong on the other?

I think that it is important to read the three books I mentioned above:

The Life-Giving Sword, Yagyu Munenori

The Book of Five Rings, Miyamoto Musashi

The Unfettered Mind, Takuan Soho

Through these texts one can better understand the martial art spirit, and conceive that only intensive practice can free us from the system. In the same way as artists studying at an art school finally gather enough tools and experience to forget what they have learned and, at last, create their own way. ☺

Shihan Daniel Brunner 6th Dan

Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne

Birankai CH (Switzerland)

November 2011

Translation: Suzanne and Christophe Brunner



Photo: Beata Darowska

Shihan Daniel Brunner with Maciej Tomaszewski (uke), Polish Summer Camp, Wroclaw, Aug 2010

An iron discipline forged by the three precepts of Aikido

Florent Liardet explains

Liardet

Shiken –The examination

The exam is the occasion for the student that I am to sum up his knowledge under the eyes of his master.

The technique is put under test but the student must also come back to the theoretical knowledge that has marked his progresses. As such, here is a personal reflection on some of the principles shown by Pascal Krieger in his book *Ten-Jin-Chi*, that have deeply permeated me along the years, echoing the discoveries, the emotions and the difficulties encountered in my practice.

Even a thousand miles trip starts before your feet

Just as in walking, Aikido is a succession of steps, one after the other. The various levels must be respected, because the first step is useful to the second in order not to stumble.

It belongs to the practitioner to discipline himself in what he does 'here and now', without being overtly concerned with where he goes. However, one must not stray away from the chosen path. For even though in the beginning we are happy to move along that beautiful path, with time we may resent fatigue because the slope turns steeper and sometimes courage is lacking. So, we see many trails aside of the path. They seem flat and easy to reach. But following them is to deviate from the chosen objective. The

hard part is not changing objective, but rather leaning towards ease, and quitting again and again, walking without progressing.

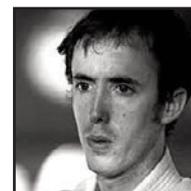
Nyû-Nan-Shin – The supple mind

Rediscover the spirit of the beginner is probably the lesson I have heard the most during Chiba Sensei's seminars. The more time goes by and experience grows, the more this question becomes relevant. The beginner does not know, his mind is thus not stuck on problems of technical nature: 'which foot forward, now? Ah, no, not like that... Geez I thought I knew that ...'. His mind is unspoiled and just tries to absorb at best the techniques shown by the master, he doesn't compare with the other and doesn't judge. We always need to find again this candor that frees the mind, and let us appreciate things as they are and not as they should be. Chiba Sensei compares the curiosity and the motivation brought by this state, to the one felt when one falls in love for the first time. This perspective should convince the most satisfied practitioners to return to the stage of a small child, never fed up with questions, nor answers.

Tanren - Forging the Spirit

To practise an art such as Aikido is not an obvious matter. Indeed, it deals with transforming one's body and mind, always linked, like we transform a piece of raw steel into a sword, sharp and polished.

The smith starts to melt the iron in order to cleanse all impurities. He then needs to fold in successive layers until reaching



Florent Liardet

the proper hardness. These two first steps, preceding the tempering and the polishing, illustrate on their own the situation: I am the steel; my master is the smith holding the pliers and the hammer. In order for the techniques to penetrate our bodies, we need to put them to fire, ukemi after ukemi. This is done through effort and repetition: 'in blood, sweat and tears', such is my favourite motto to handle the heavy blows, over the last years.

We are here in that metal state that is described by Chiba Sensei. Then comes the water (for tempering) and the wind (polish) that I do not wish to address here, as I feel that I am still on the anvil and, as we have seen it, one must do only one step at a time.

These three precepts seem to me a good basis to build and maintain, for many years, an iron discipline of Aikido. ☺

Florent Liardet 1st Dan
Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne
Birankai CH (Switzerland)

Translation: Christophe Peytier
(Essay submitted for 1st Dan testing in May 2011)



Photo: Mario Alessandro Razzeto

Chiba Sensei and Robert Savoca, BB Summer School, Bangor, Aug 2007



Mateusz Szafrąński tells why Aikido demands longtime training for the maximum effect

The year is 1973 and the movie 'Enter the Dragon' is being shown in cinemas. There is a boom for Wu-shu, as well as other eastern martial arts. They were known before in Europe and America, but now everyone wants to practise them.



Mateusz Szafrąński

The origins of Aikido in Poland were difficult. People practising sports like Karate or Judo heard about a delicate form of self-defense. They have tried to learn it from... books. During the 35 years since those events, many Aikido federations emerged, connected with Hombu Dojo to varying degrees. Ease of contact with highly qualified teachers, gaining knowledge from the source, has given greater possibilities. Despite this, in today's world we do not have too much time for practising martial art, however for many of us it becomes a way of life. Here comes the question: Are we able to master the knowledge, gained by others during years of training, in 4-5 hours a week?

Today, when the trend has passed, less people are interested in the martial art. Those fascinated by hand to hand combat, according to the

madness of our times, are seeking faster effects. Military systems and self-defense schools, that guarantee effectiveness after several months of training, are the answer for their expectations.

I think that for the survival of Aikido, some kind of elitism is needed, since commerce kills every art. The fact is, that the more people that are interested in training, the better the chance is for finding those keen on staying for a longer time. Those who stay are the ones who like precision and effort. If the training does not meet their expectation, they will be discouraged. And those who do not like to overwork, will only train for some time and also resign. Even if they stay, they will not be able to achieve precision changing their movement into art.

That is why I believe that it is necessary to encourage practitioners to take consecutive exams. It has long been known, that demanding teachers achieve better results at teaching. ☺

**Mateusz Szafrąński 1st Dan
Wroclaw Aikikai
Birankai Polska (Poland)
June 2011**

(Essay submitted for 1st Dan testing in June 2011)

Polish Summer Camp Wroclaw, Aug 2010



Ghislaine Soulet, Gen Nei Kan, France



Piotr Masztalerz, Wroclaw Aikikai, Poland

Photo: Kasia Masztalerz



Mateusz Szafrąński mobilising Marcin Chiłą (uke), January 2011



Kasia Masztalerz, Wroclaw Aikikai, Poland

Polish summer camp photos: Beata Darowska

The importance of understanding the cultural background in martial arts



Łukasz Łabęcki delves into the origins of Aikido

There are a lot of different martial art systems, differing from one another in terms of cultural aspects. I strongly believe that almost each nationality or culture has its own unique martial art system and they all believe that their system is the best one. This is true, but we have to discuss why each of these systems is best in the founders' opinion.



Łukasz Łabęcki

First of all, I believe that each martial art system has been founded by the 'nation' for the 'nation'. What I mean is that every single martial art is country/culture specific (except maybe MMA - mixed martial arts – but this is a different story). There is no doubt that all martial arts are based on hard body training and they have been all developed to protect oneself against offenders. The difference lies in the type of offender because each attack will be specific so the defence needs to be specific as well.

When you read this essay you probably feel that all I am saying is so simple and obvious. It might be, but it all

leads to the biggest question. That is why so many people are exchanging Aikido for other martial arts and stop perceiving Aikido as a martial art.

When we come to our first Aikido training, our Sensei teaches us what the Dojo is and what the Kamiza is. He explains that we are doing martial arts here, and that is the reason for all the discipline, which is interpreted in many different ways or unfortunately defied by those who can be called ignorant.

After a few years of practising Aikido, we start to believe that we are able to defend ourselves easily. Seeing shihonage for the first time and listening to Sensei's explanation, make us believe we can defend against anyone as it seems to us to be very effective. This may be correct, but only if we consider certain rules.

When we acquire knowledge about ikkyo and rokkyo, it may appear to us that if we only master those skills and movements – only God will be able to defeat us. This might be treated as a joke, but every joke has a little truth in it.

We learn how to defend from every single type of attack. We train in techniques useful for front, side and even back attack. All of this is extremely

effective, but once again only when subjected to certain rules.

Some of the senior students after realizing this basic fact often dispute Aikido as an efficient system, and whether it should even be treated as a martial art at all? In my opinion the reason, for that, is that they do not realize Aikido is being used in different cultural backgrounds, but as we all know, it is a traditional Japanese martial art and is strictly connected to a feudal Japan.

Most Aikido attacks are based on reaction to a man with sword or other similar weapon, for example ai hanmi or gyaku hanmi were developed to prevent the withdrawing of the sword – exactly the same as with ushiro assaults which may be the reason why Aikido may not be effective in other cultures where other martial arts, such as boxing in every kind of a form which have deeper roots.

I believe that some senior apprentices forgot about this fundamental aspect which is Aikido's cultural background, and this is causing their frustration. No one has ever said that it is forbidden for Aikido followers to try other systems and learn for themselves about connections between them or find out their efficiency.

Most martial arts consider a circle as perfect motion, used with a different meaning, but the basic meaning stays the same. We need to remember that it is not the fighting system that makes a warrior a proper winner. It is his experience, heart, etc.

Although knowledge about his opponent is essential... ☺

Łukasz Łabęcki 2nd Dan
Wroclaw Aikikai
Birankai Polska (Poland)

(Essay submitted for 2nd Dan testing in June 2011)



Photo: Beata Darowska

Shihan Daniel Brunner with Łukasz Łabęcki (uke), Polish Summer Camp, Wrocław, Aug 2010



Definition of a healthy dojo

Davinder Bath lists the essential qualities

A dojo is a place of awakening. It is, sort of, a university, a temple, a (self) therapy centre, a playground, even a testing ground. In a way an Aikido dojo cannot be defined, as Aikido cannot be defined. It is all things to all people.



Davinder Bath

The atmosphere holds everything together; atmosphere is paramount. This is the first requirement. A healthy dojo equates to a successful dojo. Success also has a multitude of definitions. At the deepest level success is about personal awakening and about successful transmission from one generation to the next. To be successful in awakening we would do well to have the right path and to be successful in transmission we must have something to transmit and know how to transmit. Knowledge then is the second requirement and transmission skill is the third. This knowledge has to be embodied in the teachers and they must find the right way of transmission. Knowledge is about the myriad dimensions of Aikido: what, where, when, breath, centredness, connectedness, liveliness, openness, wholeness, mindfulness, cause and effect and so on.

Successful transmission is about being a good if not great teacher and requires immense skill. It is widely recognised these days that to be successful in society, whether that is industry, politics or even Aikido, there are two primary requirements, a good

IQ and a good EQ. In other words intelligence and emotion must be well developed. The dojo has a great possibility of being successful if the teachers, and through them the senior students, have full awareness of intelligence and emotion in learning. The science of Positive Psychology has gone a long way to understanding many practical aspects of eastern philosophy. This is a good source of knowledge for a would-be successful 'western' teacher.

The best source of knowledge is the traditional path, through a teacher-student relationship. Chiba Sensei is a master second to none when it comes to transmission psychology. If I wish anything I would wish for in-depth awareness of all of Sensei's methods, not only the ones I have experienced.

Aikido is a living art of course and each practitioner and teacher will not know Aikido until they know it from inside themselves; until they feel it. Once this internal relationship develops potentially there is no limit. Everyone can be O-Sensei, or Chiba Sensei as they can be Buddha. When successful transmission has taken place we take only slightly varying paths to the top of the same mountain. Without successful transmission we take our own paths to very different mountains, thinking perhaps that they are paths to the same mountain.

Whether it is Aikido, Kyudo, Tea Ceremony or calligraphy, the Japanese arts all have the same things in common: tradition, sincerity, cleaning, cleanliness, tidiness, repeti-

tion, attention to detail, etiquette, respect and humility and although not very obvious, love and compassion and reward and celebration. These are all essential aspects of a healthy dojo. Once all of the above are ingrained we can welcome newcomers into our community and they will understand the dojo to be the special thing it is.

Regular grading structure focuses us on the path and keeps us from drifting. Promoting responsibly, yet individually, and yet with a common standard is required. The senior students reinforce the philosophy of the dojo as their awareness increases. The dojo begins to develop the right reputation and a place in the community develops once we have a community in the dojo.

A dojo is for all, not just the elite. Everyone is essentially the same, yet each is quite unique. It is so difficult to change yet all can change. Everyone is a product of nature and nurture therefore there is no free will, and yet, we somehow can all awaken. If we can understand these dynamics we will have a healthy dojo.

Awakening is by no means an easy task. An easy life is in fact unlikely to lead to awakening. A dojo usually has a dearth of money but a wealth of life. A healthy dojo is not money centred and is yet somehow full of life. Easy training is unlikely to lead to good progress. We have to push limits and go beyond, training on the edge.

Marketing cannot be avoided and is easier these days. A good and frequently updated website, facebook, presence on Aikido websites, demonstrations, and paid search engine listings as well as articles and videos are all helpful.

Time in the dojo and on the mat is limited. Every encounter has to be as if it were the last; every encounter has to count. A dojo takes time to become established, offering a vital opportunity to hone all of one's skills. In the end we have a healthy dojo. ☺



Photo: Dee Chen

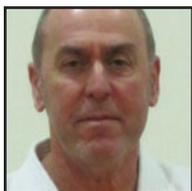
Davinder Bath and London Aikikai students at demonstration at Japan Matsuri, London, Sept 2010

**Davinder Bath 5th Dan
London Aikikai
British Birankai
July 2011**

Aikidokas training with injuries

Jon Pearson presents his case

Read with interest the latest edition of BE Musubi (July 2011) and the various contributions on the subject of injuries. I practise



Jon Pearson

as an orthopaedic physiotherapist (specialising therefore in musculo-skeletal (msk) conditions) with 20 years experience. I have practised Aikido for longer than this. I have also developed a special interest in the psycho-social aspects of chronic pain.

Similar to medical conditions, in general, msk conditions are classified as acute, sub-acute or chronic. This classification simply refers to the longevity of the complaint (acute 0-6 weeks, sub-acute 6 weeks to 6 months, chronic thereafter (numbers may vary somewhat)).

Injuries are a subset of msk conditions as they imply some discrete physical act of causality. Msk conditions include amongst other things 'diseases' such as arthritis, spondylosis (spinal disc degeneration) and 'wear and tear' conditions through overuse.

Generally, the acute injuries are the least serious, as long as they do not, or are not allowed to develop into chronic complaints. In Aikido many students suffer acute injuries, which resolve completely, sometimes with help, otherwise spontaneously.

More an issue are those injuries which are left un- or poorly treated, risking becoming chronic and secondly, the progressive degenerative conditions. The latter are, by definition age related and therefore it is usually the older aikidoka, who is the sufferer.

I am not writing today to offer advice on the treatment and care of msk problems, that is my day job. Rather I aim to offer a personal reflection on the effects of long term progressive conditions on a student's ability both physically and psychologically, to continue practice.

Aikido has evolved from a fighting art to a path of self realization, through the medium of Budo. Psychologically the aikidoka is, a priori, primed to be

stoic, to suffer for his art, to persist in the face of adversity, to push through the pain. Thus, there is a certain humiliation present if one feels the need to hold back or request a partner to 'go gently' (because of my 'bad back', etc).

The long term effect of this may be to reduce motivation and even to give up the practice, rather than modify practice in the face of a decline in function.

Aikido has changed over the last century, with the evolution of O-Sensei's own practice and of the first Doshu's programme of worldwide dissemination and inclusivity.

There is a lag between this progression and the issue of inclusivity of those students with impairments (if disabilities is too strong a word). Clearly there is a continuum from mild impairment to severe disability as a result of msk pain and stiffness, due to degeneration.

I can only offer a personal perspective and opinion on this. We pay lip service to the 'let your sensei know if you have any physical problems which may affect your practice'. Perhaps we should be making far more explicit, our attitude to less able students and even be offering positive encouragement to them, by acknowledging and actively supporting them in their practice.

Practically, this may mean having a policy statement at the organisational

level with perhaps some training for senseis. The status quo of 'ask your GP if it is safe to practise' is far from adequate. (I know from experience that most GPs are not competent to make such judgements and may just err on the side of caution.)

We know that Aikido is a practical martial art with real application. At the same time, embedded in the practice is a deep sense of care for uke. Therefore it is but a short step from there to making the commitment to protect uke as he/she is. To this end an awareness of uke's limitations is important.

In brief and in conclusion, a clear policy statement, that it is not only ok but it is actively supported and encouraged, by senseis and students, for less able aikidoka to continue in their practice; and that the latter being the best judges of their own abilities be explicit on the mat to their fellows, of their personal limits and limitations.

(Either that or they are off to practise Tai Chi.) ☺

Jon Pearson

Physiotherapist: specialist orthopaedic musculo-skeletal.

Previously trained with Chiba Sensei in San Diego and now runs his own independent dojo.

Polish Summer Camp, Wroclaw, Aug 2009



Piotr Masztalerz, Wroclaw Aikikai, Poland

Photo: Beata Darowska



How Aikido was forged in the crucible of the Omoto religion

Andrew Stones examines the symbiotic relationship

Introduction

In the last year I have felt drawn to read up on the spiritual origins of Aikido and the Omoto



Andrew Stones

religion of Onisaburo Deguchi which so deeply influenced O-Sensei. Reading Kisshomaru Ueshiba's excellent *A Life in Aikido – biography of the Founder*, it certainly seems clear that O-Sensei always had a spiritual orientation in his life. It is also clear how-ever, that it was through the influence of Deguchi Sensei, that he was able to unify and harmonize his spiritual, martial and societal interests into a clear and coherent whole for the first time, and from this unification blossomed his creation of Aikido. From my readings, this is my impression of the story of how it happened.

The Origins of Aikido in Omotokyo

In the spring of 1920, Morihei Ueshiba relocated with his family to Ayabe, to the spiritual centre of the Omotokyo religion, of which he had become a devotee, and where lived the great spiritual master and Ueshiba's new guru, Onisaburo Deguchi.

O-Sensei was at this point 37 years old, and although already a martial arts master, he had not as yet, thought of founding his own martial art. In fact, according to his son Kisshomaru's biography, O-Sensei had not even fully decided what he wanted to do with his life. All he knew now was that he wanted to follow his Omotokyo master, Deguchi Sensei, in spiritual practice and service. Up until this time we can distinguish three fascinations or obsessions that the young Ueshiba had seemed to bounce between throughout an uneasy and unsettled early life. The first was spiritual mystical practice. At an early age he had studied Shingon Mikkyo, that is to say the Buddhism of the Vajrayana, the 'Diamond Vehicle', the way of spells, incantations, and magical practices. Throughout his

early life he would often engage in days of prayer and fasting, particularly when he was feeling stressed. Another big interest of O-Sensei's was social reform. At this time in Japan's history, as Japanese society struggled to integrate western industrialization, there were massive social inequalities and unfairnesses, particularly in the countryside. The young Ueshiba was passionate in his support of social causes, and he got involved with various strikes and protests. In 1920 he had just spent the last few years helping to build a whole new village from scratch in the wild northern island of Hokkaido.



Onisaburo Deguchi

His third passion was of course martial arts. Having previously studied various systems including Judo and various styles of Jujitsu and weaponry, during his time in Hokkaido he had mastered his favorite jujitsu system thus far: Daito-ryu jujitsu, as taught by the ferocious Sokaku Takeda. O-Sensei had invited Takeda Sensei to come to live and teach in the village, Shirataki, that O-Sensei was helping to build. An energetic and deeply frustrated young man with a hot temper, O-Sensei, throughout his life up until this point, had moved from occupation to occupation, social cause to social cause, and from one martial arts style to another, never completely settling. His meeting with Onisaburo Deguchi however, and his subsequent conversion to Omotokyo, changed all that.

Deguchi Sensei's presence seemed

to utterly focus O-Sensei, and give him a clear sense and vision of his life-direction, perhaps for the first time. Omotokyo was not like a traditional religion. Although it included some elements of traditional religious practice, particularly Shinto, in other ways it was more like what might nowadays be termed a new-age cult⁽¹⁾. One of the central tenets of the system was the idea that we are indeed on the brink of a new age – a glorious unfolding and manifestation of Heaven on Earth. The original founder of Omotokyo, Onisaburo's mother-in-law, Nao Deguchi, had been a channeller, that is to say, she spontaneously went into trance and the voice of a strange and ferocious spirit spoke through her. The spirit that came through, spoke of the inevitability and immanence of the ensuing new age and insisted that the only way it was going to happen was by mass destruction of the old age – there would be fire, explosions, utter destruction; the end of the world as we know it. Only the Omoto faithful would survive, to build the new world. Nao's repeated predictions of the specific date of this cataclysmic event however, repeatedly failed to materialize, and she gradually became sidelined in the Omoto movement, as her charismatic son-in-law took command of the cult. Onisaburo's teachings were different – he took Omoto in a somewhat different direction. Whilst the new age was undoubtedly coming – he agreed upon that – he said that, firstly, it could come gently and gradually – through a gradual transformation rather than a terrifying cataclysm. Secondly he asserted that humanity would not be the passive recipients of the 'wrath of God', so to speak. Rather, humanity would be pivotal in helping to create the transition into the new age – it would come through such things as spiritual purification, healing, international co-operation, inter-faith tolerance and respect, social reform, better international communication and in particular an emphasis on the important role of aesthetics and beauty in society: the arts and artistic sciences. All these things could help lift humanity

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and the whole planet into a new consciousness and a glorious new age. He was very much into channeling, or mediumship, whatever one likes to call it. In the 1920s the term 'Chinkon kishin' in Omotokyo, did not just mean 'spiritual purification' (as the word is used currently in Aikido circles), but referred specifically to mediated spirit-possession. This entailed inviting a wise spirit to come and speak through a person, or alternatively inviting a mischievous spirit which was already inhabiting a person to make itself known, so that it could be dialogued with and persuaded to leave. Anyone living at the centre in Ayabe at that time would have probably been involved in this activity, as it was a central practice of the Omotokyo faith in the 1920s, although it later became de-emphasized⁽²⁾.

Why was O-Sensei so attracted to this strange cult? My impression is that first and foremost the amazing charismatic persona of Deguchi was key. A fascinating character, Deguchi was not, at first glance, the sort of spiritual teacher one might immediately think a martial artist would be attracted to. Elements of the charisma, gravitas and world-peace-orientation of the Dalai Lama were in evidence, as was a Leonardo da Vinci-like talent in a vast array of artistic endeavors. And at the same time this man was an unabashed dandy, a joker, a lady's man, a wildly flamboyant dresser and occasional transvestite – so to the Dalai Lama and da Vinci, we have to add elements of Russell Brand, Eddie Izzard and Elton John. Even in the 1940s, towards the end of his life, when Deguchi was standing in the dock charged with crimes-against-the-

Emperor⁽³⁾ he still insisted on making vulgar jokes, rude noises, and generally making a mockery of the whole proceedings⁽⁴⁾. And in amongst all this paradox, this character was an amazing spiritual teacher: vastly psychic, a great healer, medium, miracle worker and a master of mediated-spirit-possession, a 'saniwa' as they were known, par excellence⁽⁵⁾. It is said he could see into people's souls and observe their life paths. He was also a phenomenal organizer and galvanizer of devotees, being totally devoted to his vision of creating Heaven-on-Earth, as he saw it. This was the man who touched and galvanized Ueshiba's spirit as none had done before.

Beyond the character and charisma of Deguchi, I imagine O-Sensei was deeply touched and galvanized by the philosophy of Omotokyo itself. More traditional systems of oriental mysticism tend to have a basis of accepting things as they are, in the outside world. The outer world is seen as being full of suffering, struggle, and eternal instability and change. Our job as traditional mystics is to transform our consciousness – to reach enlightenment through inner practices, and to help others do so. In this way, whilst we will never alter the fundamentally unsatisfactory nature of the outside world, we change our relationship to it. No longer caught in mental patterns of desire and aversion we transcend attachment and abide in equanimity, enlightened. Whilst Omoto would certainly agree with the necessity of spiritual purification and the transformation of consciousness, it takes a very different approach to the outside world. According to Omoto, we *can* change the outside world! We must! Not just

superficially, but fundamentally. The Omoto faith sees us all existing at this current time in a very special time in history, unlike any other. This is the time of the birth of the new age, and we are all its midwives. The Omoto path is to gently yet firmly, through kindness and communication, spiritual transformation, combined with artistry, aesthetics, and social transformation, help create a very literal, very tangible Heaven-on-Earth. I imagine this prospect must have been vastly attractive to the young Ueshiba. After all, it combined two of his fundamental passions: mysticism and social reform, into one ethos! Further, in Onisaburo's beautiful world of aesthetics and artistry, *martial* arts could also have a place. Onisaburo said that we can touch the divine through art, and that each person has their own particular art through which they can best do this. Whilst I am sure that Ueshiba would have given up the fighting arts in an instant, if Onisaburo had told him to (he was utterly devoted to his guru), this was not to be. When O-Sensei first went to inform Deguchi of his decision to move to Ayabe, the great guru uttered these seminal words, which can perhaps be regarded as the first notion of what Aikido was to become. He said to O-Sensei:

"For you, the best way to approach your personal method of communicating with the Divine will be to practise Jujutsu or Kenjutsu as your inspiration directs you. Take the martial way as your divine vocation; by mastering it, you will achieve the ability to live freely in the three worlds of gods, spirits and elementals. Daito-ryu is not a bad thing, but I do not believe it combines the Divine and Human as a true martial way should do. Try creating your own Ueshiba-ryu. The true martial way halts violence with virtue and love. Go forward with this Ueshiba-ryu. The gods of Omoto are on your side, so I feel sure that you will forge a new path."⁽⁶⁾

In the first few months living in Ayabe, O-Sensei served primarily as Deguchi Sensei's personal assistant, whilst continuing with his own martial arts practice privately in his spare time. Soon, however, Deguchi spoke to him again and told him it was time to start a dojo and teach 'Ueshiba-ryu' to the



Travellers in Mongolia: Onisaburo Deguchi (second from left) and O-Sensei (right)

continued on page 14



Aikido and Omotokyo

continued from page 13

Omotokyo faithful. It was this dojo, 'Ueshiba-juku', founded in 1920, that can perhaps be said to have been the very first Aikido dojo.

The Loving Nature of Aikido

There is a quote of O-Sensei's that I would like to recount. Unfortunately I no longer have the reference for where it came from (where I read it), but I remember it none the less. One day, many years later, years after Deguchi Sensei had passed away, and Aikido had become popular, a student asked O-Sensei why there were no strangulation techniques in the Aikido syllabus⁽⁷⁾. O-Sensei's first comment in reply was to say that the questioner did not understand the nature of Aikido; Aikido is not for fighting; Aikido is love. He then went on to explain that we are currently in the process of entering a new time in history in which fighting in any case will have no use and no place in society. Hence no strangle techniques in the syllabus. This may seem a little strange at first glance; I mean, we have joint pinning

techniques in Aikido; what's the difference between these and strangulation techniques? My own understanding, my own interpretation of O-Sensei's words, is that there is a key difference between Aikido joint techniques and techniques of strangulation. When practised in the Aikido dojo, joint techniques do not have to be unpleasant or injurious; they can actually be therapeutic. As tori relaxes, uses his/her tanden, breathes out and rotates uke's arm, wrist and elbow, and does so with kindness, this can serve as a therapeutic shiatsu-type stretch, gently stimulating and invigorating all the meridians. Contrastingly, a strangle is pretty much a strangle, whatever way you look at it. Whatever way you perform a stranglehold, it's pretty unpleasant. For me, joint techniques can be part of Aikido's therapeutic and loving nature, whereas strangleholds less so, hence they are not included in the syllabus. The words of O-Sensei also re-affirm that he, like Deguchi, saw us all as living in a time of transition into a new age, in which fighting will become less and less relevant to the human condition.

An Analogy

One analogy that occurs to me for Aikido, is architecture. It is not an exact analogy, but it may have some merit. Architecture can be seen to have two purposes: practical and aesthetic. Aikido similarly has practical and aesthetic purposes as a martial art. What if an architect's only orientation is to get roofs over people's heads as quickly as possible and as cheaply as possible using the cheapest building materials and minimal design patterns, just creating drab boxes for people to live in? Well, that might be the quickest, cheapest way to erect buildings and get people off the streets in the short term, perhaps saving the lives of those otherwise dying of exposure. But if those people have to continue living in those drab minimalist boxes with no design features year after year, they will surely become depressed, and their spirits will sink. Contrast this with Architecture that takes a little more care and time, and makes beautiful structures that actually lift people's spirits when they live in them. Similarly someone wanting to learn how to survive in a war zone as



Onisaburo Deguchi creating a work of art



Onisaburo Deguchi and O-Sensei

quickly as possible may learn a jujitsu system full of strangles, eye-gouges, head-butts, bites, dirty tricks and killing methods of all sorts, which may help them survive in the short term. But if

they continue training in these methods obsessively, even in peace time, they will surely eventually become depressed. Aikido methods on the other hand, though taking more time to master, are more aesthetically pleasing, and lift the spirits. Just as the fountain designed to go in the central courtyard of a building may seem to have no practical use, it may in fact lift the spirits of all those living in the building, and therefore in fact be enormously useful. In a similar way, many kokyunage⁽⁸⁾ variations in Aikido may seem impractical or nonsensical for use 'in the street', but still, such techniques lift our spirit, change our consciousness, and transform our movement. And as our movement is transformed, our consciousness changed and spirit lifted, curiously the bad

people in the street may feel less inclined to attack us. They may even take a leaf out of our book and start becoming happy! And Heaven may yet be created on Earth...

*"Thinking of this world,
I sigh with lament,
but then I fight on,
guided by billowing clouds of light,
and accomplish my Day of Swift Victory!"*

Morihei Ueshiba⁽⁹⁾ ☯

Andrew Stones

Former student of
Shihan Mick Holloway

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Notes

- (1) I doubt that current practitioners of Omotokyo would appreciate their religion being described as a new age cult, but it is important to remember that Omotokyo of today is very different from the Omotokyo of a hundred years ago. Nowadays Omotokyo is a respected religion which steers clear of politics, has a strong tradition that includes elements of Shinto, and is a major advocate of international peace initiatives, interfaith communication, and the conservation of traditional Japanese arts and crafts. In 1900 however, Omoto was "a radical millenarian cult [which developed] in accordance with... [the foundress's] eschatological and utopian revelations" (Ooms: *Women and Millenarian protest...* page 2). Ooms gives a fascinating and vivid description in her book.
- (2) See Staemmler's excellent *Chinkon kishin – Mediated Spirit Possession in the Japanese New Religions* for a full description of Chinkon kishin as practised in Omotokyo in the 1910s and 1920s.
- (3) ie refusing to support Japan's war effort. Onisaburo was stalwartly anti-war, and had accurately predicted that outcome of WW2 many years prior to its onset. He advised members of his congregation that were being drafted into the army, that once they found themselves on the field of battle they should not shoot directly at the enemy but should aim above their heads and fire into the air. Japan was going to loose the war anyway, so why engage in needless killing? Needless to say, the Japanese government was none too impressed with this advice.
- (4) See in particular *Prophet Motive...* by Nancy Stalker.
- (5) *Saniwa* were the 'judges of spirits', that is to say they were trained to assess spirit mediums – to judge the calibre of the spirits speaking through them, identify the names of the spirits, and also to help interpret the messages. They would act as a kind of master-of-ceremonies during a trance channeling session or exorcism. See Ooms 1993, and Staemmler 2009.
- (6) Quoted in *A Life in Aikido* page 118. I have rendered the term *Yusai* as *your personal method of communicating with the Divine*. Kisshomaru Ueshiba gives the fuller explanation: "Yusai is a mode of communicating with the divine through one's own spirit, in contrast with *Kensai*, where this communication is achieved using formal prayers and rituals".
- (7) Unlike Judo and Jujitsu.
- (8) 'Kokyunage', literally 'Breath Throw' are techniques in Aikido which to a street fighter would seem nonsensical. Most times, all the person being thrown would need to do is let go of his grip and he can walk away and avoid being thrown. Yet within Kokyunage can perhaps be found the very essence of Aikido. The culmination of Kokyunage is perhaps Aiki Nage – throwing without even touching.
- (9) Quoted in *The Essence of Aikido* page 65. ☯



Essay for testing: Laura Anderson

Ethical behaviour of a teacher includes protecting the vulnerable and learning from each other

Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that addresses questions about morality. This



Laura Anderson

concept is closely linked to good and evil, right and wrong. Ethical behaviour is diverse in the way individuals perceive it or levels they wish to abide by. As a group (society/culture) we have to adhere by these invisible rules so as to have order and happiness within the group. That the powerful do not take advantage of the vulnerable.

The British Birankai etiquette handbook states: 'Etiquette is an intrinsic part of the discipline of Aikido. The essence of Aikido is sincerity with which you practise. No matter what the level of your training, your etiquette is a reflection of your spirit and your attitude towards Aikido, O-Sensei,

and your fellow students. This etiquette is what I think ethics in Aikido should be and what O-Sensei generated Aikido for.

O-Sensei states: "I want my students to observe all of life's phenomena. This includes listening to people, taking what is valuable from what they do and say and making it your own." As a teacher you are the person that people listen to the most, why people stay in Aikido and want to gain a better future. "It can begin to open your soul. Paying attention to the realities of this world. Leading you and your students into fresh insights." As a teacher you have to be sensitive to these needs of students, as some may need more guidance than others. People come in all different shapes and sizes. So do their vulnerabilities and strength of mind. Making an instructor's way of teaching of primary importance, both ethically and morally. Expressing themselves in the ultimate discipline of ethics. ☺



Photo: Milena Kremakova

Laura Anderson, BB Summer School, Bangor, Aug 2008

**Laura Anderson 2nd Dan
Genpu Kan, Central Aikikai
British Birankai**

(Essay submitted for 2nd Dan test at BE Summer School, Aug 2011)

Response to tsunami tragedy

**Anne Ducouret, Ann Jyou Kan,
Birankai France writes**

Our association 'Le Cercle d'Aikido Parisien' organized on Saturday 28 May 2011, an action 'Solidarity Japan' in our area of the XXth in Paris. With the help of Japanese friends, we collected 450€ for the victims of the Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011. ☺

**From Matt Teale, Aikido Dojo at
Kolonos, Hellenic Birankai (Greece)**

Saiso Shimada, a Japanese calligraphy teacher, who came over from Japan soon after the Tsunami to our dojo, conducted a seminar and together with the proceeds from the sale of her works raised 2,000€ to help the tsunami victims. ☺

Joint Aikikai Council

The Joint Aikikai Council which comprises the five UK Aikikai organizations affiliated to Hombu Dojo - British Aikido Federation, British Birankai, Komyokan Aikido Association, Scottish Aikido Federation and United Kingdom Aikikai - organized a course for the Japan Tsunami Fund on 12 June 2011 hosted by the United Kingdom Aikikai. It was a successful course and they sent the sum of 128,000 JPY (£1,010) to Hombu for the Japanese Red Cross.

Mr Tani, Aikido Hombu Dojo, gratefully acknowledged this donation.

"... We are much impressed by the humane action of JAC. By now, the total of the donation received at Aikikai reached more than 13,000,000 JPY (approx US\$163,000) including the JAC's donation. This total sum will be consigned to Japanese Red Cross. It is reported that the total sum of the donation sent to Japanese Red Cross amounted to more than 170 Billion JPY (US\$ 2.1 Billion) including donation from overseas. Certainly this money will help the people who have suffered from the earthquake and tsunami.

Thank you again for your help." ☺



After 14 years of videoing Aikido classes Jenny Curran makes way for new blood



Suzanne Brunner who has seen her in action pays tribute

At the formal dinner, during the last BE summer school 2011 in Worcester, UK, tribute was paid to Jenny Curran in recognition for her devotion to preserving the record of the practice of Aikido.



Suzanne Brunner

For many long years, Jenny took great care in recording, initially in VHS then in digital format, every important gathering of Birankai in the UK. To see

her swivel on the mat amongst the practitioners in full action, capturing the crucial moment, the precision of an attack or the subtlety of a defence, always left me with admiration.

Even though the students often don't see exactly what was demonstrated, thanks to her, the teaching of the various masters has not been lost. Because of her efforts, it is always possible to review each difficult movement, and to learn it properly, far from the stress and business of the seminars.

Although she has given up videoing Jenny Curran will continue to keep busy as she will now focus her energy on tap dancing and improving her technique in the art of archery.

She will be missed on the mats. ☯

Suzanne Brunner
Assistant Editor
BE Musubi

Translation: Christophe Peytier



Photo: Milena Kremakova

Jenny at work, BB Summer School, Bangor, Aug 2008



Photo: Franco Chen

Jenny and Joe Curran, Aidan Smyth, Alan Stevens and Deb Nelson, Tatenhill, Aug 1987



Photo: Brian McCabe

Joe and Jenny Curran, Dee Chen and Harada Sensei, Millennium Summer School, Bangor, Aug 2000



Photo: Dee Chen

Jenny and Joe Curran, Powys, Wales, May 2008



NOTICE-BOARD

PROMOTIONS 2011

COUNTRY	PROMOTION	DATE
BIRANKAI AUSTRIA		
Sylvia Taraba, Aikikai Dornbirn - O Sen Kan	Nidan	July 2011
Wolfgang Petter, Aikikai Dornbirn - O Sen Kan	Sandan & Fukushido In Re-certification	July 2011
Michael Schwendinger, Aikikai Dornbirn - O Sen Kan	Fukushido In Re-certification	July 2011
BRITISH BIRANKAI		
Izram Ali, Ei Mei Kan, Central Aikikai	Shodan	Dec 2011
Szevone Chin, Ei Mei Kan, Central Aikikai	Shodan	Dec 2011
Laura Anderson, Genpu Kan, Central Aikikai,	Nidan	Aug 2011
Iona Ellis, Ei Mei Kan, Central Aikikai	Sandan	Aug 2011
Liz McPhee, Saku You Kan, Scotland Aikikai	Sandan	Aug 2011
Kevin Hudson, Sth Manchester Aikido, NW Aikikai	Sandan & Fukushido In	Sept 2011
Stuart Lovering, Tudor Grange, Central Aikikai	Yondan & Shido In	Aug 2011
Eddie Hudson, Rainbow Aikido Club, North East Aikikai	Yondan	Aug 2011
Malcolm Blackwood, Abbey Aikido Club, North East Aikikai	Yondan	Aug 2011
Alan Stevens, Meishokan, Eastern Aikikai	Yondan	Aug 2011
Arthur Lockyear, Shi Sei Kan, North East Aikikai	Godan	Aug 2011
Richard Edmunds, I Shin Juku, Central Aikikai	Godan	Aug 2011
Stephen Beecham, London East Aikikai	Rokudan	Aug 2011
Wellington Tsang 2nd Dan, Sth Manchester Aikido, NW Aikikai	Fukushido In Re-certification	Aug 2011
Davinder Bath 5th Dan, Shinmei-kan, London Aikikai	Shido In Re-certification	Aug 2011
HELLENIC BIRANKAI		
Petros Zisou, Kolonos Aikikai, Athens	Shodan	Oct 2011
Giannis Papargyris, Kolonos Aikikai, Athens	Nidan	Sept 2011
Achilleas Label, Kolonos Aikikai, Athens	Fukushido In	Oct 2011
BIRANKAI POLSKA (POLAND)		
Claudia Garcia Mahias, Taiga Aiki Dojo (Chilean branch)	Shodan	Nov 2011
Mateusz Tomasz Waga, Wroclaw Aikikai	Shodan	Dec 2011
Rigoberto Vega Rivas, Taiga Aiki Dojo (Chilean branch)	Nidan	Nov 2011
Alfonsina Sobarzo Henríquez, Taiga Aiki Dojo (Chilean branch)	Nidan	Nov 2011
Thomas José Tomás Contreras Canales, Taiga Aiki Dojo (Chilean branch)	Nidan	Nov 2011
Zbigniew Kosior, Wroclaw Aikido Club	Nidan	Dec 2011
Marcelo Torres Jara, Taiga Aiki Dojo (Chilean branch)	Sandan	Nov 2011
Piotr Masztalerz, Wroclaw Aikikai;	Godan	Dec 2011
Andrzej Sobolewski, Sen Nen Sugi Aikidojo.	Godan	Dec 2011
BIRANKAI CH (SWITZERLAND)		
Barbara Imboden, Sakura Dojo, Berne	Godan	Aug 2011