



I SHIN DEN SHIN

“THE HEART-TO-HEART TRANSMISSION”

I - by, or through

Shin - heart, mind, spirit

Den - to communicate, to pass on, or transmit

Shin - heart, mind, spirit

CHIBA SENSEI, page 7.

RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL FOR BIRANKAI INTERNATIONAL TEACHER'S QUALIFICATIONS

Preface

The idea for this restructuring proposal was motivated by a letter from Norberto Chiesa Shihan to the teachers of the Birankai European Continent (BEC) dated January 9, 2007. The original purpose of his letter was to encourage an open dialogue among the European teachers during the first BEC Instructor's Course to be held in Strasbourg from February 23-25, 2007 regarding the qualifications system for certifying teachers.

Around the same time as I was reading Chiesa Shihan's letter, I received the latest issue of the BEC newsletter, *Shiun* (Vol. 5, No. 1), in which I found two very interesting essays: one written by M. Flynn Shihan of Scotland ("Reflections on Leadership"), and one by Dr. Amnon Tzechovoy of Israel ("On Being a Teacher in Our School.") I felt the arrival of these two publications to be very timely in light of the upcoming Instructor's Course in Alameda, California from February 16th through the 18th, and a second course in Fox Valley, IL on April 14th & 15th, 2007, because Certified Teacher's and Re-certification tests will be conducted under the system that is currently at issue.

The essay written by Flynn Shihan identifies and elaborates upon various required (or *expected*) virtues as vital conditions of leadership, and encourages teachers to confirm their responsibility and commitment within the clear light of awareness. Needless to say, the virtues he addressed should be considered a given amongst teachers, however, it is sometimes necessary to reflect upon such things as practical reminders. Nothing he has said should be considered as new in any way – not only as it applies to Aikido, but also within the context of leadership in any field of human endeavor.

I read Dr. Tzechovoy's essay with great interest, as his clear and unique insights capture the desired character traits of Birankai teachers in

a way I have never before encountered. I welcome him as a recently certified *fukushido* in our school (as of August 2006 at British Summer Camp in Bangor, North Wales), and believe that he is already showing signs of being an asset to our future development as an organization.

In my opinion, the uniqueness of his contribution can be found in his ability to make a comparative analysis of the Japanese martial discipline and the Western academic study, and to construct commonalities that are mutually applicable from and to both sides in a self-reflective manner. It is desirable for one to develop this type of analytical ability whilst avoiding a common error of such study – that is, the inclination toward "blind mimicry" or producing a superficial copy of a foreign cultural concept.

What I appreciate most about his essay is that beneath his words I sense a deep affection for our school interwoven with a sincere approach to the study of Aikido. As I write this letter I can clearly visualize him on the mat – in my mind's eye he somewhat stands out among the many; his eyes alive with a fox-like sharpness that allows nothing to escape his gaze as he stretches his physical limits in maximum effort. In this he is a fine raw model of a learner, although he is no longer young...

I have known few individuals during my career who started their Aikido training after the age of forty, and who carried out intensive study in ways somewhat different than their younger counterparts. These individuals have become outstanding teachers in whose Aikido was clearly recognizable the physical embodiment of precise timing, economy of motion and force, and the presence of a mature character. A teacher of such caliber significantly expands our ability to accommodate all members' needs, and enriches the quality of our school.

Clarification of the Relationship Between Dan and Teacher's Tests

In my view there should not be substantial differences in the qualifying criteria between Dan and Teacher's tests, yet, if any do exist, those differences would apt to be opaque and intangible in nature. Having said that, it is not an easy task to define divergences objectively unless the examiner knows the testing candidate's personality well— a task that is accomplished within the teacher-student relationship. Within our current system it is that relationship which provides the proper checks-and-balances necessary to distinguish between what makes a test a "teacher's test" or a "Dan test," as it is only through recommendation of a higher-ranking instructor that a candidate may engage the testing process in whatever capacity.

Having said that, it is worthwhile to remember that the Dan test is the foundation upon which a teacher's test relies, and strictly speaking, every candidate's application for a teacher's test should include a prior record of successful Dan testing.

The degree of flexibility we may allow in our grading system is a sensitive issue and worthy of careful analysis. While the Dan testing system itself is substantially more clear in regards to who will or will not pass and for what reason(s), a grey area relative to this issue can be found in our recommendation process. As it is now, the way recommendations are carried out is based upon my personal trust and faith in a teacher who commends his/her student(s) for promotion.

I believe that system has worked well so far, with the exception of a few cases wherein I felt it necessary to decline a candidate. Considering the continuing expansion of our school and the increasing limitations such growth places upon me and other senior teachers in regards to personal contact with ever-growing numbers of members, I wonder how well this system will continue to work in the future.

With this in mind, the question arises of whether it is possible that a person who has *not* attained the required embodiment of the art that a Dan ranking reflects can become an Aikido teacher. The answer can go either way. To answer "no" would support a standard of accomplishment for a credible school of martial arts, whereas to answer "yes" would support the necessity to leave the door open for the unfolding of human potential and creativity.

One may ask if a "good" martial artist (in a physical sense) is a de facto "good" Aikido teacher simply because s/he is "good at it?" What I mean to say is that one can be a good teacher and leader without necessarily being a good martial artist. In the end, I believe that the most essential element in assessing a candidate's fitness as a teacher is his/her *personality*. I know that the element of personality is intangible and that assessment of it is subjective, however, I believe that remaining true to this ideal is the best possible way to avoid the "good martial artist vs. good teacher" dichotomy that so often leads to the type of decisions that threaten the very essence of the art.



THE STUDY AND REFINEMENT OF MARTIAL AWARENESS

I consider the term *martial awareness* to be largely associated with a type of instinctive, spontaneous sensitivity which gives rise to action that is altogether *natural*. By nature, then, this action cannot be planned or prepared in advance, however, it can be *conditioned* within oneself through discipline so that over time it may penetrate the subconscious where it waits to manifest itself in a spontaneous, instinctive response at the correct time.

This type of response is traditionally referred to as *muso ken*, meaning, “sword of no-consciousness or no-self,” and indicates a resolution of the combat or conflict situation occurring with little or no effort. In such circumstances, one only comes to realize what has happened after the execution of action – as if one had been dreaming (*muso* implies a dream state).

Naturally, *muso ken* is regarded as the highest or ultimate psychospiritual level in martial arts wherein there is no consciousness of self – one is entirely free of desire, anxiety, ambition, and all notions arising from the egocentric conscious mind. *Muso ken* is action exemplified in perfect unity of body and mind – wholeness and liveliness in spontaneous and simultaneous manifestation. Herein arises the question of how we may condition ourselves to embody a higher martial awareness and attain a state of *muso ken*. I will attempt to answer this question from my own perspective and experience.

First, the contemporary societies in which most of us live today are, for the most part, characterized by a level of safety and security that did not exist prior to the turn of the twentieth century. This is, of course, with the exception of the poorest of urban centers and those regions marked by ongoing civil and military conflict.

With that noted exception, our modern lifestyle in general has conditioned us to an approach to life markedly lacking in martial awareness (and the need for it), therefore, we must endeavor as best we can to naturalize this awareness within the training environment of the dojo.

Cultivation of martial awareness requires the systematic training and integration of both the

psychospiritual and physical elements of the human self. In the following pages I will address each element separately, however, I warn the reader against falling into the error of dualism by viewing being as divided into two entities of spirit and body. In my view, such duality is an illusion and an obstacle to sincere understanding:

I. PSYCHOSPIRITUAL ELEMENTS

A. Immovable or Unshakable Spirit

Kami Izumino Kami (c. 1557), the founder of Shinkage-Ryu, wrote, “The way he handles a sword may look unskillful and awkward, however, should he attain the immovable spirit, even if he is crushed under tons of rocks, he is a master.”

I encourage my students to contemplate this message, relate it to your life and practice, and seek any conceivable self-discipline to foster the growth of immovable/unshakable spirit.

B. Vigilance

Recognize the importance of a lively mental tension and presence of an awakened mind in the training environment. Make certain there is no slackness, laxity, or inattentiveness on one’s part.

C. Sincerity

Be sincere, honest, and earnest in endeavor. Make certain that destructive thoughts and emotions such as hate, anger, jealousy, or malice are not present in one’s training. If they are, learn how to control them, as they are forces that will create blindness.

D. Fresh mind (beginner’s mind)

Be fresh in mind during each class or session, with continuous and/or renewed conviction and awareness that this may be the last opportunity for training in your life. Be grateful and enjoy it.

II. PHYSICAL - TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

The study and mastery of an art must emphasize and be grounded in the three following key factors:

A. When? (Timing)

There exist three layers of initiation of action: *Sensen no Sen* (early), *Sen no Sen* (simultaneous), and *Go no Sen* (late). O’Sensei emphasized *Sensen no Sen* in his teaching especially as it applied to mental attitude, or “*Idainaru kogeiki*

seishin o motsute,” meaning, “with great offensive spirit.” Some people may be surprised by this aspect of O’Sensei, as many have only considered one side of his teaching and character – that of a peace-loving, enlightened old man, while entirely forgetting that he was a martial artist of the highest caliber. In one of his journals (probably written in his fifties), he states, “I have to get him before he gets me.” To this day we still have no idea to whom O’Sensei was referring, but obviously he was involved in an intense situation in which he was aware of the approaching shadow of an enemy who clearly intended to kill him if O’Sensei did not get him first.

B. Where? (Location)

The question of where (?) indicates both a physical and psychological distance, or *maai*, plus angle and positioning in an encounter with an opponent(s). The primary aim is to render his initial offense ineffective by physically and psychologically unbalancing him without creating an opening vulnerable to counteroffensive moves. Generally this is known as the “principle of harmony,” the “principle of non-resistance,” or simply, “*aiki*,” which is nothing less than the totality of the technical, philosophical, and ethical principle of the art. It need not be said that this principle is never to be taken lightly.

C. What? (Response)

This element implies the skillful and effective use of a physical technique suited to the circumstance at hand. This cannot be accomplished without the attainment of the previous two elements in succession.

All that I have described above I consider to be the essence of O’Sensei’s teachings. In my time with him he did not have an organized system or structure to his lessons, choosing instead to allow his teachings to develop of their own accord and flow spontaneously in demonstration. To me he often appeared to contradict himself, hence throwing me into a state of puzzlement and confusion. For instance, on a number of occasions he said to me, “You must discipline yourself earnestly in martial arts, but don’t teach (or expose) it to anyone.” After biting and chewing on his words for almost half a century, I still don’t understand what exactly he meant.

In my personal relationship with O’Sensei as his disciple, he rarely expressed an intention to

teach me anything in words or actions, and rather appeared to care little about it except on a few occasions.

I was immensely thankful for his compassion on one of those very rare occasions which occurred in 1961 after I had opened the first branch dojo of Hombu in the city of Nagoya. One day with no warning he came to Nagoya (something he almost never did) and called to tell me he was there. I immediately rushed to greet and pay my respects to him at the inn where he was staying with other officers of the organization. After everyone else had left the room, he made me sit and presented me with the question, “How do you strike the center of a circle?”

I took it as a koan, and commenced to bite and chew on it day and night from every conceivable angle. About three years later I got the answer. I will never forget the overwhelming feeling of joy and excitement I felt then – it was a major breakthrough in my training. I was a twenty-one year old *sandan*, and had been his disciple for a little over three years. I did not go to him to tell him of my realization, for I believed that it should be obvious to him in the way that I conducted myself in my encounters with him thereafter.

I did not realize it at the time, but after I had to depart from him in 1966 to go to Britain, I came to understand that just being with him as a person was my most valuable training and educational experience.

The process of describing the above recollections has forced me to admit to myself that I did indeed live through some dark, heavy, and hopeless days during my time as O’Sensei’s disciple. I believe everyone in the course of a lifetime experiences various crises of faith and conviction wherein s/he loses sight of meaning and purpose, and feels ready to quit altogether. I was fortunate enough to have the strength and guidance of my Zen master, who when I sought refuge under his wing skillfully and forcibly led me through the crisis and encouraged me to go back to where I truly belonged.

In conclusion of this chapter, I would like to offer my observations of Aikido in contemporary society. However much a practitioner’s technique may appear splendid and well performed, in the absence of the three aforementioned elements (when, where, and what), I consider what s/he is doing to represent

somewhat of a departure from the *martial* aspect of Aikido.

I can appreciate the skill and accumulated efforts behind the movements, however, they appear to me to be like a fascinating display of a human swimming on dry land. I regard Aikido to be *more* than just another martial art *form*, for its value transcends the boundaries and limitations inherent in the martial art forms. If we treat it as simply a lovely flower of the tradition meant solely for our sensual enjoyment, and we ignore or neglect the gnarled roots that dig deep into the soil to give life to the flower, we will lose something vitally important – the essential nutrition for our ongoing endeavor in the study of the art.

In my view, what makes things healthy is the existence of opposing elements within a being that give rise to a lively tension and creative dynamism. After all, a martial art is a *dialectic* wherein two opposing forces meet and integrate to form something greater than the mere sum of the two. What will be created in this integrative dialectic ultimately depends upon where the greatest weight or emphasis is placed – on harmony or on conflict. With this in mind I ask you, what is harmony without conflict? Or conflict without harmony? Does simplifying the issue lead us to a creative solution?

Diligent study of the factors I have described in the previous pages is requisite in one's development as a fine teacher in our school, but fostering such awareness is also necessary within the general membership, including Dan-ranking members, of course. In the end, what is required is a deep and strong foundation in practice that is not limited to the physical / visual aspect of the art, but rooted in the essence of Aikido – a product of centuries of research in human endeavor.

“An Extended Perspective of the Three ‘W’s’ as Foundational Study for Teachers as Leaders in Our Community”

The existence of legendary Chinese strategist, tactician, and expert in the field of human conflict, Sun-Tzu (c. 400 CE), was proven when his book, “The Art of War,” was excavated in China in 1972. In it he writes, “Before a military action can be successful, three conditions must be met: *Ten-no-toki*, *Chi-no-ri*, *Hi-to-no-wa*”

Ten-no-toki, translates as “time in the mind of heaven,” meaning, to have the consent or

approval of heaven, to be in accord with Gods’ will, or, in my definition, to be in harmony with heavenly reason or justice. As I see it, the reason to declare war should be based upon principles beyond the personal or human desires or egocentric ambitions.

Chi-no-Ri translates as, “advantages of geographical conditions,” and implies knowing every aspect of your enemy, especially conditions of the terrain (environment) that present as weaknesses, so that you may use these as a weapon against him (the deeper implication being that one must know *oneself* as well as s/he knows the enemy.) *Chi no ri* does not only apply to the specific geographical conditions, however – I interpret *chi* more broadly to indicate the earthly, material, technical, and visible nature of a thing that can represent their source of strength or weakness.

Hi to no wa, or “harmony among people,” connotes the internal unity and strength of a community. What unites the people is a shared sense of justice which makes it possible for them to provide the moral support necessary to win the war. Thus, the joining of heaven and earth resounds as the people stand as a bridge connecting heavenly reason and earthly condition, manifesting total harmony.

If we observe the Chinese character for “heaven” (*tien*), we may understand the above concept better.

The two horizontal lines (1 & 2) indicate heaven and earth, and two humans (3 & 4) stand between them as a bridge – the implication being that humans must support each other in order to “stand” or function in society.



One may well wonder the reason why I chose to address this subject in such detail in the midst of a seemingly unrelated treatise on martial arts. My purpose is simply to bring a different perspective to an issue of immediate concern to me – that is, the development and cultivation of leadership within our organization and community.

“A System of Technical Applications Within Our School”

During the past few years as I have contemplated my forty-nine years as a teacher and student of Aikido, I have come to the conclusion that the following “Five Pillars” are an essential teaching for any who earnestly seek instruction in our school. I have emphasized these foundational aspects, or pillars, within my lessons for many years, however, it is only recently that I have organized and systematized them for the sake of my students’ ongoing study.

One may readily see these elements at work within the current practice of our members – especially the senior grades – and understand that much outside attention is drawn to our school as a result. As such, I believe it is worthwhile not only to maintain this reputation, but endeavor to polish and refine it.

We often talk about the “transmission of the art,” however, we must clearly define exactly what it is we intend to transmit, all the while knowing that we run the risk of theoretically “deconstructing” the art into a series of meaningless details, thereby losing the wholeness of its life.

The Five Pillars

1. Centeredness
2. Connectedness
3. Wholeness
4. Liveliness
5. Openness

These five elements/pillars are inseparably interrelated, and meant to develop in a progressive fashion. It is understood, then, that the development of each (or lack thereof) will affect the whole in a way that can be visually identified. The order in which I have expressed them above is a more or less natural order of progression from one “stage” to the next, however, individual developmental differences can be seen and appreciated.

A natural progression will appear something like this:

(1) When one is able to define the physical center, then (2) s/he is likely to find a connection to the rest of the body as an organically functional whole with recognition of its parts, leading one to (3) a realization of the body as a single, unified entity not broken into parts that may now actuate the previously untapped potential power of a unified body, which then (4) further activates essential life force manifesting

as strong physical liveliness, and culminates in (5) the reification of the psychospiritual virtues such as humility, receptivity, modesty, etc. that are necessary to the process of raising the art to its highest level.

During stage four (liveliness) the practitioner frequently experiences a sense of pleasure and joy in the discovery of the body’s previously hidden potential – an experience often accompanied by a sense of safety and security as s/he becomes increasingly more free from the fear of sustaining injury while training. (In my opinion, sustaining injuries during training is largely the result of a practitioner handling his or her body in a fragmented manner – reacting with only a particular or limited portion of the body instead of responding or deflecting with the body as a unified whole.)

In similar fashion, stage five (openness) is both generated and characterized by a strong interrelationship between body and mind. In this stage, the physical and mental aspects respond to and stimulate one another in mutual and nearly simultaneous development– an attestation to my earlier statement that the substantial nature of humans cannot be divided into two discrete entities. Furthermore, the stage three *connectedness* preceding the phase of stage four *liveliness* then expands within this openness from an internal sense of connection to encompass both the immediate relationship to the training partner and the external objective world in its totality.

All that I have expressed in the preceding lines is, of course, an ideal progression, and it would be unreasonable to expect everyone to develop exactly as described, but it is always worthwhile to understand the ideal so that it may perhaps gradually influence and shape the real. Herein arises the question of what exactly needs to be transmitted and how.

“The Heart-to-Heart Transmission”

The heart-to-heart transmission is known in Japanese as *i shin den shin*, or in English:

I - by, or through

Shin - heart, mind, spirit

Den - to communicate, to pass on, or transmit

Shin - heart, mind, spirit

Taken as a whole, the phrase means to communicate with or pass something on to another from the heart to the heart without

reliance on words of any kind in any way. This concept reflects a similar notion in Aikido training known as *kimusubi*, which means “to unify or become one with an opponent through mind or *ki*,” or “to establish contact through consciousness before physical contact occurs,” indicating a need to take positive mental initiative in contact.

A specific sociocultural example of this type of communication can be found in the Japanese notion of *hara gei*, meaning, “the art of the belly or abdomen,” or, “belly talk.” To digress a moment, the classic image of the Japanese male is that of a man who is expressionless, emotionless, reserved, strong-willed, determined, and emanating dignity – the image of a *Bushi-Samurai*ⁱ. With this image in mind, *hara gei* was once considered an essential virtue in the formation of a man’s character, however, in modern times of rapid technological advance such ideas have been eclipsed by more material and mechanistic forms of communication.

Be that as it may, the traditional cultural disciplines cling tenaciously within the core of the Japanese shared consciousness. The concept of *i shin den shin* is considered to be a significant aspect of traditional Japanese culture, and is also known by the terms *tanden*, and *jikiden*. *Tanden* refers specifically to a sole or select transmission from one person to another, whilst *jikiden* implies a direct, pure, or genuine transmission along a certain lineage. However intangible a concept *i-shin-den-shin* may be, this heart-to-heart transmission is vital to our task of transmitting the art through the generations, and if it is in any way missing or lacking in our own study – regardless of how advanced one’s physical embodiment might be – the result will be much like that of grafting a young plant to a dying tree.

Here again arises the question of what is to be transmitted and how. There is no easy answer, especially as to the question of how this transmission may occur or be brought about, as the subject refuses an intellectual approach or theoretical analysis. The process cannot be forced through mechanical means, but must occur in a natural manner, like water flowing from a higher elevation to a pool below. I know that the actuation of this transmission is not impossible, as countless people in the past and present have given and received it. More than one such experience is recorded in J. Yamada’s *Dai Nippon Kendo Shi* (History of Japanese

Swordsmanship, 1925), wherein are described numerous very moving accounts of *i shin den shin* between master and disciple. I consider this phenomenon to be the essential thread in the dissemination of traditional Japanese discipline.

I would like to quote Dr. Amnon Tzechovoy’s essay from the most recent issue of *Shiun* (Vol. 5, No. 1):

“...but our transmission implies not only bodily transformation, it means an ethical transformation from the body into the domain of value and spirit.”

I believe that he is correct, and sincerely hope this is what is happening to us – that within this bodily transformation lie the seeds of ethical and spiritual transformation. With that in mind, and at the risk of seeming too fatalistic, I find that of late the weight of my perspective is shifting toward the conclusion that the heart-to-heart transmission between two individuals is reliant upon both possessing a type of “heart maturity,” or perhaps *karma* between the two. The heart has to “be there” to begin with – meaning ripe, ready, and open – in order to enable an encounter of significance. In other words, there needs to exist a set of conditions and circumstances which have accumulated through time and space, culminating in the presence of two hearts that are ripe, ready, and open. This is what I refer to as a Karmic Encounter. It cannot be forced, but is activated through God’s will, so to speakⁱⁱ.

As stated previously, there are many stirring depictions of this type of communication recorded in the histories of related disciplines (Zen in China and Japan, martial arts, tea, etc.), wherein it happens that all artificial barriers have dissolved and there no longer exists master and disciple, but each sees the other as a whole and complete individual – master to master. This phenomenon is called *ainuke*, meaning “a mutual passing through,” as opposed to *aiuchi*, which means “mutual killing.” When *ainuke* occurs, the disciple is ready to stand on his own feet from then on; the transmission is complete, and he has “stepped onto the Master’s shoulders.”

In my view, the philosophical side of martial arts is from the start dialectical. It is a path/discipline that deals with two opposing forces, e.g., me against him/her, dominate or be dominated, killed or be killed, life or death, the presence of which create a dynamic tension. Only if the situation of conflict is resolved creatively and constructively can mutual

recognition of co-existence be realized and true reverence for life attained. This is the sublime expression of the principle *aiki*.

Ainuke = aiki.

I understand the reality of karma that is positive (order) and negative (chaos) in our relationships, but all we can do is our best in the most selfless way possible with no thought of reward or attachment to the outcome. We must leave all in the hand of heavenly reason – the hand of God, so to speak. I believe there is no other way.

Conclusion

I generally do not take human encounters lightly. I regard whomever is sitting or standing in front of me with deep interest and wonder, as s/he represents a crystallization of immeasurable lifetimes – countless generations, races, cultures, forms, events, and all-inclusive history. It stretches my imagination to the horizons of infinite time and vast space, and I begin to sense the many ages and great distance s/he has traveled to reach this encounter with me. There is no coincidence to this meeting, for I see it as inevitable in our mutual and separate destinies. Whoever s/he may be, I consider this individual to be *kami*ⁱⁱⁱ – the embodiment and representative of the particular myth to which s/he belongs, a product of the everlasting life flow, and a breath of the eternal life force^{iv} manifesting itself here and now. I consider this person a miracle, though not mysterious to me – I greet him/her with deepest vow in my heart and gratitude for the opportunity this meeting affords me.

When I see a large gathering of people, I see a congregation of *kami* – each and all standing on the heavenly platform here and now, and each representing his or her particular myth (as do I.) I pray that this encounter will prove meaningful and significant to their life, and contribute to something creative within, regardless of the outcome or surface appearances. I begin each class with five minutes of silent prayer in which I dedicate all to the three deities that are most precious and significant to me. This practice is particularly important to me when I am conducting a dojo grand opening in our school.

The first prayer is dedicated to the *kami* who sits at the Center of the Universe. I have no interest in identifying him – what is his shape or form, and I refuse any personalization of him. I recognize him deep inside my heart as something

intangible – the original reason, the motivation of the omnipresent, everlasting life force and breath which resides in every being and element in the universe. In its essence, my prayer represents my total surrender of control over my life's path to the work of the *kami* and for the greater good – whatever form that may take.

The second prayer is offered to the local *kami* – those who have been charge of and watched over this particular land – asking their permission to occupy the land and use the facilities for a time, with the promise to give it my very best care. At the same time I offer comfort to ease their suffering for the sacrifices they have made during the course of history.

The third prayer is offered to the spirit of O'Sensei – the founder of Aikido and my teacher– whose care, affection, and teaching I consider invaluable to my life and who I am today. I thank him with gratitude while I seek his continuous guidance in whatever form it may take.

The final prayer is offered to the spirits of those individuals in the past and present who have been directly or indirectly instrumental in the creation and development of the Path of Aiki to thank them for their contributions and the sacrifices they have made. In this prayer I envision the aiki shrine wherein all of the aforementioned individuals are thereby enshrined as *kami*.

The above noted prayers are carried out silently in Shinto ritual form known as *norito*. I do not claim to belong to any particular sect of Shinto, nor am I interested in becoming a *Shinto-ka* (Shinto practitioner) – I am simply Japanese.

Postscript

In closing this lengthy note, I have felt some hesitation regarding the incorporation of the “conclusion” section of this writing, as it is deeply personal in nature. After careful consideration, I have decided to include it for the sake of its interrelationship to the rest of the writing. Moreover, I consider it to be the backbone of my entire note, and in order to make myself clearly understood to the teachers of our school, I believe I must reveal those beliefs from which my teachings arise. In that sense, there is no distinction between the personal and the official – it is me, my *self*.

i. *Bushi-samurai* - an expression in oral tradition with which I was acquainted in my youth – essentially meaning, “showing your teeth once every three days is enough,” or “Don’t talk, don’t laugh, don’t cry...”

ii. In my opinion, karma is not entirely fixed and immovable or unchangeable. For better or worse, it can be shifted, challenged, or encouraged with either conscious or unconscious effort depending upon one’s level of awareness. As it applies to human relationships there exists two types of karma: orderly (positive) and inverse or chaotic (negative).

iii. *Kami* or *Kami-sama* is a Shinto term referring to “God,” “The Divine,” or “Spirit” in a pantheistic and/or animistic context (Shintoism is generally viewed as animistic by those outside the tradition and practice). It is a concept that has deeply influenced the very foundations of Japanese worldview and lifestyle.

iv. “Life force” is expressed as *ki* in Japanese, and is that very element of *aiki*. As I understand it, *Ki* is the manifestation of breath or a sign of life. In one of the classics of *Kito-ryu jyuujitsu* (founded by M. Terada in the late 1700s) there is a secret saying, “where mind is gathered, there *ki* arises; where *ki* arises, there the life force is found.” If there is indeed a certain force or energy involved in the creation of the universe, there must exist some kind of intention, motive, or reason from which that force originates. I call this intention “life will” or “heavenly reason,” which is omnipresent and evident in everything, whether animate or inanimate.



