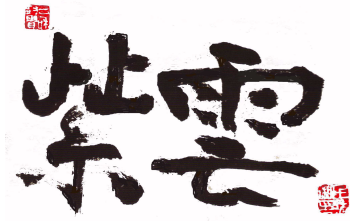


SHIUN



Volume 3 Nº 2

July 2005

WEAPONS PROGRESS

SHODEN

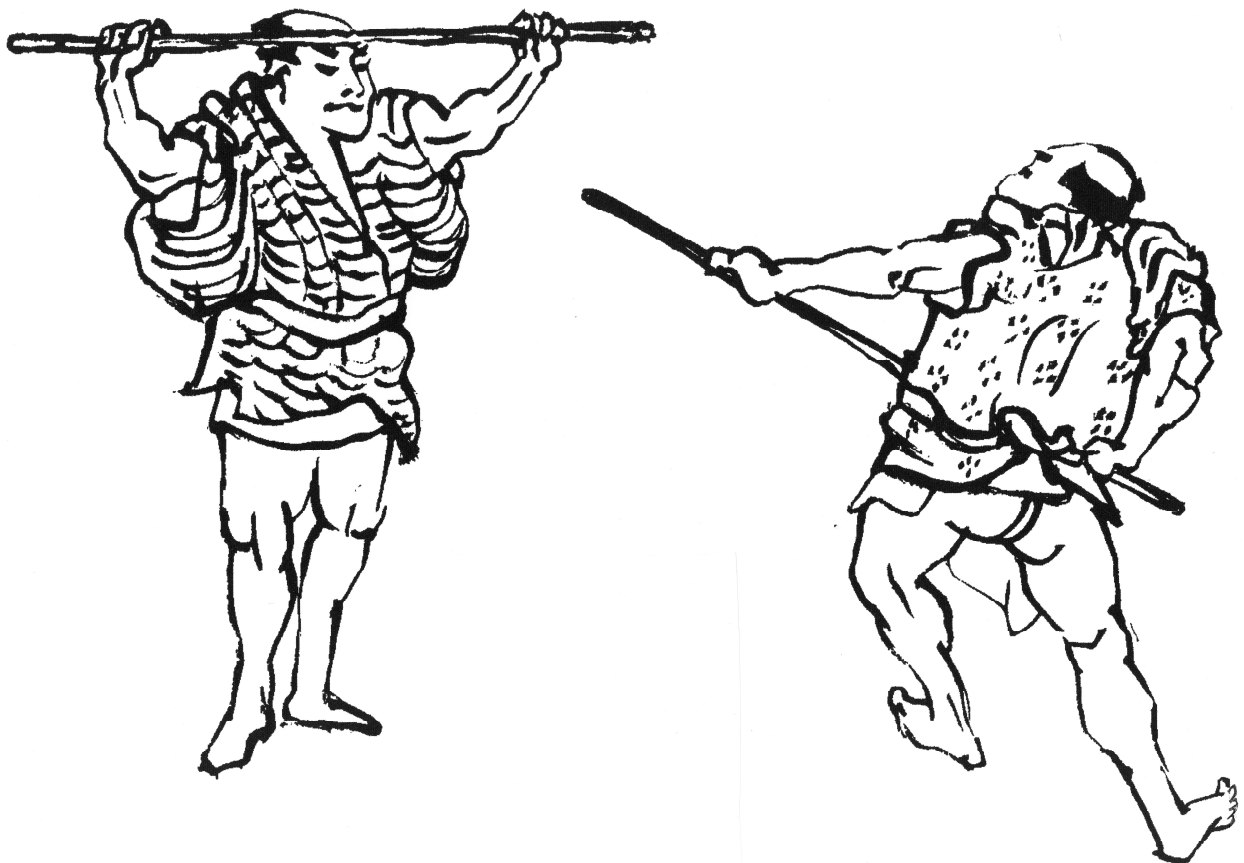
Jyo 36 Basics and Variations Sancho nº 1
Bokken 8 count Suburi, standing and sitting
Mawashiuchi, Suriotoshi,
Uchiotoshi and Suriage
Kirikaeshi Awase Exercise (partner work)

CHUDEN

Jyo Sancho nº 2
Bokken Kumidachi nº1 to nº5, Aiki Musubi no Tachi
4 Kirikaeshi Applications. (Tai- no -Atari)

OKUDEN

Jyo Sancho nº 3 and Variations
Tachidori, Jyodori
(Empty hand Techniques against Weapons)



GEN EI KAN, AIKIDO DOJO IN LANDAU, GERMANY

Technical direction: Alexander Broll



In 1998 I started the Aikido Dojo in Landau, a town in Germany of 40.000 inhabitants. Two other Aikido Dojos were started on the same year. There was no competition between the three dojos and we visited each other in a respectful way. Time went by and we were training hard. We were also very pleased to have a close contact with the Aikikai de Strasbourg, especially with Gabriel Valibouze Sensei, who helped us a lot. In the meantime we were able to invite regularly teachers from the Aikikai de Strasbourg and in spring and autumn we organized international seminars in Landau.

After two and half years we had to move into another training place, which we shared with a Karate Dojo. After a while we got into many conflicts with them and we decided to move again. Now we are very happy to have a place where we are able to concentrate our energy on Aikido and on the people. We started our training without tatamis. Eventually, after a few months fundraising, we could buy 40 tatamis.

We have at present a membership of 45 people. We have also the pleasure to offer classes for children (one for the 8 to 11 years old and another for the 11 to 14 years old). Three times a year we are organising - together with Didier Hatton Sensei and Daniel Wiedemann, Aikikai de Strasbourg

- an international children seminar, which is always crowded. The children are very open-minded and they always bring a lot of energy to the seminar. All this energy and this openness of mind are very helpful to learn the body art. Sometimes it would be very useful to the adults to show the same freshness and eagerness to learn.



The way forward...

After a while some members of the dojo were eager to breathe in the air of an international event. So in January 2005 a group of students accompanied me to the Aikido Course at the London Aikikai, UK, as well as to the spring course in

Dornbirn, Austria, in April. Every year we are looking forward to the seminar in Labaroche, a very beautiful place in France. We are also attending the British Summer School in Bangor, UK. All the energy the students give and receive at these seminars comes back straightaway to our dojo. It pushes everyone so much forward.

In 2001 we had the great honour to welcome T.K. Chiba Sensei. He gave us the name for our dojo: GEN EI KAN, which means “the house that reflects the essence”. It was a great day and we felt that we belong to this Aikido family with all its pleasures and responsibilities.



Just to mention a personal note: I was born with a disability in my arms. This disability does not necessarily hinder me in doing a martial art. Most limitations are in one's head or in the head of the others. We have inside us pictures and a special image of what things should be and how they should look like. But this narrows our mind and the mind of others. Everybody has to find his/her own way in Aikido and also in life. This is only possible when we are honest and clear with our selves and with each other. Until now I am able to teach every class in our dojo, children, adolescences and adults. I am thankful to my teachers and to my students who are open-minded and who are eager to learn Aikido in the dojo and in life.

Alexander Broll
3. Dan, Fukushidojin

Mirjam Schmid Gen Ei Kan Member

My background

I am 35 years old; I was looking for a kind of sport that supports forms of movement, stamina and –as one commonly says– the inner balance. I have always been interested in martial sports, but not being an expert I found the various martial arts very confusing. Karate, Judo, Jiu-Jitsu, Taekwondo... all seemed to be the same for me. Besides, I was sure that these sports need certain continuity. I haven't had this in the last years.

I have been traveling for years, with my rucksack, in boats, on foot, by bike, hitchhiking... and I haven't been somewhere long enough to have a good look at these sports. Besides I had enough movement on my travels. That's what I believed.

My personal situation changed last year. To stabilize my professional position I decided to go back to Germany and to stay there a few years. My desire to practice a martial art became again relevant. Just... which one should I practice?

How I get in contact with Landau Aikikai, Aikido Dojo Gen Ei Kan.

By a stroke of luck I got some help. A brochure from my health insurance had an article about the various kinds of martial arts mentioning as well the different ideologies behind each of these sports.

The comments about Jiu-Jitsu and Aikido pleased me a lot: “Soft techniques are rather defensive and put the inner balance and the body posture in the center. Jiu-Jitsu and Aikido are examples of such inner martial arts, and the power about your own spirit as well as the control of the various techniques is more important for the victory than physical strength.”

By some additional research I found out that in Aikido there are no combats. The control of the techniques in correspondence with the inner attitude is the central subject. After reading that I made my choice. In the Landau Aikikai, Aikido Dojo Gen Ei Kan, I was welcomed very warmly by the Sensei Alexander Broll. The other Aikido-kas were also very friendly and patient with me.

Soon I discovered that my supposed good movements on my travels was in reality very unbalanced. Even with a simple roll forward I had a lot of difficulties.

Impression of my first Aikido Seminar.

Shortly after entering the club, a seminar with Gabriel Vailbouze (Shihan) – Strasbourg– and Chris Mooney Sensei – Birmingham– took place.

Being a bloody greenhorn, I decided just to watch. I was fascinated... the seminar had an effect like an “injection” – I got contaminated. For the first time I realized how effective Aikido can be. The Senseis stood still – totally in their inner center– and managed to receive the energy from the others and to return it with supple grace.

By watching all this I felt an inner tickle; it just inspired me. To a friend of mine I explained: “With Aikido you will be able to walk around like a pan of Teflon. Everything is bouncing off from you, and not only that, it looks like you are only using your little finger!” I know, this a little bit exaggerated and still, it will take a long time before I can control only the basics. After each workout I am just amazed how unbalanced I am.

Another positive impression I got from the seminar was the respectful contact between the aikidokas. There were beginners and advanced people and all practiced the same. To win was not the aim; to find the right motion was the aim. At least that is what I felt.

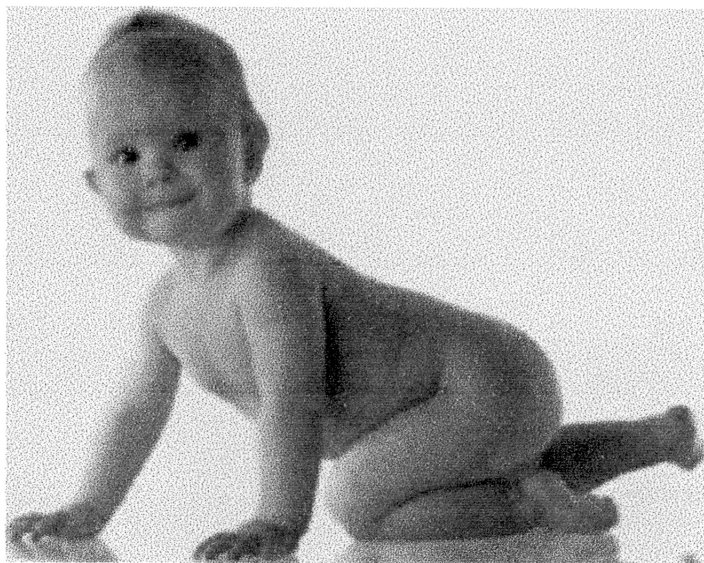
The international atmosphere (there were people from different countries) gave the seminar its own color and it was fun to be in this community. Some of them I will see again, some not. They stayed only for a short time in Germany.

But after the seminar I was very exited. I know it is still a long way to go until I will have “Aikido” in myself. But I have been looking for something all my life, and I believe that I have found it in Aikido.

Mirjam Schmid

A DOJO IS BORN; A NOTE ON TEL AVIV AIKIKAI

Technical Direction: Amnon Tzechovoy



The birth of a Dojo is not unlike that of a child. A child is born in a certain family, at a particular time, within a definite cultural milieu. There are to be sure difficulties on the way; yet a new being does come about at the end. Likewise a Dojo is born under certain circumstances, and like a child – it grows. As one of the first Aikido

teachers in Israel, and a witness to the birth of the Dojo at the TAU (Tel-Aviv University), I venture to reflect upon some personal aspects of myself, and a Dojo birth in the country of Israel.

I became a ballet dancer in my early twenties, a very real dancer with all that goes with it. But then I stopped dancing, and also ceased ballet

teaching. This left me with a sort of vacuum. I was obviously searching for something whose nature would take time to unfold. A rather ordinary conference, with a huge number of psychologists, became the occasion of my introduction to Aikido. I came across an Aikido demonstration, not giving much attention to it but still remembering the name of the person in charge - Eitan Ben-Meir. Soon after I became part of his Dojo. Eitan was my first Aikido teacher, and I was his student for about 10 years (since 1986). There were no more than 20 Aikido students in Israel at the time. Eitan had just returned from California, where he had received lessons from the students of Saito sensei. We effectively belonged to the Iwama School, which had traditionally put great emphasis on weapons.

Training sessions were very strict. Eitan was a no nonsense teacher, very demanding, to say the least. The group gathered around him was homogenous and idealistic. We were all young and unattached to family and jobs, eager to enhance the cause of Aikido. Indeed, soon after the dojo began to flourish, other Israelis who returned from their own training of Aikido abroad (for example, from Tokyo) joined the Aikido scene in Israel.

Eitan left Israel. His departure created a crisis in the Aikido community in the country. Indeed, we were left without a teacher and without contacts with a specific tradition within the Aikido world. There was no Shihan to support us. Thus, eventually the group surrounding our teacher dissipated. As no one had yet acquired enough authority to replace Eitan, each member of the group began looking for a source of support and guidance. Some turned to Duran sensei, Seki sensei, and also Tamura sensei.

This was a good time for me to sample everything around. I was all too eager to learn, and literally participated in every available seminar.

However, in spite of my eagerness, I somehow could not see the wood from the trees. The more I became exposed to the Aikido opportunities, the less I felt there was any direction to what I was doing.

A rather accidental meeting with Chris Moonsey sensei changed my attitudes altogether. Soon after meeting him I knew without doubt that here was a sensitive teacher with a wealth of knowledge. His openness was truly striking. I never felt he tried to hold back anything, and was soon convinced that Chris accurately represented the school of Chiba sensei, in particular his views and

techniques. Though not quite new to Aikido I felt yet again completely enchanted, and this intoxication with Aikido intensified in the course of my meetings with other teachers. My newly adopted convictions led me to commit myself to a way and to a teacher.

This feeling pressed on my soul, and though I taught at Tel Aviv University sport center for several years, I felt something needed to be done

urgently, and soon afterwards I found myself in front of my students. I told them my decision; deeply concerned about the way they would react.

Soon after the meeting, most of the veteran students left, as if they realized or presupposed that their previous knowledge had suddenly become irrelevant, or worthless. Some of the students, however, remained. Indeed, these students have become the new avant-garde of the newly defined dojo. They were quick to adapt themselves to the new school and soon began to 'talk' and think according to the Chiba sensei school. Eventually the dojo attracted more people and nowadays it counts 30 students, with 20 rather active ones. In short, a baby Aikido Dojo was born.

Now I should return to the home of that child, and, in more detail to the circumstances of his birth. Israel in this respect is no usual place to be born in. It is a country far removed from the major centers of Aikido in the world. On top of this, the Israeli nation is continually under a state of war. The child was born in the suburb, not a very quiet one. Indeed, such circumstances of a dojo birth proved an opportunity to realize and assess some of the values reflected in my practice of Aikido.

...I felt that Aikido as a way of life
was no cultural event of the ordinary
type.

I vividly recall how in the first gulf war (1991) I discovered some new dimensions to my attachment to Aikido. The Dojo was located in the south of Tel-Aviv. Missiles had just reached next door to my home near Tel-Aviv. It was Monday evening, the time for our Aikido session. All cultural events were cancelled; people were invariably confined to their homes and families. Nobody was to be seen on the streets, but what about the Aikido session? Naturally, like the fate of other "cultural events" it was bound to be postponed (or cancelled). However, somehow I felt that Aikido

as a way of life was no cultural event of the ordinary type. One does not stop breathing or being a father or a moral agent under hostile circumstances. There was no need to cancel Aikido lessons. After all, we were free to move around, to drive.... This was of course my own conviction; most people did not share my impression, and before dark Tel-Aviv became a ghost town. Nobody was there in the streets but people like myself, 'with a cause' (of some sort).

I was in no hurry; waiting patiently in the empty Dojo till one student came, with the gas mask we all had to carry. We conducted the lesson the usual way, knowing all too well that if there was a missile on its way to our direction – we weren't in the least protected against chemical weapons (people were generally instructed to enter some sort of enclosed space, to protect themselves against invasive chemical substances).

An experience of that kind revealed to me an aspect regarding the nature of aikido. For me, Aikido is not an amusement, nor is it a pastime to be dismissed off hand. For the serious practitioner, I think, Aikido represents a spiritual essence without which one cannot exist even against apparently inconceivable odds. As it is an internal property of our being, Aikido touches upon our innermost sense of authenticity, upon our very self-esteem. Thus it helps develop non-verbal comprehension of who we are.

This primordial sense of understanding is directly embodied and imprinted into our mutual corporeal movements and gestures. In this way, Aikido is like a baby or a child. Its practice bypasses verbal behavior through the return to early pre-verbal experiences. This is the psychological reality behind my assertions (above) about the primordial significance of Aikido for me (as a "way of life").

The circumstances of the Golf-war opened my eyes to this reality and meaning. Sometimes, indeed, harsh conditions and realities reveal and expose one's values and reality.

Others may experience Aikido in a different way. I do not of course claim that there are no other ways for one to acquire a proper and immediate sense of self. I am pretty sure that what I am

describing now can only be seen or felt from 'within'. It seems to me that in my case, the extreme conditions, which are part of our daily lives in Israel, have somehow accentuated the role of Aikido for me. This I will never be able to leave behind, as I have no intention of going elsewhere.

The fact that Israel is far away from the Aikido centers of the world affects the management of a dojo, and in particular on the various decisions one has to make upon embarking on the long path of many years of practice.

There is a problem in dedicating oneself to one specific school. As one wishes to learn even more, there are no clear and cut routes to pave the way. When there is no Shihan around, the encounters with teachers are rather brief and not always fulfilling. Thus, the socializing process to the Aikido world is generally lacking.

This applies to etiquette – rules that apply to relationships with a teacher but also those that apply to the practicing session. There is no sure and safe way for one to become aware of his or her weaknesses. For several years I have involved myself in long hours of watching various video cassettes. This I do in between visits to Europe, where I tend to take seminars. It happened to me more than once that I found out about mistakes not previously noticed due to lack of external observation. Naturally, considering the investment of time and money in the process, I was often rather frustrated.

Despite of all those difficulties, I am now at a point of being helped, and feel very grateful for that. I have located the teachers who would not only teach me (and teaching is what they are meant to do) but also support me. They are willing to come to Israel to teach my students, and here is yet another stage of progress, not only for myself.

In Israel today there are various groups affiliated to the various strands of Aikikai, and our dojo that just lately affiliated to Birankai Continental Europe, has grown up from babyhood to a rather independent young child.

Amnon Tzechovoy



PRACTICING WITH CHILDREN

Thierry Moulinet at DAI JYO KAN



I have been working with children for the last twenty-two years. Those that took my first class are today between twenty-five and thirty years old; those of this year, between five and a half and thirteen .

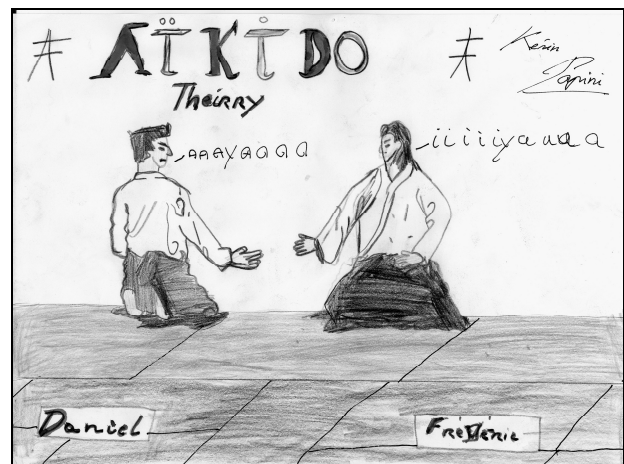
What is it that generates in children the wish to practice?

What is it that generates in me the wish to teach them and the desire to share with them my passion for Aikido?



Lea age 6

My beginning was not easy; there were no children's courses so we worked with the adults with all the difficulties and advantages that this entails. There were good and bad times.



Kevin age 10

Being optimist by nature, I kept the good memories (although I haven't forgotten the bad ones), like the image of the elders coming down to my level and adapting to my size. It is precisely in that way that I practise with the children; remaining a beginner, progressing as they progress, adapting myself to their morphology and their capacities, offering the example, class after class.

It is the children that keep me awake, class after class, avoiding routine and the facility of repetition (nevertheless necessary).



Guillaume age 11

From the moment the first children arrive, their energy and their demands are contagious. They want to fall, move, run and fight. It is up to me to canalise all this energy giving it a sense and a direction, sometimes containing it, sometimes letting it expand.

To break the comfort of routine and repetition.

I have seen groups of children, their energy down, physically present but absent minded. They were repeating my gestures mechanically, without conviction, the way we “usually” do it; not even their infantile chatter was to be heard.

I suddenly introduced in the warm-up exercises an absurd movement, something like a nervous tick. Some of them started to imitate me, others seemed surprised. One of the children finally reacted: “that is silly!”

I interrupted the course to tell them that I couldn’t make them do silly things but that they had to be attentive, present and awake. From then onwards I was going to lay traps to them, they would have to spot them and denounce them. That

is how on that occasion I succeeded in keeping their attention.

To keep their attention during one hour is not easy, but thanks to the diversity of movements, the different attacks and the enjoyment of ukemi I manage to convey the basis of Aikido in a playful way without losing the latent martial content.

It is relatively easy to teach them to fall since a great number of games are very useful for this purpose, nevertheless we must be careful to instil safe and correct ukemi in their young bodies.

We have to contain the “stuntmen”, stimulate the fearful, correct constantly, promote self-confidence, make them aware of risks and dangers, encourage and praise successful movements and correct ukemi. Indeed, participate in their joy.

In his article about the “young lions”, Chiba Sensei states that there is no place for stagnation. The children naturally have no desire for stagnation. It is my task to be inventive, imaginative and active in order to communicate in the best possible way, the desire to practice.

Thierry Moulinet



Pablo age 11

Thierry Moulinet holds the rank of Yondan.

He was eleven years old when he started practice in 1970.

In the name of Dai Jyo Kan and in recognition of his invaluable contribution to the life of our dojo we wish to express our sincere gratitude.

*Norberto Chiesa
Patrick Barthélémy*

History of Dornbirn Aikikai



In June 2002, Tony Cassells came to Dornbirn with his wife Stella for a holiday. They visited Wolfgang Petter, who had studied with Tony Cassells Sensei in Birmingham from January to March 2001. Initially Tony Cassells had planned on perhaps teaching one Aikido class but ended up teaching all of the classes that week in our former dojo.

The people immediately recognised and experienced that Tony Cassells' Aikido was different to the one we had been practising up until then. Jürgen Schwendinger, who was Tony Cassells' Uke that week really enjoyed that kind of Aikido and was keen on learning more about it. He joined Tony, Stella and Wolfgang every day and was rewarded with a good glass of red wine and insightful talks during the evenings. That week left an unforgettable impression on Jürgen and Wolfgang and motivated them to fly up to Birmingham in November 2002 to meet with and train at Tony Cassells dojo.

Jürgen vividly remembers that first night in Birmingham when he and Wolfgang were sitting in the unheated dojo of Ei Oh Kan freezing and observing Tony Cassells teaching Chiba Sensei's 12 Jo-Kesa-Suburi. That night Jürgen made up his mind and said: "The first second I saw Sensei Cassells moving on those mats I knew that this Aikido was everything I wanted to learn for the next few years!" Jürgen, who had been searching

for 'his' Aikido, had finally found 'his' teacher for a lifetime. That week Jürgen and Wolfgang committed to Tony Cassells Sensei and a traditional, in the Japanese sense, teacher-student relationship was born. When they returned from Birmingham they told us, the core group of Aikikai Dornbirn, about their plan to found their own dojo.

On a sunny Sunday in early spring 2003, Jürgen and Wolfgang went on a hiking trip to the Karren, a beautiful mountain, above Dornbirn. They were enthusiastically talking about Aikido and the founding of the new dojo when they ran into Evi Mathis and Gudrun Wolf, two members of the old dojo. They thought this was no coincidence and decided to continue their hike together. After two hours the dojo was founded in their minds and a week later the legal obstacles were overcome too. A small group of interested people decided to follow Jürgen's and Wolfgang's enthusiasm. We were now members of a new dojo which focused on body art and weapons training. Aikikai Dornbirn was also a satellite dojo of Ei Oh Kan Birmingham from the beginning.

The first mats were very old canvas mats Jürgen had bought from a Judo guy. But the mats served their purpose well in the beginning. A very beautiful bright gym with a great view on the mountains was to become our first dojo. There we practised three times a week. We had to unlearn a lot of the Tai Jitsu entries and learn a completely

new way of doing Ukemi. Our weapons practice focused on Chiba Sensei's 8 Bokken Suburis in Tachiwaza as well as in Suwariwaza and the 12 Jo-Kesa which were the only thing Jürgen and Wolfgang had learned a couple of months before in Birmingham.

We had been practising Aikido for only four months, were just beginning to understand the etiquette, and had taken over responsibilities for the dojo when we conducted our first Summer-camp in 2003. Jürgen's enthusiasm and commitment were contagious. We managed to get Aikido calligraphies done by a Japanese living here in the area. Christian, Michael and Jürgen built a wonderful wooden Kamiza. Among many other things we also rented a big gym, organised more than 100 mats from all over Vorarlberg, bought beverages, fruits and cleaning supplies and got plants and bamboo for the Kamiza. Thus when Tony and his British Aikido friends arrived we were ready for a new experience.

In summer 2003 we were looking for another dojo where we could practise on a daily basis. Finally, at the end of August we were successful. Luckily (some people in the dojo say fate) we came across a beautiful gym with an old wooden floor, built at the beginning of the 20th Century. We made a smaller, folding Kamiza for everyday use since we had to remove it and the mats practically after each practice. So we moved into the

new dojo in September 2003. At the beginning of October we had our first beginners' course and, shortly afterwards, held our first Autumn Course with Tony Cassells Sensei and Mark Pickering Sensei.

In autumn 2003 Jürgen worked out the testing guidelines for our dojo, closely following Chiba Sensei's testing guidelines. Since the very beginning students have had the opportunity to practise Iai Batto Ho twice a week as well.

In summer 2004 we became an official member of Birankai Continental Europe.

Spring Course, Summer Camp and Autumn Course have become regular events throughout the year. There we welcome Tony Cassells Sensei, Mark Pickering Sensei and our British Aikido friends as well as other Aikidokas from all over Europe and even the USA.

Finally we would like to take this opportunity to thank Tony Cassells Sensei for his commitment, his energy and his love, all of which he brings to our Dojo.

If you are interested in more details concerning our Dojo, like schedule, the disciplines taught, the seminars and the teachers, please visit our new Homepage www.aikikaidornbirn.at.

Aikikai Dornbirn

The Question of Transmission, Part two

Christophe Peytier

In the first part, we have discussed some key elements of the transmission viewed from the angle of the Sensei. In this second part, we wish to address the practitioner's side.

Every one of us started martial arts for some reasons, whatever they are. Without really knowing it, a person entering in a Dojo will become potentially an element in the big chain of transmission of Budo. Out of ten people who cross the door, one will start. Out of ten who start, one will stay more than six months. Out of ten who stay, one will become black belt. And out of ten black belts, one will become an instructor. So, whoever opens the door of a dojo has one chance out of 10,000 to become part of the chain of transmission of an element of Mankind's inheri-

tance: the culture of Budo. One in 10,000 is not a lot, but it's still something. Thus, the first responsibility of a student is the choice of a school and a teacher in particular. A beginner who arrives at a dojo is, by definition, incompetent to determine if the teacher will help to walk on the path of Budo, or not.

However, there are some factors, easy to spot, that can be taken into account each of them is important but not sufficient. They are presented in order of decreasing priority

- The lineage: From the founder of an art, what trickles down to your teacher? If a teacher cannot explain his lineage, it may not be a good indicator. If a teacher can relate up to a well

known master, or even the founder of an art, it will then be easy to search the characteristics of the art, the methodologies and philosophy, whether through books or Internet.

- The relations between the teacher and his own teacher. One can frequently hear “I was student of Master X for ten years”. It is important to try to understand if we are talking about 3 seminars a year or a daily practice with that Master.

- The teacher’s own practice: When watching a class, you can note how the teacher behaves. Is he also practicing the same exercises as the students? Or is walking on the mat, corrected a few details here and there? Both are important, but a teacher must continue his own practice. For example, if a teacher is obviously out of shape, with 50 pounds of excess weight, he may be a person who abandoned his own training. On the contrary, a teacher who keeps practicing with his students will give them the possibility to feel the quality of his body, and this is a key element in the progress of the students.

- The life: Is the teacher applying the message that he is teaching, out of the mat? Has he managed to have the life of a “modern warrior”? Is he in accordance with the principle of life that he wants to transmit? There are many “mat samurais” who, when leaving the Dojo, become mediocre, walking in the street head-down, who have only the Dojo to get the illusion that they have achieved something.

- The rank: What rank has the teacher attained? When, and by whom, was his ranks delivered. There are so many anecdotes of teachers who leaped three or four degrees of black belt in a couple of years. This should remain doubtful, in particular when a teacher who had a mediocre ranking in one school suddenly gets into a higher rank in a different school. A change of school should result in a lower grade, not higher. For example, a teacher with a fourth degree black belt in a given school who becomes Shodan (first degree) in another school inspires respect. Because he had the humility and courage to take responsibility for the consequences of his decision, as a true “budo person”. On the other hand, a teacher jumping from fourth Dan to sixth Dan while changing “style” inspires doubts. Can it be that the new style has lower standards? There are too many teachers interested in the search for

high grades, whether for personal satisfaction or for better commercial success. Neither ego nor financial interest seem reasons in accordance with the principles of Budo. I remember the formal ceremony of graduation of Saito Morihiro Sensei, when he was awarded his ninth Dan (and his son his sixth Dan) at Hombu Dojo in Tokyo (In January 1993, if I remember well): I was seating next to a gentleman who appeared to be in his seventies. After a few glasses of Sake, he presented me his *meishi* (business card). Under his name was written in enormous prints: 10TH DAN AIKIDO. As a young Shodan then, I had heard about him as a great figure of Aikido but had not recognized him. So I felt impressed to have a drinking neighbour of that magnitude. But I have to admit that my first reaction was to think “This man is overly preoccupied by his rank”. Unfortunately I never had a chance to practice with this great master but I was never able to completely get rid of this impression of a man not in peace with his ego. Having said that, considering that there are only three people who were given the rank of Aikido 10th Dan, it must be quite difficult to not fall in this trap. In conclusion, the rank can be an indicator of skills and achievements, but it can also be the mark of some superficiality and an attempt to hide a profound weakness.

So, we have discussed some elements that can allow a person to gauge whether the energy that he or she is ready to invest is worth it. But at the end, just like for most of important decisions, there is one criterion that supersedes all the others: You have to like it. You have to feel impressed, blown away, fascinated. You have to think “This is good”. It has to come from the depth of your soul, from the guts. I always remembered an article relating an interview of Sean Connery, the famous actor: He was commenting on a young student of the Actor’s Studio who had asked him whether he could become a good movie actor or not. Sean Connery responded “*No. Because he if you could you would not be asking*”.

Hence, in last resort, there cannot be the question “Should I practice in that school?”. There is only one sentence: “THIS is what I want to do”.

Christophe Peytier



A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Returning from SEN NEN SUGI seminar in Wroclaw (Poland) where we were received like parents visiting their family, the image of the communal house comes back to my mind. By founding Birankai Continental Europe, which took its place within Birankai International two years and a half ago, we have embodied Chiba Sensei's wish to **"put a roof on what already exists"**. What is it that already exists? Our common practice of Aïkido, pursuing and prolonging Chiba Sensei's teachings, itself inspired by that of O'Sensei.

Our house has extended each year by allowing new members in, from Paris, Austria, Poland, Israel and Greece. Other dojos are getting ready to join us in our sincere and demanding practice of aikido. I cherish the wish that, living up to this demanding sincerity, our common house grows creative, curious and welcoming.

Taking all our part in practicing and transmitting aikido successfully to the next generations, we have now new resources in hand.

Last year Chiba Sensei has honoured us with the nomination of two shihan: Norberto Chiesa Sensei and Gabriel Valibouze Sensei, both at the origin of Birankai Continental Europe foundation. They have endorsed a heavy responsibility receiving this highest title in martial arts teaching, a title that puts them in the frontline of BCE certified teachers, shidoin and fukushidoin, existing and to come. On behalf of BCE, congratulations!

Following their nomination Norberto Chiesa and Gabriel Valibouze became BCE general directors. As you know, our statutes were modified by the general assembly that took place in April at the Labaroche seminar, allowing the Teaching Committee to nominate two general directors, who chair by right in the Administration Committee. Their mission is "to impulse a strategic orientation that will insure for the association a general coherence, both technical and administrative".

Yet, our biggest strength lays in our solidarity! I am very happy to salute the recent and final success of Birankai fund drive for San Diego dojo that will contribute to provide Chiba Sensei with a stable income regardless of his teachings activities. On behalf of Birankai Continental Europe, allow me to thank all those, individuals and associations, donators and organizers, who contributed to this success.

See you soon on the mat!

Joël BERTRAND

