

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

A new aikido year begins and Birankai in Europe is facing another period.

Before going further, note the following landmark dates:

- Five years have passed since the creation in April 2003 of Birankai Continental Europe, designed to promote in Continental Europe and under the direction of Chiba Sensei, the practice, the teaching and the spirit of the Aikido of O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba.
- In June 2008 during the ninth annual summer camp in San Diego, Birankai International celebrated the fifty years of Aikido of Chiba Sensei, with Moriteru Ueshiba Doshu of Tokyo Aikikai Foundation as Guest of Honour, and other prestigious guests shihans, notably: Yamada (USAF), Miyamoto (Hombu), Shiohira (PAF) et Fujimaki (Hombu).
- By next November, Birankai will officially present to the Tokyo Aikikai Foundation its application for the recognition of seven Birankai national groups that at present form the Birankai Continental Europe: Germany, Austria, France, Greece, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland.

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To suggest a parallel:

- « A living organism is in a thermodynamic state of non-balance, maintaining an internal homeostatic environment and a continuous energy flow is necessary to maintain this state » (cf. Wikipedia encyclopedia; living organism)

To put it simply: the members and teachers of Birankai Continental Europe shall not be short of work in the months to come.

- To manage the Birankai at national level in order to ground our organization as deeply as possible in the daily practice of aikido, by the members and the dojos that form the true base of our school.

- To do it in relation with the Birankai Continental Europe, which remains our common house.
- A common house that seeks to restructure itself in order to meet its new role: to guarantee at a European level the unity, the continuity and the coherence of the teaching of Aikido under Chiba Sensei.

And of course, the real work gathering us around Chiba Sensei under the symbol of Biran, is awaiting us on the mat. At the camps he has led this summer in Austria, France, UK and Poland, Sensei has given us once more enough to keep us busy for quite a while!
See you soon then...on the mat !

Joël Bertrand



IS NON-VIOLENT MARTIAL ART POSSIBLE?

A note on Aikido Dialectics by Amnon Tzechovoy

Martial awareness is a notion central in Chiba Sensei's vision of life and Aikido. It is a subtle, complex and deep experience hard to explain by words; verbalization we have previously referred to Aikido state of mind in Chiba's vision as "martial awareness". What is it? How can it be articulated by words?

In order to understand Chiba's thought and unique vision underlying our school of Aikido I resort in this final exploration to the philosophy of Emanuel Levinas. A French, Jewish philosopher who captures in words some dimensions of Chiba Sensei's unique experience and vision of the essence of martial art and martial awareness.

In the following I will try to use Levinas' conception of violence in order to explicate Chiba's Sensei's deep and complex notion of Aikido as a non-violent martial art.

In my first and second articles I have raised questions of the essence and meaning of Aikido practice and experience. The recurrent, funda-

mental question was: how can we reconcile Chiba's Aikido with the notion non-violent martial art?

We understand of course that the notion of non-violent martial art is paradoxical; we know that Chiba's Aikido is immensely powerful, replete with dangers to ourselves and others. And yet, it is inherently non-violent. How is this possible?

In his *Difficult Freedom* (1990) Levinas writes:

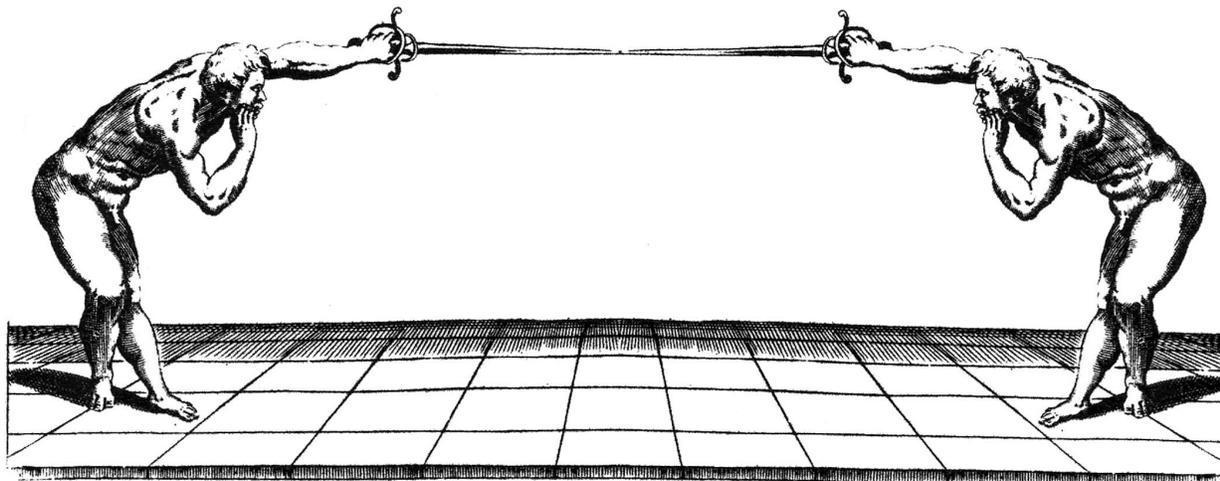
Violence is to be found in any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act; as if the rest of the universe were there only to receive the action; violence is consequently also any action which we endure without at any point collaborating in it.

Levinas' conception of violence as associated with inherent negation of the others' existence is very close in spirit to Chiba's notion of martial awareness embedded in the effort to avoid hurting oneself as well as others! In my

view, from the psychological perspective, violence takes place by virtue of passivity (on the recipient side) and narcissism (on the acting, violent part) Adopting Levinas' suggestive definition, one is free to participate in an allegedly aggressive action leveled at him or to resist it. If one participates in the action to hurt him one makes that action violent! This is indeed a conception of violence truly paradoxical yet in my view deep and closely related to Chiba Sensei's conception of non-violent Aikido martial art.

Thus, being keenly aware of one's opponent's intentions is a precondition of turning alleged violent action into a harmless activity. This is how awareness becomes transformational, namely, transforming an attack into non-violence. In addition, Chiba insists the need to be receptive alive and active, so the Aikidoka is never a victim, and the situation become inherently dialogical. This is, in my view the essence of Chiba Sensei's notion of martial awareness; and that is how Chiba's Aikido school teaches non-violent martial art.

But is it not a predisposition common to



any and every martial art, namely the insistence of being aware of one's opponent's intentions? This is perhaps true. But Chiba's Aikido experience and training consists also of something else; the Aikido practitioner is required to recognize the other-opponent as necessarily existent, never to be erased, and never be denied his or her being. In terms of consciousness and its development in the course of Aikido training the goal is no other than mutual recognition of one and his or her opponent.

The requirement of creating mutual recognition of one and one's opponent is of course very difficult to achieve. A person attacked of-

ten becomes paralyzed as it were, incapable of response. Chiba's Aikido is about the development of this kind of transformational openness turning a potentially violent into non-injurious dialogue.

How is this done? How is it made possible? It is appropriate to refer in brief to Chiba's Five

Pillars of Training:

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

Practicing Aikido in accordance with these principles means connecting of two persons through their respective centers so that they are both fully responsive in body and soul to each other and to the environment at large. It is total involvement and commitment to the other and to the world. In this sense, Chiba insists, Aikido practice produces qualities of martial aware-

ness. Thus, Aikido practice transcends mere mastery of technique and technical competence; it is total training of the whole person.

But do we have true evidence of real moments of awareness and the efficacy of Aikido practice in this respect? I say, yes; we are witnesses to the power of Chiba's Aikido to enhance openness and awareness. In his visit to Israel, Chris Mooney Sensei had a talk in a coffee house with one of my students. At the very beginning of the talk Chris asked: have you noticed the presence of all the others in the café? My student could not tell. But Chris, fixing his eyes on the student listed and described

one by one the others present around. This is openness, awareness made possible by years on the *Tatami*.

Unity of body and soul is Chiba's underlying goal and definition of a successful Aikido practitioner. Such unity is very difficult to achieve, a condition opposed to conventional approaches in the West. The contrast between the essential split of body and self inherent in Western civilization, Aikido practice in Chiba's experience and thought means a movement towards unity of body and self. The question to be asked is the following: how is our school Aikido conducive to experience of body\self identity and unity? We have referred above to the dangerous situation inherent to our Aikido practice. We have emphatically pointed to martial awareness as a necessary dimension in our Aikido practice. We have also explained in brief the mode of Aikido openness towards others in the practitioner\opponent unified field. How is all this connected with the unity of body and soul? Verbalization fails at this attempt of articulating the most intimate and subtle aspect of our Aikido experience. I turn again to Levinas (1934) for a brilliant and succinct reference to the meaning of those moments of danger and awareness so characteristic of our Aikido universe:

In a dangerous sport or risky exercise in which gestures attain an almost abstract perfection in the face of death, all dualism between the self and the body must disappear...

Levinas was of course not an Aikido practitioner. And yet, in his reflection on danger, consciousness, soul, body and pain he was superb in capturing the meaning of our experience as

Aikido practitioners of Chiba Sensei's school. Every one of us would recognize the truth of his brilliant association of bodily pain (an aspect inherent in our Aikido practice) and unity of self and body:

Physical pain can reveal an absolute position. The body is not only a happy or unhappy accident that relates us to the implacable world of matter. Its adherence to the Self is of value in itself. It is an adherence that one does not escape and that no metaphor can confuse with the presence of an external object; it is a union that does not in any way alter the tragic character of finality...

Thus, we recognize an aspect inherent in our Aikido practice by the words of a Jewish, French philosopher. But verbalization, of course does not meet the challenge of articulation of such an experience of self\body unity made possible in our Aikido practice. Martial awareness is rooted in a mode of remembrance deeper than conventional consciousness. It is a layer of animal-like ancient memory resurrected by practitioners of Aikido. In this matter, true Aikido practice leading to transformation of consciousness and recognition is indispensable.

Amnon Tzechovoy

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FROM OSTEOPATHY TO AIKIDO, THE DUAL PRACTICE OF FULCRUMS

Conference at the Dojo-School of Paris Est by Anne Ducouret

These two disciplines, Aikido and Osteopathy, address the human body but they are active in two different fields of action: health and the study of a way. The premise of this conference is that this divergence of approach is only apparent.

We shall see that the closeness of osteopathy and aikido resides in their specific techniques. In fact, to practice both it is imperative to rely, consciously or unconsciously, on two essential concepts: on one hand that of *vital energy*, also called “life principle” or “breath of life”, and on the other the concept of *fulcrum* in the service of the vital energy. It is important to underline that in our body **there is no identifiable organic element corresponding to the fulcrum**. It is a construct and a representation. The notion of fulcrum is inscribed in the history of osteopathy, which is in short a soft medicine created in the XIX century in the United States by Andrew T. Still (1828-1919). It aims at restoring the body’s health by means of a manual therapy that respects the structure of the body, that is to say everything that holds the body and determines its shape.

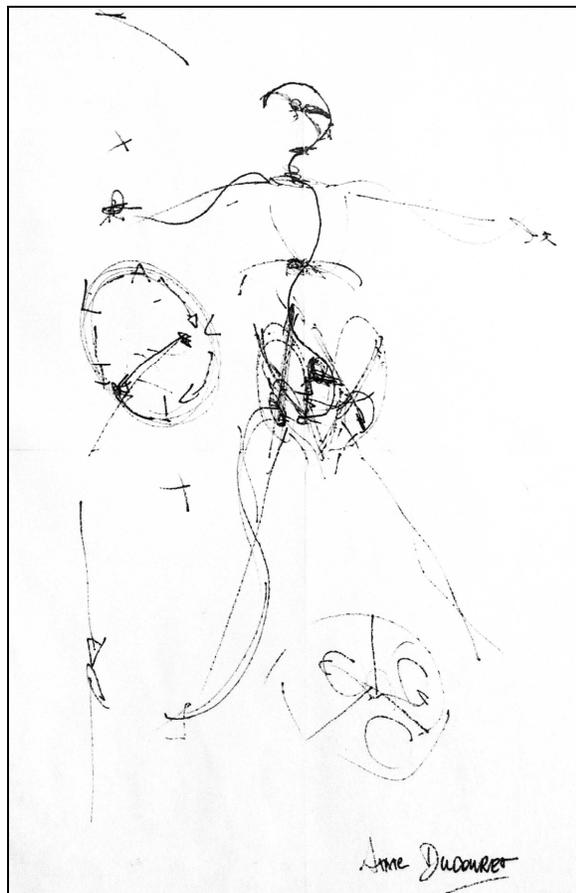
Osteopathy deals with afflictions deriving from three sources: it can be the result of trauma; it can come from severe stress and also from toxemia. Pain and fatigue resulting from unbalance and tensions in the body, weakens the patient and reveal an unbalance usually restored by the body itself. But when the body is unable to return to a balanced state it is advisable to see an osteopath. According with his own training the osteopath will relieve the patient by means of structural osteopathy or cranial osteopathy. These different approaches are complementary. **Structural osteopathy** is a biochemical approach that does not consider vital energy to be central to the treatment. **Cranial osteopathy**, discovered in 1948 by William Garner Sutherland (1873-1954), proposes a more global approach to the human body. In memory of his work the osteopaths named *the fulcrum of Sutherland* the zone of the cranium situated at the junction of the brain’s faux and the tent of the

cerebellum where the vital energy appears systematically.

This American researcher, having observed that the bones of the skull are articulated and beveled like the gills of fish concluded that this fact was related to a breathing mechanism. After proving the existence of mobility in the skull, consistent with the mobility of the organism as a whole, he set forth the following principle: **cranial mobility rests on bone and membrane fulcrums, and the zone of the fulcrum of Sutherland functions as a “center of support suspended, automatic, and in movement”**. The Latin term “fulcrum” means “resting point” and also “support or prop of a lever”. According to him, a fulcrum is a fixed mechanism; the lever moves on it and hence draws its power. During its operation the position of the fulcrum on the lever can be modified but it remains a fixed mechanism of balance from which the lever acts and derives its power. In short, cranial osteopathy appears as a science of movement inherent to physiology but also as the art of listening to tissues. It considers that the source of malfunction is not structural but exists rather at the energy level. In this case the osteopath has an approach no longer biomechanical but biodynamic. He uses the fulcrums as a tool for diagnosis and treatment in order to stimulate the patient’s disturbed energy and to restore the injured body functions.

Certainly, only well trained hands can perceive the vital energy that feels like a flow inside a living organism. Through this proprioceptive touch, that is to say touching in depth, the osteopath specialized in cranial practice perceives this action at tissue level as a movement in spiral. Within the spiral the elements in opposition gather and reconstitute energy taking a minimum of space for a maximum development. The spiral form is most present in the human body: we find it principally in the DNA, in the proteins and in the configuration of bones. Palpation practice allows the osteopath to recognize the forms, to appreciate the tensions, the pressures and of course, the imbalance.

ances in the internal and external mediums. The difficulty of the osteopathic perception stems from the fact that you cannot follow the flux of energy as such; there is instead a participation in the energy field of the totality of the body. The placement of the osteopath in relation to the patient plays then an important role in listening to the body.



Aikido also relates to vital energy. This very ancient notion is common in oriental tradi-

tions. It is the “prana” of the Hindus, the “chi” of the Chinese, and the “ki” of the Japanese”. In French this could be translated by “spirit”. The syllable “ki” in the center of the word Aikido shows how essential it is the role of the vital energy in this Japanese martial art, which could be defined as the way of the union of energies. In this way and similarly to osteopathy, Aikido brings into play vital energy. In this discipline the question is not to restore energy but make it come to light. Thus these two practices, with techniques nevertheless very different, rely in the same way on the notion of *fulcrum*. Both depend on a resting point, a pivot, to execute the kind of movements capable of generating vital energy. In the context of osteopathy one refers to micro movements; in the framework of Aikido one speaks of “moving”, since the idea is to seek an advantageous position in relation to the opponent by shifting from one place to another. Movement on the tatami is immediately perceptible by the partner and identified by the viewer.

In Aikido there is an equivalent to the fulcrum of Sutherland, even though in a different position; it is called **Seika no Tanden**. It is the physical center of energy of the body as a whole where, according to Japanese tradition, the ki of air becomes the breath of life. The position of Seika no Tanden is found where of a vertical line passing through the top of the skull intersects a horizontal plane three fingers bellow the navel.

Anne Ducouret

Osteopath and Aikido teacher BE1, 4th Dan



Aikido in Daily Life



Chris and Iona

Piotr and Kasia



Michal and Agneta



Congratulations!

SEMPAI-KÔHAI

By Suzanne Brunner

後 先

Calligraphy.

The « Hai » of these two words is formed from two Kanji « HI » on the top, which can be a negation and « Kuruma » which can mean the car, the wheel or the chariot.

According to the etymological dictionary, the top part could be seen as the wings that make the chariot go further. As with every etymological interpretation of Kanji, it is necessary to tread carefully, because we are aware that the scribes had not yet developed a writing system to explain how they arrived at this or that graphic symbol. The current translation of kanji is « companion, fellow, line, or group ».

The *sen* of *sempai* (the n becomes m because of the p) means before, anterior, preceding, elder. The *kô* of *kôhai* signifies after, behind.

The calligraphy and its explanation are by Pascal Krieger.

View from the Gallery

SEMPAI-KÔHAI

When one adopts a philosophy, studies a martial art from another country, learns the specific terms, the assimilation shouldn't be limited to the gesture or to the words and their strict definition. Choosing and "entering" into a Japanese martial art, implies that you also have to embrace the principles that govern it and are its essence. Aikido cannot be reduced to a series of techniques.

Taking up Aikido, as with any discipline, is to accept that anything one learns comes not only from teachers, but also from the "ancients".

In Japanese, the "ancients" are called *sempai*, and new arrivals are called *kôhai*. Two stu-

dents having the same level of experience or seniority are mutually known as *dohai*.

The image of the *sempai-kôhai* group might be the one of a convoy, of a caravan, a group that journeys together in the process of learning, seeking to achieve a common goal or destination. The group contains those who are ancients (*sen*) and those who came afterwards (*kô*).

One could well compare this group to “bridging cells”. In order that a tree can continue to grow, these powerful cells assemble on every branch and protect the section where the old vigorous wood meets the new vulnerable growth. The bridging cells have an essential role in linking what was with what will be.

In Japan, this notion of a *sempai-kôhai* relationship is very important, not only in the martial arts or in schools, but also in life. It governs the relations between parents and children, employers and employees and of course teachers and students. It is recognition of the impressive wealth of experience, knowledge and culture acquired over many years. It is also this relationship that affords great respect to elders and ancestors (the ancients.)

In every kind of apprenticeship, the *sempai* “adopts” a *kôhai* and will act on his behalf in the role of protector, educator, older brother or even a tutor.

In the martial arts, he has the role of relaying the teacher., the *sensei* ; he guides the *kôhai* through his apprenticeship, explaining what he might not have perceived. □

The *sempai* also has to be a role model in the *kôhai*'s life. In his behaviour, his way of life and his attitude, he must be worthy of the veneration and respect that his student (the one who follows) owes him. This is not limited to the side of the mat, or just the duration of the lesson.

In order to allow the *sempai* to play his role, the *kôhai* must show unconditional obedience and an absolute respect for his authority. Ideally he should be like a sponge ready to absorb the teachings, its nuances and its subtleties and all that the elder is able to transmit to him. Of course it may happen that this notion is perverted, that the *sempai* despises and plagues the *kôhai* he is in charge of, and treats him like a slave. On the other hand, the *kôhai* may be

undisciplined, impolite, disdainful and unreceptive towards his *sempai*'s experience and his desire to help.

What is evident in Japan and in most of the countries of the world has been slightly deleted under our latitudes. The education mostly based on strict rules has left place to the justification of each order, to negotiation, to seduction. To educate is to give the child, the student, a certain amount of life rules, so that the student can live in harmony with the surrounding society.

Both the teaching and the apprenticeship are difficult because the elder doesn't like to be considered uncompromising or tyrannical, but also because the student doesn't want to be restrained in his natural propensity towards pleasure and the transgression of rules.

In order that the authority can be established in a natural and simple manner, the rules have to be stated by the teacher in a firm and determined way and at the same time relayed by the *sempai*, who has to show by example. It is not a matter of requiring servility or obsequiousness on the *kôhai*'s part. But it is essential for the student to be conscious that he is not on an equal footing with his elders. One has to remind him of the hierarchy of the relationship, even if remind this can appear nonsense.

One has to go against the current that tries to make us believe that only youthfulness is beautiful, that in youth everything is allowed and that nothing ancient is of any value or deserving of interest or respect. As an example of this problem, we could cite the child who recently told his fifty-something teacher: “Madam, won't you soon be pensioned off? Everybody knows that an older person's brain doesn't function as well as a young person's one!” Without comments!

In the same way, even a very old *sempai*, crippled with rheumatism and arthritis, whose memory sometimes fails, always indicates the way. On the physical level, to deny the vicissitudes of life, wanting to disguise the pains and injuries of old age, to simulate ever-lasting youth, is but a distortion of the truth; the make-belief that becoming old is shameful. The badly healed wounds, the painful articulations, bear witness to the long hours dedicated to training, just like the wrinkles and white hair recount the

pains and the joys. To recognize its beauty is all that is needed.

Suzanne Brunner

If the *sempai* is honest and avoids the traps of self-satisfaction, the over-inflated ego and the contempt for others, the *kôhai* should be able, with deference and humility, to learn a great deal from the *sempai*'s experience. The *kôhai* that is respectful, curious and open to the elders' experience, will make progress avoiding the mistakes that would undermine his self-respect.

Thank you to Chiba Sensei for his explanations, to Pascal Krieger for the calligraphy and its meaning. Thank you to Lucienne Suter, Frances Newman and Norberto Chiesa for helping me to translate.

Sources: Tamura Sensei; Kenishi Yoshimura, and Clarissa Pinkola Estés for the "bridging cells".

TAMESHIGIRI



During Batto-Ho Seminar hosted by Ryu Seki Kai in Lausanne.
Conducted by Daniel Brunner, Shihan .

THE DOJO-SCHOOL OF PARIS EST

A school of life for children by Anne Ducouret



The Dojo-School of Paris Est participates in the neighborhood activities directed towards cultural and social integration in association with the local authorities responsible for the city's policies. This traditional school proposes to children the discovery and the practice of Martial Arts, offering through its way of functioning a common space to develop together.

With the learning of techniques, of postures, as well as breathing exercises, the child learns to master his body, to coordinate his movement with others and to integrate a physical commitment that respects his well being as well as that of his partners.

From the age of four, a physical awakening...

Children at the age of seven come to practice what they choose: Aikido (way of union of energies, martial art empty handed comprising also the study of weapons), Junomichi (original Judo, way of flexibility), Karate do Shotokai (way of the hand), Kendo (Japanese fencing), and also Yoga and Qi Gong. Older ones (from age twelve) continue to attend their specific courses and also have access to adult courses

with the agreement of the teacher. For the youngest (from four to seven) the practice is directed towards physical awareness; it is the discovery of movement within the protected boundaries of the dojo.

Each discipline has in itself an important educational value for the child. The martial arts, notably through the system of examination, restitutes the rites of transition that are fundamental to structuring the self, finding a sense to life, and becoming a well balanced adult. It is for this reason that our school is opened to the community. In fact, we host groups of college students in the context of social and technical training activities; we care for children in collaboration with other organizations that are active in the area. The word "Dojo" indicates the place for Japanese martial arts training implicating **"the place of awakening"** or "the place for finding the way"; in either case meaning a question of becoming; a school of life for physical, spiritual and social development.

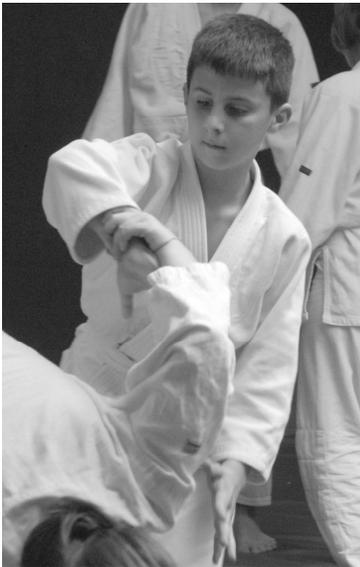
Anne Ducouret

Director of the Dojo-School of Paris Est
22/11/2007

TRAINING COURSE FOR YOUNG EUROPEANS OF BIRANKAI IN PARIS.

On the 10, 11 and 12 of May, 2008, the Ann Jyou Kan Dojo of Paris hosted the first seminar for young Europeans of Birankai.

The project of this course, encouraged by Didier Hatton sensei, was realized thanks to the wish of Alexander Broll sensei to combine a visit to Paris and Aikido practice with the young Parisians. Daniel Wiedmann, Irène Cambais and Arno Berger undertook the relay.



The course gathered more than 40 young people, 8 to 17 years old, from the dojos of Landau, Strasbourg, Colmar and Paris; a dozen adults from Paris as well as other visitors assumed the running of the seminar. The thirty-three visitors were lodged at a housing center on the 20th district of Paris, 20 minutes on foot from the dojo.

Ten hours of practice on two days

For practice we have alternated classes for everyone with classes divided according to age. Allowing us to split classes, we had at our disposal two gymnasiums as dojos and two municipal halls nearby. In passing, we noticed the surprise of the local bystanders at the sight in the street of these youngsters in keko-gi. From the very start and in spite of the tiredness of traveling, the young aikidokas fully engaged in practice. Step by step the commitment deepened. Sunday morning, the jo class was followed by all with much application. During the last class the attention was tangible by their reaction, both joyful and intense.

Ten hours of practice on two days

Visiting Paris by city bus under the sun

Thirty-eight people managed to make it across Paris with public transportation (check-

ing-in your tickets takes time) in order to admire sunny Paris from the second floor of the Eiffel Tower. We waited for the tower to be lit while enjoying candy floss at the foot of Trocadero. The next day, always by bus, we headed for the "Jardin des Plantes" for a picnic. Afterwards, everyone took the time to visit the three stories of the "Grande Galerie de l'Evolution.

The meeting of the young Aikido students: Aikido as a common language

The older ones met and got rapidly acquainted during the weekend. In spite of the language barrier the communication was established. The different age groups shared their experience; the younger children asked the help



of the older ones who lend themselves to the exercise. They helped each other during practice and in the course of the visits.

The nese meal of Sunday night offered to all the occasion to meet socially sharing leisure and play and enjoying the projection of films portraying O'Sensei. The youngsters understood it very well: Aikido is a common language.

Approaching the end of the courses the students asked: when will the next seminar take place? They expressed their wish to practice more, for a longer period of time and do more weapons: tanto, jo and bokken.

The teachers' rapport

Thirty-eight people managed to make it across Paris with public transportation (check-

As the courses took place, we realized that we had found an almost tacit agreement among ourselves; our coordination was fueled by intuition and generosity. That is to say, we were both driving the action and being touched by the event. In answer to the questions: “how to articulate the elements of a class in a fluid manner?” “How to sustain attention in a class?”, it appeared that instead of fluctuating intensity, teaching a class implied keeping the tension going tight “like an arc”. In retrospect, this seminar illustrates this period of time without any empty spaces.

One key to the success of this event with the young students is the fact that we shared the same desire to live together the practice of Aikido. The teachers and the adults were at the service of this gathering and the students were free to express their own commitment. In this way we could appreciate every student individually. In return, the youth showed so much vitality that left camp with our hearts full of energy.

Anne Ducouret, Paris, 23/05/08



A collective project, the key to success

10TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT

Aikido dojo Gen Ei Kan, Landau, Germany by Christian Frick

Introduction:

When one evening after a training session my Aikido teacher asked me whether I would write a report on the occasion of this year's Anniversary Seminar I was surprised. How could I possibly, being a beginner of Aikido (5th Kyu), write a report which was supposed to interest both high-ranking teachers and students of Aikido?

These feelings also mirrored my expectations on this seminar, which, however, already were resolved at the beginning of it by the in-

troductory words spoken by the teachers: “free yourself in the here and now!”

Report:

For three days a sports hall in Landau was only there for Aikido. It is where the Aikido Dojo Gen Ei Kan, Landau celebrated its 10th anniversary festivities. International high-ranking teachers of Aikido from various European countries were present. Gabriel Valibouze Shihan (6th Dan) from France, Chris Mooney Shihan (6th Dan) from Britain, Didier Hatton Shidoïn (4th Dan) from France and Alexander

Broll Fukushidoin (4th Dan) who manages the Aikido Dojo Landau. A special guest teacher originally from Japan but living in Germany was Michael D. Nakajima (6th Dan), who not only holds the 6th Dan in Aikido but also the 8th Dan in Daitoryu Aiki Jujutsu.

Friday evening the first training sessions started whereby various Suwari Waza techniques were the focal point. Gabriel Valibouze Shihan stated in his introductory words the central essence of Aikido: it is not the technique that is paramount in Aikido but the relation, the connection that evolves from uke and nage. With these words he motivated the participants to “free” themselves and not to focus too much on protecting themselves during the exercises since particularly in such cases injuries often happen.



That evening I was particularly impressed by M.D. Nakajima Sensei. The charisma of this man and the clarity of his words will stay with me for a long time. He again took up the link between uke and nage mentioned by Valibouze Shihan, completing it with the connection of humans and the earth. One of the greatest achievements for him, however, is the “cosmic” bonding. He stressed that T.K. Chiba Shihan, founder of the Birankai - International and direct student of Morihei Ueshiba (O’Sensei) “is living” the Budo thought and therefore is teaching the essence of Aikido in doing so. He voiced his high regard for Chiba Shihan and expressed his observations considering the time and day we live in saying that the Budo thought is often threatened to get lost. What is important is that Aikido must never be reduced to a martial arts and technique only.

On Saturday morning the training sessions lead by the teachers Chris Mooney Shihan and Didier Hatton Sensei were continued. What attracted me immensely was the fact that at times the Dojo was divided into two, which

made it possible for the Aikido students to decide on the teacher and the focal point of his techniques (with or without weapons). Regardless which group was chosen, there was a balance between advanced Aikido students and beginners. Children and adolescents equally participated in attempting the often difficult techniques, which impressed me considerably. Young and old, beginners and advanced...everyone practised with everybody and respected each other regardless of rank and experience.

It was impressive to train with people from countries such as France, Britain, Poland and the north and south of Germany and even Kazakhstan and I was experiencing that language barriers never were a problem since the bonding and communication on the mat amongst each other made Aikido to be the common language. Due to the high number of participants the size of the area for mats used for exercising was limited, which made me wonder again and again: how much space is required to practise Aikido? How can you free yourself “inside” during exercises without having to be afraid to possibly hurt your neighbour when rolling over? This interesting measure of conflict accompanied me throughout the entire seminar.



Since Nakashima Sensei had been the ‘Special Guest’, in one of his training sessions he grabbed the opportunity to explain differences between Aikido und Aiki Jujutsu: Aikido usually focuses rather on fluent movements, whereas Aiki Jujutsu builds more on short movements, whereby the Ki-concentration always would focus towards the ground. Nage is supposed to be passive towards the outside and let uke attack (“invites it”) yet controls it from the “inside”.

Training sessions for children equally proved to be very popular among the younger Aikido students. Saturday afternoon, Didier

Hatton Sensei managed with his sense of humour and playful teachings and techniques, to familiarise the Aikido idea to the young offspring.

Together with the numerous training sessions, it was the celebration of the jubilee that was the focal point of the seminar; not only had the people of Landau participated but also important representatives with sports and political background. The Lord Mayor of the city of Landau and representatives from the world of sports and politics (members of the Bundestag and the parliament) emphasised in their speeches the tireless dedication of the Aikido Dojo under the direction of Alexander Broll and reassured for future occasions to always be available when support is needed. This was symbolised by donations, which will enable the Dojo Landau to finance more mats for the Dojo. Afterwards, the Aikido Dojo introduced itself with a performance for the visitors by its members, and it was the children and adolescents that showed their talents, complemented and completed by the adult Aikido students.

The performance was rounded off by the invited Aikido teachers who demonstrated impressively the realisation of this martial art with different weapons such as the wooden stick (jo) and the wooden sword (bokken). Apart from Aikido performances, people visiting the seminar were given the chance to see the entire history of the Dojo on numerous panels and via audiovisual media. They also could buy jubilee T-shirts or enjoy the pleasant atmosphere during breaks with hot refreshments, cakes and ice-cream.

In the evening, the celebrations were moved to a restaurant in Landau where you were given the opportunity to get known to each other and exchange experiences. Later in the evening people began to sing and although the songs were chanted in different languages, be it Japanese, French, English or German, they filled the air in the restaurant that even the waiters were turning their heads curiously.

Zazen on Sunday morning heralded the last training day, but even on the third day everybody participating in the training sessions was focused and despite the fact that my kneecaps were aching I still took part in the sessions. Yet Sunday also meant that this special seminar had come to an end. Gabriel Valibouze Shihan,

managing the Birankai European Centre in Strasburg was deeply moved by the performance of the Dojo since it was found in 1998 and described Alexander Broll being a teacher of Aikido “with heart”.



What made me very happy was that this seminar revealed three Dan classifications, two of which were for our Aikido Dojo Landau members Arno and Georg.

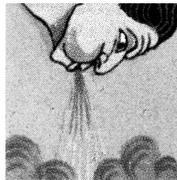
Conclusion:

The Anniversary Seminar was a mighty gift for all involved. I had the chance to meet many interesting people from all over Europe and even though the language was not the bonding link – Aikido bonded us. For me the focal point of the overall seminar was conveying the shaping of a positive relatedness.

The tie between people is the centre of Aikido, which is why the features of this tie such as “holding a high regard” for each other and “respecting” each other are more important than the pure techniques of this martial art.



Christian Frick



EDITORIAL

Dear Friends

In the spring of 2002 a modest four-page newsletter appeared in our Aikido midst; we had just published the first issue of “Purple Cloud”.

Kind words of encouragement came from Chiba Sensei who blessed the publication with its title, Shiun, named as he put it, “ for the purple cloud that is often seen in the western horizon after the sky has been thoroughly washed by a storm, indicating fine weather for the coming day.”

He reminded us that Biran, the subtle wind, can blow into a storm and provoke a shift in the order of the universe.

I do not know how eastern wisdom forecasts these esoteric meteorological upheavals, but from my western, Latin-American perspective, I have come to believe that that mischievous wind is never really stopping. Blowing softly or harshly, Biran is always there animating the perennial dance of impermanence.

I sense that change and renewal are on the way for us. I sincerely hope that our family shall remain aware and sensitive to what the wind is telling us.

This is by way of announcing my retirement from the publication of Shiun. I wish to tell you that I do it happily looking forward to that fine weather in the coming day. More selfishly, I will no longer need to engage in mortal combat with my computer.

“Ninety per cent accuracy is not as good as silence.” You will find this quote from a Chinese Zen master in my first editorial. I was voicing my disquieting awareness of the limitation of language, and to be frank, also trying to hide my apprehension in front of the task at hand.

But words are indeed the flesh and bones of Shiun, and today I am most grateful to all of you who have contributed with your writings. I had the privilege of reading the stuff before any of you did. I had the fascinating compulsion to observe the subtleties of English and French; as you know neither language is my original one. I had the entertaining job of looking for the images that best related to the texts.

And more importantly, I felt time and again that your words carried with them the love that we share for our discipline.

I have certainly not been alone in fulfilling this task. I wish to acknowledge and make public my heart-felt gratitude to those that have so generously offered me their support: Ghislaine Soulet who came aboard in the early days, Christophe Peytier and his uncanny facility with languages, Suzanne Brunner and Christophe Brunner readily translating and proof reading and all of you that have contributed with the difficult task of translation.

I have asked Suzanne Brunner, with the full approval of Chiba Sensei, to assume the interim publication of the following issue and until such time when the future Teaching Council will appoint a new editor of Shiun. I am very pleased to announce that Suzanne has agreed to fulfill this obligation.

Long life to Purple Cloud!

NORBERTO CHIESA

