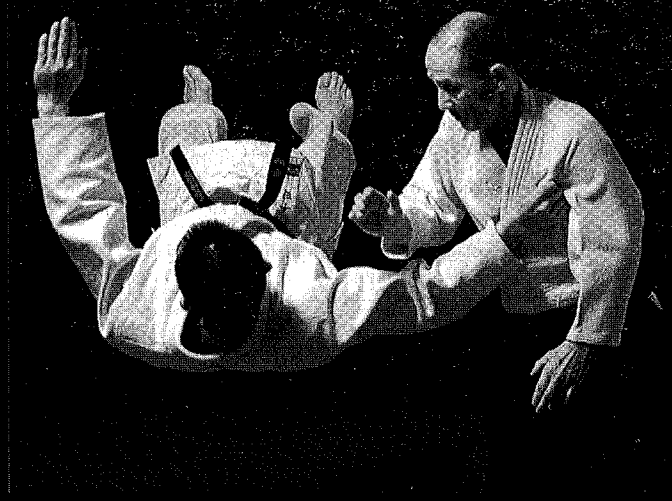

I truly feel that this translation of Shioda Kancho's book is a great success. Throughout the translation, we are provided with a personal and direct experience with Kancho himself – as though he were standing and moving right there in front of us. This is the true value of this work – it is not merely a translation.

From the Forward by
Inoue Kyoichi, Dojo-cho
Aikido Yoshinkan Hombu Dojo

The publication of "Aikido Shugyo" in the English language is a watershed event for aikido enthusiasts everywhere. Gozo Shioda, one of the most talented students of the art's founder Morihei Ueshiba, is the author of this fascinating tome that recounts his career and philosophy as an aikido teacher. Besides describing the events of his exciting life as an early pupil of Ueshiba in the 1930s and his wartime and postwar experiences, Shioda offers a host of insights into the psychology of the fighting arts and survival in a world of conflict.

This translation by two advanced practitioners of Yoshinkan Aikido is first-rate and this book will be an essential addition to the collection of any martial arts practitioner.

Stanley Pranin
Editor, Aikido Journal

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AIKIDO SHUGYO

HARMONY IN CONFRONTATION

GOZO SHIODA

TRANSLATED BY

JACQUES PAYET &
CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON

AIKIDO SHUGYO

GOZO SHIODA

dokan

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By Gozo Shioda

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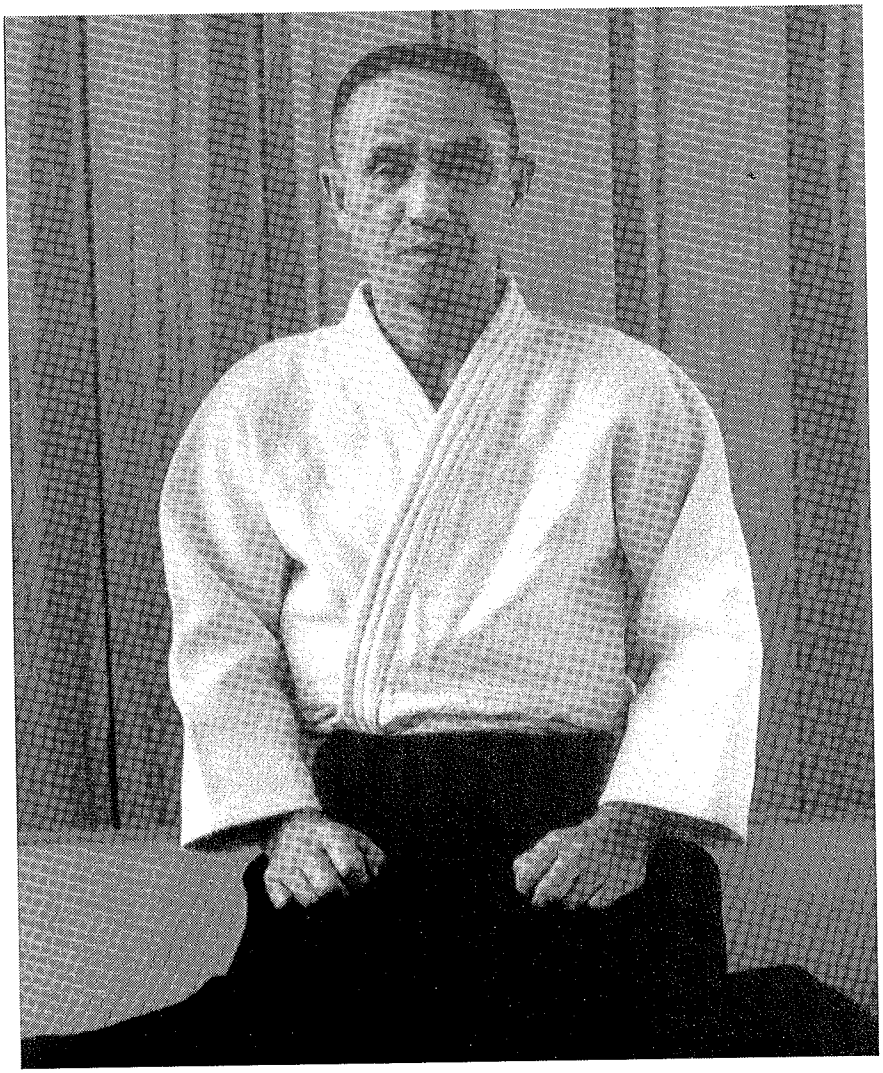

Shioda Gozo (1915-1994)
Founder of Yoshinkan Aikido

DEDICATION

We would like to dedicate this translation to

Shioda Gozo Sensei
who is an inspiration and an icon to us all

and

Kimeda Takeshi Sensei
who has given his life's energy to the propagation
of Shioda Gozo's vision and Yoshinkan Aikido.

Jacques Payet and
Christopher Johnston

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to offer our gratitude to all the people who assisted us in the realization of this project.

In particular, our thanks go to Shioda Yasuhisa Sensei and the Shioda family, and to Mr. Jiromaru Akio for their complete support.

We offer thanks as well to Inoue Kyoichi Sensei, Chida Tsutomu Sensei and the Yoshinkan Honbu staff for their kind advice.

We would also like to thank Kimeda Takeshi Sensei for his continuous support and encouragement.

Special acknowledgement must also be given to Yamamoto Hiroko Sensei, her husband Yamamoto Taneshiro and Ms. Donna Maloney for editing and reviewing the final English manuscript. Finally, Jacques Payet would like to acknowledge Geordan Reynolds and his family for their financial and moral support while preparing this project in California.

Jacques Payet and
Christopher Johnston

From The Editor of the Japanese Edition

The contents of this book, as dictated by Shioda Gozo Sensei in interviews, were arranged and composed by the editor. Supplemental sections were added to particularly difficult passages in order to aid the reader's understanding. Although under the editorial supervision of Shioda Sensei, please understand that the composition of this book was based on the editor's interpretation. Furthermore, on the occasion of the publication of this book, I received significant co-operation from Ueshiba Kisshomaru Doshu of the Aikikai Foundation, as well as Akazawa Zensaburo and Yonekawa Shigemi, both of whom trained diligently with Shioda Sensei at the Ueshiba Dojo before the war. I formally offer each of you my heartfelt thanks.

Jiromaru Akio
Editor

FROM THE TRANSLATORS

Throughout the translation of this book we have made every effort to present the original text in direct translation. We have been extremely cautious not to offer our interpretation but to stay true to the author's own words. And yet, invariably, certain turns of phrase demanded that we exercise some leeway. When such a situation was encountered, we opted to translate the spirit of the original text in order to maintain its intent.

Footnotes throughout this book are marked as either *Editor's Notes* or *Translator's Notes*. Those marked as *Editor's Notes* refer to editorial footnotes found in the original Japanese version of the book. These have been translated directly. Those marked as *Translator's Notes* are our own and are offered primarily in an attempt to clarify terminology. Also, in most cases we have opted to give all names in their Japanese order; that is, surname first.

Shioda Gozo Sensei passed away July 17, 1994, 3 years after the original publication of this book in Japanese. As a result, since we have chosen to remain faithful to the original text and have not modified any of its contents in translation, the reader may be aware of some inconsistencies relative to the time frames discussed.

J.P. and C.J.
March 2002

行住座臥
一切の事勢
これ最善の道場

Wherever you are and whatever you are doing . . .
Nothing can compare to this.
This is the ultimate dojo.

Dogen
1200-1253

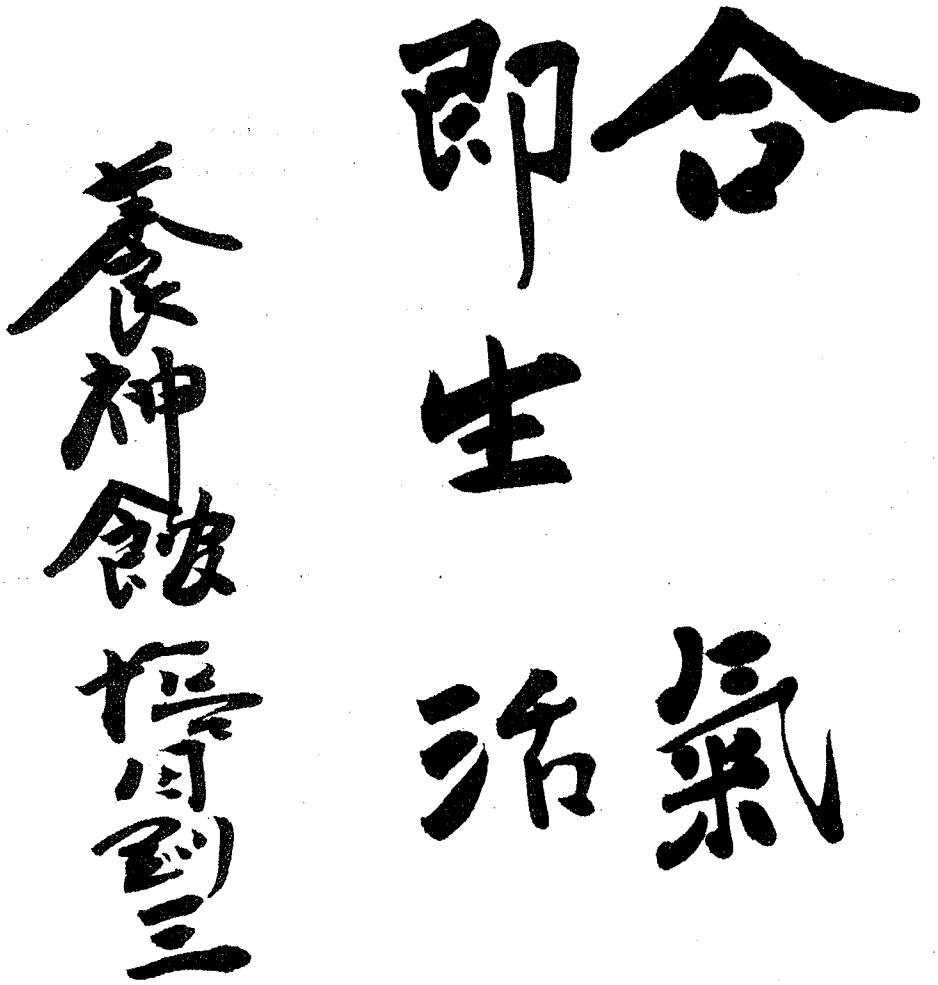
FORWARD

The translators, Mr. Jacques Payet and Mr. Christopher Johnston, remind me of the motto at the left which is from Dogen (1200-1253) and which Shioda Kancho held to very closely. Their own *shugyo* within the Yoshinkan has, of course, included their Aikido training, but even when there was a break they were reluctant to give up any spare moment and diligently focused on their Japanese language studies.

And now, I truly feel that this translation of Shioda Kancho's book is a great success. Throughout the translation, we are provided with a personal and direct experience with Kancho himself – as though he were standing and moving right there in front of us. This is the true value of this work – it is not merely a translation.

As you read these pages and gain an appreciation for Kancho Sensei's Aikido Shugyo, I urge you to also discover, flowing between the lines, those traces of Jacques Payet's and Christopher Johnston's own extraordinary *shugyo*.

Inoue Kyoichi, Dojo-cho
Aikido Yoshinkan Hombu Dojo
Tokyo, Japan



"Aiki soku seikatsu." Aikido and life are one.
Signed: Yoshinkan, Shioda Gozo

INTRODUCTION

After a party or social event, when in the intimate circle of his **uchideshi** (live-in students) and close friends, Shioda Sensei often enjoyed telling us many incredible stories of the old times when he himself was a student of Ueshiba Morihei Sensei. Years before the original Japanese version of this book was compiled, he shared with us many anecdotes of his extremely rich and adventurous life, giving us many invaluable insights into his personal training and philosophy.

However, if it were not for the work of the Japanese editor, Mr. Jiromaru Akio, many Aikido students and indeed the general public would never have had access to such a treasury of information. When I read Aikido Shugyo for the first time in its Japanese version in 1991, I knew that it was my mission to translate it into English. With the help and support of the Yoshinkan Honbu dojo staff, I started a hand-written English translation in early 1992. Unfortunately this first manuscript could not be edited before Shioda Sensei's death, but stayed in the kitchen of the dojo so that any Westerner could have access to it.

In 1996, Mr. Christopher Johnston, a student of Kimeda Sensei in Canada, printed a very accurate and excellent new translation of Aikido Shugyo as a private collection. Finally, in 2001 Mr. Johnston and I decided to put our efforts together and publish the definitive version of Shioda Gozo Sensei's

book, Aikido Shugyo. I am sure that anyone interested in traditional martial arts, and Aikido students in particular, will read this book with great excitement and will be highly inspired.

There is probably no exact translation of the Japanese word **shugyo**. I heard it for the first time in 1980 when I joined the old Koganei Honbu dojo in Tokyo, Japan, as an uchideshi of Kancho Shioda Gozo. Sensei requested that his uchideshi use any moment and any activity in the dojo to perform their personal shugyo. Shugyo may be explained as 'ascetic training', constant training in order to unite body, mind and heart. It involves physical training – the endless repetition of techniques six hours a day five or six days a week, which aims to extend our physical limits. It also involves mind training – the diligent practice of awareness, sensitivity and intuition. This includes learning how to open doors for our teacher, when to flash the light or serve the tea at exactly the right moment in perfect timing, how to guess and act before Sensei has to ask us to do something. Shugyo also encompasses a training of the heart – how to help our teacher take his bath or put on his clothes. Shugyo requires that we serve our teacher in total obedience so as to suppress our own ego, thus learning true humility and purity. As uchideshi, this total commitment was our shugyo.

It is very difficult to perform shugyo without the proper surroundings. Therefore, a young student wishing to follow this path has no choice but to actually live in a traditional dojo. In this way, the student can fully experience the total commitment required.

Shugyo involves a set of general patterns which serve as rituals to prepare the mind. For example, we learned to get up early and perform every small daily routine as if our lives depended on it. We felt that nothing was more important than cleaning the dojo, gathering garbage or serving tea to our senior. We also learned to rid ourselves of our fears; for instance, by focusing on nothing else but running as fast as we could each time the very scary instructor was about to demonstrate a technique. Gradually, we learned how to act faster and faster, as if our lives were in danger.

Throughout this style of training, a young uchideshi was never allowed to sit down between classes and had to stand alert and ready to run each time Sensei would go to the bathroom. He would compete with three or four of his co-disciples and move faster than everyone else to accompany Sensei. He would also answer the phone before the end of the second ring and sometimes even before the second ring was heard at all! Little by little, these constantly repeated but invisible actions would mould and prepare the body, the mind and the heart for a deeper and more personal voyage.

Imperceptibly, the uchideshi's technique, timing, attitude – indeed, his entire being – would be influenced. Through time, he would become a better person; one who is more aware of his weak points, more courageous and more honest.

As such, shugyo is a universal and traditional path of constant self-improvement through a body-to-body and heart-to-heart experience. It is a wonderful way to enhance the human spirit through total commitment and the

polishing of the body, the mind and the heart. Ultimately, shugyo is a personal and spiritual journey through which your Aikido becomes your life.

In this way, Shioda Gozo Sensei has built a terribly efficient model for the development of the true spirit and the realization of Aikido as a form of Budo. And so we must always bear in mind that if we only teach and train the technical aspects of the art on the mat, then Aikido becomes merely a sport, a set of physical exercise or a dance – it loses its soul.

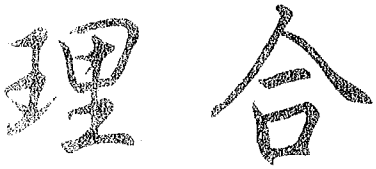
Kancho Sensei has past away now, and the old Koganei dojo has been destroyed. But even so, thanks to his teachings, we know what should be done to preserve the true spirit of Yoshinkan Aikido. This book provides one way for those who never had the chance to train under Shioda Sensei to gain insight into his legacy. It is also an homage to my teacher to whom I promised one day to translate his work.

Jacques Payet

AIKIDO SHUGYO

HARMONY IN CONFRONTATION

Fundamental Principles



Misunderstandings About Aikido

It seems there are many people who have doubts about Aikido's strength as a martial art. They seem to wonder: "Aikido has no tournaments, it does not develop physical strength, and it relies solely on the practice of pre-arranged forms. Will it *really* be effective?" There are also people who harbour doubts about the techniques themselves. "There is no way to unbalance someone so completely and throw them *that* easily," they will say. "It only works because

the attackers are throwing themselves down deliberately." This book will attempt to answer questions about Aikido and make it clear that these are doubts which have unfortunately distorted Aikido's reputation. Of course, it is difficult to understand the techniques of Aikido simply by watching them. In Judo, by contrast, there are many forceful techniques, and even if you are just watching you can get a sense of the power in the techniques. In Karate as well, surely there is no one among us who cannot imagine the pain that a thrusting kick can cause. In comparison, Aikido clearly has very few attacking movements and the uninitiated will find it difficult to comprehend. After watching Aikido they will say to themselves: "I can't figure it out. I don't know how it works."

How then can someone possibly reach any sort of understanding about Aikido? To achieve this, the most important thing is to actually try it yourself. Then there will be no need to convince those who think Aikido is fake to agree to its effectiveness. I urge you, if you have any interest in Aikido whatsoever, do not hesitate to try it. You will quickly understand the way the techniques work as well as what happens when the techniques are performed on you.

Just recently, for example, an uncommonly large man came to my dojo to observe a class. You could tell at a glance that he had trained in some sort of **budo**[1] or other fighting art. On that particular day we were conducting a special training session for black belt students. He looked on with skepticism

[1] The term **budo** means "martial way" and is a general term that is used to refer to the modern martial arts of Japan. [Translator's note.]

as I began throwing the black belt students around the mat. However, after watching for a while, and probably because he was involved in some sort of martial art, he came to realize that those who were being thrown had truly had their balance broken. He left my dojo that day with a completely different view – he had been thoroughly impressed by Aikido's effectiveness.

We heard later that this man, let's call him Mr. A, was in fact the coach of a certain university's wrestling club. Even though he was over 30 years old, he also trained in **Sambo** (a grappling art of the Soviet Union which resembles Judo) and you could see that he was quite a strong man. From that first encounter, Mr. A quickly became a regular observer at my dojo, watching the practices with wide-eyed intensity, constantly nodding his head as if in agreement and taking notes. Somehow he seemed to have become completely captivated by Aikido. In no time at all Mr. A enrolled as a student. It was a heartwarming sight to see him, his huge frame wrapped in his training uniform, throwing himself single-mindedly into practising the basic techniques in a beginner's class with girls and senior citizens. Needless to say, Mr. A became more and more enthusiastic with each training session. In the end, he even started video-taping the practices! His goal was to advance quickly to the senior level and to participate in the special practice sessions that he had originally observed with skepticism.

Let Me Take Your Hand

This same Mr. A once came to me with an apprehensive, yet respectful, look on his face and said, "**Kancho**[2] Sensei, I am extremely impressed with your technique. However, I haven't really been able to take hold of your hand even once. I wonder if the techniques would still work if you let me take your hand just once."

By asking me whether he might grab my hand, he was in effect asking me to apply a technique on him. Even though he had become consumed with Aikido, Mr. A probably still harboured some slight doubt about its effectiveness. I am sure that he came to me in order to allay these doubts. As I stood up from my chair and offered him my left hand, I said to him: "It's fine. Do as you please."

With the utmost respect and humility he said, "Excuse me," and took my left wrist with both of his hands. However, as you might expect, he maintained a somewhat reserved attitude and took my hand rather gently.

"Don't hold back. Grab my wrist firmly," I told him. He responded decisively, "Osu!"

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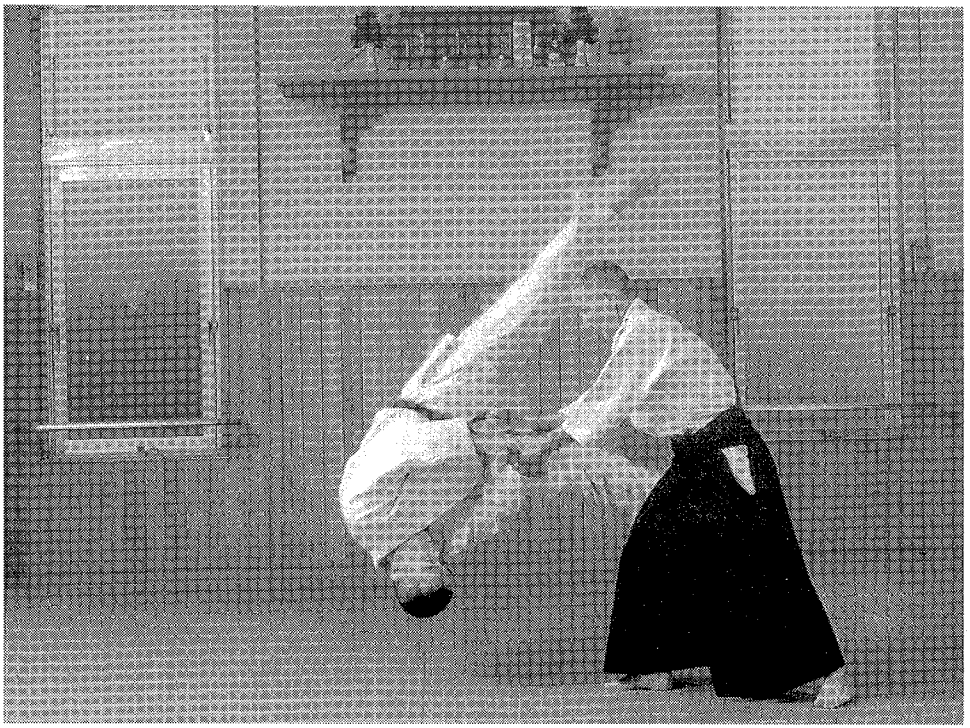
[2] The title **Kancho** literally means "director" and is reserved for the one person who holds the highest position within the group's chain of command. [Translator's note.]



Because of my urging, Mr. A put much more strength into his grip. However, I could see that he was still holding back. From my point of view though, if he used all of his power, doing a technique would be easier. So I prodded him on some more.

"What? Is this the best you can do?" I asked him. "Even though you're so big, you really aren't that strong are you?"

Finally, Mr. A put all of his strength into his grip. As you can imagine, being such a large man his grip was like a vice. But just at the instant that he applied his great strength, I quickly turned my wrist over. Mr. A's huge frame, at 180 centimetres and more than 100 kilograms, did a complete revolution and he bore the full brunt of his own extraordinary strength. He did a full somersault and collapsed right there on the floor of my office.

Mr. A was bewildered. "Amazing. Amazing," he said in a surprised voice.

With this, even the slightest hint of doubt that Mr. A had in his heart had completely vanished. As for my part, I am overwhelmed when I think that there are people like him who are so passionately devoted to Aikido. I hope that they accomplish all that they set out to do. If you have any interest in Aikido or if you have any doubts, you should not hesitate to try it, even if you are not as extremely devoted as Mr. A, because then you will be able to fully experience the thrill and wonder of Aikido.

Aikido Is The Study of Fundamental Principles

Personally, I feel that Aikido is the way of **shugyo**[3]. Of course, there is the physical training through which we become stronger. But besides that, I think that by taking up Aikido one is also taking up spiritual training for life. Accordingly, there are practice methods that are suited to each individual but becoming physically strong is not necessarily the main goal of this training. Therefore, I don't think that discussions about such things as physical strength really have any meaning in Aikido. When we think of Aikido as a martial art, however, one thing can be stated categorically; that is, rather than relying on strength or anything else, Aikido conforms to certain fundamental principles. If you follow these principles of Aikido, you will be able to defend yourself.

Training in Aikido will not give you arms as thick as logs, nor will it give you a body like a suit of armour that can take any kind of blow. However, if your movements and your use of power follow the fundamental principles of

[3] The term **shugyo** really has no single equivalent in English. It implies intensive and concentrated training and dedication, not unlike the training one would expect to find among monks in a Zen temple, for example. In fact, the term itself is borrowed from the religious world where it refers to a situation in which the trainee has given himself over completely to his teacher. True shugyo means that the student is actually living with the teacher and is undergoing constant daily training and studying. While it is normally translated as "training", shugyo embodies much more than the usual idea of going to train two or three times per week. It should be thought of as an immersion into something with all of one's being. [Translator's note.]

Aikido, you will be able to control an opponent who is physically stronger than yourself.

It is because of my training in Aikido that I have been able to live such a long life. I have endured the turbulence of the Second World War and encountered some extremely difficult situations and somehow I have managed to survive until this day. This too, I feel, is a gift I received from my Aikido training. At times, I was able to defend myself because of the fundamental principles found in Aikido. This logical design of the techniques, what we might call their underlying foundation, has from ancient times been called **riai**[4] in the martial arts. If you move your body in conformity with riai, then it really isn't necessary to have a lot of strength and you will be able to control your opponent quite safely. In short, it can be said that Aikido training is intended to make our bodies move in conformity with riai.

However, there is something here that should not be misunderstood. Just because one has learned the basic techniques doesn't mean that the riai has been achieved or understood. In fact, discussions such as, "**kotegaeshi**[5] works if you do it this way" or "**nikajo**[6] is painful when you do it this way," though invariably of interest to the students, really are unimportant. Of course, these

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[4] **Riai** is another term which really has no English equivalent. It refers to the logical reason for the effectiveness of a technique. It is the underlying principle upon which the design of the technique is based. Throughout the text we have translated it as "fundamental principle(s)". [Translator's note.]

[5] "Outward Wrist Twist". [Translator's note.]

[6] "Second Control". [Translator's note.]

are skills that students must naturally acquire but it is meaningless to judge Aikido's effectiveness by such standards. It's not how to use each technique that is important. Rather, the key is to discover the riai that exists within the techniques. Unless this is understood, things will turn out badly in a desperate situation and we'll say things like, "He didn't react in the same way people do during practice, so my technique didn't work." As a result, we will give the impression that Aikido is ineffective. Therefore, knowing the individual techniques of Aikido is not what leads us to understand the essence of Aikido. This comes only when we fully understand the riai.

If our movements are consistent with riai, then our dependence on individual techniques will naturally disappear. And with that gone, no matter what movements we encounter in an opponent, we will be able to adapt and deal with them.

When one comes to this conclusion, they can then begin to see the real value of Aikido as a martial art, as budo. But how will the riai of Aikido appear when you find yourself in a situation where you must defend yourself? Let me illustrate this with a simple example.

THE SHINJUKU BRAWL INCIDENT

Sometime around 1935 while I was still training at the **Ueshiba Dojo**[7], I was walking in Shinjuku one evening with my **kohai**[8], Mr. T. In those days Shinjuku was a place where racketeers and hooligans hung out, so it was a rather intimidating place. Now, while I wouldn't want it to be widely known, the reason we were in such an unsavoury place was to find someone on whom to test our skills. Remember that I was a young man in my early twenties with a hot-blooded temper. I also had some understanding of Aikido and I wanted to find out just how much I was capable of doing with it. This was the only way to really test ourselves. For young people with this goal, Shinjuku was the ideal setting.

As I write this, it seems to me that I must appear to have been rough and violent but in those days at the Ueshiba Dojo this type of behaviour wasn't so

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[7] The founder of Aikido, Ueshiba Morihei, established a dojo in Kawamatsu-cho in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward in 1931. It was formally called the Kobukan Dojo. Because of its intense practice, it was referred to as the Ushigome Dojo of Hell (Ushigome is an area of Shinjuku [Translator's note.]). With this as a base, Ueshiba's guidance and leadership reached as far as Osaka, Kyoto, the military and the police, and Manchuria. Later, the Kobukai, a non-profit corporation, was established with Admiral Takeshita Isamu as chairman. This became the predecessor of what is today the Aikikai. [Editor's note.]

[8] The **sempai/kohai** (senior-junior) relationship is one that is ubiquitous throughout Japan and is based primarily upon date of entry into an organization. The more experienced sempai offers guidance and friendship to the kohai who in turn offers respect and personal loyalty. [Translator's note.]

unusual. Because Aikido has no competitive matches, we honestly couldn't tell just how strong we were becoming even with our intensive daily training sessions. So this is why, despite Ueshiba Sensei prohibiting us from testing ourselves like this, everyone would go out to these busy areas for a little experimentation and research.

Mr. Yukawa, a fellow student who was senior to me and who has since passed away, used to love this kind of testing. He had a significant influence on me. There were also junior students who liked this sort of activity. One of them would return to the dojo after a fight and say something like, "I was defeated today!" and proceed to show us his wounds. Greatly amused by this, I would prod him to "Try again!" and he would cheerfully go out looking for a fight the very next evening.

My kohai, Mr. T, who was also keen on this sort of "street training", always accompanied me when I went to Shinjuku, acting as my advanced guard. On this particular occasion, he discovered a group of **yakuza**[9] who had gathered together. "Sempai, there are some guys who look pretty cocky," he whispered to me with bright fiery eyes. "I'll go and bump into them and we'll start a fight!"

In all honesty, I too was excited so I slapped him on the back and said, "Go ahead!" He quickly marched right up to the group of yakuza and suddenly

[9] The **yakuza** are Japan's professional gangsters. [Translator's note.]

bumped his shoulder into one of them. "What's this?" the yakuza demanded angrily. Thinking this would be the start of the fight, I squared off and got ready. But then something unexpected happened. Attracted by his angry voice, what looked like henchmen from the same gang appeared out of the surrounding alleys. Shocked, Mr. T leapt back to where I was. That's when, I moved to the front.

I quickly realized there were more than 30 of them and only the two of us. On the one hand, I was petrified with the prospect of such a difficult fight, but I was also thinking, "This has become interesting."

Supported now by all of his henchmen, the angry yakuza opened his mouth and announced: "I'm so-and-so from XYZ gang. What's your name and which gang are you from?" I announced: "I'm not from any gang. I'm Shioda of **Aikijutsu**[10]."

This may seem like a scene from a gangster movie but in those days it was not unusual for a fight to start off this way. The yakuza today have no class, but in the old days as soon as they became yakuza they held duty and respect in high esteem. They wouldn't do anything so crass as to wave a dagger around without any warning.

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[10] The name Aikido was used after 1942. Before that it was called Kobukan Budo, Aikijutsu, Asahi Ryu, Aioi Ryu, Aiki Budo, and other such things. Subsequently, the names Tenshin Aikido and Takemusu Aikido were also used. Terms like these seem to follow the founder's development as a martial artist and to illustrate his concurrent religious development. [Editor's note.]

"What is this Aikijutsu?" he asked with a mocking smile. His ignorance about Aikijutsu was not surprising. Compared to Judo, which was made popular by its inclusion in the physical education curriculum in schools, Aikijutsu was unknown to many people. As well, it was being taught primarily to the police and the military, and for an ordinary person to enter the dojo it was necessary to have two sponsors. With such strict conditions, the public had limited opportunities to be exposed to Aikijutsu techniques.

For this reason, even the angry yakuza must have thought that I was nothing more than some kind of street performer[11]. On top of that, I am sure that he let his guard down when he saw how small I was.

The Reality Of Facing Multiple Opponents

At this point, every nerve in my body was focused on the fight ahead. When fighting a large group, the key is to bring down the strongest guy right away.

[11] After the Meiji Restoration, martial arts practitioners were often reduced to street performers in order to survive the push toward modernization. [Translator's note.]

So while I was announcing myself to the boss, I searched through the 30 gang members behind him for my target. Out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of one guy who impressed me right away. There was something different about his bearing. He had a strange composure about him, and I sensed that he was used to fighting. Also, whether it was his build or just the way he carried himself, it was easy to see he was in good physical condition. There was no mistake about it; he was probably the headman's bodyguard.

The formalities were over. The situation was touch-and-go and the tension had soared to a feverish pitch. The next moment would decide victory or defeat. As a single unit, the gang started to move toward us, but I was a step ahead of them and the first to move! In one breath, I jumped straight at the guy I had set my sights on and drove an **atemi**[12] punch into his stomach. With a groan, he crumpled to the ground.

"You bastard!" they all exclaimed. "Kill him!"

Yelling and screaming came from every direction as the rest of the gang turned and pounced on Mr. T and me – but by then, I had already gained control.

Before a fight you are always frightened. No matter how confident you think you are, you inevitably end up excited and nervous. However, once you've

[12] **Atemi** are attacks on the body's nerve centers (vital points) and are distinct from simple punches. [Translator's note.]

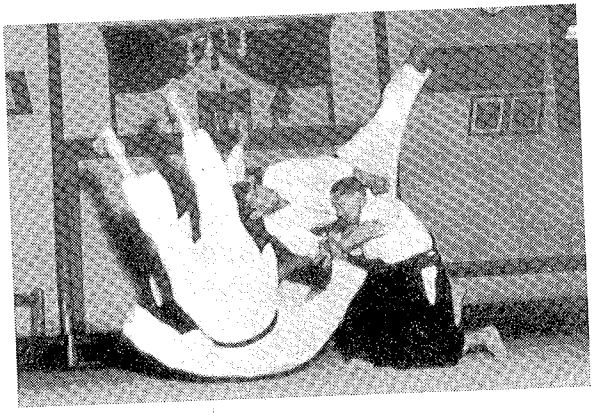
brought down the first man you quickly regain your composure. Then, the opponent's movements become easier to see.

The gang, on the other hand, was beginning to waver and lose confidence. In a group, everyone tends to rely on one person, who becomes the key to their fighting ability. Having focused on this one person, the whole group's spirit is united as one. When that individual is suddenly defeated, the key to the group's fighting ability and the foundation of its spirit are lost in the same instant. Disheartened, the group falls apart.

Under these conditions, the group no longer provokes fear. Moreover, because the feeling of terror is turned against them, they become agitated and lose their composure. These are the best kinds of opponents for Aikido. There is no need to wait for them to attack. Instead, I would go after them myself, confusing them and causing them to rush wildly at me. Then, I would turn my body just slightly forcing one of them to lose his balance or a couple of them to bump into each other, thus pitting them against one another and causing their own downfall. I would then drive atemi punches into the others, one after another. In this way, Mr. T and I created so much chaos that we were able to finish off all 30 gang members.

I must point out that this episode reflects the extreme impatience of youth. At the time, I was still in the middle of my training and it was well before I understood the true meaning of Aikido. But even though my skills were

limited, I feel that these situations gave me some understanding about how to use Aikido in an actual fight.



More than likely, there are some people who have a completely different impression of Aikido than the image I've just presented. So now I will try to explain the important part riai played in the above episode.

Atemi are 70% of a Real Fight

Many of you are likely surprised at how often I use atemi. This is only natural since when we talk about Aikido, everyone is caught up in images of wrist grasps and flashy throws. However, **Ueshiba Morihei Sensei**[13] himself, who was my master at one point, expressed himself in the following manner. He said, "In a real fight, Aikido is 70 percent atemi and 30 percent throwing." Based on my own experience, I can say that this is precisely the case.

"If that is so," you might ask, "what is the use of joint techniques?" Well, if you are being hassled by a drunkard for example, using joint techniques to control the other person may well be the best route. But in a life or death situation, or when you are engaged with multiple opponents, you cannot defend yourself without atemi and instantaneous throws because victory or defeat comes in a split second. In other words, you might say that the essence of Aikido is revealed in this type of intense fighting.

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[13] **Ueshiba Morihei** was the founder of Aikido. He was born in the city of Tanabe in Wakayama Prefecture in 1883. When he was young, he studied both Tenjin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu and Yagyu Shingan Ryu Jujutsu. When he was involved in the settling of Hokkaido he met Takeda Sokaku and became a student of Daito Ryu Aikijujutsu. Later, becoming an enthusiastic adherent of the Omoto Kyo religion, he blended his religious views with his martial arts and created Aikido. He died in 1969 at the age of 86. He is held in high esteem as an extraordinary master of the modern age. [Editor's note.]

In Aikido, atemi is not limited to punching or kicking. Any part of the body can become a weapon for executing atemi. Some of you may have seen me in demonstrations use my back to repel an opponent rushing at me, or my shoulder to send my opponent flying as we pass each other. The reason these techniques work is that the contact point in itself becomes the atemi.

These techniques are made possible by entering into the middle of the attack rather than by avoiding the opponent's attack and then counterattacking. However, it is not good enough to simply throw your body at random against

the opponent. Your entire body's power must be focused. I will discuss this focused power in detail later, but the totally free method of fighting that is the fundamental essence of Aikido is made possible by the ability to draw upon this power at will from any part of the body.

In this kind of instantaneous attack, it becomes impossible to distinguish between an atemi and a throw. But it really doesn't matter because the aim is to defeat the opponent. Exactly how he is defeated is irrelevant.

The Straight Punch Comes Off The Front Knee

Let us now consider the straight punch, which is the basis of atemi. After all, the high percentage of knockouts in actual fighting situations results because of this punch.

Some of you probably find this hard to believe since, for a punch to be the decisive factor, it would have to be an extremely powerful blow. And yet you would be right if you said that you have never heard of karate or boxing-style training used to develop punching power in an Aikido dojo. In Aikido, we

don't usually practise striking the **makiwara**[14] or breaking bricks but we do have regular punching practice. It is nothing special – the basic movements and techniques that you practise repeatedly at the dojo are themselves the practice for punching.

What then is necessary for a powerful punch? If we are talking about the right side, when stepping in off of the right foot, the question is whether or not the body's center of gravity is riding on the right foot. If it is, the punch will be effective. When stepping forward in Aikido, it is critical to co-ordinate the entire body with that specific moment when one's power is focused and sent forward. However, most people fail to use the knees properly as they step in. As a result, the power generated by the forward movement of the center of gravity stops at the knee and is not transferred to the upper body, and hence, to the fist. This is why their punches are ineffective.

The key point is the pliability, the suppleness, of the knees. By pliable, however, I don't mean limp. It is more a question of whether you can smoothly push the knee forward as you step in, and in this way transfer the center of gravity forward. Naturally, with the forward movement of the front knee and the advancement of the hips, the rear leg gets drawn in. Once you've achieved this, you will be able to project the strength of your entire body into your fist and produce tremendous power. This is focused power.

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[14] The **makiwara** is a pad traditionally made of straw and tied to a pole or mounted on a wall. When practising striking or kicking techniques students of some martial arts will hit the makiwara repeatedly in order to improve the effectiveness of their technique. [Translator's note.]

Those who are accustomed to practising Aikido in the dojo will recognize that this movement is the same as that in **hiriki no yosei**[15], which we perform everyday before training. It is also similar to the movement in throwing techniques which sends the force of the forward motion into our hands, or to using the body's forward motion to apply reverse techniques. The most basic kinds of forward body movements in Aikido have fundamental application to punching movements. Of course, in real life situations you must be able to execute these movements within larger and faster motions.

Furthermore, it doesn't matter whether it is a lunge punch or a reverse punch. Adjust your responses freely, matching them to the requirements of the situation. The key points are the movement of the center of gravity, the transfer of this movement forward, and sending the power generated through this shifting into the fist. If you can co-ordinate each of these three things into a single movement, the punch will be effective.

Don't clench your fist too tightly, either. When you do, you end up putting unnecessary strain on your muscles and fail to send power into your arms. Having a sense of loosely clenching the fist and delivering a light blow will result in an effective technique.

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[15] **Hiriki no Yosei**, or "Elbow Power", has to do with the strength of the elbow. It is training which involves holding aloft the hand that has been grabbed. In #1 the movement is advancing, while #2 is practice in transferring the center of gravity while changing directions. This is part of the basic body movements of Aikido. [Editor's note.]

As for the fists themselves, they can be used in a variety of ways. You can use the straight front punch, or as I often like to do, you can strike with the second knuckle of the index or middle finger. Against a real opponent it is more effective to aim a one-knuckle punch, into which it is easy to focus power, at a weak point of the body. Remember, the opponent is a human being and not some hard object.

Wartime Experience Has Shown Me The Strength Of The Human Body

Even if you have a powerful punch, this alone is not enough to bring down your opponent. The reason is that the opponent is not a board or a brick, but a human being. People tend to move around and the structure of the body itself is a mixture of both the strengths and weaknesses unique to a living organism. This is why I believe that in Aikido, there is no sense in tempering the fists or practising breaking objects. The destruction of a stationary object and causing damage to a human body require fundamentally different techniques.

I came to a clear understanding of this during the Second World War when I was in China. However, even now I cannot recall this incident without a sense of revulsion. Although it is such an unpleasant memory, I will nevertheless share it so that young people will know about these deeds in which men undeniably took part.

It was an incident that took place at a Japanese army post during the invasion of China. On this occasion, a group of soldiers gathered in a corner of the encampment were causing a commotion. I went to see what was going on and discovered that they had surrounded a Chinese prisoner of war and were taking turns beating him. They were all black belts in either Karate or Kempo, and they were using the prisoner as an experiment to test whether they could truly deliver a single death blow with one of their punches. Someone would drive a punch at the unresisting prisoner with all his might. The Chinese prisoner would let out a groan and twist his body, and then the next punch would come flying in at him. With his body doubled over and his face grimacing in pain, he clenched his teeth and endured it all. Then, yet another fist would be driven into his stomach.

I had to look away from the scene. This insane act, in which men calmly made a mockery of another human being, went unchallenged, showing that war does in fact make men go mad. The Chinese prisoner, his eyes filled with hatred for the Japanese, endured this brutal onslaught. In the end he couldn't stand up any more, and I am sure that it was solely by the strength of his will that he

didn't give up. The Japanese soldiers, seeing that he was just not going to die, eventually grew tired and gave up.

Unlike boards or bricks, the human body is not something that can be destroyed by brute strength alone. A level of resistance which you would not ordinarily think possible tends to reveal itself especially when the opponent's spirit is strong. This was the unexpected lesson I learned from the insanity of war.

I urge all of you to keep these things in mind. Even the magnificent culture of the martial arts can be reduced to cruelty and violence, depending upon the intent of the individual. Driving a punch or some other technique, just for fun, at those who are weaker and don't resist has nothing to do with what we call budo.

Atemi Is All Timing

Well, what is it that is important for atemi then? It is timing. Even if you go and watch a boxing match, for example, you will often see someone get knocked out by a very casual looking punch. This is an example of judging the opponent's changing movements and punching with absolutely perfect timing.

opponent's changing movements and punching with absolutely perfect timing. The important thing is to send your punch as soon as you sense that the opponent is about to move. Then you will either hit whatever is closest to you or, conversely, when the opponent has swung at you and missed, you will hit him when he is fully extended.

The interesting thing is, if it is timed perfectly, you don't even need to use a lot of power for the punch to be effective. There won't be any pain in your fist and you won't be repelled by the force of the impact. It's exactly like batting in baseball. When you hit the ball squarely you really don't feel the force of the ball at all.

Let me give you a good example. This is an episode which involved Ueshiba Sensei during the time when the Korean Peninsula was under Japanese control.

Sensei was invited to go there and give a demonstration as part of a big martial arts tournament. There were a lot of Judo practitioners around and one of them who had watched Sensei's demonstration came and challenged him, saying that he didn't believe what he had just seen. The challenger, whom I will call Mr. N, was known at that time as the rival of **Masahiko Kimura**[16]. Of course, Mr. N was considerably larger than the average person and when he and Sensei faced each other, it looked just like an adult with a child.

Suddenly, Mr. N came in to grab Sensei's inside collar and, pulling him in, tried to execute a **hip spring throw**[17]. That was it. Mr. N's gigantic figure buckled and he crumpled to the floor right there. As for Sensei, he was standing very quietly as if nothing had happened. The spectators were thrown into an uproar because nobody quite understood what they had just witnessed.

As it happens, Sensei had delivered a light blow with his fist to Mr. N's hip just as he stepped into Sensei's chest. The timing was absolutely perfect. From a conversation I overheard later I learned that Mr. N's hip bone was broken so severely that he would never fully recover.

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[16] **Masahiko Kimura** was an All Japan Judo champion who dominated the sport from 1937 until 1949. See also footnote number 51, page 125. [Translator's note.]

[17] The "Hip Spring Throw" or **Hanegoshi** is a Judo technique in which the opponent is thrown by using a springing action of the hip and leg while simultaneously pulling him downward with both hands. [Translator's note.]

This same principle can be applied in free-for-all fights as well. Discerning the opponent's movements and delivering an atemi at just the right moment will result in a very effective technique.

The Timing Of A Single Finishing Blow

As I mentioned before, once you have acquired the ability to co-ordinate your breathing with this timing, you will be able to attack using any part of your body. Here is an interesting story about the technique I often demonstrate in which I use my back to repel my opponent. It happened at a martial arts demonstration when K, a student of mine from years ago who is now active in the United States, was still an **uchideshi**[18]. We were doing the usual demonstration in which a group of attackers comes at me simultaneously. I sensed K coming at me from behind so I judged the distance between us and, with a bang, threw my back into him. It is difficult to explain just how I knew his position and distance without having eyes in the back of my head, except to

[18] **Uchideshi** are "live-in" students who undertake what might be likened to an apprenticeship with their teacher. [Translator's note.]

say that after many years of training, it is a matter of knowing the timing through intuition and the sound of his footsteps.

In any case, this single shot was a clean hit and K tumbled head over heels and collapsed. As a matter of fact, he couldn't get up – he was out cold! His stomach was swollen up like a frog's. It appears that just as he was breathing in I threw my back into him and he stopped breathing, just like that. We rushed to revive him and when he came to, as soon as he saw me, he immediately lunged at me again. It seems that he had lost consciousness halfway through his attack and so, as soon as he came to, he just kept going from where he had left off.

And because it all happened so fast, without thinking I threw him off again. Incidents like this occasionally take place because I am always telling the uchideshi to attack with the full intention of knocking me down. K showed his outstanding spirit by trying to complete his attack after regaining consciousness.

Be that as it may, I think you can see how, with perfect timing, atemi can become a single definitive blow.

Countering A Strike To The Temple

It was quite some years ago now, but one day the champion from another school of Aikido came to visit my dojo. For now, let's call him Mr. N. In Aikido, we generally do not hold tournaments but there are some dojos that do have internal championships and Mr. N had trained at one of these schools.

This particular school's championships were quite different because a separate competition was held for each technique. If you competed in the sword-hand division you used sword-hand techniques; if you competed in the punching division you used punches. Mr. N was the champion of the sword-hand division. Therefore, when he came to us he was quite confident and probably felt that no one could stand up to his sword-hand technique.

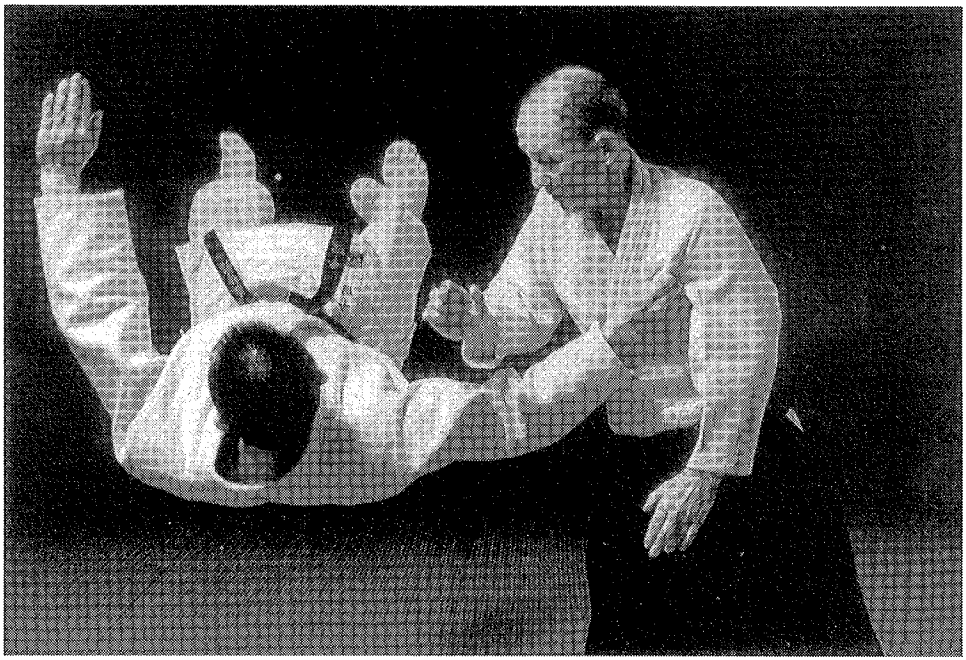
When Mr. N came to the dojo, Komagata dealt with him. Komagata was one of the uchideshi and he had an outstanding sense of timing. When Mr. N put all of his power into his trusted sword-hand technique and drove in with a side strike, Komagata lightly repelled the blow from the inside by using a sword-hand himself. Komagata's timing was superb. He took all of Mr. N's power and reversed it, sending Mr. N flying.

Getting up, a wide-eyed Mr. N rubbed his red and swollen arm in astonishment. After all, he had complete confidence in his sword-hand technique and even though he put everything he had into it, Komagata had repelled him easily. His arm was already starting to bruise as he showed it to Komagata. With genuine admiration Mr. N said, "This is the first time that my arm has been hurt like this." Komagata, on the other hand, was fine, with no pain or discoloration to his arm.

"How do you do it? How do you train your sword-hand to that degree?" Mr. N asked enthusiastically. With an awkward look on his face, Komagata responded: "Well, I don't know. I don't really have any special kind of training." At this, Mr. N was even more bewildered.

He reasoned that because his own sword-hand, hardened through continuous training, was driven back, his opponent must have honed his striking power to an even greater level. But in fact, Mr. N didn't go flying because Komagata hit him so hard. Rather, Komagata simply executed an exquisitely timed sword-hand to counter the strength of Mr. N's strike.

I'm sure that some of you have seen this technique since I do exactly the same thing during demonstrations. By just lightly touching a sword-hand that is driven in with full force, the opponent is thrown off as though he ran into a wall. Most people find this difficult to comprehend but if they could master the timing they would see that anybody can do it.



While watching basic training and seeing side strikes and front strikes being countered, you might think that the opponent's attack could not be stopped so easily. But this is only because you do not fully comprehend how effective an understanding of timing can be. Naturally, if in response to an opponent's attack you simply stick your hands out, you are not going to be able to counter the blow. The key is whether you can co-ordinate the timing, and this is the kind of thing we practise in Aikido.

Attack A Split Second Before The Power Surge

Timing the counter move is very difficult. You must not allow the opponent to exert his full strength because if you do, no matter how you try to counter the blow his momentum will be too great and will overwhelm you.

On the other hand, it is no use driving in when he has yet to exert any strength at all because he will anticipate your move and hold back his strike. So just before the opponent's power peaks or is fully delivered, be ready to move and strike the closest thing to you. Then, you will be able to re-direct all of his power back to him and there will be almost no effect on you.

Of course, this is not just about the opponent. Making your own posture and stance strong also becomes important. When this technique is applied successfully, the impact upon your opponent is tremendous, especially when you have momentum behind you. The effect of both of these forces in tandem produces incredible results. Once, at a demonstration at the Hibiya Civic Center, Inoue, who is now the Chief Instructor of the Metropolitan Police Agency, performed as my **uke**[19]. I wanted to demonstrate techniques against a dagger and because it was a demonstration he was armed with a wooden one.

[19] The term **uke** is used to refer to the opponent who attacks and is subsequently thrown by **shite**. **Shite** is the term used to refer to the person executing the technique. [Translator's note.]

Inoue took aim at my temple and stabbed at me with everything he had. With essentially the same movements as I would use to counter a side strike, I repelled his arm and although he is normally very skillful the wooden dagger went flying out of his right hand. Believe it or not, it actually pierced the concrete wall of the auditorium! Even I was surprised at this. You would have to produce a tremendous amount of force for a wooden dagger to pierce a concrete wall. It turned out, however, that Inoue's power along with the power that I used to counter him accelerated the dagger to just such a speed.

There was also another similar incident. This one involved a full-length wooden sword and also occurred at a public demonstration. My uchideshi used

a wooden sword to strike at me and I, also armed with a wooden sword, deflected his blow. His sword flew out of his hands and pierced right through the wooden door of the waiting room. Now, it didn't just stick in the door, it went completely through the door and sailed across to the other side of the room. It's a good thing that nobody was in there because it would have been serious if it had hit anyone. Even so, the hall's administrator was upset with us because there was a hole in the door. In any event, this is another example of what can happen as a result of precise timing.

This idea of timing is not simply a case of two people smashing into each other, which is something I often notice during defense practice. If both the attacker and the defender strike hard with their sword-hands, they will both develop bruises on their arms. This is not right. The fact that the defender's arm is painful means that they are simply using brute force to smash into the oncoming attack. This is the same as two cars in a head-on collision. All you do is cause pain to both parties and the physically stronger of the two will ultimately win.

It must not be a collision. Repel the opponent's force by blending in with him. This is the aim of defense in Aikido. Although this appears to be contradictory, it is through this principle that techniques which are both offensive and defensive at the same time become possible. Putting this in writing perhaps is not enough to impress this upon you, but if you strive to experience it physically I believe that you will be able to understand.

But just as every one of us has a different face, so too is the way that power operates different for each of us. Power will vary from one occasion to another, even for the same individual. That is why there is absolutely no way you will ever master the kind of technique I am discussing here simply by repeating the routines of kata practice. You have to experience the changes of power first hand through your own practice. This is the challenge.

Repelling A Fully Extended Punch

Let me give you another example of how it is possible to combine offence and defence through timing. Around the time that I opened a dojo at **Tsukudo Hachiman**[20], we were often pestered by **dojo yaburi**[21]. One day we were visited by a guy who purportedly practised the northern style of **Shorinji**

[20] **Tsukudo Hachiman** is the name of a Shinto Shrine dedicated to the God of War, Hachiman. It is located in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward and was the location of the Yoshinkan Hombu Dojo during the early 1960s. [Translator's note.]

[21] **Dojo Yaburi**, literally meaning "beating the dojo", refers to those who partake in the long tradition of paying an unannounced visit to a dojo, ostensibly to seek guidance, but in fact to gain either fame or money by defeating the dojo's master in a match. [Translator's note.]

Kempo[22]. He was a young man of 30 or so and seemed to think of Aikido as mere trickery.

At that time I demonstrated some kneeling techniques but he appeared unconvinced. And so, as I expected, he stood up, came over to me and said, "Can you do that to me?"

I consented and he sat right down and suddenly threw a punch at me. Still in my seated position, I met his fist directly in front of me with my open palm. This actually worked out quite well and he went flying backwards. He was suddenly full of humility as he came back to me and said, "That's an incredible technique. Sensei, would you please write me a **shikishi**[23]?" I think I wrote something out quickly for him.

Now, in terms of just what I did exactly, I simply met my opponent's punch head on just at the moment when it was fully extended. This is, in fact, one of the secrets that Ueshiba Sensei taught me. He often explained it this way: "No matter how fast the punch is, it is pulled back after it is fully extended. So, at the moment that it is fully extended, the fist is in a static state. Now, if you hit

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[22] Based on my own memory, it was Shorinji Kempo, but the school was referred to as a Northern Style so, now that I think about it, I wonder if it wasn't the Shaolin style of Chinese Kempo and not Shorinji Kempo. [Author's note.]

[23] A **shikishi** is normally a square or rectangular piece of decorative paper with a hardboard backing. It is usually used to write calligraphy, poetry or some other artistic expression. Under normal circumstances, one would never ask directly for such a gift – it would be considered quite rude. By asking for a shikishi from Shioda Sensei, this challenger was perhaps acknowledging the master's superiority, although at the same time showing his absolute lack of etiquette. [Translator's note.]

his fist head-on just at this instant, because his elbow is fully extended, it is the same as hitting a straight stick and he will go flying backwards."

I used to ask Ueshiba Sensei about this technique, so he performed it on me many, many times. I would attack him with a punch and he would counter me beautifully. I would be lifted from my knees and would go flying. Ueshiba Sensei was incredible – he never missed. No matter how much power I used to drive a punch at him, he was always able to counter nimbly and send me flying.

Since I had personally experienced this technique many times, I was able to use it on the spur of the moment against the dojo yaburi. But my own technique was nothing compared to Ueshiba Sensei's. One time, Sensei even grabbed a punch thrown by the famous boxer **Piston Horiguchi**[24].

In those days, Mr. Horiguchi, who was taking the boxing world by storm, came to study at the Ueshiba Dojo because he wanted to assimilate Aikido movements into boxing. Sensei urged him on saying, "Please, come at me with a punch," so Mr. Horiguchi threw a straight punch. But lo and behold, Sensei grabbed his lightning fast punch and pulled it in before scooping his chin from underneath and flinging him away. Mr. Horiguchi got up from the tatami mat with wide-eyed astonishment.

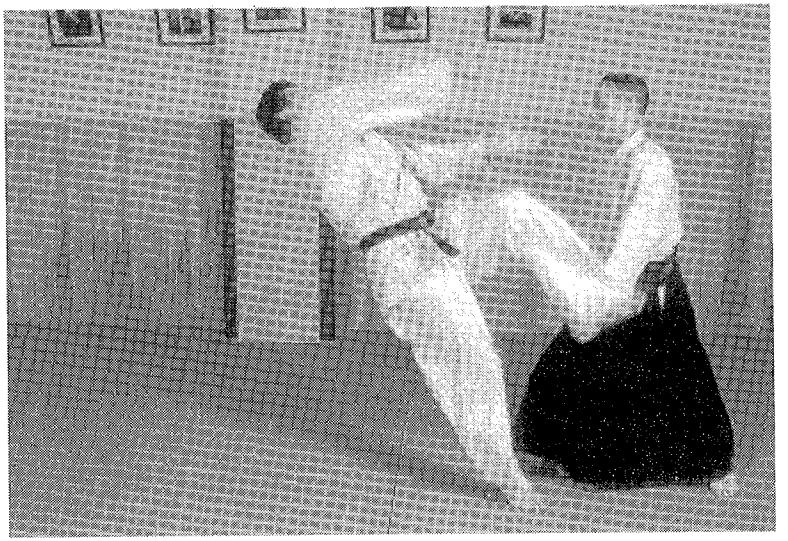
[24] **Piston Horiguchi** was perhaps the greatest Japanese Bantam Weight boxer of the time. He was known, as his nickname implies, for his lightning fast jabs. [Translator's note.]

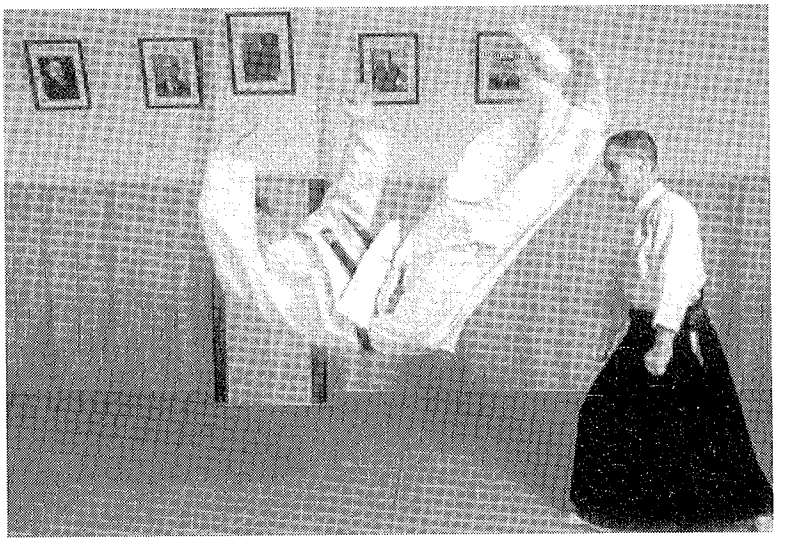
Looking at his right fist, you could see that he had red bruises all over it. It seems that Sensei's fingers grabbed Mr. Horiguchi's fist at the base of his index, middle and ring fingers and produced these marks.

I, too, was amazed so I went to Sensei and asked him how he had done this. He laughed it off saying: "It's nothing. It's a foregone conclusion. His fist has to stop somewhere and all you have to do is grab it then." Although what he said was of course correct, to actually do it is a different matter altogether.

I had been trying to get the hang of this technique, but it wasn't something you could acquire just because you set your mind to it. You have to be able to sense it physically as an instantaneous reflex just at that moment when the opponent's power is concentrated. You have to cultivate this sensitivity.

The technique that I often use in demonstrations, repelling a frontal attack to my shoulders, is also based on exactly the same principle. If you hit back too early or too late, it won't work. You have to take advantage of exactly that moment when the opponent is fully extended. This, however, is a difficult thing.





Using Irimi Nage[25] Against A Drunkard

Let me go back at this point to the Shinjuku free-for-all incident. Even though it is true that tremendous power can be generated through a well-timed offence, there is no way I could have taken on each of the 30 men individually. Therefore, rather than striking back, I relied more on body movements to dodge their attacks. This is a key element of Aikido; it gives meaning to the stepping in and rotating movements that we often use. Let me next relate a story about these body movements.

It was some time in either 1947 or 1948 when I was living in Tokorozawa City in Saitama Prefecture. I was working as a **salaryman**[26] for the Railway Signal Light Construction Company. This company was in Tokyo's Shinagawa Ward so it was at least an hour and a half one-way from my house. As a result, it was already evening by the time I returned home every day.

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[25] In the **Irimi Nage** or Step In Throw technique, the defender avoids a direct frontal confrontation and steps into the attacker from the side, breaking his balance before throwing him. [Translator's note.]

[26] The term **Salaryman** (or Sarariiman in Japanese) refers to any number of white-collar salaried positions held primarily by men in an office setting. [Translator's note.]

One day, I was hurrying along the road home from Tokorozawa station when up ahead two men who appeared to be intoxicated were stumbling toward me. In fact, they had consumed so much that they appeared to be dead drunk. I had an uneasy feeling about these two and, sure enough, one of them tried to pick a fight with me. He was having trouble blurting something out as he pressed in upon me.

I sensed danger so I moved quickly to avoid him. Although I meant no harm, he unfortunately lost his balance and fell over just as I got out of the way. Seeing this, the second guy became enraged. "What did you do to my buddy!" he yelled as he suddenly struck out at me.

Just at that instant, I simultaneously sprang forward and, stepping in, opened my hips to the right. Just a split second before he was about to hit me, his fist missed the target. His body came forward and ended up right in front of my chest, at which point I immediately drove my left hand into his throat and executed the movement for **sokumen irimi nage**[27].

The timing was perfect. The power with which he came into me and the power with which I drove into him matched to a 'T'. He flew through the air cleanly, hitting the back of his head on the hard ground as he came down. He was knocked unconscious.

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[27] **Sokumen Irimi Nage** refers to Side Step In Throw. See also note 25, page 42. [Translator's note.]

Afterwards, I quickly ran away to avoid further trouble. However, even as I look back on it now, I think that sokumen irimi really worked out well. At the same time, however, it's not that I consciously went through each of the minute movements which I've described above. It all happened in a flash and it was only later when I tried to make an analysis based on the riai that I came up with the above explanation.

Open Your Body After Stepping In

The key here is that I step in at the same time that the opponent comes in to strike me. If a fist comes flying in, it is only natural to try to move away from it or else the tendency might be to simply bat it away and then try to figure out how to counterattack. Nobody likes being hit, no matter who you are, so it is only natural for the body to react this way.

In reality though, if you move in just as the opponent's attack starts, he won't be able to hit you. By stepping right in, you encourage the opponent's aggression and he becomes more and more confident. In a way, you are

enticing the opponent and drawing out his power. Then, just as he has come in far enough, you suddenly open your body to the left or the right.

Now, it's critical that you don't misunderstand this idea of "opening the body" after stepping in. Many people feel that Aikido deals with the opponent by simply waiting for his attack. However, if it were anything so laid back as that, Aikido would never be able to hold its own, as other martial artists like to point out. What we refer to as body movement might also be called "being transparent". When the opponent attacks with all his might without even a hint of hesitation, if you dodge just as his power peaks, he will swing and miss and lose his balance. This is why it is important to step straight in. Don't wait and try to decide what to do. While it may appear that the opponent is on the offensive, in actual fact, in that instant you must have already taken control of the pace.

In this way, your opponent's power is completely under your control and, as a result, with a rotating movement you will easily be able to direct it. Just as in the case of the Tokorozawa incident, if you can combine this with precise timing, you will be able to throw the opponent easily.

Strike With A Backfist After Dodging A Knife

You can't do these things by imagining them, by thinking them through. The body must react immediately. Otherwise, you will not be able to defend yourself. This is all the more true if the opponent has a knife. Against an opponent with a knife, you don't have the time to work out details such as parrying this way or countering that way. I myself once narrowly escaped death only because my body reacted quickly.

It was an incident in Shanghai. In those days when evening fell in Shanghai, prostitutes called Yachii would stand on the street corners. My kohai and I were having fun teasing a group of them when a guy coming toward us pulled out a jack-knife and lunged at me just as we passed each other. It was completely unprovoked and out of the blue. The second I noticed him my body was in motion and in the next instant he was rolling around on the ground, groaning and holding his nose. Shocked, my companion asked, "Sempai, how did you do that just now?" It was only then that I went over what I had just done. It was something like this.

First, I dodged his knife thrust with an irimi movement. Then I pulled his extended arm in with my right hand and drove a left backfist strike in just below his nose. All these movements co-ordinated in a single effort produced

the desired results. Even though the distance between us was very close, I was able to dodge the knife with an instantaneous hip movement.

In this situation, if I was afraid or tried to figure out how to evade the attack, my body would not have moved and I would surely have been killed. By the very fact that I didn't think about it, I survived.

Because the execution of the backfist strike in this situation is quite important, I would like to offer an explanation here. The trick to a backfist strike is to anchor the extended elbow in one specific spot. If it moves around, you won't be able to generate any power. It's exactly the same as the way you use your elbow in a sokumen irimi. This produces the stationary strength of the elbow that is possible only in Aikido.

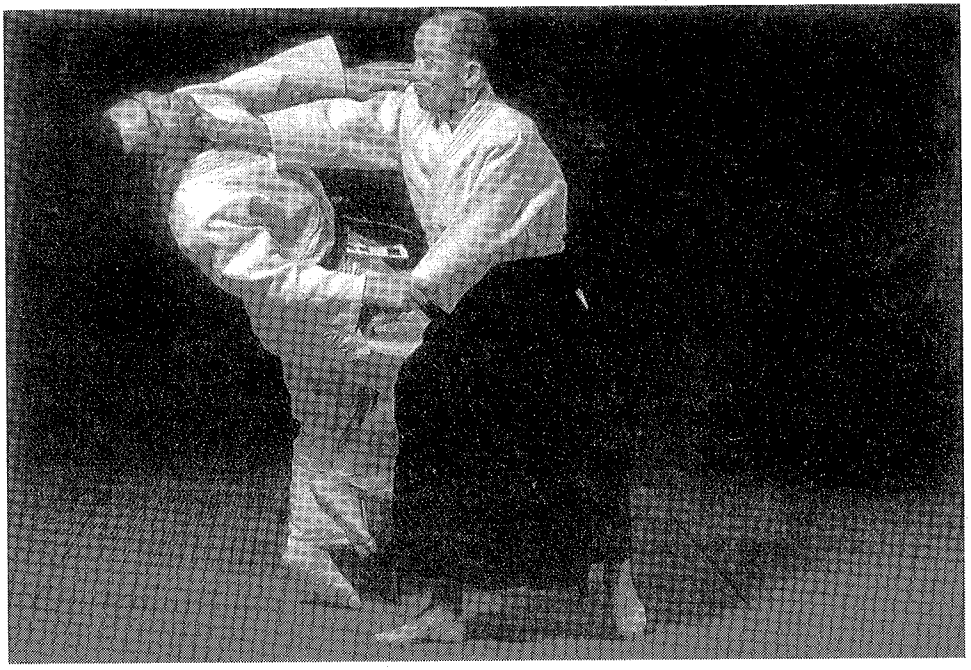
You have to make sure here that you keep your center of gravity below the elbow. Of course, the key point is controlling your center of gravity. Then, using the elbow as a fulcrum, strike with the power of your entire body in your fist. You won't be able to generate power if you focus solely on the strength of your arm.

Make Use Of The Enemy's Eagerness

In Aikido we particularly emphasize body movements, but this is not something that was originally unique to Aikido. No matter what the martial art, fighting techniques which included body movements were originally pursued. Because martial arts of previous times were meant to prove their worthiness purely on the battlefield, they had to consider how to deal with multiple opponents at one time. So, rather than engaging opponents head-on one at a time, they needed a method of combat which used body movements to freely overwhelm their opponents, or else they wouldn't be able to deal with the situation.

In modern martial arts which have been turned into sports, this aspect seems to be easily overlooked. Judo is a one-against-one contest, and on top of that, they only practise fighting methods which start from the grappling position. Karate too, because of the overemphasis on competition, has developed into an exchange of blows from a set distance. These kinds of movements may be effective in a one-on-one competition according to weight divisions, but it is difficult to say whether they could be used to defend yourself in a free-for-all fight, particularly if the enemy has a weapon. An enemy's attack in a free-for-all fight is quite different from an attack in a competition. In a free-for-all the first blow is usually thrown from quite a distance, which is exactly what you

want. As I noted before, by stirring up your opponent's eagerness and enticing him to come flying in at you, you will be able to deal with him when he does rush in.



People often say, "Aikido techniques are effective against punches that are driven in hard as in Karate, but ineffective against punches which are not driven in, as in boxing." But if they were to say this to me I would tell them that they think this way because they can only imagine fighting in the context

of a competition. When you are engaged in a life or death struggle, it's not a matter of Aikido techniques against boxing techniques, like in a movie or a novel. It is really not a question of technique at all. The strategy of martial arts involves the question of how I can make use of the emotions, the intent, of an enemy who is bent on destroying me.

This is why, if you consider the Shinjuku incident once again, you could say that the fight started as soon as the opponents got riled up. In such a situation, you, on the other hand, must remain calm and composed. If you cannot, you won't be able to discern the opponents' movements. If you lose your composure, you won't be able to execute the body movements and it will only be by sheer force that you are able to strike down the opponent.

People who have confidence in their physical abilities often misjudge this point. In advance, they pin their hopes on their techniques, confront the opponent head-on, and lose the presence of mind to get out of trouble. While this approach may be useful in a one-on-one contest, when the opponents outnumber you, you will eventually be finished off.

I often see students who have been drinking a little grappling with each other in popular downtown bar areas. Even in these situations it is generally the one who seems to have some knowledge of Judo who goes in for the grab. But they usually get bogged down in an endurance match, unable to move let alone throw the opponent. Here too though, it is not a question of good or bad

techniques. It's just that they don't do any training in how to deal with a real fight, one that is not a competition.

That's why it's better not to have the intention to fight. Hold yourself as though you are about to attack and when your opponents move in, dodge quickly and sharply. They will smash into each other, stumble around, and cause their own downfall. Otherwise, if you have to fight one-against-one many times over, you are bound to be defeated eventually. Conquer the opponents by means of themselves. This is the secret to fighting one-against-many. It is made possible by body movements which involve a sense of calm judgment.

To illustrate this point, free-style techniques against many attackers are performed in demonstrations. You should keep in mind here, however, that the demonstrations are not just prearranged performances.

Mike Tyson's Visit

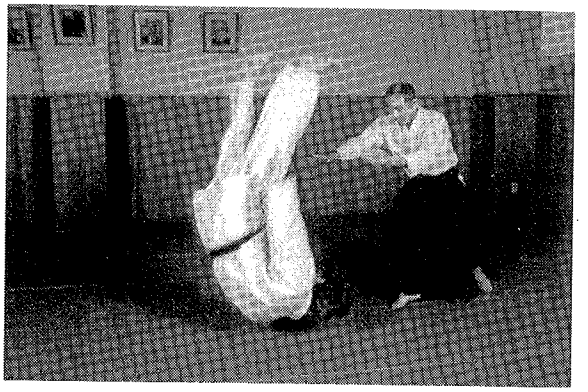
Boxing is another fighting method that places great emphasis on a wide variety of body movements, just as Aikido does. The difference is that as opposed to

the flowing circular movements found in Aikido, the key point in boxing seems to be the use of footwork. It is often said that in a real fight boxers would have the advantage, and I think this is absolutely correct. In a free-for-all fight it really comes down to whether you can handle any attack from an assailant, and boxers have plenty of practice in this type of thing.

On February 7, 1990, **Mike Tyson**[28], who was then the World Heavy Weight Champion of the World Boxing Association, the World Boxing Council, and

[28] **Mike Tyson** is the former undisputed World Heavy Weight boxing champion. Born in Brooklyn on June 30, 1966, he had his professional debut in March of 1985. In November 1986, at the age of 20 years and 4 months, he became the youngest fighter in history to win the Heavy Weight title. [Editor's note.]

the World Boxing Federation, came to visit my dojo. The visit caused a lot of talk, but I understand that it came about because Tyson felt that he could learn a great deal from the body movements of Aikido. From what the reporters told me, it seems that during the entire demonstration, Tyson kept his eyes glued to our footwork. The others who accompanied him only watched our upper bodies and so they couldn't quite comprehend Aikido enough to make a good comparison with it.



However, the thing that Tyson showed the most interest in was what we call **Kokyu Nage**[29]. In this technique, the attacker drives in and is thrown by matching the timing to the force of the attack. When he saw this he reportedly

[29] **Kokyu Nage** is a throwing method in which you use timing to co-ordinate your own breathing and body movements with the opponent's in order to control the flow of his power and throw him. [Translator's note.]

commented: "This technique is all timing. It has nothing to do with power." Just as you might expect from a boxing genius, he had grasped perfectly the core reason for Aikido's effectiveness. I would have been proud if, after his visit, he had gone on to successfully defend his title with his winning form, but unfortunately, he did eventually lose his crown.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that boxers can be extremely formidable opponents. I, myself, have had first-hand experience with this. Immediately after the Second World War, on the introduction of a friend, I had the opportunity to go around to the army camps to hold Aikido demonstrations. It was right around the time that I decided to start my own dojo, so I really needed to raise money, and this tour of the army camps served both as a good source of remuneration and an excellent public relations opportunity.

For this reason, I visited camps all over, but things didn't exactly go smoothly. All sorts of things happened, including the following story which took place in the Asagasumi Camp in Saitama Prefecture.

To say that you are going to introduce traditional Japanese martial arts to the American soldiers sounds great except that in reality, nobody is seriously interested in the martial arts of a country they occupy. The Americans came to my demonstration fully intending to see a show. For them, this was entertainment. They threw themselves down to watch and smirked as they smoked their cigarettes and drank their beer. I was disgusted by their poor

behaviour but I couldn't very well complain; they were, after all, the occupying forces.

After a while, a large Caucasian soldier who was sitting in the spectators' seats approached me, assumed a boxing stance and challenged me. He seemed to have quite a bit of confidence in boxing. Reluctantly, my kohai who was acting as my partner in the demonstration decided to take him on. The American's fist flew out like a flash. It was a hook, and it hit my kohai directly in the face. With this one shot my kohai was knocked out cold. The soldiers in the spectators' seats suddenly broke into an uproar – whistling, clapping their hands and laughing loudly.

Now the American turned to face me. He tried to provoke me by shouting in a mocking voice, "Hi, papa-san!" This was now a challenge to Aikido's reputation as a martial art. A fighting spirit burned within me as I advanced to face him. He was about twice my size and his eyes showed his contempt for me.

Using Shiho Nage[30] Against The Boxing G.I.

The American threw a left jab at me and at that very moment I dove in and grabbed his right hand. Then, rotating my body around once, I flattened him with a shiho nage. All the others who were lying around taking in the show let out a gasp of surprise. I looked back at them as if to say, "There! How's that?!". After that, nobody came forward to challenge us.

My opponent got up holding his right elbow as though it was in pain. He had a miserable look on his face, a look decidedly different from just a few minutes earlier. He kept asking me something, which the interpreter translated. "I threw a left jab at you, but you jumped in and grabbed my right hand. Why?" I replied: "Your left jab was only a fake. In reality, after the left, you were going to throw a right punch. That's why I grabbed your right hand instead." He was very impressed by my answer. He probably never thought along those lines before.

This concept of not struggling or competing with the opponent is fundamental to Aikido. To be concerned with the opponent's attack itself only results in a struggle, in aggression. The result is confrontation.

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[30] The **shiho nage** technique is the "All Direction Throw". [Translator's note.]

In this particular case, if I were solely concerned about the left jab, I probably would have been struck by the following right punch. That's why I quickly dodged the left and controlled the real weapon, the right, before it could do any damage. Because my opponent in no way expected me to come in like that, he was defenceless against an attack to his right hand and I was able to take him by surprise.

In contrast, my kohai who preceded me was completely preoccupied with how to deal with the opponent's attack. As such, he was psychologically outmanoeuvred and placed in a reactive mindset. Saying that he lacked any knowledge of boxing is over-simplistic and wrong. If you follow that line of reasoning, then you would have to study all of the fighting techniques throughout the world before you could be effective.

That is not what is meant when we talk about dealing with an attack. No matter how the opponent comes in, you have to move first and use your own body movements to pre-empt his movements. This is why you must never wait for an attack to come. By sensing just when the opponent's attack is about to start, you need to deal with it before its power can be manifested. It is not simply a matter of saying if he attacks this way, you will counter that way.

This is why you must abandon any plans about doing one technique over another. It is not a matter of moving based on a conscious judgment, but rather, when you rely completely on your five senses, you will for the first time

be able to move freely. If you can do this, then the type of attack your opponent uses becomes irrelevant.

As it was, my kohai was unnerved because he was up against unknown fighting techniques and even his stance seemed to be saying, "Now what shall I do?" He had completely lost his own natural posture. As a result, he was already psychologically one step behind the opponent. He was defeated. Quite clearly, you can't deal with a boxer's speed by waiting.

You must not forget that it is only when you have abandoned your own ego and have become a completely blank slate that truly free body movements become possible. Please realize that if you cannot grasp this point, you won't be able to use Aikido in a real fight.

Throwing Techniques To Use Against Judo

Let's look next at throwing techniques. It is impossible to say unconditionally which throwing techniques are effective in a real fight, but if I were to mention those that I, myself, have used often and found effective, I would have to say they were shiho nage, **hijiate**[31] kokyu nage and irimi nage. When I started teaching Aikido at the Nihon Kokan Steel Company in 1951 before I set up my own dojo, I had occasion to demonstrate the power of shiho nage and hijiate kokyu nage.

[31] **Hijiate** is known as the "Hitting Elbow" technique in which the elbow is struck or attacked. [Translator's note.]

The Nihon Kokan Steel Company was strong and well established in Judo, so those to whom I taught Aikido were all veterans of the Judo club. The first day that I held a demonstration I had no students of my own yet to perform as my uke, so I started right off by using members of the Judo club as my opponents. Of course, they didn't know much about Aikido, so they couldn't be expected to co-operate and throw themselves willingly. I approached the demonstration with complete seriousness.

I chose the captain of the Judo club, a 6th **dan**[32], as my first opponent. He was a huge man. When he came in to grab me, I used a variation of shiho nage to lift his arm on to my shoulder and then I used his elbow to throw him. All you could hear was a snap, and then, holding his elbow, he bowed out of the demonstration.

The next to come forward was the assistant captain. I learned later that he was a 5th dan in Judo and besides being the Kanto region champion, he was a veteran of Karate, Kendo and Sumo, holding a 3rd dan in each of these arts. He immediately attacked me with a Karate punch. I dodged and sent him flying by using hijiate kokyu nage. He picked himself up and I threw him another five or six times. His elbow must have sustained quite a bit of damage and, although he didn't acknowledge his defeat, he withdrew in silence.

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[32] Black belt holders are usually referred to by their level of achievement or **dan** (degree). [Translator's note.]

With shiho nage and hijiate kokyu nage I was able to defeat the two strongest members of the group. After that it was easy to handle the others and I was able to clearly impress the power of Aikido upon those in attendance.

This was the beginning, out of which I became a part-time employee of the Nihon Kokan Steel Company. Since it was from here that I was able to establish a base which led to the foundation of the **Yoshinkan**[33], I will never forget this "no holds barred" demonstration.

Shiho Nage Is Fundamental

In Aikido there are various kinds of throwing techniques, but of all of them shiho nage is the one that is particularly important. The reason is that shiho nage forms the base for all the other throwing techniques.

Ueshiba Sensei used to say, "Shiho nage is the foundation of Aikido." Therefore, if you train sufficiently and are able to master shiho nage, the rest

[33] The **Yoshinkan** was established in 1955. The author's father originally used the name to refer to the family dojo. Literally translated it means "School for the Cultivation of the Spirit". [Translator's note.]

simply become adaptations. Sensei would say, "All you ever need to master is shiho nage."

Once, a man whom we'll call K from the Waseda University Judo club came to the dojo to test his skill. At the time, he was the center of attention in the Judo world and very good at executing a left **Tsurikomi-goshi**[34]. I think he was a 4th dan then.

It was Mr. Yukawa, who was one of my seniors and who has since passed away, who first went forward and accepted K's challenge. Mr. Yukawa originally practised Judo and was a 3rd dan at the **Kodokan**[35]. He was actually very promising in Judo and he only entered our dojo because **Jigoro Kano**[36] Sensei basically dispatched him to us saying, "Go and steal what you can from Ueshiba's Aikijutsu!" As it turned out, Mr. Yukawa became completely captivated by Aikido and eventually stopped going to the Kodokan altogether. It's amazing how things turn out sometimes!

In any case, it was Mr. Yukawa who faced K. Now, beyond his excellent technique, Mr. Yukawa had great physical strength, and within the Ueshiba

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[34] The Judo technique **Tsurikomi-goshi** is the "Lift-Pull Hip Throw". It is a technique in which the hips are dropped and then raised as the hands are used to pull and throw the opponent over the hips. [Translator's note.]

[35] The **Kodokan** was the name given to the school established by Jigoro Kano. The name literally means "School for Studying the Way". [Translator's note.]

[36] **Jigoro Kano** (1860-1938) founded Judo in the early 1880s. [Translator's note.]

Dojo he was recognized as one of the best. Nevertheless, in the face of this famous Judo practitioner, it seemed as if his former self as a Kodokan 3rd dan took over. On the outside, in form, he was doing Aikido, but you could see that in his heart he was a Judo practitioner. As a result, he couldn't commit one way or the other and so there was no way he could win over this practising Judo 4th dan. He fell into K's pace and was thrown cleanly.

Considering that it was the Ueshiba Dojo, this was not going to end just like that. The next to go forward was Mr. Zensaburo Akazawa. Mr. Akazawa was my sempai at the dojo and he followed the teachings of Ueshiba Sensei faithfully. He devoted himself solely to the practice of shiho nage. And since he did Aikido exclusively, he didn't know anything about the ways of Judo practitioners. On the contrary, since his daily training only consisted of squeezing as much as he could out of shiho nage, outside of this one technique he had almost no other moves. Practically speaking, you would expect it to be difficult for him to put up a good fight against a 4th dan in Judo.

And yet, as K came in to grab him, Mr. Akazawa took hold of K's wrist, spun around and shifted his body, and executed a beautiful shiho nage. A dull snap came form K's elbow, which had been locked against itself. His elbow was completely destroyed and he couldn't even execute a breakfall.

From a practical point of view you might think, "What's the use of practising only one technique over and over again?" But as Mr. Akazawa has shown us, by devoting himself to mastering shiho nage – the most fundamental technique

– before anyone knew it, he had, in the process, acquired the very body movements that are essential to Aikido.

Completely Extending The Opponent's Body

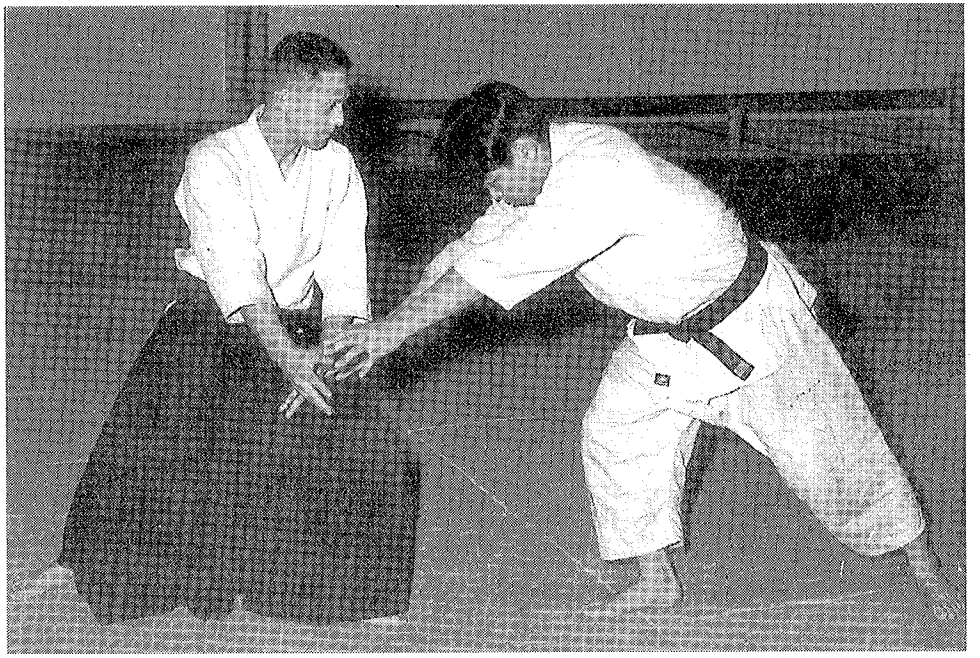
Let's consider for a moment just what it is that we should learn from practising shiho nage. It's actually quite straightforward if we begin by resolving some of the doubts that outsiders have about shiho nage. You often hear things like, "Is it really possible to tuck in the opponent's arm and bring him down to the rear?" Their point is: "Nobody's going to stand still while the technique is applied to them, so even if you want to spin around, won't the opponent just resist you? Won't it be you who is defeated?"

Those who think along these lines have only partially grasped what it is that we call martial technique. Most likely, they have the image of the "winning technique" of Judo and Sumo in their heads. For example, in the case of the **ippon seoi** or the **harai-goshi**[37] of Judo, it is only by the difference in the form

[37] The **Ippon Seoi Nage** and the **Harai-goshi** of Judo are the "One-arm Shoulder Throw" and the "Hip Sweep" respectively. [Translator's note.]

at the end of the throw that you can distinguish between the two. And generally, in terms of the "technique", many people are only looking at the ending. In other words, you could say that they've already become captive to the "form".

The important thing, however, is not your form when you throw the opponent. It's how you force him into a position where he can in fact be thrown. To put it bluntly, the problem is how you break your opponent's balance; in the end, it really doesn't matter what method you use to throw him.



As for breaking your opponent's balance, many of you are probably familiar with Judo's two-stage explanation of just how this is achieved. First is **tsukuri**, or positioning oneself for the throw, and then comes **kuzushi**, or the actual breaking of the opponent's balance. Judo's way is to lead the opponent into shifting his center of gravity one way or the other, and then to throw him by either sweeping him or lifting him on to the shoulder.

In Aikido, the principle is exactly the same. However, in Aikido, our concept is based on allowing his power to flow and, in one big continuous movement, extending his body as much as possible. We then attack at the moment the opponent's balance is broken.

This "extending of the body" points to the following condition. Suppose you stumble and lose your balance. If you recover immediately, fine. But when you can't regain your balance, you stumble forward and then it's just a matter of waiting to fall. In the same way, extending the body means to lead the opponent into a position where he can't control his own balance. Once he is fully extended, even if you leave him alone he will defeat himself. You can cause him to take a much more damaging fall by effectively applying additional force.

The way to achieve this is to guide the opponent's power farther and farther away from his body in such a way that it is not stopped or interrupted. The key is to keep him from recovering his balance. It's like pulling someone's hand a little bit further just as they lose their balance. If you do this, you will control

his center of gravity and if you can guide his power in the right direction, you will be able to finish him off any way you like. As a result, you will be able to apply something like shiho nage. In fact, this is where the essence of shiho nage lies.

Going back to the initial point, if you attempt a shiho nage and the opponent is able to resist you, it is because you haven't been able to guide their power correctly and the flow of their energy has been interrupted. I often see people who, having successfully broken the opponent's balance, subsequently guide their power in such a direction as to, almost on purpose, allow the opponent to recover. In such a situation, you are trying to achieve a throwing position by way of force and you are ignoring the flow of his power. If the opponent puts up a struggle, the technique simply won't work. As such, you should realize that you have already strayed away from the basic technique.

This use of the opponent's energy flow is all a matter of rhythm. In order to extend the opponent's body, it is necessary to guide him sufficiently with large movements. Conversely, when quick and small movements are required, you should move in just this way. Large movements are not necessarily wasteful and, by the same token, going out of your way to make small movements is not always a good thing. In terms of the basics of shiho nage, the initial stage involves bringing the arms up and the latter stage involves pivoting, reversing directions and tucking in the opponent's arm. Here too though, the mastery of this kind of fast and slow rhythm is an important issue.

Again, the guidance of power cannot be achieved by force. It is not a matter of physical strength. It's important to use the power that is generated through the shifting of your center of gravity. In particular, it is important to make use of this principle just as you tuck the opponent's arm in.

By mastering these various fundamental principles, shiho nage will have the desired effect. All of these principles are common to each and every other technique. Beginners should strive to discover these principles and should devote themselves ever more to training in shiho nage.

Breaking The Opponent's Balance Without Pain

Up to this point I've explained at length the usefulness of Aikido in a real fight and I'm sure that some of you might find it odd that I haven't discussed joint-locking techniques at all. It's not that joint-locks are not useful. They are very handy when you want to control an opponent or when you want to gently settle down a drunk who's being obnoxious. I, myself, have had to use yonkajo to teach a lesson to an American soldier.

But if you consider the essence of Aikido, defeating the opponent by wrenching their joints is fundamentally a very crude method. First of all, joint-locking techniques don't seem to have any distinct form. Within the basic techniques they are classified into a number of categories as represented by **ikkajo**, **nikajo**, **sankajo** or **yonkajo**.[38] But as with throwing techniques, if you study these carefully you'll find that they have little to do with outward form. For example, it's meaningless to decide one wants to use sankajo, and then expend an inordinate amount of effort in order to achieve it. Even if, as a result of this decision, the deciding factor in the match is in fact sankajo, it cannot be denied that this way of fighting is quite far removed from the essence of Aikido.

The principle here is the same as that which I've explained already. If, as a result of letting the opponent's power flow, you can apply the technique naturally to conform with the position of his joints, then that is fine. Simply put, once you have fully extended the opponent's body, then by applying a modest amount of pressure on his elbow, the joint can be controlled. There is no need to go out of your way to follow a set procedure to achieve a difficult technique.

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[38] In Aikido, the basic types of joint-locking techniques are called **ikkajo** [1st control], **nikajo** [2nd control], **sankajo** [3rd control] and **yonkajo** [4th control]. These are not the names currently used by Aikido's predecessor, Daito Ryu, but they derive from the step-by-step systemization of the techniques. However, while in Yoshinkan we use ikkajo, nikajo, etc., to conform with the names used in the old days at the Ueshiba Dojo; in the Aikikai they have altered the names to ikkyo, nikyo, etc. [Editor's note.]

Another important point is that techniques which cause great pain have their limits. If the opponent is not very experienced, then a simple twist of the wrist may be enough to put an end to the whole affair. However, if he's someone who has had a bit of training, this won't be enough. The fact that you have applied a reverse joint-lock is no guarantee of victory. On the contrary, it becomes extremely difficult to follow it up with a different technique.

So what should you do? In the end you simply have to render the opponent powerless. You should strive to develop the ability to manipulate your opponent so that he is unable to resist no matter how hard he tries, or to disperse the power with which the opponent resists you. Some people who see my demonstrations worry that the students who act as my uke and have their joints locked must surely be in pain. But this is not the case. They are not in any pain at all. As uchideshi, they are so strong and so tempered that no matter how many times you try to apply a reverse joint-lock on their wrists, you won't be able to finish them off so easily. In terms of strength, they are much more powerful than an old man like me and, besides, they know enough about how to escape a joint-lock in order to prevent injury.

Be that as it may, I am able to break them with a nikajo technique, but not because it causes them pain. It's because I attack in a direction that leaves them unable to resist me, no matter how much they try.

The opponent can be broken without causing him pain. This is where the essence of Aikido lies. You should think of your training in joint-locks as the first step toward attaining this end. As long as you enjoy inflicting pain on your training partner, you will never attain the heights of Aikido. It would be better to think of joint-locking techniques as a way of conditioning the wrists. Ueshiba Sensei used to refer to it as "cleaning the crusts from the joints." Applying joint-lock techniques improves the blood circulation, stimulates the metabolism, and is well suited to promoting one's overall health. Practise them on each other all you want!

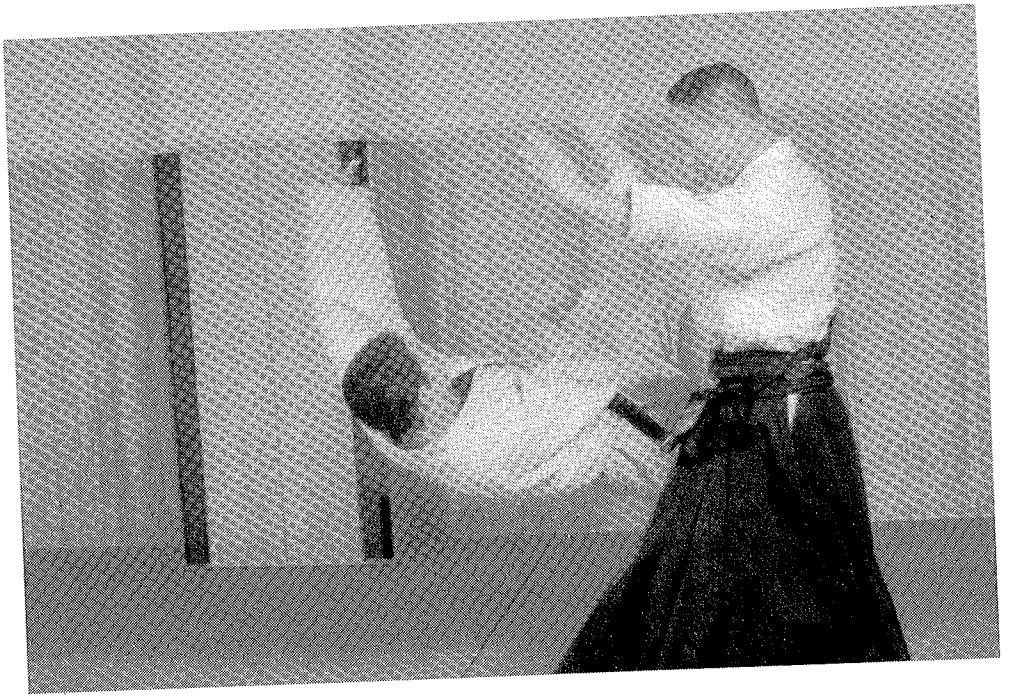
Kokyu Power

呼吸力

Kokyu Power Does Not Diminish

In the first chapter, I primarily discussed strategy as it relates to Aikido. You now have some understanding, however general, of how Aikido can be useful in a real fight. But moving according to the precepts of strategy isn't always easy. The reason is that in Aikido there are rather unique methods of using power and of moving the body. If you don't acquire these skills you won't be able to move according to strategic principles. If you simply move around without any knowledge of what you are doing, there's no way that you will manage to use Aikido techniques.

One of the distinctive features of Aikido is its extremely efficient use of power. In demonstrations, it looks as though the opponents are thrown around with such ease that everyone gets the feeling that there must be something mysterious going on.



Actually, in a demonstration given by students of Aikido, the back is completely straight, the shoulders are dropped, and the participants assume a very sharp looking posture. Some people who witness a demonstration come away with the impression that Aikido is highly stylized. There is certainly

nothing of the brute strength and straining muscles that one normally associates with throwing people around.

In fact, this is one of the most important aspects of Aikido. The graceful movements have nothing to do with laziness, nor is the perfect posture a result of striving for stylized beauty. Then why are they important? Well, in order to produce great power, an effective posture is one in which your back is straight, your shoulders are down and your feet are firmly planted on the ground. In other words, moving your body while maintaining this type of posture will bring forth a much more powerful force than can be produced through muscular strength alone.

This is not to say that there is no use of power in Aikido. If anything, we use a lot of it. However, it is not power in the normal sense that people think of it, produced by tensing the entire body and straining the muscles. In Aikido, we use terms like "kokyu power" or "focused power" to refer to the power that we develop.

The distinctive feature of kokyu power is that it is not affected by age. No matter how hard one trains, muscular power will naturally deteriorate with age but this doesn't happen with kokyu power. As long as one continues to do the proper training, kokyu power can be used regardless of one's age.

I, myself, am a good example of this. I am well over 70 years of age, my stature is small and I don't exactly have big bulging muscles. And yet, just by

moving slightly, I toss around all those vibrant young men and everybody is surprised. Some people wonder if I'm not using some sort of mysterious technique. But truthfully, it's not mysterious or anything else. I am using kokyu power.

Kokyu power is produced when we push ourselves to the limit, making the most efficient use of the capabilities that lie within our own bodies. Consequently, anybody, no matter what kind of person, can use kokyu power. The only problem is whether or not you practise in such a way as to develop it.

Another important point is that kokyu power is not limited to Aikido alone. Originally, it was certainly a part of all Japanese martial arts. While it was referred to by different names, Judo, Karate or any of the various other martial arts all had ways of practising kokyu power. But somewhere along the line it fell into disuse. I believe that therein lies the decline of Japanese martial arts. So in this chapter I would like to discuss kokyu power, the basis of Aikido.

Center Power: Maintaining the Body's Axis

The human body can produce incredible power naturally. A good example is the enormous strength that people often show at the scene of a fire. In extreme situations, the unconscious takes over complete control of the body's functioning and even an old granny can display enough strength to lift up a large chest of drawers by herself. This power comes from the use of the entire body.

Yet usually, when we move our hands we rely solely on the muscles of the arms and shoulders, and when we move our feet, we typically rely solely on the muscles of the legs. In short, we only use the strength of each individual part. This places quite a burden on these muscles and leaves us with a rather inefficient method of using power.

As for what Aikido calls "kokyu power", this is something that is inherent in all human beings. It is the manifestation, at will, of power which is derived from the entire body.

The basis of kokyu power is "center power", which is the power that keeps the body's center line absolutely straight. For the most part, our center lines are actually twisted, even though we claim to stand up straight. If we truly do

stand up straight for a moment and make our center line strong, as soon as we move just a little we relax this feeling and go back to our normal pattern.

In Aikido, the first thing we do is training to strengthen this axis, this center line of the body. Specifically, we train in order to develop one straight line between the head, the hips and the tips of the toes.

Often in practising nikajo, when the technique doesn't work, I'll hold the person's hips from behind and it will work instantly. This is because I am supporting his center line, which becomes relaxed as he tries to move. Of course, he must learn to do this himself without any outside help.

Just what kind of training should you do in order to cultivate this center power? Well, in Yoshinkan we attach great importance to practising **kamae**[39], which is training for center power. In the kamae position, both hands, both feet, the hips and the head all come together in one line. Then, the center of gravity is placed along the perpendicular axis which runs directly down from the head.

From a beginner's point of view, maintaining this posture is quite an imposing expectation. At first, they have no concept of where their own center of gravity lies and they put so much power into their arms and legs that they shake all over the place. However, through practice they build up a very solid center

[39] **Kamae** literally means "posture" but is used to refer to the basic stance in Yoshinkan Aikido. [Translator's note.]

line, and then they go on to acquire a basic stance which can be used to produce immense power.

If your central axis is unsteady, you won't be able to make any technique work. Always remember that every one of the basics in Aikido is geared toward the maintenance of this center line.

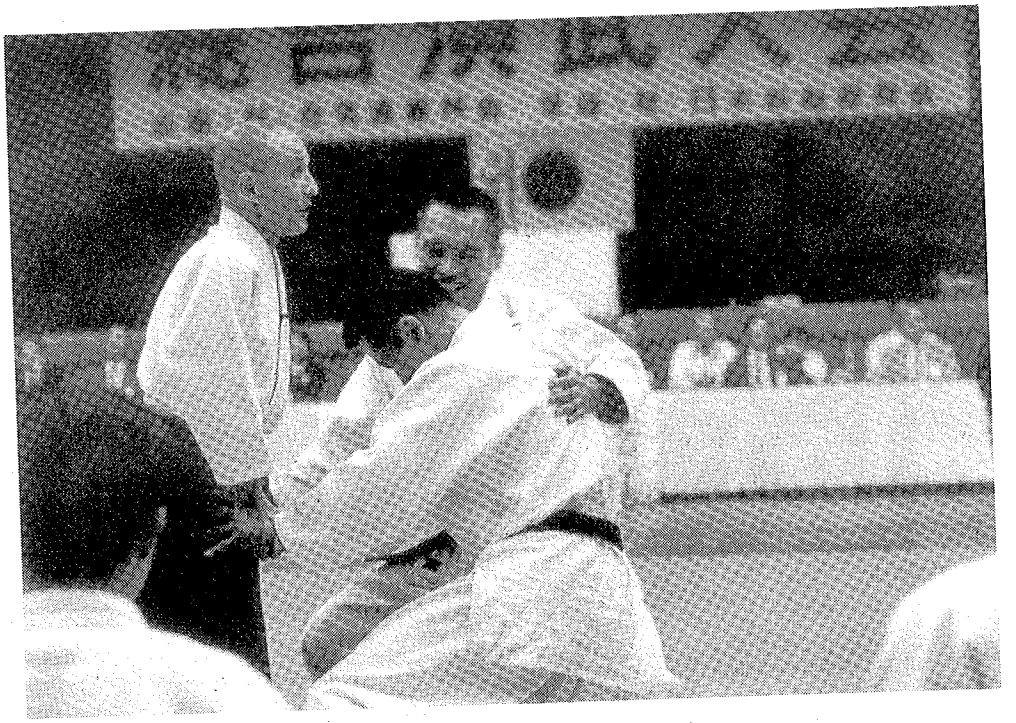
Grip The Ground With Your Feet

As I've said many times before, the basis of Aikido is center power. Firmly stabilizing the body with a strong central axis allows for a great variety of body movements, and by connecting these with **focused power**[40] and kokyu power, incredible power can be produced.

This is where we find the answer to the question of why Aikido has no kicking techniques. Ueshiba Sensei used to say: "Kicking leaves you momentarily on

[40] For an explanation of **focused power**, see the discussion on page 84 entitled "Developing The Focused Power Of The Entire Body." [Translator's note.]

one foot, and for that moment you are in a very weak position. If you were to be swept off your feet, you would be finished. This is why lifting your feet off the ground is crazy." If the opponent comes in for an attack and your feet are firmly planted on the ground, you can either retreat or move in. If one foot is lifted up, however, there's no way you will be able to move.



One of the things that is absolutely fundamental is to always assume a stable posture. To do this, you have to leave your feet flat on the ground. Move by

sliding your feet and maintain contact with the ground. The reason for this is to avoid the uneven shifting of your center of gravity. At the same time, however, as long as you can maintain a stable posture then it's okay to be on one foot. But realistically, you have a problem since the ground isn't always level.

If you ever get into a fight outdoors, you'll run into problems if you slide your feet as though you were still on tatami mats. Inevitably, you will need to lift your foot. However, even when you do lift your foot, the important thing is whether you can move and keep your center of gravity steady, just as you would if your feet were sliding along the floor.

During training, Ueshiba Sensei would often assume a one-legged stance and tell us to come at him. He was showing us that one must always assume a stable stance by moving the center of gravity freely at will.

If you reach the point where you can do this, lifting a foot or standing on one leg won't be a concern to you. However, until you've attained this ability, keep your feet planted on the ground at all times and practise firmly supporting your body. No matter how much they mimic their teachers, those who can't control the movement of their center of gravity are headed for disaster.

Analysing The Movement Of Sensei's Center of Gravity

In terms of Aikido, moving the center of gravity is extremely important and I have tried all kinds of things in attempting to study it. Fortunately for me I had many opportunities to accompany Ueshiba Sensei, and during those times I would analyse intently the pace and movement of his feet as I followed along behind him. I was interested in where he held his center of gravity and just how he transferred it as he moved along.

This, by the way, was extremely difficult to discern since Sensei wore a **hakama**[41]. Just as we say that "the secret of the martial arts is in the knees," the masters of old absolutely never showed the movement of their knees, fearing that if they did, their own body movements might be perceived. So in order to hide their knees, they wore hakama. Sensei was no different, so I followed the movement of Sensei's feet with my eyes peeled. As a result, I gained an understanding of many things on my own. I wonder if, among today's younger generation, there are those who would go to these lengths in order to learn?

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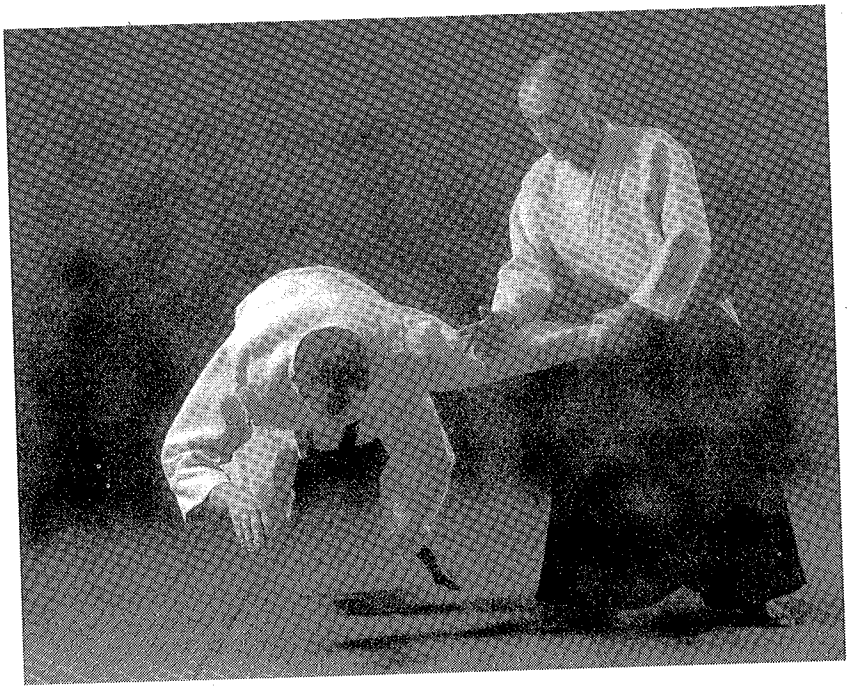
[41] The **hakama** is a type of formal divided skirt which falls roughly to the ankles in length. [Translator's note.]

Another thing that I really struggled with was studying goldfish. You are all probably laughing at this but for me this was extremely important. When I was a student, I used to keep 10 or so goldfish in a bowl. They were the kind with tails that are split into three sections. What I would do was tap the glass rim of the bowl and the goldfish would scatter all at once – but they would never run into each other. They would quickly shift their bodies to avoid each other.

I watched them closely and realized that they manoeuvred themselves using their tails. So I would tap the bowl and observe where in their tails they placed their center of gravity. I would even imitate this movement myself as I moved my feet. I think I kept this up for about 10 years or so.

These kinds of things are probably not directly related to my current technique but, as a minimum, I feel that they improved my sensitivity. No matter what you are doing, you have to muster all of your strength and devote yourself to the task at hand. Don't be satisfied with average effort.

Developing The Focused Power Of The Entire Body



While center power is the power used to maintain your axis, if we take this one step further, tremendous power is produced by maintaining this center line throughout movement. By bringing together the strength of the hips, the legs, the knees and the abdomen when moving forward and by focusing this into one

point, whether that be the arm, the shoulder, the elbow or anywhere else, immense power can be produced. This power is referred to as focused power.

The average person thinks about training individual muscles or about training a certain area because it is weak. Although this is certainly one way of going about it, it is not what we strive for in Aikido. Whether it is the chest, the abdomen or anywhere else, you should be able to throw all of your power into that particular area.

When the entire body is disconnected in its movements, this kind of power cannot emerge. Focused power is released from a body that is united and working as a single unit through the use of center power. Be sure to move your body in unison. You can't have a certain part of the body moving faster and another part more slowly.

Consider, for example, the application of nikajo. The thing to avoid most is trying to do the technique with just the hands. Doing so disconnects the movement of the upper and lower halves of the body. To begin with, once you assume the position for nikajo, if the space between your hands and your body shrinks, the technique won't work. The important thing at this point is the strength with which the upper body is locked. That is, by locking the shoulders and the flanks, the position of the upper body is completely maintained. Then, once you move forward the strength of the lower half of the body is transferred to the arms.

Just as an object will move if you push it with a hard iron pole but won't move if you try to push it with a soft rubber hose, if you are bent or too relaxed, power will not be transferred to the opponent. But at the same time, "hardening" the muscles is different from "locking" or "fixing". If you put strength into your muscles and harden them, the result will be that they will only move as separate units. You have to be able to remove your strength and at the same time firmly maintain the form of the technique. This is "locked power".

By moving forward while using locked power to maintain your posture, with no part of your body lagging behind, and with the entire body moving in unison, immense power will be produced. Then, by transferring this power along one line, you will have the ability to use it through any part of the body.

In a way, you could think of focused power as the ultimate form of center power. In demonstrations, I often show things like striking the throat with the index finger or stepping on the top of the foot with the big toe. These are all examples of focused power.

The key to producing focused power is in the big toe. Keep it strong and grip the floor firmly. Then power will surge into your hips and you will become strong. You have to get the feeling of this surging sensation. The next thing is to add acceleration from the springing action of the knees to this power. If these movements are united, your techniques will be filled with immense power.

Defending Yourself With Focused Power

Above all else, because of the importance of strengthening the big toes, be diligent when practising seated techniques. If you strengthen your big toes by doing seated techniques, the power of your standing techniques should increase rapidly. Ueshiba Sensei himself was always strengthening his big toes.

Some time ago, the professional wrestler **Akira Maeda**[42] came to visit my dojo a couple of times and we discussed the importance of the big toes. Afterwards, and with his new understanding of just what this was about, he said that when he did deep knee bends or squats, he would put power into his big toes. Although Maeda was a big star in professional wrestling, he never put on airs or acted tough. He was a very gentle and courteous young man and I had an extremely good feeling about him.

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[42] **Akira Maeda** was born in Osaka on January 24, 1959. While in primary school he studied Shorinji Kempo, and in high school he studied Karate. He was scouted after becoming well known as a street fighter in Osaka and joined the New Japanese Wrestling League. He later transferred to the UWF, worked hard to develop professional wrestling, and caused quite a stir among young people. In March 1991, he founded a new company, Rings, and started a network of world-class professional fighting sports. [Editor's note.]

The big toe also plays a vital role in rotating movements. That's because the big toe becomes the axis of the revolution. In my case, it's actually the pad of the big toe. If you don't use this spot, then your body will be unsteady as you pivot. You will develop a hard callus here, and even if you remove it again and again, it will continue to build up. This simply indicates that your body's axis is stable. If you develop calluses all over the place, then this means that your axis is still unsteady.

You could say that all of the incidences regarding power in the techniques that were introduced in the first chapter, whether dealing with throws or with strikes, are expressions of focused power. By causing an explosion through the focusing of all the body's power into one point, you can produce power which is beyond the normal ability of your muscles.

This is something that is not just restricted to Aikido techniques. I narrowly escaped death on one occasion by virtue of the fact that I reacted with split second explosive power. Because of my great love of dogs, every morning from four o'clock to about five o'clock I ride my bicycle and take my dog for a walk. Once, while turning a corner, a car coming from the opposite direction ran right into me. Because it was early in the morning and nobody was around, he was going incredibly fast. The instant after I realized that I was in danger, I came to on the hood of the car, which had come to a sudden stop. The driver turned white, thrust himself out the window, and screamed: "Hey Pop! Are you OK?!"

It appears that my bike was sent flying and my dog ran off to get away. Also, the bicycle's pedal had left a mark on the car's bumper. I have no idea how it happened but I must have jumped up with incredible timing just as the car's bumper hit the bicycle's pedals, and at the same time, let go of the dog's chain.

In retrospect, when I sent out a momentary burst of power, my mind had become totally void. Before I could think about it, my body was moving. Acquiring this kind of sensitivity is one of the important goals of Aikido training.

Applying Focused Power to Weapons

The movements of Aikido can also be applied to the use of weapons. These movements produce immense power by sending the center of gravity forward. Whether it's a case of thrusting with the staff or of cutting and thrusting with the sword, it all comes down to whether you can transmit the power of the forward surge into the weapon.

Even in the old martial arts of the samurai, you can see many examples of how the movements of unarmed combat came to be adapted for use with weapons. The idea is that if you can perform the basic techniques of unarmed combat, then by extending this skill you also have the ability to handle weapons. Of course, some things will clearly be different, like the distance between you and your opponent, for example.

This is a little off topic but I would like to mention it just in passing. In an actual fight, thrusting attacks are very important even when you're using a sword. When you mention the sword, cutting is the thing that immediately comes to people's minds. But Ueshiba Sensei taught me that, in actual fact, it's absurd if you can't thrust with the weapon.

In 1924, Ueshiba Sensei went over to Mongolia with **Onisaburo Deguchi**[43] of the **Omoto**[44] religion. To make a long story short, Onisaburo was trying to

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[43] **Onisaburo Deguchi** was born in Kameoka in Kyoto Prefecture in 1871. After intensive personal training he had a supernatural experience. He met Nao Deguchi of the Omoto religion in 1898 and married her daughter, Sumi. After this, he was active as a central figure in the Omoto religion and was referred to as "Sacred Teacher". In 1924, he dreamt of constructing an ideal nation and went over to Mongolia to do so but it was never realized. Ueshiba Morihei accompanied him at this time. Onisaburo Deguchi died in 1948 at the age of 76. He has left behind the "Tales of the Spirit World", the result of a spiritual revelation, as well as other literary works. [Editor's note.]

[44] Nao Deguchi, an uneducated and illiterate woman from Ayabe in Kyoto Prefecture, established the **Omoto** religion in 1892 after she had a sudden encounter with the supernatural. The gods instructed her to work toward the reconstruction of the world. The religion later boasted one million adherents, as a result of intensive missionary work on the part of her son-in-law, Onisaburo Deguchi. However, the religion's teachings were thought to promote *lese majeste* and both in 1921 and 1935 it was heavily suppressed. Ueshiba Morihei was converted to the Omoto religion in 1919 and taught

make inroads into Mongolia and Sensei accompanied him as his bodyguard. During their travels they fought a number of times with local bands of mounted bandits who attacked them. Sensei apparently brandished his sword vigorously but was only able to cut down the first two or three bandits with any ease. Apparently, the fat from the human body is far greater than we might think. It coats the blade of the sword, quickly decreasing the effectiveness of its cutting ability. This leaves only thrusting, so Sensei continued to fight relying solely on thrusts.

So cutting people down one after another the way they do in the old samurai films is pure fantasy and can only happen in the movies. Ueshiba Sensei used to say that if you insist on cutting at all costs, you had better have a sword polisher standing by! This is how the actual fighting experiences of Ueshiba Sensei are reflected in today's Aikido.

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the martial art that would become the predecessor to Aikido at the religion's headquarters. [Editor's note.]

PRINCIPLES OF KOKYU POWER

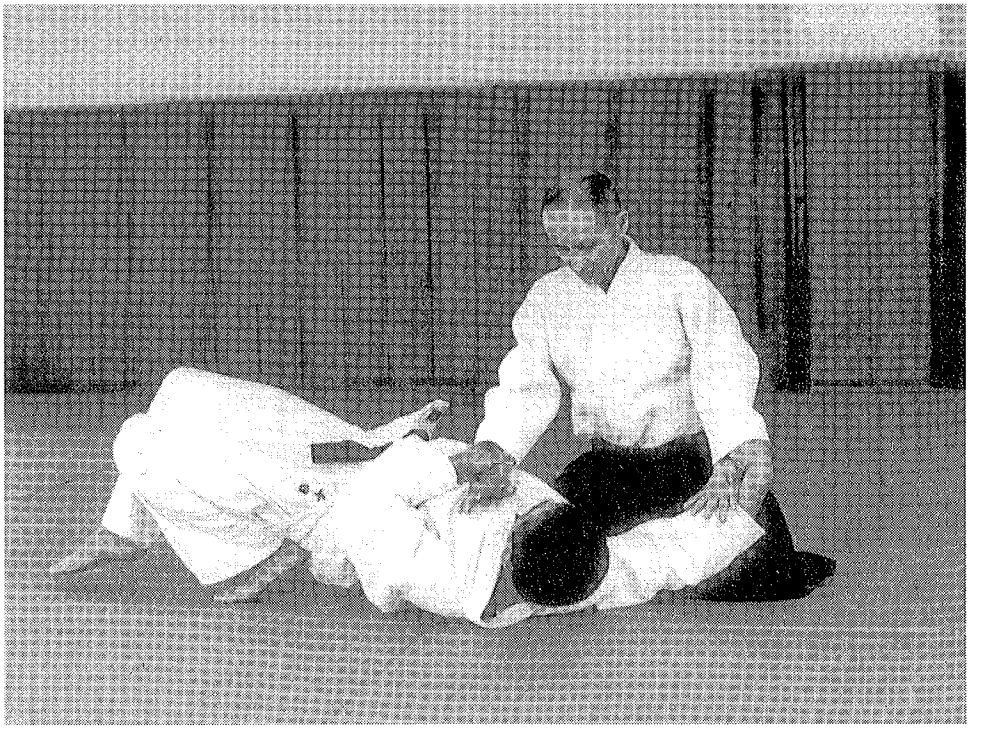
We've already said that focused power is the method by which you send forth your own power, but beyond this, by combining a certain state of mind and rhythm with focused power, what you get is kokyu power.

What I mean precisely by "state of mind" is that you have to achieve a state of emptiness, or nothingness. Another way to describe it is a "psychological focused power" which is a much more intense "focused power".

People are defeated by their own plans since they are overly concerned with thoughts of what to do or how to do it. When you put all these sorts of thoughts out of your mind and reach the stage of complete nothingness, your fears will die away. Once all of your apprehensions have disappeared, then you will start to have complete faith in yourself and you will achieve a state of serenity.

Once this happens, you will be able to read the movements of your opponent's mind. You won't perceive how he is going to advance in your head, you'll sense it in your skin. It will be as if the so-called "mind's eye" or sixth sense is at work.

The next important component is rhythm. You need to develop your own fast and slow rhythm. When I say "rhythm", I am not referring to an unchanging, monotonous rhythm. You have to assess each situation independently and use the rhythm most appropriate for it.



The use of rhythm is, ultimately, tied to your own breathing. Inhaling and exhaling is not simply carried out on a whim. Relative to the situation at hand,

when you have to inhale, you inhale, and when you have to exhale, you exhale. When you get right down to it, this is what produces rhythm. It is rhythm that adjusts breathing.

Your focused power should be infused with this breathing and rhythm. When you have brought these things together perfectly, true kokyu power will result. And when you can do this well, the opponent will lose his ability to resist and be completely at your mercy. He probably has no intention of letting it happen this way but that is just how it will end up.

Kokyu power is also the ability to lead the opponent into a state in which he is willing to co-operate with you. This means that there is no such thing as kokyu power without the existence of the opponent.

When kokyu power is displayed it bears no connection whatsoever to prearranged forms. In the old days, when Ueshiba Sensei taught he didn't give us detailed instruction. No matter what we did he would say: "Ah. That's fine. That's fine." However, this just meant that we shouldn't become overly concerned with form. The important thing is to work toward achieving your own personal best. But, of course, the problem is that it is difficult to perceive just what the "best" is.

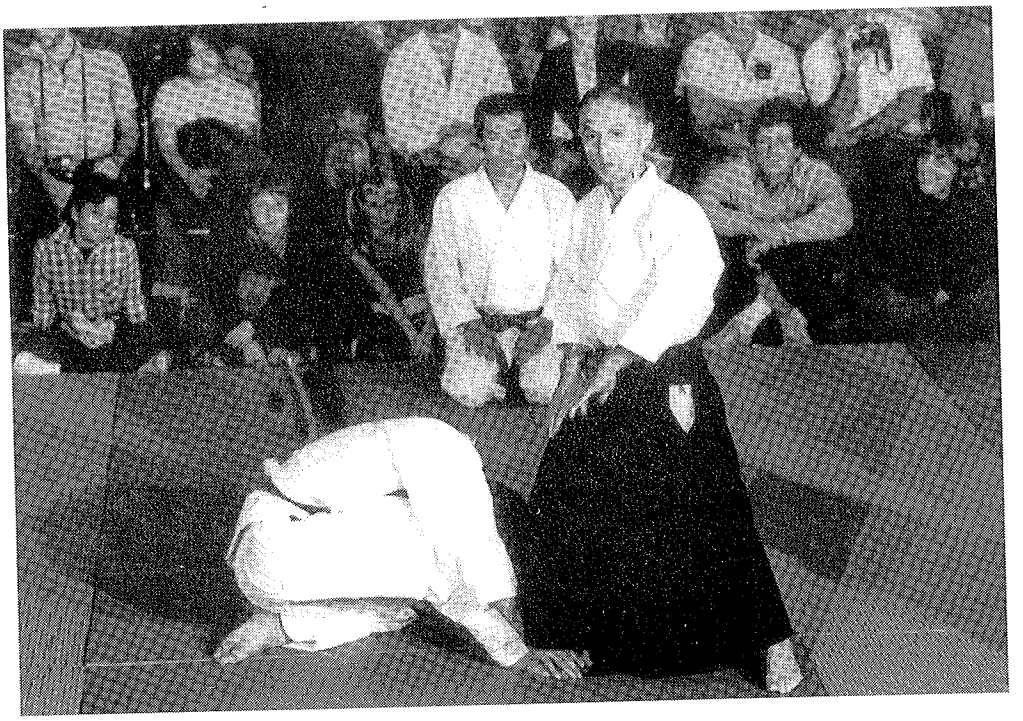
Kokyu Power Is Derived From Nothingness

There are no special training techniques that can help you acquire kokyu power. Daily training in Aikido techniques is in itself conditioning of kokyu power. With steady practice, one day something will click, and your mind, technique and body will unite and out of nowhere you will be able to produce kokyu power. Rather than being able to say that you can produce the power, you will have achieved the ability to produce it without realizing it.

In this way, when you are faced with a life or death situation, it will suddenly appear. By this I mean that going through an extreme situation itself may just provide the spark for kokyu power. In this type of situation, the opponent would be on his back before you realized it. You yourself would be surprised because you wouldn't know how it had happened. Even in retrospect, you wouldn't have a clear picture of just what you had done.

Kokyu power is just this sort of thing. It is not something that you can do because you want to. It won't work if you consciously try to produce it. You have to go about it naturally. Sticking to a set plan and trying to do it this way or that way is wrong. It's a "strategy of no strategy" and it's no easy thing.

And just because you've produced it once doesn't mean that you'll immediately be able to do it again. When you haven't been able to do it for some time, or if you've forgotten about it altogether, out of the blue you will produce it without even thinking about it. In the course of normal continuous training, these isolated cases will gradually increase in frequency and things will start to connect. Somewhere along the line you will have acquired the ability to use kokyu power at will.



The feeling you get the moment kokyu power comes forth is an extraordinary and magnificent one. You will experience joy, happiness and paradise. Somehow, you will feel refreshed. It's an indescribably pleasant feeling, although it's different from the light-headedness you feel with anemia. It is not a feeling that you experience in the normal routine of everyday life.

When you feel it, it's as though your entire "self" has disappeared. I often show techniques during the intensive training classes and black belt classes at the dojo and at these times my own state of mind is one of nothingness. Literally, nothingness. There is absolutely no feeling of struggling with the opponent. I am nothing and the opponent is nothing. I seem to feel everything with my entire body.

So if I move my hand, the person will go in that direction. If I move it in the opposite direction, he too will go in the opposite direction. Everyone reacts in relation to me. But why is this happening? Even I don't know the reason behind it. But by truly becoming nothing, this sort of thing is humanly possible.

Kokyu power is not something you can teach, even if you were told to teach it. It's a feeling that can only be captured on your own. Everyone studies this a great deal in relation to Aikido techniques, but it's unfortunate that there are so many people who only do the studying part. No matter how much you study, even if you put great effort into it, the feeling of kokyu power can't be deduced

by studying alone. Things you've thought about in your head immediately become distorted. Even if you intuitively sense something genuinely good, by introducing your own thoughts into it, it becomes something less than pure. Ultimately, this is something that you must let grow naturally within you. Rather than trying to understand it mentally, it is important that you experience it physically.

I feel that I am now just barely starting to understand the meaning of what Ueshiba Sensei used to say: "Become one with nature." Sensei always used to talk about the gods and the universe and things that made no sense to me. But it is only now that I am finally beginning to discover the truth of his words.

The Question Is, Who Is Faster?

Let's talk now about the role of speed in relation to focused power or kokyu power. First, your own speed. It is only natural that faster movements are preferred over slower movements. However, it is not a matter of focusing blindly on increasing the speed of your movements alone. You have to lose any concept of whether you, yourself, are fast or slow. It's not a matter of

thinking, "I want to go fast" or "I want to go slow." You become fast or slow relative to the opportunities presented by the opponent. If you can't co-ordinate your movements with these opportunities, the concept of fast or slow has no meaning.

This is what Ueshiba Sensei referred to as "spontaneous movement". In Aikido, speed can only be considered in relation to the opponent. Again, Ueshiba Sensei used to say that when faced with an opponent, "It's a question of which one of you is faster, which one of you gets in first." For example, when the opponent is coming in at you, don't go crashing into him, just quickly step aside. Then, he will pass right in front of you and, as a result, you will have taken the initiative. In the end, you will have been the faster one.

On the other hand, when the opponent is slow there is a danger of being side-stepped yourself if you move in on him. So make a feint to entice him to make the first move. And just when he is about to make that move, take the initiative and move in on him. You will again have been the faster one.

Ueshiba Sensei was extremely good at feinting to entice you and then side-stepping in this way. He didn't move that much, but by opening his body even just slightly to the left or right he would synchronize his movements perfectly with those of the opponent. His opponent got the impression then that Sensei was really fast.

Yet when you came in at him slowly, he would make a quick feint to entice you – perhaps by simply lifting his hand and waving it. Your attention was naturally drawn to it and when he suddenly dropped it and you reacted without thinking and moved to it he would take you down. In this case, although he only moved slightly, you would feel everything taking place very quickly because you were the one rushing in.

In this way, you can play with the opponent virtually as though he were a baby. For example, even when the opponent was a huge man like **Tenryu**[45], Sensei easily threw him around as though he were a leaf off of a tree.

I asked Sensei once what he was feeling at the time. Tenryu was six feet three inches tall compared with Sensei's five feet one inch. And yet, Sensei told me that face-to-face, Tenryu didn't impress him as being large at all. He said that he had the feeling of looking down on Tenryu and being able to crush him in the palm of his hand.

"In the long run, the handling of your feelings when confronting the opponent is crucial," Sensei explained. It's not just side-stepping your opponent's strength that's important; side-stepping his emotional attack is also important.

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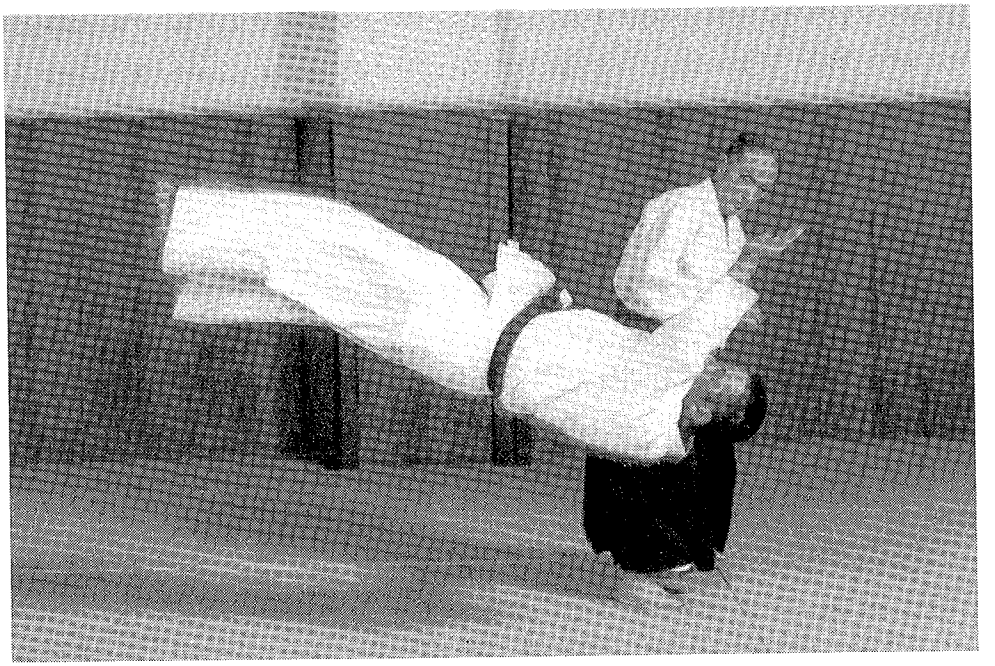
[45] **Tenryu**, whose real name was Saburo Wakuta, was born in Hamamatsu city in Shizuoka Prefecture. He was a popular Sumo wrestler in the late 1920s, but then he launched a reform movement against the Sumo Association. He later became an executive director of the Manchuria Martial Arts Association. He admired the techniques of Ueshiba Morihei and entered his dojo in 1939. He passed away in 1989 at the age of 86. [Editor's note.]

It is not to your advantage to move in on an opponent when he is emotionally psyched up. According to what Ueshiba Sensei taught, you must manoeuvre your opponent so that he is drained of his fighting spirit. He will then move in on you as you wish and you should then be able to handle him at will.

I was on good terms with Tenryu and we hung around a lot together. One time back then, with his head cocked and a puzzled look on his face, he said to me: "That teacher is pretty mysterious. Even though I try to use strength against him, it all ends up being drained away." Of course, Ueshiba Sensei was the only one who could train full out with this giant of a man.

Ki Is The Concentration of Balance

In Aikido, we use the term "ki" quite a bit. These days, people use ki to explain everything, turning it into something mystical. But what is called ki in Aikido is a little different from something which allows you to throw people without touching them.



As for me, I think of ki as the concentration of balance. It is correct posture and breathing, as well as the explosive power that comes from focused power. It is also the power of the center line. You could even include timing into what you think of as ki.

In fact, in Aikido, ki encompasses everything that transpires between yourself and your opponent. This is what is meant by "uniting your ki". It is, after all, not simply a matter of mere feelings. It is the uniting, the bringing into agreement, of every single factor between you and your

opponent. You might even say that kokyu power is the power that is produced through this uniting of ki.

When you have united your ki, there is certainly a sense of common understanding with the opponent. When he has grabbed you, for instance, he will not let go if you handle him properly. Someone watching this might wonder: "What? Why doesn't he just let go?" But by truly understanding your opponent's feelings, he will continue to maintain his hold on you, just as you wish.

For this purpose, there must be no animosity between you and the opponent. It's a matter of matching your own feelings with his. If you do this, you will then begin to see the direction of the flow of his power as well as his thoughts. If you can lead him in that same direction, he will follow your lead without any resistance since he is being led in the direction he wishes to go anyway. This is what is meant by your opponent co-operating with you, as I explained in the section on kokyu power.

If the opponent is taken down in this manner, he'll have no feeling of being taken down forcibly so he doesn't develop any feelings of hatred toward you. In fact, when I was Ueshiba Sensei's uke and got thrown around all over the place, not once did I ever experience any animosity toward him. On the contrary, I came to harbour a feeling of appreciation for Sensei who kindly allowed me to experience such incredible techniques. These are the kinds of

things that happen once your feelings have become one with those of the opponent.

In terms of Aikido, having the opponent give in by dealing him a severe blow is the absolute lowest level of technique. Even if you win the match this way, he will have bad feelings for you. In Aikido, the ideal is that by matching your feelings with the opponent, he naturally and easily gives in to you, just as the phrase "harmony in confrontation" indicates. Ultimately, this is the uniting of ki, which is to say, "aiki".

Flowing Into The Weak Spot

I touched briefly on this point earlier but I would like to give a more detailed explanation here about being able to see the flow of power.

During the intensive training classes and black belt classes at the dojo, when we're working on techniques together, some of you have probably seen how I just slightly change the direction of the power and make a technique that wasn't working work. What's happening here is that I can see the flow of

power. This is not some sensation or intuition that I have; I can actually see it quite clearly.

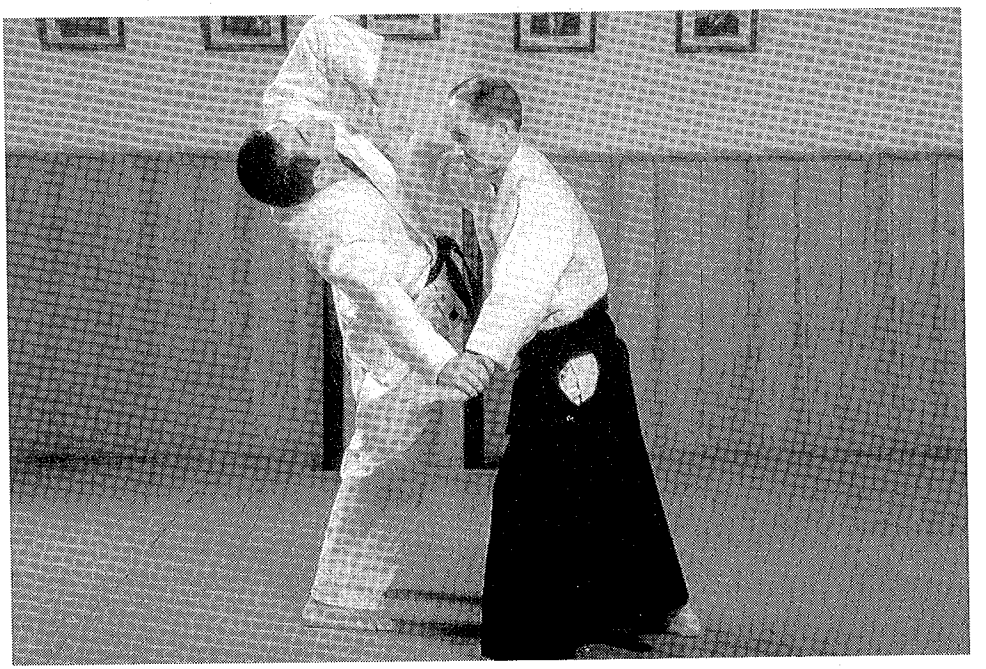
The first point that I notice is the expression in the opponent's eyes. Then, I determine what kind of stance he has and where his center of gravity is placed. You can't look long and hard at all this though, you have to take it all in at a glance.

If you can't achieve this, you won't be able to fully execute things like nikajo. Just wrenching away as hard as you can on somebody's wrist is not the way to go about it. Ueshiba Sensei's nikajo didn't give any sensation of pain when he did it to us. And yet, without realizing it, we were suddenly broken. This wasn't because of any pain in our wrists though. It was more a sensation of all the power surging into our hips and knees, causing us to collapse.

This is, fundamentally, how Aikido techniques must work. The technique is truly effective if it takes away the functioning of the opponent's hips and knees. After all, this is because you are sending your power toward the opponent's weak spot. The human body is an amazing thing. No matter how much strength it uses to ward something off, without fail, it has a weak spot somewhere. If you can send power flowing in that direction, the knees will collapse.

However, most people are unable to determine which direction this is, so they can't create a flow and as a result their technique is ineffective. Even if you

put every ounce of power that you have into your technique, it's usually focused into the direction in which the opponent is the strongest.



If you were to ask me what you could do to be able to perceive this flow of power, I could only answer that it is a sensitivity that you develop through constant and continuous training. Whatever you do, never let your ego take over. If you can look at your opponent honestly and without bias, you will begin to see his flow of power.

The Secret Is To Let Go Of Your Strength

I have already given an account of how to transfer your power, but another important point in Aikido is letting go of your own strength. When the opponent uses strength and comes in to grab you, you have to do the opposite and lose your strength. Although it sounds easy, in reality letting go of your strength is an extremely difficult thing to do. This is one of the greatest secrets that I was taught by Ueshiba Sensei.

To lose your strength you can't just go limp, because your opponent will instantly hold you down. That's not what I mean. You must always maintain the center line, which I've discussed before. Maintain that center line firmly throughout your body and let go of your strength. Then you can take in the opponent's power and control it.

You can't have even the slightest feeling of resistance at this point. Completely lose all of your strength and let the opponent hold on any way he likes. Then, for some reason, even though he tries to exert more and more power, it will seem to dissipate giving him nothing to grab on to. In this situation, if you squat down he will squat down, and if you move your hand he will follow accordingly.

This is the goal toward which Aikido strives. It's not about techniques or anything else. If you can't let go of your power like this, you won't really be able to go up against an opponent who is physically stronger.

On the other hand, if you attack and the opponent has let go of his own power, it is also possible to bear down on him. Since he has lessened his power, you are that much stronger. I was able to do this once to Ueshiba Sensei and he complimented me on it. However, I should mention that he was in the middle of a lesson when it happened. I was applying a yonkajo technique and Sensei was explaining the process.

No matter how strongly I grabbed his wrist, Sensei just let go of his power and became limp. Then he taunted me by saying: "Put more power into it! Is that all the strength you have?!" Although he was in the middle of teaching me something, I felt that I had to take this chance to apply a technique on him. If it was at all possible, this was my opportunity to challenge him.

As instructed, I pretended to put a lot of strength in the hand which was applying the yonkajo. Then, sure enough, all at once Sensei let go of his power. That's when I quickly bore down on him and Sensei tumbled over without any resistance.

The look on Sensei's face as he looked up at me seemed to say, "I don't believe this!" Seeing this gave me a sense of pride since I thought that I had scored a

point on him. Later on Sensei paid me a compliment by saying, "That technique you used before was excellent."

In this way, a match can sometimes be decided by the strategic outcome of either letting go of one's own power and taking in your opponent's, or aggressively bearing in on an opponent who is decreasing his power.

Remember that techniques have their limits, something I've said over and over again. No matter how proficient you become in Aikido techniques, it doesn't mean that the technique will be effective against everybody and anybody.

Therefore, in the final analysis you have to learn how to let go of your power. If you can achieve this, you will have attained the state of "technique without technique". Once you have achieved this, true confidence will begin to arise within you.

Strength Of Will Has No Limits

Aside from your body and physical strength, in the end all you have is your strength of will. Ueshiba Sensei would say that the body grows old and becomes weak but the force of will does not diminish. Until your death it continues to get stronger, he said. This is why he was always saying, "You are the strongest at the point of death."

As if to demonstrate this, the people who were around him at the time say that when Sensei was on his deathbed he displayed incredible vitality. Although he always went to the lavatory on his own, one time he was having so much trouble trying to get up that the four or so students who were there to assist him tried to stop him from getting up. I heard that somehow when Sensei shook their hands off, they all went flying through the air! I think that this is the very will power that Sensei spoke about.

I, too, ran across a similar situation with him. It was prior to World War II and we had just been told that a member of the Imperial Family wished to see Aikido. However, what Sensei said was, "It would be unthinkable to show a lie to His Imperial Highness." He felt that if you truly performed a technique once, the opponent wouldn't get up and come at you a second time. So a demonstration in which the opponent gets up and attacks again would be a lie.

Nevertheless, because the Imperial Household Agency said that this would be all right, in the end the demonstration went ahead.

At the time of the demonstration, Sensei was suffering from jaundice and could barely even eat. He would throw up even if he drank water. For as long as I'd known Sensei he has had a weak liver but I heard that his troubles began during the affair in Mongolia. When he went there with Onisaburo Deguchi they were captured by mounted bandits and were dangerously close to losing their lives. The bandits' leader apparently told him that if he drank a full bucket of salt water in one gulp he would spare their lives. Sensei drank every last drop of the salt water and his party was saved. However, he has had liver trouble ever since.

But this day was the worst I'd ever seen his jaundice and I thought that he really wouldn't be able to go through with the demonstration that had been requested by the Imperial Family. Yet, on the appointed day, the messenger came and Mr. Yukawa and I accompanied Sensei.

The demonstration was scheduled to last 40 minutes – 20 minutes with Mr. Yukawa and 20 minutes with me. However, in the waiting room Sensei had absolutely no energy and appeared to be in no condition to give a demonstration. I was worried about what we were going to do. Yet, as soon as he saw His Imperial Highness, it was as though Sensei was a different person – he straightened up right away.

Mr. Yukawa, who was the first to act as Sensei's uke, probably held himself back and made allowances for Sensei's condition as he went in at him. However, Sensei sent him flying with a snap. Sensei put everything he had into the blow and it turned out that Mr. Yukawa's arm was broken.

The result was that I had to serve as Sensei's uke for the entire time remaining. I went to face him with trepidation. His spirit at that time was fearsome. His piercing eyes were flashing brilliantly. You wouldn't have thought that this was the same sick person who could barely stand up just a short time ago. But no, just when his body was at its worst, through his incredible strength of spirit he rose to the task at hand.

Over and over again, for 40 minutes I went in at him and was thrown. When I got up and went in again, I was thrown again. I was barely conscious at the time. The only thing that I remember is Sensei's huge glaring eyes. Somehow, I lasted for the entire 40 minutes but that evening I came down with an extremely high fever and spent the next three days lying in bed.

On this occasion I personally experienced Sensei's spirit, his strength of will, and I felt as though I had come to know the essence of budo. It's not like in sports where you don't participate in tournaments unless you are in top condition. The ability to use your spirit to bring yourself to your peak level at any time and anywhere – this is budo.

Even though the body has its limits, until your death, the strength of your spirit is limitless. This is precisely why, in the martial arts, there is no such thing as deteriorating as you age.

SHUGYO

修行

TRAINING WHICH CONFORMS TO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

All of us have our own reasons for turning to Aikido training. Some people wish to master a martial art and some want to keep trim or maintain their looks. Others are attracted by impressive demonstrations or because they wish to relieve stress or overcome a handicap. And then there are those who do other martial arts and begin training in Aikido as a way of studying further. No matter what the reason, Aikido training is open to, and can respond to, any objective.

However, one thing there can be no mistake about is that training must follow the fundamental principles, the riai, which are at the root of Aikido. If we are negligent in this regard, we won't achieve any results from intensive training and we will never experience the real spirit of Aikido. As well, if a person practises Aikido and their training does not correspond to the fundamental principles, they can end up doing something completely different.

This is why I would like to illustrate, based on my own experiences, just how to approach your training properly. Although it seems like not so long ago, it's already some 60 years since I entered the Ueshiba Dojo. Perhaps the knowledge that I have acquired through the process of intensive training during this time will help you.

My Judo Days

Before Aikido I practised Judo. We had a dojo in our house called the **Yoshinkan**[46] so even back then, I was unusually enthusiastic in my approach to training.

One time, we invited the policemen from the Yotsuya police station to our dojo and held a match against them. Even though I was a third-year junior high school student at that time, I was allowed to attend competitions. Police Judo

[46] Shioda Kancho's father, Seiichi, who was a pediatrician, built a training hall for the martial arts in his home in the Yotsuya district of Tokyo and worked with the local youth. He invited Judo and Kendo masters from within the police and, refusing to accept monthly fees, brought together a large number of trainees. He called this dojo the **Yoshinkan**. The Aikido Yoshinkan of today has inherited this name. [Editor's note.]

is a very rough and hard Judo. They are unyielding and rely on brute strength. Most people were generally overwhelmed by their power.

When it was my turn, my opponent didn't take me seriously, thinking that I was still just a puny kid. As far as I was concerned though, this was just what I wanted them to think. To compensate for my small size, I had speed. Through non-stop movement, I could more than make up for the difference in size between myself and my opponents. By the time my opponent realized that things were a little different than expected, my technique had proven effective and the match was over.

This strategy resulted in my defeating five men in a 12-man elimination match. I lost the sixth match but my confidence in myself had increased tremendously. After all, these were all adult policemen.

At that time my best technique was the **seoi nage**[47], but it wasn't the standard seoi nage. First, by way of hiding what I was up to, I would drive my foot in toward the opponent's groin. When I did this with force, everyone's reflex invariably would be to try to avoid my foot. This diversionary tactic was almost always effective. Now that I think of it, this tactic probably contained the makings of another strategy that I would later acquire in Aikido, that of luring in the opponent.

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[47] The **Seoi Nage** is known as the "Shoulder Throw". [Translator's note.]

Another one of my favourite techniques was the **okuri eri jime**[48]. On several occasions I managed to render my opponent unconscious with this technique. I have to say though that I preferred standing techniques and usually won the match by throwing the opponent and scoring a full point.

I always had great success in tournaments. Once, in an intramural contest at school, I won by single-handedly eliminating all the members of the opposing team. In terms of rank, I eventually achieved the level of third dan.

So I had this air of confidence about me, confidence in my own Judo skills. I'm sure that there were even times when I appeared to be quite conceited. Even outside of Judo competitions I often displayed a fiery, hot-blooded nature. Personally, I was convinced that my actions were driven by a sense of righteousness but people around me were always somewhat apprehensive.

Then it happened that Mr. Abe, the principal of the junior high school that I was attending, said to me: "I've heard about something called 'Aikijutsu'. Are you interested in seeing what it's all about?" So I went to check it out and this is how I ended up going to the Ueshiba Dojo. In hindsight, this was probably Mr. Abe's way of quietly humbling me and my arrogant nature.

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[48] **Okuri Eri Jime** is the "Sliding Collar Lock". [Translator's note.]

Being Thrown By Ueshiba Sensei

On May 23, 1932, Mr. Abe took me to visit the Ueshiba Dojo. It was five o'clock in the morning since that's how early the training began. When I saw the training I was absolutely amazed. This teacher, who was in the prime of his life, easily handled the young students throwing and pinning them one after another. I smiled sardonically to myself, thinking that it was all faked. My initial impression of Aikido was the same as what people today feel when they see Aikido for the first time.

At the end of the training session, the teacher whom I had been watching, with his close-cropped haircut and moustache, called over to me, "Won't you give it a try?" I could barely contain myself. I stepped forward to the center of the dojo, intending to expose this fraud of a martial artist. The teacher turned out to be Ueshiba Sensei.

"Can I attack any way I like?" I asked. Sensei replied, "Any way you like."

If I had the ability to judge my opponent then, I would have realized that his eyes emitted an unusual brilliance and that he had an aura of impenetrability that only a genuine martial artist possesses. However, I thought that I was the

strongest one around so I didn't perceive this at all. On the contrary, he was even smaller than me so I really didn't take him very seriously.

I thought to myself, "I'm sure that he knows that I do Judo, so since he probably expects me to go in and grab him, I'll do the opposite . . ." I pretended to go in for the grab, and then all of a sudden I threw a kick at him. It all happened so quickly. I felt Ueshiba Sensei's hand lightly touch the inside of my leg and then everything was turned completely upside-down and I had no idea what was going on. I picked myself up off the ground while I held my spinning head. I realized that this was the first time that I had been thrown! Being thrown by Ueshiba Sensei annoyed me terribly; but on top of this, I was absolutely and completely amazed.

With all of my confidence in my own physical power, I had no idea how this little old man had sent me flying through the air. The only place that I thought this kind of incredible martial arts skill existed was in folk tales and stories. And yet here was the genuine article, somebody who had actually acquired these skills. I could barely contain myself. I entered the Ueshiba Dojo on the spot!

The Difference Between Judo And Aikido

The thing that amazed me when I entered the Ueshiba Dojo was that the movements of Judo were of absolutely no use to me. While I admit that I had great admiration for Ueshiba Sensei, I still went in with the confidence that I had developed in Judo and thought, naively, that everything would turn out fine. How wrong I was!

Ueshiba Sensei told me, "You must forget everything that you have done up to now." In fact, if habits from Judo linger, they often hamper rather than help development in Aikido.

One good example of this is the method of using power. As you may be aware, in Judo, it's more the pulling power that one trains to develop. In contrast to this, Aikido functions more by thrusting the power forward. The fact that power operates differently means that although the techniques themselves may look the same on the surface, they are fundamentally different. Until I overcame this difference, things were extremely difficult for me. I'm sure that even today those who switch from Judo to Aikido experience exactly the same problems.

This seems like a good place to touch on the topic of Judo a little more. There are various differences between Judo and Aikido, such as the distance between the opponents, and as mentioned before, the method of using power. But at the same time, it would be wrong to think that they have nothing in common. They are both the same with respect to the secrets of circular motion.

And in terms of someone who actually put the circular movements of Judo into practice, we cannot forget **Mifune Kyuzo Sensei**[49]. Looking at the valuable films of him that remain today, we are struck by the realization that his movements are fundamentally different than what we see in today's tournament Judo.

Without resisting the opponent's power, he would use smooth circular movements to avoid the opponent's attack, and at just the right moment, sharply and quickly throw him in a single breath. There would be no collision whatsoever. Mifune Sensei summarized this principle in the saying: "If you are pushed, pull back. If you are being pulled, circle away." Even today in the Judo world this saying is likely the most often repeated.

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[49] **Mifune Kyuzo Sensei** was born in 1883 in the Kunohe district of Iwate Prefecture. He was a Judo Master who dominated everyone with his Kuki Nage (sumi otoshi). It is said that, through the circular movement and timing of his many absolutely amazing techniques, he reached Jigoro Kano's original ideal of just what Judo should be. He was granted 10th Dan, the highest rank within the Kodokan. He died in 1965 at the age of 81. [Editor's note.]

"A circle is unlimited" is another way of explaining this. If you are pushed to the edge of a cliff and all you can use are straight-line movements, you will fall over. However, if you go to the edge of a cliff and you can wheel about, you can continue your movement without falling over. In this way, circular movements are limitless. This is precisely in line with the secret of body movement as it is used in Aikido.

In regards to Mifune Sensei, as soon as you hear his name you think of his speciality, the Kuki Nage. This was not some sort of mysterious technique in which he threw the opponent without touching him. Rather, this is a highly sophisticated technique which throws the opponent by changing the flow of power, relying on your own body movements rather than close body contact with the opponent. The breathing involved has a lot in common with the kokyu nage of Aikido. It's probably the same as the **yobimodoshi**[50] of Sumo. As such, Aikido has no patent on using circular movements to change the direction of the opponent's power and throw him without using too much of your own power.

Originally, this was a tactic employed by all martial arts. But in other martial arts, fighting methods are now restricted by rules and the focus has become sports-like competitions. Because of this, there is more and more grappling and other movements that result in the competitors smashing into each other. There

[50] The **Yobimodoshi**, or "Pulling Body Slam", is a technique used in Sumo wrestling which relies on timing to break the opponent's balance. It is generally only seen when there is a distinct difference in strength between the two wrestlers. [Translator's note.]

is less and less thought of acquiring techniques that rely on split second timing. Because Aikido is not restricted by competitions, we can thoroughly study the body movements that are an essential aspect of all martial arts.

As such, it is certainly beneficial for people from other martial arts to join Aikido in order to study body movements. In fact, quite some time ago many of the Judo practitioners from "T" University studied Aikido at my dojo. Although they were already fairly skilled in Judo, they came because they wanted to study body movements. After a period of diligent training, they entered a Judo competition and reported to me afterwards that their Aikido training had proven to be extremely useful.

One member of the group said that he had scored a full point by driving forward and throwing his opponent with an irimi nage. However, since there is no such thing as irimi nage in Judo, the referee wasn't exactly sure what to do. With a bit of a strained smile, he informed me that they ended up calling his winning move a variation of either the Inner-Thigh Reaping Throw or the Hip Sweep.

I think that it would be interesting if, through an interchange with Aikido, the spirit of "Soft Overcomes Hard" or "Small Overcomes Large" were to be revived in Judo. What's more, my friend **Mr. Kimura Masahiko**[51] says, "In

[51] **Kimura Masahiko** was born in 1917 in Kumamoto. The year 1937 marked the beginning of his three successive titles as the All Japan Champion. He won a great many tournaments and when people referred to him they said, "Before Kimura there was nothing, and since Kimura there is nothing." Upon leaving the Judo world, he went on to professional wrestling. His sensational one-

terms of self-defence, Judo, which today has abandoned the use of atemi, has a lot to learn from Aikido." As a genuine martial artist who has experienced many, many fights, he knows the importance of atemi in a real fight.

Although this may be overstepping my bounds a bit, I warmly welcome any Judo people who want to dabble in Aikido in order to understand the essence of martial arts; the essence which is absent from sports-like martial arts.

Teaching Aikido At The Shotokan

I've spoken about Judo at some length and now I would like to take the time to relate something about Karate. I have had some relationship with the Karate world through Shotokan's late **Nakayama Masatoshi,**[52] with whom I developed a close association during his lifetime.

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on-one fight with Rikidozan attracted quite a bit of attention. Shioda Kancho was his sempai at Takushoku University and they continue to be friends today. [Editor's note.]

[52] **Nakayama Masatoshi** was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1913 and studied under Funakoshi Gichin of Shotokan Karate. He also assisted in the founding of the Japan Karate Association. He held the rank of 9th Dan and was the Chief Instructor of the JKA before he passed away. He was

As someone who placed great importance on the fundamental principles at the root of Karate as a martial art, Mr. Nakayama was dismayed by the increasing popularity of sports-like competitions and demonstrations featuring the breaking of boards and bricks in Karate. Because of this, he also showed an appreciation for the fundamental principles of Aikido.

I remember him saying: "Guys who are preoccupied with such things as toughening up their fists are never the real problem. It's quite often the guy with smooth hands that you have to watch out for." I believe what he meant here was that rather than striking solid objects specifically in order to forge the fists, you could become stronger by practising the things that form a fundamental basis for Karate, such as timing and body movement.

Mr. Nakayama saw the growth of Karate among Westerners as a major threat to Japanese Karate. Because Westerners have a long reach and their upper bodies are extremely strong, his thinking was that when they drive in with a punch they can just muscle right in, even if you thought you had blocked them.

Karate has also become more of a sport and young people are training solely in order to win contests. In other words, they have become able to function only within the context of rules that apply equally to all. So, just as with Judo, it surely won't be long before superiority in Karate will be lost to foreigners

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recognized for his logical analysis of traditional Karate techniques. He died in 1987 at the age of 74. [Editor's note.]

whose physical strength far exceeds that of the Japanese. This was what disturbed Mr. Nakayama.

Accordingly, he felt that body movement should be a key element in future instruction in Karate. So Mr. Nakayama came to me and asked, "Could you please come and teach the body movements of Aikido to our instructors?" In response to this request, I spent about one month teaching at the Shotokan.

One of the people who took part in the Aikido training at that time was **Mr. Kanazawa Hirokazu**[53] who has now formed his own independent organization. At the time he was already a famous Karate champion but he also showed an uncommon ability in Aikido. He was one of the people who trained intently and even went so far as to join the Yoshinkan Dojo!

When I demonstrated my customary counter-punch, he asked in amazement, "Why does that produce so much power?" I told him, "It's not my power, it's yours." He was deeply impressed. I also advised him that, " If you want to

[53] **Kanazawa Hirokazu** was born in 1931 in Iwate Prefecture. He entered the Japan Karate Association after his graduation from Takushoku University in 1956. In 1957, he won the Sparring division of the First All Japan Karate Championships. In the Second All Japan Karate Championships, he was the overall champion. He was also the co-champion of the Third All Japan Karate Championships. After that he went to various places in Hawaii, America and Europe to teach. In 1977, he separated from the Japan Karate Association and founded Shotokan Karate International. As Chief Instructor, he teaches in some 30 affiliated countries. Currently (April, 1991) he holds the rank of 9th Dan. [Editor's note.]

make your kicks stronger, perform **seated techniques**[54] to increase the strength of your hips and knees."

[54] Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu, from which Aikido was developed, incorporates the Oshiki Uchi techniques of the Aizu Clan which were intended to be used within a palace. Accordingly, the "seated" and "one sitting one standing" techniques which are reminiscent of the lifestyle of the warriors of old have been included in Aikido as well. Through practice, seated techniques have the effect of developing strong legs and hips. By training sufficiently in seated techniques, standing techniques become easier. [Editor's note.]

Neither Mr. Kanazawa nor Mr. Nakayama were concerned with whether it was Karate or Aikido but were more than willing to learn from anybody who could teach them something worth learning. This, I think, is a wonderful thing about them.

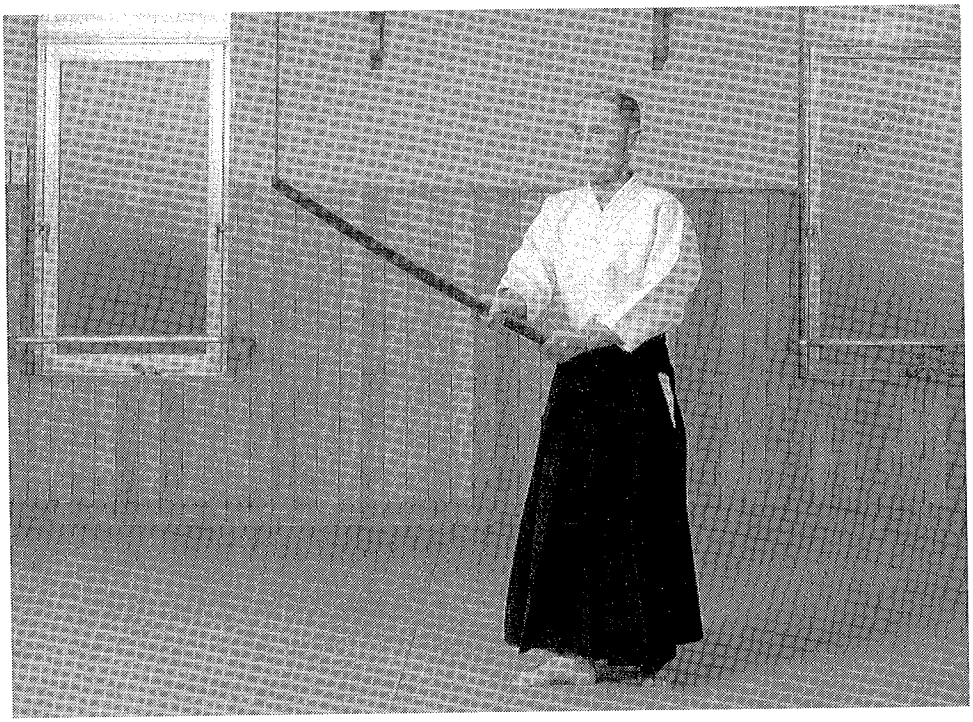
Aikido Can Benefit Kendo

Even people who are involved in Karate these days come to my dojo and begin studying Aikido. Since we don't force them to wear a different uniform than the one they already have, many of them train in Karate uniforms which bear the name of their school on the chest. In spite of this, those who come to train are extremely serious about learning Aikido.

It is possible that some of these individuals hold black belt ranks in Karate but, clearing their minds of preconceptions, they put on a white belt and study Aikido. As long as they have this openness and humility toward learning, I am convinced that they will be successful in any endeavour.

Let me continue from this point with a discussion about Kendo. You could say that Aikido has an inseparable affinity with Kendo since Aikido is the physical

manifestation of the fundamental principles of the sword. But what is meant exactly by "the physical manifestation of the fundamental principles of the sword"? Well, Aikido is not like Judo which first involves physical contact and grappling before moving on to the technique stage. Rather, it is a martial art that relies on timing and body movement at the instant of contact to defeat the opponent. This is precisely the fundamental principle of the sword.



For example, if you rely on strength alone you won't be able to manipulate the sword. The way you use your body to send power into the blade is extremely important, and this is exactly the same way that power is used in Aikido.

Because of this we study both hand-to-hand techniques and sword techniques simultaneously in Aikido. If you can perform the empty-handed techniques, you can also do the sword techniques, as well as handling the **jo**[55]. The underlying principles for each are the same. Ueshiba Sensei himself was a master of the sword. I believe that he studied both Kashima Shinto Ryu and Yagyu Shinkage Ryu and as he formulated Aikido, he also attained a high degree of skill with the sword.

In the old days, there was a certain Kenjutsu person named Haga. He had a reputation for travelling all about engaging in dojo yaburi and absolutely never losing. He was extremely feared. At that time, what he did was known as Haga Swordsmanship.

He once showed up at the Ueshiba Dojo in order to try to defeat Ueshiba Sensei. Ueshiba Sensei was as calm as ever as he stood up to face him. Sensei casually took up a position with a wooden sword and Haga was completely at a loss as to what to do. Dripping with clammy sweat he simply stood there frozen with fear. Then as Sensei struck Haga with a snap he said: "What's the

[55] The **jo** is a short hardwood staff of approximately 1.2 metres in length. [Translator's note.]

matter Mr. Haga? I'm here! I'm here!" Haga had been completely deprived of his ability to resist. He developed a sincere admiration for Ueshiba Sensei and later joined the dojo briefly and trained intensely.

Here's something else that took place back in the old days. It occurred when we taught a short course in swordsmanship for some Kendo teachers from Osaka at a dojo in a local police station. The course ran once a week for about seven months. The Kendo teachers were all well-known masters in their own right so, as students, we really couldn't teach them anything. Ueshiba Sensei himself gave direct instruction.

At that time, they decided that you couldn't grasp true swordsmanship wearing protective clothing so they didn't wear any protection. Instead, they practised with a **fukuro shinai**[56], which is extremely hard and is made by inserting a hard core into an inner tube from a bicycle tire and then pumping it full of air.

On one occasion, Sensei faced seven of them with nothing but his bare hands. Each of them held a fukuro shinai. Still, Sensei was very relaxed and composed. He stomped on their feet as he taunted them, "Don't you have enough of an opening?" and went around smacking each one of them saying, "Aren't you trying seriously?" These seven teachers with their fukuro shinai couldn't even touch Sensei once!

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[56] The **fukuro shinai** is a mock sword that is covered in leather or some sort of heavy cloth. It is used in place of a live blade or a wooden sword. [Translator's note.]

And that's not all. Not only did Ueshiba Sensei ward them off with his bare hands, when he did so, there was a sharp pop and the tubes split open. It goes without saying that when we saw this, all of us who happened to be there, including me, were absolutely amazed.

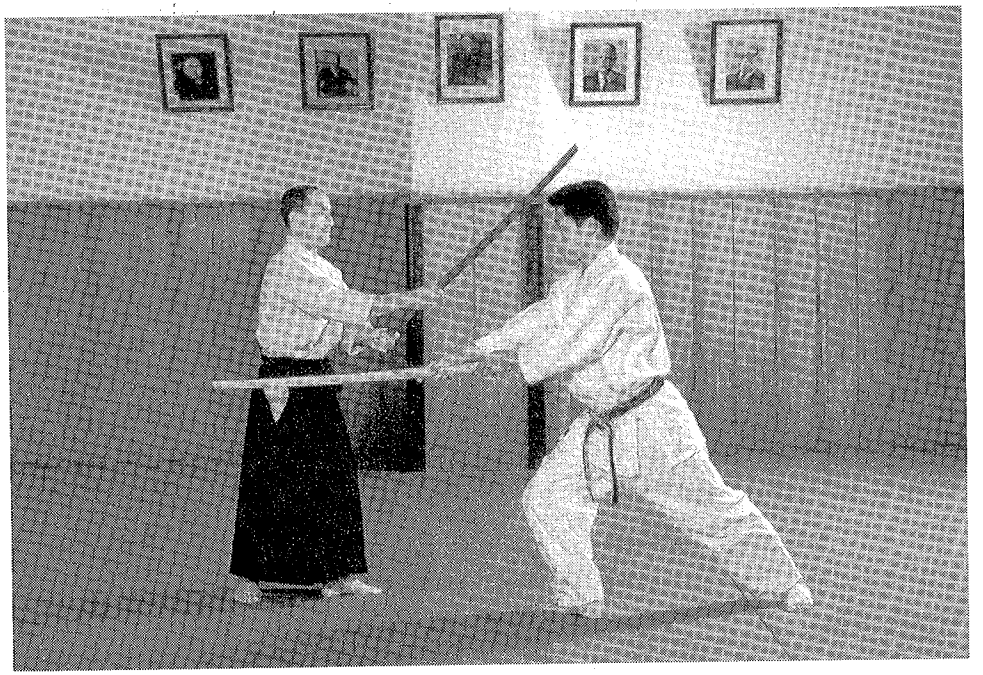
Thus, we can see that the body movements of Aikido can be applied to the sword just as they are. It is for this very reason that it is possible to go empty-handed against swords, just as Ueshiba Sensei had demonstrated.

On the subject of Aikido benefiting swordsmanship, when all is said and done we can't forget about **Mr. Nakakura Kiyoshi**[57]. At one time, Mr. Nakakura was the adopted son of Ueshiba Sensei and trained in Aikido. However, for various reasons he eventually left the Ueshiba household and went on to become the top Kendo practitioner in all of Japan. Even now he is reputed to be the Number 1 swordsman in Japan and still doesn't give way to younger men. How can this be? Well, referring to Ueshiba Sensei, Mr. Nakakura has said, "Of course, I owe it all to my old man."

His specialty is the side strike. He feints a strike with his right and then shifts to the left hand and strikes. He catches everybody with this because, as the

[57] **Nakakura Kiyoshi** was born in 1910 in Kagoshima Prefecture. He studied under the master swordsman, Nakayama Hakudo, and later, in 1932, he became the adopted son of Ueshiba Morihei. It was considered that he would be Ueshiba Morihei's successor in Aikido, but his adoption into the Ueshiba family was later dissolved. He has won a great many Kendo tournaments and is considered the top Kenjutsu practitioner of this generation. He is currently 9th Dan Hanshi in both Kendo and Iaido. [Editor's note.]

opponent tries to avoid it, the shinai comes from the opposite side. The one who gave him this hint was Ueshiba Sensei who told him, "Be more flexible." And so it appears that this tactic was devised.



In Aikido, techniques are practised in the same way on both the left and the right sides. So thanks to his Aikido training, Mr. Nakakura could execute techniques equally well on either side. Kendo today completely favours the right stance and the exchanges are fairly monotonous. You rarely see someone

switching between left and right. This is also a result of the influence of sport on the martial arts.

The body movements of Aikido assume the use of real swords and conform to time-honoured martial techniques. I expect that even those who are studying Kendo could learn a great deal from them.

Learn It, Then Forget About It

Ueshiba Sensei's way of teaching was quite different from the instructional methods used today. In those days, Sensei would first demonstrate the technique we were to practise, simply giving us an idea of the movements. By no means did he ever explain to us how to do something.

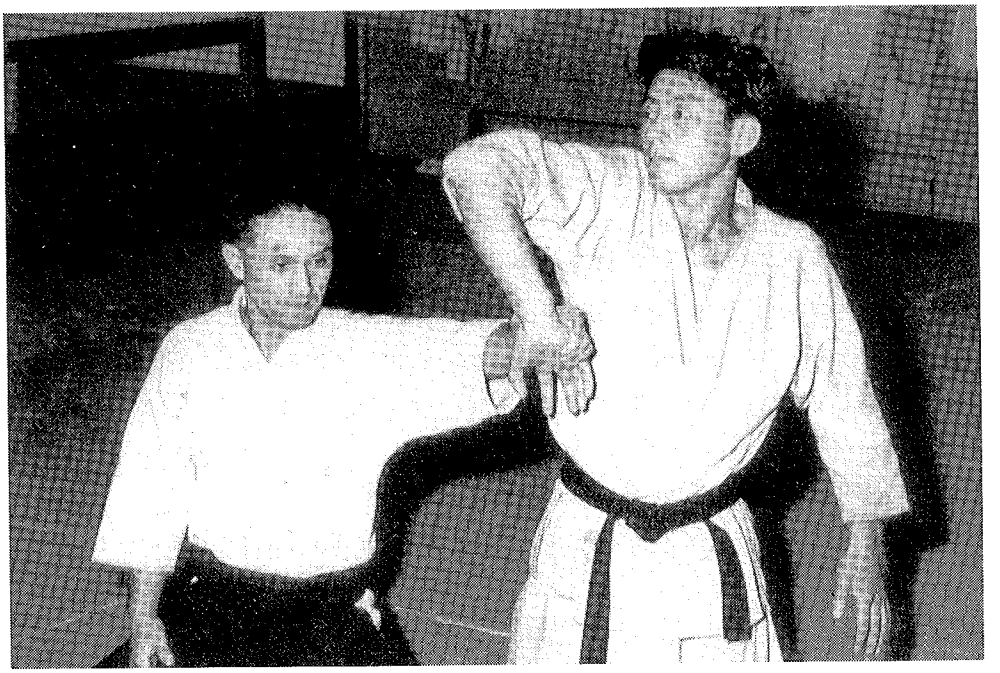
By watching Sensei's example we tried to work the techniques out for ourselves. But no matter what we did, Sensei would be on the sidelines saying only: "Ah! That's good! That's good!" This was extremely frustrating, however, since we had no idea just what it was that was good! You may think that this was an unkind way of teaching, but Sensei always felt that this is what budo was about.

"Learn it, then forget about it," was an expression Sensei always used. Let's take, for example, using a shiho nage to throw your partner who attacks with a front strike. The first time you try it, it works fine, and so you try to throw him in exactly the same way the second time. However, this time the force and position of his body, as well as the way he uses his power has changed subtly. So, if you try to move just as you did the first time, your technique will be ineffective.

The proper way is to make appropriate changes in your own body movements in response to changes in the opponent. There is no such thing as doing things just one way for each situation. You can't do exactly the same thing twice. If you can deal with each individual situation in the most appropriate manner, then your technique will always work. Sensei always used to say, "If you can't grasp this, then you can't do martial arts."

Ultimately, "learn it, then forget about it" is not about trying to repeat what you have done before. Rather, it has to do with totally putting preconceptions out of your mind and facing each circumstance as a completely new one, and in this way coming to terms with the technique. Then you can develop the feeling of "seizing the moment" without relying on set procedures. Paradoxically, the way we try to do things now, with our detailed way of setting the feet in just this position and the hands in that position, is somewhat removed from the true nature of budo.

Yet, it's only now that I'm starting to understand the things that Ueshiba Sensei didn't mention. Back then we simply continued to train blindly, without knowing what was right and what was wrong. So only those students who truly had a natural aptitude could grasp the essence of Sensei's martial art. At the Ueshiba Dojo, those who could perform the techniques performed them well, but those who couldn't were completely lost.



In the martial arts of old, this was fine. But times have changed and we have to provide many more people with an easier way to learn Aikido. What's more, people today think about things logically, so it's important that the instructional methods change in accordance with this. You can tell people all you want, "Become one with heaven and earth!" but that alone is not enough to make them understand. This is the reason why my teaching methods, which strictly reinforce the basics, are different than those of Ueshiba Sensei.

Perceive The Changes In Each Situation

Having always acted as Ueshiba Sensei's uke, there is something that I have noticed. Although Sensei's techniques may have always looked the same to those who watched them, in reality this was not the case. Whether it was the way he executed his body movements or the way he held himself when he told me to come at him again, it was different almost every day.

Sensei was no different than everyone else. His techniques, his movements and the way he used his power changed with the way he felt on any particular day. For example, if he had a quarrel with his wife on the previous day, the

demonstration the following day would be completely different. It would also differ depending on whether he was the one doing the scolding or if he had been scolded by his wife.

If you couldn't pick up on these sorts of things and simply did everything in exactly the same way every time, you couldn't be a good uke. You had to be extremely sensitive to Sensei's changes and follow his mood, otherwise you just couldn't perform well as his uke.

Ultimately, even within a single individual all sorts of changes take place. Therefore, even if your partner is always the same person, if you always perform the techniques in the same way, they really aren't effective. This is all the more so when you do change your partner. You can't say you've mastered the technique unless you are able to adapt to change the moment it occurs.

Once I understood this, I incorporated a specific approach into my training. This was to change training partners every day. The intent was to never link up with the same person twice.

Of course, there are a limited number of students in the dojo, so after a while you inevitably face the same person again. But even so, you definitely won't train with the same person twice in a row. In this way, by training with everybody and anybody in the dojo, I developed the ability to sense the differences in the way power was exercised.

What happens in most instances is that we only get together with those who are easy partners for us or those we are friendly with. So our technique is always the same. Because we only become familiar with the same build and the same habits, once we are faced with a new opponent, our techniques are ineffective. You will never make progress this way.

Train with as many different people as you can, and thereby foster your ability to detect the moment by moment differences in the flow of their power. By heightening your ability to detect subtle changes in power in this way, you will be able to execute effective techniques in response to any situation.

By the same token, change is not something that only applies to people, it is the same with regard to the environment. For example, when Ueshiba Sensei was on a roll there were times when he even had us take falls for him on concrete! He would tell us that we had to be able to take falls anywhere, not just on tatami mats.

On concrete, there is no way you can survive as uke if you perform in the normal manner. On one particular day, I rushed into Sensei prepared for the worst. As usual, he side-stepped sharply and I took advantage of this to execute a roll. In this way it was relatively painless. My senior, however, who was also taking falls was determined to receive the technique just as he always did. He ended up with a broken shoulder.

As you can see, it's good to develop the ability to look at each situation individually and deal with the changes in an appropriate manner.

The Physical Training Of My Youth

As a general rule in Aikido, we train without using excessive force. We don't train specifically for muscular strength the way other fighting styles do. People often ask me whether it is better to stay completely away from strength conditioning, or whether it's good to develop a certain degree of physical strength. My response would be that it all depends on how you go about it.

When Ueshiba Sensei saw people lifting barbells and using pulleys he said, "That kind of physical exercise really is of no use." And so he always told us, "Don't do that sort of thing." However, the truth is that when I was alone I trained my body with all kinds of physical exercises.

Back then, I was overflowing with youthful vigor so I had an abundance of energy. I wanted so badly to become physically strong that I trained as much as possible and wasn't concerned about taking it easy on my body. When I

look back on it now, by challenging my own limits in this way, I was also forging my own spiritual strength.

So every day I would exercise feverishly, doing such things as push-ups. I could easily handle 250 repetitions. If I felt like doing chin-ups, I would do them 300 times. To me, one-hand chin-ups were a piece of cake. When I was in my second year of junior high school I even attended a gymnastics competition as the representative of the Kanto region, so I have always had confidence in my physical strength.

Thanks to the fact that I trained so much, I even defeated Mr. Kimura Masahiko once in an arm-wrestling match. We were both students at Takushoku University at the time and were in the same English class together. Back then, arm-wrestling was quite popular. Out of nowhere, someone would suggest that they wanted to go at it and there would be a showdown right there on the desks of the classroom.

By that time, Mr. Kimura had already won the All Japan Championships in Judo and he was much stronger than most people. There were any number of incidences in which he displayed his superhuman strength. He could bend a coin in half with two fingers, crush the frame of a sliding door from the sides, and even bend a lead pipe in half!

As I clasped his right hand in preparation for the match, I sensed his intentions. Then, just as the signal to begin was given, I got the jump on him and applied

my strength before he had a chance. I turned the tables on Mr. Kimura's own strength by defeating him before he had a chance to develop any power. So he looked at me with a wry smile and said, "I was beaten before I had a chance to do anything!"

I won the first time with this tactic but since he too was strong, I couldn't do this forever. The second time we went at it, I lost to him. We had a number of matches like this but in the end, we each won some and lost some.

After a Period of Intensive Training, Your Strength Is Gone

In this way, I too went through a period when I was proud of my strength. I yearned to do techniques in those days and kept relying on brute strength to apply them – and I wasn't the only one. Because of the relationship between the Ueshiba Dojo and the Omoto religion, there were always about 20 or so young people at the dojo and we used to get together and eagerly throw each other around.

When you are young and into intensive training, this is fine. In fact, even if you tell young people not to use strength in their techniques, they can't help it and they end up doing just that. This is what being young is all about. If you repress this forcibly, training no longer becomes possible for them. The important thing is that they try their best at the time. If you don't make a conscious effort to push yourself to your physical and spiritual limits, and train until you yourself are satisfied, you won't be able to physically assimilate what is truly important.

A good example of this is the **Riot Police Training**[58] that we conduct at the dojo. We don't tell them not to use strength. We make them put every ounce of effort into the training and we push them so hard that they can barely stand up.

When the dojo used to be in Koganei, I heard that the railway station attendants would know when the Riot Police Training course had begun at the beginning of April every year by looking at the handrails in the station. We pushed them so hard at the dojo that they couldn't climb the stairs without holding on to the handrail, so the handrail gleamed with all the polishing it received!

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[58] Every year the Yoshinkan receives 11 members of the Riot Squad of the Metropolitan Police Agency. As special students, they are put through a separate 10-month course. This program began in 1964 and as of today there have been 27 annual courses. Once these special students graduate, they return to their squads and give instruction in Aikido. Also, within the Metropolitan Police Agency today, female police officers are required to study Aikido. [Editor's note.]

The fact of the matter is that if we hadn't pushed them so hard, they wouldn't have acquired any sense of Aikido as a martial art. But if we did this to everyone, no one would ever return. This is why at the dojo today, we focus on pre-set forms and a somewhat gentler approach to teaching.

In any case, the time to put yourself through all this physical torment is while you are still young. Through this process you will come to understand just who you are, and you will develop strength of spirit. Then, as you get older, you will gradually let go of your strength. When this process begins, you will be able to actually feel the effects of kokyu power, which doesn't rely on strength. However, it is precisely because you did such demanding training during your youth that you will find yourself at this stage. If you had let go of your power from the beginning and trained easily, the results in your later years would have been nothing.

And although he told us not to use power, in fact Ueshiba Sensei himself also did considerable physical training during his younger days. We mustn't forget that it was precisely because he had this foundation that he achieved the level of so-called "divine techniques" in his later years.

Develop A Body That Moves In The Most Natural Way

What does physical development mean to those who are engaged in intensive Aikido training? In order to address this question let's look back at the type of physique that Ueshiba Sensei had. On the whole, Sensei was broad, but not in the sense of having rippling muscles. In portraits he was drawn with a rather angular, rugged looking physique but he wasn't quite that way in reality. In general, he was more smooth and lean as opposed to rugged.

Since I often scrubbed down Sensei's back or gave him a massage, I actually had occasion to feel his muscles and my recollection is that he was extremely taut. When I pressed into his muscles and then let go, it felt like the muscles were bounding back into shape.

When Sensei grabbed your wrist, the feeling was also slightly different. Initially, you didn't have a sense of great strength but gradually, and without your realizing it, the grip tightened. In other words, it was a soft grip with great underlying strength. That was how Sensei exercised his strength.

Just because the founder, Ueshiba Sensei, had this kind of physique doesn't mean that everyone who studies Aikido should develop the same sort of physique. Sensei himself used to point this out often. He would say that

physical development is a state of mind, and it was sufficient that you developed a body suitable to yourself. "So, Shioda," he would say, "if you developed a physique similar to mine, you wouldn't be able to move naturally." In other words, Ueshiba Sensei was saying that because Aikido is a martial art which places the highest value on being natural, one must not develop a physique that is forced and does not come naturally to him.

However, people have a lot of misunderstandings about just what is meant by "natural". For example, since we begin to get stiff as we get older, it's bad for our muscles if we force ourselves to do the same kind of stretching exercises as when we were young. Or if, because of your small stature, you push yourself to acquire more muscle than you need through weight training, you will strain yourself. These kinds of things are unnatural. If you are forced to develop a certain physique, even if it makes you physically stronger, you won't be able to attain the finer points of Aikido.

Therefore, the proper interpretation of physical development according to Aikido is to build a physique with which you are comfortable throughout every one of your daily activities. The following phrase often used by Ueshiba Sensei expresses this very idea – "Walking is martial arts."

What this means is that no matter what sort of physique you have, you can do Aikido. Whether you are rigid or soft or thin or heavy set, you can do Aikido in your own way as long as you find the way to move that's most natural for yourself.

In other words, you must continue to improve your physique so that it is not forced but natural. You could say that this is the unrelenting struggle of shugyo. So, if you develop the physique that is best suited to your age, you will be able to do Aikido forever, no matter how old you are.

Sense Your Teacher's Feelings

Thinking that I would have given anything to make something of myself in this incredible martial art, I eagerly commuted back and forth to the dojo. But of course, I could never equal the uchideshi who were always serving at Sensei's side. So it was inevitable that I, too, had to be by Sensei's side to take in as much as possible. Thus, I became an uchideshi at the age of 19.

At that time I was going to Takushoku University but I was devoted to Aikido more than anything else and so I took a leave from school. I was allowed to take two years off. Once I hit the three-year mark though, I would be removed from school altogether. I immersed myself whole-heartedly in Aikido for two years with an absolute resolve to become a top uchideshi.

Once I became an uchideshi, I lived with Sensei and took care of all his daily needs, no matter what they were. All shugyo is like this, no matter what kind it is. It's the same as the apprenticeship programs of years gone by. You never complained to your master. You simply kept silent and did as you were told. Giving your opinion was absolutely out of the question. If you ever asked something like, "Isn't it better to do it this way?" you would catch holy hell immediately!

People today probably think that this is a bit unreasonable, but if you want to master a particular path or way, my feeling is that this kind of intensive training is necessary. For no matter how well you know the pre-set forms and procedures of the techniques, this alone will not make something a martial art. This is especially true in the case of Aikido. In order to master Aiki techniques, simply drilling in sports-type training is not sufficient.

To achieve this mastery of a martial art, nothing is better than solid shugyo in which you share daily life with your teacher in absolute obedience. And yet, you won't gain anything by simply living with your teacher. The important thing is, in taking care of all his needs, to continually sense your teacher's feelings before they are made known to you. In the end, you are striving to be able to perceive his intentions.

Suppose, for example, that Sensei is taking a bath and you are scrubbing down his back. You should be able to determine what Sensei will want next and do it

for him before he says anything. Watch Sensei's movements continuously; then understand the changes in his feelings.

But here's the difficult thing. If you see something and then think about it and then set to work on it, it's already too late. You can't think about it. You have to be able to discern instinctively what Sensei's feelings are right away, on the spot. This is the natural way. It's not about thinking, just sense it naturally. I always made it my goal to try to do things this way and as a result, I developed an ability to sense my opponent's intentions.

Before long, this kind of training carried over into demonstrations as well. When performing as Sensei's uke, although fundamentally it doesn't matter where you attack, the point initially is to show the audience. So, for example, Sensei might present his shoulder and say, "Grab here." The average person would then go in and grab his shoulder. My goal was to perceive his intent and go in and grab his shoulder before he could say a single word. It is an unspoken, heart to heart way of communicating. If you can't do this, then you can't move naturally. I studied this sort of thing. So now when it's time for me to do a technique I can apply what I studied and can tell where the opponent intends to attack.

It is through my life as an uchideshi that I acquired these sorts of abilities, but it's unreasonable for me to try to get today's young people to do the same thing. They probably wouldn't give absolute obedience to their master and I'm

sure that they couldn't even begin to think of caring for their teacher as part of Aikido training.

Ueshiba Sensei's Mysterious Powers

When it comes to Ueshiba Sensei, the topic that is still brought up today, apart from his genuinely martial techniques, is whether he had some sort of supernatural powers. While I was at his side serving him I watched his every action and, if you ask for my opinion, there is no question that Sensei had psychic powers.

Sensei was an ardent believer in the Omoto religion. Now, I don't know if it had anything to do with that but it is a fact that every now and again he would sense things that we just couldn't understand. Some of you probably think that this is all just superstition, but I assure you that I personally encountered several of these events myself. Let me share some of them with you.

Once a month Sensei went to teach in Kyoto and he often took me along. Since there was no such thing as the Bullet Train back then, it took us at least

10 hours to get as far as Osaka in a steam locomotive that chugged and shook all the way. Sensei always carried around a certain iron-ribbed fan, which they say he received from **Takeda Sokaku Sensei**[59]. When we got on the train, Sensei gave this fan to me for safekeeping and said: "If you sense a chance at any time, try to hit me with this. If you succeed, I'll make you 10th dan." Then like an old man he sat on the seat in a formal posture and fell asleep – just like that. I watched his breathing closely and it truly seemed that Sensei was asleep. I thought to myself: "All right! Not even Sensei could catch me now! He said that I could try to hit him at any time, so this has to include when he is sleeping."

Thinking that I would receive a 10th dan for this, I was just about to drive in and hit him with the fan when Sensei opened his eyes as wide as can be. I was absolutely shocked and my movement was stopped dead. With a smile on his face, Sensei said to me: "A spirit appeared to me just now in the middle of my dreams and told me, 'Shioda is going to hit you! Shioda is going to hit you!'" After saying this he went right back to sleep. No matter how many times I

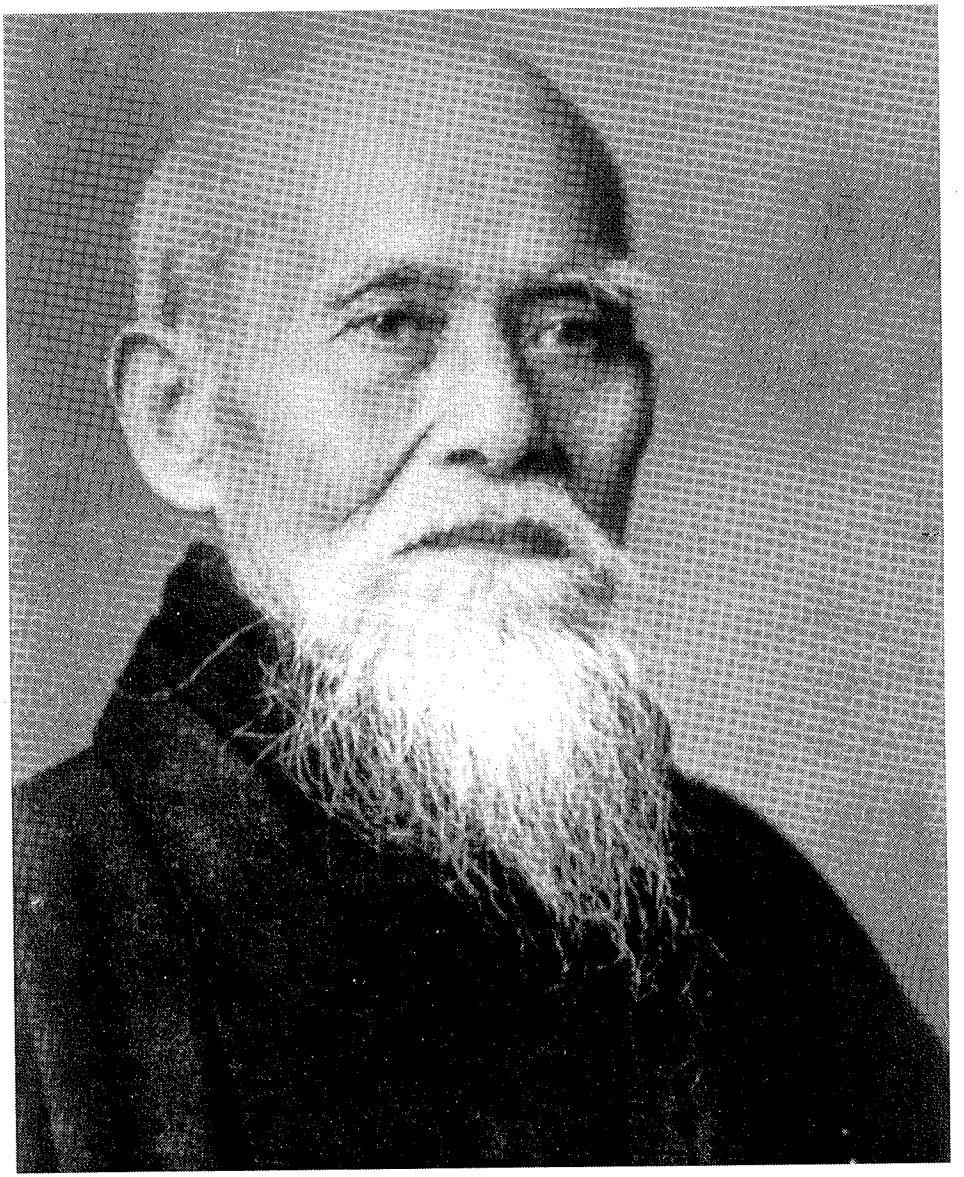
[59] **Takeda Sokaku** was born in 1860 in Aizu (Fukushima Prefecture). He was heir to Daito Ryu Jujutsu, which was handed down within the Takeda family, as well as the Oshiki Uchi tradition of the Aizu clan. Having studied the principles of Yin and Yang under the chief retainer of the Aizu clan, Saigo Tanomo, he revived Daito Ryu Aikijutsu. He boasted of being undefeated as he walked throughout the entire country conducting knight-errantry. Special mention should be made of him as a master in this modern age. In 1915, he taught Daito Ryu to Ueshiba Morihei in the town of Shirataki in Hokkaido. After this, their relationship as master and student lasted some 20 years. Shioda Kancho says that during his years at the Ueshiba Dojo, he once had the opportunity to act as uke for Sokaku. Takeda Sokaku died in 1943 at the age of 83. [Editor's note.]

tried to hit Sensei with the fan, he perceived what I was up to every single time. To me, this was something truly mysterious.

Here is another example of Sensei's mysterious powers. At night, all of us who were uchideshi used to lay our sleeping mats out in the dojo and go to sleep. Sensei would sleep in an interior room. One night, I was sleeping soundly when all of a sudden the door leading to his room came crashing open. Sensei had a wooden sword in one hand as he came flying into the pitch black dojo. Then in the darkness, Sensei confronted something and cut down with the wooden sword as he let out a piercing kiai. Having no idea what had just happened, we rushed to turn on the lights. There was Sensei standing firm while at his feet lay the body of a dead rat with its head cut off.

"You fools!" Sensei thundered at us. "This rat was chewing away at the offerings I left for the gods. And you, who were sleeping right here in front of the shrine, you mean to tell me that you didn't know what was going on?!"

So there was Sensei sleeping in the next room; he sensed that a rat was gnawing away at the food offerings left in the dojo shrine, came crashing in and decapitated the rat with a wooden sword! He was enraged that we hadn't sensed what the rat was doing, but even so, we really couldn't have been expected to realize it. Standing before Sensei, who had flown into a rage, the only thing we could do was simply scratch our heads in bewilderment.



Dodging A Barrage Of Gunfire

Speaking about mysterious, let me relate a story that I guarantee actually took place. This is also something that I personally saw with my own two eyes. One time, an artillery officer came to visit the Ueshiba Dojo, bringing with him at least nine other army officers. He wanted them to see this unbelievable martial art called Aikido.

In the group were some firearms inspectors who saw to it that every gun produced would actually shoot and that the gun barrels didn't veer to the right or the left. They were all Olympic class marksmen. On one occasion when I was allowed to watch, I was amazed to see them hit the target every single time!

After he had given a demonstration of Aikido to these people, Ueshiba Sensei let slip, "You know . . . guns can't hit me." Now to be sure, I had heard that Ueshiba Sensei had evaded the bullets of the mounted bandits he had fought in Mongolia, but these men were different than mounted bandits. The professional pride of the firearms inspectors had been insulted and they became very angry.

"Are you certain that guns can't hit you, sir?" they asked as they gathered around Sensei.

"Oh yes."

"Well then, may we put you to a test?"

"Fine."

One thing led to another, then right there on the spot they wrote up a pledge indicating the month and day upon which Ueshiba Sensei would be the target at the Okubo firing range. They sealed this document with their thumbprints. Furthermore, they took copies of it to the military courthouse to have the details of the agreement verified. In this way, should Ueshiba Sensei be shot and killed, nobody could register any complaints.

On the appointed day, they sent someone to accompany Ueshiba Sensei to the Okubo firing range. Both Mr. Yukawa and I went along with them. Sensei's wife was extremely worried and begged him to put an end to the whole affair. However, Sensei optimistically said to her: "No, it's all right. They won't hit me." Even Mr. Yukawa and I had had a discussion and decided that we should probably make preparations for his funeral.

Upon arriving at the firing range, we had a much bigger surprise waiting for us. I had assumed that one person alone would be firing at Sensei, but we were shocked to see six men lined up together.

The guns they had were pistols with an effective range of 25 metres. The firing range had targets shaped like people set up at this distance, but Ueshiba Sensei replaced these and set himself up as the target. Then from our end the six firearms inspectors took up their pistols and assumed a position 25 metres away from Sensei. I held my breath and observed the proceedings, wondering how on earth Sensei was going to get out of this one.

On the count of three, all six guns went off at once. Thick clouds of dust billowed up and then, in the next instant, one of the six men went flying through the air! We had no idea how, but before we knew it Sensei was standing behind the six gunmen smiling radiantly. He looked like a child at play. I was completely at a loss to understand what had just taken place. And I wasn't the only one. Every person there was so amazed that they were dumbfounded.

The six marksmen couldn't believe what had just happened and asked whether Sensei would do it again for them. He responded quite nonchalantly, "Of course, I don't mind at all." So once again the six guns were aimed at Sensei and fired, and this time the marksman on the end of the line was sent flying through the air! Before we knew what was happening, Sensei was once again standing behind us. I was astounded because this time I had been determined

to figure out what was going on and had my eyes riveted on Ueshiba Sensei. But in the end, I failed to see even a single movement on his part.

The six pistols were pointed at Sensei as he stood there and the triggers were pulled. That much I know. And yet, in the next instant Sensei had already covered the 25-metre distance and thrown one of the marksmen. I can only think that this was beyond any doubt a "divine technique". Leaving the army personnel behind with puzzled looks on their faces, Sensei triumphantly returned home.

Golden Balls Came Flying

On our way back home I asked Sensei, "How in the world did you do that!?" His response was something to this effect. He said that when they were about to pull the trigger, golden balls of light came flying at him. Since the bullets followed these balls of light, it was easy to get out of the way. Also, even though all six shooters intended to fire at the same time, the golden lights didn't come all at once. Of course, the shooters were out of synch somewhat so all he had to do was move against the one who shot first.

Sensei said, "The golden lights made an incredible zinging noise," and so as soon as he heard the sound, he started running. He said he lowered his hips and ran with short little steps, just like a ninja. He went rushing forward and by the time the bullets came, he had already covered half the distance.

Sensei said that there was an extremely long period between the time when the golden lights came and when the bullets arrived. But for those of us who were watching, the whole thing took no more than a split second. We couldn't see him at all as he covered the distance between himself and the shooters.

In Ueshiba Sensei's own words, he said: "I had a revelation from the gods who told me that I still have important things to do in this world so they had to keep me alive. My purification ceremonies were not finished yet so I couldn't die. They told me that once I no longer had importance in this world, I would ascend to heaven."

Sensei fully believed what he was saying but the rest of us had no idea what he was talking about. And I'm sure that having read these stories, none of you really believe them, but I assure you that these mysterious events actually took place.

The Match Against The Expert Hunter

There is a sequel to this story, though. It has to do with Sato Teijiro, a hunter who was an acquaintance of mine in Yamanashi Prefecture. He was an expert marksman. When shooting pheasants, for example, hunters would aim at the birds as they flew down into the valley from the surrounding hills. Apparently, pheasants can reach speeds of around 200 kilometres per hour at this time. When they are shot, if they are shot in the head, they fall right there like a stone, but if they are shot in the body, they glide for quite a distance before they fall to the earth. So all hunters aim for the head because they want them to fall right there on the spot. This, however, is extremely difficult to do. And yet, Mr. Sato shot them through the head every single time. In marksmanship, he was truly an expert among experts.

One time, I relayed the story of Ueshiba Sensei evading bullets to Mr. Sato, and brimming with confidence he said: "Even so, there's no way he could escape *my* shot. People have heads about this big! I shoot pheasants in the head so there's no reason why I couldn't hit a person!"

So Mr. Sato came down from the mountains in order to have a match with Sensei. I took him to the Ueshiba Dojo and conveyed to Sensei his reasons for desiring a match and Sensei accepted his challenge.

Inside the dojo, Sensei sat in seiza while off at a distance Mr. Sato stood ready with a hunting gun. I was extremely anxious as I looked on. Mr. Sato's finger was just about to pull the trigger when Sensei put an end to it by yelling: "Wait! You will hit the mark! You haven't even the slightest desire to shoot me. From the start, you are taking for granted that you will hit me. I won't be able to dodge your bullets. You are indeed a great marksman!" Saying this, Sensei bowed his head to Mr. Sato. Truly delighted, Mr. Sato then returned once again to the mountains.

I was completely filled with admiration. Sensing that Mr. Sato was a master marksman and withdrawing from the match, Ueshiba Sensei had shown himself to be a master as well. It truly does take one master to know another, doesn't it? I am extremely lucky to have witnessed a match between two extraordinary masters.

One Day I'll Be Able To Throw Ueshiba Sensei

As you can see, Ueshiba Sensei was truly a master with inspired powers. Therefore, I feel that it is only natural that his disciples viewed him with the

utmost reverence and used the lofty doctrines that he espoused to support the teaching of the way of Aikido to those who followed. However, during my days of intensive training my interests didn't really lie in that direction. I felt that Sensei's mysterious powers were clearly derived from his involvement with religion and had little to do with fundamental martial skills.

Martial arts is something that *people* do. I fully expected to be able to attain the same level as Ueshiba Sensei, assuming that I trained enough. I used to tell myself, "Just as he is a man, so too am I." So while I fully respected Sensei and served at his side showing him every courtesy appropriate to the master-pupil relationship, I didn't exalt him as though he were some sort of god whose existence was beyond reach. This was because by doing so I would have stunted my own development.

Throughout my intensive training period I had only one thought. "One day, I will throw Sensei with a thump!" People will probably take me to task for entertaining such a presumptuous thought but, of course, I bore no grudge against Sensei and even now I can't say often enough how much I respect him. However, it was precisely because Sensei was so great that I wanted to put my heart and soul into challenging him. I thought it would be a worthy achievement to accomplish such an immense task.

Where a master-pupil relationship in the martial arts is concerned, it is not sufficient that the student simply revere the master. Even if it is not a matter of the student actually fighting the master, it is the duty of the student to strive to

surpass – to defeat – the master. In other words, unless the student trains with this kind of intensity, he will never be able to master the martial arts.

Train Seriously Enough To Challenge Your Teacher

When my seniors acted as Ueshiba Sensei's uke, they would fall beautifully in response to whatever Sensei did. They knew that they were no match for him and would show restraint toward him. They were all very serious without any sense of play or mischief. But while this may have made for a magnificent demonstration, it lacked the deadly seriousness of a true confrontation. I also felt that those acting as uke missed the opportunity to experience what it was like to actually attack without holding back. So when it was my turn to perform as Sensei's uke, I always went after him with everything I had.

Of course, when he was showing how to do a technique so that we could practise it, I went along with it. But in major demonstrations, my frame of mind was not for "show Aikido" but for "attack Aikido". Sensei, too, would sense this and rise to the occasion.

While I was exposing myself to danger at those times I couldn't think about that or anything else. Unless I went in with the feeling that it didn't matter if I died right there, I couldn't get a sense of the real thing.

Even though I certainly felt that Ueshiba Sensei was both powerful and magnificent, in order for me to realize where the root of this magnificence lay I had to fly into him like a ball of fire. Otherwise, Sensei would ward off my attack in a half-hearted manner. Sensei apparently said later that my attacking with full effort became good practice for him as well.

I am told that Sensei said: "In 1941, my physical training came to an end. Now, I have begun to study the way of the gods." It just so happens that 1941 was the year that I left the Ueshiba Dojo. So you might say that I had the opportunity to work with him during a time when he had completed his physical training and was just putting on the finishing touches. It is indeed my extremely great fortune today that I was able to enter into a sort of direct physical dialogue with Sensei during this extremely rich period of his life.

Since I now have students myself, I always instruct them to come at me with the intention of throwing me down. So even in demonstrations they aren't restrained at all. Handling them is quite a chore for me but I feel that this kind of pressure is essential to genuine martial arts training.

My Aikido Enlightenment In Shanghai

During my twenties, my life consisted solely of training intensively day in and day out, trying to become stronger. However, since Aikido has no competitive matches, I had no idea just how strong I was. Still, in accordance with Ueshiba Sensei's instructions, I believed in the soundness of my training and I practised diligently.

Meanwhile, war had broken out and word came that I was to go to China as a civilian serviceman. Since it had always been my dream to go to the continent, I responded without giving it a second thought. When I went to pay a courtesy visit to Ueshiba Sensei in order to say goodbye, he looked at me with unusual kindness and said: "Shioda, you won't be beaten by anyone. I have made sure of that by what I have taught you, so be confident in your task."

I had never experienced such a happy occasion. This was the first time that Sensei had ever given me any recognition. Until then all he had ever done was shout at me. With these encouraging words, I went over to China and took up my duties. And while I was there something happened to me that proved Sensei's words to be true.

I was stationed in Shanghai at the time, performing my military duties. By chance I met up with one of my kohai, so that same night the two of us ventured into the **French Settlement**[60]. As it turned out we ended up in a bar and got into an altercation with a local con artist. At any moment his supporters would arrive, so we entrenched ourselves in the bar and prepared for the impending fight.

At that time in Shanghai, killings and beatings went unpunished. Murders were everyday occurrences. So now that this altercation had begun, I didn't think I would be returning to Japan alive. This was the first time that I had experienced a life or death struggle.

From the other side of the closed door we heard the sound of footsteps thundering toward us. I grabbed a beer bottle, held my breath and waited. When the first guy tried to open the door, I beat him to it and suddenly pulled the knob. He lost his balance and came crashing into the bar. I smashed him on the head as hard as I could with the beer bottle and then I thrust the jagged opening of the broken bottle into his face.

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[60] The English Dictionary of the Kadogawa Publishing Company states that the Settlements were "autonomous residential areas set up in the center of cities in China exclusively for use by foreigners. The 1842 Treaty of Nanking between England and China established them in order to secure the areas as open ports with the power of trade and the right of residence. They were abolished during World War II." The French Settlement was France's autonomous zone. [Editor's note.]

Without a moment's delay the next guy came in and immediately fired a kick at me. I turned slightly to the side to avoid it and, with my back to him, I struck his kicking leg with a sword-hand strike. My timing was just right and he was flattened. I learned later that his leg had been broken by the strike.

So I had brought down these two men and it was just at this moment that I felt a strange sense of confidence that is difficult to describe. It was as if I was being mesmerized: "You are strong! You can't be beaten!"

There were still two guys left. My kohai and I each took one of them. But by now I already firmly believed that I could not be beaten. So what do you think happened? In the middle of this desperate situation, my mind quickly became calm and it was as though I could predict my opponent's every move. He threw a punch at my face. I slipped inside it and, with a variation of shiho nage, lifted his elbow on to my shoulder and threw him. His elbow broke with a snap.

My kohai was fighting the one guy remaining with what looked like Judo and even though he had thrown him, he hadn't quite taken away his ability to fight. I didn't miss the opportunity to jump into the melee and smashed a punch into the guy's side. My center of gravity went forward perfectly and it was a superb hit. This was enough to stop him from getting up and coming at us again.

Looking down at the four men lying all over the floor I was amazed at myself. This was the explosive result of kokyu power when mind, body and technique truly become one. This was Aikido.

Then and there I firmly believed that "at long last, I have made Aikido my own!" This was my Aikido enlightenment.

Passing My 9th Dan Test

When I returned to Japan after the war Ueshiba Sensei had opened the **Aiki Farm**[61] in Iwama, Ibaraki Prefecture, and was teaching Aikido. He went there in order to keep out of sight of the GHQ (the General Headquarters of the U.S. armed forces).

I went to live in Iwama with my entire family and once again received instruction from Ueshiba Sensei. Other uchideshi from the old days showed up

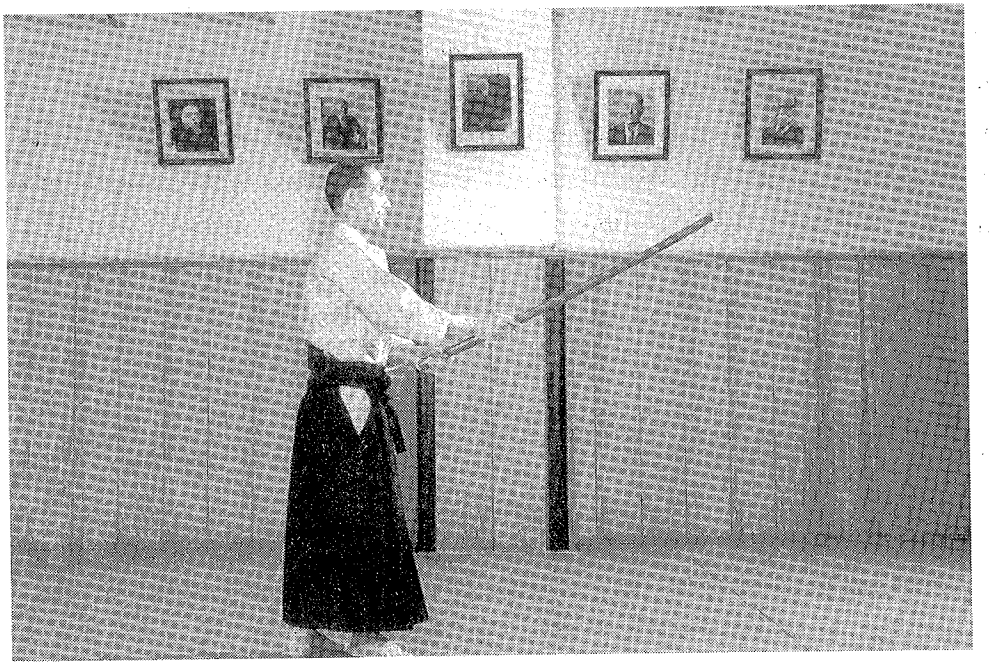
[61] Immediately after Japan's defeat, martial arts training was prohibited by command of the American occupation forces. For this reason, Ueshiba opened a farm in Iwama called the **Aiki Farm** and taught Aikido there. Today, the Aiki Shrine stands on the same grounds. Every year on April 29th, a grand festival is held at the Aiki Shrine as a memorial service to the founder. [Editor's note.]

one after the other. One of the things that Sensei said at that time, which made a deep impression on me, was, "Shioda's basics are the best; they are very strong."

I took this to mean that I was successful in remaining faithful to the fundamental principles of Aikido in my movements, while many of his other disciples, although remembering the forms of the techniques, had strayed into their own personal variations because of their prolonged absence from training. Fortunately, I had many opportunities for which I remain deeply grateful to teach Aikido at the battlefront and at several trading companies that operated in the occupied areas of China.

In 1951, when the confusion of the post-war period had settled down somewhat, I took my 9th Dan examination. The test took place right in front of the Aiki Shrine. To begin, I had to take up the wooden sword. Sensei was holding one himself and said, "Come at me from anywhere."

Try as I might, Sensei was completely covered so I couldn't go in for a strike. I tried every which way to move in but Sensei just pointed the tip of his sword at me and it was as though I was bound hand and foot. There was no way I could move. I was trapped by the force of his spirit. In the end, I didn't even take a single step. I just stood there with sweat dripping off me. In that state, if Sensei had wanted to hit me, he could have come in any way he wanted.



I felt as though I had failed the sword portion of the test. As you know, in Aikido we study the sword as well as hand-to-hand combat techniques at the same time, but people all tend to lean more toward one than the other no matter what. Ueshiba Sensei could look at someone and tell whether they were cut out for the sword or for empty-handed techniques. My strength lay entirely with empty-handed techniques, so relative to them I had no confidence in my sword techniques.

The next stage of the examination was empty-handed techniques. This time Sensei was empty-handed as well and I was to attack him freely. Facing Sensei I searched for an opening. I had undergone a complete change compared to the sword portion of the test. My mind was extremely calm. Then I thought to myself, "That's it!" I felt as though I had found a place to attack. I thought I could hit him in the chin with an uppercut. Just as I was about to go flying in Sensei stopped me by saying, "That's fine!" Then he said, "That was excellent!" as he nodded in approval. "You still need some work with the sword, but if this is what you can do empty handed, it's fine. I will make you 9th Dan. But from now on, spend more time working on your sword technique."

Therefore, on September 23, 1951, Sensei gave me a 9th Dan certificate. This was the last certificate that I ever received from Ueshiba Sensei. After that, I left Iwama and started teaching Aikido on my own which soon led to the establishment of the Yoshinkan.

Study Fundamental Principles Through The Practice Of Pre-set Forms

At this point I would like to explain what people should look out for when they practise Aikido. The practice of pre-set forms is central to Aikido. Some people look at this prearranged practice and say that it has nothing to do with actual fighting but they are wrong. It's not a matter of whether it simulates actual fighting. The issue is why we practise these pre-set forms.

As mentioned earlier, at the Ueshiba Dojo in the old days we didn't explicitly have any pre-set forms. The only thing the students could do was copy the techniques that Sensei performed on their own. In terms of instruction, the only thing we were told was to "become one with heaven and earth."

Of course, this is in fact what lies at the root of techniques. Since reality dictates that you respond to any possible situation through an endless variety of techniques, you might say that specifically laying out procedures is, in a sense, misleading. However, if all you ever do is copy the teacher, while certain students might grasp the fundamental principles accurately and make progress, those who don't, will not progress.

When I set up my own dojo, I didn't want this to happen. Now that I was teaching large groups, I felt that I had to instruct in a way that allowed everyone to learn the proper fundamental principles. So I took the techniques which I had learned from Ueshiba Sensei and put them in what I thought was an appropriate order. I set up the sequence of movements according to how I understood the fundamental principles. I considered such things as how not to interrupt the flow of your power, breaking the opponent with the absolute minimum of effort and yet producing the maximum amount of power on your part. Based on this, I began to map out certain movements. Today, these are the basic techniques which we teach at the Yoshinkan.

The result is that the basic techniques have become extremely stylized. Those who have practised Yoshinkan Aikido know all too well the minutely detailed instruction we give about things like the position of the hands and the angle of the feet. However, the intent is for students to grasp each of the fundamental principles. Keeping these in mind as you practise is important. It is senseless to simply repeat the forms without any understanding of their meaning.

In the same way, those who practise solely with the intention of bringing down their partner are also a problem. These people don't think of the meaning behind fundamental principles. They only think about how to drop their partner through the movement of the technique. Regardless of how strong they are physically, they really won't acquire the basic principles.

Practising prearranged forms is not about bringing each other down. It's a method of practising to study what sort of posture you have to maintain in order to break your partner's balance, how to move your body to do this, and how to use your power. It's important to understand from the beginning that we, of course, are not saying that this is precisely the movement one must follow in an actual combat situation.

Another thing often said against basic techniques is the statement, "Having your opponent grab your wrist is ridiculous." And this is exactly right. In reality you would never allow your opponent to grab your wrist. In true Aikido, you would execute the technique before he fully got hold of you.

However, as I have said many times, the basic techniques are intended for practice. The purpose of allowing the opponent to grasp your wrist in a practice session is for you to study how to modify your own body movements in accordance with the changes in his power, such as whether he is pushing or pulling. In this way, we practise the basic techniques over and over to learn how to move our bodies in response to the different types of power exerted by the opponent. In the next stage you can practise how to use these movements under a greater variety of changing conditions.

Aikido Has No Need For Competitive Matches

We don't hold competitive matches in Aikido. There are a lot of people who have questions about this but I am adamant that there is no need for them in Aikido. Nothing is less important to the improvement of a martial artist's skill than having him enter a competition.

So far I have given various explanations about the workings of Aikido techniques so I'm sure that you can see that these techniques are not designed for use in competitive matches. This is because the conditions under which combat takes place are different.

Aikido techniques make excellent use of a person's feelings and physiological responses. It is only because the opponent attacks with the intention of inflicting harm that you can take advantage of that intention, using his power to your benefit and combining it with your technique. Under such conditions there is no thought of competing to see who is stronger. Only the thought of having to defend yourself is present.

Competitive matches, however, are different. Standing and facing each other in the ready position, the competitors wait for the signal to begin and then they go straight at each other and start doing techniques. Ultimately, competitions

completely remove the emotional ups and downs of real fights, as well as the variations encountered in the environment of each situation. They retain only the dull and uninteresting techniques for competitive purposes. Even if the match is hotly contested, it's a far cry from real combat.

Can you imagine two Aikido practitioners facing each other under such conditions deliberately moving in to grab the other? The more they tried to remain faithful to the fundamental principles of Aikido, the less likely it is that a match would even take place. If they were forced to fight in such a competitive situation, the fundamental principles would be destroyed and it would become something that bears not even the slightest resemblance to what is the essence of Aikido. It would soon be a trivial grappling match which only borrowed the form of Aikido techniques. I don't think that it makes any sense to go to these lengths to have martial artists vie for such fleeting feelings of superiority.

Rather than this, by practising the techniques daily, I think that the feeling of harmony with the opponent and the actual sense of unity with the universe, which one receives from the fundamental principles, is much more important. Also, if you hold a competition, restrictive rules are brought into play, and in order to ensure safety certain techniques are prohibited. Once this happens, it is no longer Aikido. It is precisely because there are no prohibited techniques that Aikido is effective as an art of self-defence.

Aikido must not make the same mistake as Judo which, although it has achieved growth as a sport, places too much emphasis solely on competitions. It has abandoned effective techniques that could actually be used in a real fight and has become ineffective today as a martial art.

A Serious Fight Is The Consummation Of Intensive Training

After training intensively in Aikido and thinking of it as a martial art, a serious fight is essential. It is not a game held for sport. If you lose in this contest, everything is over. In this type of situation, the techniques that you execute unconsciously are themselves the genuine article. Without experiencing this, you cannot achieve an honest understanding of the true nature of martial arts.

In the past, once you had trained thoroughly in a martial art and advanced to a level of full understanding of the art, you went off on a journey. This was called **musha shugyo**, or "knight-errantry". Once you had experienced real fights and returned home without having lost even once, you received a licence

and certification that you had achieved the highest level of advanced proficiency. As for me, you might say that going over to China was my musha shugyo, since the serious fight that I experienced in Shanghai brought me to a deeper level of understanding.

When you experience a situation in which you can say, "If I lose here, I'm dead," then for the first time every ounce of your power will surface. If all you do is practise in the dojo, you will never appreciate this sensation. When you approach the extremes of life and death for the first time, you will discover just what the martial art that you have acquired is all about.

People today probably think that this is all quite dangerous but in the old days there were many more opportunities to encounter these types of situations. Altercations were daily occurrences and such things as dojo yaburi were even commonplace.

I am not necessarily saying that this is a desirable state of affairs but for those who trained vigorously in the martial arts it meant that they could test their skills. You could say that it was an age that lent itself to intensive training. Of course, we don't live in such times today. The days of barbarism when violence went unchallenged are over (although, when you look at what took place in the Persian Gulf War, it seems as if this is not necessarily so).

Competitive matches have become the focal point of modern-day martial arts precisely because there are no opportunities to acquire knowledge of truly

serious fighting. However, if this is in fact the case, who knows where the essence of budo lies?!

In a society in which you can't perform musha shugyo in order to engage in genuine fights, as in the old days, how are we to discover a method of training that replaces this and through which we can acquire the real essence of budo? This is a difficult point and one which the young people training today will have to think through. And yet, even if the real essence of budo is not passed on, this does not mean that the existence of Aikido has no significance. Understanding the harmony of the universe through the intensive training of techniques is also fundamental to the true nature of Aikido.

Aikido And Life Are One

合気即生活

The Fundamental Principles Express Harmony

In this book, I have explored the martial arts aspect of Aikido. I'm sure that you have gained at least a small insight into Aikido's outstanding principles as a martial art intended for self-defence. So then, what do you think Aikido's ultimate technique might be? It is the ability to be at peace with your opponent by inducing him to abandon his animosity toward you.

Having said this I am sure that there are some people who feel as though they have been deceived somehow. Until now I have spoken unsparingly about martial techniques that can be used to win a fight. So I can't blame you if you feel that I'm simply grandstanding by commenting at the end that you should be at peace with your opponent. However, one of the interesting aspects about Aikido is that the more you grasp the fundamental principles, the more you can understand the actual feeling of harmony that they produce.

Aikido is called the martial art of harmony. But make no mistake about it, it's not considered harmonious because there are no tournaments, or because the techniques are done together with a partner without offering resistance, nor even because there is no importance placed on becoming physically strong. In fact, it's because the techniques themselves, which are as sharp as a real sword, are realized through harmony.

This is not just theory. You will never understand Aikido if you start seeking its intellectual nature from the very beginning. The techniques themselves are the very expression of Aikido's philosophy. Only by putting the fundamental principles of the techniques into practice yourself will you come to understand just what "harmony" is all about.

As a result, the important thing is whether the techniques that you perform yourself conform to the fundamental principles. If you can't put these principles into practice, but can only affect the movements, even if the

opponent goes flying away from you, this is not a true understanding of harmony as expounded by Aikido.

This is why I place such emphasis on the fundamental principles of the techniques. Only after you have a firm grasp of how and why Aikido proves effective in actual combat and only after you understand the fundamental principles through personal physical experience; only then, for the first time, will you be able to discover within the techniques what Ueshiba Sensei meant by the word "harmony".

Ueshiba Sensei often said: "If you are skilled in Aikijutsu, you have nothing to fear in the entire world. Everything will be on your side." He also said: "Harmonize with opposition. If someone comes at you waving a sword, you have to be willing to be their friend." Of course, I realize that it's not easy to see a friend in someone coming at you with a sword, but in its essence, that is where harmony ultimately leads.

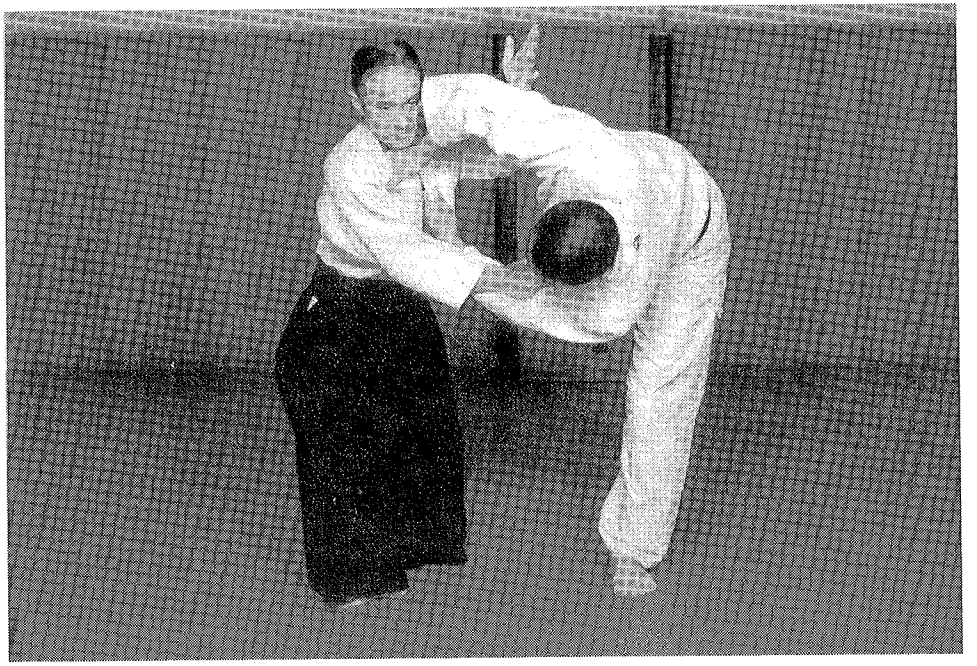
Couldn't we say then that Aikido is intensive training in the cultivation of a spirit which allows you to think of even an enemy as a friend? It is to be able to smile radiantly at someone who wants to inflict harm upon you – not a forced smile but a smile that truly comes from your heart. If you could do this, even your adversary would lose his intention to cause you harm. This is an extremely difficult thing but the process of training toward achieving it is Aikido.

We Should All Become Infants

When I was establishing the Yoshinkan I had the following conversation with the people who were helping me, including Ogata Taketora Sensei and Kudo

Shoshiro Sensei. I said: "The magnificence of Aikido lies in its physical expression of the spirit of harmony. If one could spread this feeling of harmony throughout the world, wouldn't it bring about genuine peace?"

You can't expect to bring about real peace by incessantly bargaining back and forth trying to gain the upper hand, as if you were one of today's politicians engaged in diplomacy. Rather, we have to build a society in which everyone practises harmony from the heart. In order to do this, it is vital to be open and humble. We must have a pure heart that is sincere and unsullied.



At the time of birth, all human beings are babies, and since babies are godlike they don't have even the slightest evil intent. This is something I have always said. In the beginning, we all start from here. Then, as we grow we learn various things and the gentle heart that we began with is forgotten. There's nothing wrong with gaining knowledge but when that knowledge produces petty cleverness it becomes a problem. It's because we try to outsmart each other that disputes arise.

So if we could all maintain the gentle feeling we were born with, wouldn't it be possible to develop a society in which everyone throughout the world helped each other? This is my true desire and I feel that the spread of Aikido will contribute to its fulfilment.

Other people probably feel that it's useless to have such grandiose thoughts. However, as long as we are all human beings, it is important that we have dreams. If we don't, life has no meaning. Of course, we can't live in a fantasy world but if we don't harbour such grand desires, we will not move forward.

As a result, my personal reason for training in Aikido is that I believe Aikido plays a major role in my struggle to regain the innocent heart of a newborn baby.

HE BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE GODS

Ueshiba Sensei was a fervent believer in the Omoto religion. At one time he taught martial arts to the young people at the religious order's headquarters in the city of Ayabe in Kyoto Prefecture. His efforts at this time would later bear fruit in the form of Aikido.

To begin with, the term "Aikido" itself was coined following the advice of Deguchi Onisaburo of the Omoto religion. Therefore, you might say that you can't discuss Aikido without touching on the Omoto religion. Actually, there are many people who interpret their Aikido training in terms of Shinto spirituality.

Yet, if I may say so, I am a complete atheist. I have struggled with Aikido over a period of 50 years or so and spent a long time serving at Ueshiba Sensei's side, and still I have ended up indifferent to the religious aspects of Aikido.

One of the greatest things about Sensei was that he absolutely never forced his religious beliefs on us. Naturally, there were many people at the dojo who were affiliated with the Omoto religion and Sensei even took me along with him to the church many times, but I was never told that I had to have faith in the gods. This subject was left up to our own personal choice.

But while I am an atheist, I do have my own convictions. One is that I must never lose sight of myself and who I am. Religions sometimes produce feelings of dependence upon the gods. Although I feel that the ability to feel gratitude toward the gods is important, I also feel that as the spirit of dependence gets stronger, you become weaker.

It is to you that the gods have bestowed life. If you neglect your own efforts in the development of that vessel of life – yourself – and rely solely on the power of the gods, you lose your initiative and independence. I think that the gods dwell within our own bodies. The body is a temple of flesh and it is in this very temple that we find the gods. And so, no matter what, it is in yourself that you must have faith.

Naturally, this does not mean that we should simply inflate our own egos. It is difficult, but ultimately it comes down to you sensing and grasping just what your "self" is. If you simply swallow up whatever others give you, you will never take the initiative. Your heart will be influenced by whatever others tell you and you will wander from place to place. I don't think you can reach the absolute truth in this way.

I think that Ueshiba Sensei's inspired qualities were truly amazing but, of course, I wanted to endeavour to master Aikido in accordance with my own beliefs. I was afraid that by imitating too closely the grandeur of Ueshiba Sensei I would be losing my own independence.

I have of late gradually begun to understand through personal experience what Ueshiba Sensei meant when he uttered phrases like "I am the universe" or "become one with the universe." I now encounter circumstances which corroborate what I thought was nothing more than gibberish when I was young. I find myself saying: "Of course! This is what Sensei meant when he said that!"

I definitely have not reached the great heights that Ueshiba Sensei achieved, but to the extent that I have been able to achieve understanding, I am in complete agreement with him. It may be a bit presumptuous of me but I believe that *this* is my own Aikido.

If you do Aikido, it's important to hold on to the feeling that you are doing your own Aikido, not Aikido that relies on something else. If this is not the case you won't achieve your full and genuine potential.

There Are No Precepts At The Yoshinkan

The true nature of budo is not something that can be understood intellectually. It does you no good to pretend to understand it through a rational explanation provided by someone else. The important thing is to discover it for yourself through intensive training. If you don't do this, what you have achieved is not the genuine thing. In other words, you might say that the purpose of training is to discover the true nature of budo for yourself.

I am sure that those who have been to my dojo are aware that we have no set of precepts hanging on the wall. We haven't even written up a set! There are dojos where they find it necessary to have everyone chant: "Number 1. Through our training in the martial arts . . ." and so on and so forth at the beginning and end of practice. This is fine for them, but I didn't want to do this at the Yoshinkan. This is because I feel that no matter how well the words are arranged, if it is something that is forced upon you, it really has no meaning for you.

Words that have been given to you by others are, after all, things that belong to them alone. They do not derive from your own personal insight. The scary thing is that people get it into their heads that by knowing the words themselves they understand their essence. When this happens the initiative is

removed from the individual and the words take on a life of their own. Words become the bonds that tie us down.

In such instances, it is impossible to make the individual understand the essence of these words and his own development stops right there. That is why the important thing is to somehow provide each individual with the environment in which he can achieve understanding on his own.

Here is a case in point. When our Hombu Dojo was still at Tsukudo Hachiman, one of the members of the dojo started stealing shoes. At that time we didn't have a shoe cabinet and the dojo members would take off their shoes and leave them lying all over the entranceway. The thief's *modus operandi* was to arrive wearing his own dirty shoes and return home wearing someone else's clean ones!

This was happening all too often, so as you might expect the consensus within the dojo was that the culprit should be caught and punished. However, I told the students to cease their efforts. Instead, I instructed them to arrange their shoes neatly in the entranceway. Once they tidied up what had until then been a mess of scattered shoes, the entranceway was so clean that it was unrecognizable. And what do you think happened next? The shoe thefts stopped immediately.

This is the way people are. The disorder of a place will extend into the hearts of those who are there. Our own disorder is what allowed him to take

advantage of a poor situation. You might say that the shoes that were scattered all over the place are what provoked him to stealing. However, as soon as we put things neatly in order he found it difficult to steal and his criminal desire vanished. The principle here is the same as Aikido's principle of pre-empting the opponent's animosity.

What do you think would have happened had we caught and punished the culprit? Even if he had felt badly when we got angry with him there is no reason to believe that he would have found it within himself to stop what he was doing. So he probably would have done the same thing over again. On top of that he likely would have developed a spirit of defiance and felt resentment toward us.

I feel that the reason this didn't happen was that he probably sensed something within himself. And even if this wasn't something he was conscious of, I am sure that something lodged itself in his heart and made him think twice about stealing. It doesn't matter what the theory is; the important thing is what dwells within your heart. What a person has in his heart is what is genuine from his point of view.

Discover Your Hidden Faults

No matter who we are, people tend to make judgments on all sorts of things based solely on what they see. We rationalize this by saying that all we can see is the outward appearance of things. However, what is truly important are those areas that we cannot see. Whether or not a particular person will achieve a higher level depends upon whether he can perceive that which cannot be seen.

So far the greatest problem I have faced in my training is knowing my true self. The first step toward achieving this is awareness of your own true faults, which cannot be seen but are concealed. Anyone can easily say, "These are my faults," but these are generally just the faults that can be seen, the faults that appear on the surface. It is often the case that we don't perceive those faults that are below the surface.

For example, let's assume that someone has problems getting along with his subordinates. He thinks that the reason is his lack of understanding of young people so he takes his subordinates out to dinner, tells a few jokes and tries to become more friendly. However, what if, in the depths of his heart, he doesn't think highly of his subordinates, and this was evident to them, leading to his lack of popularity among them. No matter what he does to try to get into favour with his subordinates, he really can't expect things to work out well.

This in turn leads him to conclude that nobody understands him despite all his efforts and leads him further into a dead end.

This kind of person needs to become aware of the arrogant feelings he has deep inside. But since nobody likes to look so deeply within themselves, this is extremely difficult to come to terms with. In the end, you find yourself blaming the other person for what is, in fact, your own fault.

You could say that practising techniques is the same. Whether to go right or left, or how to place the hands, these things anybody can correct. However, even if they master the form of the technique, you will find lots of people who are at a loss because no matter how hard they try, their technique just doesn't work.

And it's not a matter of the form or the angles being right or wrong. Often the technique doesn't work because your center line is tilted or your power is going off into some other direction. But this sort of hidden element is extremely hard to perceive. If one is at least making efforts to become aware of these hidden faults, improvements may be possible. But if one becomes satisfied with his condition, unaware of his faults, then no further growth can be expected of him.

In order to uncover your true faults you must return to the starting point. This is what going back to basics is all about. You must regain your original

innocence and humility. Once your heart becomes pure, you will be able to see for the first time those faults which have until then remained hidden.

This is the reason why I make it a rule to oversee the practice of new students myself. Because those who have just entered the dojo are struggling with Aikido with an absolutely pure heart, I learn a great deal by comparing my spirit with theirs. There is a saying that goes "Students are teachers and teachers are students," and this is why I'm not so full of arrogance today. I train every day in order to continuously refresh and discover myself.

WALKING IS MARTIAL ARTS

Ueshiba Sensei always used to explain to us that "Aikido and life are one." Aikido is not just doing techniques with each other in the dojo. Every one of our daily activities is Aikido training, whether it's waking up, moving around, talking with people, drinking or going to bed. Sensei also said, "Walking is martial arts." This too, is the same thing.

Martial arts must not deviate from daily life and become something special. Even if you are just walking on the street, such things as your presence, the

way you maintain your posture, your sense of awareness, all of these are expressions of riai, the fundamental principles. And again, working on these is part of training. If they conform to the fundamental principles, they will contain harmony. Your posture, your carriage, the way you greet those in passing, your use of language – harmony dwells in each and every one of these. The method of walking with harmony is in fact a practical application of both kokyu and focused power.

It's not about strength or weakness. Budo is continuously maintaining your own personal best. If we don't do this, our martial arts become sports. In sports, you practise for competitions. You practise to win tournaments and on the day of the tournament, you take yourself to a higher peak physically. Since in this way you can do what you normally wouldn't be able to do, it is a magnificent thing in its own right.

However, developing a special peak requires placing excessive strain on both your mind and your body. If it were for a set period of time, then even this would be all right. But people can't function forever under this pressure. That's why athletes go into retirement.

The martial arts way of thinking is different. Maintaining your best condition every day is a basic principle of martial arts. It's no good being in top condition one day because one was prepared, and not on another day because one was unprepared. Having said that, you only put yourself into an untenable position if you try to force yourself to achieve what is not within you. To

achieve a favourable result within the confines of your ability is what is meant by doing your best. Regardless of the situation, you won't make it in real life unless you are able to bring forth your best without coersion or without forcing yourself.

Shugyo, or intensive training, is being your best in each and every situation. This is why Aikido training has no end. It is the maintaining of a desire to improve yourself throughout your entire life.

Lose Your Ego And You Will Understand The Opponent

The application of the fundamental principles of Aikido techniques to practical life is another indication that "Aikido and life are one". For example, doing away with your ego is at the root of Aikido. You cannot move naturally if you are preoccupied by such egocentric ideas as the desire to do something this way or that way, or to win or to show something in a good light. What's more, since people are emotional beings, if you fly into a fit of hostility your opponent will react to this by becoming enraged himself.

If your desire to do something one way clashes too heavily with your opponent's desire to do it another way, the result is simply a futile contest of strength. The match may finally be decided once you've injured each other and one side has surrendered, but this doesn't produce any harmony at all. To avoid this, it's good to go in with no preconceived plan – a plan of no-plan.

If you can get rid of your ego, you will start to be able to see the opponent's intentions. If you can move while blending with these, you won't collide with each other at all. So just as with Aikido techniques, if you can absorb the opponent's power, even though you won't have to use your own strength you will still be able to develop incredible force. If you can do this, your opponent will be happy since his desires are being recognized and you, too, will feel great. In other words, this is how harmony is achieved.

You have to sense the other person's feelings first hand. It's not a matter of understanding them intellectually; rather, you have to sense them in a flash. This will allow you to see where the opportunities lie. Even if you have opposing views, you will avoid upsetting the other person. You will discern where his own specific characteristics dwell. And just as you perceive the flow of the opponent's power through techniques, in personal relations as well, sense where the other person's interests likely rest and then build these up. Aikido techniques are carried out in precisely this way but if you are going to apply this to personal relations, the first thing you have to do is discover just what it is that brings delight to the other person, and then give it to them.

While I was serving Ueshiba Sensei, I practised this sort of thing as well. Sensei was rather scary when he was mad but even then I couldn't just run away. Whenever his rage was turned toward me, I would suddenly pivot to dodge him and then counter by bringing up some topic that I thought Sensei was interested in. And so, I would soothe Sensei's mood and think to myself, "That's one for me!" Then I, too, would feel good about the whole thing.

Rather than a conquest of technique, it is probably better to say that this was a conquest of spirit. However, because everybody these days is so self-centred they can't do this. You can see this kind of person especially among martial artists. They are so absorbed with strength and weakness that this is all they concern themselves with. So of course, their spirit becomes lonely and in order to cover this up they put on airs. They take to browbeating their partners and as a result their personal relations are in a mess.

In all things, by exerting your own ego, you become a captive of your ego. The best thing to do is to achieve a state of no-mind, **mushin**, because incredible techniques are produced from within this state.

Become One With Heaven And Earth

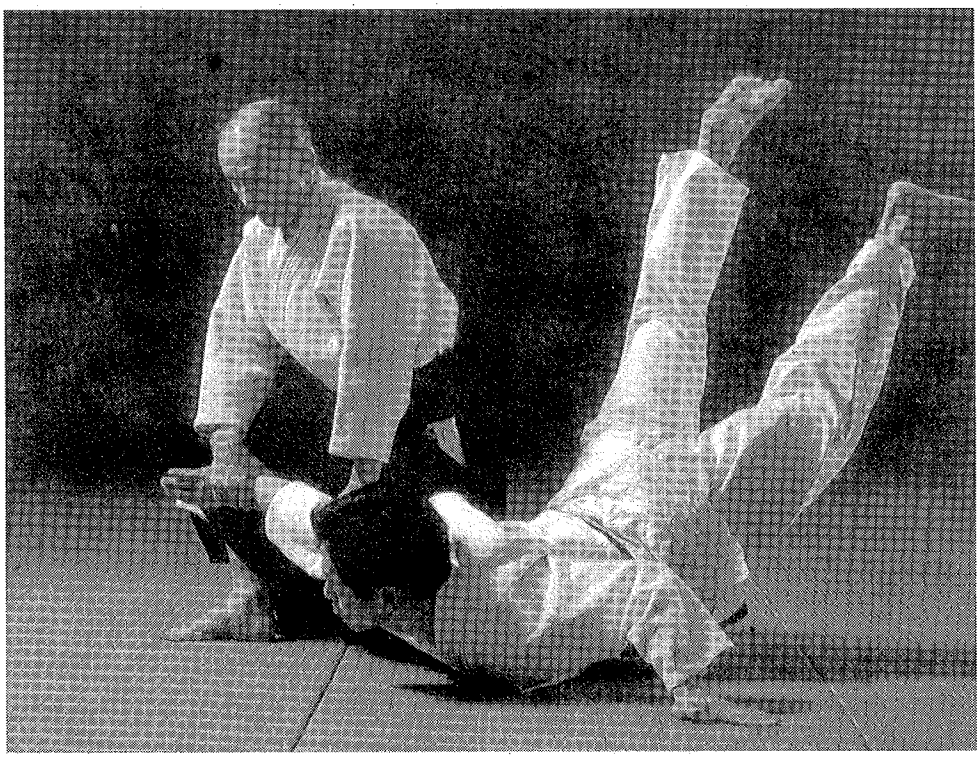
"Always be natural" was Ueshiba Sensei's lifelong teaching. He also said, "Move in unison with heaven and earth!" There is a natural rhythm in heaven and earth and if you can follow this rhythm obediently, you can do things without ever producing unnecessary force. Then both you and your opponent can survive.

These days, global destruction has become a hotly debated topic. Through our own selfishness, we continue to disrupt the natural order. The result is that we've reached the point where the earth can barely recover.

It is only because we have heaven and earth that we are born and go on living here. These are the workings of universal principles that are far beyond the reach of human endeavour. How can we live in opposition to these principles?

We must not forget that human beings are also one of the animals that live within nature. No matter how much we advance technologically, when we get hot we take our clothes off, and when we get cold we put clothes on. We live according to these innate principles. If we don't understand this, we won't understand Aikido techniques either. Just as goldfish in a bowl simultaneously change directions and don't collide with each other, people are simply animals

as well. So essentially, we too, live according to sensations that cannot be grasped by reason or thought alone.



However, man, by thinking, gives rise to ego. And thus we lose sight of the fact that the principles of heaven and earth reside within us. Therefore, people must become more innocent. We must regain our innocence, and return to our

point of origin as individual animals nurtured by nature. If we can do this, we will likely understand that we must not destroy the rhythm of nature.

In this time of global crisis, don't you think that the path which we should choose is indicated by the words that Ueshiba Sensei always uttered: "Become natural!" and "Become one with heaven and earth!"?

Aikido Is The Practice Of Harmony

All over the world these days, Japan is constantly under attack for causing economic friction. During the post-war period, Japan felt that it was desirable to turn a profit regardless of anything else. So without any thought of harmonizing with the global surroundings, we championed our own desires over the needs of others. As a result, conflicts continue to arise, which is just what you would expect if you considered it from the point of view of the fundamental principles of Aikido.

Take America, for example, which has now taken on the role of standard-bearer for Japan-bashing. If we consider that Japan's prosperity today is thanks

to America then their agitation isn't so unreasonable. When we lost the war and Tokyo was burnt to the ground, the majority of Japanese people didn't even have enough rice to eat. At that time, America gave us soybeans and corn free of charge. Countless Japanese were saved from starvation because of this generosity.

If we think about this, how can we think of asserting our self-interest against America? Leaving aside for the moment Japan's national interest and circumstances, we should first show our appreciation for the generosity we received from the Americans. It is from acts like these that the road to mutual friendship begins. Even the Persian Gulf War was like this. It was a useless and unnecessary conflict in which two parties over-asserted themselves.

Of course, each country has its own set of circumstances, but it is my feeling that conflicts arise as a result of thinking only about making gains for yourself. Now, if we could abandon this selfishness and return to basic human interaction, I'm sure that these sorts of issues could be settled naturally. The question of winning or losing is truly a trivial matter. It is foolish to argue with our fellow citizens of this earth.

In Aikido there are no tournaments, but I feel that this is an extremely good thing. The current acceptance of Aikido by people all over the world is due, I believe, to Aikido's non-aggressive position.

Without a doubt Aikido is an outstanding martial art. Its fundamental principles bring forth enough force to finish someone off with a single blow. However, the days when Aikido was used as a weapon of battle have already passed. The concept of Aikido as a martial skill has ended with me. Instead, by training in the incredible techniques of Aikido every day, I now completely embrace its fundamental principle of profound harmony and put harmony into practice myself. I feel that this is precisely the task facing Aikido in the 21st century.

Through the process of training in Aikido, the harmony that is in each of our hearts is spread from one person to another. This is what the Yoshinkan desires. I dream that if people all over the world study Aikido and come to know its fundamental principles, then every single conflict in the world could be settled. I pray with all my heart that Aikido as a path of learning can miraculously bring people together to join hands and respect the principles of nature in order to make this world a better place in which to live.

About The Author: Shioda Gozo

Shioda Gozo was the top Aikido practitioner of his time. He was the founder and head instructor of Yoshinkan Aikido. Holding the rank of Hanshi, 10th Dan, he was a director of the International Martial Arts Federation. He was also the instructor for the Metropolitan Police Agency's Riot Squad.

He was born on September 9, 1915, in Tokyo. When he was in elementary school he studied both Kendo and Judo. As a fifth-year student in junior high school, at the age of 18, he became a student of Ueshiba Morihei Sensei. For almost eight years he was an uchideshi and gave his undivided attention to his training. After that, he graduated from Takushoku University and immediately went over to China and Taiwan where he remained in the southern region during the war. He returned to Japan after the war and established Aikido Yoshinkan in 1955. He passed away on July 17, 1994.