

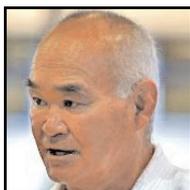
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Please send submissions
for January 2014 issue by
1 December 2013

Chiba Sensei believes Aikido regardless of style should always enrich lives

Traveling extensively, I have seen many styles of Aikido in the world. Some of them were beyond my imagination to be called Aikido. I used to worry about this, and think about what I should do about it. But gradually I became less and less worried, and in fact I am no longer worried about it at all.



Chiba Sensei

First of all, there is nothing you can do about it - you can't be responsible for it. Secondly, I came to the realization that as long as the people practising enjoyed it, and as long as Aikido enriches their lives or is meaningful in their lives, I should be pleased and happy regardless of its physical form.

Of course we should not be blind to what's going on in the Aikido world today. We should strive hard to maintain and preserve the quality as best we can. However, the nature of Aikido

is strongly self-developmental and allows itself to develop harmoniously with the environment and various human conditions. Idealistically and hopefully, we have to rely on the conscience and sincerity of the individual teacher. In other words, whoever is involved in teaching has to be competent, with a strong foundation and responsible in their teaching. Furthermore, I believe it is important to have a historical sense of this profound art left to us by the generations before us, supported by deep conviction and respect.

There is a Japanese expression 'mixture of diamonds and rocks'. Of course I see that in the Aikido world today. So what does it matter? A diamond as a precious stone carries its own value and beauty. At the same time, a rock also carries a value and use. If Aikido is the path that truly reveals the principles of nature, we should be able to live with the contradiction between order and freedom.

continued on page 3



Photo: Beata Darowska

Chiba Sensei, Polish Summer Camp, August 2006

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Photo: Franco

Editorial

Last year at the BE summer school in July Chiba Sensei informed us that Birankai France under the leadership of Shihan Patrick Barthélémy, President and Anne Ducouret, Vice President was granted Aikikai Hombu full recognition in line with the other European Birankai organizations. In June this year Anne Ducouret organized a course in Paris when the Hombu certificate was presented by Shihan Didier Boyet - see article on page 11. We are also pleased to announce that Birankai Israel under Amnon Tzechovoy, Chairman, has also received Aikikai Hombu full recognition.

This year the Birankai Europe Teachers' Course and Aikido Summer School will be held at University of Worcester, England. Chiba Sensei had agreed that for economic reason the Teachers' course should be combined with summer school. The Teachers' course 26-27 July is open to Birankai certified teachers and head of dojos only and this year there will be no course fee charged for this extra day of classes for those attending the full week of Summer School.

Shihan Etsuji Horii 7th Dan from Aikido Kobe Sanda Dojo, Japan will be our special instructor and he will be assisted by Birankai Europe Shihan and Shidojin. We will miss Chiba Sensei who is unable to be with us this year as he has taken an official leave of absence until May 2014 while he sorts out his health issues. We all send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Thanks to all the contributors who submitted articles and photos for this issue. A reminder that Dojos should send in a list of Dan/Shidojin/Fukushidojin promotions and any new development in their organization/Dojo together with articles for the next issue due in January 2014. ☺

Dee Chen

. . . Aikido enrich lives

continued from page 1

This world is so interesting. It is so dynamic and beautiful in its as-it-is-ness, because there are things like diamonds and rocks coexisting without conflicting against one another, and everything is in its place in its own right. Needless to say, this should not be our excuse to avoid responsibility. The law of nature, of cause and effect, is evident and inescapable, and therefore what is to perish will perish in its natural course. ☯

**Shihan TK Chiba 8th Dan
Birankai Founder
San Diego, California**

*Article originally published in
Summer/Fall 1994 issue of Sansho -
the Aikido Journal of the USAF
Western Region and precursor of
Biran.*



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Photo: Beata Darowska

Chiba Sensei, Polish Summer Camp, August 2010

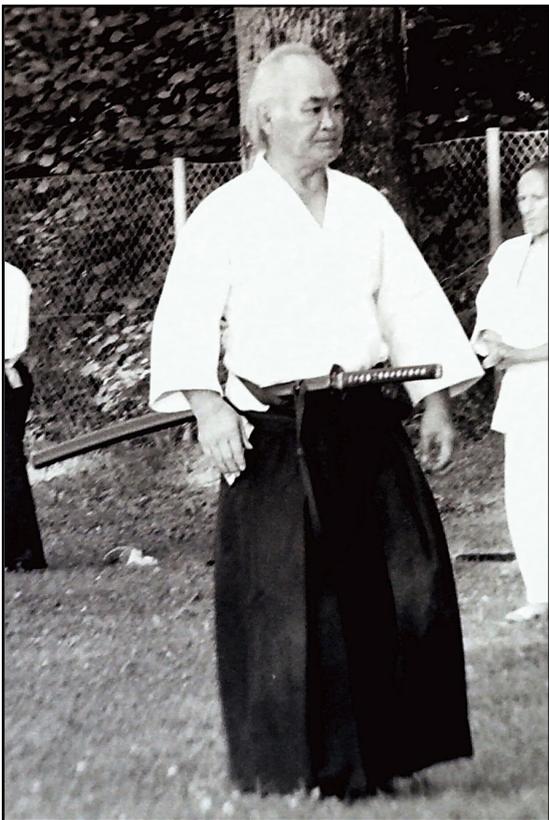


Photo provided by Jürgen Schwendinger



Photo: Beata Darowska

Chiba Sensei, Austrian Summer Camp, Dornbirn, July 2008 Chiba Sensei, Polish Summer Camp, August 2009



The birth of Kan Zen In Dojo in Zurich

Stephan Corsten's dream comes true with help from the villagers

Switzerland had two Birankai Dojos, one in Lausanne and one in Bern though there was a small group of Birankai members in Zurich without any Birankai Dojo close by. These people trained in several Aikikai Dojos. Quite a few of them stopped training for some time, maybe because they couldn't practise what they were committed to. In 2005 Stephan Corsten was allowed to teach once a week in the Aiki-Kai Zurich Dojo. Finally the group had a platform to practise Chiba Sensei's Aikido. Since we had the space only for one evening (Friday training) everybody was depending on additionally training in the Aiki-Kai style. We quickly realized it's very confusing to train one day in this style and then on another day in a different one. We have to admit though, it does open the mind. But it is very difficult to embody the movements. In addition our agreement with the Aiki-Kai foreclosed any recruiting or grading of students. There was quite a gap to Sensei's vision of the practice of Aikido.

In 2009 Chiba Sensei and Daniel Brunner Sensei suggested finding our own Dojo. In Zurich that's not an easy



Stephan Corsten



Photo: Jasmina Ritz



Photo: Stephan Corsten

task. Real estate prices as well as their rents are at the level of London or Manhattan. Of course we were also thinking of a gymnastic hall or any room we could lay out our mats for the training. But the longer we were searching the clearer it became that we should find our own Dojo. We

wanted a real and permanent Dojo. The identification with a compact place where you train, sweat and bleed in is a strong bearer of the spirit of Budo. For three years Stephan has been looking for a place big enough for training and small enough to finance. In 2012 he was not able to join



Photo: Jasmina Ritz

summer school in Worcester, UK. And as if it was destiny in exactly the same week he found a room which had been used as a Dojo before. Everything was there - except for a ceiling high enough... We took it! On 22 September 2012, the exact day when Daniel Brunner Sensei was celebrating 50 years of teaching, Aikido Birankai Zurich was founded. Finally we had a room and eight members. Philippe Baur, Matteo Laffranchi, Stefan Wegmann, Christian Schwarzer, Rahel Buchter, Anastasia Stamatiou, Daniel Isele and Stephan Corsten. Of course Daniel Brunner Sensei became our honorary member. So actually we were nine, two more than Akira Kurosawa's 'Seven Samurai'. And as a matter of fact we were many more, because we also had many villagers that helped us building up our 'castle'. A big thank you goes to the Ryu Seki Kai (Daniel Brunner Sensei's Dojo) and to the partners and friends of our members!

We started regular training in October the same year. At the same time we cleaned, tore down, rebuild, painted and installed the new Dojo. We like to call it Misogi. We also set up all administration work and our brand new website, which we proudly present as www.aikido-birankai.ch.

23 and 24 February 2013 was our big moment: the first seminar - the inauguration seminar. Shihan Daniel Brunner and Shihan Norberto Chiesa honoured this remarkable weekend with their excellent teaching. Brunner Sensei named our Dojo Kan Zen In (place where excellence is advanced). We were presented a wonderful Calligraphy by his friend Pascal Krieger, Swordmaster and 10th Dan in Shodo. This was a wonderful weekend. A weekend with lots of emotions and a weekend a dream came true.

For us, members of the Kan Zen In, a new part of the journey has started. We want to meet the meaning of our new name and we will fill our Dojo with the spirit of Birankai Aikido! This is already visible and people entering the Dojo realize right away - this is a special place and everyone is welcome!

Keep looking for your own Dojo! ☯

Stephan Corsten 4th Dan
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30 May 2013



Photo: Matteo Laffranchi

Shihan Daniel Brunner with Stephan Corsten (uke)



Photo: Jasmina Ritz

Shihan Norberto Chiesa with Philippe Baur (uke)



Photo: Matteo Laffranchi



A tumultuous encounter with a warrior which has inspired Arthur Lockyear for over 40 years

I have, over the last few years, had the inestimable honour of meeting and knowing some of this country's most renowned



Arthur Lockyear

warriors, most notably that most delightful gentleman Dick Annand of the Durham Light Infantry, who was the Army's first Victoria Cross recipient of World War II; Harry Errington of the London Auxiliary Fire Service who was awarded a George Cross for saving two of his comrades from an inferno raging in a collapsing building during an ongoing air raid, and John Bridge, a Royal Navy mine disposal officer, who was one of only two men ever to be awarded a George Cross and two George Medals. Knowing these great and iconic heroes, being acquainted with the detail of their gallant stories, and indeed counting them as friends, has most certainly enriched my life, and given substance and direction to my endeavours. However, it has to be said that the warrior who has influenced me most deeply and ineradicably, is a hero of a quite different ilk, my teacher in Aikido – the renowned Kazuo Chiba Sensei.

I first met Chiba Sensei in September of 1969 when as a young,



Photo credit: Shields Gazette

Chiba Sensei with Pat Butler (uke), South Shields Judo Club circa 1967

skinny, long-haired Karate-ka, I visited the Sunderland Martial Arts Academy to watch a seminar taught by him. Although Sensei had been resident in the UK for quite a short time, a little under three years, his reputation in the north-east and, I am sure, other parts of Great Britain, was legendary. He elicited the maximum degree of respect from Karate teachers at a time when even the most open-minded

practitioners were partisan to say the very least. That first meeting was a key moment in my life, and I should like to recount it for those readers who may be interested.

The venue was the old martial arts academy which was situated in the rather less than salubrious setting of Sunderland's east-end, where a walk to the Dojo could easily result in a spot improvised 'kumite'. I had heard that Chiba Sensei was teaching there on a particular weekend in September 1969, and so I decided to see what all the fuss was about. As I pushed opening the heavy, paint peeled wooden door, and entered the old dank building which housed the Dojo, I could hear, the now familiar swish of feet brushing canvas, and the loud 'report' of hand greeting mat in breakfall. With each step I took ascending the wide, cold, stone steps that led from the street to the Dojo, my curiosity intensified, building to a crescendo of gut churning expectation - it was almost as if I knew, instinctively, that something unique was about to take place.

Knowing that Chiba Sensei held the rank of 5th Dan I, as teenager, naturally assumed that he must be an elderly gentleman, possibly even as old as



Photo: Pat Butler

Chiba Sensei in white hakama with John Hamilton (uke on left) and Stuart Appleby (on right), at a martial arts festival, Newcastle upon Tyne City Hall circa 1968

forty!! So as I stood in the doorway of the Dojo, having raised my head from a respectful standing Rei (bow), I slowly cast my gaze over the expansive area of tatami (mat), which was brimming with people working at an impressive rate, and looked for my first sight of this famous, and presumably greying, avuncular, old warrior! A careful and thorough scan of the proceedings brought no result, as the only non-European to be seen was a young Japanese man, who was seated comfortably, but almost paradoxically powerfully, in seiza (traditional kneeling/sitting position). Despite his very martial mien, he looked a figurative oasis of calm amid the tumult of the class, clad in what to me looked like a velvet hakama (traditional split skirt worn by the Japanese warrior class) (it was wool actually, but that's another story), and a dark blue gi jacket. I thought: "Oh, it must be Chiba Sensei's assistant."

This misconception was soon dispelled as I carefully observed him walking about the Dojo with all the natural command of a warrior king, and the stealth of a panther. As he moved, his posture, although composed, seemed to allow no opening for an attack, and he seemed to me to be fully aware of all that was happening around him, every nuance of the practice. His Zanshin, his martial perceptivity and consciousness, was almost tangible. More particularly, the imposing and dignified martial presence exuded by Sensei was so potent, that it seemed to fill the room, and imbue his students with an intensely powerful sense of inspiration

and purpose – in my case it has lasted more than forty years. Looking back over four decades I can see that the potentiality of his Budo (martial art) was like a deep-flowing river, tranquil and fluid on the surface, but with tremendous power hidden in its depths.

If I was impressed by watching him walk around the Dojo, then I was astounded by the dynamism of his technique. The cadence of Sensei's movement, although flowing and expansive, was also concise and focused. In opening each technique Sensei presented an overwhelming, and awesome explosion of energy that, far from detracting from the poise and fortitude of his posture, gave emphasis and definition to it. The devastating martial integrity of his Budo was clearly and unequivocally evidenced, as he entering through his partner's attack, showing the potentiality of his strike. His demonstration was not, though, in any way fear-provoking, it was however intensely stimulating - physically, intellectually, and spiritually. His Aikido seemed to energise his uke (partner), and allowed that student to fulfil his potential in that moment, on that knife edge. Chiba Sensei's control was absolute, and his good humour decidedly reassuring.

His quite singular approach to Aikido was, I now see, the embodiment of swordsmanship without a sword - with each engagement between Sensei and his partner being almost Tameshi-



Photo: Ian Smith

Chiba Sensei and Arthur Lockyear (uke), 1971 Summer School held at the Chiswick Dojo, London

giri - a test-cutting - not of flesh or straw, but of the human spirit.

Had it been any other Aikido Sensei, I may well have been impressed, but not I think inspired, and certainly not motivated to put aside my study of Karate for Aikido. I was profoundly and indelibly impressed by Chiba Sensei, who seemed to me to have been born for the warrior arts.

The outcome of this meeting was, for me, much more than an overwhelming adolescent desire to be able to defend myself, or even the genesis of determined and undiluted ambition, it was a *consensus ad idem* - a meeting of minds. This was one of the great seminal moments in my life, and I knew from that day, that this was what I wanted in terms of Budo. So it was that I made my first unsteady foot fall on the path I still tread - that of Chiba Sensei's Aikido. I really cannot imagine how my life would have developed without meeting this great and charismatic warrior. Whether Chiba Sensei had any similar feelings about meeting me that day is, I regret to say, unrecorded!! ☹

**Arthur Lockyear 5th Dan
Founder & Chief Instructor of the
former Shi Sei Kan Aikido Dojo,
North East Aikikai, Durham City
British Birankai**

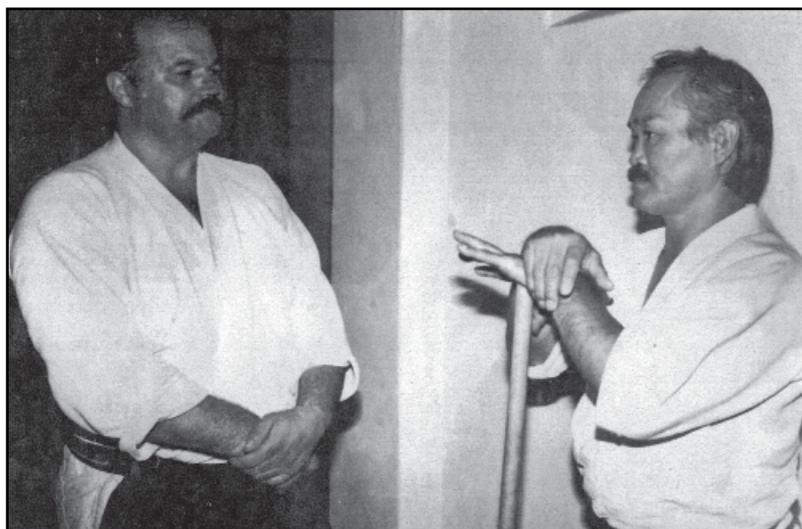


Photo: Franco Chen

Arthur Lockyear with Chiba Sensei at a Weapons course at Shinmei-kan, London Aikikai in 1990



Jürgen Schwendinger

Teacher student relationship is key to Aikido survival

Ten years ago I made a life changing decision. I met my teacher in Dornbirn Austria and he offered me the chance to become



Jürgen Schwendinger

his student. For me, the saying: 'When the student is ready the teacher will appear' was suddenly fulfilled. In 2003, Tony Cassells, one of the best martial artists I know, accepted me as his student. This decision has changed quite a lot in my life. The journey we have been walking together over the last ten years has been beautiful, challenging, inspirational and most important, has always been based on care and respect for one other. We have always had a real teacher student relationship, which in my opinion, is one of the most important things in the Aikido we practise.

Aikido has become a great journey to me. Aikido has the ability to wake us up. Just think for a moment about how often you are absent-minded? How often do you daydream about certain things? How often are we asleep spiritually and mentally? Aikido is able to teach us how to open our inner eyes

to the aliveness surrounding us. I believe that Aikido is a wonderful tool that O-Sensei has given to us.

Aikido has become a companion in my daily life and is with me most of the time. I am very happy to be part of Chiba Sensei's Aikido school called Birankai. Also, I feel very privileged and honoured that he named my school in 2008. He has given me a very special name and I still dwell on that name and very often ask myself why he has given me such a name. However, I haven't found the correct answer yet.

I am doing the best I can to honour the name given to my Dojo. O Sen Kan has become my heart and my soul and I hope that one day, I will be a true guardian of Aikido like my teacher Tony Cassells.

I believe that through hard and fully committed work and through a truthful teacher student relationship, we are



Chiba Sensei, Austrian Summer Camp, Dornbirn, July 2008

Photo provided by Jürgen Schwendinger

able to achieve many things we didn't believe in before. I also think that through this process we have a good chance to transmit the art to the next generation. However, Aikido will only be able to survive if we get committed students.

Chiba Sensei once told a story how he sees his relationship with Aikido. In that

interview he said that he had fallen in love with a beautiful princess whom he can't reach or touch. She is far away behind a silk curtain and unreachable for him but his love for her is pure and forever. So he decided to be the Captain of her Royal Guard. He promised to protect her and that's what he did for the last 50 years. In other words, Aikido for him doesn't have its own means to protect itself. It is fragile, noble, sensitive and precious.

I think that the teachers have to provide protection for this noble art and make sure that Aikido doesn't get bastardized. Therefore every instructor of any Dojo has a big responsibility towards Aikido. The chief instructor should be the centre of the Dojo. He is the example everybody will follow.

I am fully aware of it and for me, my Dojo is like a beautiful circle. In order to create a circle you must have a strong centre. Just think of many Aikido techniques and how circular they are in motion and how important it is to have a strong centre while executing them. O-Sensei called that 'true' centre 'SUMIKIRI', which means *total clarity of mind and body*. I think this state is not easily achieved at all by anybody, but it is definitely worth trying. We all know that O-Sensei achieved this through his daily hard practice of the body, mind and soul.

I have never done any other martial arts other than Aikido. Therefore, my next statement is probably questionable to many people but I still dare to

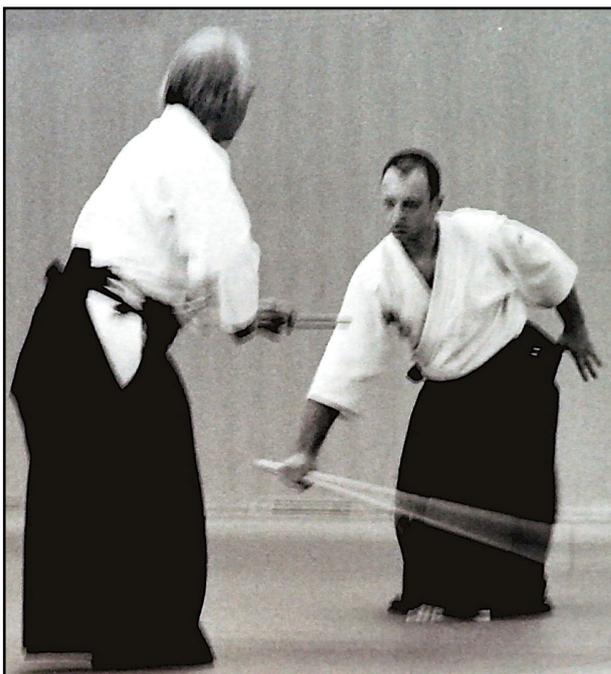


Photo provided by Jürgen Schwendinger

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



say that Aikido, in my opinion, is probably the most difficult martial art to learn. We have no contests and therefore we cannot measure ourselves, we cannot win medals and cannot participate in the Olympic Games. That is one of the reasons why Aikido is Budo, a martial art and not a sport. For me Aikido is much more than winning against someone. I believe that through Aikido we are able to connect body, mind and soul.

Aikido helps us to defeat and also challenge our worst enemy. My teacher always says: "You step on the mat and therefore it has already been a victory!" The easiest way is not to do Aikido, but then we might not be able to learn how to defeat our worst enemy. Some of you will ask yourself who is this worst enemy? Ten years ago we chose a Dojo slogan that perfectly fits with this 'worst' enemy. On our Dojo pass, you will read **Masakatsu Agatsu**, which means **'true victory is self-victory'**.

Aikido asks for constant and total awareness. This continuing awareness is very important for every Aikidoka. In Japanese it is called Zanshin. Zanshin helps us to care for the attacker and we learn to have compassion for him. In Aikido, we learn to neutralize any attack and therefore we are able to show any attacker that his attack is useless. On the highest level we put every attacker down without hurting him but showing him that his aggression leads to nowhere. However, as I said, that is the highest form taught by the master teachers called Shihans. My teacher always tells me that in order to give a life back

we have to know how to take a life. This is a frightening statement. However, if you think about it deeply you can feel the truth in it. The highest form in Aikido was expressed through O-Sensei, of course, who said: "I am the universe and if you want to defeat me you have to defeat the universe." O-Sensei was never defeated by anybody, but how could anybody defeat the universe?

Often we hear the question: "Have you ever really used Aikido? I mean really used it ..."

This is a fair question. My answer is a clear yes. I use it every day. I use it all the time. I use it at home, I use it at work, I use it while I am talking and while I am walking. Some will now say: "No, I mean used it to fight another person." Then it is very hard to explain that the true purpose of Aikido is not to fight, even though we learn how to fight.

Just lately I read in a book that Aikido was given to us from O-Sensei in order to make the world a better place where fighting is unnecessary. I also believe that Aikido can make us 'better' human beings, that Aikido is able to bring out the best in ourselves.

As a skilful Aikidoka one is able to prevent an outbreak of violence in the first place or one knows how to stop violence, which is on its way. When we were able to do Aikido on that level I think we become a much better person than someone who is not able to control the outbreak of violence and therefore has to hurt the attacker. How we use and practise Aikido is up to us, and it is always our own choice to injure or not injure somebody.

I always try not to hurt or injure my students. Nevertheless, I often challenge them above their normal limits. As Aikido teachers we have a big responsibility towards our students. They come on that mat and give their bodies, their spirit, their attention, their full awareness and only through that commitment we are able to connect with them. At the moment, this contact means

a lot to me in my Dojo. I created a formula for myself and my students. It is an easy one to read but a very difficult one to practise.

AIKIDO = CONTACT NO CONTACT ≠ AIKIDO

More and more I realize that all the basic techniques we practise in the Dojo only work through contact. Actually they can only be done if there's contact. Both uke and nage have to work on that contact in order to understand those basic techniques.

Here we realize that we both depend and need one another. Without uke, tori cannot do Aikido. Without students, a teacher cannot teach. That is why we should connect with our students. Through that connection we have a relationship with each other, which is totally alive and something beautiful can be created. What would Aikido be without committed students? I think it would be lost. The art of Aikido can only survive if a teacher has at least one student who is able to transmit his art to the next generation. Chiba Sensei's school has given us this possibility through the teacher student relationship, which is one of the core principles within our school.

In the relationship with our students, we feel what Ai-Ki-Do can be. The teacher and the student feel the love (Ai) and harmony between each other. They feel each other's energy (Ki) on and off the mat and through a commitment to each other they can walk their path (Do).

Last but not least, we shouldn't forget one more important thing. Chiba Sensei often emphasised that Shoshin is one of the most important things in our Aikido practice. Shoshin – beginner's mind - has become an honest companion and clear mirror in my Aikido practice.

I must admit that at the moment, I have the feeling that the more I learn in Aikido, the more I realize how much I am a beginner. ☺

**Jürgen Schwendinger 4th Dan
O Sen Kan
Dornbirn
Birankai Austria
May 2013**

Essay submitted for yondan grading



Photo provided by Jürgen Schwendinger

Shihan Tony Cassells, Austrian Summer Camp, Dornbirn August 2007



Through the haze and pain of Sesshin Ian Grubb waits for the bell and vows to return for more

I arrived at the Sesshin at Shin Juku in Burton on Trent on the morning of Saturday 1 June 2013 with some trepidation. I had arranged to arrive late, after the course had started on the Friday, due to work commitments. I did not want to interrupt so waited in the car until breakfast had finished.



Ian Grubb

I am reasonably flexible and sitting is not overly uncomfortable for single sessions, but the last Sesshin that I had attended was over four years before, and I did not have pleasant memories of it. I had left on that occasion in the knowledge that I had given it a try for a second time but vowing that I would not do it again. I remembered that the cold had gone right to my core as we sat in February with windows open. During the last sit of the second day I had shivered uncontrollably dressed in T-shirt, Gi and black jumper which seemed to give no comfort or warmth. I was mentally fighting the urge to get up and walk out at that moment never to return, let alone sleep on the mat and then sit

again for another half day. I thought it strange that the person who had sat next to me throughout had later thanked me for sitting so well and supported him in his sit.

Yet here I was, persuaded by the fact that Zazen is one of Chiba Sensei's three pillars; part of our training to understand our own body and mental state. As one of the senior instructors I felt duty bound to support the cause for which numbers have always been in short supply. Anyway, at least it would be warmer this time since the Sesshin was in June!

As I walked in I was warmly welcomed with quiet smiles and handshakes while people moved around preparing to clean the Dojo and prepare for the next sit. I placed my sleeping bag in the hall with all of the others, arranged my zabuton, zafu, teacup, food bowls and chant sheets in the manner that all of the others were neatly arranged and mentally prepared myself for what was to come, while everyone else quietly bustled about their chores. While I knew that there would not be many people there I was disappointed to see that there was only twelve other sets of cushions set around the mat. At the last Sesshin,

previously blocked from my memory, there had been over twenty I was sure, or perhaps this was my mind playing tricks on me.

The first session of the morning was kin-hin, walking meditation where everyone stands close behind the person in front. Led by Genjo Ossho the zen priest we walked in step with each other; sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, sometimes almost at a stop, all dressed in our dark clothing not speaking, hands held together across our front. A pleasant start.

As we prepared for the first sit I quickly scanned the chant sheet to see what was on it and try to familiarise myself with what was there so that I knew where to read from when we had to chant. Having arrived late, I had missed the introductions and instructions on the order of events, I was just going to have to wing it and hope for the best. Since this was my third Sesshin I was aware of most of the chants and what to look for when the Genjo announced what we were to chant at the various parts of the sit. Still I had to hum in time to the chants at times as I desperately scoured the

continued on page 11



Photo: Josh Hill

Anne Ducouret, Birankai France Vice-President

Paris Seminar follows recognition by Aikikai Foundation



On the occasion of its recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters,



Anne Ducouret

Tokyo, Birankai France invited Didier Boyet Shihan, 6th Dan to teach a seminar. This seminar, open to all Aikidoka, took place on 1-2 June 2013 at Ann Jyou Kan Dojo in Paris. About 40 people from various French Dojos took part in the seminar which was dedicated to Chiba Shihan. We send Chiba Sensei our deepest gratitude for his teaching and his dedication to our

art. The training during this seminar was fueled by the energy of its participants. Their obvious and continuous involvement during the whole duration of the seminar will remain a precious memory. Several of the participants also prepared the Saturday night dinner. The Hombu Certificate presentation gave us the opportunity to thank the document messenger, Didier Boyet Shihan, and all of those who have been working hard all these years on behalf of Birankai France. Such recognition of our French organization, Birankai France, shows an acknowledgement of the work done and also strengthens our connection with the Aikikai Foundation. Let's hope that this

important recognition by the International Aikido Organization will encourage teachers and students of Birankai France Dojos to be more diligent when training. ☺

**Anne Ducouret 5th Dan
Birankai France Vice-President
Ann Jyou Kan, Paris
Birankai France
June 2013**

Translation: Didier Boyet



Photo provided by Anne Ducouret

... Sesshin

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sheets for what I was looking for. Either no one noticed or were kind enough not to look disapproving, even though I was sat right in front of Genjo who, naturally, did not need a sheet to read from and seemed to be watching everyone, all of the time through half closed eyes.

Some sits were comfortable, some very painful. Sometimes in my knees, but mostly in my neck and shoulders. The tension from the stress at work was certainly making itself manifest. Sometimes I counted my breaths, sometimes I did not think of anything. Throughout there were times that I willed for the bell to ring and then when it did thought "well I could have lasted a bit longer after all", then stretched and sat again only to find

that I was again willing for the bell.

I left Sesshin this year having worked through the issues of the last one, and sat in the pub next door talking to Genjo and everyone else, drink in hand feeling grateful that it was over. On reflection I am glad that I attended. The experience was much the same but my frame of mind at the end and throughout was more positive. I still had the times where I wanted to get up and leave but I knew that each sit would end. It would be followed by another sit, but that would end too and I relaxed into it trying to sink into the sit without trying. There was even a fleeting moment when I thought of Chiba Sensei talking about dying on your cushion.

I do believe that there are benefits in sitting. It grounds me and improves my posture. The intensive nature of Sesshin has helped me to understand

and overcome discomfort through knowing that it will come to an end. It is like kneading the body, much as we do on the mat in body art, but there is nothing to distract me except my own body and mind.

Thank you to Chris Mooney Shihan for his continued drive to organize and hold Sesshin each year despite the small number of attendees and the expense, both monetary and personal. Thank you also to Richard Edmunds for hosting again, and to everyone who attended without whom there would be no Sesshin. I will be back again. ☺

**Ian Grubb 6th Dan
Mei Jyu Kan, Central Aikikai
British Birankai**

Jo-Ha-Kyu - The three dynamic steps to completion as seen by Malcolm Blackwood

Jo-Ha-Kyu is a prescriptive principle characterized by a sense of intensifying action.



Malcolm Blackwood

The phrase Jo-Ha-Kyu describes an idealised dynamic pattern popularised as a key pacing principle by the Noh master Zeami. He viewed it as a universal concept applicable to the pattern of movement of all things. It may be realised in any martial or performance art, including music, flower arranging and the tea ceremony.

Zeami likened Jo-Ha-Kyu to a mountain stream, becoming a river, ending as a waterfall. Picture a leaf floating to the crest of a waterfall, steadily accelerating and then hurtling down.

Jo-Ha-Kyu application imposes a continuous augmentation to a kata or technique. It imposes a pattern into our movement. The Jo-Ha-Kyu pattern is essentially tripartite. In its broadest sense Jo may be given as *introduction*;



Photo: Christopher Walton

Ha as intensification; and *Kyu* as finale. More subtly, *Jo* might be while in motion approaching an attacker. *Ha*, changes in speed and/or position. *Kyu*, decisive (fast) resolution.

This can better be visualised by looking at the structure of a simplified Katate Dori Ai-hanme Ikkyo attack/response. Here as uke grabs tori's wrist. Tori responds, by (1) absorbing

the attack, (2) redirecting the attack and (3) cutting uke to the ground. The above sequence is not a staccato 1-2-3. Nor is it a flat out linear rush. Tori's response is as and through contact being made (1) *Jo*. This intensifies, *Ha*, through (2) and concludes through (3), *Kyu*. There is a raising of awareness and tension towards the encounter (introduction). This tension becomes action (intensification). This action is resolved (finale). Jo-Ha-Kyu.

Delving deeper is possible for those so disposed: Individual actions which make up a given technique or kata can also have this sense of intensifying action. The concept is applicable to each sub division of a technique. Complex techniques and kata can be dissected into a number of Jo-Ha-Kyu sequences. For example, an Iaido kata could involve Jo-Ha-Kyu for the draw, for each cut, for the chiburi and for the noto.

For those readers still with me I can only ask that the next time you practise examine your technique whilst thinking to yourself Jo-Ha-Kyu, and let the pattern be with you. ☺



Photo: Katie Chaplin

Malcolm Blackwood and Anthony Fairbairn (uke) at the annual open day demonstration at Teikyo University of Japan based at the University of Durham, October 2012

**Malcolm Blackwood 4th Dan
Abbey Aikido Durham
Scottish & Borders Birankai**

Despite setbacks Paris hosted a successful Youth Seminar in Paris. Anne Ducouret reports



The 5th Birankai Europe Youth Seminar based on the theme of 'Living in a Traditional Dojo and Intense



Anne Ducouret

Training' was held from 30 March to 1 April 2013 at Ann Jyou Kan Dojo in Paris. The 2nd and 4th Seminars took our young members camping in Labaroche, Alsace, while the 3rd Seminar took place in Landau, Germany, where the 65 plus participants were hosted by local families.

This year more than 50 young members from Dojos in Colmar, Strasbourg, Landau and Paris came together for intense training, visits and seeing the sights in Paris and of course exchanging and sharing sessions in the Dojo.

The training sessions were conducted by instructors from various Dojos: Didier Hatton Shidoïn, Colmar and Strasbourg; Alexander Broll Shidoïn, Landau; Anne Ducouret Shidoïn, Paris; Daniel Wiedmann Fukushidoïn, Strasbourg; and Irene Cambeis, Landau. The group was divided into different groups according to age and

proficiency in body art and weapons practice, the young members were able to train for 13 hours, sometimes collectively, sometimes in a more intense manner with the older ones. About 10 of these participants have been attending this annual event for the last five years.

During tours around the city and in order not to lose anyone in the crowd, all members were split into three groups of mixed age and different dojos, with each group carrying its own flag. Each group was also responsible for the Dojo cleaning on alternate days.

On the day before the seminar, the Colmar and Landau groups went to visit Versailles. On Saturday, after practice, we sailed up the Seine in a Riverbus from Notre Dame to the Eiffel Tower. The next day, we went to the Parc de la Villette, to the Géode, Europe biggest movie theater, on board the T3 streetcar which circles the Eastern part of Paris. Some of the members, exhausted by all these activities took the opportunity to take a nap during the screening of a documentary on elephant and orangutan care.

Everyone was able to eat to their

hearts' content as there was a huge picnic prepared by the adult Dojo members and those who accompanied the children. Then everyone joined in various games before the lights were turned off and eyes were closed for the night.

Careful management is necessary to take care of such a large group and the help of parents, adults and young people is crucial. We avoided a few disasters: lack of food on Sunday due to the time change, cancellation of the movie session at the Géode as the reservations were on the wrong day and the disappearance of a rice cooker which ended in the garbage can! However all when well, and everyone in a happy and joyful spirit boarded his or her returning train on time. Later on, back on the mat, we were all, once again, able to appreciate the dynamics that holding such a seminar and training bring to our Dojo. ☺

**Anne Ducouret 5th Dan
Ann Jyou Kan, Paris,
Birankai France
June 2013**

Translation: Didier Boyet

Junior class, Cocks Moors Woods, Central Aikikai, British Birankai, July 2013



Photo: Amandine Morel

Mark Pickering and Jake (uke)



Photo: Amandine Morel

Katie (right) with Jamie-Luke and Jake (ukes)



Stuart Lovering's Tudor Grange Dojo continues tradition by hosting 5th Joint Aikikai Course

On 12 May 2013 British Birankai hosted the JAC course at Tudor Grange in Solihull.



Stuart Lovering

For those not aware the JAC, or Joint Aikikai Council to give it its full name, encompasses all the Aikikai Hombu recognised organizations in the UK. Since its formation in 2009 the member organizations take it in turn to host a national JAC course each year. British Birankai also hosted the first JAC national course in 2009. The JAC was also instrumental in bringing Aikido Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba to Cardiff, Wales, UK in May 2010.

I had the great privilege of organizing the 2013 course. It was a wonderful day, seeing several organizations practising so well together and enjoying each other's company on and off the mat, continuing the work O-Sensei and his disciples set out to do all those years ago.

The course was opened by Caroline Smith Sensei of the British Aikido Federation who was followed by Neil Blacknell Sensei of Azami-kai. Steve Beecham Sensei representing British Birankai, took the last class of the first half of the course.

Shihan Peter Brady of the United Kingdom Aikikai continued after a lunch break. Last but not least Shihan Terry Ezra of Komyokan Aikido Association ended the course with a weapons class.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone for supporting the course and for being a part of a great day. ☺

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



Shihan Terry Ezra (right), Komyokan Aikido Association



Shihan Peter Brady (right), United Kingdom Aikikai

All photos on this page by Tomasz Jopek





Caroline Smith Sensei (left), BAF



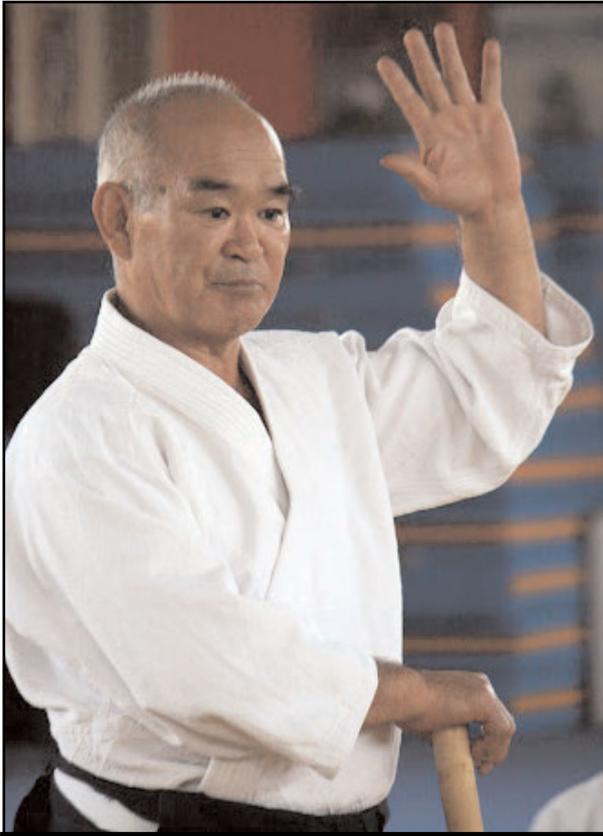
Steve Beecham Sensei (right), British Birankai



Neil Blacknell Sensei (left), Azami-kai



NOTICE-BOARD



Chiba Sensei, Polish Summer School, August 2009



Shihan Patrick Barthélémy. Polish Summer School, August 2009

All photos on this page: Beata Darowska



Chiba Sensei, Polish Summer School, August 2009