

EDITION 12
WINTER
2025

TAE JOURNAL

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
TRADITIONAL AIKIDO EUROPE

ONE VISION, TWO LEVELS AND FIVE SKILLS

A MODEL FOR AIKIDO ORGANISATIONS

AIKIDO: IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

A BEGINNER'S VIEW

'KEIKOGI', 'DŌGI', 'GI'

WHATEVER YOU CALL YOUR TRAINING
UNIFORM, WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?

'GIS' FOR THE 'GALS'

FINDING THE PERFECT FIT KEIKOGI
FOR THE FEMALE AIKIDOKA



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**‘There are
many paths
leading to the
top of Mount
Fuji, but there
is only one
summit – love.’**

– MORIHEI UESHIBA

Mishima Pass in Kai Province, from the series
Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760–1849)

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EDITORIAL

BY ANDREA PFISTERER



WELCOME TO THE 12TH EDITION OF THE TAE JOURNAL

We live in a time in which uncertainty and conflict not only make headlines, but also shape our everyday lives. As Aikidoka, however, we move in a different field of tension, we practice an art based on harmony, de-escalation, and connection. What role does our training play in a world marked by polarization and uncertainty?

Our training serves as a laboratory in which we explore the dynamics of attack and defense, tension, and release. We understand that the solution lies not in confrontation, but in integration. The attack is not repelled; it is absorbed, redirected, transformed and the attacker is taken care of.

Through training, we develop our bodies and our ability to respond to external pressure. When we meet uke, we understand that stability arises from flexibility, not hardness. Resilience lies in adapting to the flow of events rather than rigid endurance. Especially now, in a world that often seems to be falling apart, we Aikidoka can make this flow visible to ourselves and others. The energy of a conflict can be redirected - when we stay present, listen, and move.

Every time we apply the principles of Maai, Irimi or Tenkan, we practice dealing with challenges. Every time we commit to harmony in training, we also choose a path in life that is not based on violence or fear.

In a time when division and enemy images dominate, our ability to see attacks as an opportunity rather than a threat, teaches us that there is always room for change.

The mat does not stop at the dojo door. When we bring the spirit of Aikido into the world, we act in the essence of our path - be it in our dealings with friends, colleagues, or social tensions. Our path is not always easy. It takes courage to keep the stoic mind for long term developments and at the same time stay curious in a noisy world. It takes strength to respond with patience and empathy when circumstances call for harshness and escalation. But this is precisely where the essence of our training lies: staying engaged, finding the center, transforming the conflict - again and again. The world may be uncertain, but our ability to center, adapt, and find balance creates security and connection - for us and for those who come into contact with us.

Subscribe to get the journal sent directly to your inbox by following the link below and if you have ideas, or would like to contribute an article, please get in touch!



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 29 dojos in 7 countries. For more information, visit our website and make sure to subscribe to our YouTube Channel:

Online:



YouTube:



Contact:





ONE VISION, TWO LEVELS AND FIVE SKILLS:

**A MODEL FOR AIKIDO
ORGANISATIONS**

**LEWIS BERNALDO
DE QUIROS**

The vision of an organisation such as TAE could be stated as follows:

To serve the practice, development and dissemination of O Sensei's Aikido as transmitted to Morihiro Saito Sensei.

This, simple as it may seem, needs to be kept in mind through all levels of organisation and decision making with the question at each juncture as to whether the basic vision of the association is being served or not by the choices and decisions available.

Beyond the foundational vision, the organisation is basically composed of two levels: level one sets the ground rules for the organisation and creates the space for the second level where the activities of the organisation take place.

Level one.

The first foundational level is the formal set-up of the organisation (beyond the legal and administrative requirements involved in setting up an association) as regards three cardinal points as detailed below.

- Accountability
- Financial transparency
- Grades awarded on merit outside of financial gain for the examining body

Accountability: As ability and skill in Aikido develops so does the responsibility that goes with these positions. No one is infallible and mistakes can and will be made. The important point is that a corrective mechanism be built in which keeps everyone accountable and on track. We have inherited a hierarchical system in which senior grades and senior teachers can avoid challenge and can at times behave in ways that serve themselves rather than the organisation. At these times dysfunctional or irresponsible behaviour needs to be called out and corrections made.

Financial transparency: Whether the organisation is set up as non profit or for profit, annual AGM's and professional level auditing of the accounts visible to all members is a must. If not, then mistrust is generated within the membership with all its negative consequences.

Grades awarded on merit outside of financial gain for the examination body: Examiners should not benefit financially from examinations beyond a reasonable examination fee to cover the costs of organising such events, as this can become an obvious conflict of interest. If it is allowed that individuals fund themselves from grades then this can easily become a business model rather than a merit model for the quality assessment that is the original intention behind the grades. This can result in a rapid degradation of the quality and meaning of the grades as financial benefit overrides quality concerns.



Level two

The second level consists of five Aikido skills that are pooled from the membership and pertain to the actual practice itself (except skillset 5). The Board, which is a democratically elected body, needs all five skills represented amongst its members. It is very rare that any one individual is competent in all of them, hence the direction of an association is a collaborative effort.

- Skill in Aikido.
- Skill in teaching at the Dojo level.
- Skill in teaching at the seminar level.
- Skill in conducting examinations.
- Skill in managing the organisation

1. Training. In an association dedicated to Aikido, skill 1 is in a way the most important. The reason for the organisation, for the statutes, the teacher certifications, the examination system, the seminars etc is to serve in different ways the training that takes place on a weekly basis in the Dojos. Everything should serve and support this: learning and developing skill and ability in Aikido through regular practice. This is the basic vision behind our organisation.



2. Teaching. Although there are useful courses and training in didactics and various pedagogical methods, the teachers emerge from the Dojos as their ability, knowledge and experience develops. The primary model most emerging teachers will adopt will be the one they experienced from their own instructors and as they mature they will add or subtract from that model to find a system that suits their outlook on the art and temperament. Teachers need to continue learning through teaching and appreciate that in terms of pedagogical intervention with students, the approach should in general be minimal. They give a clear example with a breakdown on how to work with the material taught. Interventions should be on the basis of clarification where necessary and correction where students are engaged in dead ends. Regular teaching in Dojos involves much repetition of basics (repetition being 'the mother of skill') and patience as students work their way into techniques and practices which are not just about learning new moves and techniques but correcting patterns of structural holding and movement that impede functional ability. In addition to technical ability Aikido, as all traditional Budo's, is a training of the mind. The state of consciousness we seek to develop is one of calm open awareness where perception is unclouded by affective issues to the extent that we can move from blind reactivity to conscious responsiveness. Furthermore teachers need to take on their own teaching and realise that to teach is to learn. Training is endless and does not stop once one becomes a teacher. Practice and learning in Aikido is endless.

3. Teaching seminars. This is a step beyond the experience of teaching regular classes at one's own dojo. Seminars can be of all different sizes from a few dozen to a few hundred participants. Locations can be ample or restrictive. Levels vary from participants with a few months training to veterans of 50 years experience. Participants can come from different styles of Aikido with not only different basic techniques but very different philosophical ideas as to what the basic techniques and defining principles are in fact about. All that plus different countries (with different languages) and cultural influences really make things interesting and challenging. The teacher needs to be able to 'listen' to all the above factors and 'hold' the mat teaching in such a way that the majority of the group is able to work with the material in different ways. And when the 'music' on the mat shifts from harmony into cacophony they must be able to change course accordingly to reestablish harmony and direction.

4. Conducting examinations. The examination system should act as a system of milestones and feedback on one's level of development. Contrary as it may seem, it is not strictly speaking a system of attainment. One trains and grows in the art and the exam system is mapped out to give guidance in the journey and to act as a road map to the system as a whole. An examination should be a positive experience (whether as a pass or fail) which confirms the student in terms of where they are now and what needs to be worked on from here on. Examiners need to be able to conduct an exam with both sensitivity and impartiality.



5. Management. Being a competent practitioner or accomplished teacher does not in itself guarantee management skills. These include listening, communication and problem solving skills, being able to think strategically, the ability to empathise and understand other points of view plus being able to engage in healthy debates and discussions with other parties in conflict situations. In particular the Board needs to be composed of individuals who can work well together and have different reinforcing skill sets. They are responsible for the overall direction and vision of the organisation. Beyond running the organisation on all levels necessary and making sure member Dojos are able to function as they should, the Board and senior teachers also maintain and cultivate relationships with other organisations and with Aikikai Hombu Dojo.

Whilst skills 1 and 2 are the organisation's 'raison d'etre' at the Dojo level, skills 3 through 5 in particular decide whether the organisation can actually fulfil its role in a healthy dynamic way (in addition to clarity of vision and level 1 as detailed above).

Seminars have become an important way of exposing students to different points of view and getting them to train with different people other than their habitual dojo members. This gets them to test themselves beyond their comfort zones and learn from a wider variety of partners and instructors. Examinations are also held at these events and are open thereby establishing clear and transparent standards across the organisation as a whole.



The traditional Japanese hierarchical model where the senior teacher at the top manages the organisation in a top down manner has some advantages but to me the drawbacks outweigh them. These become obvious when the senior teacher passes away without having prepared the next generation of teachers adequately, ceases teaching through unexpected circumstances or behaves in less than commendable ways. In most cases when any of these occur the organisation either dissolves, diminishes or splits into differing factions as senior students strike out in different directions.

In my opinion Aikidokas in the west face two principal challenges: first adapting Aikido to western society and culture. This involves asking the hard questions as to how relevant this traditional discipline is for us today and how the teaching needs to be adapted while not losing sight of the essence of the art which transcends cultural and temporal differences.

The second challenge is at the organisational level. Even though hierarchical organisation and outright 'dictatorships' are not uniquely eastern in any way, the traditional hierarchical organisational model we have inherited from Japan for the modelling of martial art organisations does not in my opinion work very well in our western culture. If one way of understanding Aikido is as an infinite adaptability to circumstances through inspired and creative solutions (Takemusu Aiki) then surely this also needs to be the case at the organisational level as Aikido takes roots and develops far beyond its native origin?

Photos from the TAE 2024 group visit to the Aiki Shrine in Iwama:





**AIKIDO: IS IT
RIGHT FOR ME?
A BEGINNER'S
VIEW**

MARTIN ROGERS

Martin is a student at Lancaster Aikido Club, the below article is a personal account of his transition from Karate to Aikido...

I have now been studying/practicing Aikido for about 1.5 years (2-3 times a week) and it has been a revelation in so many ways. It is perhaps worth me starting by mentioning that whilst I am a beginner to Aikido, I am not new to martial arts in general. I first attended Aikido aged 9 but didn't stick with it beyond about six months. It wasn't until I was in my mid-twenties that I picked up Shotokan Karate and this became my passion for the next 15 years. Towards the end of that time, I also dabbled with Ju-Jitsu and a rather aggressive form of Tai-Chi and then the Pandemic hit. As for many, I struggled during the Pandemic, both to do my job and with my already fragile mental health. When this finally started to get back to some sort of normal my enthusiasm for martial arts had all but gone. I felt lost and my mental health became worse. It was only through chance that I reconnected with a friend from secondary school, someone I had not seen for nearly twenty years and he started talking to me about Aikido. It sounded interesting and I vaguely remembered my dad taking me to a class as a child so I thought I would give it a go. I dug out my Gi and went to my first class, there was virtually no one there and the instructor was considering cancelling which, I was told, never happened. However, they said we could go ahead. I found the initial differences fascinating and frustrating. The spilt between weapons work and basics was refreshing and the pace was significantly different. I rather naively thought that my past experience would stand me in good stead and that I would pick things up quickly and progress quickly. I could not have been more wrong! I was told repeatedly (and still am) about the need to be 'soft', to welcome 'going to the ground' and to 'relax my shoulders'. In short, the complete opposite of what I had learned studying Shotokan. At this point the best advice came from my love of Star Wars and Jedi Master Yoda, "You must unlearn what you have learned", this has proved to be much harder than expected...



In what I can only describe as continuing acts of boundless patience the instructors at the club have answered my never-ending questions about form and footwork, about the differences in style and my ongoing outbursts of laughter when realising how a technique works 'like magic', particularly Kokyu ho. Over the next few months, I convinced my teenage daughter to join me and it is something that we have really bonded over, her self-confidence has soared, something I will be forever grateful for. We have both graded and she is arguably finding it easier than me.

I am now trying to understand the principles of Aikido and if possible, merge them with my Karate experience. I think it unlikely that I will be unable to purge this knowledge from my memory and to be honest I would not really want to. Fifteen years dedicated to something should not be so quickly cast aside. So now I am trying to merge two very different styles of martial art, one 'hard' the other 'soft'. Initially I thought I would be able to use my karate for distance and Aikido for grappling and any work on the floor. The trouble being that the stances and movements are so different they require totally different mindsets and yet some breaks and holds remain the same naturally due to how the body works.

In particular I am having trouble being a willing 'uke' and 'going to ground'. This is because in large part I was told not to 'go to ground' in Karate. My instructor would regularly tell us 'if you go down, it's over' so whenever I am grabbed or held or pushed I tend to resist. This is making my training difficult on so many levels as not only is it not proving helpful to my partner but I also sometimes come away physically hurt from being tense when I fall or being pinned. It also means that there is a disconnect in my body as different parts lock up and make the techniques ineffective. I have been told that knowing this will be helpful but it is not making overcoming it any easier. Frustratingly, every time I feel that something has clicked something else comes along to upset my progress.

I am starting to understand why Aikido is a long-term study and progress is talked about in terms of years.

I will admit to having concerns at times about the practicality of using Aikido in a real fight, as so much of what we do seems to rely on willing partners. I am still unsure as to how this would transfer into a real-life situation where someone is not so willing and everything happens in the blink of an eye. In a situation like this, at the moment, I do think my karate training would kick in but maybe with time and continued study this will change. Interestingly, compared to my time studying karate, my eyes are not fixed on achieving my black belt, instead I have set other goals which arguably might take longer. I want to spend my time mastering Tai no Henko and chasing the elusive 'Iwama wobble'. I am interested in the history of Aikido and applying the philosophical lessons to my own life.

What I do know is that Aikido is the right martial art for me right now, not because I'm slowing down or not as strong but because of the more mindful approach to study. The application of the lessons to everyday life and the friendly, supportive surroundings of the classes that do not focus on competition and strength but mutual respect and the promise of learning and growing together.

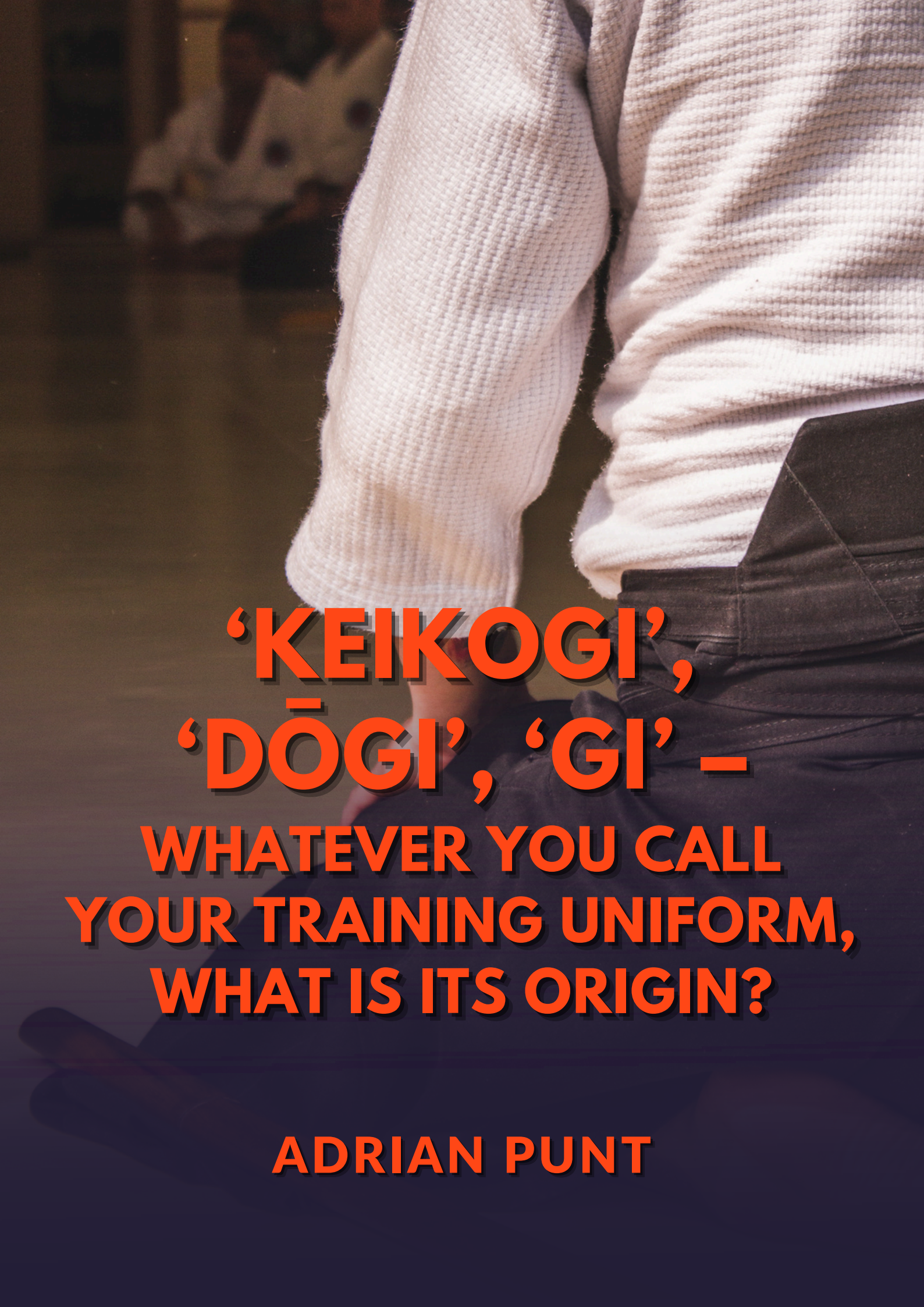


The TAE (and friends) 2024 Japan group after morning training in Hombu Dojo with Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba:



And together with Shigemi Inagaki Sensei after training in Iwama at the Aikikai Foundation Ibaraki Branch Dojo:





**‘KEIKOGI’,
‘DŌGI’, ‘GI’ –
WHATEVER YOU CALL
YOUR TRAINING UNIFORM,
WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?**

ADRIAN PUNT

Keikogi (稽古着) (keiko meaning 'practice' and gi meaning 'dress' or 'clothes', i.e., practice clothes), also known as dōgi (道着) (dō meaning way and again gi meaning cloths, i.e., cloths of the way), is a uniform worn for training in Japanese martial arts and their derivatives. The top part of the dōgi is called the uwagi (上着, lit. upper / outerwear). The trousers of the dōgi are called shitabaki (下穿き, lit. under and below clothes), or zubon (ズボン, 'trousers').

The dōgi is a relatively recent invention and is generally attributed to Kanō Jigorō (1860 – 1938), a Japanese martial artist, educator and politician and founder of Kodokan Judo. Pedagogical innovations also attributed to Kanō include the use of black and white belts and the introduction of the dan ranking system (based on the Japanese strategy game of Go) to show the relative ranking among more senior members of a martial art style [1].

Kanō is said to have developed the dōgi “for reasons of dignity and safety” [2]. The development of the dōgi was not recorded in any specific way, it wasn't considered of any importance at the time. Nonetheless, a young Kanō, in the 1870s, would have been practicing ju jutsu (Tenjin Shinyo-ryu and Kito-ryu styles) in informal dress, potentially a jacket with legs naked.



The development and adoption of the dōgi as a training uniform in Judo would appear to have been quite rapid. For instance, photos held by the Kodokan (the headquarters of the Judo community and founded in 1882) from late in the 19th century (potentially in the 1890s) show Kanō and other judoka in their jackets or 'uwagi' that look almost exactly like the hanten, the thick and heavy cotton jackets of the Japanese firemen of the time (and also used as winter coats). Photos dated to 1913 and 1920 then show Kanō and students in white dōgi virtually identical to their modern-day descendants [2]. Although Morihei Ueshiba is often pictured in traditional Japanese garments, photos and video footage from the 1930s show that adoption of the dōgi in Aikido practice was commonplace, for students at least, in pre-war Japan.

It has also been suggested [3] that the origin of those earliest dogi is a type of garment worn under the kimono – likely the 襦袢 juban or 半襦袢 han (half) juban. In the 1880s, daily use juban, particularly of commoners of modest means, were simple, sturdy cotton. Juban covers a wide range of garments which are worn by men and women between the silk kimono and the skin, to protect the delicate, expensive and often unwashable kimono from sweat and skin oils [4]. The modern-day western equivalent is probably best described as a t-shirt.

The Kano Chronicles [3] notes that Kanō described the final, premodern keikogi jacket as a “white cotton (undyed), tight sleeved, lined juban with sleeves extending beyond the elbows, a longer ‘coat tail’ to reach mid-thigh and gathered in front and held by an obi (belt)”. The trousers are described as cotton exercise trousers. Did Kanō just use the term juban to imply clothes worn next to the skin?



How influenced was he by heavy hanten jackets? We don't know. What we do know is that from traditional schools of ju jutsu he established a new modern system (Judo), and over a few short years, a standardised training uniform to be used in that system (one that was then adopted by Aikido, and in a modified form by other Japanese martial arts such as Karate).

Mitsugi Saotome Sensei (a post-war Aikido student in Tokyo from 1955) notes in his 1989 publication "The Principles of Aikido" book [5] how he was chastised by O-Sensei when he forgot his hakama (all students were expected to wear hakama irrespective of grade). He notes that:

I was preparing to step on the mat for practice, wearing only my dogi, when O-Sensei stopped me. "Where is your hakama?" he demanded sternly. "What makes you think you can receive your teacher's instruction wearing nothing but your underwear? Have you no sense of propriety? You are obviously lacking the attitude and the etiquette necessary in one who pursues budo training. Go sit on the side and watch class!"

In the quote above, the dōgi is referred to as 'underwear'. Whatever O-Sensei said at the time has been interpreted and translated (possibly more than once). Does our modern-day, western interpretation of the term 'underwear', and the societal expectation of 'not being seen in your underwear', match what he meant? I doubt it. Perhaps he accepted that the training uniform (whether termed keikogi or dōgi, as popularised through Judo), was a modern invention, and something to stay, but too casual on its own. For someone accustomed to the multi-layers of traditional Japanese clothing, a single layer of clothing must have been very informal, or at least not in keeping with standards and appearance of the samurai of old.

So, whatever you call your training uniform (keikogi, dōgi, gi) it is a relatively modern thing, developed for the purpose of training in a Japanese martial art. It is not 'samurai underwear'!

[1] Kanō Jigorō - Wikipedia

[2] Dave Lowry (2006). In the Dojo, A Guide to the Rituals and Etiquette of the Japanese Martial Arts

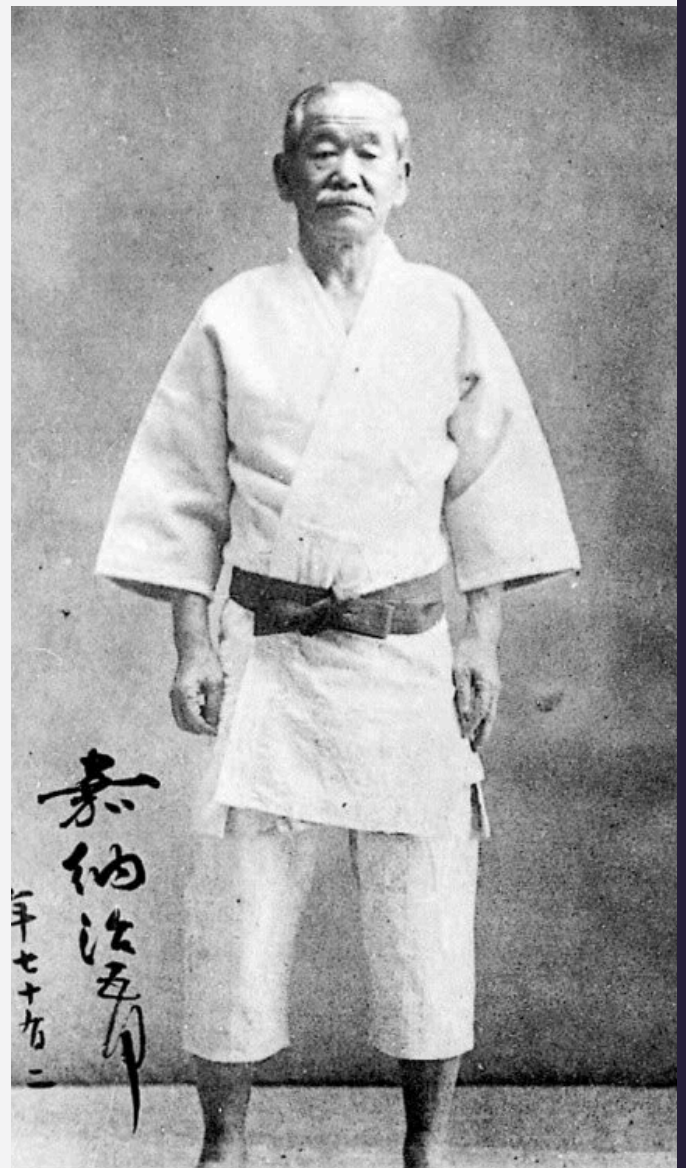
[3]

<https://kanochronicles.com/2021/02/17/the-evolution-of-the-judo-keikogi-gi-the-kanochronicles/>

[4]

<https://kimonomochi.jimdofree.com/juban/>

[5] Mitsugi Saotome (1989). Principles of Aikido





'GIS' FOR THE 'GALS'

EMMA WEE

As a newly enrolled student of Aikido, once I'd decided that this was something I wanted to invest my time and energy in, it seemed that a bit of research was required to have all the right uniform and equipment to hand. In googling 'Aikido gi' and looking at the measurement charts commonly available, it became quite apparent that there was a slight imbalance in the offer for Gis for women. As a theatre designer, I'm naturally wired to deep dive into the research around clothes meeting the requirements for a job, so off I went!

Women's bodies are significantly different from men's, and the traditional cut of an Aikido gi tends to be cut from a single square pattern joined with a single seam under the arms. There is a practical reason for not having a shoulder seam as it reduces friction when doing ukemi, but this means there is very little shaping through the body of the jacket. As a result, getting a gi that fits across the front chest will inevitably often be a size that is for a much taller man. This also results in an excess of fabric in the back which can be both uncomfortable (and hot!) and the length of the jacket sits longer than it should be with the waist seam hitting somewhere around the hips.

One thing to check for is for companies that have their size chart based on female physiology rather than male.

The weight of fabric is also important as having something that is too heavy can be both uncomfortable and hot to work in, especially if you tend to run warm. Most aikido gis commercially available are about 500gsm. Moving to gis designed for jujitsu which have wider ranges that are cut more specifically for women's bodies can open up much more choice.

In these ranges there are gis made from 325gsm and some made from an even lighter fabric (300gsm) Often the jackets are cotton so you have the structure and formal shape of the jacket, but the trousers are from ripstock fabric which means they can be thinner but extremely durable (many traditional 500gsm trousers are double lined adding to their weight).



The other thing that's good is that they have a good range of colours such as a navy, which if you're training and you have your period, you can avoid the anxiety of signalling it to the entire dojo. (Nobody wants to wear white on those days!!). (Top tip, throwing too bright a colour into the washing machine with a dark grey Dylon pack will take the colour down nicely).

There aren't too many suppliers of women aikido gis, so a great option is to go for the Jiu jitsu uniforms as there is greater demand for women cut uniforms.

The only thing with jiu jitsu uniforms is that they don't tend to come with ties (uwagi) to hold the jacket shut, especially across the bust and their sleeves may be full length (it's better to have $\frac{3}{4}$ length sleeves to free up the wrist), but adjustments can be made. I often cut the sleeves down and create ties from the offcuts.

Internationally, there are other suppliers as well - Portugal seems particularly well served - but then there is the issue of costs of tax and shipping costs. However, if you're visiting that country, then getting a local delivery could be an option.

This does lead onto a wider question of WHY. Why is there not enough provision?

I spoke to one of the main companies in this country and they expressed reasons about the origin of the garment in terms of it being predominantly a unisex undergarment and the build of Japanese bodies. However, within a commercial market it seems strange, if not lazy to make the access of these garments equitable across the genders, especially if there is a very obvious physical difference that needs accommodating.



What do you wear underneath?

Wearing a sports bra is practical and then having a light layer that can absorb / wick away sweat can be helpful; this will often be a t-shirt or a rash vest.

One thing to note is that the usual pattern of trousers tend to have a split on the side seams to allow you to get into them; this means there is often a gap showing either side on the hips. Wearing shorts style underwear can be a way to maintain modesty without having to wear leggings underneath. You'll need to make sure that the seat of the trousers is enough to allow plenty of bending and movement without parts of you falling out!

Do also check the pre - shrinkage on the description as when cotton is washed for the first time, it can shrink up to 10%. Ultimately, you want to wear something that feels comfortable and isn't distracting you from your practice, so finding what works for you may take some trial and testing.

Three of the 33 manifestations of the Japanese Deity Kannon that can be found along the Kohechi pilgrimage route in Southern Kansai, Japan:





Dorset
Seminar

DOJO PORTRAIT: WELLSPRINGS AIKIDO

MARK ALLCOCK

I started training aikido in October 1994 (yes this October will be my 30 years since starting aikido) with my wife Anne under the guidance of Paul McGlone at Poole aikido club, Dorset. Paul together with Tony Sargeant, formed an organisation called Takemusu Iwama Aikido Europe (TIAE) to specifically follow Saito Sensei and train in Iwama Aikido.

Yoga is also a major part of my personal study. People think I am naturally flexible. This is not the case as I started to do both yoga and tai chi to help with my flexibility just after I started aikido. When I started aikido I was running marathons, playing football and badminton. These activities have gradually been dropped as I have gotten older and maybe wiser.

I never intended to teach aikido or yoga for that matter. My main yoga teacher/influence since 2004 has been an American teacher called Diane Long who had studied with Vanda Scaravelli [1]. Diane encouraged me to teach yoga very early in my working with her. I qualified as a British Wheel of yoga teacher a few years later and as it happened I also decided I needed a change in career. I had been IT for 25 years but I felt I needed to do something with a little less stress. I taught yoga classes and from that experience I started to also teach Aikido in 2010 under TIAE as a nidan.

Thus Wellsprings Aikido was born. 湧泉 (Yuusen: This means 'gushing spring'. 湧 means gush/spring/upwell. 泉 represents spring/fountain. Also used as the name of an acupuncture point that energises a person.

[1] See Book Review on 'Awakening the Spine' in TAE Journal, Issue No.1



As a new club in the TIAE organisation we had to start the club a few miles away from existing clubs and train on a different club night to them (our nights were Friday and Sunday) so as not to poach students from existing clubs. Students from other clubs did train with us and we started a beginners course very early on and had 5 students enroll, two who are still training with us today. The venue we found was a dedicated martial arts center (Tai Chi) with sprung floor. We purchased our own mats to train on. Our first venue in Corfe Mullen. We stopped training here in March 2013.

I started travelling to Lancaster a couple of times to attend seminars taught by Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros. In July 2014 I was fortunate enough to get a last minute place at the summer camp held in Orvelte, Netherlands. At the end of the summer camp Lewis accepted Wellsprings Aikido as an International - Associated Dojo and became its technical director. This was a few years before Traditional Aikido Europe (TAE) was born.

Wellsprings hosted its first annual seminar with Lewis in November 2015 and since that first seminar the numbers attending have gradually increased each year.

Wellsprings Aikido didn't train during the Covid pandemic but we weren't idle during that time. A bank account for the club was set up, a new URL was purchased and a new [web site](#) was designed and built. Also during the pandemic Wellsprings Aikido, West Cumbria and Takemusu Aikido Midlands came together to create an umbrella organisation, [Traditional Aikido Alliance](#) (TAA), for UK based TAE member clubs who wished to be part of the British Aikido Board (BAB). TAA has grown to 6 member clubs having been joined by Ulverston, Poole and Chet Valley Aikido Clubs.

Wellsprings has over a dozen people who train with us. We also have people who, although they have moved away, remain members of the club to maintain their link with TAE. Membership is split 50:50 between kyu and dan grades and recently three beginners have joined.

In addition to myself there are three other qualified teachers at the club. They have been teaching on an ad hoc basis but will be teaching regularly in the future.





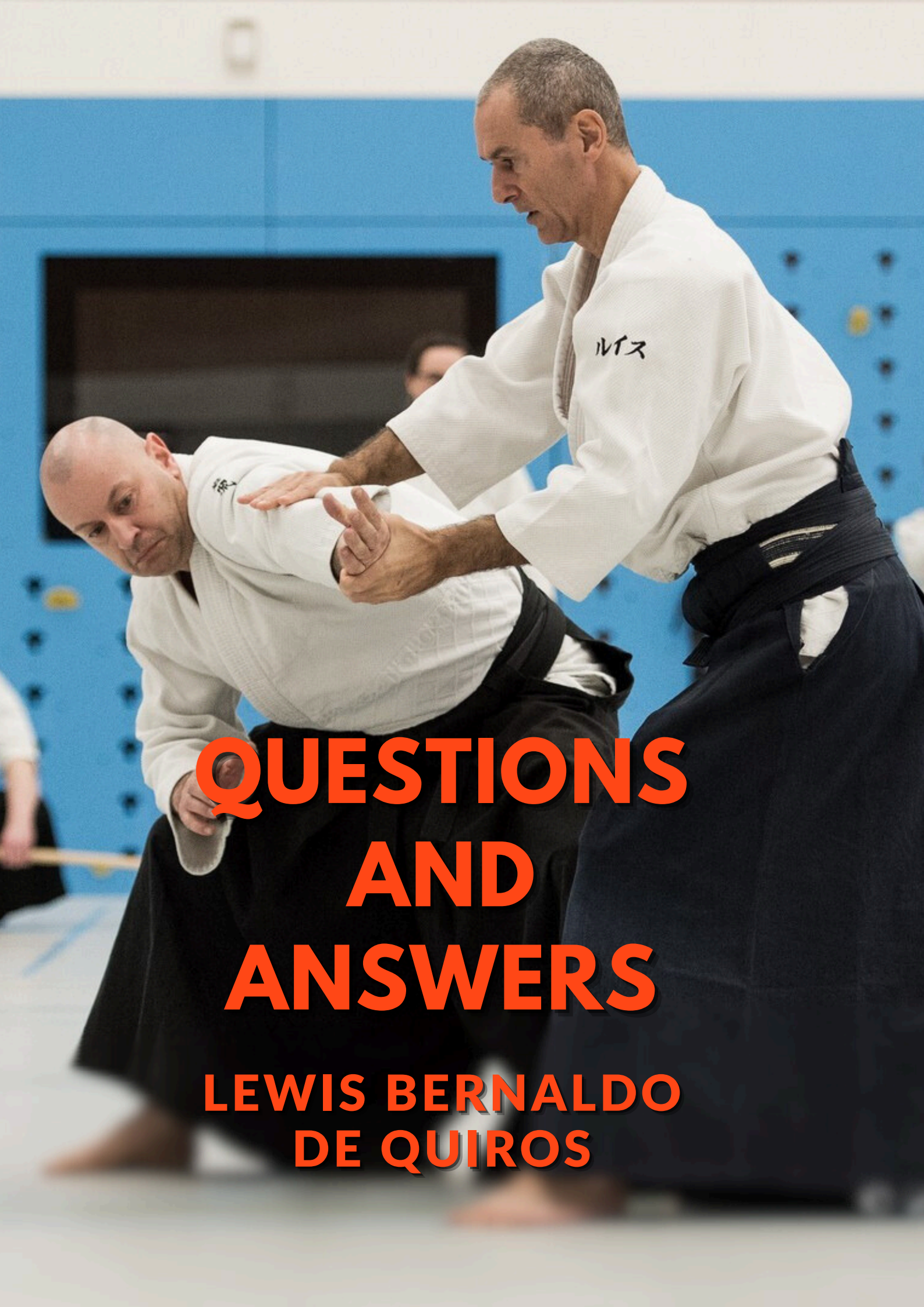
There are always problems to encounter and we have had to move home several times. Our most recent move was earlier this year and was a major upset as we had been training at the dojo in Stanley Green for 10 years. Wellsprings currently trains twice a week (Tuesday and Friday evenings) in The Dance Studio, The Cornerstone Academy, Hamworthy, Poole. We also have a longer training session on the first Saturday of the month and regularly invite guest teachers. The first guest to teach in our new home was Andrea Pfisterer. In the past we have hosted seminars with Michael Ormerod and Brendon Buchanan and we are looking forward to welcoming Tomas Nord at the beginning of December 2024 (see TAE seminar schedule).



Visit the Wellsprings Aikido website for more info:

<https://wellspringsaikido.co.uk/>





**QUESTIONS
AND
ANSWERS**

**LEWIS BERNALDO
DE QUIROS**



How do we find the angle for the finishing cut in the last move of the kumitachi and how do we avoid getting blasted back by the attacker?

First the basics: the angle for the finishing cut in all the kumitachi is a yokomen uchi while you remain centred on the line and angling into uchitachi's attack. There are many basic ways of finding this receiving cut (yokomen) but the key is in the hip rotation and control of the weapon from the centre. An important issue in these practices (kumitachi) is one of being able to deal with pressure. So first we practise correct form built up from suburi where we are learning to make the weapon an extension of our whole body and centre work and then incorporate that dynamic into practices that put it under pressure - and hence develop and deepen it further. So getting progressively 'blasted back' is where we need to eventually go!

Why are the oyo, henka, kaeshi waza not in books or filmed? Is this something you are considering doing, or would be interested in?

I cannot be sure why Sensei did not leave a record of these levels. But my own opinion is that these levels are not sets of techniques like the basics at Kihon and Ki no Nagare levels. They are more akin to an understanding/ability and the techniques we practice at these levels are meant to be understood as examples and not something fixed. Henka waza for example are techniques born of the need to change - either because your technique is failing or you are being blocked. The transition and the techniques that become available to you as a followup are always going to be unique to that particular moment of interaction. Don't be fooled by the examples we practice to demonstrate this level - what we want is to grasp the principles that make this level functional. The same goes for Kaeshi waza and especially Oyo waza. Actually I have not considered doing anything for the record with these levels. I am more focused with the basics where the abilities that lead to these levels are learned.

What grade could someone attain if they don't do rolls or highfalls? What if there is a medical reason? Will their aikido stagnate without ukemi?

It depends on how you define ukemi. If ukemi is just rolling and high-falling then someone with physical limitations will be stopped short. The term actually means 'receiving body' and not 'falling' as such. Ukemi is the ability to receive force without resistance allowing oneself to 'deform' as needed to maintain one's integrity - on all levels (physical-mental-emotional). Ukemi allows us to receive and 'listen' to our partner's technique and respond accordingly. It is also the primary way of learning technique as when working with a senior we can 'feel' through our connection with them the 'how' of what they are doing. So while I teach technical ukemi (rolls etc) and consider it very important I take ukemi as something much broader and hence can adapt it more easily to students with physical limitations so that they can develop in their practice.

How do we put forward aikido to people who haven't trained before? Do we relate it to similar ideas such as kendo or judo with a martial and applicable emphasis, do we abandon all competitive talk and focus on the study as the purpose, or do we simply let those who are looking find us?

What are you passionate about as an Aikidoka? Why have you chosen this art versus another? What, to your mind, separates it out from others which are more focused on competition or simply self defence? Share that.

How do we undo all the damage that has been done by social media?: The inaccuracies and omissions, the poor understanding and appreciation of technical principles, and the lack of clarity and integrity that so many fail to deliver to such a wide audience?

'False coin abounds because real gold exists'. There is nothing we can do about correcting the perceived errors of others (especially when they are not asking for correction), whether in person or on social media. We should look to ourselves and our own errors and continue to practice in the most meaningful and honest way we can. Those interested in training the same way will find us.

Why is the tanken syllabus less developed than the bokken and Jo? Arguably, a knife is a more likely weapon on someone's person due to its size and ease of concealment.

Yes I agree. The knife should have much more prominence in our practice for the reasons you point out plus others. One reason for its lack of emphasis goes right back to Iwama. Morning class was weapons outside and evening class was taijutsu. On rainy days we would practice inside weapon taking primarily (jo and tachidori) followed by jo mochi nage and finally tanken dori. So it did not receive much attention. However it was clear from the little that Sensei showed that it was part of a more complete system beyond the basic 5 or 6 techniques we did 90% of the time we practiced it.



There were intermediate and advanced difficulty techniques plus complex attacks. So I feel we have been left with the skeleton of a system that was not recorded anywhere by Sensei and hence it is up to us to explore and fill out this part of the curriculum.

When training with someone who practices a different style and has done so for countless years, how do you get them to try the Iwama way of doing things? How can you challenge them when they teach their own way of doing things to new students when it contradicts with the 'sensei' on the mat?

Yes you can absolutely 'challenge' them if when on the mat in your class they begin teaching their own way of doing things to their partners. This is a question of humility and respect. When visiting another style dojo or taking a seminar with a Sensei from another line I put my own knowledge aside and focus on what the teacher is doing - which is going to be technically different. There are two issues here for your specific question: Is the visitor willing to try to follow your class or is he just doing his own thing? If the latter, be clear with them. Bring them back to being beginners (shoshin) and just training. If they are not prepared to do that, ask them to leave.

How do you strike a balance between 'focused' and 'fun' training? Similarly, how do you stop people talking too much when on the mat, and what is the right level of conversation? Should this be challenged, and if so, how best to do so without admonishing or belittling those involved?

What if seniors are the problem?

Training should be both focused and enjoyable. The issue of too much talking or distraction on the mat is something that needs to be addressed by instructors for obvious reasons, however I think it is important to appreciate on a deeper level why excessive and unnecessary personal interactions during training is not useful. Essentially what we seek is to be able to respond to circumstances directly and appropriately from a 'non thinking' space. Think of the situations in your life when you have been in a sudden unexpected moment of danger such as an accident or an unexpected threatening encounter. In those moments thinking is going to be too slow. You must respond immediately. If you do not or stutter into 'thinking it through' allowing fears and doubts to overwhelm you, you will be ineffective. This applies equally if your response is to withdraw strategically (if that is possible) and allow yourself time to further appreciate your options while you take control of initiative, time and space. In training once we have the basics of understanding what particular practice we are engaged in we should throw ourselves into it shifting from 'thinking it' to 'feeling it'. Not only should our technique be smooth and effective but our state of mind should be clear, calm and focused allowing our perception of the situation to be direct and unclouded by affective concerns.

Training in martial arts is not just about learning techniques but is also about training our mind. Without attention to this domain training is essentially empty. Hence unnecessary talking and distraction on the mat is not innocent but basically a waste of time while undermining the development of real ability .

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

[CLICK HERE](#)

SEMINAR SCHEDULE 2025

17-20 JANUARY

Kidderminster, United Kingdom
Takemusu Aikido Midlands
Intensive

Contact: Brendon:
 info@takemusuaikidomidlands.com

24-26 JANUARY

Malmsheim, Germany
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo
de Quiros

Contact: Barbara Ambrus:
 coyote.blue@gmx.net

25-26 JANUARY

Wells, UK
Seminar with Bjorn Saw

Contact: Bjorn Saw:
 aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk

7-9 FEBRUARY

Norfolk, UK
Seminar with Lars Landberg

Contact: Sarina:
 chetvalleyaikido@gmail.com

15-16 FEBRUARY

Gothenburg, Sweden
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de
Quiros

Contact: Alula: alulak@hotmail.com

8 MARCH

Wells, U.K
International Women's Day of
Aikido. Five female teachers (to
be announced).

Contact: aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk

8-9 MARCH

Weesp, The Netherlands
Yudansha Seminar with Lewis
Bernaldo de Quiros

Contact: xzeroxz@gmail.com

28-30 MARCH

Lancaster, UK
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo
de Quiros

Contact: Aaron:
 aaronwieclawski@gmail.com or
 Ellie: edenvir@gmail.com

29-30 MARCH**Copenhagen, DK****Seminar with Kayla Feder**

Contact: Caroline: caroline@aikido-copenhagen.dk

7-12 APRIL**Motril, Spain****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: lewisbdeq@gmail.com

19-20 APRIL**Wells, U.K.****Seminar with Bjorn Saw**

Contact: aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk

2-4 MAY**Edinburgh, UK****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: steffmiller@yahoo.co.uk

31 MAY - 1 JUNE**Bath/Wells, UK****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk

7-8 JUNE**Lund, Sweden****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros and Hoa Newens**

Contact: leaswelt@yahoo.de

20-22 JUNE**Cumbria, UK****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: adrian@radecol.co.uk

14-19 JULY**Summer Camp, Urnäsch, CH****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: See web-page

26-27 JULY**Wells, U.K.****Seminar with Bjorn Saw.**

Contact: aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk

1-3 AUGUST**Dorset UK****Seminar with Andrea Pfisterer**

Contact: allcock_mark@sky.com

6-7 SEPTEMBER**Stara Kamienica Poland****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact:: wawrzynczak@gmail.com

13-14 SEPTEMBER**Midlands, UK****Yudansha seminar with Tomas Nord**

Contact:

Info@takemusuaikidomidlands.com

27-28 SEPTEMBER**Motril, Spain****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: lewisbdeq@gmail.com

26-28 SEPTEMBER**Norfolk, UK****Seminar with Michael Ormerod**

Contact: Sarina:

chetvalleyaikido@gmail.com

4-5 OCTOBER**Copenhagen, Denmark****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: Lars: lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk

4-5 OCTOBER**Wells, U.K.****7 Teachers get-together.**

Contact: aikidoalive@yahoo.co.uk

24-26 OCTOBER**Magdeburg, Germany****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact:

christiane@laehnemann.de

15-16 NOVEMBER**Dorset UK****Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact: allcock_mark@sky.com

29-30 NOVEMBER

Weesp NL
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros
 Contact: xzeroxz@gmail.com

5-7 DECEMBER

Dorset UK
Seminar with Tomas Nord
 Contact: allcock_mark@sky.com

14-16 DECEMBER

Bosei Denmark
Residential Aikido Intensive
with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros
 Contact lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk

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