



# Chiba Sensei Reveals the Difficulty in Teaching Aikido to Children

BIRANKAI EUROPE NEWSLETTER

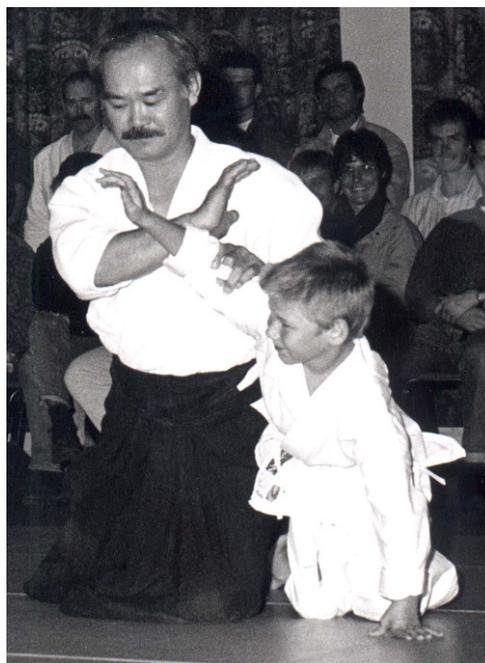
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I am not an expert on the subject of children and Aikido, as I have only limited experience in the field compared with my experience in training adults. Furthermore, my experience is limited mostly to Japanese and children familiar with Japanese culture. For this reason I believe that there are people more qualified than myself to deal with the specific issues unique to children's training. I hope that we will be able to share in the experiences and knowledge of these people so that we may gain deeper insight into the subject.

Children's Aikido is important not only because the future of Aikido in this country [the US] relies on them, but because this is an area where Aikido needs to grow in order to become truly a part of this society.

I am thankful for the teachers who have carried out an extensive study of this subject these past few years within the USAF Western Region. They have worked to extend our ability in this area

and have been willing to share what they have learned. I consider their contribution invaluable. More than anything I appreciate their love and concern for the well-being of children.



Chiba Sensei, Demonstration, Warminster 1996

Photo: Franco Chen

I understand that the work and studies which have been carried out by these teachers has been designed primarily to develop the basic skills

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**Aikido and Children...***continued from page 1*

required before children can be introduced to traditional Aikido training methods and techniques. If I understand correctly, "pre-Aikido" training is designed for relatively young children, ranging in age from five to eight years or so.

In my opinion, however, this form of training does not necessarily have to be limited to those ages. As the society in which we live becomes increasingly mechanized, children have become increasingly isolated from their natural environment. This interferes with the development of their natural and instinctive physical and mental abilities in various ways, affecting such things as coordination, reflexes, awareness and balance, which otherwise would develop more or less naturally through exposure to the natural environment.

Furthermore, such things as diet which, due to changing lifestyles, includes an excess of artificial foods of poor quality like fast foods and TV dinners, and a public education system which is inclined toward intellectual development, also affect the development of children. As a consequence of these trends there seem to be more and more children who lack the natural development of their physical abilities which might otherwise be expected at their age.

What has interested and astonished me about these children's Aikido programs that have been developed, is that although the children are under no pressure

or stress to learn any traditional forms or techniques, they are able to develop basic skills by playing games specially designed for that purpose, within an enjoyable and even pleasurable atmosphere. The principle underlying this kind of practice seems to be to draw out the hidden potential already within each child, instead of forcing them to learn from the outside.

However, I am not sure at this stage how the children's program can be organically linked to the concept of discipline unique to martial arts training. In traditional training students are stressed, both physically and mentally, to encounter adversity in situations, and learn to bear it without personal indulgence. These are vital elements that foster the spirit of endurance, challenge, focus, awareness, sense of order and self-confidence, etc. Learning the skill is one thing; being in a situation as it arises and living through it is another.

If the ultimate objective in studying a martial art is to master the skills, then the methods of studying and teaching may be focused on the physical mastery of the art without necessarily involving the other aspects of character development. This approach to training is goal-oriented, and training becomes a means to achieve or accomplish an objective. It is not, however, true to the discipline unique to martial arts, which emphasizes the importance of just being there, doing it.

The basic concept underlying recreation or sports activities in the West can be seen as the re-creation of man's original activities, associ-

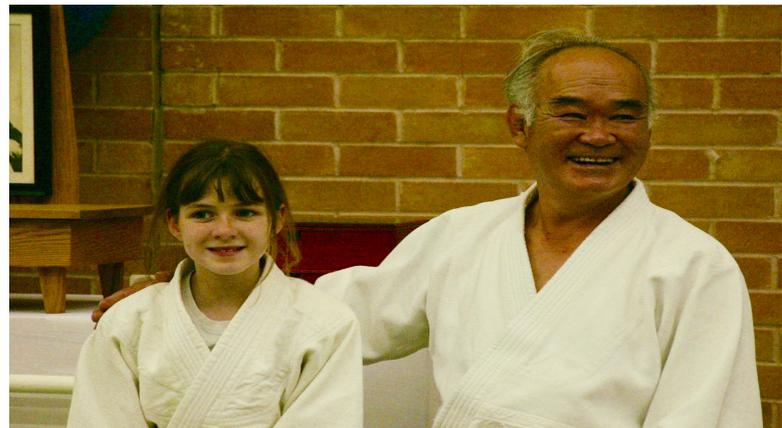


Photo: Milena Kremakova

BB Summer School, Bangor, Aug 2008



Photo: Franco Chen

Chiba Sensei, Demonstration, Warminster 1996

ated with his instinctive desire for continuous and positive development within that society. The elements considered undesirable for the well-being of society have been systematically removed, and the basic spirit on which it is founded is enjoyment and the notion of self-affirmation.

Although most martial arts originating in Japan have become sports, the development of Japanese martial arts, along with the development of Japanese culture as a whole, somehow took a different path from that of sports in the West. I am not qualified to describe it in detail. However, its basic concept is discipline, strongly supported by the notion of self-denial. Discipline in traditional Japanese culture seeks and places importance on being here now, finding “perfection” in practice, rather than in achievement or accomplishment.

There seems to be an opinion generally shared that Aikido is difficult for children for the following reasons:

- i. Because it is not competitive, it is difficult to focus on training.
- ii. A number of techniques are considered to be potentially

dangerous to an immature body.

iii. Aikido requires high mental concentration and presence while executing forms repetitively, and children tend to get bored or lose interest.

iv. Aikido is too sophisticated and intellectual for children to learn.

I basically agree that all the points mentioned above are obstacles to learning the art; but I consider them to be positive, precisely as they are described. It is these aspects of training which make Aikido what it is. There would not be much left if we avoided them. Therefore we must not be afraid to present Aikido to children with its basic structure intact. While keeping in mind that all the points mentioned above are potential obstacles, we have to place a positive light on them.

First, non-competitiveness is an essential value that Aikido can offer to children. The answer to how we focus in our training must be found within this value. Today’s society already has an excess of competition in every aspect of life. The value of life itself is predominantly understood in terms of winning, victory, success, etc.

The true value of individuals

cannot be found by comparing one with another. The basic challenge of education is how to put light on the potential within an individual, and how to bring it out, without regard for time, destination or any predetermined judgments about its quality. The only way to foster individual dignity and self-confidence is to help a child become proud of what she or he can be as an individual and to give them positive recognition. We need to help them understand that there is no such thing as a failure or a loser in life, except when we become a failure or a loser in ourselves. Competition plants a sense of failing or losing in a child when she or he fails to achieve or accomplish something for which they are not suited while still young.

Furthermore, it is undeniable that the influence of competition in our lives causes us to regard work, study and training as nothing but a means to achieve or accomplish something, rather than as a way to seek personal growth towards our best potential. These activities can be used to help us become aware of the way we stand within each step that we take; to learn to be pure, present and whole in every deed we

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perform in life.

I am not totally against competition if it is deemed necessary to keep our culture healthy. However, I am against letting it become the dominant current of our society. I am convinced that it is valuable that Aikido is a non-competitive art and I hope that it remains so, especially in light of the fact that almost every other Japanese martial art has become competitive. Aikido, if correctly presented, could be an effective counter-balance to the excessive competitiveness responsible for the isolation within people. There is a great danger in the ubiquity of competition because it causes us to lose sight of the true identity of man and the meaning of our lives. And when this happens, it is our children who suffer the most.

Secondly, I am aware of the need for professionals to study and determine the effect of Aikido training on immature bodies, especially over long periods of time.

Although this more open way of introducing children to Aikido has a relatively short history, I have not witnessed or heard of any serious injuries in children's classes, although they do occur in adult classes. I have not yet come to a conclusion as to whether this is due to the fact that children in general are more flexible, natural, balanced and lighter than adults; or if it is because teachers have been extra cautious and attentive; or if it is because deliberate efforts have been made to eliminate certain techniques from children's training.

As far as my own experience is concerned, I basically conduct children's classes in the same way that I teach adults (except for weapons training) and I have found children to be quite capable of learning, provided that more attention is given and a strong sense of order during class is maintained. What is potentially dangerous to adults is also dangerous to juniors, and vice versa.

However, we need to clarify that there are three different types of injuries that can result from training. The first results directly from the execution of technique. The second results indirectly - for exam-

ple, by being struck by somebody's flying body when taking ukemi, and other so-called accidents. As far as these first two types of injuries are concerned, there is no way to prevent them except by being sensitive to others, developing awareness and presence of mind, and learning self-control, all of which are valuable learning processes for children as well as adults.

The third category of injuries we know little about. We do know that there are substantial differences between the bodies of children and adults. But we can't be sure of what aspects of Aikido training, if any, may be inappropriate for children's bodies. For this reason, I seek expert advice on the subject in cooperation with member dojos with junior programs.

The third point raised about children and Aikido concerns their becoming bored or disinterested through the repetition of forms through class. This is a more complicated issue.

I believe this is less of a problem with Japanese children because they are more familiar with, and generally have, a stronger sense of discipline. Repetition of forms is a fundamental concept in Japanese education as well as in social disciplines unique to Japanese culture. For instance, Chinese characters are learned by writing them repeatedly, memorizing the order of the strokes, the shape, meaning, pronunciation and application of each of a total of 996 characters. This is usually accomplished by the age of 14 or 15, when children graduate from junior high school, and enables them to read at least the daily newspaper. Repetition of forms in this fashion may be foreign to American children but they can be taught this way if it's presented correctly - which depends on the ability of the teacher.

Nevertheless, it is my observation that American children, in general, lack a sense of discipline. I consider that adults are responsible for this - the parents and guardians of the children. It has been a striking experience for me to observe the excessive freedom given to American children in general, and the way they are allowed to indulge in their freedom. I can't be sure, but I think that because of this they do not withstand situations well, other than situations they are fond of; which they find enjoyable and pleasurable in a rather emotional or sensuous way. As I said earlier,



Polish Summer Camp, August 2007

I do not blame the children. They simply have not been taught about the meaning of true individual freedom, which can be attained only through study, labour and sweat, and which is not something which can be given unconditionally. True individual freedom never loses its identity under any circumstance, whether favourable or adverse.

The question is, do the children's 'likes' always meet their needs? Are children capable of judging and distinguishing between their 'likes' and the needs of their own growth? Will they always find themselves in

situations which they like for the rest of their lives? If not, what will happen to them? Will they become disinterested and give up on life? Will they just collapse? Or will they learn life's lessons the hard way? I cannot help but wonder about the meaning and strength of our love for the children for whom we, as parents, guardians or teachers, are responsible.

The discipline given in martial arts fosters ethical, moral and physical awareness and develops a sense of responsibility, sensitivity, spirit of sacrifice, loyalty, courage, honesty, mental/physical concentration and balance, as well as mastery of techniques. These are all considered virtues of the martial arts discipline. However, most importantly, the core of discipline cultivates the spirit and strengthens one's endurance to encounter adversity and master it.

It does this by enabling us to experience the self in stressful situations systematically created in martial arts training. This does not conflict with the Aikido principle of accepting everyone as they are. The prime objective is not necessarily to 'succeed'. Rather it is to just practise. There is, therefore, no set beginning or end. You accept students as they are, create the situation for them, and then let it work within them. What they experience subjectively, or what, if anything, happens inside them, is beyond our work as teachers.

The discipline described above is traditionally accepted by Japanese families who send their children to train in any form of the martial arts. It is known as *shugyo* and *keiko* which, in essence, are based on principles similar to the ascetic exercises used by religious disciplines.

If we are willing to accept this Aikido discipline, it seems that what is required is a reformation of the attitudes of the adults themselves, and even of the general environment in which children live. As I said earlier, individual freedom is not something given unconditionally but is something to be worked for, otherwise it is nothing more than theory without content. It is certain that in order to make Aikido training for children something

of value and truly part of society, closer cooperation between parents/guardians and teachers is essential. The attitude that "If you don't want to go, you don't have to," is an obstacle to children's training. It deprives them of support at the point in their training when they most need direction and encouragement. Adults with blind faith in freedom, who allow their children an excess of it, seem to be saying "Let my kids have fun so that we can have fun, because we don't want to be bothered by them."

There is an old saying in Japan: "Lions kick their cubs off the cliff, 1,000 feet down," which means to train them in adversity out of the true strength of love. And another maxim, "Let one even sit on a rock for three years," meaning don't let the indulgent self judge - at the beginning of our learning or doing - whether or not what we learn or do is right. Commitment alone should carry us for at least three years; then see what happens.

Lastly is a response to the point that Aikido is too sophisticated and intellectual and is therefore difficult for children to learn.

Apart from the philosophical and spiritual aspects of Aikido training, the physical mastery of the art alone presents difficulty for children. It requires a certain degree of spiritual and intellectual maturity or readiness to be able to appreciate or comprehend the depth of the movements. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it is because of these difficulties that it is valuable for children to learn Aikido.

Let me reconfirm that what is essential is found in the doing, and not in its mastery or consequences. Let doing (practice) alone be the reason for doing and let the consequences take their natural course. Otherwise we fall again into the trap of making our practice nothing more than a means to achieve something. I am only able to say this because I have an immovable faith in Aikido and its practice.



Polish Summer Camp, August 2007

In order to move one's body harmoniously in a circular motion, to deflect or neutralize a negative energy directed by aggressor, it is necessary to accept, rather than confront or reject. This requires the attainment of a certain degree of humanity in terms of internal harmony, balance, order, intellect and reason - the attainment, ultimately, of self-confidence. Here again, the importance is not in whether one is able to do it or not, but is simply in the doing of it, again and again.

However, in a sense, because we are human, we will never do it perfectly. It is for this reason that Aikido is considered to be a purification exercise for lifelong study. It is not limited to the physical realm, but includes the psychological, mental, spiritual and intellectual development of the whole being. It is strikingly true that whenever one is in a negative state, such as anger, hate, or fear, one is unable to move harmoniously, but instead moves directly into confrontation with an approaching force. In a negative state one responds to the force of circumstance, either with an explosion of the hidden beast triggered by nature, or with paralysis, being totally unable to move.

I would prefer to send a child for whom I care deeply to study Aikido, rather than to learn how

Photo: Achim Goldemann



European Children Seminar, Annweiler Germany, June 2014

to kick and punch, skills which clearly are associated with the more primitive and instinctual side of man. One may argue that Aikido is not practical for application in real situations. Nevertheless, I would still send my child to Aikido classes because what could be more practical to raise him or her to be a healthy, humble and harmonious person who is sensitive to human values, rather than just excelling at throwing punches and kicks in street fights.

To conclude this article, I would like to reemphasize the fact that the problems we are encountering in children's Aikido are not problems with the children themselves, but problems to be found in ourselves, as well as in the social environment to which children are exposed. We need to reform our own attitudes and consciousness in order to determine and distinguish between what children need, versus what

they like, and to put more effort into building a bridge across which we can convey our messages to their hearts. If we do not begin by reforming ourselves, whatever we try to do for them is likely to be rootless. To determine what they really need requires the fostering of our reason, courage, self-confidence and all that emerges from the true strength of love.

What we really need is for parents to have a more positive involvement in their children's training, as opposed to sending them out of the house for their own convenience, treating the dojo like a daycare center. Whether directly or indirectly, it is the parents who need to practise Aikido, one way or another. They need to show their interest, commitment, support and encouragement by sharing the children's struggles, pain, pleasure and happiness, their emotional ups and downs, as they go through the

various stages in their training.

Aikido is non-competitive and there is no way for the parents to get involved with their children's training other than to be there with them, directly or indirectly. The value of Aikido, especially in today's world, lies in its firmness to resist trophies, medals, champions, victories, praise, or any form of materialism whatsoever. It should be a profound education for the parents, as there is no space in Aikido for them to place their personal gratification and egoism on their children if they join in their training.

*Postscript*

*I hope that readers will not be offended or take my statement about American children as a criticism.*

*I write this article from a very traditional martial arts point of view, the environment in which I was brought up.*

**Shihan TK Chiba**  
**Birankai Founder**  
*From Sansho, Fall/Winter 1988*

Photo: Dee Chen



London Aikikai junior students, Japanese Matsuri, Trafalgar Square, London, Sept 2014

# The Dichotomy Between Tori and Uke - Christina Vaccaro Treads a Delicate Path



Mastering a martial art is a life-long journey. It is the path of refining one's



Christina Vaccaro

character and above all, it is hard and continuous work, demanding sincere devotion to the art, to the teacher and to the Dojo. As O-Sensei himself had put it: "True budo is not a fighting technique based on a rash use of force against another in order to determine who is stronger or who can win in a contest; rather it is a path centred on daily training with other kindred souls, mutually working together to polish and refine their individual characters."<sup>i</sup> What we crave to harvest are not grades but ethical virtues and freedom of self. Chiba Sensei described the transmission of the art by a natural progression consisting of five pillars, where the fifth pillar, *openness*, is "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."<sup>ii</sup> Aikido is a wonderful art and tool, helping us to conquer our ego-centred greed, ignorance and anger, developing humility and a noble form of self-confidence at the same time. We are humble as we know that we will never master the art to its supreme perfection, and we are self-confident as we learn to face fear and to trust our inner ability to receive and to protect.

After seven years of practising Aikido, I find myself now in a time of transition. In the past, I have found myself being Uke, ie internally taking the Uke role through and through. This has never been a conscious decision, but an unconscious attachment to the virtues of the Uke: to commit (the attack),

to give (the centre), to receive (the strike) and to fall. There are two perspectives to the fall. One part is that we have to learn how to survive - the technique; life. We have to learn how to react to blows and painful experiences without being injured and losing the joy of living. Another and indeed personal part is that for some or maybe for all of us it is hard to picture ourselves as a 'winner' and - particularly speaking from a woman's perspective - as the one who dominates. Of course, Tori is reacting to Uke too, but still it is Tori who holds the ultimate position, who leads the way. And even though the domination of Uke by Tori is not to take his or her life but to give it back, it is still a form of domination which I had had my struggles with.

## To Study and Recognize

I remember many occasions where I found myself incapable of impersonating the right *shin* (heart, mind, spirit) for conducting a technique as Tori. Always did I prefer to be Uke, wishing my counterpart to begin being Tori, even as I gradually 'climbed' the Kyu ladder and hence was supposed to start as Tori whenever I practised with someone less advanced than myself. I became to be conscious of my pronounced inner preference very quickly, yet as the years passed, I never found a 'solution' to it. However, it became sort of a problem for me. For one part, how was I supposed to improve my technical knowledge and abilities when I so much took to the Uke role? But much more importantly, how could I ever transform the self to be immovable, vigilant, sincere and fresh-minded as expressed by Chiba Sensei? Chiba Sensei named it the "Immovable or Unshakable Spirit" and stated it as the first psychospiritual element for cultivation of martial awareness.<sup>iii</sup> Here again, I had no problems to incorporate an

unshakable attitude as Uke - facing and handling great Ki and power of movement thrown at me. Yet, I did not wish to test the unshakable mind of my Uke when being Tori. The turning point came on an intensive Aikido seminar - only weeks ago. I was practising with a Nidan and Fukushido-in, taking Ukemi for Kokyu-Ho. Everything went 'smoothly' when the teacher approached us and shouted: "No!" Both of us stopped, looking quite aghast. The teacher looked at the Nidan and said: "You want to throw!" and then he looked at me and said in a rather accusing voice: "And you want to fall!" In this moment, for the very first time, besides my usual first thought ("Yes, I want to fall") there was a strong and clear inner voice protesting: I do not want to fall!

It was an ordinary situation and although I cannot explain why, it had triggered something inside me. There it was: the *shin* I had not been able to locate for so long. It had never been absent, only it had had to be awakened again. In this moment, I saw, like in my life off-the mat too, how I had not been able to be Tori and how my neglected *shin* of protection, guidance and leadership had enrolled itself in my Aikido as well. And thereafter something was put in its place and I knew that I am able to be not mere Uke but Tori too; I knew I could establish balance between these two and finally enhance integration and harmony.

## Developing a Compassionate But Strong *Shin*

As Mitsugi Saotome wrote, "Aikido is not a sport. It is a discipline, an educational process for training the mind, body, and spirit."<sup>iv</sup> There are many things I have to learn - on a physical level, on a technical level, but most of all on a mental level. I do wish to study and embody Aikido fully. A coin has two sides; the two of them make the

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coin. Uke and Tori are interrelated, Aikido needs both. I need to practise both to refine my character and become a person of inner harmony. It is said that you learn Aikido through Ukemi. This is true, but it is not all. As a devoted student to the art, I need to become a good Tori. Only thus will a student ever be able to pass the art on and become a teacher. Something I have neglected ignorantly for many years. A student (I) needs a teacher. But one day, a student has to become a teacher. Otherwise, the transmission of the art will stop and Aikido will end. Whether I will ever come as far as to actually be a teacher, I do not know and dare not guess; but this is not the crucial point. The key point is that it is part of the way to *try* and be as good a Tori as an Uke.

### **The Journey in Retrospective: Acknowledgements**

It is time to look forward and I am joyfully looking towards the steps still to come. Nonetheless,

the future is not yet here, and “you have to know the past to understand the present” as Carl Sagan said. Therefore, I wish to express my greatest thanks to my teacher Jürgen Schwendinger Sensei, who introduced me to the art right at the beginning and has ever since formed the basis of my Aikido, continuously supporting me through my studying years where I could not practise at my home dojo, the O Sen Kan. Thanks to his openness and trust I was permitted to visit many different dojos - as a seminar participant or as an Uchi Deshi. Also, I wish to thank Michael Schwendinger Sensei and Wolfgang Petter Sensei and all members of the O Sen Kan.

I thank my teacher’s teacher, Tony Cassells Sensei, Mark Pickering Sensei and Andy Colclough Sensei from the United Kingdom for all the support they have given me throughout many years. I wholeheartedly thank Anne Ducouret Sensei, her assistant Fukushidoins,

Jean-Gabriel Massardier and Cyrille Benoit, as well as all other members of the Ann Jyou Kan Dojo, where I was allowed to live and practise as an Uchi Deshi for three months. Each of them contributed to one of the most enriching periods of my life. Also, I thank my temporary Aikido teachers from Germany, Jules and Leoni McGough and Frank Edelmaier, for welcoming and integrating me kindly in their dojo for two years. Lastly, I thank my Zazen teacher, Roshi Eran Junryu Vardi from New Jersey, who has encouraged me (and still does) to trust my path.

**Christina Vaccaro 1st Dan  
O Sen Kan  
Aikikai Dornbirn  
Birankai Austria**

<sup>i</sup> Ueshiba, M, and Takahashi, H. (ed) (2013): The Heart of Aikido: The Philosophy of Takemusu Aiki. Kodansha, USA, p 52

<sup>ii</sup> Chiba, TK (2007): The Study and Refinement of Martial Awareness. In: SHIUN. The Birankai Continental Europe Newsletter, Vol 5, p 7

<sup>iii</sup> Chiba, TK (2007): The Study and Refinement of Martial Awareness. In: SHIUN. The Birankai Continental Europe Newsletter, Vol 5, No 2, p 4

<sup>iv</sup> Saotome, Mitsugi (1993): Aikido and the Harmony of Nature. Shambhala, United States of America, p 245



London Aikikai junior students, Japanese Matsuri, Trafalgar Square, London

# Julie Gouthez Finds that Face to Face Encounter with Oneself or Teacher Can Lead to a Special Bond

**A**ikido practice is first of all, a meeting with myself as well as a meeting with the person



Julie Gouthez

that is teaching. This relationship is extremely demanding and so is the practice, but it is precisely this bond that makes us progress on the way.

What is the way? Aikido is not just what I do on the tatami, it is also present in my daily life. It offers introspection and deeper self-knowledge; to begin with, it is the way to the self, then the way to the other, and further the way to a relationship with others and the world. For me it is not the way of wisdom and peace as the 'do' is perceived by the popular imagination and as I could have described it before I started to practise. It is first of all the path to self-knowledge, to the awareness and acceptance of one's positive and negative emotions.

Is it necessary to modify what can be judged as negative when it is a constitutive part of oneself? I don't have yet any answer to this questioning for the path to acceptance is a long and difficult one. Furthermore this questioning is amplified by the reflection of the sensei we choose.

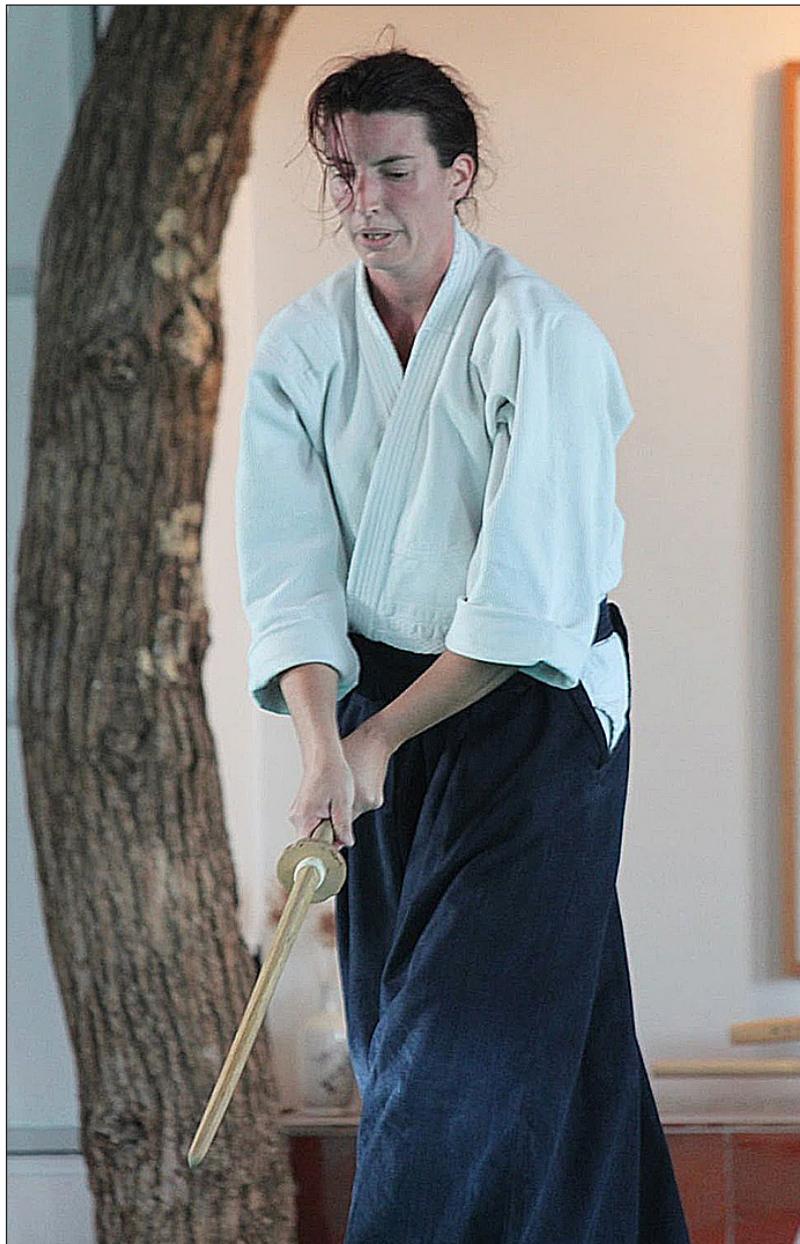
For me this choice is not due to chance. It came, perhaps unconsciously, because this encounter satisfies a need of the moment. So the face to face with oneself is amplified if not guided by a face to face with the teacher. This combination then gives birth to a special bond with one's teacher.

It could be regarded as a parent-child relationship since it also generates the construction of the self with the same care and goodwill, but it differs from it by the

demanding nature and the fragility of the bond created. To preserve and expand this connection is a job of each moment, each class and each time spent together on the tatami and in daily life. It is a rich and profound relationship with its drawbacks, its happiness, its sorrows, its heartbreaks and its moments of

exaltation. It is a reflection of life, ever changing but so rewarding.

**Julie Gouthez**  
**Dai jyo kan Bagnols sur Cèze**  
**Birankai France**  
**Shodan essay**



Julie during the 'prairial' seminar, Dai jyo Kan, Bagnols sur Cèze, France, May 2018



## Scottish and Borders Birankai Spring Course 2018

# The Four Pillars of Chiba Sensei's Aikido and Scottish Spirit Ensure a Successful Course

Scottish and Borders Birankai held their Spring course over the late May bank holiday. It



Malcolm Blackwood

was based at Carronvale House, Larbert in Scotland. A Victorian mansion in extensive tree lined grounds it once again proved the ideal venue for a sunny long weekend of aikido. This is the fourth time that the course has been held here and it proved as successful and enjoyable as all of the others.

Training followed the four pillars of Chiba Sensei's Aikido being held in blocks each having zazen, body

arts, weapons and Iaido. One block on Saturday. Two blocks on Sunday and one on Monday. The excellent weather allowed weapon classes to be held outdoors with the focus on jo suburi and Sansho.

Teaching was led by Mike Flynn 7th Dan Shihan with Shidoins Stephen Boyle, Richard Edmunds, Paul Goatman and Malcolm Blackwood. Special thanks to visiting instructor Laurent Bertrand Shidoin from Gen Yo Kan Strasbourg. Congratulations were given to Mike Flynn on his promotion to 7th Dan and Hombu 6th Dan certificates were presented to Stephen Boyle and Richard Edmunds. Celebratory libations were taken later.

A busy mat included students

from across the UK with visitors from Gen Yo Kan, Strasburg and Aikido Landau, Germany. The strong Scottish presence ensured dynamic and lively practice for all. Visitors had the option of full board at Carronvale house or attending daily.

This increasingly popular course and venue is a highlight of our calendar and accommodation fills up quickly. The next Spring course is predicted to be even more popular with Sensei George Lyons coming over from the USA.

**Malcolm Blackwood 4th Dan  
Durham Aikikai  
Scottish & Borders Birankai**

## Notes from BB Spring Course by Stuart Lovering

Thank you all who attended the BB Spring course on 26-27 May 2018 at Bilberry Hill Centre, Birmingham which was rescheduled after bad weather.

As usual the deep commitment of the students resulted in a worthwhile exercise and improved their techniques.

The three 6th dan shidoins instructed some great classes that kept all motivated through the two days of the course.

The junior classes before the course also went well with the assis-

tance of a couple of our dan grades which kept them training good throughout the sessions.

Well done to all the juniors as you trained very conscientiously.

Some of you will have seen the feedback sheets during the course. This is a way you can let us know how it went or how you would have preferred it to go so thank you for filling them in.

As you can see Musubi is a great way to share the experiences that you had during a class or a course so if you have any comments or observations even if it is brief please

send them to the Musubi team for inclusion in our newsletter.

I would like to thank all who assisted both at and during the organising of the Spring course.

Summer school is next on 4-8 August and Booking is now open. If you are able to assist us again please let me know.

Many thanks.

**Stuart Lovering 4th Dan  
Tudor Grange Central Aikikai  
British Birankai**



# Kagamibiraki Grading for 2018 published by Hombu Dojo, Tokyo in January

## Grades awarded to European Birankai members

### 7th Dan

Tony Cassells, British Birankai  
Michael Flynn, Scottish and Borders Birankai  
Christopher Mooney, British Birankai  
Gabriel Valibouze, Birankai France

### 6th Dan

Steven Boyle, Scottish and Borders Birankai  
Richard Edmunds, Scottish and Borders Birankai  
Piotr Masztalerz, Birankai Poland  
Amnon Tzechovoy, Birankai Israel

*Congratulations • Congratulations • Congratulations • Congratulations*



## Aikikai British Birankai

### Aikido Summer School 2018

Saturday 4 - Wednesday 8 August

Worcester University, Worcester



**Shihan: Etsuji Horii 7th Dan (Aikido Kobe Sanda, Japan)**

**Shihan: Tony Cassells 7th Dan, Birankai**

**Shihan: Chris Mooney 7th Dan, Birankai**

**Stuart Lovering 5th Dan, Birankai**

**Guest Shihan: Gordon Jones 7th Dan, UKA**

Prices :    Week   £125    £75 (Concession)  
              Daily    £30     £20

**All organisations welcome**

Details and booking - contact Stuart Lovering    [stuart@britishbirankai.com](mailto:stuart@britishbirankai.com)  
[www.britishbirankai.com](http://www.britishbirankai.com)



# BIRANKAI IN EUROPE SUMMER CAMP 2018



Birankai Europe Summer Camp 2017 Annweiler

Saturday 21 to Wednesday 25 July 2018

A week of Aikido  
with

**BIRANKAI SHIHANS**

and

**JENNY FLOWER SHIDOIN**

**PIOTR MASZTALERZ SHIDOIN**

Celebrating 20 years of Gen Ei Kan Aikido Dojo Landau

Landau in der Pfalz, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany

All styles and organisations welcome

Registration opens 1 March 2018

on [www.birankai.de/camp](http://www.birankai.de/camp)



# BIRANKAI IN EUROPE SUMMER CAMP 2018

## TIMETABLE

Saturday 20.07.2018

3x Aikido 14:30–18:00

Sunday 21.07.2018 to Tuesday 24.07.2018

Iai-Batto-Ho or Zazen 06:30–07:30

3x Aikido 09:00–12:30

2x Aikido 15:45–18:00

Wednesday 25.07.2018

3x Aikido 09:00–12:30

## LANDAU 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

As part of the Summer Camp, Gen Ei Kan Aikido Dojo Landau will celebrate its twentieth anniversary — further details to follow.

## LOCATION

Raimund-Huber-Str. 16

76829 Landau-in-der-Pfalz

Germany

Nearest train stations Landau (Pfalz) Hbf 2.2km

Landau (Pfalz) Süd 0.7km

Nearest airports Frankfurt am Main (FRA)

Stuttgart (STR)

Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden (FKB)

Overnight stays in the Dojo are possible.

Camping places and holiday apartments are available in the local area.

## CONTACT

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