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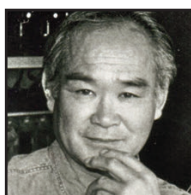
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Promotion tied to keen eye and relationship of teacher says Shihan TK Chiba

Promotion is a natural process in

the study of Aikido, in which timing as well as content vary on an individual basis. Each student progresses in an individual fashion, and how he or she should be given recognition can't be generalized. However, we can't afford to be completely without form, but need to have an overall guideline: test requirements.

Test requirements are a sensitive issue. They are fundamentally mechanical, and flexibility is required in order to meet the diversity of the human condition and the individual reality. For this reason, I have adopted the test 'guidelines' and not 'requirements' for the USAF Western Region. This system both ensures that promotion is not a matter of luck, and



Chiba Sensei

preserves my freedom to give recognition to my members beyond what is written.

Promotion in Aikido can be given through two different procedures: examination and recommendation. The most important rule for a teacher in conducting an examination is that one must never compare the performance and content of one student's examination with another. Each candidate should be examined based on his/her own human condition and as a complete individual, which requires a close understanding between teacher and student. Without having established this, the Aikido test is likely to be false. The overall principle and backbone of any examination is the degree of cultivation of the body – what I call an "Aikido body" – which is the degree of cultivating one's original body-consciousness. Objectively, an

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Photo: Beata Darowska

Polish Summer camp, Wroclaw, 11 August 2007



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Photo: Franco Chen

Editorial

Aikido teaches us more than self defence. From our first class we have to reacquaint ourselves with our body: how to coordinate the movements of our limbs and body with our brain. We are taught to move in ways we have not done before and the brain becomes a bit muddled initially. Once the pathway of each new movement has been mastered with many repetitions, the movements in Aikido become second nature.

Learning the form of the techniques is only one aspect of the physical, mental, spiritual and ethical disciplines in Aikido training.

What better way to further the mastery of the art than learning respect through mutual physical contact. In this way a means of communication is established which transcend the barriers of lifestyle, language, culture and race.

From 2000 Alexander Broll, Aikido Dojo Gen Ei Kan, Landau and Didier Hatton, Aikikai de Strasbourg have been conducting children and adolescent seminars and from 2008 this expanded into joint German-French seminars for children and adolescents. Venues for the seminars have included Paris, France and in June this year 50 members gathered in Annweiler, Germany for their camping seminar. Lars Ebsen and Max Jung share their experiences with us on page 5.

At the other end of the scale, we see a close group of adults united in their desire to strengthen their ties to Mother nature and freeing themselves from the constraints of their daily lives to brave the elements to practise misogi. The misogi gives depth to their martial training whilst reminding them of their connection to the beauty of nature. Jean-Luc Busmey describes the Misogi training in 2013 on page 8.

Other activities around Europe include the BE Summer School held this year 26 July-1 August 2014 in Wroclaw, Poland conducted by Shihan Tsuruzo Miyamoto 7th Dan, Hombu dojo, Japan and the European Shihans and shidoins. On 27 September London Aikikai once again took part in the Japan Matsuri Festival held in Trafalgar Square, London with two demonstrations which included children's classes for the first time. Shihan Etsuji Horii 7th Dan, Aikido Kobe Sanda Dojo, Japan, has been invited to conduct courses in London and Wroclaw this year, and Birankai Shihans and shidoins have been invited to conduct courses in other dojos throughout Europe.

As the cold and dark nights of winter approach and another year ends, we wish all the members the best for the coming year with the hope that your regular practice will bring a sense of well-being and self-confidence that permeates all aspects of your daily life. ☺

Dee Chen

Photo: Beata Darowska



Polish Summer camp, Wroclaw, 11 August 2007

continued from page 1

Aikido body manifests as centredness, connectedness, wholeness, awareness, liveliness, flow, sharpness, clarity, orderliness, and spontaneity. Certainly there are important physical and technical principles in Aikido which make the art what it is, and they should never be taken lightly. However, as long as the body-consciousness has been progressively activated, individual differences in performing the forms are acceptable. The important thing is to see the aliveness of the body, not the forms. Whenever the body is alive in its original mind, the forms come to life also.

Promotion through recommendation is only possible when there exists a close teacher-student relationship, which is the core of the martial disciplines. Individual advancement must and should vary, and must never be treated mechanically. It is always an eye-opening experience to see a student make a major breakthrough – a leap to a higher dimension of physical awareness – in a short period of time. It is the responsibility, or rather, it is a required ability of the teacher, to be able to observe that breakthrough when it happens, and to give recognition of it promptly. When a student fails to receive recognition for progress, either through the teacher's negligence, or for some other reason, such development can fade away or go to sleep. The absence or recognition on the part of a teacher is as much a mistake as the granting of a premature

promotion. When the fruit is picked before it is ripe, it has the same bitter taste as fruit that remains on the tree long after it has ripened. The keenness of the teacher's eyes is vital to the progressive advancement of his or her students.

Another element that needs to be taken into consideration when promoting through recommendation is what I call "big" Aikido and "small" Aikido. Big Aikido is how one deals with one's life beyond Aikido training in the dojo. Small Aikido is Aikido practised inside the dojo. I know many individuals whose learning inside the dojo has been relatively slow, but who, by conducting their lives in accordance with Aikido principles, I consider exemplary

Photo: Beata Darowska



Polish Summer camp, Wroclaw, August 07

Aikidoists, and appropriate candidates for promotion. What I look for and how I judge when promoting either through examination or through recommendation is whether a student's Aikido carries something substantial, or is it superficial. On the other hand, however clumsy or incompetent a student appears, he/she may still hold something in his/her body that is truly substantial. A student's Aikido is substantial, regardless of the degree of technical advancement, when that student comes in contact with his/her true self, and comes to accept his/her original face, devoid of artificial decoration or judgment.

A student's Aikido is superficial when that student tried to be someone other than who he/she really is. This person has not yet come to experience his/her original face through the training. More broadly, this person's values in life are based on an accumulation of values copied from others. It is certainly important to copy one's teacher in learning the art. But remaining a copy is a different story. Having a teacher and copying from him or her is the correct path for most people and indeed is the core of the martial discipline. But the teacher's job is to prime the pump – to prepare the student to discard imitation and superficiality, so that he/she may come in contact with his/her true self, and accept his/her original face.

This original body-consciousness, awakened through training, is in fact the very foundation of human life. It is martial - as is every living being on the earth from their first moment of existence - and at the same time it goes beyond the martial, to encompass mind, that is, spirit, soul, sense and intellect. ☯

Shihan TK Chiba 8th Dan
Birankai Founder
San Diego, California

This article was originally published in the Summer 1997 issue of Sansho - the Aikido Journal of the USAF Western Region and precursor of Biran.



Alexander Broll, Gen Ei Kan Aikido Dojo Landau

German-French friendship seminar for children and adolescents focuses on personal development

In February 2000, we started teaching children and adolescents in the Aikido Dojo in Landau and since the venue of our



Alexander Broll

Dojo is located near the French border, we held our first children and adolescent seminar already in November 2000 in conjunction with Didier Hatton, Shidoïn, Aikikai de Strasbourg. Children, adolescents and parents were thrilled and since then we offer German-French children and adolescent seminars twice or even three times a year, being held in Strasbourg, Colmar or Landau.

Instructors keep meeting and exchanging information amongst each other on both seminars as well as international summer schools which are held in France, the UK and Poland. This developed the idea of offering children's and adolescent's Aikido seminars over several days. The Dojo in Paris, led by Anne Ducouret, Shidoïn, was added and since 2008 children's and adolescent's Aikido seminars are held every year, whereas locations and programmes differ with the prevailing aim to practise Aikido intensively, including Jo, Bokken and Tanto for approximately



six hours a day. Seminars in Paris included 'sightseeing' tours and Colmar and Landau focused on experiences in nature such as outdoor camping with barbecues and campfires. Thus more and more not only the intensive Aikido practice was vital but also communicating across the borders and the mutual respect. A sense of community and acceptance is very important for children and often means wrestling between doing what you want and sticking to the rules, ie to experience commitment and being involved.

Feeling secure and confident, meeting different nationalities is always exciting and creates a fantastic atmosphere. Children and adolescents with various disabilities are equally participating at such seminars. You are like you are, a particle of the whole, and

Aikido gives you the chance to confront both yourself and the environment you are in and develop it (my meaning of Ai).

The instructors are also different despite the fact that they have known each other for a relatively long time and are teaching together on seminars, the individual aspect being a marvellous addition. Whenever they meet, new discoveries, new experiences are made, there is no standstill but every new encounter, be it adults, children or adolescents, means an advance in development which brings back new energy to your own Dojo. ☯

Alexander Broll 5th Dan
Gen Ei Kan, Landau
Birankai Deutschland



Photos: Alexander Broll

Children enjoy camping together as fun and games underline hard training weekend



My name is
Lars

Ebsen (18 yrs).

I am training in
Aikido for near-
ly nine years

now and I took

part in every

German-French 'Pentecost

Seminar' (two times in Paris,

Labaroche and Landau each).

These courses have always been

something special for me and I

always found it interesting to also

speak with the French participants.

Through this I met some people,

who, like me, participated in all

these courses and I could clearly

see their development. I found it

very interesting when we camped as

one big community and did not stay

in hotels, like this year in Annweiler,

too. I have many fantastic memories

of these courses and I am sure that

I will miss them when I am gone to

study in Aachen, even though I am

sure I will stay loyal to Aikido there,

too. ☺

Lars Ebsen 5th Kyu

Gen Ei Kan, Landau



Lars Ebsen

All in all 50 children and teenagers participated in the Birankai Europe Children Seminar from 7-9 June 2014 in Annweiler (Germany). The participants came from the dojos in Paris, Colmar, Strasbourg and Landau. The leading Senseis were Anne Ducouret, 5th Dan from Paris, Didier Hatton, 5th Dan from Colmar, Dr Daniel Wiedemann, 4th Dan from Strasbourg and Alexander Broll, 5th Dan from Landau.

When the French participants arrived on the sunny Saturday afternoon, we had already laid out the Tatami in the 'Turnerheim' in Annweiler (Germany), because soon the first training took place. After three hours of training in which we practised different throwing techniques, we ate dinner. The 'Small Ones' still had remarkably much energy and played rugby until it was dark, while we 'Big Ones' sat together comfortably. After a too short night in our tents the next training started.

After again three hours of Aikido and Jo exercises, a hike to the 'Jungpfalz-Hütte' was planned for noon. For the pleasure of all there was a spring on the way, where we could refresh ourselves to make the temperature of nearly 35°C (95°F) bearable. Shortly after our return to the camping-site, we trained again for three hours with both 'funny' exercises, in which the 'Big Ones' represented rocks and were piled up to represent a mountain

by the 'Small Ones' and the 'Very Big Ones' and 'normal' Aikido and Bokken exercises. In the evening we barbe-cued together. The 'Small Ones' went into their sleeping bags early, exhausted from the long day, while some 'Big Ones' stayed up until the early morning hours. On Monday the last training took place, where the Senseis received gifts for the training and the group photo was taken. Then our French friends had to leave for their journey home and we had to transport the Tatami back to Landau.

Finally, we want to use this space to again thank all participants, helpers and organizers (special thanks to family Heinen), without whom the course would not have been possible. ☺

Written by

Lars Ebsen 5th Kyu

Max Jung 6th Kyu

Gen Ei Kan, Landau

Birankai Deutschland

My name is
Max Jung

(15 yrs). I am

training in

Aikido for more

than one and a

half years now

and this was the

first course I participated in which

took place on several days. I found it

very interesting to train with so many

people under four Senseis. The liv-

ing together on these three days

was very harmonious and exciting.

The training was very hard, but

informative and I think, it will help

me with my further training. Also the

camping was a highlight for me just

as much as the fantastic hike on

Sunday. ☺

Max Jung 6th Kyu

Gen Ei Kan, Landau



Max Jung



Photo: Alexander Broll



**Birankai Europe
Children Seminar
Annweiler
Germany
7-9 June 2014**



Photos: Alexander Broll

JAPAN MATSURI 27 September 2014, Trafalgar Square, London

London Aikikai performs for the sixth consecutive year

1. J.



Randori (freestyle) practice with Davinder Bath (right)



Tomas Litvin (left) and Rinaldo Rustico



Davinder Bath oversees children demonstration

Photos: Andre Milovidov

1. MISOGI 2013, Borée Ardèche mountain

Misogi allows us to draw energy from deep within - Jean-Luc Busmey discovers

Isolation and close contact with the natural elements: earth, air, water and fire, allow us to walk away from every-day's life and wash our spirit of the common thoughts that can burden it. Free from useless thoughts, we can do the work to make our spirit stronger in hard living and practice conditions, so as to keep it open and moving in any circumstances.

Base camp life is organized around the fire and timed by the succession of day and night. No contact with the outside world is allowed and soon our mobile phone is considered as a mere alarm clock. No order is given as everyone is expected to remain connected with the group and know in time what has to be done and how.

The hours following arrival are light and pleasant, while bodies and spirit are still warm and snug, busy with the camp set up. Misogi really starts when feet are cold and wet in damp shoes from the snow. Thoughts then come in from all sides focusing on things that hurt or dearly missing the comfort left behind.



Jean-Luc Busmey

The first zazen classes can then be difficult to stand while the spirit is still subjected to the sensations of the body and tries to satisfy it in movement or slumber. How particular the lesson given by this little water drop hanging onto the nostril and asking us tremendous will not to sweep it away, when the spirit is stuck on it. And what a feeling when we succeed at moving our thought away from it.

Weapons classes are welcomed for they allow body and spirit to renew with well-known sensations despite difficult ground and bad weather. New sensations are quickly found in order to be able to move and act on such uneven and slippery grounds. With the cold that bites the flesh even the weapons seem to have another density and behave in other ways.

But dojo practice is not enough and we need to go beyond our usual limits. We need to draw energy from deep inside to get these powerful *kiāi* that allow us to bear the cold wind on bare skin and punctuate the physical assaults that we direct on each other or inflict on the trees.

Misogi uses the body sufferings to reach the spirit. The relationship we experiment with fire and earth in a hut made out of branches and leaves,

gives us the opportunity to explore the various dimensions of our existence; from the physical to the spiritual sphere. The dark hole in the middle reminds us where we come from and where we are heading to, while vapor rises and twist up like a life and disappear at last. Introspection widens the notion of connection from the physical to the temporal plan, considering what and who came before us to make us what we are now. A final snow bath make the energy burst out and scatter the melancholy that can fall upon some of us.

In the course of time our anchoring in the present moment becomes stronger. Connected to the place and to the natural elements, we become part of it without noticing anymore. Time is reaping for the self over-reaching. Forest and monoliths fields are then witnesses of unusual night events. Such weapons shoden examination are standing out for excellence and have that much value as they are performed in harsh conditions. Considering Thierry's and Fabrice's performance in night cold and swirling winds, a question comes in mind: how would I have performed? No answer to this before submitting to the same thing.

Misogi gives density to martial practice. It teaches one how to keep a non-committed mind facing hardship without ignoring it and keeping even in the course of action. Perhaps, is it the state of mind we have to look for if we had to walk on the edge between life and death? ☯



Photos: Patrick Barthélémy

Jean-Luc Busmey (right) and Brunno Russo

Jean-Luc Busmey 4th Dan
Daï jyo kan Aikikai de
Bagnols sur Cèze
Birankai France

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Sleeping quarters/Zendo



(L-r) Thierry Moulinet, Jean-Luc Busmey & Fabrice Mahieux



Master chef Jean-Luc



Jean-Luc collecting wood



Fire for the Sweat Lodge ceremony
Shower tent in the background



Sleeping quarters/Zendo

Photos: Patrick Barthélémy





BE MUSUBI



Photos: Goska Smierzchalska



British Birankai Autumn Course 2014 - A foreigner's view by Jörgo Vieira

Being a foreigner is not easy. Being a foreign Aikido student is a real challenge. But sometimes the challenge is really worth it.



Jörgo Vieira

I have recently started training at the London Birankai dojo, London Aikikai, with Davinder Bath Sensei and while it is becoming quite an enriching experience in itself I was also able to grab the opportunity to take part in the British Birankai Autumn Course on 11-12 October 2014, instructed by Chris Mooney Shihan, Ian Grubb Sensei and Piotr Masztalerz Sensei at Bilberry Hill Centre, Birmingham.

Basic, but cheap, accommodation was available for students in the building complex with food served in the lounge during the major breaks. These food breaks enabled closer and personal contact with other participants and discussion of experiences and techniques practised during class.

The course also provided an excellent on-the-mat opportunity to train and share experiences with national and international Aikido students. I found the training system in Birankai complete and on par with international Aikido practice I am used to. Zazen and laido were included in the training schedule, giving greater

understanding of the techniques practised in body-art.

Watching Ian Grubb Sensei perform sword sequences during laido classes was a real feast for the eyes. Precision, effectiveness and elegance of Katana and body movements were replicated by the class. Hearing the katana split the air in every cut made by Ian Grubb Sensei was not easy to replicate but all the students doing it at the same time in coordinated cuts was amazing. I almost wished I could stop training just to watch the group coordinated beauty.

Piotr Masztalerz Sensei's weapons class was impressive to watch. The relaxed Jo movements seemed to flow with self-motion around the sensei's body. It was truly hard work to keep up with the demand for speed with control of your weapon and of the opponents. It was also interesting to learn different locks for classic Aikido techniques such as Shiho-nage. The imposing figure of Piotr Masztalerz Sensei induces respect on the tatami, but is softened by his sympathy and good sense of humour in the breaks between classes.

Zazen meditation before sunrise with Chris Mooney Shihan woke the body of the students to awareness of the day's practice. Correct breathing and a strong hara were emphasised in the body class. Knowledge of breathing control and methodology were

demonstrated for the class to replicate and embrace in their practice and daily life. All techniques demanded a strong position to perform the technique and the practice was full of energetic projections.

For a student like me joining a different line of thought such as Chiba Sensei's, who has been practising Aikido his whole adult life, is really testing for my body has absorbed techniques as reflexes and changing them requires a mental effort that slows my tatami practice.

Although it is not easy to fight against our body memory, it's an exercise that enriches my perspective of Aikido, opening my mind to different approaches to body movements and energy flow. After each training session the feeling of pushing yourself further is always there. ☯

Jörgo Vieira 1st Dan
London Aikikai
British Birankai



Piotr Masztalerz (left) with Pierre-Alexis Mouthuy (uke)

Photo: Davinder Bath



BJJ

Photo: Davinder Bath

British Birankai Autumn course 2014



Photo: Laszlo Seres

Japan Matsuri 2014, London: Jörgo Vieira (left) and Rinaldo Rustico (uke)



Photo: Andre Milovidov

Japan Matsuri 2014, London: Davinder Bath (right) and Tomas Litvin (uke)

From the archives

Shihan TK Chiba at United States Aikido Federation Western

Region 7th Summer Camp In San Diego, California

7-14 July 1990



Photo: Franco Chen



Photo: Mary Lou Watters