



The monkey is reaching for the moon in the water,
Until death overtakes him he will never give up.
If he would only let go the branch and disappear into the deep pool,
The whole world would shine with dazzling clearness.
Monkey, painting by Zen Master Hakuin, Japan, 18th c. Eisei Bunko

Contents:	<i>Sen Nen Sugi Aiki Dojo</i>	2
	<i>Barbara Imboden, essay</i>	3
	<i>Ursula Shaffner, essay</i>	4
	<i>Amnon Tzechovoy, article</i>	5
	<i>Daniel Brunner, Repairing a saya</i>	7
	<i>Christophe Peytier, article</i>	9

Translations:	<i>Christophe Brunner</i>
	<i>Suzanne Brunner</i>
	<i>Norberto Chiesa</i>
	<i>Iona Ellis</i>
	<i>Christophe Peytier</i>
	<i>Ghislaine Soulet</i>

Sen Nen Sugi Aiki Dojo

Birankai Member Dojo of Poland
Under the direction of Daniel Brunner



Piotr Masztalerz and Renata Bohdanowicz

The history of our dojo started in September 1979, which means that this year we are celebrating our 25-th anniversary. Many thanks to all of you for sending your warm congratulations.

Our club is situated in Wroclaw, a city of 600.000 inhabitants in southwest Poland. I could not write about the history of our club without mentioning the father of Polish aikido, Marian Osinski, from the northwest of Poland. A former judoka fascinated in the mid 70'ties with this new oriental martial art, he gathered around him a few enthusiasts and started the first aikido group in Poland in 1976.

Two people from among these pioneers (Andrzej Ciewiernia, Janusz Stanko) came in 1979 to Wroclaw and started to teach aikido. I was lucky to be on the first training. From nowadays perspective those years make me smile. We have never had a Japanese aikido master resident in Poland. We had neither instructors nor books and Internet was not invented yet and surely what we had practised was far away from aikido, but we were young, full of energy and enthusiasm. There were no obstacles for us.

Gradually we made contacts with foreign aikidokas and the first Japanese aikido teacher who visited Poland in 1979 was T. Ichimura sensei, who lived in Sweden.

From the very beginning each aikido club in Poland sought its own way of development and made contacts with more advanced aikidokas. Our club had great luck when Daniel Brunner sensei came in 1985 from far away Lausanne to Wroclaw to prepare a performance in the Puppet Theatre. He found our dojo and changed our aikido life. It is difficult to express our feelings, when after 6 years of efforts and lonely seeking of correct aikido movements, suddenly, out of the blue an experienced aikido teacher (yondan) appeared in our dojo. This first contact turned into a long relationship and friendship. Thanks to his unlimited patience, Daniel sensei still finds energy to teach us, to visit Poland regularly and to try to transform us into aikidokas, showing us the true nature of aikido. Thank you Daniel sensei very, very much!

Aikido was during all these years very popular in Poland and we always had tens of people

(mainly teenagers) in our dojo. Today we have 4 dojos in Wroclaw and about 200 students (including the group of 50 children). The trainings are conducted by 7 instructors who are (beside me): Piotr Masztalerz (nidan, practicing 16 years), Renata Bohdanowicz (shodan, practicing 23 years), Jacek Kochaniec (shodan, practicing 17 years), Zbigniew Dudzic (shodan, practicing 15 years), Krzysztof Jedras (shodan, practicing 11 years) and Darek Machalski (shodan, practicing 11 years).

Daniel Brunner sensei gave to our dojo the name Sen Nen Sugi in 1999. We like it very much because it means 1000-years cedar, which is the symbol of long life, persistence and steadfastness. We would like to have the same attributes and we are happy that our teacher sees us that way.

Since a few years, after D. Brunner sensei joined the Birankai, we keep close contacts with Birankai Continental Europe. Our instructors and

students take part in Spring and Summer courses in France with T. K. Chiba shihan and few of them were uchideshi in the Strasbourg dojo. Two instructors: Piotr and Renata were in 2003 uchideshi in the San Diego dojo of T. K. Chiba shihan.

An old Chinese proverb says that each, even the longest trip starts with the first step. In August 2004 we became members of the Birankai Continental Europe. Let it be the first step of at least the next 25 years.

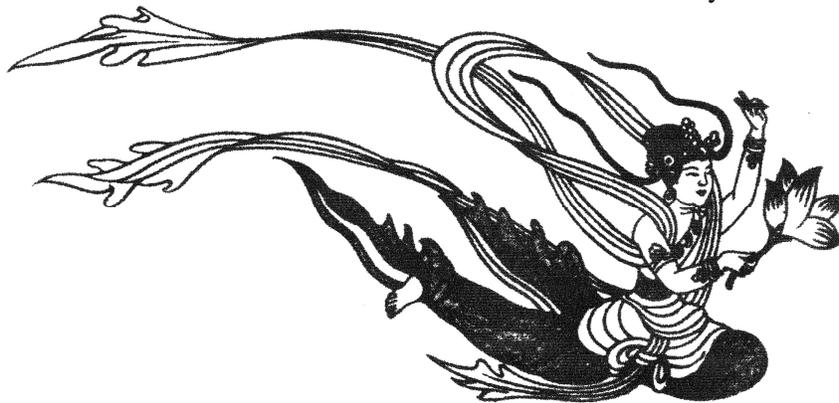
Andrzej Sobolewski

On the 28 of November, 2004, M. Sobolewski has been promoted to yondan, Piotr Masztalerz and Renata Bohdanowicz to sandan, and Zbigniew Dudzic and Jacek Kochaniec to nidan.

Difficulties on the way to becoming an Aikido teacher

Barbara Imboden re-testing for Fukushido in

Translated by Iona Ellis



After years of practicing Aikido, for most Aikidoka who continue to train, there comes a point where you have to teach Aikido. The step to becoming a teacher, however, is linked with many difficulties, which often only first become apparent later.

The process of teaching disturbs the rhythm of training which one is accustomed to. The time spent practicing Aikido is no longer devoted to one's own training, but in the training of others. One's own physical activity, especially ukemi, becomes much too short.

The time spent practising Aikido is time spent on oneself. This means for example, time spent having a break from work. Teaching is a task, so it is time spent

working – the rest and recuperation time for oneself is missing.

To take responsibility for teaching is not only limited to the physical, technical side of Aikido: at the core, the teacher takes on the responsibility for the development of others. In order to be able to fulfil this task, it is not enough to be solely technically perfect, and physically fit and healthy. These are only external criteria which can be immediately seen. Just as important (or in the longer term, perhaps more important) is 'spiritual healing'. This cannot be achieved solely through practicing Aikido, but only through extensive life experiences. Without these, teaching overtaxes the young teacher. When one first assumes the role as teacher, there is a big danger that one becomes too self-important.

These difficulties appear in opposition to the tasks of an Aikido teacher. There are requirements that should be fulfilled. One should:

- Know one's own strengths and weaknesses (in Aikido and in general);
- Put others first as opposed to putting oneself first;
- Be ready to be present and attentive to students;
- Learn to recognise where individual problems of students lie, and try to understand the relationship between the physical problems and their sometimes emotional causes;
- Develop the ability to identify and respect other people's limits, and work with each student on their individual limits;
- Possess the necessary openness to spontaneously respond to any situation;
- Be able to actively cope with conflict in the Dojo or in training; and
- Be unbiased.

In order to be able to practically prepare oneself for the difficult tasks of a teacher, every Aikidoka who is interested in teaching should begin to conduct an occasional class, and take responsibility for only this class. This enables one to learn without great pressure how to stand in front of a class. Thereby one will inevitably gradually learn to manage the tasks and difficulties of

the teacher, without having to carry the full responsibility.

Another way to learn how to give one's time to others and work with them is through the mutual help of a senior and junior student through the preparation for an examination. Thereby learning how to coach and cultivate another through their difficulties.

Such experiences can help to decide, whether teaching is above all a task, which one can transmit from one's heart. The step to becoming a teacher is still, however, a challenge, which each person must wake up to – also there can be a time, when one can take a temporary step backwards in one's own training. To mature as a teacher is a way, which is never fully completed, and in this sense I understand Chiba Sensei's words "there is no room for stagnation"*.

July 2004

* This essay is based on spontaneous thoughts, which I noted down after reading Chiba Sensei's article "Young Lions' Face Challenges" in Biran Fall 2002: In many respects, the article spoke of me as a young teacher in a critical stage and prompted me to reflect on what 'to be a teacher' can or should mean. These thoughts have today, after 2 years, not lost their relevance.

Barbara Imboden

Motivation for my Fukushima Exam

Ursula Schaffner



I have been thinking about opening my own Dojo for a long time but until today I have found all kinds of excuses not to do it. I argued that the circumstances were not yet convenient, that I was not yet mature enough, that I wanted to do it with other people, which I didn't find, and many other arguments.

During the last two or three years – since I joined Birankai and since I'm training on seminars within the Birankai – I feel more and more encouraged to take the very important step of establishing my dojo.

What this decision means for me is facing, accepting, meeting and living all kinds of fears and joy such a project can produce and evoke. I feel it

is a bit like deciding to establish a family, since I have neither family nor children of my own.

I had to clarify for my self the following questions: Will I lose my freedom? Will I be able and be strong enough to keep alive my Dojo on my own and for how long? Do I find the good way to teach and to motivate people to train in my Dojo? Will I find students? Will I find a hall I can pay? What's about the costs?

Yes, now I'm on the point I can say yes, I want to take the plunge! I'm able to do it and it's time to do it. I like teaching, I have organized my life so that there is a stable place for Aikido – and finally I want to take my responsibility. So why not planning the opening of my Dojo for my 20th Aikido-anniversary next year?

I visualise myself and my dojo in the context of an association and that association is the Birankai because I feel and see that the people there are training seriously, with engagement and on the search of the true martial art. My choice and preference is to work in that spirit.

I trained in different styles, under the direction of different Senseis such as Ikeda Sensei in Switzerland, Tamura Sensei, Saito Sensei, Hosokawa Sensei, and also and still with Tiki Shewan Sensei. I have not found any other place where the training is so serious and so well based as in Birankai. Specifically the work on weapons as an integrated aspect of the way of Aikido fills me with enthusiasm and inspires me a great deal.

I have never before experienced such hard and challenging trainings until I joined seminars with teachers from Birankai. Often I felt I was working beyond my limits – and found new freedom in movements and emotions. Sometimes I also found the trainings were too hard and too much. But I had to ask myself: am I not a free person who decides by myself how far I want to go, what are the idols I would like to follow, what demands I have on myself. At the same time other questions were (and still are) constantly going through my mind concerning the relationship with “the master”: Do I have to accept what he is asking from me? Do I have to devote myself to him? Can he know what is good for me and how far can he go with me? - On the end it's a question of confidence and finding the balance between my own perception and arguments and that of the masters. I feel that in the surroundings of Birankai I can grow up, because, as mentioned above, the trainings are challenging and the dialogue is permanent, whether visible or not.

As I said I would like to open my dojo, and as the title of Fukushidoin is the formal condition to join Birankai with a Dojo, it's the logical step I would like to take: to show I have clarified my relation to this association. My preparation brought me back to the basics and showed me I really would like to follow on the trace I have found in the last five years.

Ursula Schaffner, 8th of August 2004

Aikido and Personal Change

By Amnon Tzechovoy

Anyone doing AIKIDO sooner or later realizes that emotional qualities are involved in the process; indeed, personal change takes place in that space created between persons practicing on the mat, again and again doing the same exercise. There is evidently more than a grain of self-improvement in Aikido. In this paper I wish to examine some relevant elements in this process from my own personal perspective.

Several days ago my son turned to me and asked "Dad, who is the strongest Aikido instructor in the entire world?" After I hesitantly replied, he returned with yet another questions: "who is your teacher?" I said: "Chiba Sensei". The name ob-

viously rang no bell, and he promptly continued with "did you ever beat him?" "No" I concluded. "And, will you ever beat him?" my son retorted. "No", I said, "I would never beat him".

This exchange may at first appear somewhat trivial, and yet my son sensitively touched upon one of the essential foci in Aikido: the particular harmonious relationships that its discipline entails. This harmonious softness is there at first sight when we look at the very name Aikido. Indeed, many articles on Aikido do emphasize “harmony” as the quintessential characteristic of this discipline. This concept of harmony, *awasse*, implies togetherness, openness to others, a kind of coop-

eration which this martial art brings to the fold of its disciples.

Strictly egotistic drives and personal rivalry and conflicts are part and parcel of the Aikido universe. For Aikido practitioners, harmony is desirable, but not easy to find. The Aikidoistic world, so to speak, is typified by many rifts, many rivalries. I shall soon attempt to spell out the sources of these negative sentiments.

The argument I wish to develop consists of two parts; the first deals with the personal traits of those practicing Aikido. The second part touches upon the nature of Aikido *per se*.

Who actually is doing Aikido? There is no doubt that a person dedicating so many hours to Aikido is doing it not merely for 'technical' reasons. There is obviously something that goes deeper. Instructions directed throughout any class clarify that they rarely deal with sheer performance. There is nothing there that relates merely to the angle of the arm or leg. Instructions by and large aim to the person in training, and to a rather total change in him or in her – that should take place in the next minute to come, next year or much later than that. "Be calm and composed", "loosen your muscles", "flow with the movement", and also the immortal "do not object". These instructions, so often repeated throughout lessons, point to the major aim of the person involved in practicing Aikido. Ultimately – and this is my main thesis - the goal is **transformation, personal change**.

Here then comes my basic proposition about the connection between the observation made above (about the essential disharmony current among – and within! – Aikido practitioners) and their choice of Aikido as a primary investment in life. I suggest that people practicing Aikido respond to primary unfulfilled needs driving practitioners to closure and fulfillment. In other words, considering the actual instructions given in the course of a typical Aikido lesson, and the non-harmonious initial condition of an Aikido community, Aikido practitioners seek (consciously or unconsciously) solutions towards harmony, a sense of solidarity, and cooperation. Aikido is a martial art, but nevertheless it introduces an element not to be found in any other art of its kind. It offers battles with no winners and no losers. One of the implications of the basic Aikido-characteristic of no-winners-no-losers is that hierarchy within the Aikido community is essentially irrelevant. For indeed, how can one decide who is

up and who is down? No matter how high you are in the hierarchy, you are never really 'better' than anyone else, for there is no criterion to make such a judgment. Indeed, Aikido never fosters "competition", and is thus an unusual martial art. I would classify Aikido as a 'soft' martial art, without any motive for hurting others in any way.

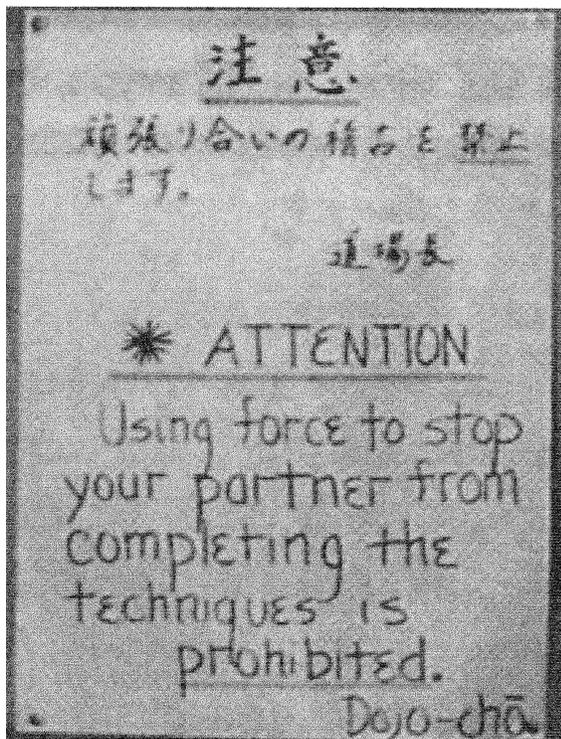
At this point I wish to return to the harmony mentioned in the opening paragraph. This harmony prevails as long as no violence is involved in the process. And this, of course, is a major value in Aikido. The following questions arise: Why is it so? Is it a constitutive value, or could Aikido exist without this principle? What does Aikido philosophy lead to?

We should not forget, not even for a split second, that human beings are aggressive, by their very nature, even 'evil'. As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, aggressiveness prevails in each and every one of us. In fact, it is rather easy to demonstrate how the primal impulse leaves a devastating mark. The difficulty here is to overcome the primal impulse. Side by side with destructiveness we have constructiveness and also creativeness. Destructiveness can impair or even destroy relationships, whereas its opposite allows for growth and creativity. Negative emotions might be envy, greed, hatred, cowardice or even vengefulness. Each one of us has at one point or another such emotions and they reside in us alongside more 'noble' emotions. As suggested above, even more than others, Aikido practitioners exemplify the need to overcome aggression and destructive rivalry grounded in the human nature.

Morihei Ueshiba created a cohesive structure that enables us to continually confront the destructive elements in men and women, so that we eventually become better human beings. Often we fail, but perhaps failure is the engine that feeds continuity. This dynamics is created from the very basic structure of couples/dyads. As simple as it may seem, this basic component of AIKIDO is what makes it so absolutely unique. No matter with whom we practice, we always strive to master our inner self towards an improvement manifested in the ability to tune ourselves to the other, and also in being more co-operative. This quality of tuning into another person is what pulls us away from narcissistic modes of action and allows the evolution of mutual reciprocity.

There is no coincidence therefore that in O Sensei's dojo there is a sign saying that 'disturbing your partner is totally forbidden'.

Harmony in AIKIDO is a regulative feature. It aims towards development of the kind that allows us to overcome destructive forces. However, as every teacher knows, some students do not work harmoniously. They are not 'flowing' or they are not 'soft' enough. They nonetheless continue practicing and this is what challenges us as teachers. Naturally, teachers run the danger of resorting to destructive forces against such students. Our ego is put to the test by those who are actually there to attack us or at least check 'how good we are'. We are aware of being tested but by virtue of the Aikido tools we do not let primal impulses dictate our responses. Surely, we might as well have some scars from childhood, some problems that might encourage us to go the 'wrong way', but with Aikido—a healing method—we are less likely to respond violently or even in a remotely aggressive fashion. My own conviction is that we are here to utilize the healing qualities of AIKIDO. It is not mere accident that made us come to Aikido. Once we are there, we eventually learn to be grateful to AIKIDO.



This announcement was hanging on the wall at O Sensei Dojo.

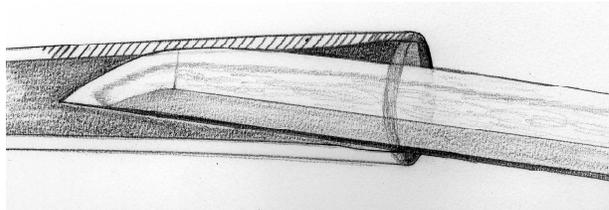
Mr. Amnon Tzechovoy lives in Israel. He holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and works as a professional psychotherapist. He holds the rank of SanDan. and is the chief instructor in Tel-Aviv University Dojo.

CARING FOR AND REPAIRING A SAYA.

Text and illustrations by **Daniel Brunner**

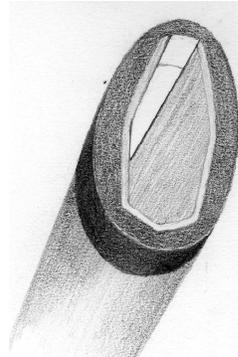
The practice of Iai-Batto-Ho can be very damaging to the weapon, particularly to the good condition of the scabbard. It is advisable to have good care and to repair it when necessary in order to avoid more important damage.

The most frequent accident occurs in the “upper” part of the saya, which the cutting edge of the blade scores with every NUKI TSUKE poorly executed.



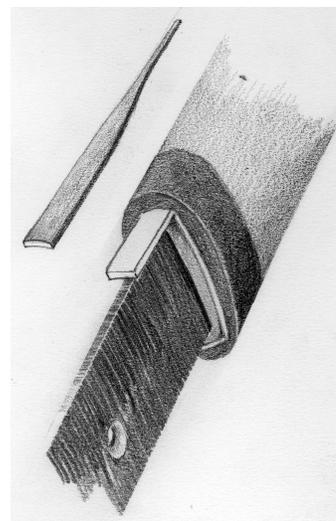
The harm is quickly done with a cutting blade, but a Iaito can produce the same effect. To begin with the sword no longer holds tight into the scabbard and if nothing is done, the blade can eventually cut through the wood of the saya and the inside of the left hand that is holding it.

To fix the damage, the mouth of the scabbard (KOIGUCHI meaning carp's mouth) must be thoroughly cleaned of all traces of oil and rendered flat; a sliver of wood is then made to fit and glued. The new surface is ad-

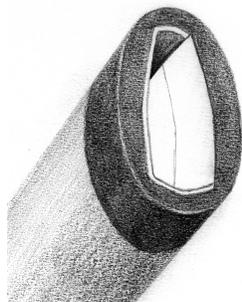


justed to make full contact with the habaki under a slight pressure.

This restoration is to be made frequently, even if there are no cuts, when the sword no longer holds safely in the scabbard.



Another problem, also caused by a faulty execution of NOTO, occurs on the vertical surface of the koiguchi, on the OMOTE side of the saya. The procedure is the same as for the upper part.



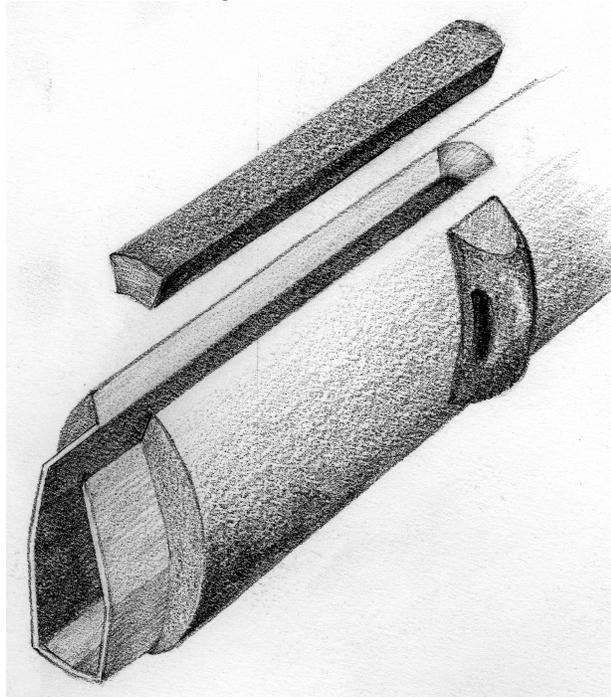
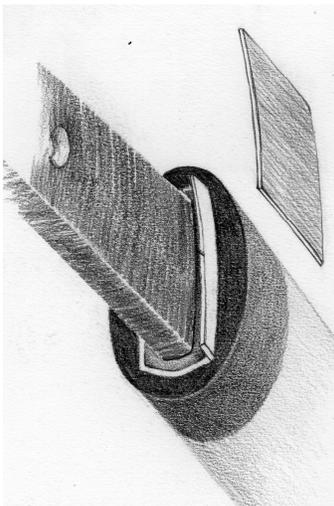
Very often, both places are repaired at the same time.

The best wood for this work is HONOKI, a Japanese magnolia that has

little or no sap according to the time of the year in which the tree was cut.

Nevertheless, lint wood is just as good and much easier to find.

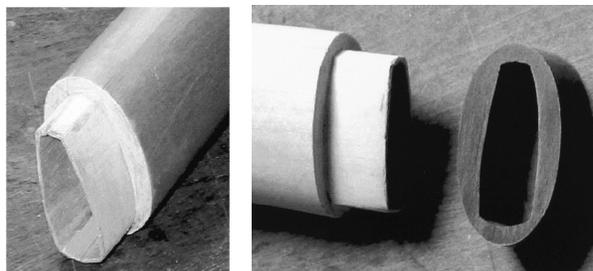
Note that although it is possible to use a good quality sand paper to shape the saya of a Iaito, it is not advisable to do that with the saya of a real sword. In that case it is safer to use cutting tools like a cutter or a fine file.



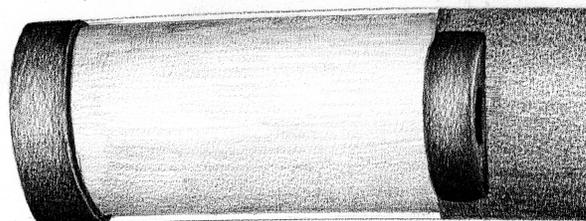
If the upper part of the saya, between the koiguchi and the kurikata, becomes thoroughly damaged, it can be repaired by inserting a new piece of wood, or better yet, a piece of black water buffalo horn. To that effect a lodging is carved out in the damaged area and the piece shaped to fit is carefully glued.

If this operation is required in the scabbard of a Iaito, the koiguchi, usually made out of plastic,

will probably need to be replaced. In that case, a new koiguchi is carved out of a piece of black horn.



This area can be reinforced with wrapped bamboo or with a piece of SAME, the rey skin that covers the tsuka under the lacing.



The thickness is reduced by about a millimeter so that the reinforcement will be flush with the surface of the saya.



The work is finished with a matching laquer. There are on the market synthetic laquers that are easy to use. Wood floor lacquers highly resistant to abrasion is a convenient choice. They can also be tinted with dry pigments.

*For details on techniques and materials please contact **Daniel Brunner** at www.ryusekikai.ch*

The Question of Transmission, Part one

Christophe Peytier

In ancient Greece, the numbering system was “One, Two, Many”. Indeed, as soon as we are dealing with more than two people, the question of transmission arises: How to transmit an art for the students of the next generation?

Part 1: From the Sensei’s side

For all instructors came the day where the first class had to be taught, and thus ask the key questions: What am I going to show them? Which techniques will I make them practice? What message do I want to transmit? With a mixed bag of intentions: On the one hand, do things simple, just by humility, and on the other hand, not leave the students with the feeling that they haven’t practiced anything interesting.

Since that very first class as an instructor, fundamental questions arise regarding the transmission of martial arts: What are we really transmitting? Is there a concrete “matter” to hand down to the next generation? How is the content defined? In fact, it is important to come back to the meaning of the word “Sensei”: In Japanese, it means “One who has come before”. That is a person who is in front of us on the path of Budo.

This definition is important to highlight the process of martial art teaching. Without being provocative, one could say that a Sensei does not have anything to teach to his student. He (or she) can only help them to reveal the capabilities that exist in all of them. O Sensei used to say: “Aikido is Misogi”, that is purification. Literally: “removing layers of flesh”, hence the process of cleansing that occur little by little during practice.

But the following stage of this reasoning, then, is: What must be done in order to promote and obtain that purification process? Using the analogy of a diamond: What must a Sensei do so that his student-stones reveal themselves as diamonds? By what means will he help them to remove the coat of dirty mud, to fashion the man-stone so that he can reveal under his optimal angle?

“The Sensei merely transmits a set of conditions”.

Would it be, after all, that the Sensei transmits a collection of conditions? Conditions in which he will place his students so that they have the possibility to grow, evolve and reveal themselves until their maximum potential.

Most of us possess a potential largely superior to what we actually use. We all have heard extraordinary anecdotes: that Russian mother who single-handedly lifted the car under which her son was stuck. Or the NDEs (Near Death Experiment), those opportunities where some individuals have seen death from such a close distance they have returned transfigured. Such American carpenter became professor of physical sciences, created a charity organization, and learned five foreign languages, etc.

These anecdotes all come from isolated origin, usually of accidental nature. On the contrary, the revelation, as we have described it above, stems from a reproducible and transmittable process. The objective is similar: To help the students become conscious of their potential. This revelation of potential helped, in the past, to survive the battle fields, but it has since then been used also to make of every person a better human being, in order to allow each of us to “live his personal legend” as Paulo Coelho writes in the “The Alchemist”.

If one admits that the role of a Sensei is to put his students in conditions to awaken their capabilities to the maximum, then logic would indicate that, in order to reach this result, the Sensei would have had to follow the same path himself.

Let us try to analyze concretely the key elements that define those conditions of revelation. At first glance, they appear at a physical and technical level, like Ikkyo to Rokkyo in Aikido, the trilogy Kihon/Kata/Kumite in Karate, the Long Form in Tai Chi Chuan, or the Ne Waza (ground work) in Judo.

This represents the visible part of the iceberg, and obviously belongs to the “conditions of transmission”, however they weight little compared to the hidden part. This is probably the reason why, in most martial arts, beyond a certain level, one can hear “We need to forget the technique”. In the less visible part of the condi-

tions of transmission, three are outstanding enough to deserve to be discussed more in detail:

- The Mind/Body integrity
- The state of vigilance
- The individualized intensity of practice

The Mind/Body integrity begins with the development of the body consciousness. It is an essential aspect of martial arts, but also of dance, gymnastics and many other disciplines. It includes the perception of time and space and the situation of the body in these four dimensions. In the case of Aikido, these four dimensions are multiplied by two to take into account those of the partner, since right at the beginning an intense contact is developed between the two practitioners.

Corporal integrity assumes an acute perception of the rectitude of the body, what is called *SenChuSei* in Japanese: The consciousness of the central axis. This represents a life-long study. In Aikido, this can be almost better noticed from the Uke side, since it reveals the ability to adapt to a situation that we do not master. One may say that learning to be the strongest will not give us many opportunities to apply what we have learned. On the contrary, learning to react in adapting ourselves to circumstances stronger than us will have almost daily applications. That is the way it is: Life imposes its conditions on us, we cannot force our own. And with the development of the “right posture”, the rectitude of the body, comes the consciousness of the centre, and the resilience: “To not resist, but to not give up”. Adapt oneself to the blows of life without losing what represents our centre, our own personality.

Preserving this attitude during the practice will have a contagious effect on the mind, and will develop the ability to preserve the sense of what is important, even during extraordinary conditions. In fact, one will quickly determine, in a martial arts adept, the degree of “Shizei” that he displays. The Shizei is seen during the bow, during the walk, the practice, or even the sitting position, and reveals the harmony of the relation between space and one’s body.

- The state of vigilance: Those who have seen the difference of attitude of a lion in a cage versus one in the wild will have understood already. This might be the central quality of a mar-

tial arts adept. A Sensei must maintain his students in a state of permanent vigilance so that they can refine their capacity to sense the details at an extreme level. For example, when a Sensei prepares to show a movement that requires a partner, suffice for him to look slightly in the direction of the chosen student for the latter to get out of the line and prepares to practice with the Sensei.

In the Japanese culture, this type of communication without words is called *I Shin Denshin*: “From your soul to mine”, and is considered to be the most sophisticated form of communication. This is the form that needs to be developed between the Sensei and his advanced students.

In another example, that can be readily understood even by beginners, we will compare a Sensei who gives spoken explanations of the exercises to practice during warm-ups, with comments such as “Change directions” before switching from one side of the exercise to the other, with another Sensei that says nothing. In the first case, it is not necessary for the students to be vigilant. One just needs to wait to hear the Sensei’s indication to switch sides; one can look by the window, or daydream without losing much. In the case of the second Sensei, his students must always look then try to feel when he is going to change the motion. Since the very first seconds of the class, one can note a martial dimension (or the lack of thereof) in the practice. Seeing a Sensei lead a warming exercise shouting “change direction”, one can wonder if that teacher will have the capacity to help his students to reveal this basic quality: the spirit of vigilance, fundamental quality in jungle or battlefield survival, and predominant factor in the development of a human being, if we consider that it is at the origin of many others: lucidity, sensitivity, good judgment, speed in decision making, etc.

- The individualized intensity of practice, obliging each student to give the best of himself during the exercise. A Sensei must sense where every student is on the path of practice, and consistently push their limits, with regards to strength, speed, flexibility, ability to react to new circumstances, etc.

There are unfortunately many dojos where one can feel an impression of comfort, like a car engine quietly rumbling on the highway at 60 mph. Even if the students practice in silence and

appear sincere, this does not mean that they are practicing seriously. The role of the instructor is to make sure that each practitioner is permanently “raising his own bar”, that during each class a level of energy and an intensity transpire in an obvious manner.

This willingness to push towards the top also applies to the students among themselves. It is always a great pleasure to see adepts helping each other to grow, to challenge each other with a spirit of mutual progress. That has nothing to do with the need to show one’s superiority, to the contrary. It is a manifestation of respect and generosity, giving the partner the opportunity to improve.

Here again, this attitude can be felt immediately, for example during the practice of Juy Kumite in Karate, or Randori in Aikido, where there is an obvious difference between the “ego battles” and a sincere practice, challenging but with intention to help the partner/opponent to raise his level.

This search of the best intensity for each student is also a source of progress for the Sensei. He must remain sensitive to every student; feel in the fraction of a second where the limits are.

Whoever has practiced with a real master knows that he had to be at his top level to do so. Suffice to be slightly tired, to have had a bad night or too many beers to create an opportunity of injury. In the encounter of two forces, there is always a probability of de-synchronization, from one side or the other.

From the Sensei side, a wrong estimation of the current capacity of the student, and from the student side, a performance below usual standards. This tension obliges each party, instructor and student, to give the best of themselves, even if this sometime creates the risk of a regrettable incident.

However, this risk has an immense advantage: It is the origin of fear. That fear that forces

the student to remain alert and vibrant. In fact, every time one enters on the mat, one should wonder “Am I going to get out alive and in one piece?” The sentence of Chiba Sensei that I heard over fifteen years ago always comes back to mind: “When you attack me you have to think that you may die”. This fear to inflict or to be victim of a bodily damage creates a mutual progress, because fear is a motivating feeling. It must not be repressed but, to the contrary, leveraged. It is fear that maintains in life. If you have the opportunity to talk with army veterans who survived battlefields, you may have already heard that.

However, let us clearly state that we are not talking about purposefully injuring students. Some instructors do practice that way, but this an attitude eminently condemnable. When stepping on the mat, we must be conscious of the possibility of an accident by lack of attention, not wondering if it is on us that “the teacher is going to pass his nerves today”

Here again, suffice to look at a martial art class for 30 seconds to feel the degree of intensity in the practice, and if the conditions above are present.

There are certainly other conditions that should be part of those “conditions of transmission”. Some of which I am not conscious of, but that my students will be able to capture, others that I was not able to understand from my masters, and that may be forgotten by the next generation.

I wish there are only few of the second category, since if not there is a risk that these conditions be insufficient to allow the optimal revelation of the students, and, in consequence, a great loss which will transform the practice of Budo in a mere sport.

Part two will appear in the next issue.

Truth Is Found Moment To Moment

Truth cannot be accumulated. What is accumulated is always being destroyed; it withers away. Truth can never wither because it can only be found from moment to moment in every thought, in every relationship, in every word, in every gesture, in a smile, in tears. And if you and I can find that and live it— the very living is the finding of it— then we shall not become propagandists; we shall be creative human beings— not perfect human beings, but creative human beings, which is vastly different.

Krishnamurti



