



SHINKI NEWS

NO. 34



Onegai shimasu

Editorial

Text: Lukas Underwood

Dear Members,

this issue of Shinki News is a special one, as it is the first time that a small supplement has been published. Nakajima Sensei celebrated his 80th birthday this year, and we as the Shinki News team would like to congratulate him! To honor this truly special occasion, you will find a few words from Duncan Underwood and Claudia Buder on Sensei's birthday in this issue. Also included is the play written for Sensei by Arian Wichmann and performed at the Seminar in Dresden.

The "regular" issue of Shinki News is all about Kata. We were able to conduct an interview with Sensei on the topic. There are also articles by Matthias Böttcher, Michael Danner, Rick Soriano and Tamás Haraszti on this topic. Charlene Schröder and Sabine Krissel, Günter Rinke, Michael Danner and Marius Trzaski have contributed seminar reports. We are very pleased to send you into 2024 with this comprehensive issue of Shinki News and wish you all peaceful and relaxing days off!

The Shinki News Team

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Soke's Word

Text: Michael Daishiro Nakajima

Dear Shinkiryu members, dear friends,

Today, shortly after my 80th birthday, I would like to sketch my career as a picture that you can see and possibly benefit from:

I was born on November 9, 1943 in Tokyo. That was in the middle of World War II. Although Japan was already on the verge of defeat after losing the naval battle off the Midway Islands, west of Hawaii, in June 1942, the Japanese newspapers only ever reported on the victories. Yes, it was supposedly Great Victories (Dai-Shori) everywhere. My grandmother supposedly wanted to give me this term as a name. But Daishori sounds odd as a name, so it was changed to Daishiro. Daishiro means something like "man with the great noble determination." But soon Tokyo also became a victim of the air raids. The wooden houses of the capital were destroyed and burned to the ground. Tokyo was a gray desert of rubble, just like Hiroshima after the atomic bomb was dropped, only it was hundreds of incendiary bombs that led to the result. Shortly before, my family moved north to the small city of Hanyu, where our relatives lived. Soon after, in February 1946, my father died of pulmonary tuberculosis. Because there was neither medicine nor reasonable and sufficient food. Even before his death, I was isolated from him for several months because of the risk of infection. He lived on the first floor, and I was on the ground floor with my mother and her adoptive mother. That's why I didn't know him at all. I was a little insecure boy - especially protected by this granny.

A few years later, my mother had a boyfriend again, and we moved to the town of Gyoda, about 10 km west of Hanyu, where he lived. This is where my mother married him, I started school, and we stayed in this town until the end of my first grade.

After that, my family moved to Kamakura, about 60 km south of Tokyo. A house belonging to the Nakajima family was still standing here, because Kamakura was hardly bombed, unlike Tokyo, where the family also had two houses and lost both. I was enrolled in the second grade, but I was still quite naïve and weak. We soon moved to a very simple house within Kamakura, probably because we were poor. This is where my stepfather became a timber merchant. It wasn't until the 4th grade, when I was elected one of the 6 class representatives, that I gradually gained self-confidence.

Until the end of the 6th grade, I went to the same elementary school. Since Kamakura has two famous beaches, I often went swimming to the sea in the summer. Otherwise, we neighbor kids often played in the surrounding wooded hills. Otherwise, I loved to play sumo wrestlers in the playground.

From the 7th grade, I went to a private Jesuit middle and high school in Yokosuka, which was known for its high level of education. My sporting activities also picked up speed during this time. Even the 30-minute bike ride to school was physically very demanding. There were also two hills between my house and the school. The bike didn't have gears at the time. During the breaks, I continued to wrestle sumo, but I started to train really in sports from the second year, i.e., the 8th grade. I joined the baseball club. My hitting skills were mediocre, but catching the long ball I was good at. Academically, I was mediocre, because my 180 classmates (boys only) had all been top students in their elementary schools. A special spiritual event was that I was baptized as a Catholic by a German priest in the 9th grade. In the beginning I was not a diligent believer, but over time I became so through intensive reading of biographies of saints.

In high school, I switched to the gymnastics club. Here I was even less gifted because my body is naturally very hard. While almost all of my classmates were studying diligently for the university entrance exam, I continued to read only religious books. I didn't have to study so fanatically either, because I was allowed to enter the Jesuit University Sophia in Tokyo without an exam by recommendation, which was also possible with the middle grades. Here I officially became a candidate of the Jesuit order. I studied Latin and philosophy for the first two years before entering the novitiate in Hiroshima. During these two years at university, I first belonged to the swimming club and then to the athletics club. In the latter, I experienced a very hard running training, because our university wanted to participate in the long-distance relay race between Tokyo and Mount Hakone (about 220 km one-way), which is very famous in Japan. Each university provided a team of 10 runners. So, one of them ran an average of 22 km. In the end, we narrowly lost in the preliminary decider. But this training gave me strong mental strength for many years. I compared later difficulties with the hardness of this training and said to myself, you can easily overcome them if you have endured this hardness of training. I didn't train that hard with Budo later on.

I dropped out of university after those two years and came to Hiroshima. Life in the novitiate was strictly regulated. We didn't have any free time other than a 45-minute lunch break, which we often used for a nap because the inner concentration was quite tiring for us beginners. We learned meditation in general, worked in the house and garden, listened to spiritual lectures. Twice a week there was a time and a half for sports. It was also there that I got to know the game of football for the first time. Before Christmas, we also went collecting for the poor people, which required some courage in the beginning. We also had an internship of one month in a slum in Tokyo. It was so cold in our dwelling that the water began to freeze over during Mass. We also accompanied a rag picker once. Essential to the novitiate education were four-week meditation retreats according to Ignatius of Loyola, but I did not feel a strong experience at that time, while in other daily meditations I was allowed to have some profound experiences.

After three years, I returned to Tokyo to continue my studies in philosophy at Sophia University. That was in 1967. Around this time, I learned karate from a Jesuit confrere who was studying an old Okinawa style in the karate club of Sophia University. Soon, the student movement also began to flare up violently worldwide. It was around this time that I fell in love with a girl in the country who was distantly related to me. It was a hard time because I felt that I had to continue on the path to becoming a religious priest. But in 1968, when the student movement became very violent, I was elected one of the class representatives of the philosophy department. So, I dedicated myself completely to this task. There were sessions after sessions, and it happened that I slept in a conference room over 4 hard wooden chairs without a blanket. I also took part in street demonstrations as a group leader. In the meantime, together with a few others, I founded the Federation of Christian Young Adults who fought for social change, but in contrast to the radical left, rejected violence. The radical left hated us. From the confiscated university loudspeaker, they agitated loudly against us. After a heated discussion in the student parliament, my people were afraid for me. But I was impressed by the sharp intellectual speech of the representative of the radical left. This exciting time finally helped me

to overcome the sorrow of falling in love. In 1969, when I was on campus, I received the news that my mother was very unwell. By the time I arrived at the hospital where she had been admitted, she had already died. She had become an alcoholic because of domestic grievances. This was 5 days before my 25th birthday. Around this time (early 1970) I also started Aikido training at the Honbu Dojo. But that had little to do with self-defense. I was very taken with O-Sensei's violence-reducing and religiously deepening idea. I completed my undergraduate studies in philosophy in 1969 (diploma thesis on Plato's theory of ideas) and continued with my master's degree until 1971 (master's thesis on the epistemology of Nicolaus Cusanus).

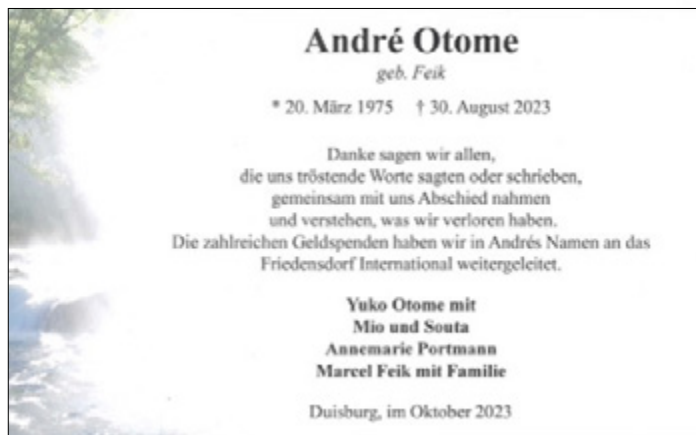
Actually, I was supposed to study theology straight away. But my wild activities during the student movement obviously did not please the Jesuit university administration so much, so I was sent to a Jesuit high school in Kobe as an interim teacher. In addition to my history lessons, I also did some work like an assistant to the janitor.

After a year, I returned to Tokyo for a short time to study theology in Frankfurt. There I studied for 3 years (1972-1975) and received the diploma in theology (diploma thesis on the doctrine of inspiration by Karl Rahner). During this time, I continued to train Aikido in Frankfurt. I met my future wife Susanne (in the Aikido Dojo) and left the Jesuit order shortly before my ordination to the priesthood. In the following time, Aikido master Kenji Shimizu came to Germany twice for about 2 weeks. I also accompanied him as an interpreter during this time. Eventually, I became his overseas uchideshi. In the meantime, I was a religion teacher, first at the girls' grammar school in Geisenheim am Rhein (1975-1978) and then at the all-day grammar school in Osterburken. **In 1983, I separated from Shimizu Sensei and became self-employed. How it went on, and how and when Daitoryu and Kenjutsu joined, you can read in my short vita on our homepage.**

And at some point, I turned 80.

Remarks

Ad of the family of André



Social fund

Despite the war in the Gaza Strip, the life of Namika's nephew in Cairo is not going badly. He works in a grocery store and shares an apartment with three other employees. The temporary residence permit is limited to three months. To get the permanent residency, he has to pay another \$800, but he can handle this himself. For him, it is essential that he can live without fear of arrest or torture.

Yukié (Namika's sister) is still in the hospital. There are still major problems with her stomach (stomach bleeding). Her eldest sister Jomana (with knee problems and 3 kidnapped children) has given up her own apartment and now lives in Yukié's basement apartment to save costs. We told Namika that we could cover the cost of the knee surgery of \$500. She will ask her sister if she wants the surgery because her sister is still hesitant because the rehab will be lengthy and will cost a lot. We are waiting for the answer. For the time being, we are supporting Jomana with painkillers that have to be imported from Lebanon (50 Euros per month, so that our aid currently amounts to a total of 250 Euros every month).

But there is good news about the basement apartment: The homeowner wanted to chase the extended family out and even reported them. But the judge saw that the lease runs for a total of 5 years. Now they can stay in it, and the homeowner also has to pay the court costs. To be honest, I don't really feel sorry for him.

A very good news here is that Namika can do an apprenticeship at the elderly care facility where she now works. In this way, she can later enter the world of work on a more solid basis. It's not a walk in the park, and she earns very little, but she bravely perseveres.

Articles

Notes



Laudation

by Duncan Underwood

Dear Sensei,

I would like to take your 80th birthday as an opportunity to describe some aspects and facets of your long journey.

Because what you have created over these many years is certainly a masterpiece. Your life's work, which still lives on and develops, was not there from the beginning as it is before us now. You continued to complete it and put it together into a larger whole.

Someone who is new and sees this so consistent result for the first time will have a hard time imagining how you achieved it. Because there is such a variety of techniques that for someone who is just starting out, it must be viewed as an unmanageable mountain. Just the idea of combining Aikido, Daitoryu, and Kenjutsu in one Budo school is challenging. Putting this into practice and filling it with depth, life, and love is only possible with a very high level of dedication, hard work, and genius. From the very beginning, you coupled this external framework that you created with a deeply felt belief in the internal development that is directly associated with it. For you, striving for this deep inner insight into the basic principles of our existence has an elementary meaning, without which one cannot understand your work in its entirety.

In general, your faith was and is what has deeply shaped your life. You were baptized at the age of 14 and then very rigorously pursued the goal of obtaining a professorship as a systematic theologian by studying philosophy and theology.

Life - and one could perhaps say divine providence - meant something different to you. Luckily for us.

Because if you hadn't met and loved Susanne in 1974, you wouldn't have ended up at school in Osterburken and wouldn't have opened your Dojo. As a professor, you would certainly not have made this path of martial arts the focus of your life, although you began it in the Hombu Dojo in 1967.

Your path, as someone who stood up for justice and against oppression from a very early age, has followed a clear line from the beginning in the student movement, where Jesus and Che Guevara were your role models, until today. But you certainly couldn't have imagined that in the end you would gather a student body of several hundred people around you and that your message would fall on such fertile ground.

I was able to accompany this development for a very long time, even if not from the beginning, but at least in some of the decisive turns. I have often thought that you expect too much of yourself and therefore of us, your students, that you try out too much and demonstrate too much diversity. But you were right. By combining the three budo arts, you have given everyone who wants to get involved the opportunity to develop in a way that would otherwise not have been possible. You have always been the driving force and have tirelessly given new impulses, without just scratching the surface, but on the contrary, always going deeper.

Dear Sensei, we all bow in deep gratitude to this work and its creator.

And even though you are now 80 years old, we all assume that you will not leave us anytime soon so that we can learn from you as long as we can.

Duncan



Text: Duncan Underwood



Michael Daishiro Nakajima – Our Sōke Turns 80

Text: Claudia Buder

What a number!
 What a life!
 And we are experiencing it.

On November 9, 2023, our Sensei, Shihan, Sōke opened a new decade on his life path.

We congratulate him, we cheer him, we honor him.

And how?

Wouldn't it be a worthy gift if we acted together in the spirit of SHINKI?

In other words, taking the usefulness of matter with us and yet putting the spiritual aspect at the center: the essential goes beyond the visible – SHINKI!

We have collected for Sensei so that he can continue to enjoy the Japanese flights of fancy without worries (and without restrictions).

At this point, we would like to thank everyone who donated so energetically. We did it! Those who did not have the opportunity to participate can still support the Social Fund with a donation. Dōmo arigatō!

The Aiki Budo course in Dohna was dedicated to his 80th birthday. And the focus was and is on acting together for Sensei.

As an artist with experience in theatre, Arian Wichmann created a play inspired by Rakugo, which combines various components: Japan, Akechi Mitsuhide (common family coat of arms with the Nakajima family!) and Shinki in the collection of matter and spirit (our gift).

On November 11, 2023 (St. Martin!), the time had come: All participants of the course stood on the stage of the event and designed the scenery.

Everyone plays, everyone participates!

Naruhodo!

But so that those who could not come to the course are also present, the created work is found here (below) as a reminder and for joy for times to come!

May the Eight in Ura form strengthen infinity!

Legacy

A theater play for Sensei's 80th Birthday

by Arian Wichmann





MAKURA: Japan's history is long and extended. There were many wars, intrigues, and verses. This is the first time that we have been able to find a solution, but above all, there was a shared belief in an all-encompassing code. To follow it was considered by many to be the highest good. It was especially important to stand by one's lord's side. For reasons of honor alone, the murder of this man resembled social suicide. For many years, Akechi Mitsuhide was seen as a bad person by the Japanese population because he dared to assassinate his master, Oda Nobunaga. It was only in his younger years that this picture changed. One of the possible interpretations of the historical events is told below. In order to understand the motivation for Akechi Mitsuhide's plot, it is important to get a better impression of Oda Nobunaga's nature. Nobunaga lied, humiliated, massacred, and deceived. In Echizen, he had more than 40,000 inhabitants killed who he believed to be of the wrong faith. He, himself, wrote in a letter: "The city is full of corpses, so that one can no longer see any free ground. I would have liked to show you that. Today I will search for them and slaughter them." Akechi Mitsuhide served under Lord Oda. Mitsuhide was an outstanding player on the Go board of his time. He was well-versed in the art of war as well as in the arts of art, a man of both ways. That night, he sits with an open view of the garden, pondering over a sheet of paper. With him is his faithful companion Toshizo.



SCENE 1

Gudrun enters the stage, rings a bell to introduce the piece and shows a golden 80.

Stage empty except for Tino.

Tino | Playing shakuhachi

MITSUhide: (writing)
In the light snowfall,
billions of worlds
are created in
every case tender flakes

Shakuhachi stops playing

TOSHIZO: Mitsuhide-sama, sir. So many evenings you sit at the open Shoji and quietly write your poems. I haven't dared to do it yet, but... May I read the poem you wrote today?

MITSUhide: (laughs) Who calls my poems, poems? My poems are not poems. Since my poems are not poems, we can talk about poems together. No Toshizo, it's going in my box. Should something happen to me... Know that I carry it with me. Then you can open it. May the energy of my heart speak to you from her.



SERVANT: Lord Akechi! The messenger has just arrived with the news. Oda is on its way to Hon'noji. There are about 150 samurai with him.

MITSUhide: Thanks to you Hachi. Inform the troops that tomorrow we will be there if you want to move out, you will be able to use them.

TOSHIZO: Mitsuhide-sama - what are you up to?

MITSUhide: Please forgive me that you are only finding it out now Toshizo. I have to tell you a story: 3 years ago, I was in battle with Hatano Hideharu. I defeated him. But at a high price that I didn't tell anyone about. Actually, my plan was to keep Hatano alive. I sent my mother to his castle as a guarantee for Hatano's life. But my lord Oda didn't care. He killed Hatano. Hatano's subjects then killed my mother. That's the day I started thinking. I have been instrumental in helping Oda get to where he is today. And he has murdered and displayed so many people carelessly, gratuitously, and dishonorably. I stand up for my mistakes, I have to bring him down.

TOSHIZO: You... you want to commit master's murder?

MITSUhide: Yes. It pains me, but my Lord Oda is a danger for this country and its inhabitants. He has begun to have people worship a stone, Toshizo, a stone. Soon he will demand that they worship Lord Oda. Even if it costs my honor, he can no longer indiscriminately execute entire villages to please himself.

TOSHIZO: You speak with determination. You've defended me from Oda, you've put your own lives in danger. Know that I am always behind you.





SCENE 2

Claudia | Renovation, intermediate music

Nobunaga raised in the middle, humbly waiting around him various people, including the Geishas and the posts, besides the underlings of the Nobunaga again and again calmed.

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, Oda Nobunaga is in Hon'noji. With him only about 150 Samurai. His actual armies are on the move elsewhere at the moment.

UNDERLING: Lord Oda, it's a pleasure to have you here. A delight! We didn't have you so much for you. Uh expected! Please, please - come in.

NOBUNAGA: Be quiet! Where is Shimai Soshitsu? I was told he was here. He's supposed to sell me the third tea bowl. Now don't crouch on the ground like that, man! Where is he?

UNDERLING: Lord Oda. You are great. Unfortunately, Shimai-san hasn't arrived yet. He hadn't expected you for a few days. Please, please. Come in. I immediately send a messenger to urge him to hurry. While you wait, you shall want for nothing.

NOBUNAGA: Nothing? Hmpf. I'll give you 2 days. If he is not here by then, I will kill all the inhabitants of the village because they kept me waiting. Bring Sake!

UNDERLING: Now if you want to know more about it, you will right away. (gestures)

2 Geishas appear, bring Sake



UNDERLING: And here's our first distraction for the gracious Lord.

Pamela & Wolfgang | Tango



UNDERLING: Great, great. Lord Oda, wasn't that great?

NOBUNAGA: Hmpf. You call this modern stuff dancing? I hope you have even better stuff or I'm still thinking about whether my next 2 days will be over in a few hours.

UNDERLING: Haha. Yes, sure... sure. Not if you want to know more about it, you will I'm sure your lordship will be thrilled with the next performance.

Henry & Bernd | Song



UNDERLING: Really nice. Very virtuosic. Always a pleasure.
 NOBUNAGA: Hmpf. yes, nice. But far too... PEACEFUL. I'm longing for more...
 UNDERLING: But not if you want to know more about it, you can I know exactly the thing!

Nathalie | Ukulele



UNDERLING: Great. If you want to know more about it, you can Something very special. Unique!
 NOBUNAGA: You're driving me crazy! Don't you have any entertainment? It makes my blood boil! Bring me women or I'll cut off all of your heads! More Sake!



SCENE 3

Claudia | Renovation, intermediate music

A looser round, symmetrically structured.

In the middle of the section left and right 3-4 people. Among them Mitsuhide.

NARRATOR: In the meantime, Mitsuhide set off with his army, about 13,000 people. Nobunaga's 150 won't stand a chance. The town of Hon'noji is about 2 days' journey away. On the evening of the first day, the army pauses at the Temple of Atago. Officially to pray for victory in the war against the Môri. But appearances are deceiving. Mitsuhide holds his very last poetry gathering there, during which chain poems, so-called Renga, are recited.

MITSUHIDE: Now is the time of rainy May.

GYOYU: The river flashes in the garden of the Sommerberg.

SATOMURA: Falling leaves slow down the flow of the pond.

MITSUHIDE: Dear Abbot, I have come to pray. Please take these poems. The thoughts on you reflect me and are therefore a part of me. I want to sacrifice them to Shinki.

Mitsuhide opens his box, takes out some of the notes and hands them to the abbot





SCENE 4

Claudia | Renovation, intermediate music

Same Setup as Scene 2

Volodimir | Sumo Demonstration

NOBUNAGA: Hmpf. Better... And now away with him.

UNDERLING: Maybe some Sake? (gesturing wildly to the Geishas)

NOBUNAGA: Give it away. You've got one more try!

Sabine & Aika | Dance Awa-Odori

NOBUNAGA: Paah. Get out of here, everyone! I'm going to sleep now. You have time until I wake up again to find something better. consider!



SCENE 5

Claudia | Renovation, intermediate music

There are two groups on stage,

Mitsuhide and Nobunaga in 1/10 ratios at the front.





Doro | Inset: Life decisions

DORO: I kill him? Kill him!
I would sooner have drawn the murder steel on my own chest!
Is compassion a sin? Pity!
Why do I have to look him in the eyes!
The features reflect the noble face!
I drove my lambs guiltlessly on the silent mountain high.
But you tore me into life, into the proud princely hall,
To give in to the guilt, alas! It wasn't my choice!

Johannes | Inset: Lesson from the Downpour

JOHANNES: Hear the lesson of the downpour!
A man, surprised by the sudden rain,
scurries from doorway to doorway and ends up getting wet.
But once you accept that it's natural to get wet when it rains,
then you can walk through the rain with peace of mind.
This applies to everything.

Mitsuhide gives the signal to attack.

At first, only a few people break away from the group of attackers and attack Nobunaga's group.

4-5 Jiyu-waza groups are formed.

The defenders manage to fight back. Slowly, more attackers join the group.

There are more and more.

At some point, the defenders are overrun.

Nobunaga is buried under bodies.





SCENE 6

Claudia | Renovation, intermediate music

There are two groups on stage. Mitsuhide and 4-5 of his followers.

Hiding waiting 1-2 assassins.

NARRATOR: Oda Nobunaga had fallen. And his death left a power vacuum. Mitsuhide, who assumed his power and post, did not want to keep them permanently. He was looking for allies with whom he could organize an orderly and stable transition. But his search failed. He was not trusted, the murderer of the Lord. He was thought to be a usurper, another dishonorable ruler who needed to be eliminated. A battle ensued, but Mitsuhide managed to escape. With him on the run, his companion Toshizo. But the danger was not yet averted.

Group on stage is moving, the assassins ambush them. Mitsuhide is hit.



Mitsuhide in the arms of Toshizo.

MITSUHIDE: (with the last of his strength) My faithful Toshizo. You have remained faithful to me for a long time. Here, take my casket. It will be of more use to you in the future than it will be to me. You see the moon by pointing your finger. You know the finger by the moon. Moon and finger - not the same, not different. To guide beginners, this parable is sometimes used. Once you have seen how things really are, there is neither moon nor fingers.

NARRATOR: But Toshizo doesn't understand a word, writes Mitsuhide's last words on a piece of paper and puts it in the box.





SCENE 7

Claudia | Renovation, intermediate music

On the stage in the middle a new lord, never seen before. Around him are the followers of Mitsuhide. Among others, Toshizo, who has just received the casket.

TOSHIZO: Lord. We are all in your debt. You have taken us in, the former subjects of Akechi Mitsuhide. My late master left us something that he himself described as his greatest treasure. Please take this box as a token of our gratitude to you.

Handover crate

NARRATOR: But this lord was not versed in the two ways, as it should be. Mitsuhide. It was a political calculation to take in the remaining followers of Akechi Mitsuhide. And so, he did not understand the deeper value of the casket.

Lord opens box, poems fall out

LORD: I don't see anything of value.

END OF PLAY



Handing over the casket to Sensei, representing various poems, congratulations, etc.; but also contains the money for the trip.

Claudia speaks freely in her own words. The following text is only to be understood as a description of the content.

CLAUDIA: Sensei!
You are our greatest treasure!
We would now like to give you Ki in just a minute.

Minute of Prayer

CLAUDIA: This box we present you with our collected treasures that go beyond matter.
We put our hearts into it for you so that you may see the value.
Hai.



Kata – Interview with Sensei

by Lukas Underwood

Lukas: Hello Sensei, thank you for taking the time to talk to me about this topic. I sent you the guiding questions, so you know what it's all about. I would like to start in a very basic way: What is your understanding of Kata? Where does kata begin and where does kata end? Strictly speaking, you could also say that every practice in Aikido is kata, right?

Sensei: First of all, there is a difference in the name between Kata and our Aikido exercises. What we practice in training would be called Kumidachi in the sword, because you practice in pairs or with several people. In Aikido, there is no equivalent word for Kumidachi. It's not easy.

L: Is kata always a one-on-one exercise?

S: Yes, rather. Of course, there are also katas that are not performed alone. For example, when you see karate, the three of them do an exercise at the same time. This is also kata. In a free fight, one would rather say Kumite, but that is not possible in Aikido, because our practice is already fixed, i.e., which attack comes and which throw follows. As far as I know, there is no special term in Aikido. Kata is a one-on-one exercise for us, because we haven't designed a kata for two or three people so far. I don't intend to do that in my life [laughs]. If someone wants to do that after me, they can do that. But if there are too many katas, then it becomes difficult for the students to learn everything. From my point of view, katas are basic exercises that are performed alone and with proper breathing technique. In this way, you learn to make the foundation your own. And it's also handy when someone doesn't have a partner, at home, for example. In this case, you can supplement the joint practice by practicing alone. Like during the Corona period, if you can't practice much with others, then you can still practice kata. Then, firstly, you don't forget the basic exercises and secondly, you can experience Ki effects better.

L: Could you say that kata is good if you have to practice the basics and beyond that it's really just an addition? There is also a kata, which is very difficult, even if the movements are not complex, it is much more than a basic exercise. So, kata is always important in practice?

S: Yes, so if you can practice with your partner all the time, then maybe you can call kata not really necessary. Sometimes it is the case that if you practice with a partner from the beginning, then it may be that you can shape your movement well. But if you practice alone, there is no resistance and you can learn the basic movement well.

L: And what is the exact difference between Kata and Suburi?

S: Suburi is practically only with weapons and Suburi is also a very short movement. You could call it a kind of kata in a broader sense. But Suburi is mainly even more basic than Kata. For example, if we take the sword Suburi, they are not sequences, but only individual movements. Suburi helps a lot in the correct wielding of the sword. By repeating the simple exercise, one can also have a Ki experience.

L: But sometimes it seems to me that the distinction is not clear-cut. With Jo Suburi Ni and also with Tachi Suburi Ni the movements become more fluid. Is the second form an intermediate state between Suburi and Kata?

S: Yes, you can say that.

L: And Kamae Undo is not a Suburi because there are no weapons involved? So, this is a purely linguistic separation?

S: Yes, exactly. Although, Undo means movement. Of course, Kamae is ultimately to be performed correctly with the inner attitude and Ki. But it's mainly about what form of kamae you practice. In the case of the sword, there are many more kamae forms. Nevertheless, it is the basic exercise of movement.

L: Ah yes, exciting. You developed our katas. What I would be interested in is that it is noticeable that there is the Tachi Kata and the Jo Kata, the Kata Tenchi is clearly different from it. Why didn't you develop an equivalent kata without weapons?

S: Because practicing in Aikido is very similar to kata. But actually, there was still a kata called Kogarashi. It was a Atemi Kata, but there was one number I didn't like, so I put it all aside. It was almost finished, but one point wasn't good, then – bang, gone (laughs).

L: Everything?

S: Yes (laughs). I still remember some elements from my head and if I want to, I can show them as well. But will it be too much to practice? But actually, it's not bad because we don't specifically learn attacks.

L: That's exciting, but you've never shown them?

S: No, not intensively. Some may have seen some things briefly, but I never really showed them. It's like a karate kata, but the forms are different, the posture is different, we don't hit with the fist, but with the edge of the hand and so on. But that would actually be very interesting.

L: Yes, I don't think I've ever seen that in an Aikido style either. Is there such a thing?

S: Not as far as I know. But you would actually have to master something like that, also so that the other person can defend himself against such attacks. If the strikers are all amateurs, then the defensive techniques of Aikido are not so serious.

L: This now leads in a different direction, but out of interest. Should you practice the right punch and the right attack intensively?

S: Yes, that would be good if you want to take Aikido seriously as a budo. But many don't want to do that and then it's not necessary. But because I see Aikido as Budo and not only health-promoting and dance-wise, both of which are also very important, but I consider Aikido as Budo – afterwards, after doing some karate, I realized that it was very good because I got a feeling of attack. In other words, what attack is coming. There is a tendency in Aikido not to learn enough forms of attack and still pretend that you can do it. For example, there are techniques against sword, but if those who perform the attacks do not master the forms of attack, then it is not to be taken seriously.

L: What does the name Ko Ga Rashi mean?

S: Loosely translated, it means cold wind, which causes the leaves to wither in winter. I thought it was good because Kogarashi is a very sharp wind and we have to be able to protect ourselves from such an element.

L: But you never thought about improving the one element again and then showing the whole kata again?

S: Maybe in my old days again (laughs)

L: And with the Jo Kata and the Tachi Kata – did you get inspired somewhere?

S: To some extent, yes, of course I know different sword movements, you can't free yourself from such prerequisites, of course that flows into it. But I didn't consciously take anything over.

L: What was your basic idea when creating the katas? Or are they coincidentally the way they are today?

S: No, I already had the idea that we have to master the basic exercises in weapons if we want to defend ourselves against such techniques without weapons. That was the basic idea from which I developed it. Of course, you can record all kinds of things, but we can't practice everything these days. The samurai dealt with it every day and lived for it, but I don't see the point in that today's world. If some people want to do that, I'm absolutely not against it, but for most of them it's too much. That's why I've only included the basics.

L: Okay, but now we also have the Shinki Toho, which makes the sword aspect much more present. Could you say, then, that if you practice Shinki Toho well, then perhaps practicing Tachi Kata is a little less significant?

S: I wouldn't say that. If Shinki Toho is practiced properly, then the suburi and kata will get better from practicing.

L: Yes, but sometimes you get the feeling that Tachi Kata comes from another time, when sword wielding was closer to Aikido. Sometimes I have the feeling that it conflicts with the execution in Shinki Toho. Now you say that they complement each other quite well. Should there be a difference in sword wielding whether you do Shinki Toho or Tachi Kata?

S: Actually, the same principle should apply. Shinki Toho is always with a partner, so there is automatically a difference. But the individual exercises, the sword handling should be the same.

L: What do you think makes a good kata? So, what are you looking at?

S: Firstly, of course, precision, because certain leadership elements need to be practiced. At the same time, the Ki must gradually become more noticeable. The body should also not be stretched and filled with strength, but should be soft and thus sharper. In fact, you wrote that I said that I hardly see good Kata Tenchi, that's true (laughs). People don't study with me all the time and if the trainers don't practice intensively enough, then they don't show the form that satisfies me. But I probably don't convey the basic idea of what's behind it enough. Actually, the basic forms of Shihonage, Kote gaeshi, Iriminage, they are all in there. These are basic forms, so it should be possible for it to be practiced well.

L: I always have the impression that with Jo and Tachi it's very clear what is expected. Of course, it is also clear with Kata Tenchi, but I have the feeling that the principle behind it is more complex.

S: Yes, that's why we have to practice them again and again.

L: The saying I wrote down, that you said that you had seen a good Kata Tenchi first, I have heard that from various people.

S: Yes, it may be that I said that once. I've completely forgotten who did it well (laughs). But that's also good, so everyone can imagine that it was him/her.

L: You said it before, actually kata is a one-on-one exercise. However, if we take the same exam as another person during courses, we are expected to show the kata synchronously. That's very difficult, because you only have very little time to practice together. So why is this so important in the evaluation of the exam?

S: Because, when you take the Dan exam, you have to be able to perceive other people who are moving in the room. Even if it is not yet developed in terms of content, the form must be coordinated with each other. It can also be seen as a weakness when there are multiple attackers, and some people don't pay attention to all of them. They only pay attention to the person who is currently attacking and that must not be the case. Especially from the third dan.

L: How much room for individuality is there in the execution?

S: There is not much room for external individuality in our katas. The decisive difference is said to be in the Ki. This is also the meaning of kata.

L: Maybe to come back to the connection to Aikido. When you see someone practicing Aikido. Do you see the same mistakes in the kata as well?

S: Yes, often the movement is not precise. This is usually very clear to see in Kata Tenchi, that people do not perform some movements cleanly, this is then performed too blurred. By the way, during the exam, I have also noticed it the other way around, that individual examiners perceive individual movements well, but lose sight of the entire flow. There were then surprising judgments for me to let a person exist for whom the overall movement is not yet there. While others, where the overall movement is there, have failed due to careless mistakes. In general, there is a tendency to adhere too much to the examination regulations. But training is also an everyday test. Overall, too much emphasis is placed on deadlines and so on, it is much more important that the content is right.

L: And tell me, do you have a favorite kata?

S: Yes, I like Kata Tenchi. In the katas with weapons, the form is somewhat limited by the weapon. In Tenchi, the basic movement of Aikido can be seen, but the body has to show itself as a whole. The kata is relatively short compared to other katas, but in the brevity the basic content has to come into its own.

L: Is there a point where you would also say that now you can break away from kata to a certain extent? Especially since it's so fundamental?

S: Yes, absolutely. But coming back to kata again and again isn't bad. Then, when you feel that you are stuck, you can go back to the basic techniques. A similar effect is also present with kata.

L: Sensei, thank you very much for the interview, I really enjoyed it and it was very enlightening!



Interview: Sensei and Lukas Underwood

Thoughts on Kata

by Matthias Böttcher

In Japanese, the two kanji (型 or 形) are used to represent the budo term "Kata". With a very short internet search, in-depth examinations of the nuances of these two signs can be found. The topic of "Kata" and comparable forms of exercise in martial arts of other cultures has also been scientifically researched in great detail. That's why I think only a personal point of view is appropriate at this point. Since I am socialized in a club that includes six different martial arts departments, I would like to approach the content of the term from different directions and also make the voices of my esteemed trainer colleagues audible. Sometimes some of these views seem to contradict each other, but the conclusion we can draw from different points of view is what I consider to be the added value of this article.

At their core, the two kanji mean something like "shape, track, figure, pattern". My individual perception considers the character 型 to be authoritative, as it can be translated as "mold" in other contexts. It is therefore a very rigid structure through which a raw mass (a budo practitioner) is given a form (that of a budo practitioner). Roughly summarized, Kata are predetermined sequences of movements that are performed alone or together with a partner.

This is clearly visible in Karate, where the forms are given great importance and a lot of training time as the primary school of movements. The refinement of the included techniques with regard to practical application takes place in separate exercises (so-called "Bunkai" 分解).

In contrast, in Korean Taekwondo, which is historically and technically closely related to Japanese Karate, I observe a big difference between the movements in the forms and the competition.

Again, the statement of a kendo trainer fits in with this: "Kata is the beautiful Kendo, the beautiful sword movements. You don't need them in competition, but you can't get anywhere without them."

With these three examples, it can be questioned whether Kata should be considered more of a basic form or a refinement of a fighting style. As an Aikidoka, you may quickly be drawn to view the competition as a threat to technical versatility and accuracy. But shouldn't we question the combat effectiveness of the technology? Of course, the rules of the competition also play a role, but that would be going too far at this point. In the end, the interesting question always remains whether you can, within any set of rules.

A surprisingly long list of partner Kata names the most common budo discipline "judo" in its curriculum. A judoka I know, who is an absolute ace in his field, always says with a slightly disparaging undertone: "Kata means: the opponent does not defend himself." Let's take a look at the procedure of such a Kata at this point: an uke performs a predetermined attack, which the tori (counterpart to gnaw) responds to with a prearranged technique. This is the most common training method we do in Aikido. The instructor corrects the execution in detail ("... keep your back straight... the arms must remain long... do the Sabaki all the way to the end... occurs more clearly when ejected..."), which clearly leads us back to the concept of the mould. In Aikido, you can, in my opinion, even try to transform one unsuccessful technique into another if this is appropriate. For example, a failed Ikkyo can often become Nikkyo or Sankyo. In this way, the training can turn into a kind of free fighting, which actually cannot exist in Aikido. However, care must be taken not to deviate willfully or too willingly from the common thread with which the instructor wants to guide through his lesson.

In Aikido, we don't have Randori (乱取 = chaotic attacking). Only with the terms "Jiyu-Seme" and "Jiyu-Waza" do we touch on a form of exercise in which Nage can freely draw from the pool of his acquired skills how he wants to counter an attack. However, all participants remain in their roles as attackers and defenders. In martial arts with a very strong competitive orientation, this is sometimes referred to as "children's sparring". Although it remains to be seen whether uke defends himself or simply puts up with everything, my conclusion is: The main form of exercise in Aikido is by definition Kata.

In Kenjutsu, Kata is not considered alive enough to describe the practice method. That's why the term Kunitachi (組太刀 Clash of Swords) prevails here. The practitioners are supposed to engage in a sword fight in which there are predetermined attack patterns and reactions to them that are considered ideal, but no rigid adherence to them (cf. Kumite, Kumijo). Kunitachi is a free fight in which an erroneous deviation from the imparted ideal technique is exploited by the opponent and thus punished. A large part of this is based on improvisation from the entire repertoire of techniques within the ryu. This is more or less how the predominant form of exercise in Aikido can be kept alive.

I got to know a completely different approach to this in the course of my life in the Filipino martial arts. Similar to our Exam Suburi, there are individual forms here, but they are subject to constant interpretation. In a sequence of punches and blocks with a club (or machete), a coach said to me, "At your next exam, I want you to include punches and kicks in between." By this he meant not only that I should supplement the form at my own pace, but also look for an opportunity for a knee strike, for example, when called. This created a deeper situational awareness, especially of the need to react spontaneously to the unforeseen in combat. In my opinion, this is a major weakness of the Kata in Japanese Budo.

At the end of the day, Kata, as we practice it in Shinkiryu Aiki Budo, is a sequence of movements that both allows for the internalization of an elementary school and can work in the other direction. Due to the growing experience, there are always nuances that can be refined, e.g., not all movements of a Kata should be done at the same speed. There are clearly parts that need an increased tempo and a different emphasis. Of course, the awareness of this grows with the progress of the practitioner. This is also stated in our examination regulations, but for me the Kata is one of the clearest indicators of whether a Budoka questions what he is doing.

The Kata allows you to practice alone, both in the absence of a training partner and to be able to concentrate better on yourself. These last points are probably the reason why my colleagues who practice (German) Ju-Jutsu have often signaled that they regret the lack of Kata in their martial arts.

As an outlook, I can say that the more focus there is on competition or self-defense in a martial art, the less important forms in any form of understanding seem to become. However, I am not aware of any traditional martial art that completely dispenses with it. Basically, a large number of repetitions always helps to internalize a movement correctly. That's why I see practicing with yourself as an opportunity to get a feeling for your own body and become more confident in it.

Sources:

Budopedia.de, Wikipedia.de, Wadoku.de, personal conversations with other martial artists



Text: Matthias Böttcher

Shinki Rengo Kata – Overview and classification as well as practical considerations

by Michael Danner

Introduction

In our Shinki Rengo Aikido, more precisely in the examination regulations of Shinki Rengo, there are eight kata, two of them without weapons (Kamae-Undo and Kata Tenchi) and three each with sword and jo. The kata are required in the various Aikido exams and are therefore an integral part of our Aikido style.

But first, the question, what is a kata or what constitutes a kata?

Kata is translated or defined in the "Lexicon of Aiki-Budo Terms Japanese-German" (see Shinkiryu homepage) as a formal sequence of movements without a partner. Kata as a character is also translated as a form ([http://www.budopedia.de/wiki/Kata_\(Form\)](http://www.budopedia.de/wiki/Kata_(Form))).

As a result, kata is usually practiced alone and the movement sequences to be practiced are fixed. These can be forms or techniques.

What makes kata special?

So, what is special about kata in general?

The fact that you practice them without a partner is already in the above definition. However, the fact that they can be practiced alone allows the practitioner to improve without being influenced by different partners/uke. Of course, in the course of Aikido training you learn a lot from different partners over the years, but just rehearsing a form or sequence of movements allows for other possibilities of training than always "just" practicing with others. You can concentrate much more on the details and on these works, e.g., how is the footing, the height of an atemi or an attack.

In addition, the Ki aspect can be practiced very well with kata. Conscious breathing helps with this, as well as the consciously and precisely executed movements of the forms. Kata are therefore a kind of meditation in motion.

Special features of the Shinki Rengo Kata

The Kamae Undo and the Suburi (Kata for the student/Kyu grades) are still quite simple, so this is mainly about learning the basics of the movements with the basic steps, as well as with stick and sword.

Already in the youngest Aikidoka, Kamae Undo is required at 10th Kyu, i.e., the first Aikido exam ever, even before the first techniques! For adults, this kata is also required for the first kyu exam (for 5th kyu). Of course, the expectations of the execution of the kata are significantly higher for adults than for children or adolescents.

In the kata of the Dan degrees, the processes are more complex and demand much more from the practitioners, matching the respective Dan graduations! The Tachi-Kata, with the sword, as well as the Jo-Kata, with the Jo, represent a challenging sequence of movements with the weapons; which, in my experience, can hardly be learned from the descriptions and exam videos alone. Here, as with the other kata, you need guidance from a teacher, especially to learn the details.

The Kata Tenchi, with its sequence of different Aikido techniques, is the most demanding kata as a conclusion. Mastering them can also be very aesthetically pleasing in my opinion! In addition, the already mentioned Ki aspect can come into its own in Kata Tenchi, among other things in the breathing exercises and Kokyu-nage, as well as the sword guides before the final breathing exercises.

Result

I see the kata as a very good addition to the "normal" Aikido training with partners! The practice of kata should, therefore, also be carried out regularly in normal training. The individual development of the Aikidoka, as well as successful exams are hopefully the reward for the intensive practice of the kata.

Kata courses as a supplement to normal training

In cooperation with the Pforzheim Aikido group, we regularly conduct pure kata courses to enable more detailed practice of the kata. Depending on the level of knowledge or the upcoming exam of the participants, all Shinki Kata can be practiced individually in detail. Especially the work on the subtleties is often neglected in normal training due to a lack of time or appropriate focus.



Text: Michael Danner

The Importance and Benefits of Suburi and Kata Training

by Rick Soriano

Every Sunday morning, the regulars show up for training at the Heidelberg Shinki Rengo Aikido / Sansuikai Aikido Dojo. We begin promptly at 08:00 a.m. after sitting in Seiza and bowing to O'Sensei and the Kamiza to begin with what many of us have been doing for the past 25+ years: the Aikido Shinki Rengo Kata and Suburi (see Kata-Beschreibungen (Kata Descriptions), <https://www.shinkiryu.de/aikido/de/Info.php>)¹:

Kamae Undo	Jo Suburi 1
Tachi Suburi 1	Jo Suburi 2
Tachi Suburi 2	Jo Kata
Tachi Kata	Kata Tenchi

We are fortunate to have a detailed and comprehensive Shinki Rengo Aikido Suburi and Kata program that M.D. Nakajima Soke developed. Thanks also to Michael Danner Sensei for his recent update of the Shinki Rengo examination regulations, as well as the Suburi and Kata instructions. We adjusted to the latest updates and focusing on refining our movements and seeking Shoshin (beginner's mind), Mushin (no mind), Fudoshin (immovable mind), and Zanshin (remaining mind).

Background (Buki Waza – Weapons Training)

Morihiro Saito Sensei² (March 31, 1928 – May 13, 2002) practiced and trained with O'Sensei for more than 20 years at Iwama Dojo and recorded O'Sensei's Bokken (Aiki Ken) and Jo (Aiki Jo) techniques. O'Sensei did not name most of his Bokken and Jo movements, so Saito Sensei decided to document detailed descriptions and informative photographs and video recordings of O'Sensei's movements. O'Sensei occasionally taught Bokken and Jo outside of Iwama Dojo, but did not allow anyone to teach weapons training (Buki Waza) at Aikikai Hombu Dojo, Tokyo.³

Over the years, we incorporated the following additional Jo Kata to our weekly Sunday training routine, sequencing them between the Shinki Rengo Aikido Jo Kata and Kata Tenchi:

Ju San No Kata (13 movements)
 Ni Ju Roku No Kata (26 movements)
 San Ju Ichi (Ippon) No Kata (31 movements)

Saito Sensei left his legacy to the Aikido world by transcribing O'Sensei's Ju San No Kata and San Ju Ichi (Ippon) No Kata. Both Katas can also be practiced with a partner (Kumi Jo). Georg Umlauf Sensei taught us the Ni Ju Roku No Kata, which can also be practiced as Kumi Jo. We practice the various Suburi and Kata movements to enhance and improve our Aikido movements.

Terms and Definitions

Before progressing any further, it is important to address some pertinent terms and concepts so that one can better reflect on the importance and benefits of practicing Suburi and Kata:

Suburi (素振り)

This Japanese word literally means “naked” or “unadorned swing.” It applies to various sports (e.g., baseball, golf, tennis swings), as well as in martial arts such as in Aikido, Iaido, Kendo, and Kenjutsu, where repetitive cutting exercises are practiced.⁴ I remember practicing with a Bokken during one of my first weapons training sessions. The trainer required us to perform Shomenuchi cuts 1,000 times. The movements quickly became harder and harder after around 300 repetitions. Our arms and shoulders began to burn and become sore. Soon, we noticed that we were moving with less force and power and with more efficiency and a unified body movement (arms, shoulders, body, and legs). Our bodies naturally adjusted to a more efficient movement in order to lessen the pain and burning. This was an interesting and amazing experience!

Kata (型 or 形)

Kata is the Japanese word for “form” and applies to practicing detailed movements to learn and memorize either alone or in a group.⁵ The form (Kata) and the various movements develop over time and after continuous training. Tai Sabaki (body movement), Ashi Sabaki (foot movement), and Te Sabaki (hand movement), when practiced over and over in a Kata help maximize efficiency, while minimizing excessive or unnecessary movements, much as performing 1,000 sword cuts results in one's body finding efficiency through movement.

Awase (合わせ)

The Japanese word “Awase” means “to blend,” “to join,” or “to harmonize with.” Awase applies not only to Aikido, but also to all aspects of one’s life. Miles Kessler Sensei, a student of Saito Sensei teaches “Awase” in Aiki Ken through the 1) blending of hands; 2) blending of feet or steps; 3) blending of speed; and, 4) blending of timing or rhythm.⁶ By practicing Suburi and Kata, one develops one’s ability to incorporate Awase (blending) in the specific form and movements that are part of each Suburi and Kata sequence of movements.

Musubi (結び)

Musubi (or blending) is a Japanese Shinto term that describes the force or energy (Ki) that brings different individuals or things together.⁷ Awase and Musubi are two terms that are somewhat similar, but are at the same time, quite different. Jun Akiyama, the Webmaster for Aikiweb.com, explains that “from a purely semantic viewpoint, “Awase” comes from the verb “Awaseru” which, in turn, comes from the verb “au” (all of which use the same character as “Ai” in “Aikido”). “Awaseru” basically means “to match <something> up with <something else>” and “Awase” is basically its noun form. “Musubi” comes from the verb “Musubu” which basically means “to tie.” He further states: “For me, at least, in an Aikido sense, “Awase” carries the connotation of matching one’s movements up with someone else’s... We use “musubi” to connote a sense of connection, whether physical or spiritual, with your partner.”⁸

Ki no Nagare (気の流れ)

Ki No Nagare, the flowing of Ki, is the execution of Aikido techniques in fluid motion without stopping or interrupting the movement. Aikido students normally start with static techniques (grasps or holds) and progress to Ki No Nagare movements as they become more experienced and advanced. O’Sensei recommended that students begin Ki No Nagare only after one achieves the rank of Sandan.⁹ Practicing the specific movements in each Suburi and Kata result in the ability to perform those movements in Ki No Nagare, without conscious thought (Mushin). Just as a baseball player can catch a ball without consciously overthinking what to do when catching a baseball, so too can an experienced Aikidoka perform an Aikido technique with efficiency and flowing Ki, minimizing the use of muscle and force and performing each movement with minimal conscious effort required.

Maai (間合い)

Maai is the space-time/rhythm and distance between opponents. Often, students mistake the meaning of Maai as only relating to distance. The “interval” or “engagement distance” between two opponents also includes speed or rhythm depending on one opponent being faster or the other being slower. If two opponents strike simultaneously, the one who maintains Maai can prevent being struck while being able to strike or control the other opponent.¹⁰ Suburi and Kata practice assists practitioners in practicing their Ki extension through their Bokken or Jo, to blend (Awase and Musubi) with others, and to practice the various states of mind (Mushin, Shoshin, Fudoshin, and Zanshin) as explained below. The space-time/rhythm and distance elements of Maai are quite interesting and noteworthy.

Mushin (無心)

Mushin is “no mind” or “the mind without mind,” a state when your brain is not preoccupied with anything else but what you are performing at that certain moment. Movement is the result of following your instincts or the training that you have ingrained in yourself, without thinking about the next move. Mushin can be achieved through meditation as well as through continuous practice to the point of no longer having to think about your movement.¹¹ Meditation is an integral part of Shinki Rengo and Mushin is a result of meditation training, as well as practicing Aikido, Aiki-jujutsu, Aiki Budo, and Shinki Toho.

Shoshin (初心)

Shoshin means “beginner’s mind.” This state of mind is the letting go of your preconceptions and having an open mind that is empty and willing to learn and consider everything. Children have beginner’s mind and are open to new experiences and stimuli. Those who resist Shoshin tend to assume that they already know something and ignore information and actions that are contrary to what they have experienced or what they may expect. The Zen master, Shunryo Suzuki stated that “in the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s, there are few.”¹² How many times have you trained with a partner who immediately starts “teaching” you how to do a technique the “correct way” (their way)? I try to avoid these type of “teaching experts,” especially when they try to teach you what is not what the instructor just showed.

Fudoshin (不動心)

Fudoshin means “immovable mind.” Someone who displays Fudoshin tends to stand strong and determined when faced with circumstances that may seem impossible to overcome.¹³ When the mind is calm, intent is pure and Ki is strong. Movement becomes calm and flawless, with little or no error.¹⁴

Zanshin (残心)

Zanshin is translated as “remaining mind,” a term used in Zen and martial arts to describe the mental state of alert calm and awareness of your environment. This focus and attention occur before, during, and after executing a technique or executing a strike.¹⁵

As we practice our Sunday morning Suburi and Kata training, we synchronize our movements with one another; and, we develop our Awase by blending the movement of our bodies (Tai Sabaki), the movement of our hands (Te Sabaki), the movement of our feet (Ashi Sabaki), connecting with each other by maintaining distance, speed, and rhythm (Maai), while blending and harmonizing our Ki with each other (Musubi). This harmonious blending of our Ki and movements result in improving Ki No Nagare Suburi and Kata movements.

Often, those who are preparing for an Aikido examination are offered the opportunity to lead the group with the specific Suburi or Kata that they are preparing for. It is quite interesting to note that, at first, many either lead the group too slowly or too fast. Often, they are uncertain about the next movements or unsure that they will perform them properly. This is normal. Sometimes they forget the next sequence because they are thinking quicker than they can execute the movement. Over time, they are able to blend their Ki and movement with the rest of the group. They are able to complete the Suburi or Kata without too much concentration, because the movements and form have

become a natural part of their movement (or perhaps they simply become one with the Suburi or Kata that they are performing). Suburi and Kata training provides opportunities for everyone to lead training and to improve not only their movements, but also their confidence, focus, and attention (Zanshin).

Sempai (advanced students) are encouraged to provide positive feedback to Kohai (beginner students), resulting in additional training opportunities for all trainers (“train the trainer”). Sempai provide Kohai with the opportunity to learn the Suburi and Kata through the “crawl,” “walk,” and “run” method, similar to the way a young child learns to crawl, walk, and run. Sempai are asked (or they volunteer) to teach what they know to Kohai, one-to-one. Sometimes, Sempai learn something new or unlearn something that they did not really understand before and perhaps applied incorrectly. Over time, all Kohai become adept at executing the various movements and are more confident in joining the main group of practitioners. Sempai become more adept at teaching the movements and improving their teaching abilities. Kohai learn depending on the method that best suits them (mentally, learning by doing, learning by explanation, learning by copying, etc.).

We practice Kamae Undo, the Tachi and Jo Suburi, and Kata Tenchi only once on Sundays. We practice Tachi Kata and the Jo Katas twice. The first iteration of the Kata includes counting each separate movement and sequence. For those who are interested, they can practice counting in Japanese, which, for many, is difficult at first. Counting and the coordination of movement and timing, help one associate each movement with a specific count in order to memorize the Kata movement and sequence. When we perform the second iteration without counting, we strive to perform the movements with fluidity (Ki No Nagare).

Through regular Suburi and Kata training, we train our minds and bodies and improve our four states of mind (Mushin, Shoshin, Fudoshin, and Zanshin). Posture, confidence, coordination, and synchronization improve. Of note, we never get bored with Suburi and Kata training, for there is much more to learn. For example, we have noticed to truly synchronize our movements, the person leading a Suburi or Kata is not solely responsible for coordinating everyone's movements. Each participant is also responsible for synchronizing their movement with the one leading the Suburi or Kata. Each movement can be progressively sped up or slowed down by concentrating on one's center and focusing on one's Maai (space-time/rhythm and distance) in relation to the one leading. This, however, is easily said than done. Thus, practicing Suburi and Kata is and will continue to be a life-long process of doing, learning, and improving.

Aikido is meditation in motion and a truly unique experience. If one reflects that each movement, each sword cut, or each Jo thrust is unique and could be one's last, then one can further one's understanding of Ichi-go Ichi-e (one time, one meeting, one chance in a lifetime).¹⁶ Striving for perfection is a never-ending and valiant goal. We look forward to continuing and improving our Suburi and Kata training for the next 25+ years.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Nakajima, M.D. "Kata-Beschreibungen" Aikido Shinki Rengo. January 1, 2022. <https://www.shinkiryu.de/aikido/de/Info.php>.
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Text: Rick Soriano

About Katas

by Tamás Haraszti

Motivation

I love katas in all martial arts, they look often impressive, inspiring, and they help us understand movements. In Aikido, they also help practicing when for any reason I have no partners at hand.

What is a kata?

Katas are forms to practice a sequence of movements in many martial arts. Aikido mainly employs them for weapon techniques, using jo or bokken.

Learning a form has several levels, and at each of these they teach us different things.

The first level

is to memorize steps, the sequence itself. In learning sequences, we train our mind and body 'down to the spine,' defense and attack movements can be combined until they come as a reflex. A visually mediated reflex can easily take about half a second [\[\(see this abstract\)\]](#), thus a move that comes automatically as a learned sequence can beat the common reaction time.

Anyone who learned katas may remember how time consuming it was the first time just to memorize which step came after what. It is very helpful to count the steps, and remember corner points, such as: "a local ending of a series was number 14 in the form." This way we have a check point at hand, which indicates if we have made a mistake up to that point.

Shadow boxing

As a next level, when the trainee knows the steps, comes the requirement to fill the form with content. How?

A form is not an empty sequence of steps. Even a dance is filled with binding to the partner and harmony.

A martial art form is a kind of 'shadow boxing.' We practice a fighting scene, where one or more opponents are held back with our actions. Though, often we have some steps which make no sense at first, we can always construct a scene that helps in this understanding.

Exercising so, we can fill our movements with more energy, attention, giving the attacks more realistic edges.

1D, 2D, 3D

Most of the forms we learn are designed to move in one dimension, forwards and backwards along a line. One can consider that backward moves are needed to ensure we do not end up in the wall at the end of our practice. Actually, most katas can be executed such that one arrives to the very same spot where it all has started. This is really beneficial when we practice in a larger group, that the main body of the group remains centered.

Some forms are made 2D, thus motion is not along a single line, but also perpendicular, in four or even eight directions. (See, for example, the short Suburi of Shiho Giri, or Happon Giri.) However, in every case we can add slight deviations from the linear movement giving space to our virtual opponents seeking their opening and closing ours during the form.

At the end of the day, studying the details will bring up the necessity of changing the level (height) of our movement in the third dimension as well. Some cuts are higher, others lower, some hits aim to the head, others to the torso or the lower part of the body. Thus, expanding our freedom to fill the space around us.

Continuous movement

Next, we can combine our movements not breaking each step apart as individual ones. We can feel how a short part belongs together, giving a unique rhythm to the form. It is somewhat like writing and calligraphy, where we do not stop after every letter, but bind parts together (in many cases not whole words, but parts of them).

The rhythm can be slow, or fast. We can practice a form slowly but continuously, enjoying the flow of ki in the movements.

And we can also speed up and release energy, practice as we imagine a real fight.

However, we must remember: faster does not mean better.

Study the details

There is a point where it gets exciting to study the elements of the form in their binding to the previous and following steps and also in their own.

Slowing down and study what can come from cutting a specific way, what attack we do and what attack we defend against.

At this point it may be helpful to receive instructions on what was intended for a specific kata. Beyond that, however, it is still intriguing to explore potential variations.

A good practice for this is to work with a partner, who can actually execute those attacks and blocks, giving us feedback on what would be a proper distance to maintain, and how to move forward, backward, and sideways to best handle a given situation.

Such exercise improves the form to the level where we really can feel the imaginary partner, filling our practice with life and content.



Text: Tamás Haraszti

Seminar Reports



Shinki-Toho Seminar in Leopoldshafen

with Marius Trzaski / 6. May 2023

Text: Sabine Krissel



On May 6, 2023, the Aikido department of the KIT Sports Group in Leopoldhafen hosted an Ikkuden Shinki Toho sword course. A pleasingly, large number of participants, from beginner to advanced, took part.

Marius began meditation with a story about the unique position and significance of the sword in Japanese history and culture. After some stretching exercises, we conducted a kata with the sword (bokken). Then it was time for the first Ō-Dachi forms. During the lunch break there was the opportunity to exchange ideas with the Aikidokas from other



clubs. All of them were well taken care of by Günter Rinke (Aikido board) and Ilona Danner.

Strengthened, we then went into the second half of the course. During the afternoon, the participants had the opportunity to intensify and deepen their Ō-Dachi forms.

Marius explained to us that when performing the Ō-Dachi techniques, it is important to maintain posture, whether student or teacher. Timing, spacing,



centering, and alignment in space are all important. The internal force (Ki) from one's middle (Hara) should be connected to the tip of the sword (Kissaki) and radiate further out through it towards one's opponent. Even if you are physically smaller than your opponent, you should develop the inner idea of an upright tall posture, as if you wanted to support the sky with the crown of your head. **Such an attitude always proves to be very helpful not only in combat, but also in everyday life. If you are already approaching the opponent with this large, upright posture, the sword blows, or more precisely the sword cuts, should also be executed accordingly large.** It helps to imagine a large wheel of fire when pulling out for the sword cut, which rolls over the opponent, so to speak, and leaves him no chance to fend off the cut. And for example, if you are moving towards your opponent with the Seigan sword stance, you should make sure to keep the sword in the same position at all times. Often you lower it unconsciously, revealing a weakness. The more often you repeat the different exercises, the more details open up to the practitioner. Over time, the practitioner also senses whether the movement is consistent and whether it is performed correctly. The training ended with stretching exercises, which, among other things, are intended to prevent tennis elbow or sword arm.

Itto-den Shinki Toho

Shinki Toho requires some practice; and, courses offer a good opportunity to complement, refresh, and deepen acquired knowledge. Among other things, learning this sword art serves to better understand and execute the movements in Aikido. Again, practice requires a certain regularity in order to make progress.

Marius explained to us that by practicing with the sword, we can get a better connection to the "here and now." Sword exercise is also good for feeling yourself in the room and



developing more energy (Ki). Marius showed a clear clarity in both his movements and posture when demonstrating the sword technique, which helped us to better understand the connections he explained.

In addition, he gave us many good suggestions for the individual exercises. The exercise with the sword is intended to help the practitioner to concentrate and focus better. It is also important to set priorities and develop mindfulness for the "right things" in combat. This allows an experienced fighter to anticipate the opponent's movements and adjust his actions accordingly. It is also advantageous not to give the opponent too much surface to attack. Both in the exercises and in life, one should not only see oneself, but also one's counterpart, then the group and later also the larger community. We should be aware that an action always causes a reaction.

Very interesting was also the explanation that in Shinki Toho there are sword techniques in which you can practice the readiness to "die." Of course, in the earlier samurai era, it was an advantage on the battlefield to go into battle without fear of death. Today it is more about developing the inner courage to "die," to let go of the "ego."

The very effective "simultaneity of defense and attack" is one of the essential basic principles of Ittōryū Kennjutsu and Ittō-den Shinki Toho.



About Marius Trzaski

He has long been interested in the connection between religion and Itto-den Shinki Toho, as well as the use of swordsmanship for pastoral and therapeutic purposes, and is currently doing his doctorate on this topic. Marius is a pastor and a religion and computer science teacher at a school. As an Aikido trainer, in addition to the disciplines of Shinki Rengo, he also has knowledge of Qi-Gong in the imperial court style and other health-promoting exercises.

Thank you very much for this instructive day! The Aikido Department of the Sports Group at KIT would like to thank Marius Trzaski and wish him every success and many more courses.



Text: Sabine Krissel



Summer Seminar in Oldenswort

with Duncan Underwood / 24 – 29 July 2023

Text: Larissa ...

6 days, 30 hours of training and 5 hours of silence.

The focus on the self, its center, and energy, shared with perseverance and concentration, were on the agenda for this year's summer course every day from 9:00 a.m. to 9:10 p.m. With over 30 participants, the week from 24.07. to 29.07.2023 will be remembered by many as a highlight of the year.





Complex techniques. Various attacks. Concentration.

Duncan Underwood showed and explained the techniques precisely and conscientiously to the attentive participants of the course. The sometimes, complex processes pertained to both lower- and higher-grade students, which meant that, for many, there was something they could take home with them for their own training.

However, Duncan was not content with simply grabbing wrists, but he also built interesting variety into the training sessions in the form of foot, jo, and bokken attacks. Especially during kick attacks, a smile surfaced across the face of one or both partners.

But it wasn't just physical abilities that were challenged.

Before the two daily meditations, which last up to half an hour, Duncan led the participants into their inner selves. With short monologues, he described, among other things, acceptance in everyday life, the view of people and how to deal with one's own value.

Despite the lack of sleep due to soccer players, sirens, countless rain showers, and thunderstorms, the campers also did well on the mats. However, one or more exhausted, snoring bodies could still be seen during the lunch break.

In addition, the participants were able to prove their precision not only during the training, but also on Friday evening in archery. Those who were not busy looking for or shooting arrows could fortify themselves after the exhausting week at the varied buffet, the delicious drinks, and the warm grilled food. Claudia, Johannes, and Franz found a musical connection with the help of an accordion, a guitar, and a fiddle together with a newly founded choir.

With an impressive performance of a one-person play, accompanied by the accordion, Arian introduced the conclusion of the small celebration. After that, almost everyone, except for Ian and Larissa, who had an exciting head-to-head race to solve the Rubik's Cube, let the evening end in peace.



My personal view.

At the time of the summer course, I hadn't even been in Aikido for a whole year and had no real experience in a similar field before.

Especially for me as a beginner, complex techniques and levers, which I had not done before, were very demanding. For example, during my regular training, I was in the process of learning Nikyu techniques. If Duncan showed a technique in which this lever appeared twice, I needed a little more time to execute the technique than others.

Nevertheless, I was able to familiarize myself very well with the different movements, because Duncan explained the techniques in detail and understandably and the other participants of the course were also very patient with me and helped me where they could.

However, I was able to learn a lot not only in the techniques.

Daniel and Ulli attach great importance to a solid Ukemi training when training at home, which is why we practice it very precisely and often. Nevertheless, my free fall was still very loud when landing on the ground. In the case of a technique involving a free fall, I looked for someone who had mastered the Ukemi training perfectly. Duncan gave me several clues that he had seen in me and I tried to implement them. And it worked. Not only was the free fall quiet afterwards, but I was also able to get up again with the given energy.

All in all, I was able to take a lot away from the summer course. The variety with the many different people was very enriching and challenging at the same time, because every body moves differently. I really enjoyed the week and I'm looking forward to being back next summer.



Text: Larissa ...





Seminar in Leopoldshafen

with Nakajima Sensei / 16th – 17th September 2023

Text: Charlene Schröder

On the weekend of September 16, 2023, we had the honor of welcoming Soke for a seminar in Leopoldshafen. The large mat area was well filled, not only with Aikidoka from our dojo, but also numerous guests from far away.

The meditation discussion on Saturday was first about André Otome's death and about "becoming aware" of death. In this context, Sensei also mentioned the approach of "letting go of one's own self." I've heard this phrase many times before and I find it beautiful every time. He made it particularly clear that it is not about giving up on oneself, but rather about voluntary renunciation – and about being part of something bigger. To abandon the ego does not mean to despair, but on the contrary, to perceive life all the more consciously.

Above all, however, "conscious perception" means being vigilant. Sensei quoted from the Budo book "Hagakure." In essence, he asked us to walk around in everyday life as if it were an emergency, and in an emergency to remain relaxed and easy-going as if it were everyday life. So, we should not feel constant fear or tension, but rather be mindful and attentive.

We started training with relaxed Aikido. I found it very nice how Sensei emphasized the everyday movements described above: that especially with Ikkyo we take natural steps and that we should move relaxed but still with sharpness. He illustrated this with an anecdote about a former champion whom he was able to see in training several years apart.

This master had evolved enormously, infusing the sharpness of the sword into his soft movements. Especially with Irimi-nage, Sensei showed us very nicely how he imagined these movements. Afterwards, we had the opportunity to practice this ourselves. In fact, I could get a sense of what Sensei meant. Irimi-nage has rarely felt so good. In fact, these movements impressed me so much that I was inspired by them when planning my next workout.

This was followed by a unit of Daitoryu. I thought it was pretty good that it was at the end of the morning. Because when you're already a little exhausted, it's suddenly much easier not to confuse power with Ki and to concentrate on what Daitoryu can actually do.

I had heard many times that the entrance and the moment of being "grabbed" is important in Daitoryu, but it was only now that I understood that it was about using Ki from the beginning. I used to think that Daitoryu looked choppy. Only now, however, did I understand what is actually behind the movements: the alternation between Aiki and relaxation, which throws the partner off balance, without the need for strength or rough movements.

After lunch, which our chairmen, Günter Rinke, and Silke Bohrmann had prepared for us, we continued a little quieter with a session of Shinki Toho. Here, too, we focused on the basics. At Kiri-otoshi we tried to find a suitable distance between each other. But before we could get too used to a single partner, Sensei let us form new teams. So, in keeping with his words at the beginning, we had to remain vigilant. We couldn't rely on a well-rehearsed process, but had to focus our attention on a new partner: What kind of steps does he or she take, how close are we after striking? The movements I had practiced before suddenly felt completely different again. What had previously been a suitable distance suddenly didn't fit anymore and we had the opportunity again to grow together as a team and get a feel for each other - and thus also for the sword.

I also took some things with me for Aikido. Although we had "only" practiced the basics, I was able to take with me the feeling of sharpness that Sensei had described at the beginning of the day. When practicing different variations of Kokyu-nage, I had to think about cutting with the sword again and again, especially when dodging. Overall, the collected Ki was clearly noticeable on the mat. We had trained intensively!

With this we also earned the following dinner and were able to end a nice day together.

On Sunday, there was only one session left in the morning. Again, we started with a meditation in which Sensei took up many aspects of the previous day. However, he also added other

points, one of which in particular stuck in my mind because I still struggle with it (and again and again): the difficulty of learning meditation. However, I didn't find that discouraging at all. Above all, Sensei emphasized why this effort is still worth it.

This time we started with Daitoryu techniques. Similar to meditation, Sensei revisited the aspects of the previous day. "Aiki and looseness" was the common thread running through the exercises, which above all included Aiki-sage as an important basis of Daitoryu. I found these basics to be very helpful in understanding a little better what Daitoryu actually is. I'm sure some other participants felt the same way, who, like me, had little to no idea about it.

Finally, there was a last block of Aikido, where we trained our vigilance. So, Sensei showed us a technique with triple Tai-Sabaki. The purpose of this was to keep an eye on the surroundings as well as possible, which can be important, for example, with many attackers. But we also had to be careful with a less conventional exercise: Uke attacked Katate-Muna-dori and tried to throw different punches with his second hand, while Nage was supposed to fend them off. This once again challenged our concentration a lot, but was also a lot of fun.

The morning and with it our course were over much too quickly. How I would have loved to train longer! Admittedly, my body was pretty tired after this weekend. But my mind had all the more energy for it, which also accompanied me into the following week.

All in all, it was a very nice course. Thank you, Sensei, for visiting us and bringing us so many new ideas!



Text: Charlene Schröder

Promotions

September 9th – December 8th, 2023

Aikido

10th Kyu	Osterhold, Mika	Wi-Sonnenberg
10th Kyu	Schönig, Philipp	Wi-Sonnenberg
10th Kyu	Mates Cardoso Rêgo, Davi Ricardo	Leopoldshafen-JG
9th Kyu	Heuß, Valentin	Wi-Sonnenberg
9th Kyu	Köhler, Carl	Wi-Sonnenberg
9th Kyu	Ellger, Malik	Wi-Sonnenberg
9th Kyu	Schwalb, Philipp	Wi-Sonnenberg
7th Kyu	Hanusch, Lilli	Wi-Sonnenberg
7th Kyu	Braune, Benjamin	Wi-Sonnenberg
5th Kyu	Telehoi, Stefan	Sibiu
5th Kyu	Straßberger, Frank	Linz
5th Kyu	Schmitz, Michael	Lahnstein
3rd Kyu	Kleinert, Sven	Cottbus
3rd Kyu	Weiß, Björn	Linz
2nd Kyu	Lang, Nathalie	Weimar
2nd Kyu	Wichmann, Arian	Weimar
2nd Kyu	Schwierzy, Tino	Schkeuditz
2nd Kyu	Schulz, Udo	Schkeuditz
1st Kyu	Gayer, Horst	Pforzheim
1st Dan	Ahrens, Christina	Oldenswort
1st Dan	Jochimsen, Frank	Oldenswort

Daitoryu

4th Kyu	Tschirner, Frank	SG KIT
3rd Kyu	Tada, Aika Marie	Heidelberg
2nd Kyu	Goldemann, Cedric	Landau

Shinkiryu Aiki Budo

Shoden	Shiina, Midori	Ushiku
Shoden	Shiina, Kazumi	Ushiku
Okuden	Smentek/Bolk, Birgit	München
Okuden	Smentek, Martin	München
Okuden	Tomasevic, Danijel	Edingen

Seminars

2024/2025

Seminars 2024/2025

Sat, 6 – Sun, 7 January 2024	Dresden-Striesen: Aiki Budo New Year Seminar mit Claudia Buder und Henry Kowallik
Sat, 10 – Sun, 11 February 2024	Bad Segeberg: Aiki Budo Seminar with Claudia Buder
Sat, 16 – Sun, 17 March 2024	Heidelberg: Aikido Dan Se minar with M. D. Nakajima Soke
Sat, 20 – Sun, 21 April 2024	Munich: Shinki Toho Seminar with M. D. Nakajima Hoshu
Sat, 4 – Sun, 5 May 2024	Oldenswort: Aiki Budo Seminar with M. D. Nakajima Soke
Sat, 4 – Sun, 12 May 2024	Donauschlinge: Aikido Semiar with Petra and Bernd Hubl
Sat, 25 – Sun, 26 May 2024	Coburg: Daitoryu Seminar with Michael Daishiro Nakajima
Sat, 8 – Sun, 9 June 2024	Weimar: Aiki Budo Seminar with Duncan Underwood
Mon, 22 – Sat, 27 July 2024	Oldenswort: Eiderstedter Aiki-Budo Summer Seminar with Duncan Underwood
Sat, 12 – Sun, 13 October 2024	Weimar: Daitoryu Seminar with Michael Daishiro Nakajima Soke
Thu, 5 – Sat, 7 June 2025	in and around Muroan: Bokuyokan Honbu 50-jähriges Jubiläum Seminar and Celebration

Arigato gozaimasu

Preview Shinki News No. 35

The next edition of Shinki News will be published in March 2024.

If you would like to contribute to Shinki News, please submit your contribution(s) to: shinkinews@shinkiryu.de and we will contact you to discuss the formalities.

Have a nice winter time full of Ki!
Shinki News Team.

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