



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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Humanity

By David Ito

Ito Sensei discusses O'Sensei's philosophy of nonviolence and humanity.

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Keep Practicing

by Ken Watanabe

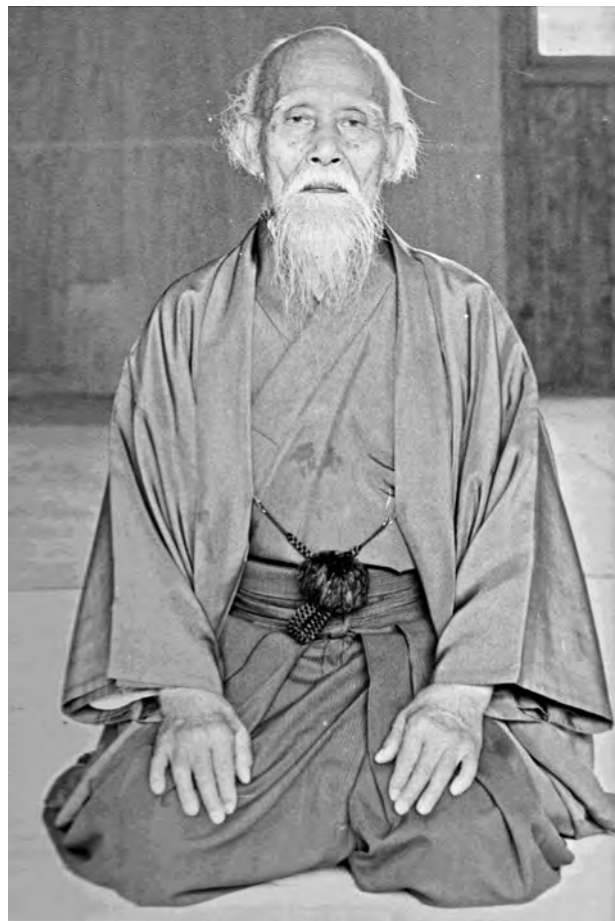
Watanabe Sensei explains what it means to train like O'Sensei.

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Bowing to O'Sensei

by Rev. Kensho Furuya

Sensei illustrates the meaning of clapping and bowing in training.



O'Sensei Memorial Issue

This year marks the 53rd year since the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba passed away. Morihei Ueshiba is referred to as O'Sensei not just within Aikido, but it is also a title that many other martial arts accord him with. Morihei Ueshiba is called O'Sensei not because he developed many great teachers or even because he developed Aikido. Morihei Ueshiba is referred to as O'Sensei because of the example he set not only as a teacher and martial artist but as an example as a human being to the world.

Some people believe that Aikido is not a martial art and it is more of a spiritual practice. To the uninitiated, it is easy to think that an Aikido class is filled with spiritual teachings and pseudo religious talk. However, the interesting thing about Aikido is that there is actually very little, if any, philosophical doctrine taught during class and most classes are physically demanding and done in silence. O'Sensei's teachings of *hibouryoku* (非暴力) or "nonviolence" are hidden within the techniques which are first inculcated into the student's body through the training. Once students' bodies change, they somehow have a shift in their consciousness. That shift in consciousness in turn leads them to the realization of O'Sensei's teachings of nonviolence and *shinmu fusatsu* (真武不殺) or that "true *budo* does not kill."

It is easy for a people who are new to the martial arts to dismiss O'Sensei's philosophy of nonviolence especially if they come to the martial arts to learn to fight. From the outside looking in, most *budo* seem like nothing more than systems of violence and brutality. This is partially true because many students initially only come to the martial arts for self-defense. The unfortunate thing is that competition and fighting only end up causing the students more harm than good. Harboring only this mentality students become good fighters but never become good people. Interestingly, Aikido training has a way of changing the student and as they become more adept, they begin to realize that Aikido is much more profound than just punching someone in the face.

Through physical training, we harden our bodies and learn self-discipline. Armed with this self-discipline, the training enables us to better understand ourselves. With that self-awareness, we realize that all beings suffer which in turn teaches us compassion. Being self-realized and armed with compassion we learn the highest teaching in *budo* which is humanity or that "true *budo* does not kill." In Aikido, our aim is nonviolence. Nonviolence doesn't mean passivity. What it means is that we defend ourselves with restraint so as to protect our attacker so that they sustain the least amount of injury as possible – it is compassion or humanity in practice. In Japanese, the idea of showing one's opponent humanity is referred to as *tekini shio wo okuru* (敵に塩



"The Way of the Warrior has been misunderstood. It is not a means to kill and destroy others. Those who seek to compete and better one another are making a terrible mistake. To smash, injure, or destroy is the worst thing a human being can do. The real Way of a Warrior is to prevent such slaughter – it is the Art of Peace, the power of love."

– Morihei Ueshiba

を送る) and is centuries old.

Tekini shio wo okuru comes from a famous story about the 16th century daimyo Uesugi Kenshin. Kenshin was fierce warrior and brilliant military commander. He was known as "The Dragon of Echigo" and his bitter rival was the daimyo Takeda Shingen who was known as "The Tiger of Kai." Interestingly, according to Chinese philosophy, the dragon and tiger will always be rivals but neither will ever be able to best the other. The two rivals fought many battles and were generally at a stalemate. At one point in their rivalry, Shingen was under siege by another warlord who had cut off his supply of salt. In Japanese culture, salt is deemed sacred as it is an integral ingredient in cooking and preserving food. Without salt, Shingen's army would eventually fall. When Kenshin got news that

Shingen's salt supplies had been cut off, Kenshin sent Shingen a load of salt with the note, "I do not fight with salt, but with the sword." His kind act enabled Shingen to weather the siege and he lived to fight on for two more years. Uesugi Kenshin may not have understood nonviolence, but he did understand that

humanity and self-restraint are the highest teachings in *budo*.

Humanity



by David Ito
Aikido Chief Instructor

Aikido training can make our bodies and minds strong, but that strength needs to be tempered with O'Sensei's teachings of nonviolence. Without a way to reconcile our strength, we run the risk of doing something that we will regret. Thus, the true power of Aikido is not in what we can do to others but in what we choose not to do.

Understanding that there is a danger in only developing one's body, O'Sensei advocated that one should strive to balance the mind, body and spirit.

He suggested this when he stated, "The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. You are here to realize your inner divinity and manifest your innate enlightenment. Foster peace in your own life and then apply the Art to all that you encounter."

O'Sensei said, "Fuhai no *budo*" (合気道は不敗の武道) or that "Aikido is invincible." Most misunderstand this to mean that they will become so skillful that they cannot be defeated. However, the invincibility that O'Sensei is speaking of is the realization of knowing one's self and in having the ability to have self-restraint. Armed with these skills, no one can beat us and thus we become invincible. Therefore, Aikido is a martial art, but it is much more than that.

I am truly grateful for Aikido and I am thankful for all the work that O'Sensei has done to create it. Thank you very much, O'Sensei!•

The Japanese conduct memorial services very differently than we do here in Spain. Being from Spain I never had the opportunity to attend or witness any type of Japanese style memorial service. The first time I attended a Japanese memorial service for O'Sensei was at Furuya Sensei's dojo in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles at the end of the 1990s.

I remember throughout the memorial service that I was amazed at all the rituals that the Japanese go through to remember someone. Throughout the ceremony, I was in a state of amazement even though I did not understand any of the rituals or even what the priest was saying as he prayed. However, through the rituals, the student's reverence, and the priest's prayers, I learned that the memory of a deceased person close to you deserves solemnity, respect, and above all, reverence.

After the memorial service, I accompanied Sensei and the priest to the *Odoki* lunch. *Odoki* is the customary meal provided for the officiating priest after the service. Later during the meal with the priest, Sensei explained to me some details of the rituals and what the priest represented or did during the memorial. For instance, the *Hannya Shingyo* or "Heart sutra" is read at every memorial service. For Sensei the memory of his deceased teachers was very important to him. He believed that they were always present with him in his daily classes and that their memories should be remembered on the anniversaries of their deaths.

One of the hardest things after someone passes away is to preserve their teaching for future generations. Remembering those that have come before us enables us to not only remember them but to also remember their teachings.

This April we commemorate the 53rd anniversary of the passing of Morihei Ueshiba, affectionately referred to as O'Sensei. This memorial service is just a small token of appreciation that we offer to the founder of Aikido. We dedicate a few minutes of our lives to remembering O'Sensei in order to thank him for dedicating his whole life to Aikido and for teaching us this art. Without O'Sensei's life of dedication, work, and effort we would not be able to enjoy this precious art today.

Millions of practitioners of this art all over the world enjoy Aikido but how many truly take the time to give thanks? Like many of us we are busy dedicating our time, effort, and work to develop Aikido in our dojos. There will always be work and stu-



dents to teach. We should not let busyness force us to forget to truly thank O'Sensei.

Many of the new practitioners, myself included, did not know O'Sensei personally and most hardly know about the life of O'Sensei, but we have pictures of the founder on our walls. Many times we do not stop to reflect on the impact that his work has had on our lives. Sensei taught me many things but above all else he taught me that we should value and respect our teachers and to be humble and grateful. I believe that these memorials, regardless of religion and beliefs, are important and are just but one small gesture of gratitude that we show to O'Sensei.

I feel fortunate that after 53 years, our dojos continue to remember O'Sensei every day and hold memorial services every April. In this way, we continue with the traditions that O'Sensei sowed many years ago.

I am grateful that Ito Sensei has continued with Sensei's practice of holding memorial services each year in his dojo for O'Sensei, Nidai Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba, and for our teacher Reverend Kensho Furuya. It inspires me to do the same and helps me not to forget.

Continuing Traditions

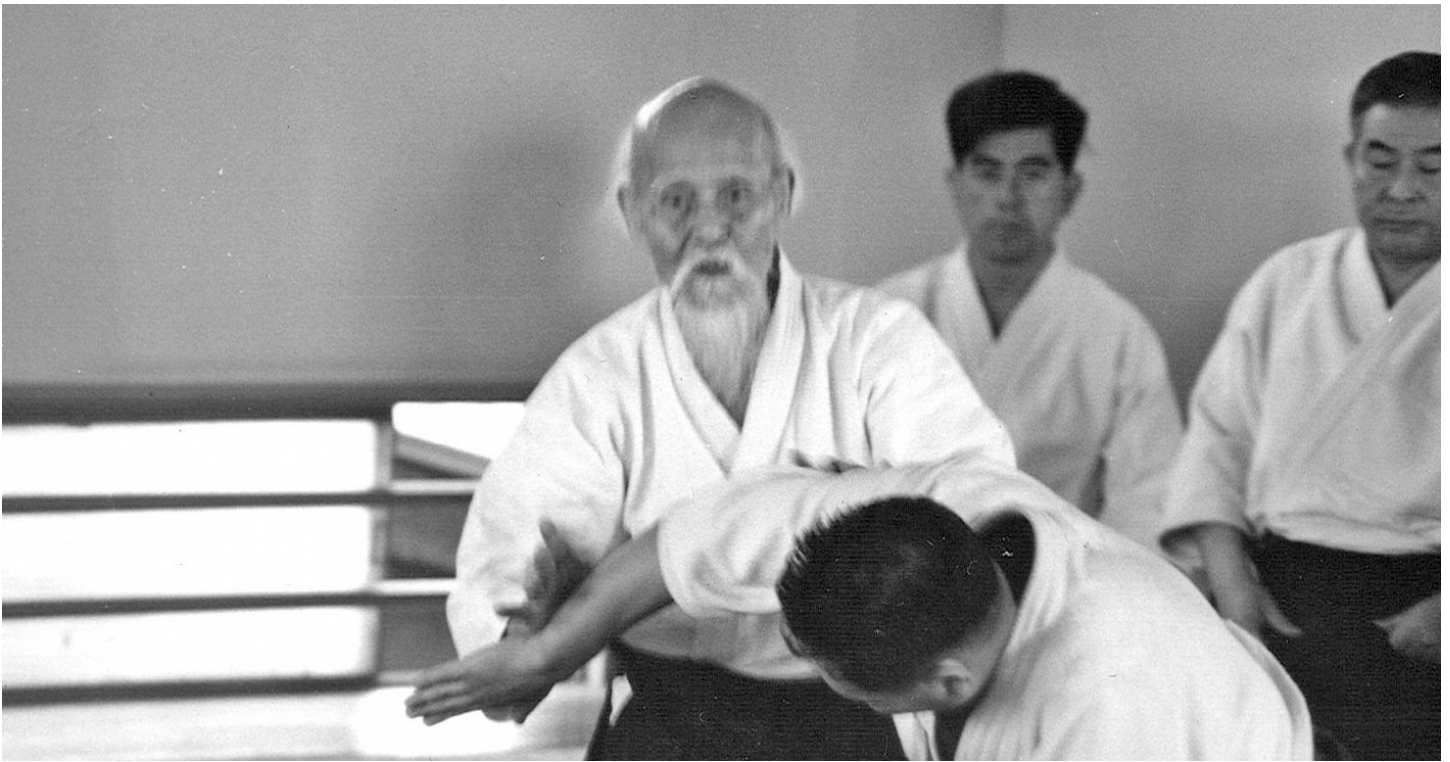


by **Santiago Garcia Almaraz**
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

Sensei has passed away and we are the teachers now. It is our turn to continue transmitting O'Sensei's teachings. Teaching goes beyond wearing a black belt and putting on the *hakama*. It is more than teaching or practicing *ikkyo* properly. Physical techniques only depend on our skill or ability, but the practice goes well beyond physical practice. What we wear and what we do pales in comparison to the respect that comes from the heart and is reflected in the spirit of each practitioner. Having respect for those that have passed before us is what makes us human.

This is the first year because of the Covid that I was not able to attend either Sensei's memorial service or O'Sensei's Memorial in Los Angeles. Not being able to spend time with the other teachers, students and friends from Los Angeles is a huge regret. However, I know that because they have chosen to memorialize our teachers year after year that they have the fortitude to survive this pandemic and their dedication inspires me. Soon we will return to normal again, but until then we will continue teaching, learning and showing respect to our teachers.

Thank you O'Sensei. I appreciate all of your work. We will work hard to continue the tradition. •



When we think of the future of Aikido, it is important to remember that Aikido can only survive intact from its correct practice.

When we remember O'Sensei, we might read about the miraculous feats he performed and think, "Wow, that is Aikido!" We might hear something about his philosophy of peace and love, and think "Wow, that is Aikido!" We want Aikido to fit our own idea of what Aikido is supposed to be, whether it's from anecdotes or from a neat and easy simplistic definition.

The truth of the matter is that O'Sensei's Aikido is right there before us. We simply need to work hard to get to it. Nobody needs to make something up, no one needs to add anything to improve Aikido, and no one needs to put in their own two cents about Aikido. Its practice already speaks volumes.

What we as students and teachers must do is practice Aikido until our body can understand Aikido, and once our body understands Aikido through its practice, then our minds will follow. The teachings and wisdom of Aikido is already contained in its correct practice. When we practice many of the basic techniques, we are living Aikido. When we try to thoughtlessly add our own ideas or opinions as to what we can do to improve it, then it is no longer Aikido.

To many (especially) westerners, following so closely seems overly dogmatic. If so, how does one follow a recipe, for say, bread? In a bread recipe there are certain things that may be changed and there are certain things that, if altered, result in something that is unpalatable.

To a beginner, a recipe for bread may seem like nothing special. Something as simple as bread might seem below their expertise.

Keep Practicing



by **Ken Watanabe**
Technical Director

An amateur might think it needs more of this or it needs more of that to make it better, but will it make it bread or will it become something else. Fads come and fads go, but is the end result something that a person can eat and say that it's delicious?

Baking the same type of bread may seem tedious, but the amateur only sees the same loaves. To the beginning baker each batch of loaves appears to be the same, yet only the expert baker can see the small differences between the different batches. Only the expert knows how the quality of one ingredient affects how the entire loaf turns out.

Likewise, a baker is not trying to change the world with a loaf of bread, yet in the little loaf of bread are years of failures, experiences, knowledge, artistry, and sweat. Doing the same thing every day, baking the same bread every day, the baker becomes intimately connected to the bread just as someone who has trained correctly in Aikido keeps going deeper into the technique. It becomes as much a science as it is an art, with the hard facts in one hand and inexplicable artistry that only a human can summon, in the other.

An expert might see the same recipe and create a loaf of bread that, although seemingly unremarkable, shows the baker's level. An expert sees the same things differently than the immature eye of an ambitious amateur does. As a baker gains more experience, the ingredients, as simple as they might seem, have a totally different meaning to an expert than to an amateur.

When we look at Aikido, we think of timing and blending and extension and many of the other stereotypical characteristics we think of when we see the world of "Aikido," yet an expert would understand these Aikido characteristics much differently than a



beginner would.

When we don't understand something about O'Sensei's Aikido, we feel threatened; we make things up to justify it without truly understanding what Aikido really is. Or worse, interpreting Aikido to fit our own preferences and our own convenience. It is our own mind's security blanket. The rub of the matter is this: simply possessing intellectual knowledge of Aikido is not enough. Even when it is the correct instruction, the only way to truly understand Aikido is to take a page from the O'Sensei's own book, and that is to practice, practice, practice.

O'Sensei, through tireless training, sought to preserve the original meaning of martial arts – how to stop the weapon – and brought it to the modern world. Through his endless study and, most importantly, practice, O'Sensei brought the miraculous feats of the old masters to the modern world as well as managing to pass them down to his own students.

In class, when we practice a technique, say *shomenuchi iriminage*, each time it is different. No two times will the technique be exactly the same, yet each time we practice *shomenuchi iriminage* we try to check off the recipe for the technique. There are certain things that are essential to a good *shomenuchi iriminage* that must be included in its practice.

When people think of martial arts they think of *kata* (形) or “forms.” One might say that Aikido has no set forms, the type of prearranged martial arts *kata* used to catalog and preserve techniques. Yet, O'Sensei's Aikido has its own *kata*; Aikido has *ki* (氣) forms. To understand O'Sensei is to try to understand Aikido's many basic techniques. Hidden within these basics is O'Sensei's wisdom.

Furuya Sensei always told us that when we lose our way, go back to the basic technique to find ourselves. That technique is O'Sensei's legacy to the future of Aikido. We continue his teaching, not because it is our duty, but because we love practicing Aikido and when Aikido is practiced correctly with the correct spirit, I believe it can bring someone genuine happiness and peace.

Battles are fought with sound minds as well as strong bodies. All militaries understand this. The mind cannot be forged without study and the body cannot be forged without training. O'Sensei's Aikido is understood through people and their efforts. The question, “What is real Aikido?” can be answered by a quick look on the mat; it is the students who, like the founder of Aikido, keep practicing. •



In the matter of bowing, it is customary to follow the manner decided by the dojo for which you happen to be in when visiting other dojos. Or, to follow your teacher's method in your own dojo.

Many Aikido dojos today follow a Shinto custom of clapping. In Shinto generally, it is customary to clap twice and make a bow before you make your prayer or your request to the gods such as for good luck, a nice day, a new baby, marriage, to avoid car accidents, make money, better business or for any other personal requests one has and needs help from above. For example, geisha always pray for divine protection at a small Shinto shrine in the Gion District before they go off to see their customers or before they perform at parties to ensure that they do well or are successful. In some temples today, the priests specialize in blessings for new cars to protect them from accidents and scratches. Some Shinto temples even specialize in easy births, early marriage, better business, etc.

In some Shinto temples, one rings a bell. Usually they are "sacred" bells tied very high up before the altar. A long thick rope hangs down which the person shakes causing the bell to ring. The purpose of clapping or clanging these bells is to wake up or get the attention of the gods you intend to pray or speak to.

Bowing to O'Sensei



by Rev. Kensho Furuya

a *shomen* or *tokonoma*. However, it may look like a mini dojo, but the *kamidana* is only a *kamidana* if a Shinto god resides there. This is usually defined by a "shintai" or sacred Shinto object or object of reverence or a sacred talisman from a Shinto temple which is placed inside there. I suspect that there are many vacant *kamidanas* around. The customary offering to a Shinto deity is pure water, pure salt and/or grains of uncooked rice. Occasionally, fresh vegetables and fruits are offered. Sometimes ake rice wine is one of the earliest offerings to Shinto deities. In some sects, fresh fish is offered on special occasions.

Customarily, it is not proper to offer flowers or incense to a Shinto deity, this is a Buddhist custom. Only in some eclectic sects where both Shinto and Buddhist deities are considered one and the same deities.

Some rocks, mountains, streams, waterfalls, rivers, etc. have been named as "sacred" or have been defied in history. Few individuals are given sacred status in Shinto outside of members of the Imperial family who are said, in Shintoism, to be descended from Shinto gods. One well known exception however is

財団法人
合氣会

Sugawara Michizane, a courtier, who was exiled by the Emperor when he was double-crossed by other jealous courtiers. After Michizane died in exile, many disasters occurred in Japan and they were attributed to his angry and vengeful spirit. Michizane was deified as the “god of education” because he was a genius in calligraphy and poetry and miraculously all the disasters ceased. Today, he is commonly known as *Tenjin-sama* or “heavenly person” and all college students pray to him for success in their university entrance exams.

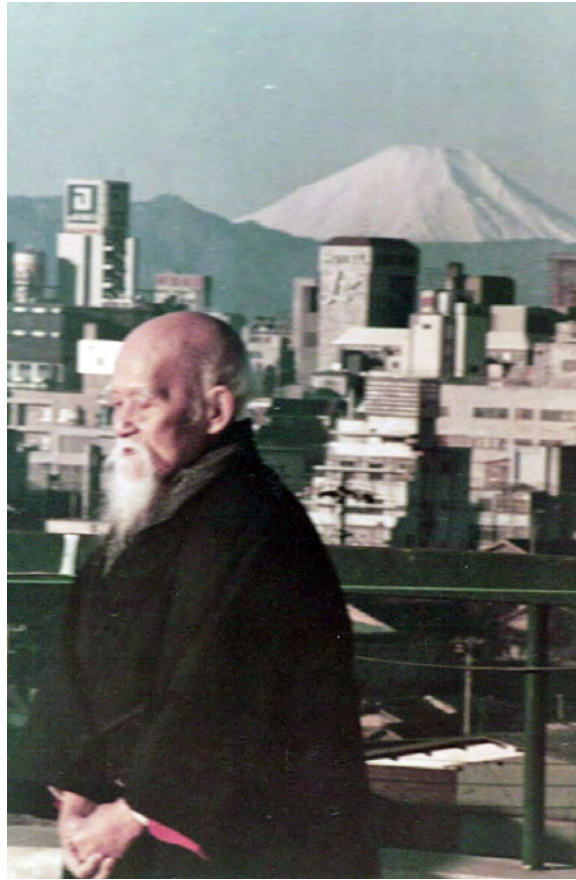
In the Omoto Kyo, of which O’Sensei was a member, the custom is to clap four times. This distinguishes them from more traditional Shinto customs. Omoto Kyo is not technically a Shinto religion. It is categorized as *shinko shukyo* or a “new religion” because it was created less than a hundred years ago. Omoto Kyo is based on Shinto, some Buddhism, the Genesis of the Old Testament and some ancient Arabic texts, so it is not technically a Shinto religion but a new, eclectic, synthesized religion as typical with this type of new religion in Japan. Oddly enough, Japanese accept many types of these new religions which spring up all of the time. I think we, as Americans, think of religion as being very ancient such as Christianity or Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam.

This is the basic difference between clapping two times and four times. Generally, it works better if you happen to belong to the Shinto religion or are a member of the Omoto Kyo. I don’t know how meaningful it is if you are not a member or believer.

Shinto itself is really not conducive to international expansion as we know religions. Shinto is very Japanese, and the gods are very Japanese, so it is generally more appropriate if one happens to be Japanese. Supposedly, the gods reside only in Japan and do not really have a universal or international presence. There is Amaterasu Ohmikami or what we call the Sun Goddess but even she is more important as the progenitor of the Japanese Imperial line of emperors. Religious scholars nowadays accept Shinto as a religion but technically it is not even a “religion” as we define religion today. There is not a main, important sacred text or dogma such as the Holy Bible or the Koran. Many priests are not ordained as a clergy but act as “official caretakers.” There is not necessarily a distinct congregation with particular rules which define a member. These are the three main characteristics of how a religion is defined.

Since I was ordained as a Zen priest, I have become more paranoid about my religion and do not want to be accused of using my own dojo as a place to “sell” my religion or beliefs, so it has been my personal choice not to “push” religion of any kind. Of course, Japanese martial arts are highly influenced by Zen so as

much as it clarifies or defines the spiritual aspects of the art, I try to explain Zen sans too much “religious” consciousness. This is just my own personal choice.



More traditionally, it is proper and appropriate to simply bow to the *shomen* or place of honor where O’Sensei’s photo resides and then to your teacher. The bow symbolizes the fact that you are a student of O’Sensei and you do him honor or “pay your respects” as you do your teacher. In Japan, there are many types of bowing. A simple, dignified and noble bow to O’Sensei, I believe, is most appropriate. As we bow, bringing forward one hand before the other follows the tradition of the samurai warrior and we are following the martial art of Aikido so I feel this is very auspicious as we are a warrior-trainee. This is just my personal interpretation.

As a Zen priest and as a scholar and as an Aikido teacher, for my own students, I have to think and reflect about what we do in my own dojo. The custom of clapping in Shinto and in Omoto Kyo recognizes a “divine presence.” In this sense, I must consider if I want to introduce my students to O’Sensei as a “great teacher” or as a “divine being.” This is something we might need to think about more among Aikidoists.

I also wonder if O’Sensei himself would want to be remembered as a divine being or a great teacher and martial artist. In my own heart, O’Sensei is a divine being – but this is only an expression of my own love for O’Sensei and his teachings. It is not a general custom. It is similar to the situation in Zen, Zen people recognize Buddha as the historical being and great teacher, many other sects of Buddhism recognize his divine presence.

Now that I have thoroughly confused you, simply put, it is really not set in stone yet as to what is the way to show respect to O’Sensei. It depends on your teacher’s preference as to which custom to follow. There is the traditional bow of paying respect and the two claps as in Shinto, and four claps as in Omoto-Kyo. There it is in a nutshell.

In Japanese tradition, the bow is a sign of respect to another person just as we shake hands in this country. There should be no religious connotation to bowing in the normal sense. We follow this custom in the dojo, because the bow is what O’Sensei understands as a sign of respect – he may not understand “shaking hands.” After all, would we dare to shake O’Sensei’s hand? – not without good *ukemi* skills. •

Editor’s note: *Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on July 15, 2002.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

Dojo Coronavirus update:

Los Angeles County has moved into the Red and Orange Tier which means we can now open up indoors. We will be offering a limited amount of classes so as to lessen any coronavirus exposure. Please follow these guidelines:

- Your temperature will be checked upon entry.
- People with showing symptoms will not be allowed to train.
- Masks will be required at all times.
- Double masking, KN95 masks and gloves are optional.
- Students are encouraged to social distance when possible.
- When possible, students should come dressed for class.
- Dressing rooms are limited to one person at a time.

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender identification, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays

10:15-11:15 AM Regular Class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Regular Class
1:00-2:00 PM Online Class

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class
10:15-11:15 AM Regular Class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Regular Class

Mondays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Online Class

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

Thursdays

No Class

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

*Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar by Invitation only.

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Regular Class

Wednesdays

7:45-8:45 Regular Class

Saturdays

7:45-8:45 AM Regular class



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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido La Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido
Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

FOLLOW THE US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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