

Ken shinryu 流神劍

TRADITIONS FOR THE FUTURE

An Initiative of **Compass**
INSTITUTE INC.



VOLUME 29 ISSUE 01 THE INSTITUSHIN

APRIL 2019

Kancho's Corner

The Value of Osu!

That ubiquitous term we all hear around the Dojo (and outside when Dojo members convene in pretty much any location) – Osu! – has so many applications that I won't even attempt to go into them in a single article. The meaning or use I'd like to explore with you now though is the application of Osu! in calming our minds and spirits.

Quite regularly I find myself passing on an observation or some advice to a student during training... and then being surprised by the sometimes lengthy explanation or even justification for why the person hadn't been doing or had been doing that thing. The reason for my surprise I guess is that this type of response has never been part of my own upbringing in a Dojo so never something I'd ever entertained doing myself. Can you picture Chida Sensei replying to a piece of advice from Shioda Sensei with an "Oh Osu! I know... I was just trying to see if this other way might be worth trying too" or Inoue Sensei replying with an "Osu! I thought that in my case I might need to adapt the technique to my uke" or perhaps me responding to Nishioka Sensei with "Oh Osu! It's just that this seems to work well too... what do you think?". Or "Oh yeah... I'm on it already"... Or my all time favourite... "Oh Osu! I tried that but it doesn't seem to work".

Believe it or not these are indicative of, or some actual responses people have made to advice or observations I've given in the Dojo. Some of those responses have come from relative beginners which makes them all the more amusing but other times have emanated from people with more experience.

To be completely honest I never know quite what to say or do in these situations. I don't want to be dismissive of the person - that would seem rude to me - but I definitely feel we would both benefit from dismissing the unnecessary comments. In all the above circumstances the only word that ever needed to be said was "Osu!". I think I can appreciate why people want to make these comments and I understand the motivation. People want to be heard. We want to have our thoughts, opinions or views taken into account, most particularly if we feel challenged by the advice or observations that are directed towards us. Perhaps we feel they may be unfair, unwarranted or even belittling... so we respond with an explanation or justification.

The interesting thing is these responses are forthcoming almost instantly – automatically - so no real time or effort has gone into genuinely listening to or considering the advice. This seems even more unsuitable if we assume that the advice or observation may

have required quite a bit of effort on the part of the giver to take into account all the aspects of the practice that was being observed, understand what the most pertinent advice was, timed it to 'cut through'... and phrased it to be most easily understood and assimilated.

I'm guessing that most of us reading this will agree with the above... so where does the response / excuse / justification arise from and how can 'Osu!' help? The fact that the response is so automatic is a good hint... it arises straight from our ego. Don't get me wrong... 'ego's not a dirty word' as they say. It's just that sometimes it takes charge when it should take a back seat. And this is one of those times. In a learning environment listening... *really listening*... and taking time to contemplate and try following advice is the best way to improve. Listening, contemplation and trial are all 'quiet' endeavours. They need a quiet space and that's what a heartfelt 'Osu!' can provide. We can use it to still the busy ego / mind that wants to be heard and understood. Saying Osu! doesn't mean we are devaluing or ruling out our own thoughts or feelings – we're just putting them aside to provide the quiet for learning now.

Recently you'll note that I've been asking people to train without talking. The main reason is to provide a quiet space – a space where each person can focus on their own practice without the regular advice from each other. Too much commentary and advice leaves our minds bewildered and creates an atmosphere where the ego feels compelled to defend us. Then when the carefully considered advice we **need** comes along, the ego also bats it away. Other feedback has been that not talking / giving advice has meant the training has been more continuous and focused which is surely also a good thing. Simply responding with a heartfelt 'Osu!' helps put aside the noisy clutter of consciousness and the defensiveness of the ego... both things with very little benefit in training. And as mentioned recently...if you truly want to help your partner, just be a good Uke and leave the teaching to the person conducting the class. If that person isn't correcting you or your partner that's also for a reason. Osu!

David



Members Corner

Koryu vs The Tap Out

"Hit them with the biggest thing you can - The Earth." - Sensei

Does aikido work? I'm sure we've all been asked this before. My response these days is no. Purely because, Aikido will never be the Hollywood type of martial arts. What it is however... is lethal. So no, Aikido doesn't work in the way a civilian would want it to. Because, Aikido was designed for the battle field and is designed to kill, not injure.

But something struck me the other night... why do we train safely? And, then why do we tap out at the end of a technique? Particularly, because we come under the training discipline of a Koryu.

In a way, it's a special type of crazy to study ancient, obsolete forms of Japanese martial arts. Stranger still, when you think that very few Japanese train in the martial arts. And if you have any experience of the Koryu, it's stranger still.

The Koryu, Iai and Kenjutsu are not for the faint of heart. They are very hard to endure training in. It takes a particular type of mindset and strength, one that I believe can be developed by anyone. Few however, would wish to endure the lessons to build it. But for those that train in Koryu, they rarely ask, "why". The truth is, for many, if not all, they simply cannot think of a life where they don't train. The why is unimportant.

Essentially, training in a Koryu, we define our lives through the art of war. So, here is my question for everyone... if we train as we would on the battlefield, how would we ever get ourselves into a position where tapping out is appropriate? Have we modernised to a point of martial sport?

As an Uke, we move and land in place. Over and over again. We receive blows and locks. Sometimes well executed, other times injury inducing. But we give our bodies over to our partners to help them train and learn. An Uke is always the senior partner and helps to instruct the partner into positions where they would be unable to be beaten. They risk injury day in and day out to help each other develop their skills on the battlefield. And although this sounds safe and predictable. The higher up you go in Japanese martial arts the less predictable it becomes, as there are more opponents and weapons. You can be attacked from any angle, with any type of ancient or modern weapon and are still expect to come out alive.

Our training whether Eastern or Western should be strong and fierce and push us beyond our limits. And although we "Tap Out" in Aikido it is purely to help demonstrate where the technique ends and the final blow begins.

By Tamara Burriss

News from the South

The leaves are changing colour and it has just started to frost here, meaning it is almost time for Kancho to visit and indulge in that cold weather he secretly loves. We've recently had a grading down here, with all students putting in a commendable effort. The variety of questions I'm asked makes me very grateful that art we practice, the teachers we learn from, and the patient students I've had the honor to train with have encapsulated, transferred and beaten in the answers to so many of these, sparing the armidale students from the horror of me having to make something up.



Dion, Illiana, Oscar & Jay from the Grasshoppers class.

Clio, Sophia, Aashrita & Lydie from the Warrior Princesses also did well and are moving into the more complicated section of the junior syllabus.

Sensei Jonathan, having lit and tended to a SMR fire in Lismore over the past few years, has handed over to Sensei Jamie Welham to keep that flame alive.



Saurabh & Muan

Keep training, we're looking forward to seeing you on the mats.
Osu!

By Daniel Watkins

Members Corner

What is it that draws people to take up a martial art? How did we come to find Kenshinryu? Numerous reasons spring to mind, but for me it was getting into a fight at high school many years ago. Having my head slammed into a brick wall, punched in the face several times, the blood in my mouth from my lip being pushed onto my teeth, the literal scars of which I still have today. All of this stemmed I felt, from not knowing how to defend myself.

I vowed never to be a victim again. I soon signed up for my first ever dojo, and began my path in Shorinryu, a kung-fu/karate substyle designed for street fighting, based in Toowoomba, Queensland. There were no traditional kata, no formal patterns, only drills of the techniques being taught, punches and kicks on bags held by training partners, a mixture of Kungfu circular interceptions, sensitivity techniques, redirections, traps, clawing, arms locks and take downs followed up by sparring with higher belts. I feel there may have been some borrowed Aikido techniques in the mix too.

I loved all of it and it became part of who I was, the confidence from the dojo carried through in my life, interactions with people, situational awareness and demeanour. A close friend and dojo brother was killed in a car accident and I stopped going to training while I worked through my grief. Then life got in the way and I accepted a job a thousand miles away from home, and while I was away working the dojo closed down.

And so, I had been searching for something ever since to fill that need, some resonance in training or feeling of discipline of self, and of course a challenge. It's these things that appeal to martial artists, and in this crazy modern world I feel it's a necessity.

Coming from a street fighting background many would assume BJJ or MMA would be appropriate, but I did not feel a resonance when I investigated these styles. To explain the importance of resonance to me you must understand that I'm also a photographer and film maker, and there is almost a literal click in my head when a visual resonates with me. I've made a career out of visual intuition and aesthetic resonance, so I follow my gut in seeking this 'click' in all things.

Those of you with years of Budo training and an understanding of Ki can already see the convergence of paths in my journey, and those with an understanding of psychology know that some people think in words, some in pictures and some in both. I think in both, so I needed a place where words and instructions had depth and the visuals resonated.

Since I couldn't find something that clicked like my old dojo, I decided to find something that was totally different and required a lot more skill, that being weapons, specifically swords. It's here that I found Shinto Muso Ryu through the school of Kenshinryu in Palmwoods. On meeting with Sensei David and observing several classes, it felt like this was the place for me. It clicked.

And it's here that I struggle with what I'm sure many of us do, being a beginner again. I had become accustomed to being proficient in my old martial and indeed my professional career, so to start again was a big step for me. But I wanted to find something more than just physical ability in a fight, I wanted to find mastery of myself, and SMR is a great place for that. Every week for the last two and a half years I have had layers upon layers of body mastery revealed to me by Sensei David, but also mastery of spirit, of Ki, of resonance.

It took me a while to stop trying to be like the senior students of the dojo with their years of training making it look easy and find my path at the pace of my newbie skills. To risk being foolish, to risk feeling stupid (and when your body doesn't do what your mind wants it to, or what Sensei David patiently explains for the umpteenth time but you can't grasp, it's easy to feel stupid) but over the years I slowly shifted the Setei kata into muscle memory and out of conscious thought. (I am by no means anywhere near fully embedding Jo side, let alone both Jo and sword side...but I'm making progress.)

Sensei David talks of shapes, body positions, footwork, and over and over I try to build that muscle memory for SMR. After years of SMR practice and hearing about Aikido and the benefits and correlations of the two arts, I made the leap into doing Aikido practice as well as SMR.

There are no rolls or tumbles in SMR Setei kata, nor in my old martial art so doing rolls for the first time was daunting, but you can only learn by doing, so I dived in head first (literally) and tried not to break my neck.

With the mastery of self, I was seeking, and the muscle memory of SMR somewhat embedded, I found immediate resonance and 'clicks' in the footwork of Aikido. My old friend Kesa was there, sword cuts with hand blades instead of steel were familiar, entries and exits to kata exploded my resonance radar, I knew some of these! It was a constant stream of parallels and dejavu movements, but with different weapons (my hands) that made my mind boggle. I was a beginner, feeling stupid again, yet the physical answers felt like they were in my grasp if I relaxed enough and absorbed the Aikido kata.

So here I am, chasing that resonance, moulding my body into shapes that click, shifting it from conscious thought into muscle memory to free up space in my head to project Ki and give me choices, to relax and build my confidence.

Sensei David said this the other night in class, "Be happy with your study and progress but never be satisfied."

I am happy in my choice to study both SMR and Aikido, but I am not satisfied. I look forward to a lifetime of learning and chasing that resonance, that 'click'.



By Simon Van Der Spoel

Embracing the Void

"The most important part of a cup is not the handle, the base, or the sides, but the empty space within, and as you cannot drink from a cup that cannot be filled, you cannot live in a house without space between the walls."

This old maxim illustrates the sentiment of the Japanese concept of "Ku" (The Void). Just because a physical space is not occupied by something physical, it still has value, because it allows physical things to enter that space. This is overtly present in Japanese culture. Some of the most celebrated Japanese gardens have breathtaking use of negative space and there are paintings with dramatic empty scenes punctuated by simplistic features of trees or mountains. In our Palmwoods dojo the two paintings of "Dō" (also read as "Michi": "the way", or "the path") are a single, large black kanji on a plain "empty" background. There's a story about two poets, in which a blank piece of paper is held with the same regard as a great poem.

Miyamoto Musashi included "The Void" as one of his five elements of combat, borrowing from Buddhist thought about the elements that make up existence. In this tradition, the physical requires the non-physical in order to exist. A cup requires a cup-shaped space to sit in in order to have physical properties. Likewise, the mental recognition "this is a cup" requires the knowledge of what is not a cup, as well as the practical ability to understand where a cup could theoretically exist, if you wanted to put one on a shelf, for example (don't forget that when a cup occupies a space, it still has empty space inside it).

In Aikido and Shinto Muso Ryu we discuss the use of kesagiri angles and how the intersection of this angle upon your uke/uchidachi's centreline is devastating. This is because of a place called "Shikaku" (the "blind spot" or "void angle").

If your uchidachi/uke is attacking you where you are, they immediately have 4 Shikaku. If their forward direction is North, their blind spots/void angles can be thought of as NE, NW, SE, SW. Find yourself in these places and you'll see the advantage this gives you over Uke.

While a Shikaku is often a point of poor visibility, even better, it is the angle where it is easiest to affect an uke's balance. Think of this as like the eye of a storm, or the barrel of a wave. If you correctly insert yourself into this point, you can remain stable and relatively unaffected by the movement of uke's original attack to the position you previously occupied.

In techniques such as Kata Mochi Ikkajo Omote, the footwork Shitei uses opens up a space that Uke will fall into, as if they've leant on a door that's suddenly given way. In other techniques you step into the space behind Uke's attack, so that you are inside their sphere and able to affect their momentum and position from within.

O-sensei talked about this in a more poetic way:

"If your heart is large enough to envelop your adversaries, you can see right through them and avoid their attacks. And once you envelop them, you will be able to guide them along the path indicated to you by heaven and earth."

-

"Opponents confront us continually, but actually there is no opponent there. Enter deeply into an attack and neutralize it as you draw that misdirected force into your own sphere."

-

"In Aikido we [Shitei] never attack. An attack is proof that one is out of control. Never run away from any kind of challenge, but do not try to suppress or control an opponent unnaturally. Let attackers come any way they like and then blend with them. Never chase after opponents. Redirect each attack and get firmly behind it."

Nishioka Sensei once taught us about the importance of being aware of the space surrounding things as much as the things themselves. Our vision must be "broad and deep", we must be able to see the foreground, the background and the space in between and beyond. See what is behind you, around you, above you and past the confines of the room you are in. Without this perception, Aikido and Shinto Muso Ryu become very difficult. Everything becomes clashing and struggling as you try to overcome your opponent without yielding or redirecting. Identify spaces and be able to move into them. Identify spaces and let Uke fall into them. Embrace the Void.

By Aaron Williams

Junior Members Corner

The Future is very bright!

If you watch or read the media, there are endless stories these days of kids who are off the rails bad with what they are doing. For example, stories of school kids going to their schools with guns, killing and wounding by opening fire on other students.

Or the stories of the sweet, good kids being viciously bullied by gangs of juvenile delinquent classmates. Some are bullied so bad and so often that they can't take it any longer and start doing things of self-harm, and some cases even leading to suicide. It's tragic!

We're being bombarded with stories and images of younger and younger kids using recreational drugs like cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, synthetic drugs, alcohol and cigarettes.

And then, there are the horror stories of kids who are being abusive towards their teachers at school, their siblings and even their own parents.

In a nutshell, if you see enough of these stories it appears like the world is going to hell in a handbag, and that our future is dark and doomed.

Thankfully I don't pay any attention to the media or their stories. Instead of wasting my time with that, I am honored to be a part of elite team of instructors at the Kenshinryu Aikido dojo for the Junior classes.



To work with these young people who are regularly showing up for training, working on themselves, and growing and evolving as they progress is exciting, enlightening and inspiring.

Week by week, class by class their personal development can be clearly seen in the smiles on the faces of the kids themselves, and on the parents faces who are overjoyed watching their kids positively transform.

Many parents almost can't believe it themselves how much they see their child go from starting out as an introverted, lost, timid, meek, fearful and maybe even bullied child, and turn into a self-believing, self-confident, self-respecting confident full-of-joy young person. The turnaround is night and day!

In the junior classes they learn and experience so much more than just learning the martial art of Aikido. They learn teamwork because they are all there to work with and assist each other through out each class. They gain coordination and fitness. They set and achieve goals. Make new empowering friendships.

And through learning the martial art of Aikido, they learn real skills to defend themselves to keep themselves safe if they are ever confronted with a dangerous situation. The best part is, because of their training and the way they

Continued.....



Junior Members Corner...continued.

gain such a self-confidence and awareness, they just don't attract as many of those kinds of situations toward themselves any more. They start to attain what is called "Command Presence". Bullies and/or trouble is not attracted to them any longer. The Aikido student no longer carries themselves as victims or prey. Instead they radiate with an energy that exudes self-assurance and personal power. It's not ego or aggression - it's certainty!

I have asked many classes, "Who here has experienced being bullied at school?". Usually every one of the kids say that they have been bullied. For some of them, it has happened many times. Then I ask them, "Who here has been bullied since consistently participating in Aikido classes?". No hands go up (all the kids get huge smiles on their faces, and so do the parents watching class!).

When Sensei David Dangerfield asked me to be an instructor for the Junior Aikido classes I was over-the-moon honored to be invited and to be of service. I came with the intention of giving and ever since have been in awe with how abundantly much more I wind up receiving from doing it.

Working with these young people who are transforming themselves and the lives of others, gives me the knowing that the world that we live in is doing just fine and will continue to do so. If there are people like these amazing transformational kids in the dojo, then there are a lot more of them throughout the world. If our future is in the hands these young people, our future is bright - very bright!



"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy!" - Rabindranath Tagore

Have a most outstanding day!

By Kurek Ashley



Winter and Spring Gasshuku's

Enquiries and bookings:



ph: 07 5445 9116
e: info@kenshin.com.au

Traditions for the Future
www.kenshin.com.au



Gasshuku's Galore!

If it's training you're after, look no further!

Winter Gasshuku—Palmwoods July

Spring Gasshuku—Sydney October

Malaysian Gasshuku—2020

Details to come.

Technique Workshop

Katate Mochi Nikajo Osae Omote



1. Face your partner in ai hanmi.



2. As your partner attacks your wrist perform omote footwork being sure to wait until the attack is close and your weight stays forward.



3. Shift off line and back once more to absorb that attack and keep your partner of balance .



4. Apply Nikajo.

Technique Workshop continued...



5. Allow your partners momentum to continue past your body and step in between body and arm.

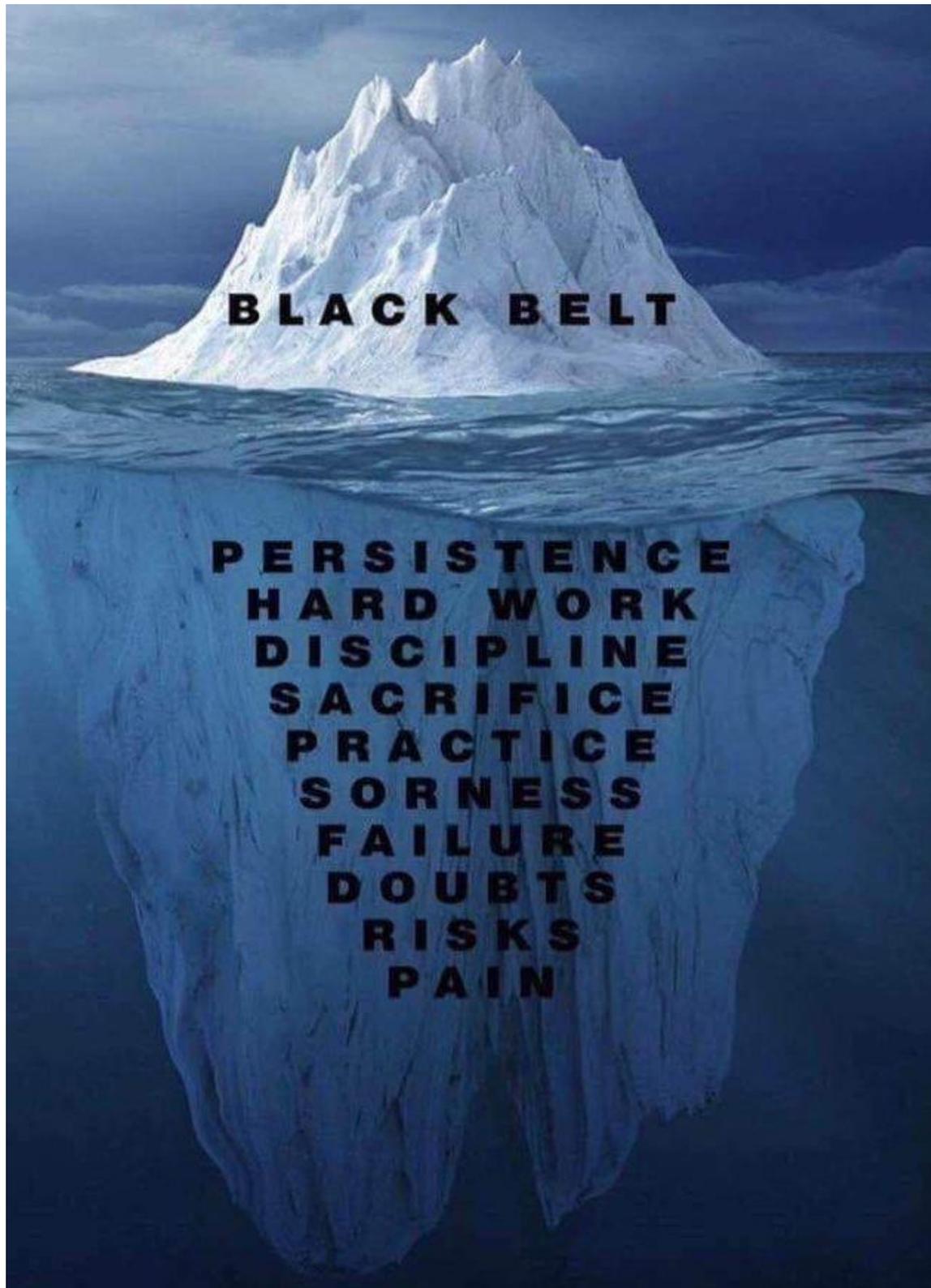


6. Control your partner to the ground securing their shoulder and head.



7. Apply Nikajo Osae

Inspirational corner



www.facebook.com/KenshinryuPalmwoods/