

The JAA(USA)



AIKIDO TIMES



A TOMIKI AIKIDO QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Aiki Expo 2005!

We are pleased to announce the addition of Seiji Tanaka, 8th dan Tomiki Aikido to the list of featured instructors at [Aiki Expo 2005](#) to be held May 27-29, 2005 at California State University Dominguez Hills in Los Angeles.



Seiji Tanaka began aikido in 1958 at Waseda University studying under Kenji Tomiki and Hideo Ohba. He was the first captain of the Waseda University Aikido Club and received the first yondan rank awarded to an active college student by Professor Tomiki.

The Expo will take place May 27-29, 2005 at California State University Dominguez Hills in Carson, CA. A tentative, preliminary schedule is as follows:

Friday, May 27, 2005

9:00 am Registration / Check-in
12:30 pm Opening ceremony
1:00 - 5:00 pm Seminars and workshops
6:00 - 9:00 pm Welcome potluck party at Victoria Park

Saturday, May 28, 2005

9:00 - 12:00 pm Seminars and workshops
12:00 - 1:00 pm Lunch break
1:00 - 5:00 pm Seminars and workshops
6:30 - 9:30 pm 7th Friendship Demonstration

Sunday, May 29, 2005

9:00 - 12:00 pm Seminars and workshops
12:00 - 1:00 pm Lunch break
1:00 - 4:00 pm Seminars and workshops
4:30 - 5:00 pm Closing ceremony / photo session
5:00 - 6:30 pm Mat removal and cleanup

The seminars/workshops will take place in a large gymnasium with over 27,000 sq. ft. divided into about 8-10 mat sections of varying sizes according to the number of signups for a given training session. The total possible number of training sessions for the weekend can be as many as 150 classes depending on the total number of participants in the event. Water and food services operated by the University will be available at the event.

There is quite an impressive roster of instructors and they expect a large turnout for Aiki Expo 2005 given the fact that there is a large aikido and martial arts population in the Southern California area.



Further information about the event, schedule and signups is available at the website www.aikidojournal.com.

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Arnold Martial Arts Festival 2005

Tomiki Aikido Tournament

March 4-5, 2005

For the Arnold we plan to have the following events and divisions:

Randori No Kata (basic 17)	Youth Coed 16 and under
Jo Kata (21 step kata)	Youth Coed 16 and under
Youth Freestyle kata	Youth Coed 16 and under (up to 30% weapons)
Randori No Kata (basic 17)	Adult (Kyu Rank Only)
San No Kata (1-16)	Adult
Open Freestyle Kata	Adult (up to 30% weapons)
Youth Tanto Randori (Vandalia style)	Youth Coed 16 and under
Kyu Tanto Randori	Adult
Open Tanto Randori (Men)	Adult
Open Tanto Randori (Women)	Adult
Open Toshu Randori (Men)	Adult

www.arnoldmartialarts.com is the home page for the event., and hotels are listed there under "Info"

Local Ohio contact for info:

Bob King - Director
419-774-4323

Robertking@zoominternet.net

Reviews & Previews—

First Annual Vassar Aikido Festival/Tournament Results October 16, 2004

Vassar College, Poughkeepsie NY



Tournament Events:
Junanahon no Kata
Kyu Tanto Randori (men's)
Open Tanto Randori (men's)
Open Kata
Open Tanto Randori (women's)



Modified Events:

Kyu Randori and the Open Tanto Randori were combined for one event.
The Open Tanto Randori for men became Open Randori for both men and women



Men's Kyu Randori Competition:

Champion: Peter Baculak
2nd: Hugh Steir
3rd: Charlie Hudson & Billy DeMatteo



Men's Open Randori (aka Open Randori) Competition:

Champion: Angel Quinones
2nd: William Ball
3rd: Jeremy Machado & Peter Baculak



Women's Open Randori Competition:

Champion: Maritza Quinones
2nd: Jessyka Cueva
3rd: Louise Loeb & Tiffany Doan



Junanahon no kata:

1st: Eric Snyder and Charlie Hudson
2nd: Aaron Rabinowitz & Eric Snyder
3rd: Xavier Carver & Hollie Osbourne



Open Kata:

1st: Eric Snyder & Charlie Hudson
2nd: Xavier Carver & Josh Ramey
3rd: Sharissa Jaen & Mauro Jaen



A day of Aikido: Exchange, demonstration, gain Ability, skill, friendship

October 16, 2004. Poughkeepsie, New York. Competitors were arriving in the gymnasium as early as 8:30 a.m. bearing duffel bags and athletic tape. The mats were ready, the boundaries were marked. Within an hour, the judges' panel was full and the events of the first annual Vassar College Aikido Festival and Tournament had begun.

Events included junanahon no kata, open kata, and randori using soft tanto knives. Rules were based off the Tomiki Aikido style, and many required clarification as participants were accustomed to different styles and executions of technique. In the afternoon, seminars were scheduled to impart some of the diversity of Aikido styles, with each seminar lasting about an hour. Vassar Aikido Club President, Charlie Hudson '06 said, "I was very impressed by the turnout. We didn't really know what to expect because we had received very few RSVP's, but we did end up drawing a fair sized crowd. We had folks drive from Ohio and Maryland, there was a large contingent from New York, and of course Dave Nettles flew in from Denver. Everyone seemed to get along well, and we saw a lot of impressive Aikido."



Louise Loeb '07 (VC Aikido Club) said, "For the beginning half of the tournament, the only emotion I felt was extreme nervousness because this was my first competition. I was afraid of accidentally hurting my opponent, getting

hurt, or making stupid mistakes. But I kept in mind what Sean Sensei once told me, "it's sport....all it really is is an advanced version of tag...you tag them. They tag you. Nobody gets hurt. Everybody has fun--and crucially, everyone gets really good at tagging each other." Aikido is very much like a game. As the old saying goes, "it doesn't matter who wins or loses. What matters is whether or not you have fun." And I did have fun that day."



Louise was not the only one who compared it to tag team as David Chiu '05 (VC Aikido) jokingly described a memorable moment during one of his randori matches. As a result of the loud acoustics in the gym, and the enthusiastic cheering from the crowd, it was oftentimes difficult to get the attention of the match referees. A quick solution was to use a couple of beanie babies, which happened to be on hand, to throw into the middle of the competition mats whenever the timer was up, allowing the referee to have visual confirmation just in case they did not hear the timer shout above all the noise. "I started hallucinating in the middle of randori that the beanie baby was gonna tag in 'any second now,'" said David.

There was an incredible amount of sportsmanship demonstrated that day as Charlie Hudson described, "the most memorable moment for me was when I had to leave early

and I got very kind farewells from dozens of people who I had met only just that morning, and some of who I had fought very recently. I was really impressed by how friendly everyone was.”

Watching from the sidelines, I had the chance to be a close observer of the day’s activities as the volunteer scorekeeper, timer, and general secretary. There is an energy that permeates the gym. Over and over again, I sensed the adrenaline—that feeling of hypersensitive electricity where your skin becomes suddenly aware of every prickle. It is an intensity, yes. After all, this is a competition. Yet at



the same time there is an incredible amount of relaxation and tranquility on the faces of all the competitors. Perhaps Charlie was onto something when he jokingly described Aikido as the “lazy person’s martial art.” Of course, it is not a lack of focus or apathy of technique. It is simply a kind of rest. It is an ability to stay both unperturbed and reactive.

It’s interesting. In English, the most accurate translation is a ‘competition.’ In a Thesaurus, substitutions of ‘compete’ are words such as vie, fight, struggle, battle, opposition. Yet as I review the day’s events in my mind, I realize, the really good ones, the techniques that really work, there is no ‘competition;’ there is no real struggle. It is like water, not a moment for a thought, nothing. Breath, blink, and the opponent is down. In the junanahon especially, it looks more like dancing than anything else as the movements blend, the energy controlled, but

not forced. That is what everyone has in common. That is why all of these people have converged together: that moment of quiet and awe as we each respect and revel in that feeling of complete smoothness.

I received a similar opinion out of Brandi Collisides, ’02 alumnae of Skidmore College and black belt in Genri-Ryu Life Protection Arts (Genri-ryu roughly translates to “principles way” or “principled method”), “The best reason for being passionate about martial arts is that feeling I get when my uke has just done a beautiful technique. I grab my uke’s arm, and they just give into my motion. I’m moving and I have no idea why. Suddenly my body is falling and I hit the mat hard. There is this rush I feel right at my heart/throat chakra, and it’s so intense that I need to take a few minutes before I can continue.... It all happened in a fraction of a second and it was so smooth. My body is in shock over what just happened. I am stunned and in a state of awe over the power and grace that just controlled me. These are the moments I live for. This is what I love about martial arts.”

Thus, as I too continue to search for that sensibility, that moment of grace, I recall another, possibly more important reason of what motivates people converge to participate in Aikido: friendship. It is by far the most common responses I received as I asked different participants about their experiences with Aikido. The relationships people have built and the solid foundations they have found in their companions who share in their passion and pursuit of this amazing activity is equally significant when trying to describe to someone what Aikido is and what Aikido means.

*Janine Parziale ’07 Vassar College Aikido Club
(Photos by Geoff Wertime)*



Visions & Revisions— JAA/USA Board Updates

Revised Kyu Curriculum—

The JAA/USA Board of Directors recently approved a revised Kyu Rank Curriculum. The revisions include 1) elimination of the current 8th/7th/6th kyu requirements; 2) the new 6th kyu exam requirements including all footwork and falls; 3) addition of cross-arm and same-side grab applications of basic 17 techniques in “Kihon waza” sections of 5th kyu thru 2nd kyu exams. The intention is to reinforce the principles and develop a more thorough knowledge of the basic 17 techniques by including 3 versions of each technique—from tegatana, aigamae katatedori, and gyagugamae katatedori. This revision effectively includes the former 8th/7th/6th kyu techniques from grabs and expands them to include all of the basic 17. New test forms have been posted on the website at www.tomiki.org along with the new requirements. Initial responses have been positive for the most part (see “Curriculum Revision Comments” following these pages). Please give us your opinions also!

JAA/USA Kyu Grade Curriculum

6th Kyu (no minimum time requirement) – White Belt

Unsoku

Kouhou ukemi (standing)

Yoko ukemi (standing)

Tegatana dousa

Zenpou kaiten ukemi (on one knee and standing)

Standing breakfall

5th Kyu (more than 40 hrs practice after 6th kyu)

Suwari waza Shomenuchi - oshitaoshi osae

Kihon waza Atemi waza (shomenate, aigamaeate, gyakugamaeate, gedanate, ushiroate) – 3 variations: using tegatana (handblade), aigamae katatedori (right hand grasp to right wrist, or left to left), and gyakugamae katatedori (left hand grasp to right wrist, or right to left)

Kihon no tsukuri Atemi waza, hontai no tsukuri (shomenate, aigamaeate)

Kansetsu waza, tegatana jodan no tsukuri (oshitaoshi, hikitaoshi)

4th Kyu (more than 40 hrs practice after 5th kyu)

Suwari waza Shomenuchi - oshitaoshi gyakutedori kotehineri osae

Kihon waza Hiji waza (oshitaoshi, udegaeshi, hikitaoshi, udehineri, wakigatame, wakigatame) – 3 variations: using tegatana (handblade), aigamae katatedori (right hand grasp to right wrist, or left to left), and gyakugamae katatedori (left hand grasp to right wrist, or right to left)

Kihon no tsukuri Atemi waza, hontai no tsukuri (gyakugamaeate, gedanate, ushiroate)

Kansetsu waza, tegatana gedan no tsukuri (tenkai kotegaeshi, kotegaeshi)

3rd Kyu (more than 40 hrs practice after 4th kyu)

Suwari waza Shomenuchi - oshitaoshi juntedori kotehineri osae
Kihon waza Tekubi waza (kotehineri, kotegaeshi, tenkai kotehineri, tenkai kotegaeshi) – **3 variations:** using tegatana (handblade),
aigamae katatedori (right hand grasp to right wrist, or left to left), and
gyakugamae katatedori (left hand grasp to right wrist, or right to left)
Nage waza Nage no kata omote waza (go no sen no kuzushi)
Kihon no tsukuri Atemi waza, hontai no tsukuri
Kansetsu waza, nigiri gaeshi jodan no tsukuri

2nd kyu (more than 60 hrs practice after 3rd kyu)

Suwari waza Shomenuchi - oshitaoshi tekubi osae
Kihon waza Uki waza (maeotoshi, sumiotoshi, hikiotoshi)
3 variations: using tegatana (handblade),
aigamae katatedori (right hand grasp to right wrist, or left to left), and
gyakugamae katatedori (left hand grasp to right wrist, or right to left)
Nage waza Nage no kata ura waza (go no sen no kuzushi)
Kihon no tsukuri Atemi waza, shouki no tsukuri (shomenate, aigamaeate)
Kansetsu waza, nigiri gaeshi gedan no tsukuri

1st Kyu (more than 60 hrs practice after 2nd kyu)

Kihon waza Randori kihon waza (uke without tanto)
Kihon ura waza Atemi waza no ura (wakigatame, oshitaoshi, gedanate, aigamaeate, tenkai kotehineri)
Kansetsu waza no ura (oshitaoshi, tenkai kotehineri, kotegaeshi, wakigatame, tenkai kotegaeshi)
Kihon no tsukuri Atemi waza, shouki no tsukuri (gyakugamaeate, gedanate, ushiroate)
Kansetsu waza, hiji mochi no tsukuri
jodan (juntedori, yakutedori)
gedan (juntedori, yakutedori)
Randori hou taisabaki (against tanto)
- without using hands
- using tegatana

Notes

1. Kihon no tsukuri must be done twice on both left and right sides.

The second time the technique must be completed without stopping.

2. Tsukuri practice.

(a) Atemi waza - hontai no tsukuri - in five directions from the correct distance

- shouki no tsukuri - in five directions at the time of uke's feet touching down

- tsukuri from taisabaki - in six directions after taisabaki

(b) Kansetsu waza - tegatana no tsukuri - aigamae and gyakugamae, jodan (eye level) and gedan (knee level)

- nigirigaeshi no tsukuri - jodan and gedan, junte and yakute grips

- hiji mochi no tsukuri - junte and yakute grips using both hands, in front of and behind uke.

Open Forum—JAA/USA Revisions

Kyu Rank Curriculum Revision Comments

To summarize the initial proposal which resulted in the recently approved revision to the Kyu Rank Curriculum (posted at the JAA/USA website at www.tomiki.org):

Several JAA/USA instructors who questioned the value, especially at the colleges, in teaching the nine smorgasbord techniques that are required for 8-6 kyu proposed a return to the pre-1995 curriculum and a reduction in the number of kyu ranks from eight to six. Some of the comments from JAA/USA Board members and others who later learned of the curriculum changes follow:

Dave Nettles, 6th Dan, Colorado —

“Regarding the kyu rank belt colors, I feel that the current color scheme (yellow for 5th kyu, orange, green, blue, brown) is good. The old way (yellow for 6th kyu, orange, green, brown for sankyu thru ikkyu) was good when we were just working with local clubs and everybody knew each other and their ability. Speaking for myself, I like to be able to tell what a person should know by looking at their belt (when I don’t know them). Plus between Sankyu and Ikkyu there should be a big difference in their abilities and they shouldn’t lead others to believe that they are equal.

As far as 8 and 7 kyu’s I believe those requirements should be included in later exams. Here is a thought—6th kyu would be still be a white belt with the test being knowledge of footwork, handwork, and all the falls and rolls. No set time requirement, just the instructor’s determination of when the student is ready, while at the same time having the student learn the 5th kyu exam. As far as the other exams, maybe we should look at adding the same techniques from additional applications (i.e. same-side and cross-hand grabs—katatedori) to give greater focus to the principles of application rather than just the mechanics of one version of each technique.

For 5th kyu, Atemi-waza would include execution from the grabs; for 4th kyu, the hiji-waza would include execution from grabs, etc. That way, the techniques which are now included in the 8-th-6th kyu exams would be covered automatically within the later exams.”

Bob King, 4th Dan, Ohio —

“I like the direction that takes the curriculum and does simplify the color scheme, though we could stripe the white belt if they have a dogi.”

Steve Wood, 5th Dan, Ohio —

“I like the changes in the kyu ranking. Perhaps it would be less confusing if kyu’s were only required to learn one kata at a time. We know they can do it, but I wonder if the guy that’s still in street clothes finds it somewhat overwhelming to learn 2 of these, 2 of those and 2 more of these.”

Wade Current, 4th Dan, Ohio —

“I agree. Perhaps we could just use 2 browns with Ikkyu having either a black stripe or a black sleeve.”

Ragib Karamehmedovic, Sarajevo, Bosnia

“I have just seen new JAA/USA testing requirements. As it appears to me, all the first part of Nariyama goshin-ho kata is included in kyu testing grades (Katate - tori responses). If it is true, I really like and appreciate this new change.”

William Sharpe, 3rd Dan, Oklahoma

“This is all very good news to me. I have been teaching these to my students all along. They have not had to do them in tests though. I teach this for 2 reasons, one of which is close to Dave’s. The first reason is because I have loved them since back in the 1980’s when Jerry Oven had me doing them and then I saw a tape with Nariyama doing them.

The second reason is like Dave’s. My judo and jujitsu training maintained that a person need only a few waza that the person was very good at performing under a multitude of attack presentations. This is one of the main reasons that I fell in love with Shodokan Aikido and left Aikikai.

I was teaching Aikido and Jujitsu. It was way too much for my students and it was taking too long. My old judo sensei, Porter Sensei, told me that Aikido was the pushing part of Jujitsu and Judo was the pulling part. He told me to take the Shodokan syllabus as a framework and add a few techniques to complete it as an art. I did this with a few judo-type throws and the ne-waza and shime-waza from judo. I teach this way now. However, my students only test using the Shodokan syllabus. They are ready to accept my unscheduled requests during their tests.

I am very pleased with this revision. It has answered some of my complaints and I believe we will see a greater understanding of Aiki develop much quicker in our students.”

For demonstrations of the atemi-waza techniques which would be added to the 5th kyu exam, refer to the “Technical Corner” section of this issue and the last issue with Sensei Bob Dziubla explaining the techniques

Technical Corner



The Five Atemi-Waza Techniques Against Wrist Grabs (Part 2)

by Robert Dziubla, 7th Dan

At the US National Tournament in Mansfield in July 2004, I taught a seminar that focused on the application of the five atemi-waza techniques against wrist grabs. The five atemi-waza are:

1. Shomen-ate
2. Aigamae-ate
3. Gyakugamae-ate
4. Gedan-ate, and
5. Ushiro-ate

The wrist grabs are single-hand, and are done *aigamae*, i.e. matching-hand grab, which means that uke (the attacker) uses his right hand to reach across and grab tori's (the defender's) right wrist, and *gyakugamae*, i.e. opposite hand grab where uke uses his right hand to reach across and grab tori's left wrist. Of course, all of these techniques should be practiced on both the right and left side, but for purposes of this article I will explain the techniques where uke is grabbing *with just his right hand*.

Please note that in this article I am trying to convey the basics of how these five techniques are done so that you can develop a powerful and effective application. I also try to convey some of the finer points (and those subtle points can materially improve the power and execution of the technique), but those points may differ from one sensei to another. The point to remember is that aikido is both martial and an art. It is evolutive by nature and techniques are likely to differ depending on relative body shapes and sizes (both tori and uke!).

In Part One of this article, I covered the first three atemi-waza: shomen-ate, aigamae-ate, and gyakugamae-ate. In Part Two below, I will cover the remaining two atemi-waza: gedan-ate and ushiro-ate.

4. Gedan-ate

a. Against an aigamae wrist grab. Uke uses his right hand to grab uke's right wrist. As uke grabs, he steps forward with his right foot. Tori should receive the attack standing in shizen-tai (natural stance), and just as his right is being grabbed by uke, tori should first rotate it to the outside so that the top of the hand is facing to his left and the palm is facing outside. While doing the above, and as one continual movement, tori steps to his back left diagonal, going into a right stance (migi-gamae) with his right foot forward, thus pulling uke off balance. Tori then continues the technique by simultaneously moving forward with his right foot while grabbing uke's wrist (using a kime, i.e. pressure point, grab against the fleshy inside of uke's wrist if possible – this is a fine point primarily intended for the upper ranks), and pushing uke's arm up into an oshi-taoshi type of position. With this movement, uke should now be positioned so that his right arm is completely bent at the elbow and at or above his head, his armpit is opened up, and his balance is broken upward and slightly to uke's rear left. Having thus opened uke's armpit, tori now places his left upper arm across uke's lower torso and steps through with his left foot while applying gedan-ate.



b. Against a gyakugamae wrist grab. Uke steps forward with his right foot and uses his right hand to grab tori's left wrist. As his left wrist is being grabbed, tori simultaneously extends his hand and fingers into a tegatana pointing downward and steps to the left into hidari-gamae (left stance) just to the outside of uke's body and perpendicular to uke's body (i.e., uke is facing forward and tori is now to uke's right front outside facing 90 degrees toward uke's left). Tori then breaks uke's balance downward by bending his knees (keep the back straight!) and dropping his hips straight down. This hip drop should cause uke to bend slightly forward because his balance has been broken downward. Tori then rotates his left tegatana / arm so that his left upper arm and elbow are positioned for gedan-ate. Tori completes the technique by stepping to uke's backside, leading with the left foot, and simultaneously applying gedan-ate.



5. Ushiro-ate

a. Against an aigamae wrist grab. Uke uses his right hand to grab uke's right wrist. As uke grabs, he steps forward with his right foot. Tori should receive the attack standing in shizen-tai (natural stance), and just as his right wrist is being grabbed by uke, tori steps backward with migi-gamae and applies the junte-dori (natural grip) jodan kuzushi (high level balance breaking) application of the nanahon-nage waza (i.e., the seven throwing techniques that were learned in



prior training), thus breaking uke's balance upward and to uke's front (tori's rear). At this moment, then, tori should be in migi-gamae with his right tegatana on the inside of uke's right wrist, with uke's right arm having been extended and upward and his balance broken. Tori then executes ushiro-ate by simultaneously rotating his right tegatana down and around to tori's right, rotating his hips to keep the tegatana on his center line, step-

ping to uke's backside with his left foot, and thus causing uke to rotate. With this movement, tori should now be standing behind uke and on his left side. Tori then places his hands over each of uke's shoulders and takes a step backward throwing uke on to his back with ushiro-ate.

b. Against a gyakugamae wrist grab. This application is very similar to the prior one except that uke begins by using the gyaku-te dori (opposite grip) jodan application of the nanahon-nage waza. The detail is this. Uke steps forward with his right foot and uses his right hand to grab tori's left wrist. As his left wrist is being grabbed, tori steps backward into migi-gamae and applies the gyaku-te dori (opposite grip) jodan kuzushi application of the nanahon-nage waza. At this moment,



then, tori should be in hidari-gamae with his left tegatana on the inside of uke's right wrist, with uke's right arm having been extended and upward and his balance broken. Tori then executes ushiro-ate by simultaneously rotating his left tegatana down and around to his right, rotating his hips to keep the tegatana on his center line, and bringing uke's grasped right wrist into tori's waiting right hand, which grabs and continues to rotate uke around. While doing this, tori steps to uke's backside with his left foot. With this movement, tori should now be standing behind uke and on his left side. Tori then places his hands over each of uke's shoulders and takes a step backward throwing uke on to his back with ushiro-ate.

I hope that the above explanations coupled with the demonstration in Mansfield (or the videotape) are useful in helping to master the fun and challenge of the atemi-waza as applied against wrist grabs.

@ Robert Dziubla (2004)



“Anyone who refers to himself as a ‘master’, isn’t” - Yukio Takamura

Teaching & Shu-Ha-Ri

(The traditional Japanese method of knowledge transmission)

By Yukio Takamura, edited by Nanette Okura

“Shu-ha-ri” literally means embracing the kata, diverging from the kata and discarding the kata. The pursuit of training in a classical Japanese endeavor almost always follows this educational process. This unique approach to learning has existed for centuries in Japan and has been instrumental in the survival of many older Japanese knowledge traditions. These include such diverse pursuits as martial arts, flower arranging, puppetry, theater, poetry, painting, sculpture and weaving. As successful as shu-ha-ri has been in the modern era, new approaches to teaching and learning are altering this traditional Japanese method of knowledge transmission. Whether traditional Japanese arts and endeavors are successfully passed to the next generation of practitioners is up to the sensei (teachers) of today and their wisdom in confronting

the inherent strengths and pitfalls of shu-ha-ri. In this essay I will focus on shu-ha-ri and its unique application in the honorable martial discipline of Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin ryu jujutsu.

Shoden/The beginning level of training

Shu (Embracing the kata)

The kata or form is the educational core of all traditional Japanese knowledge schools. It is the most visible representation of a school’s knowledge packaged into one seemingly simple set of movements or concepts. Because the kata is so accessible, it is often mistaken to be the most important aspect of determining a student’s ability or progress. In fact, properly taught, the kata does contain within it the ura or hidden level of information, but this information lies beneath the surface or omote of simple observation. Without first devoting oneself entirely to the mastery of the omote of the kata, the student is destined to remain forever a beginner, never able to progress towards the true depth of knowledge that rests hidden in the ura before him. To experience shu and embrace the kata, the student must first resign himself and his ego to a seemingly random series of repetitious exercises. Often these beginning or shoden level kata are by design intended to challenge the student’s concentration levels and devotion to learning. In some of the more rigorous traditions, kata are intended to create physical discomfort in addition to this exercise. Overcoming physical discomfort in this type of kata is just the first level of training the student to mentally focus exclusively on one task. As the student progresses thru the various kata, different aspects of stress and distraction are encountered. As these challenges grow more intense, the student’s mind learns to process information and stress in a much more efficient manner. In time different neuro-muscular processes become intuitively ingrained in such a way that they are no longer consciously realized by the student. Once this level of kata is absorbed and executed satisfactorily, the student has reached the first level of his or her training. Other more advanced kata will be presented throughout training which present greater and more diverse challenges, but the mental methodology for learning is now in place. The most basic reason for kata training has been achieved.

The pitfalls of teaching at the shoden level

At this level it is possible for kata to teach all by themselves. They are after all physical repetitions which challenge and instruct in an almost totally private experience. Although it might seem an exaggeration, anyone who knows the basic movements of a kata can take a student to this first level of training. It is even possible for some students to reach this level of training entirely by learning from a device like a book. However, this hands-off approach to learning by the sensei places the student in a perilous situation, especially in the teaching of paired kata. The most common downfall here is a sensei’s lack of diligent attention to physical form and proper timing. Simply stated, many low level instructors’ teaching ability suffers due to their own mediocre instruction. Due to this, they now instill poor habits into their students which must be unlearned at a later time. This is not only potentially dangerous but can be quite frustrating to the student. This teaching flaw has resulted in many excellent prospective students becoming disenfranchised with their training experience and discontinuing their pursuit. Diligent instruction even at the most basic level of kata training is absolutely mandatory. Basics are at the core of any pursuit’s proper execution and should never be undervalued.

Chuden/ The intermediate level of training

“Shu” at the chuden level

At the chuden level, kata study includes a new element. This element is the application, or bunkai. The deeper reason for the kata and its construction is now presented to the student. The scenario in which the kata exists is also studied and evaluated. This study and evaluation is however strictly limited to the pure execution of the kata without variation. Only thru this strict study can the kata accurately demonstrate its relevance to the student at a level he can comprehend. During this process the sensei helps the student begin to grasp the existence of the ura, those aspects that lie hidden beneath the surface of the physical form. For some students this realization is a revelation while to others it has been obvious for some time. Either way, the sensei must now accurately present basic concepts on a more abstract level than before. This paves the way for the second aspect of shu-ha-ri.

Ha (diverging from the kata)

In the traditional Japanese concept of shu-ha-ri, ha is the first hint of creative expression allowed the student. It is when the henka waza or variation is first experienced. It has been called the “divergent form existing within the form” or the “orthodox variation that co-exists within the confines of the strictly defined greater kata”. This is when the student is encouraged to consider any response to a failure within the pure kata. Extremely attentive instruction is required by the sensei at this juncture because too much deviation will lead to sloppiness or bastardization of technique, while too much restraint can cripple any underlying intuitive talent. Encouraging intuitive creative talent is the purpose here, but this creative experience must be diligently tempered by the confines of the greater kata. The kata must remain recognizable as the kata. If the kata diverges too far from the norm, it is no longer related to the original kata and becomes an altogether different expression of technique. It is imperative that such a deviation be avoided at this level of learning.

Ha, at the chuden level

Once the student discovers the boundaries of his training within the greater kata, he will find the possibilities of learning almost endless. Progress comes now in leaps of ability not experienced in the past. Most excellent students first demonstrate their real potential during this stage of their study. The concepts and forms of the ryu integrate in a manner that intellectually stimulates the student’s mind. He now more fully appreciates the kata and recognizes the technical wisdom that exists within it. Consequently, many sensei find this time the most rewarding in a student’s progress. The fruits of a sensei’s labor demonstrates itself powerfully during this period.

The pitfalls of teaching at the chuden level.

Strict adherence to the core concepts of the particular tradition must be adhered to at this time. To deviate from the core concepts that define the ryu will allow the student to proceed in a direction not intended by the Ryuso (founder). The boundaries of the kata must be adhered to for the ryu to maintain its identity and focus. Stepping beyond the confines of the kata at this point can be disastrous and a student’s ultimate potential compromised. Sensei often fall into the trap of becoming too unstructured in their teaching at this level of training. They misread the student’s progress and take him too far beyond his level of comprehension. The student’s mind and technique must be constantly challenged during this intermediate stage of learning, but occasionally an overzealous student will attempt to move too far too fast. This tendency must be avoided or it will compromise further progress and learning.

To be concluded in the next issue ...

Published with permission of Sensei Toby Threadgill, Menkyo Kaiden, Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin Ryu



How Tomiki Aikido Changes Our Lives By Antonio Gonzalez

When I first started studying aikido, I attempted to confront movement with power and force. My movements were awkward as a result of my mind not being in tune with the idiosyncrasies of my body and the way it moves. With time, I slowly began to realize the importance of relaxation, timing, and gentleness. These three principles provide just a glimpse of the notion of harmony in the martial arts, a concept upon which aikido revolves. Within kata and randori I have realized that tension is met with tension. Worse yet, when the body is tense, it is immobile and practically incapable of movement. Relaxation inevitably frees the martial artist to be able to move liberally and respond quickly in defense.

Timing is crucially connected to relaxation because we cannot anxiously await an attack, rather we must empty ourselves of posture and attain a “quietude of spirit” that allows the body to be ready and pliable in any confrontation. If too apprehensive, we restlessly engage the opponent prior to the appropriate time and either miss a window of opportunity or expose ourselves to harm. If too poised, we sit idly passing opportunities by. This “quietude of spirit” is at the heart of the harmony the martial arts seeks and is better recognized by aikidoka as *mushin* and *mugamae*, “no heart” or “quietude of spirit” and “no posture” respectively.

Gentleness is perhaps the subtlest of the three principles that I have begun to realize. It is a property related to both relaxation and timing in that one must relax and have the proper timing to begin to be gentle. Being gentle allows tori to use his body as an antenna to search for weaknesses in his opponent’s balance, tech-

nique, timing, etc. A technique is most effectively applied when tori is relaxed, and therefore not signaling his intentions, until the last instant when the technique is applied.

The principles of relaxation, timing, and gentleness are best viewed through a combination of kata and randori practice. Through kata we can easily control the power of our techniques and investigate the subtle differences of balance and timing through constant repetition. Through randori it is possible to gauge and hone our skills by practicing the techniques in a superbly more dynamic fashion. As Tomiki Sensei once said: “randori and sparring help to lead us closer to both the core principles of the martial arts and the true power that they generate by letting us experience the techniques studied in kata as they were meant to be performed: against a smart, resisting, and aggressive opponent.”

Tomiki Sensei was an amazingly intelligent and gifted aikidoka. It is without surprise, though truly admirable, that Tomiki Sensei was able to develop a system of training specific to aikido, though applicable to all the martial arts. This system of training is dedicated not only to warm up the body, but also to develop the core principles of gentleness, speed, accuracy, timing, *mushin*, and *mugamae*. It is through the development of these principles that we begin to achieve the stillness of spirit that is essential to the martial arts.

In my opinion, aikido should change the way we view the very ebb and flow of life. Life is never still. Yet to reach accord with this bustle, we are challenged to first tackle the commotion of our own spirit.

Dan Rank Promotions

JAA/USA



Manny Vargas
5th Dan

Tomiki Ronin Dojo

Hyland Hills Dojo

Sensei Seiji Tanaka

Cuu Phung
Shodan

Colorado



Shodokan

Sensei Dave Nettles

Jay Jones
Shodan

Kyu Rank Promotions

Piqua Aikido Club

Sensei Steve Wood

Matt Partington
John Owsiany

Nanakyu
Gokyu

KCW Aikido

Sensei Carol Apple

Louis Gentile
Cody Reynolds
Sandy Hibner
Alex Hill
Abby Owen
Kim Owen

Hachikyu
Hachikyu
Gokyu
Yonkyu
Yonkyu
Yonkyu

Berkeley Shodokan

Sensei Warren Pottebaum

Charless Fowlkes
Rebecca Feng
Mark Whitney
Lily Liao

2nd Kyu
8th Kyu
8th Kyu
8th Kyu

Kyu Rank Promotions (cont.)

Hyland Hills Dojo

Sensei Seiji Tanaka

Bon Pham	8th Kyu
Ryan Foo	7th Kyu
Antonio Cano	5th Kyu
Maria Newkirk	4th Kyu
Mary Newkirk	4th Kyu
Nobuo Matsushita	4th Kyu
Kohi Matsushita	3rd Kyu
Brad McCarthy	3rd Kyu
Mark Newkirk	3rd Kyu
Erika Tanaka	3rd Kyu
Eric Rerucha	2nd Kyu
Kathy Sweet	2nd Kyu
Kenji Tanaka	2nd Kyu
Thuha Tanaka	2nd Kyu



Above: Hyland Hill's Kobi Matsushita throws Kenji Tanaka, and Kenji throws his father, Sensei Seiji Tanaka in kotegaeshi

Below left: Kenji & Kobi demonstrate
Below right: Ryan & Emily Abo show their 8th & 7th kyu techniques for their father, DBT's Sensei Ron Abo



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I have a new building on my farm that is 40' x 80'. Half of that space is dedicated to a dojo that is heated with a corn burning furnace. There is a 35' x 40' mat area.

On Sunday, January 9th, we held a local mini clinic to celebrate the opening of the new dojo. I would like to thank my friends from Grove City, Vandalia, Piqua and Dayton, who attended and made the event a success.

Classes are Tuesday and Thursday from 6:30 - 8:30. Visitors are always welcome. For more information, e-mail to csmaikido@hotmail.com.

Wade Current

UPCOMING EVENTS

*Arnold Martial Arts Festival
March 4-6, 2005
Columbus, OH*

*Aiki Expo 2005
May 27-29, 2005
California State University
Dominguez Hills
Los Angeles, CA*

*2005 International Tournament
Chiba Japan
October 7-10, 2005*

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