

ISSUE 09  
WINTER  
2023

# TAE JOURNAL

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF  
TRADITIONAL AIKIDO EUROPE

## SUMMER SEMINAR IN CUMBRIA

We are Aikidoka, an unassuming Martial Arts Family of global Proportions

## A KI QUESTION

What did O-Sensei mean when he spoke about Ki?

## METSUKE

Where should you put your Eyes?

## THE JOURNEY BEYOND

The Study of a Lifetime

## THE LEVELS OF PRACTICE

A brief Exposition of the Levels of Practice in Takemusu Aikido



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# 'You must understand that there is more than one path to the top of the mountain'

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI

*Miyamoto Musashi (宮本 武蔵, c. 1584 - 13 June 1645), was a Japanese swordsman, philosopher, strategist, writer and rōnin, who became renowned through stories of his unique double-bladed swordsmanship and undefeated record in his 61 duels. Musashi, as he was often simply known, is considered a Kensei, a sword-saint of Japan. He was the founder of the Niten Ichi-ryū, style of swordsmanship, and in his final years authored The Book of Five Rings (五輪の書, Go Rin No Sho) and Dokkōdō (獨行道, The Path of Aloneness).*



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# PERSPECTIVES

**"Each person  
is the  
universe  
from a  
particular  
perspective."**

Morihei Ueshiba

**"Everything appears with a  
beginning, develops to maturity  
and then subsides."**

Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros, Pg.38

**"Ki is not something that is  
superhuman or supernatural..  
it is just something that is. "**

Adrian Punt, Pg.18

**"Choice is the  
fundamental power  
in regards to the  
human experience  
and power begins  
through the  
activation of choice."**

Ginny Breeland, Pg.21

**"What I learnt was to  
keep things simple!"**

Paul Robinson, Pg.48

**"Weapons practice  
doesn't get much  
better than standing  
in warm sunshine  
with cool grass  
softly squeezing  
between your toes."**

Suzie Dickinson, Pg.11

**"Better three suburi with full ki  
than a thousand without"**

Morihiro Saito, Pg.17

**"The eyes lead,  
the body follows."**

Andrea Pfisterer, Pg.31

## ABOUT TRADITIONAL AIKIDO EUROPE

TAE or Traditional Aikido Europe is a group of European Aikido dojos with the purpose of training O-Sensei Morihei Ueshiba's Aikido as taught by the late Morihiro Saito Sensei.

We are currently about 400 active aikidoka from 16 dojos in 7 countries. For more information, visit our website and make sure to subscribe to our YouTube Channel:

Online:



YouTube:



Contact:





# EDITORIAL

BY ELLIE DENVIR



## WELCOME TO THE 9TH EDITION OF THE TAE JOURNAL

Just after Christmas this year, my first, much loved and respected Aikido teacher, Sensei Terry Ezra Shihan, died of cancer. He was a brilliant aikidoka, whose teaching was at times quite devastating and simultaneously full of love.

Feeling grief, regret, the things left unsaid or undone, I realised that what remains is deep gratitude for the time I had with him. A language student once told me "The best teachers are the ones who teach you to learn more than they teach, beyond the time that they teach you". I am still learning from what Ezra Sensei taught me when I trained under him in the early 1990s. With this in mind, I am looking at this journal through the lens of the teaching I received from him at Komyokan Dojo in Birkenhead in the northwest of the UK.

Ezra Sensei taught that everything that happens on the Aikido mat is about developing practice of the principles of Aikido, from stepping onto the mat and bowing in. This we take back off the mat to our lives beyond.

During warm-up, I frequently heard Ezra Sensei say "Use your peripheral vision", "Extend your field of vision", and training with partners - "Encompass them with your sight". We have a vigorous exploration of this subject in Andrea Pfisterer's article, Metsuke - what do you do with your eyes?

Ki, on and off the Komyokan Dojo mat, was a huge subject. "Always extend your ki.... Walking home, carrying your shopping, extend your awareness and energy through your whole

body, into your hands". In the TAE lineage, we don't generally talk about ki in this way. Yet, for me, the principle of extending ki is deeply incorporated into training. So, what does this mean? A Ki Question by Adrian Punt takes a thoughtful, thoroughly researched dive into the concept and its translation across cultures, leaving us with fresh perspectives. With Ezra Sensei, Aikido practice was explicitly about becoming more conscious, about continuity of awareness "from moment to moment". I learned and keep learning that Aikido is an art in which we move towards greater oneness, less separating, within ourselves and with the world around us, in interactions on and off the mat. In Ginny Breeland's third article in this journal series - The Journey Beyond - we take a look at what this lifelong path of becoming and of deepening consciousness looks like.

Life led me away from Komyokan Dojo and to a different city. Many years later, I joined Lancaster Aikido club, where later still, Takemusu Aikido and the teaching methodology inherited from Saito Sensei started to arrive. The steady kihon to ki no nagare approach was a new way of practising. Training with Ezra Sensei, we were taught to move straight away when we felt a partner's attack coming. And sometimes, Ezra Sensei would show incredibly succinct, condensed techniques which, until he unpacked and expanded into a full form, I had no idea what he had done. Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros Sensei's very welcome article on the levels of practice in Takemusu Aikido clearly unpacks the role and relationship between kihon waza, ki no nagare waza, henka waza, kaeshi waza, oyo waza and Takemusu Aiki.

Suzie Dickinson's review of a seminar in Cumbria encapsulates a sense of community in training and the interplay between individual and group as we develop our practice together. I note how grateful I am for the community in Aikido, the interesting way we know each other when we train together. This goes hand in hand with my deep gratitude to my teachers for their devotion to Aikido and to helping us along this path which, as Ginny Breeland reminds us, has no end.

Written in remembrance of Ezra Sensei  
August, 3rd, 1945 - December, 28th, 2022

*A Memorial Service and Course will be held on the 11-12 March: [MORE INFO](#)*







# SUMMER SEMINAR IN CUMBRIA

SUZIE DICKINSON



In a bright and cheerful cafe overlooking the sparkling Irish Sea, I sit with a group of people I sort of know. Some have travelled hundreds of miles to get here, some from just around the corner. We quietly contemplate our newly acquired aches and pains over a nice cup of tea and a variety of local cakes.

Only an hour beforehand, we'd been throwing each other around with glee and vigour. Strange that it is. The ladies behind the cafe counter had no idea.

We are Aikidoka, an unassuming martial arts family of global proportions. This particular group is guided by Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros Sensei, a man who had the privilege of training for many years with Saito Sensei. "How lucky", I contemplate; "What a life he must have led". We can see the results of his dedication and devotion to the art and to his late teacher through the lessons he transmits. Watching and listening intently, we always try our best to imitate the magic we see. Even so, it tends to come in fits and starts for us mere mortals.

Over the weekend, Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros taught the fundamentals of structure and taking balance which is the key to effective Aikido. "Take their balance first; techniques come second," he reveals. Yet many of us are still only vaguely aware of how our bodies move. Oh, how we think we're doing so well, only to be shown that we're bunching our shoulders, bobbing our heads, and leaning a little to the left. I often hang my head in the realisation that the move I'm getting wrong is one I've practised hundreds of times over the years, so it will take another hundred times to undo!







## Friday

The weekend activities started with a Friday night class in Lancaster in the North West of England - normally a 4 hour drive from the central south of England, but due to a major traffic accident, much longer.

The first lesson in Lancaster on Friday evening was a feat of stamina for many of us who, only a few hours earlier, were negotiating miles of stationary traffic or braving roads barely car-width due to one of the main English north-south motorways being closed. Nevertheless, no holds barred; most of the lesson was dedicated to ukemi, which perked up my sorry stiff legs.

I quietly groaned when I saw Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros grabbing a children's school chair and placing it on the mat. He knows that we know what that means. My heart sank - the last time I tried 'chair ukemi' was disastrous. The embarrassment was made all the worse when it transpired that kids do this exercise all the time! 'They're just closer to the ground' is the thought I console myself with.

However, this time seemed different. I guess the body was beginning to 'know' what to do, even with eyes closed - quite reassuring and considerably less terrifying! We're taught to 'make friends' with the ground. I suppose we do spend a fair amount of time down there, I contemplate. "It would appear rude not to say hello."

Kote gaeshi was also on the menu Friday evening. One idea we explored was to shortcut the technique to the point of takedown and attempt to throw our partner by connecting to their back. Aaron (an instructor in the Lancaster club) gave me some great pointers on the angles and when to drop my weight. As we moved to ki no nagare, Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros recalled a lesson from Saito Sensei: *"the setup is harsh, but the throw is soft"*.

Friday came and went in a blur, and I suspect most people slept well that night despite the soreness!

On Saturday morning we headed further north. The rest of the weekend seminar was being held in St Bees, a West Cumbria coastal village approaching 2 hours drive from Lancaster, at the historic St Bees School, founded in 1583, and also the school that Rowan Atkinson (AKA 'Mr Bean') attended before going to university.





## Saturday

After the first taijutsu class on Saturday, we picked up our weapons and headed outside. The school at St Bees is not small by any measure, and we found ourselves walking down some rather grand-looking steps and onto a spacious, well-kept playfield.

A few of us joked that we were lucky to be experiencing the north's one and only day of summer. I had donned my coat in disbelief that the temperature could ever rise above five degrees, but I was proven wrong and promptly took it off. A few people had even ventured to remove their socks and shoes, which seemed like a nice idea. Weapons practice doesn't get much better than standing in warm sunshine with cool grass softly squeezing between your toes.

Jo suburi was simple and challenging, as always. The hasso series is one of my favourites. It's so graceful to watch when it's performed well. Here we learned that movement and power come from the ground, not the arms. The lack of a barrier between feet and earth seemed to help with the feeling.

It's some time ago now, but I recall that the theme of grounding continued once we were back inside on the mat. There were fun moments in groups where we laughed and harassed each other in spatial awareness practice, followed by yawarakai and ki no nagare levels of practice, where everything tends to fall apart - at least for me! Adrian (the local seminar organiser), however, seemed unruffled by it all, and I was very impressed with his soft ukemi on the hard sportshall floor!

The essential theme of the weekend was structure, bodywork, distance and balance. Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros imparted that it's imperative to understand when to give space and when to take space. Though sometimes I think I need to figure out whose space is who's first!

Some light relief came on Saturday night with laughter and good food at The Vagabond Pub in the local town of Whitehaven. Gradually the people I 'sort of know' are becoming more familiar as each meeting comes around. It's nice to see that new faces are always warmly welcomed by this light-hearted community. As one who suffers from social anxiety in these settings, I feel more at ease with the kinds of souls drawn to Aikido.







## Sunday

Buki waza outside was a replay of the previous day - warm, sunny and intense in parts. My limited knowledge of the kumi tachi was put under pressure as I attempted to impart some small tips to my unsure partner.

The afternoon came around faster than we would have liked. As with every seminar, there is a plethora of information crammed into only a few days. With our heads bulging from the weight of it all, and a few lunchtime sandwiches in our bellies, it was time for... yep, you guessed it... jiyu waza!

The mat was packed, and space was sparse, putting our recently practised spatial awareness to the test. A perfect time for Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros to advise us on the importance of reading the maai and situation, ensuring that uke enters to intercept nage before the safe distance is closed. Additionally, he demonstrated that speed is not always necessary as long as nage's intent is focussed and martial. And then, just like that, the day was sadly over. We thank and chatter with our fellow colleagues for a while before commencing the customary friendly competition of how many mats our hands can hold before we start falling over them. Once our duty is complete, we arrange the final meeting point for our post-seminar celebration.

"There's a cafe nearby, overlooking the sea, that serves a nice cup of tea and a nice variety of local cakes", Adrian suggests.

"Sounds perfect!" we exclaim - "See you there!"



*West Cumbria Aikido will be hosting Lewis in St Bees on the 16-18th June 2023 - [Click here for more info](#)*







2023

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**Fri 16 - Sun 18 June - West Cumbria**

**Sat 18 - Sun 19 Nov - Dorset**





# A KI QUESTION

ADRIAN PUNT



## Introduction

I have known Aikido teachers that talk, comfortably and at great length, about 'ki', as well as those who want all mention or reference of the word or concept banned from all discussion, whether on or off the Aikido mat. However, ki, or perhaps the less controversial term 'aiki', are fundamental parts of the name of the art we follow (whether you consider Aikido as 'Ai-Ki-Do' or 'Aiki-Do'). Hence, in this article I pose 'a ki question' - what did O-Sensei, or more precisely, his first generation (direct) students mean when they spoke about ki and how have concepts around ki, or at least terminology, changed in the 50-plus years since the Founder's death?

Aiki (合氣; literally: 'Joining Spirit') is a well-established concept in Japanese martial arts in which the 'defender' blends (without clashing) with the 'attacker' and hence can control their opponent with minimal physical effort by making maximum use of the opponent's momentum against them. This blending of movements is achieved by understanding the rhythm and intent of the attacker and having the mental clarity and body coordination to find the optimal position and timing to apply a counter technique. Can aiki be considered as a mechanical activity focusing on distance, timing, velocity, and direction of travel etc? Hence, are Aiki-jutsu and Aikido therefore the Japanese martial arts of blending? Is aiki more than just physical timing?

I think most people would answer yes, at least in part, to the questions above. Some may suggest that Aikido is only receptive or passive, that it responds to a physical attack. However, Koichi Tohei Sensei in 'Aikido - The Coordination of Mind and Body for Self-Defense' (originally published in Japanese in 1961 and then in English in 1966) [1], notes that Aikido follows the principle of non-aggression, but goes on to say:

*"...however, Aikido is on the offensive and aggressive, because you pour forth and project powerful ki even before your opponent has had a chance to attack and apply techniques against him."*

Equally, Morihiro Saito Sensei in his 1976 Traditional Aikido Vol. 5 (p.36) [2] book notes that:

*"Aikido is generally believed to represent circular movements. Contrary to such belief, however, Aikido in its true ki form is a fierce art piercing straight through the centre of opposition."*

In our style of Aikido, we follow the teachings of Morihiro Saito Sensei. In both tai jutsu and buki waza we learn how to initiate the physical encounter to our advantage and to control and neutralise an impending attack before the strike, kick or grab is launched. Could this be considered as an advance practice of aiki - of responding to an intent ahead of the physical attack? I would say yes. In this we seek to enter deeply into the space of the aggressor with full intent and commitment, with strong extension, and with movement from the body, we strike upward and forward with the blade of the hand, the tegatana. We seize the initiative and aim to dominate the encounter. Is this what Tohei Sensei meant when he said, "pour forth and project powerful ki", or what Saito Sensei meant when he described Aikido in its true 'ki form' as "a fierce art piercing straight through the centre of opposition"? I would say yes. However, is 'ki' something more than just part of the concept of 'aiki'? This is part of the 'ki question' explored here.



## 'Ki' Meaning and Use

Ki (気) is the Japanese word for air; atmosphere; flavour; heart; mind; spirit; feelings; humour; an intention; mind; will etc. Uses of the word ki can include expressions such as 'ki ga katsu' meaning to be determined or strong-willed; 'ki wo ireru' to do in earnest, to concentrate on, to apply one's mind; and 'ki ga ooi' which can be taken to mean 'having many romantic interests', i.e., to be 'energetic' in a particular context. Equally, 'ki o yurusu' means 'to let go of one's ki', i.e., to let one's guard down; and 'ki ga chiru' means 'to have one's ki scattered', i.e., to be distracted. The question 'genki desu ka?' is typically translated from Japanese into English as 'how are you?'. However, in Japanese, 'genki' (元気) means 'lively; full of spirit; energetic; vigorous; vital; spirited', so you are in fact asking 'Are you full of energy?'

Tohei Sensei, in his 1961 publication [1], makes multiple references to ki. He notes that Aikido means "the way of coordinating with ki"; that through practice we aim to lead our opponent's ki; that we should aim to "pour forth ki" etc and that "As long as there is an outpouring of ki, you can maintain a posture of strength and still move swiftly in any direction".

Saito Sensei also makes extensive reference to ki in his publications from the 1970s. In the 1973 Traditional Aikido Volume 1 [3] book he notes that "It should be the desire of all who practice Aikido to develop ki...", that exercises should be done with full "ki extension", and that "As you extend your ki, the ki of your opponent will return to you like an echo". He also notes that you should "not receive your opponent's ki" but evade this by entering deeply and moving past them to their rear. He notes that in practice, "ki is directed before body movement takes place". He defines ki as:

**"The vital force of the body. Through Aikido training, the ki of a person can be drawn in increasing amounts from the universe. In practice, ki is directed before body movement takes place."**



Equally, 'ki musubi' is defined as "uniting of one's own ki with that of the opponent" and kokyu as "Breath power. The coordination of ki flow with breathing".

In Saito Sensei's 1975 book, 'Aikido Its Heart and Appearance' [4], he also talks about the importance of blending / matching your ki with that of your partner, about guiding and controlling your partners ki, and says that ki is critical because it is the origin of strength. He notes the importance of building up ki power over that of muscular power and that the highest level of practice is that of 'flow of ki' (ki no nagare) and that this can include throwing your partner without coming into contact with them.



Tohei Sensei also notes [1] a deeper meaning for the word ki in Japan as something akin to 'life-force', or fundamental energy where everything comes from, and ultimately returns to ki. This is, to all intents and purposes, the same as 'chi', the vital force believed in Taoism and other Chinese systems to be inherent in all things. Kisshomaru Ueshiba Sensei in his 1984 book 'The Spirit of Aikido' [5], talks about the "...flowing movement of ki-power which is free and fluid, indestructible and invincible". He defines 'ai' as harmony and 'ki' as a fundamental creative principle, i.e., force, energy. Hikitsuchi Mishio, in an 'Aikido Magazine' article from 1988 [6], also notes that "Aikido is harmonization with ki" but goes on to state that this does not mean harmonising with the partner's ki, but that you should "take the ki of your partner".

Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros recounts that during his time in Iwama, from 1986 to 1993, Saito Sensei would mention ki a lot, "better three suburi with full ki than a thousand without", but as noted earlier, the term ki is ubiquitous in Japanese language. Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros also notes Saito Sensei would also make a distinction between ki and kokyu using the analogy of a car: "ki is the fuel and kokyu the power". In other words, kokyu is therefore the expression (in action) of ki. However, Saito Sensei's 1994 book Takemusu Aikido Volume 1 [7] makes only limited reference to ki such as that on page 75 that states:

*"Ki will manifest itself naturally if you are training correctly. Once you have developed ki, it will flow freely through your hands even when your fingers are relaxed."*

There are then only a few other references to ki in the Takemusu Aikido series such as "open your fingers fully and extend your ki" or "raise your arms upwards as if holding a sword, extending ki through your arms". The definition of ki is simplified to "spirit or energy" and kokyu is only defined in terms of 'kokyu ho', i.e., exercises to develop breathing, ki extension and a stable posture. There appears to be a clear shift away from ki related terminology relative to Saito Sensei's publications of the 1970s. Why this shift? I don't know, but perhaps it related to western interpretations of ki and the desire to avoid language that could be misinterpreted. Maybe, maybe not.

## MEET THE AUTHOR



**ADRIAN PUNT (2nd Dan)** Adrian started Aikido in 1994, with an association following the mind and body coordination principles of Koichi Tohei Sensei, and was awarded his shodan in January 1999.

Later that year he moved to West Cumbria (NW England) and established the first Aikido club in St Bees where he taught for a number of years. In 2004, due to back problems, he retired from Aikido. In early 2018, and at just over 50, Adrian returned to Aikido joining West Cumbria Aikido. He received shodan from the International Takemusu Aikido Federation (ITAF) in summer 2019 and then subsequently tested for Aikikai grades of shodan and nidan in 2020 and 2021 with TAE.

He is an environmental scientist in background and has worked as a professional consultant in the international energy sector since the late 1990s in areas of waste and land management arrangements; impact assessment; and, provision of expert advisory services. He has authored over 245 technical / scientific reports and provides expert peer review services to operators, regulators and national and international advisory bodies.

**DOJO WEBSITE:**

[www.westcumbriaaikido.com](http://www.westcumbriaaikido.com)



## Aiki, Ki and Energy

Aiki might be a longstanding term in Japanese budo, but to me, Tohei Sensei in the 1960s and Saito Sensei in the 1970s were not talking about 'aiki' as a singular concept, but as 'ai' and 'ki' as clearly separate concepts with a distinct emphasis on ki. In this, ki (or more specifically an 'abundance' of ki) represents an energised state, where the mind, the intent, goes first.

These early publications note that like an attack of a spear or dagger thrust, you seek to evade the ki of the attacker, and in turn you aim to control, to dominate, to pierce straight through to the centre of the opposition. You act before your opponent has had a chance to attack and apply techniques against them, you seek to lead and 'take their ki'. They include the concept that ki strength can be increased and that this is different (and additional) to physical muscular strength. They include the concept that ki, specifically extension of ki, plays a key part in maintaining a strong structure and that through extension of ki you are able to realise kokyu – in essence whole body power. These are martially oriented concepts.

In the 1985 book 'Aikido' [8] Kisshomaru Ueshiba Sensei describes Aikido as "The Way of Spiritual Harmony" and talks of 'aiki-victory' (masakatsu agatsu) and that aiki is the assimilation of body and spirit. He describes 'chikara no dashi-kata' as 'extended power' and that this is the unification of ki, mind and body. He notes that ki, as a core concept of Oriental thought, equates to spirit or life force. Although the concepts here are similar to earlier publications of Tohei Sensei and Saito Sensei, they perhaps present a more spiritual focus and aiki as a unified concept that may have influenced Western interpretations of the concept of ki.

It is important to note that although Shintoism, Buddhism and in part, Christianity, co-exist in Japanese culture, societal root beliefs are animistic, i.e., the belief in the existence of individual spirits that inhabit natural objects and phenomena. Hence ki, whether considered as spirit, life force or universal energy etc, is not something that is superhuman or supernatural in the Oriental mind, it is just something that is. As Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros notes "I remember one teacher telling me that ki itself cannot be felt, only its effect in the body (kokyu)".

As Aikido spread through the western world so did western interpretations and translations of terms and concepts, including that of ki. I have encountered some Aikido teachers in the west who strongly declare that they "do not believe in ki". When questioned as to what it is they do not believe in, the response has been that they object to the concept of ki as some magical or mystical quality, some Jedi-like power.

The language of 'ki' used by Tohei Sensei, Saito Sensei and the second Doshu varies and in part evolved over time, nonetheless, it is hard to believe that they were referring to a mystical power. This interpretation appears to be a 'veneer' that we in the west have added, a mysticism, even romanticisation, that was not part of the original concept.





But... in our practice there is still an energised feeling, a quality that comes and goes and gradually grows with time, a quality that is hard to describe. What is it?

## Training and Ki

In our lineage of Aikido we don't tend to use terms such as 'extend ki' or practice mind and body coordination 'ki tests' such as that of the unbendable arm, but cut after cut, hour upon hour we work on raising the bokken from underneath - of extending and expanding. We work on being grounded but expanded, to the front to the back, to the sides, up and down, inside and out. We explore how the tensile structure of the body, the bones, joints, tendons, and fascia, along with gravity act as a system (see the article on basic training by Sensei Bernaldo de Quiros in the TAE Journal no. 1 [9]).

And as Ginny Breeland Sensei in the TAE Journal no. 7 [10] notes:

"Extension is first experienced through the arms. It feels like a 'lengthening'. As we practise, we learn that it can occur throughout the body along specific 'alignments'.

We extend the arms into the fingers and beyond. We extend the legs into the feet and below. We can extend and feel projection through the back and chest. We can even extend through the breath. Without extension, body movement may appear to be 'empty', lacking, or without substance. Extension is the crucial 'invisible' factor that can allow us to feel much bigger than our actual 'physical selves'.  
Extension opens the door to expansion."

Are the concepts of extension and expansion considered here the same that Tohei Sensei and Saito Sensei wrote about in the 1960s and 1970s? To me they are.

Kihon waza gives us a broad window through which we seek to explore, understand and embed the principles of mind and body coordination into all of our movements. We seek to coordinate and control our whole-body structure and to move with confidence, clear intent and commitment, to move from our centre and to transfer the power of our full body movement directly to our partner. When working with a bokken or jo, we seek to make the weapon an extension of not just our own body, but also of our mind.

Key to the points above is the development of kinaesthetic awareness of our own bodies, to be able to literally feel what being centred, grounded, extended, expanded mean, and to feel the connection with our partner and how we transmit movement from our centre to them. Equally, it is about our partner feeling our intent and knowing, without a doubt, that their structure is compromised.

It is all about a feeling that some might describe as ki. 🙏

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1. Koichi Tohei (1961). 'Aikido – The Coordination of Mind and Body for Self-Defense'
  2. Morihiro Saito (1976). 'Traditional Aikido', Vol. 5
  3. Morihiro Saito (1973). 'Traditional Aikido', Vol. 1
  4. Morihiro Saito (1975). 'Aikido Its Heart and Appearance'
  5. Kissomaru Ueshiba (1984). 'The Spirit of Aikido'
  6. Aikido Magazine, No. 40, 1988, p. 11 et seq.
  7. Morihiro Saito (1994). Takemusu Aikido Volume 1
  8. Kissomaru Ueshiba (1985). 'Aikido'
  9. Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros (2019). TAE Journal, Edition 1: 'A Commentary on Basic Training'
  10. Ginny Breeland (2021). TAE Journal, Edition 7: 'The Outer Journey – Refining Basic Structure'





**THE  
JOURNEY  
BEYOND**

**GINNY BREELAND**



# “The Study in Aikido Involves the Study of a Lifetime”

Perhaps your teacher has said this. From beginner, to intermediate, to teacher, to master, the refining that occurs from the exterior infiltrates the interior. Amidst this Aiki journey we come to the understanding that it is actually the process that changes us. We realise the destination is not a finish line to be crossed, but rather, a lifestyle revealed to be lived. Going Beyond delves deep into this art to obtain some sense of its Essence.

In the second Doshu's book, “Aikido” (published 1974) O'Sensei's list of Aikido Rules include:

“The teachings of your instructor constitute only a small fraction of what you will learn. Your mastery of each movement will almost completely depend upon individual, earnest practice.” Much learning comes through “individual, earnest practice” and the self-discovery that occurs when we choose to do our own study. We add and integrate knowledge, supporting the framework our teachers have so diligently instilled within us. Obtaining new knowledge is the constructive process that adapts/adjusts this framework. Integrating and connecting that information is the creative process that receives, applies, or simply pockets information for future use or study. Going Beyond is a choice, a conscious, invested endeavour to practice arduously. This Shugyo (mind/body) commitment merges intrigue with frustration, befriends exasperation, invests in failure as we actively choose the harder path, constantly deciding to step outside of our comfort zone. We deliberately temper and discipline the self. This is a choice. There are no shortcuts. Choice is the fundamental power in regards to the human experience and power begins through the activation of choice.



## MEET THE AUTHOR



GINNY BREELAND (6th Dan) started Aikido in 1978 at Napa Junior College (California) under William Morris, she later trained with Dennis Tatoian Sensei before spending 20+ years with Hans Goto Shihan (both early students of Morihiro Saito Shihan). She began teaching in the 1990s as Goto Sensei's Assistant instructor. In 2006, immediately after visiting Iwama, Ginny co-founded Cotati Aikido with her husband, Pete Breeland. She began creating instructional videos for YouTube in 2010 and started writing for a Facebook page, '[Aikido Advice for Women ... and a few men](#)'. She has taught and trained at venues in Northern California- including the TAA Gasshuku near Lake Tahoe; Tuscon, Az; Sarasota, Fl; and Chiappas, Mexico.

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Thus far, our Journeys have been described: The Outer Journey detailed external structural relationships. We progressed from the physical stance and central axis into the felt and manifested influence of Aiki weapons and Riai. We concluded with the impact 'Center First movement' has on technique. The Interior Journey outlined whole body integrated movement with connected breath. We superficially addressed the yin/yang concept, and peered into the universe of the energetic body tensegrity potential. We remain incomplete without mentioning The Journey Beyond. Here we seek higher consciousness to further refine embodied skills. We realise that in choosing to undertake this deeper study, some amount of healthy self-examination is required. In this endeavour we seek our highest potential and rise to the challenge of also accepting the due burden of responsibility inherent in this kind of commitment.

In seeking the Essence of this art, the learning of the body (physical), the mind (mental), and the spirit (transcendence) follow a trajectory that far exceeds the ordinary learning experience.

This involves realising our 'true Self'. The deep knowing and sensing of who we truly are. This reveals why we do what we do, what unconscious belief systems we hold, and how our history influences our perceptions. We scrutinize ourselves observing both good and bad with no judgement, thereby deciding what needs change. It is in the knowing of the Self so intensely that we can come to know others. Self understanding is like acquiring great knowledge of the world.

We find our innate inner resourceful state, and our local knowing evolves into a global understanding with a primary singular focus: to make ourselves better.

Aikido begins physically. We learn who we are through body movement. Going Beyond involves study past the five senses, past detail and form. We train sensitivity and intuition, using principles and relationships for direction, and we arrive at a visceral 'knowing'. We start at the beginning, with physical Kamae, surprised at the profound revelation stillness and non-action provide. In Refining Technique, we study describing what is present but absent (unseen), we examine the 'dialog' in the felt/sensed roles of uke/nage, as we uncover everyday meaning through the act of training. Teaching reveals layers of self discovery in the practice to responsibly transmit information. And lastly, the action and duty of Service to Others describes the 'do' that exists beyond the the mat, transforming the physical into a greater good.



## **Kamae (Posture and stance) and the Kamae 'Beyond' (the Present Moment).**

One of the first things we learn in martial arts is the proper way to 'stand'. Kamae is basic and fundamental, more than just 'stance' - though a strong, solid, structural base is crucial. Through the entire posture, we correctly join gravity, aligning and grounding into the Earth. We develop a very stable structure of static and dynamic readiness available at the start of technique, in the middle during transition, and as a finish (Zanshin). This shape expresses our physical standing, our emotional/mental status and intention. On the mat we stand with focused attention, circumferential awareness, and in a 'no mind' (mushin) 'non-thinking' state. Kamae presents a distinct interval, a pause to bring us into the present moment no matter what technique we practice. This occurs even in the midst of flow since Kamae is present throughout. Kamae occurs in our everyday life, defining how we 'abide' in the world. It is present in the space of readiness, as the pause we can assume amidst stress, and as a reset in released conclusion. These intervals occur in silence. Like the space in between each breath, we can discover profound moments of 'being'. This paused, conscious realisation of reality's transience can create a paradigm shift, revealing a surprisingly comfortable, peaceful respite of Calm. It is within this paused quiet state that the body brings into mind that all is well. In life and on the mat, this is how we Stand: Focused, Aware, and Calm. Bask here where the mind and body align and the brain and heart have coherence. Seek to experience this most perfect 'pause' in the physical and ethereal Kamae.



## **Refining Technique – Viscerally Knowing, Intuitively Understanding.**

Refining technique Beyond moves past the obvious five sensory observation, past linear physical biomechanics. Here, we feel and sense what is present but absent (unseen).

For example: O'Sensei describes Inryoku, the 'Attractive Force' this way, "...True budo is the cultivation of attraction with which to draw the whole opponent to you."

We expand this description, utilising O'Sensei's quote as a guide, adding layers to what we already know. We integrate 'sensed' information as we adjust our framework.

**"Kamae occurs in our everyday life, defining how we 'abide' in the world. It is present in the space of readiness, as the pause we can assume amidst stress, and as a reset in released conclusion."**



I posit this added description of the above:

*“Our weighted centre draws the whole mass of uke in like a vortex. The body breathes, exhaling to join gravity with a rotational core spiralling all things down. We blend and take balance, aligning the physical body with a paused mindstate. Technical ability with mindset awareness calibrates interception. An informed, open hand adheres as we amplify awareness by connecting the palm of that hand with the grounded sole of the foot. As we confidently release potential / stored energy, our skill ensures that uke will remain safe.”*

When we consciously and mindfully observe the Self and these kinds of relationships, we realise that habits of attention are as important as habits of movement. We observe ourselves fully before we observe uke. When we know the Self, we can intuitively sense uke, physically and intentionally as we strive to know his mind.

Uke's role in this dialogue is not passive, he accepts this connection and maintains it. Uke listens for physical cues amidst this connected movement, employing a 360 degree situational awareness. He senses what is right in front of him and in every part of the background. Uke shifts, realigning his body to stay connected, essentially harmonising with a destabilising force. Eventually uke 'decides' to meet the fall. As the 'crescendo' of the technique is sensed, uke will, at the exact moment, overtake the fall. In other words, uke will make nage's throw - his fall. This is uke's conversational response. This silent dialogue is not equally dynamic but each role is integral, existing in the state of constant flux. Yet nage and uke have mutual regard, making conversation complete. The principle of blending also lends insight into uke's perception. Creating 'oneness' bridges the gap as uke's viewpoint comes into our consciousness. And since we carry our histories (all we have experienced) in our mind and body, we assess, asking: Exactly how does this blend feel? Is uke aggressively coming forward or is he holding back? We move less to harmonise with enthused movement, while we may need to energetically fetch a more hesitant intent.

There is no perfect language to describe movement, so we shape the nage / uke relationship like a conversation. This body dialogue is initiated as nage absorbs an attack to lead the conversation. Uke receives signals on how to respond to nage's movements. If nage 'converses' clearly, uke perceives direction. If there is confusion, nage must redefine (restate) movements so uke can, through connection, understand. Nage 'shows' the way.

Humans often move in unconscious patterns. We react due to the





Automatic Nervous System in fight / flight / freeze. However, our present day 'dangers' include more insidious threats present in our belief systems or through the human experience of chronic stress resulting in maladaptive behaviour. Implicit bias, history of chronic or complex trauma, extreme sensitivity to pain for whatever reason, etc. reflects the state held within the body.

When we 'sense' such variables we draw distinction, we intuitively adjust, optimising connection. We viscerally discern, assessing and adjusting, remaining fluidly adaptable. Aikidoka training for decades may notice some of these unconscious patterns of movement.

As we intuitively adjust, creating harmony to optimise connection, we draw distinctions, viscerally discerning while remaining fluidly adaptable.

As we become better at harmonising with this 'dialogue' we can anticipate problems before they manifest. Eventually, we learn to fully trust our instincts in response to these problems. This mental exercise creates unity, a 'felt' understanding with body and mind. Fluid emotional intelligence, intuitive awareness, and welcoming the ability to understand other viewpoints helps us 'read' and respond to uke / people in general. We adjust conversation just

like we adjust connection on the mat. This higher consciousness fosters effective communication - which is not driven forth by an engaging ego - but clearly, by a specific, subtle set of skills.

### Teaching – The Forging Continues.

Dennis Tatoian Sensei, 7th dan Shin-shin Aiki-shuren-kai, imparted some sage advice from his Sensei, Morohiro Saito Shihan:

*"All you need to continue learning is: your students, your sword, and a mirror".*

Saito Shihan was technically brilliant. His systematic approach broke down technique into manageable steps. This method allows the student to grasp technique basics, while also empowering one with the ability to "teach" it, rudimentarily, to another. This departs from the classic traditionalist who spoke very little so students had to 'steal' technique. Saito Shihan's method gave students an opportunity to feel successful. Most advanced Iwama teachers employ this approach. Saito Shihan's teaching style can be viewed in the many videos left behind. Many of his students, now Iwama Shihan, preserve this method. I also follow this process, extrapolating deeply for my own study. This approach also helps preserve the forms we transmit. Additionally, we realise that detail can be revealed by assessing technique from many angles. We, who teach, quickly discover that just physically 'knowing' is not enough. Our explanations must clearly match physical technique. Hanmi, centerline, extension and grounding must remain visually intact. The mindful gift here is learning to control our own body precisely and minutely because there is always something, inevitably, a bit off. In essence, ideally, we teach through the clarity of our own example. This considers what they see...not just what we do.





Accurate self-observation is a skill. We maintain a healthy critical spirit so we can examine our own example with objective scrutiny. We should not assume that if our teaching is not received, it is solely due to the student's deficit. The ability to observe oneself beyond the 'surface' level is crucial for growth since we cannot address what we are unaware of. Observe the body and mind apart from the constraints of the mind. This requires very deep presence. The egoic mind will label / rationalise so take heed, the egoic mind serves only the ego. Foster self awareness with receptivity, not defensiveness. Notice flaws with no judgement, see it as information. A new consciousness can arise through mindful practice and meditation. Study intentionality – the 'why' and 'what' we do and its impact.

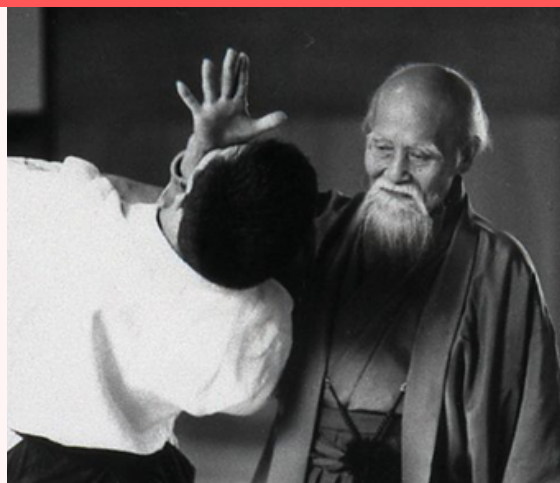
*“Self Awareness is the Key to Self-Mastery”*

- Gretchen Rubin

### **Service to Others – the “Do” Beyond the Mat**

When we first joined Aikido it was about Ourselves. We came to learn 'how' to fight, to be disciplined and fit. For a while it was, indeed, entirely about the 'Self'. Later we learned to move 'around' our uke. It was about him and ourselves, two separate entities attempting to control the other. We used strength, making or forcing technique to work. We were still into 'fighting'. When we learned that we were only fighting ourselves, our perspectives changed. We blended, surprised to use less strength. We connected, and curiosity began to outweigh frustration. When we learned about the Axis of Rotation, we became efficient. We allowed and harmonised, unifying our body, mind, and spirit. We became smooth and powerful, integrated and aligned. We learned to manage, calibrate, and temper our own body movement.

As we blended, no longer pushing or pulling, we were surprised to discover that now uke dictated how we conformed. In this 'surrender' it all became about uke. Uke dictated timing, absorption and connection. Our centre conformed to uke's centre. We harmonised with uke's mindset and intention first. And then one



day we felt the Oneness. We enveloped uke into ourselves, seeing him as we see ourselves with no differentiation, no separation. We both occupied the centre now, as a single unit, a true reflection of the other. We mindfully purified our thoughts and intentions realising that from a pure mind and body flows good energy in technique and thereby, good energy in life. I believe this progressive realisation is the physical manifestation toward a most worthy ideal. From a separate knowing to a singular understanding. This dynamic evolution is reflected in our external life as we discover new ways of 'being'. In our microcosm, we find more calm and peace amidst daily chaos, challenges become opportunities, and we remain unshaken by neither praise nor blame. The ease in dealing with uke on the mat transforms into finding the ease of harmonising with daily life struggle. In our macrocosm, “Service to Others” manifests. We altruistically expand - our boundaries of sensation swelling out to include other people. Our responsibility is to give back once receiving “Fudoshin”, the unwavering heart/immovable mind. This gift of Calm moves us toward humanity and nature, not away from it.

*“The ideal in martial arts is humanitarianism. Accomplishment uses diligence as a goal”. - Ip man*



## Conclusion

I conclude with a surmise, most of which I wrote years ago describing my evolution on ["Aikido Advice for Women and a Few Men"](#):


**"Formlessness does not exist separate from Form. They exist mutually.  
To study an art we must first learn form, shape, and mechanics.  
The brain follows linearly, observing pattern and rhythm.  
We learn technique.  
Like musicians we must first learn the Scales.**

**Eventually we evolve.**

**Our mind and body transcend into principle and notion.  
The art slowly becomes our own as we discover  
the essence of unattached, spontaneous response.  
The Math of technique becomes the Poetry of Intention.**

**This is Takemusu Aikido.**

**This Embodiment enters in our everyday.  
Confidently empowered, we radiate Divine qualities  
of Love, Humility, Compassion, Equanimity, and Joy.  
Our Duty becomes Service to Others. We are present, ready to do our best.**

**Aikido is a conduit for Self Transformation, yet this path has no end.  
'We are Here', still reaching toward a new and better plateau.  
We know more, now we must do more.  
This Journey involves one long developmental arc.  
We arrive full circle, enabled, ready to begin again."** 





**METSUKE**

**ANDREA PFISTERER**



## Metsuke: Where should you put your eyes?

Let us look at this question in three parts: first for solo practice, then for practice with a partner, then in movement, specifically when dealing with multiple attackers. As a supplement there are some neuro-physiological explanations about the visual process at the end of this article.

### 1. Solo Practice

I found this text from a Iaido blog:

*'An important element of going beyond the mechanics of the form, is sighting your opponent; i.e., looking in his direction and fixing your gaze wherever he may be. Many books on swordsmanship simply say that the beginning iaidoka should fix her gaze towards the floor two metres ahead, but once the mechanics of the kata become more familiar, her gaze must be levelled at her imaginary opponent.'* [1]

This passage refers to Iaido solo kata but can be applied for katas in aikido as well. I would argue however that already at beginners' level the gaze should preferably be levelled at the imaginary opponent, or else a strange habit is ingrained. Often, I see students perform solo kata putting their gaze too close in front of themselves on the floor. Because the body tends to follow the eyes, this affects their whole posture, their back getting rounded, shoulders tight, often balance lost towards the front and all in all their movements getting too contracted. Just a short comment, like 'lift your gaze' can change their whole practice completely. Practising any kata every once in a while in such a

way that after each movement the pause is increased to check the form, starting from the gaze and then downward can help change habits in this regard. So next time you practise the 31 or the 13 jo kata, or any kind of solo kata – also tai sabaki – pay attention to what you do with your eyes.

### 2. Partner practice

Now let's look at partner practice: 'level the gaze at the opponent' still is quite a vague description. Should we look at their head? At their eyes? Their hand, feet, weapon?

Wherever you put your eyes, there is also the tendency that your mind will move there.

*'If you send your mind in one direction, it lacks the other nine. If the mind is not restricted to one direction, it is in all ten.'* Takuan Soho[2]

Rather than focusing the eyes on a certain part of the attacker's body – or their weapon – our gaze is directed to the chest area of the attacker, but not focusing there, rather zooming out as if we wanted to see something more in the distance. "Enzan no metsuke", translated as 'looking into distant mountains' is the term often used in martial arts referring to this. The feeling is a 'softer' gaze that envelops the partner.

In this way we get less distracted by unimportant visual information (e.g. colour and pattern of clothes) and can 'see' more easily the origin of the attack.

At first one might see the attack coming only if the attacker is helping us with big, slow attacks. But with increasing experience the signs of an attack can be read more easily and by this we 'gain time' to respond to them. Eventually it will be possible to 'see' the intention before the attack.

In karate or also kendo the term metsuke refers to using your eyes. "me" means eye and "tsuke" means to attach. Literally speaking: attach your eye to your opponent. Not letting him or her out of your sight. There are two levels of metsuke: Ken No Me and Kan No Me.

Ken no metsuke: This is translated as 'to look, see, watch' with your eyes. To look at the attacker, see how they are moving. And then respond accordingly.

Kan no metsuke : Can be translated as "to observe the truth." Not only to see, but also to understand what the opponent will do next. Thus, not just by looking through the eyes, but rather using the mind, intuition, insight or instinct. With years of practice

and experience the senses and feelings have been sharpened. How fast can no metsuke is achieved largely depends on personal talent in sensitivity and analysis. As a beginner it is not something to worry about, but definitely something to strive for.

When attacking, the eyes are focused on the target (head, hand, knee....). But only for a split second (together with the 'kime') and then the gaze should be opened again to be ready for responding to partner's reaction. We should not get fixed on the target, or else we will be late for the next move. In the special case of attacking the knee: be careful not to focus 'down' too much, or else you will signal your attack.

The gaze can also be used as a 'feint' to distract the opponent and attack by surprise. E.g. to look at the left shoulder and attack the right knee. Of course, this only works against someone who hasn't yet internalised the approach of the soft gaze as described above.







### 3. Movement

Have you ever assisted a child learning to cycle? It was certainly more helpful to show them the direction they needed to steer towards, than showing them the curbstone that they must not hit....: The eyes lead, the body follows.

Whether it is in solo practice and you want to turn with a tenkan or kaiten, or when dealing with multiple attackers, we should always first direct our eyes, and with them our head, in the direction we want to turn. The rest of our body will follow more easily.

There is a tendency to be stuck with the eyes on the attacker, e.g. the one grabbing us. Especially when dealing with more than one attacker, this will cause a problem. But we know exactly where this attacker is: he is grabbing me. Rather, I should turn and look out for the other attacker(s), ideally while at the same time moving out of the grip. This is exactly what's happening with kotegaeshi for example: turning away from the partner in order to see the other(s) and with the turn freeing myself from the grip.

In tai no henko we are constantly reminded to turn completely and look the same direction the partner is facing. In morote dori kokyū ho we tend to forget this again, not turning completely and 'running ahead of the technique'. Why? Because our evolutionarily ingrained reflex of keeping our eyes in the direction where the problem / danger is, makes us stuck with our head turned only midway ('maybe I can still see him peripherally?') and so also our hips only turn midway, resulting in not taking partners' balance properly. Also in this case, from a teachers' perspective, rather than correcting the hip movement it is mostly enough to instruct to turn the head completely.

#### **The physiology of seeing (Geek alert):**

The visual field refers to the total area in which - without movement of the eyes or the head- visual perception is possible. It has a binocular (stereo) extension of about 120° horizontally.

The visual field is composed of foveal (or focal) and peripheral vision. In foveal vision, the central axis of the eye is precisely aligned with a targeted object for a maximum central visual accuracy. Peripheral vision involves "seeing past" the object in question. This provides coarse, blurred and optically distorted visual

### MEET THE AUTHOR



#### ANDREA PFISTERER

(4th Dan) has been training Aikido since 1995 where she started at Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros dojo in Haarlem and afterwards with Hanspeter Dietz in Zurich. She has been teaching Aikido for over 20 years. In 2014 she cofounded the Kokoro Dojo Zurich where she teaches children and adults. Andrea is continuously developing on international seminars as well as during two long stays in Japan, 1999 in Iwama with Morihiro Saitos Sensei, 2003 in Kobe with Shingo Nakao Sensei. After a PhD in Ecology and coordinating and teaching doctoral programs, Andrea is now working as shiatsu therapist, PR responsible of the professional shiatsu association and aikido teacher. With her husband Nik Bärtsch she regularly leads workshops for musicians and performers.

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impressions of objects in the visual field. But when we look in the distance, our eyes diverge slightly, thus increasing the active visual field.

Clear recognition is only possible within the central area, the fovea; the quality of perception in terms of visual acuity, pattern recognition and colour vision decreases, the more peripheral the visual stimuli are. Sensitivity to moving objects also decreases peripherally, but less so than other visual functions, so that in peripheral vision there is a relative superiority of motion vision over other visual functions. The periphery of the visual field is therefore particularly important for recognising dangerous situations.

### **In practice:**

When adopting a peripheral vision 'looking' at a partner in front of us, we may not be able to distinguish colours and patterns on their shirt or the length of their nose, but we will still see movements, not only from the partner ahead of us, but within the whole visual field.

Visual processing describes the brain's ability to understand and process what the eyes see. It has been suggested that we distinguish two types of processing: the focal mode and the ambient mode[3]. The focal mode uses almost exclusively visual information, while the ambient mode includes information from the vestibular, somatosensory, and auditory senses to assist spatial orientation, posture, and gaze stability.

Focal and ambient modes differ in a number of ways. While the focal mode requires adequate light

conditions, ambient mode still works well also with degraded image quality or reduced light. Focal vision typically involves attention, while ambient visual functions are more reflexive in nature. We can therefore, for example, read a book (focal mode) while we walk and spatial orientation (ambient mode) is still maintained with no conscious effort.

Under stress, tunnel vision can occur, where objects imaged in the peripheral visual field may not be detected at all. Ambient vision, which does not require attention, is probably unaffected by this attentional narrowing.

In practice: Based on this information, and from my own experience I would hypothesise that with practice we can train to use our peripheral vision more and we can also train to pay more attention to our ambient mode of processing. So that, even under stressful circumstances, tunnel vision will not occur.

How do we do this? Training under adequate stress levels, increasing them over time, in order that also in critical situations, we manage to stay alert, but calm. 'Artificial' stress specifically directed to our visual system would involve training in (semi-)darkness. With the help of purposeful practice, you can achieve the skill of subtle perception of the opponent's body movements, including invisible ones, and thereby anticipate his intentions and actions.

Maybe this relaxed, alert peripheral vision is the 'kan no metsuke' as described above. 🙏

[1] <https://resobox.com/news/metsuke/>

[2] Zen master Takuan Sōhō (1573 – 1645) in a letter to sword master Yagyū Munenori, quoted from: *The Unfettered Mind: Writings of the Zen Master to the Sword Master*, translated by William Scott Wilson

[3] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK219039/>





**"Don't look at the opponent's eyes, or your mind will be drawn into his eyes. Don't look at his sword, or you will be slain with his sword. Don't look at him, or your spirit will be distracted. True budo is the cultivation of attraction with which to draw the whole opponent to you. All I have to do is keep standing this way."**

MORIHEI UESHIBA





# **THE LEVELS OF PRACTICE**

**LEWIS BERNALDO  
DE QUIROS**



**A brief exposition of the levels of practice in Takemusu Aikido.**

**Kihon waza**  
**Ki no nagare waza**

**Henka waza**  
**Kaeshi waza**

**Oyo waza**  
**Takemusu Aiki**

This is a brief exposition of the levels of Takemusu Aikido as I understand them. What can be appreciated is a clear progression in the above six levels from clear, and precise (kihon and ki no nagare waza) through to exploring the ability to change and be flexible (henka and kaeshi waza) to free and spontaneous response (Oyo waza and Takemusu Aiki).

Generally our practice focuses on the first two levels and rarely on the last four advanced ones. Hence in the discussion below I will give these last four more attention.

**Kihon waza**

Usually performed from a static start, they are the basic techniques in Aikido and are performed ritualistically (kata) from a variety of attacks beginning with grabs and progressing onto strikes. They are like the studying of the alphabet and the grammar system of a language.

This first level is by far the most important level as all subsequent levels, even though presenting challenges unique to themselves, are fundamentally built on the skills and knowledge acquired at this level. In practice there should be a clear balance between technique and principle and between stillness and movement. The 'what' of the techniques needs to be underscored by the 'how and why' of the principles of the art. These two (technique and principle) are like the wheels of a cart and both need to be trained from the start.

**Ki no nagare waza**

Basic technique performed in a flowing manner. If Kihon can also be considered as learning to stand and walk then this level is about being able to run and jump. The main issue here is about following and joining. The main challenge arises in breaking the three connections we have begun to develop at the previous level (the connections with the ground, our own bodies and with the other).

## Henka waza

Henka waza are techniques where nage changes the technique depending on one of two dynamic situations:

1. The technique being performed by nage 'fails' and hence is adjusted to either a variation of the same technique or a different one.
2. Uke resists or evades nage's technique causing nage to follow up with a second technique.

Henka can be didactically built up from static through to flowing forms but the essence of its performance becomes manifest at the flowing level where the 'change' from one technique to another is seamless. There should be no deliberation but a feeling directly into the openings that are presented, as the pathways into the first technique are lost or blocked.

This is advanced level practice and requires a thorough knowledge of the techniques plus the developed ability to 'stick' and follow the changes in the encounter that require the change to a second technique.

Nage should not use force to achieve a result nor resistance to attempt to stop uke's change. Every structure or form has strong points and weak ones. Nage's job is to follow uke's changes and connect to his centre where he can finally neither resist nor escape through the weaknesses revealed in his movements. To do this requires sensitivity above all else and then, once centres are connected, kokyu (whole body power) to neutralise uke with a technique.

## Kaeshi waza

These are Aikido techniques used as counters to Aikido techniques. Originally they were taught only to senior instructors but nowadays have become part of the advanced level of the curriculum of techniques and practices.

As with henka waza where the essence is the ability to stick, flow and change with new conditions, kaeshi waza requires the same abilities, but now applied against nage by uke.

Kaeshi waza techniques, as with henka waza, can be performed in one of two ways:

1. Uke exploits a weakness in nage's technique and enters with a technique of his own.
2. Uke provokes a weakness in nage's technique thereby creating a window for his counter.

Kaeshi waza affords a deeper study into the techniques - with their individual inherent weaknesses. A technique can be considered as a shape, with curves, corners and changes of direction. It is at the 'corners' and changes of direction that techniques become potentially open to failing and where counters can be applied.

Morihiro Saito Sensei would teach Kaeshi waza this way: for example, ikkyo was first practised as usual and then Sensei would give examples of counters at progressive points of opportunity along the timeline of execution of the technique. For each technique studied in this way, three or four clear 'windows' of opportunity would be revealed sequentially.

This practice therefore is not just fascinating in its own right but deepens our understanding of the techniques themselves, allowing us to appreciate their weak points and therefore 'seal' them, making them stronger and in effect more difficult to block or counter.



## Oyo waza

This is the practical or 'combative' application of Aikido techniques. They are characterised by speed, technical brevity, the use of atemi (strikes) and a deep understanding of three strategic timings: go no sen, sen no sen and sen sen no sen (see Ethan Weisgard's article on these distinctions in TAE Journal number 8).

A prerequisite for this level is that the Aikidoka through his previous training has come to embody and is committed to non resistance and connection as fundamental relational strategies and that his intention is not one of merely fighting and defeating the opponent but of sparing him. Oyo is not a departure from the principles that characterise Aikido as a unique martial art which goes beyond simply defeating an opponent. There is a choice being made here: Aikido techniques can be devastating but the choice is to control versus damage the opponent. That intention must not be lost at this level.

In oyo waza, atemi is used as a form of kuzushi where we distract or unbalance our attacker with a non lethal strike allowing us to perform a technique. This

technique is generally very brief and simple.

For example, consider nikkyo as a response from a kata dori attack. Performed at a basic level, nage moves to the side and rolls back, connecting to the forearm to set the wrist and elbow joints of the arm for the correct alignment required for the technique and ends with a dropping motion connecting to the attacker's centre through his arm and whole body. In essence this step by step training of the technique teaches us the configuration and 'shape' of nikkyo, developing the technique from a merely wrist technique to a whole body technique which controls our attacker's centre.

The oyo waza application of this technique from this same attack will involve an initial back fist strike (ura-ken) to our attacker's face as he connects with our shoulder. Simultaneously our other hand connects with his shoulder-gripping forearm. In this situation uke will



**MEET THE AUTHOR**

LEWIS BERNALDO DE QUIROS (6th Dan, Shihan) trained full-time under the direction of Morihiro Saito Sensei (9th Dan) from 1986 to 1993 at the Iwama Dojo in Japan.

Since his return from Japan he has dedicated himself entirely to teaching Aikido and to date has given more than 300 international seminars.

After his return he maintained regular contact with his teacher, through seminars participating both as an assistant and as a translator, until the death of Morihiro Saito Sensei in 2002.

Lewis received the 5th Dan Aikikai degree from Morihiro Saito Sensei in 1999 and the 6th Dan Aikikai degree from Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba (Hombu Dojo in Tokyo) in 2009.

He is the main instructor and examiner, recognized by Hombu Dojo, of the European network of dojos "Traditional Aikido Europe". Lewis is the Dojo Cho of Takemusu Aikido Motril (Granada - Spain) and the Technical Director of Traditional Aikido Europe (TAE).

**DOJO WEBSITE:**

[www.aikidotradicional.eu](http://www.aikidotradicional.eu)

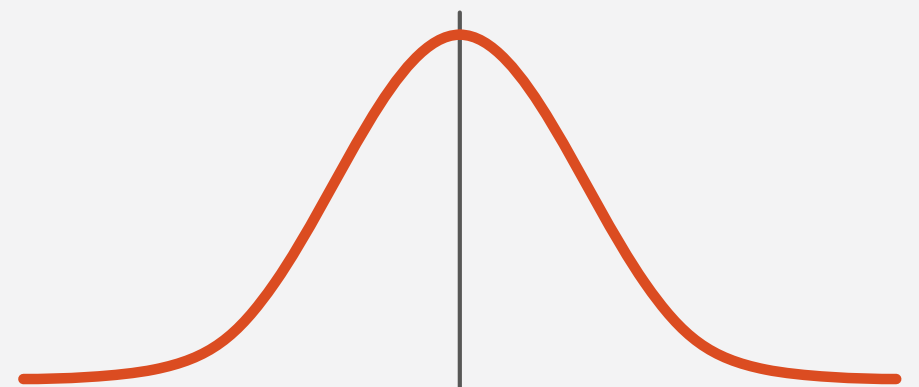
reflexively flinch backwards after being struck loosening his grip. We stick to and follow his withdrawal, executing nikkyo in one motion, dropping him to the ground. The whole sequence of response in this case should be executed as one motion in less than a second.

Consider nikkyo as the color royal blue and all possible variations as shades of this blue (as distinct from all possible variations of ikkyo which we could designate with the colour yellow). No matter what the variation, it is 'blue'. This 'blueness' which defines what makes nikkyo a nikkyo is what we need to gain through basic training. In oyo waza no matter the attack if nikkyo is suggested as a technique in the relationship that springs up in our response, it is that 'blueness' that we apply and not a set practised technique.

So this level can be practised through examples but in essence is an expression of our understanding of the basic levels. In a real situation we need to react instantly without thinking. There is no searching for techniques but a simple execution of them in a modified practical form. As the saying goes, 'It does not matter if you are talented or not, it only matters if you are trained or not'. This level is all about the depth of your training.

A few last words on timing.

All events can be represented as a normal curve:



Everything appears with a beginning, develops to maturity and then subsides. In the above case intensity is represented by the height of the wave while duration is represented by the horizontal axis from left to right.



An attack can be understood using this analogy. The three basic timings refer to which part of the event (wave) we engage with.

If we are late and the attack has developed fully we engage at the end as power begins to dissipate. This is known as 'go no sen'. In essence the attacker has the initiative and we seek to regain it following and drawing out his power.

If we engage within the attack we enter while his power is at peak. This is risky as if we get the distances and angles wrong we can bear the full brunt of his attacking power. However it is at this point that our attacker will be least able to change what he is doing. This is sen no sen.

If we are able to perceive the beginning of the attack (the intention) then we can enter deeply to the left of the wave and forestall it. In this timing we take the initiative and do not allow our attacker to develop his. This is the preferred strategy whenever possible. Sen sen no sen.

These three timings along with a deep sensitivity to distance need to come into play instinctively at oyo waza level.





TAKE MUSU AIKI - by Morihei Ueshiba

### Takemusu Aiki

All of the above discussed comes to fruition at this level.

**Take:** martial techniques

**Musu:** to be born, the source of, the creative element

**Aiki:** the state of mind of the practitioner (harmonious, non oppositional)

The techniques are examples of solutions to martial conflict situations but if we simply think that learning Aikido is a matter of memorising many techniques, this is a superficial approach. What we should seek is the genius and inspiration that is their source. We seek to embody Aikido itself. From that place - at source - we are in a position to spontaneously create techniques unique and appropriate to the situation at hand. This being able to create techniques fluidly and spontaneously as demanded by the situation is considered the highest level of Aikido: Takemusu Aiki.

From this 'place' our 'strategy' will be one of absorbing and joining with the intent and movement of the other.

And the resolution will look like a technique.

At the beginning of our journey it's all about struggling with ourselves (our bodies and minds) and the other and learning the vast corpus of the techniques. But as we learn to do less, get out of our own way and join with the other we come to see that the techniques are actually simple and constantly pointing us inwards towards simplicity.

The level of Takemusu Aikido is where the techniques have been embodied and their lessons learned, returning us to a simplicity and connection with all things. From this place our actions are Takemusu Aiki.



## Conclusion

It can be appreciated that the six levels above actually resolve into three. The first two, kihon and ki no nagare, are where most of our daily training in the Dojo takes place. It is here at the most basic levels that all the techniques and principles are learned which form the subsequent base for the next four levels. Techniques at these levels are practised in a ritualised fashion and are known beforehand.

Henka and kaeshi waza are obviously very similar in that they both entail developing the ability to follow and change with changing circumstances. The practice is less fixed, being decided in relation to the attack or initial technique but opening with the change or counter.

Oyo waza and Takemusu Aiki are very close and both entail responding directly and unthinkingly from an unknown attack with a spontaneous response. The difference is subtle but in my opinion oyo waza is limited to a martial response while the response at the final level can be beyond what is normally understood as a martial technique. Being totally appropriate in neutralising aggression can take many forms. 道



*"Aikido is not an art to fight with enemies and defeat them. It is a way to lead all human beings to live in harmony with each other as though everyone were one family. The secret of aikido is to make yourself become one with the universe and to go along with its natural movements. One who has attained this secret holds the universe in him/herself and can say, 'I am the Universe.'"*

*Morihei Ueshiba*

# YUDANSHA AWARDS 2022

The annual recap of yudansha awards in the previous year.



## **ULI BICHELER (DE) 1ST DAN**

### **What I learned from my grading:**

"I was able to improve my sensitivity and body awareness, taking another step in understanding how the techniques work and how they don't and why. That makes me really curious about how I will develop here in the further training years!"



## **STEPHAN GEIGER (DE) 2ND DAN**

### **What I learned from my grading:**

"Patience and perseverance lead to the goal."



## **TOBIAS SCHUELE (DE) 1ST DAN**

### **What I learned from my grading:**

"It was very challenging to keep patience and stay focused all the time, but I grew into habit."



## **MARK ALLCOCK (UK) 3RD DAN**

### **What I learned from my grading:**

"Need to do more ki no nagare."



## **PAUL ROBINSON (UK) 1ST DAN**

### **What I learned from my grading:**

"What I learnt was to keep things simple! Under the stress of a grading, simple techniques require less brain power and are easier to bed in the muscle memory."



## **ROBERT DICKINSON (UK) 1ST DAN**

### **What I learned from my grading:**

"There is no better preparation for a grading than a lot of practice and hard work."





### **CARSTEN GLENTING (DK) 1ST DAN**

#### **What I learned from my grading:**

"My preparation taught me that aikido encompasses principles - calm mind, relaxed body, centring, grounding, zanshin - that transcends martial arts and affects other parts of my life."



### **RICHARD VAN BERKUM (NL) 5TH DAN**

#### **What I learned from my grading:**

"Sometimes you can't prepare how you would like so you have to blend with the situation and make the best of it."



### **JORGE SANCHEZ (E) 1ST DAN**

#### **What I learned from my grading:**

"Became more clear how to study the relationship within my body and how this internally behaves, also the position of the body in the spaces and the connection between the weapons and taijutsu."



### **JUAN VAN CAUWENBERGHE (B) 1ST DAN**

#### **What I learned from my grading:**

"The more you pay attention and train to the details, the clearer it becomes, but the more details come to light, forcing you to train even more."



### **FRANK CLARYS (B) 1ST DAN**

#### **What I learned from my grading:**

"Preparing together with Katrien and Juan created a tremendous energy and motivation to grow in Aikido. This came to a point, where there was no more you, he, me, she ... only intense practice."



### **JEAN-DAVID BODÉNAN (CH) 1ST DAN**

#### **What I learned from my grading:**

"Beyond a much better precision in kihon, what I learned was the focus and determination that allowed me to persevere when it gets tough."



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

LEWIS BERNALDO  
DE QUIROS



*Q: I have heard you often refer to the difference between basic and advanced technique with an image of a wide or narrow window of access to the principles. Can you expand on this?*

A: This is a way I have developed of understanding and teaching which I find quite useful - and have validated in my own experience. First let's look at Technique.

From the vast corpus of Techniques practiced in Daito Ryu Aiki jiu jitsu O Sensei extracted and modified his technical repertoire (taijutsu) down to a much simpler set which can be organised as follows: a basic core set of 6 and an advanced set of six totalling 12.

### **Core waza (basic)**

Osae waza: Ikkyo, Nikkyo, Sankyo

Nage waza: Kote gaeshi, Shiho nage, Irimi nage

### **Advanced waza:**

Osae: Yonkyo, Gokkyo, Rokkyo

Nage waza: Kokyu nage, Koshi nage, Kaiten nage

(Specific techniques such as ago oshi, kubi nage, sumi otoshi, juji garame, aiki otoshi etc are grouped under the heading 'kokyu nage').

In regular training we spend easily 80% of our time practicing the core waza group. Each group of three in this group form a beautiful and logical sequence:

Ikkyo can be considered working with a straight arm.

Nikkyo explores bending that arm at the wrist and elbow.

Sankyo explores twisting the arm.

The work here is connecting from the periphery (arms) to the centre.

A similar progression can be appreciated with the core nage waza where different arches are explored as related to the movement of the technique through space with variable distances from the central axis of the body of uke.

Kote gaeshi can be considered as an arch movement at maximum distance from the central axis.

Shiho nage is closer, completing itself just in front of the shoulder.

Irimi nage can be seen as an arch which covers the centre line across the neck of uke.

Again as with the osae waza above all explore visible pathways through space whose central connection is with uke's centre.

The advanced waza abandon this elegant sequencing of the core waza, exploring specific themes in themselves, the biggest 'catch-all' grouping being the kokyu nage group.

How does the above grouping of core and advanced waza relate to my 'window' metaphor?

The techniques can be considered as the 'what' and the principles as the 'how' of a technique.

From the very beginning of our practice both need to be kept in view. The practice of Technique IS the practice of Principle.

What are these principles? They can also be grouped into categories:

1. Body Use principles such as being grounded yet expanded, being internally connected and integrated, being centred, etc
2. Relational principles such as 'listening' (an open and non-resistant perception of the other), following, joining and connecting (musubi), harmonising with the movement and intent of the other (awase), kuzushi (balance breaking), etc.
3. Mind principles such as being calm (a non reactive consciousness), being able to balance focus (isshin) with open awareness (zanshin), mental 'positions' such as Fudoshin ('imperturbable mind'), Ai uchi ('mutual cut', but on a mental level complete commitment with no reserve), etc

If we consider these principles (and many others) and take as an example 'grounding' we can appreciate that this principle is all about our physical and mental relationship with the ever present force of gravity. It governs our source of stability, movement and power. All actions we take and any force we generate needs to be sourced in this primary relationship and all forces we receive (in the form of attacks) need to be directed downwards through the body to be drained into the ground.

A relatively simple technique such as ikkyo allows us, step by step, to keep the 'ground' present in our movements. Our movements should be balanced at each step allowing us to use the centre to direct all parts of the body. As we raise our arms into the upper arch of the technique, we do so 'from below' instead of lifting 'from above'. As we cut down we do so again 'drawing from below' instead of 'pushing down' and finally settle in the pin connecting through our partner into the ground.


If we are taught correctly to pay attention to such 'inner dynamics' (principles) within the form then the core techniques offer 'wide' windows of access to the principles in general. The inner dynamics are easier to keep in mind and feeling during the performance of the techniques.

In contrast, more advanced techniques, while expressing the



same principles, offer a 'narrower' window to them. And hence, the principles are more easily lost sight of. A technique such as kaiten nage for a very long time remains actually a technique that only 'works' with the collaboration of our partners. The relational principles of leading our partner irresistibly into reactive patterns of movement whereby he literally 'falls into' the technique are very difficult to access until our skill in these principles is quite advanced. Hence the window of access to the underlying principles that allow this technique to be functional is 'narrow'.

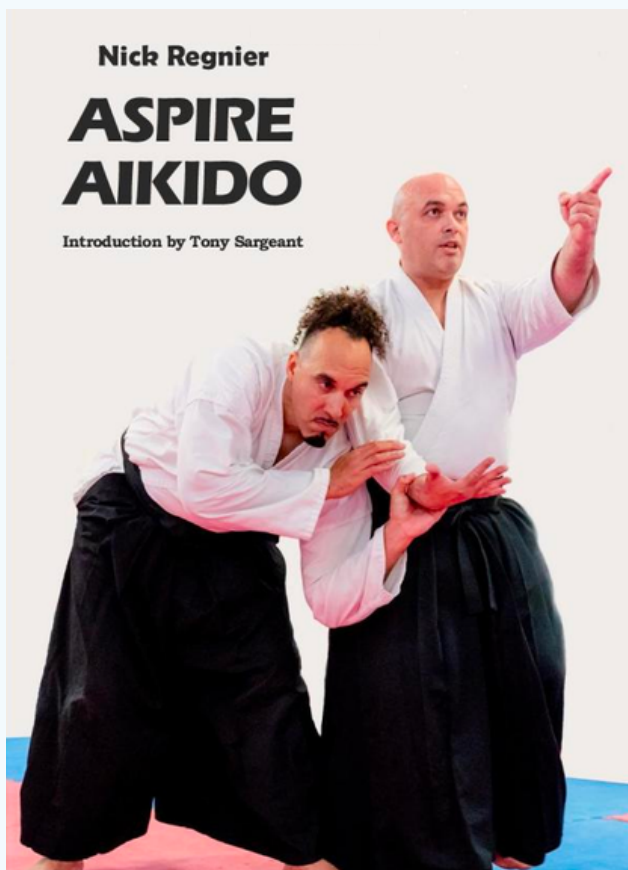
The techniques (forms) are expressions of Principles (no form). They are inseparable.

Just so, in our practice we need to access, develop and embody the principles that give the techniques their actual functionality. To the degree and depth that we can do this, the more advanced techniques become accessible. 

*If you have any questions for Lewis, or in regards to the articles in this issue - submit your question via our mailbox:*

[CLICK HERE](#)





# BOOK REVIEW

**Aspire Aikido (2022) by Nick Regnier**

**– published by Aikido Italia Network**

*Reviewed by Adrian Punt*

Many years ago I used to search book shops for anything to do with Aikido. However, I fell out of the habit and for many years my Aikido book collection gathered dust, unread and unloved. Last year, when I saw that Nick had published a book I decided that it was time to change – it was time to add some new editions to my bookshelf 😊 .

I was fortunate to have met Nick at a seminar last year. He started Aikido in the late 1980s and has followed 'Iwama' Aikido since the mid-1990s. Hence, I was very interested to see what he was writing about.

His book is a collection of over 20 articles that he has written over a number of years – each one a short and focused discussion. The articles in the book are diverse. They range from discussion on how to transmit the tradition of Aikido to younger generations, Aikido and ego, and questioning articles such as 'is Aikido effective' etc. I particularly liked the sections on 'Aikido and weapons', 'benefits of ukemi' and 'internal feeling'.

Nick has an ethos, a belief in the need to connect mind, body and spirit in Aikido practice – and this is expressed through this book, a book that I enjoyed reading. 🙏

**Order Aspire Aikido via Amazon:**

[CLICK HERE](#)





# LATEST VIDEOS FROM THE TAE YOUTUBE CHANNEL



Richard van Berkum's Godan Demonstration from the 2022 Summer Camp in Switzerland. Filmed by Bernie Gitmans.



Teaching moments from the November 2022 Dorset (UK) Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros. Filmed by Paul McGlone.

To be notified of all the latest uploads, subscribe to the TAE Channel by clicking here:



# SEMINAR SCHEDULE 2023

## MARCH

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**6: Bath, UK**

**Seminar with Björn Säw**

Contact: [aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk)

**11-12: The Netherlands**

**TAE Yudansha Seminar with  
Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Paul Keessen:

[paul.keessen@gmail.com](mailto:paul.keessen@gmail.com)

**24-26: Lancaster, UK**

**Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Aaron Wieklawski:

[aaronwieclawski@gmail.com](mailto:aaronwieclawski@gmail.com) or

Ellie Denvir: [edenvir@gmail.com](mailto:edenvir@gmail.com)

## APRIL

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**15: Brunel University, UK**

**British Aikido Board**

**Weapons Course**

Contact: [babsecretary@bab.org.uk](mailto:babsecretary@bab.org.uk)

**18-22: Motril, Spain**

**Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact: [lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)



Lewis Seminar in Dorset, UK 2022

**22-23: Wells, UK**

**Spring Course with Björn Säw**

Contact: [aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk)



**MAY**

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**6-7: Edinburgh, UK  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**Contact: [steffmiller@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steffmiller@yahoo.co.uk)**20-21: Zurich, CH  
Seminar with Arjan de Haan**  
Contact: [info@kokorodojo.ch](mailto:info@kokorodojo.ch)**20-21: Azkoitia Euskadi, Spain  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**Contact Iñigo:  
[yogarate@hotmail.com](mailto:yogarate@hotmail.com)**JUNE**

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**3-4: Lund, Sweden  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**Contact: [leaswelt@yahoo.de](mailto:leaswelt@yahoo.de)**JULY**

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**30 June - 2 July: Poole, UK  
Seminar with Michael Ormerod**Contact Mark Allcock:  
[contact@wellspringsaikido.co.uk](mailto:contact@wellspringsaikido.co.uk)**27-28: Wolverhampton, UK  
Seminar with Takemusu Trio  
(Keessen, Schuerbeke &  
Buchanan)**Contact: [brendonsan@gmail.com](mailto:brendonsan@gmail.com)**16-18: Cumbria, UK  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**Contact: [adrian@radecol.co.uk](mailto:adrian@radecol.co.uk)**17-22: Summer Camp, Urnäsch, CH  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**Register [here](#)

**AUGUST**

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**25-27: Malsheim, Germany  
Seminar with Lars Landberg**

Contact Barbara Ambrus:  
[coyote.blue@gmx.net](mailto:coyote.blue@gmx.net)

**SEPTEMBER**

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**2-3: Bolinas Dojo, California, USA  
Seminar with Hoa Newens and  
Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: [lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)

**23-24: Motril, Spain  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact:  
[lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)

**25 - 29: Zurich, CH  
Uchi Deshi Week**

Contact: [info@kokorodojo.ch](mailto:info@kokorodojo.ch)

**OCTOBER**

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**7-8: Copenhagen, Denmark  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Lars Landberg:  
[lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk](mailto:lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk)

**30-October 1: Zurich, CH  
Seminar with Pia Moberg**

Contact: [info@kokorodojo.ch](mailto:info@kokorodojo.ch)

**27-29: Magdeburg, Germany  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact:  
[christiane@laehnemann.de](mailto:christiane@laehnemann.de)



**27-29: Norwich, UK**

**Seminar with Michael Ormerod**

Contact Sarina:

[chetvalleyaikido@gmail.com](mailto:chetvalleyaikido@gmail.com)



## NOVEMBER

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**4-5: Netherlands**

**(location to be decided)**

**International friendship seminar  
with 10 instructors ([sign up](#))**

Contact Arjan de Haan:

[contact@arjandehaan.com](mailto:contact@arjandehaan.com)

**18-19: Dorset, UK**

**Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Mark Allcock:

[mark@yogawithmark.co.uk](mailto:mark@yogawithmark.co.uk)

## DECEMBER

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**2-3: Zaragoza, Spain**

**Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Arturo Navarro:

[aikidozaragoza@gmail.com](mailto:aikidozaragoza@gmail.com)

**4-5: Bilbao, Spain**

**Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact:

[Aikinoken.recalde@gmail.com](mailto:Aikinoken.recalde@gmail.com)

### Contribute to the next Journal

Do you have a good idea for an article? Or have you read a great aikido related book that you want to write a review about? please contact us to make a contribution to the next issue.

Our mailing address is:  
[editors@traditionalaikido.eu](mailto:editors@traditionalaikido.eu)

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