

TRADITIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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Kancho's Corner

Important Aikido Concepts (Part 1)

One of the questions I'm asked regularly is "What is Aikido?" I'm sure many Aikidoka experience the difficulty from time to time of trying to answer that curly one. It would be very easy to quote the oft-repeated, near dogma of the Aikido legend however I would like to open the door a little wider and encourage students of Aikido to study and reflect for ourselves so we can form our own perspective. None of the following is written in judgment of those mentioned - far from it - I am ever grateful for the work of our 'martial ancestors' for their efforts in passing on this wonderful practice and inspirational philosophy. These ideas are offered respectfully and with humble apologies for any and all mistakes.

Part of the difficulty in answering the above question lies in the tense - is.

Let's start with ...What was Aikido ... what were its' origins? Well, even that seems debatable. The Aikido History section on our website comes straight from the Yoshinkan manual and while there is some evidence to justify this history, much more is required to put this beyond doubt. It states Aikido was a martial art with its roots in the apparently 1200 year old [Daito Ryu Jujutsu](#) (DRJ) tradition. (This version is also found elsewhere and refers to the development and incorporation of the '*oshikiuchi*' (inside the palace) techniques of the Aizu samurai.) Many martial traditions have embellished their past to gain extra prestige. Is Aikido's history embellished? I doubt it can now be proven either way, but if so, the 'colour' was probably not added by the person considered the founder of 'modern' Aikido. What is credibly recorded is that the founder, [Ueshiba Morihei](#) ([O'Sensei](#)) studied Daito Ryu Jujutsu under [Sokaku Takeda](#) (self-proclaimed headmaster of DRJ). The '*Aiki*' prefix was apparently added to the name by Sokaku Takeda around 1922 even though the term has a considerable history of usage (according to the Kojiki.) For what length of time Ueshiba Sensei studied under Takeda Sensei is another unknown, but it is generally accepted that the actual overall training time could not have added up to more than a handful of years. It would appear he received Kyoju Dairi but not Menkyo Kaiden. (It is also recorded that Ueshiba Sensei studied several other arts in his early years—jujutsu and

weapons - some say for relatively short periods while others claim he received Menkyo Kaiden). It is clear that he studied Kashima Shinto Ryu because his name and that of one of his uchi deshi at the time appear in that Ryu's [Eimoroku](#). Some of the kata preserved by Saito Sensei also appear remarkably like Yagyū Shinkage Ryu Kata and it is recorded that Ueshiba Sensei received Menkyo in this art, also from Sokaku Takeda. No matter, tales of O'Sensei's martial prowess and spirituality have reached mythic proportions in quite a short time.

The rose-coloured glasses of hindsight prefer us to see him as either somewhat unworldly or at least quite divorced from the nationalistic Japanese Government in the lead up to the Second World War. He in fact seems to have been a very well connected and substantially political figure from a respected and well to do family. Furthermore his position within the [Omoto Kyo](#) sect saw him famously involved in a number of controversial incidents including participation in the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and Mongolia. [Onisaburo Deguchi's](#) influence on Ueshiba can not be overstated. Even pre-war, many of his writings were difficult to comprehend without a considerable background in the Omoto world view. Often portrayed as a humanist with a deeply spiritual side, Ueshiba Sensei would also appear to have had some very nationalist associations and leanings at that stage of his life. His own published writings from the pre-war period further hint at this aspect of his past. It must have been an interesting dynamic, given the Omoto sects somewhat anti-government stance while both Ueshiba Sensei and Onisaburo Deguchi maintained very considerable military and right wing connections. It is a delicate subject however, like most of us, Ueshiba Sensei was no doubt very human and probably a product of the prevailing culture of his time.

Did the outcome of the Second World War have an impact on Ueshiba Sensei's environment and philosophy? Almost certainly. He was deeply involved in the Omoto Kyo sect and this must have provided a strange and dynamic interplay. I believe his pre-war spiritual views triumphed over any jingoistic leanings in the post-war environment. Equally certainly and I believe, very importantly, it had a massive effect on the philosophy and practice of his first generation of post war students. Japan was considerably reduced and the Japanese people lived in an occupied country for ten years. History is written by the winners, so it hardly provides an accurate reflection of the of this time, however Japans' expansionist policies were dealt a severe blow while those of the USA grew unabated.

Kancho's Corner

Pre-war Aikido owed a great deal to the Daito Ryu Aikijujutsu of Sokaku Takeda. It emphasised martial effectiveness (during this period Ueshiba Sensei often referred to his art as a 'Bujutsu'), utilised atemi (vital strikes) and acknowledged its deep relationship to swordsmanship. During the period of occupation and indeed through the following years until his death in 1969, Ueshiba Sensei increasingly expanded his vision of Aikido to that of a more global art with the capacity to sponsor universal harmony. The concept of *Aikibujutsu* fostering 'Yamato damashii' (Japanese spirit) was reinterpreted as *Aikido* fostering 'human spirit'. Atemi and a connection with the use of the Japanese sword was perhaps seen as a little too martial in the eyes of many Japanese, the occupation forces and the world in general and seemed less suitable to the "Art of Peace". These aspects were deemphasized over time, particularly by the post war generation coming through in Tokyo alongside Ueshiba Kishomaru, his son. Even the strategy of Irimi (entering often performed with Shitei (or Tori) initiated attack / technique sequences) came to be seen by many as 'aggressive and 'un-Aikido'. In fact however, Ueshiba Sensei continued to employ powerful technique, use atemi and incorporate sword and other weapon use right through his life. Many examples are available in photo and film and the technical legacy in Iwama and other locations provides further substantiation.

The usual argument (proposed by advocates of the 'softer, less martial' styles – a somewhat baffling concept in itself) is that Ueshiba Sensei continued to refine the art of Aikido after the war right up till his death and that the pre-war Aikido became quite obsolete. (Advocates of the pre-war styles of course argue that Ueshiba Sensei was at his peak in his 50's) It is probably correct to say that considerable changes in Aikido happened under the direction of his students, while his interest lay in refining his own Aikido. It would be difficult to argue that Ueshiba Sensei continued to improve his Aikido right up till his death as there is sufficient evidence to suggest that he was far from his best physically or psychologically through the 1960's.

So ... what is Aikido now? (Continued in *Important Aikido Concepts Part 2*—September Newsletter)

Sensei David

Part 2 of An Interview with Nishioka Tsuneo Sensei



Q. Sensei, can you please share your ideas on the development of Budo?

(Nishioka Sensei has studied not only Jojutsu. From the age of 20, he has studied Kenjutsu (sword), achieving master Dan level.)

A. "The Sword is the centre of Japanese Budo" "All kinds of Japanese Budo have been developed from the view of how to compete against the sword. In other words, the technical styles of stick, spear, Japanese halberd etc. have been developed from the base of sword. When you talk about sword, the role of Uchidachi is the one to be focused upon. Also in Kenjutsu today, many masters do not take the role of Uchidachi. Instead they play the role of cutting their students. Today Ken-do is practiced just for the competition, and Kata practice is treated lightly. This influence is coming now to Jodo and in this way modern Jodo is being led astray.

Part 2 of An Interview with Nishioka Tsuneo Sensei cont'd

Q. Sensei, how is this occurring?

A. Formally, Jodo is now practiced under the guidance of the All Japan Kendo League, so even though it uses a Jo, the core part of Jodo is adopting a similar format to Kendo. Shimizu Sensei originated today's popular style of Jodo based on Shinto-Muso Ryu Jojutsu, so the basic spirit is supposed to be the same, but I do not see the same spirit in today's Jodo. Perhaps most people wouldn't know but people who have been practicing properly would definitely notice it."

Q. Sensei, what do you mean when you say "properly"?

A. This again comes back to the key point about understanding the true roles of giving and receiving technique. The level of Budo practitioners will always drop if there is no teacher who knows the importance of Uchidachi, and can lead Shidachi so that Shidachi will learn with his body about timing and breath."

Q. It seems there are many possible pitfalls when we start Budo training.

A. "This is true. When one starts practicing Jojutsu, one sometimes thinks 'I can compete and win against the sword.' No way. There are always those above us. Even when one makes huge progress, there is always higher level Uchidachi and it will never change as long as one practices Keiko. If we practice Keiko properly, we cannot help being humble all the time."

Q. Sensei, from a technical point of view, what insights can you share with people seeking to develop their Budo practice?

A. In Japanese Bujutsu, when you match for life and death, the person who makes the first move will always lose. The technical reason is it becomes a battle of nerves and we need to know how to move the opponent first! This means to lead not just his body but his mind and spirit.

Inviting the opponent ... leading the opponent so he has to move ... this kind of delicate technique is learnt only by practicing Kata with a true Uchidachi. Unfortunately much of today's Budo is just show and will not serve in life and death combat.

Secondly, in most Budo, and always in weapon based Budo, understanding the correct use of the inside of the hand (te no uchi) is essential. If you change inside of hand, your whole body approach also changes. This requires much training and cannot be explained easily in words.

Next is Hasuji (cutting line). Many Kenjutsu artists emphasise the importance of Hasuji. Of course if Hasuji is not straight, you cannot cut things. This can sometimes lead to a false idea of the true value of Bujutsu. It can be misunderstood through false practice to lie in being able to cut things.

"Hasuji has to be straight and sharp, otherwise you cannot cut the match. If Hasuji is not firm, it is no good. Left hand is the axis, and right hand is attached. Inside of the hands is very important. To check if Hasuji is straight and standing or not, you will never know unless you cut something like straw. Cutting the straw is for that purpose only. But today, it has become the performance of Budo. You cut the straw in front of people, and are applauded. This is merely a show. Cutting things is just Renshu, so you should not show it to people. It is different from the original style of how it was intended to be.

Q. Sensei, to draw out your wisdom accumulated over 64 years of training is difficult. Please tell us if there are important matters we have failed to discuss.

A. I have written several books on Bujutsu so of course to condense this into a short article is very difficult. There are several points however we can mention. In all our Budo practice, we must begin with Rei and end with Rei. In English, Rei is most closely translated as etiquette. Seek to understand the purpose of Rei.

Study Kata. In Jodo all Kata is paired. Many people understand Kata and free training as separate and feel they must choose between them or allocate percentages to their practice. In fact they are part of a continuum and through Kata only can you truly be free.

Study Kihon (basics). Perhaps these should be renamed to explain their importance. They should be better called "Essence".

Learn the meaning of "Shinken Shobu". This is the matter of Life and Death.

Seek to understand "Keiko Shokon". Searching for and mastering the essence is the training itself. If you think deeply about the essence of life, you must decide what to do now and actualize it.

Perhaps finally, is the formula for happiness. This is a simple matter. We have our desires and, when we achieve them, we have fulfillment. Usually our desires run far ahead of our achievement so we strive always against this trend to achieve fulfillment and happiness. Of course our potential and our desires are very different. We can reach up to our potential, but it is much more achievable to lower our desires than it is to always seek to fulfill them. True happiness is then attainable.

Junior Members corner

AIKIDO IN ACTION

Lyla has been learning the art of Aikido for a few years now and has always allowed me to feel its importance for her future and self confidence. She has attended with a keen attitude and knows my quiet insistence that its just a part of our lives. The incident she has written about has shown her the true day-to-day benefit of learning mindfulness and action that is taken from that place, not a reaction to emotions.

Last week something happened which helped me realise how important Aikido is to my awareness, reflexes and self defence.

I never thought I would have to put those skills into action at 11 years old. I thought it was just fitness and fun.

I was walking my fluffy friendly white dog down my driveway with a large umbrella in hand as it was pouring rain. My neighbours have 2 scary dogs, one a young rescue dog which they don't know much history about, the other is the breed that locks their jaws on things and you cannot get it off. These dogs are up to my hips, big, strong, slobbery and aggressive. They always bark at me and my dog though the electric tape fencing (a thin white piece of tape that floats in the air between poles) and I have always thought "I just hope they don't get out one day".

As I was walking past I heard this huge bounding through the trees and saw them shaking. My heart stopped and I turned to see the 2 dogs racing towards us. I put the umbrella up in front of me to stop them from getting any closer. I assessed the situation as I stood shaking in fear.

I had no idea what to do.

I stood there for about 20 minutes with the dogs behind the umbrella shield hoping they would just leave me alone!! The young dog eventually got bored and wandered off to its home. The bigger dog then tried to bite my Spoodles head so I automatically used my umbrella to whack it on the nose causing it to yelp and run away.

I drew my dog closer to me on the leash, collapsed the umbrella and ran back towards my driveway as fast as I could. My heart was pounding as I heard the dogs running after me again.

I grabbed the gate to my property and shut it as hard and fast as I could. They didn't come any further towards me at this point.

Then I ran as fast as I could all the way up my very long driveway to tell my Mum about the dogs. I began to really cry and shake when I know that my dog and I were safe.

The training I have done with Aikido really helped me to take deep breaths and not just react out of fear. I have learnt to assess the situation and try to make the best possible decisions with a positive attitude. My Sensei has taught me that I have to use the things around me, which I did, to save my puppy and myself from being bitten or attacked.

Thank you Tamara and Aaron.

Osu...Lyla

Technique Workshop

Yokomen uchi Kotegaeshi tankan



1. Face your opponent in ai hanmi



6. Cutting back with your hip / left foot continue to draw him further off balance. Be sure to keep your armpit closed and to maintain his momentum. Keep your hand at belt

2. As your opponent strikes Yokomen, slide to the side and a little forward intercepting the strike and off balancing him with an atemi (ura ken)



7. Apply kotegaeshi with your right hand (match his hand position) as you spin a further 180 degrees (uke to take zenpo hiyaku uke-mi)



3. As you pivot, continue to pass the striking limb with the left and then the right hand, softly guarding his elbow keeping him at a distance and off balance

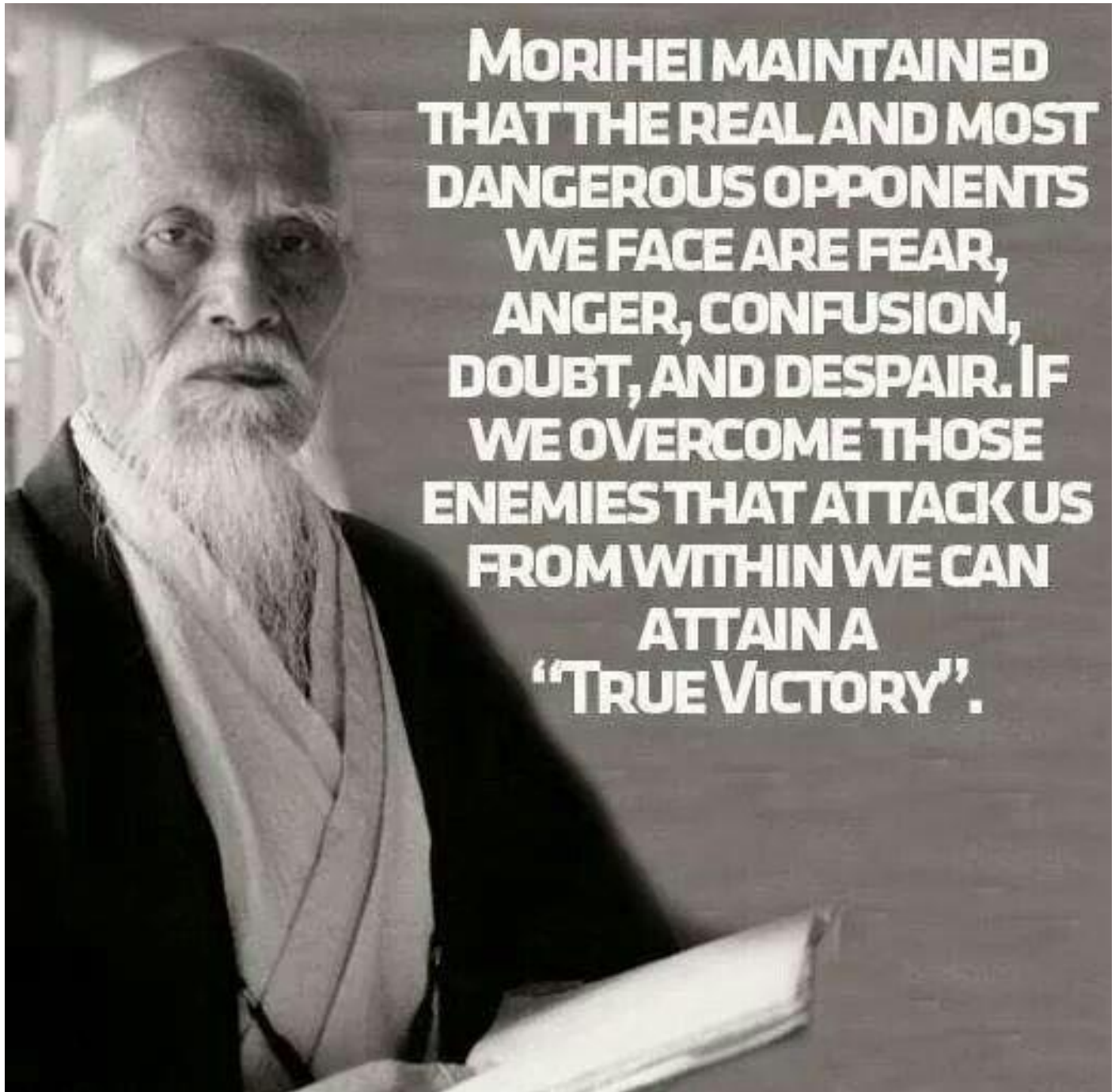


8. Capturing his elbow with your right hand spin your left foot forward and turn him face down. Apply the osae.



4 & 5. As he moves around you slide the left hand down from the elbow to take the wrist in kotegaeshi position as you move the right foot to the rear and again deliver atemi

Inspirational corner



**MORIHEI MAINTAINED
THAT THE REAL AND MOST
DANGEROUS OPPONENTS
WE FACE ARE FEAR,
ANGER, CONFUSION,
DOUBT, AND DESPAIR. IF
WE OVERCOME THOSE
ENEMIES THAT ATTACK US
FROM WITHIN WE CAN
ATTAIN A
“TRUE VICTORY”.**

Upcoming Events



Kenshinryu Spring Gasshuku 18 - 21 October 2018

Shinto Muso Ryu Jojutsu . Shinto Ryu Kenjutsu & Laijutsu

Suitable for practitioners of all styles aged 15yrs + and any level of experience
Enquiries and bookings: 5445 9116 or info@kenshin.com.au

Shinto Muso Ryu

**Delve into SMR with
David Dangerfield Sensei.**

Focus on Jodo basics and beyond.

Saturday August 11th 2018
11.15—4.15 (1 hour lunch)
Cost \$60

Aikido Yoshinkai NSW
Level 1 Rear 310 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville NSW 2204



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