

Magazine  
Dentou  
**IWAMA RYU**  
Aikidō

岩間  
神信  
合氣道

**IWAMA SHINSHIN AIKI SHURENKAI**

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Issue 01 / August 2020



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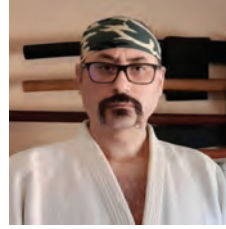
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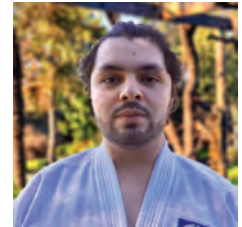
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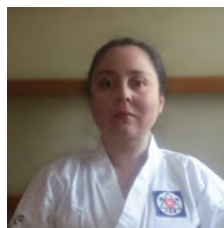
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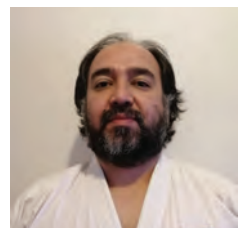
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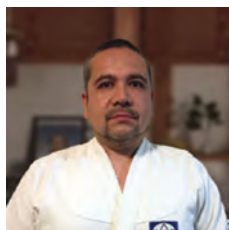
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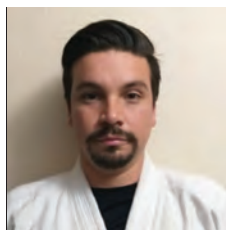
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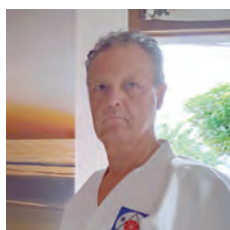
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# SENSEI Hitohira Saito

Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai

Translation by: Miki Nakajima

I am grateful that we have been given this precious opportunity to let many people know about our organization, the Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai. Here we earnestly practice Ken, Jo and Taijutsu, which are the foundations of the techniques of Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido.

I hope that everybody will understand how important the founder's achievements are, which he had accomplished taking a long time. Furthermore, I would also hope the bonds to be deepened among the members of our organization who put the founder's ideas into practice.





# Here in Chile, we celebrate our dojo anniversary!

It was the year 2008, the day was August 28th when we got a letter from Soke Hitohira Saito stating the following: "From this day and on, you are allowed to walk this path with us." It has been 12 years of meticulous and rigorous study, a humble path supporting the international growth of the Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai.

As the Chilean Aiki Shuren Dojo group, every year we have faced new challenges. We have held national and international seminars, and along with a variety of promotional events, we have also let our school take an active role in society. This year, through this digital magazine, we seek to strengthen the international communication among us and to spread the work done by the ISSASK group and the international dojos. We have named this magazine: "Dentou Iwama Ryu".

We are very grateful to be able to share

this gift, and to contribute to the growth of ISSASK at the world stage. This digital magazine reflects the commitment of many students and fellow travelers, all spread through different countries, all of them contributing to bring together the elements that make the Founder's aikido a way of life.

We would like the reader to delve deep into different themes and topics like: the discipline of this art, technical aspects, the human factor involved in it, and to submerge itself into the traditional and inner elements that keep growing in all of us day by day.

For those like us, who live by the Aiki, lies in our hearts the concept of growing up and to walk this path together. We want this magazine to be a way to always be present, updated and integrated as part of this Budo. We would like this magazine to be a gift to accompany everyone on this road.

*"We all have a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained"*

O'Sensei, Morihei Ueshiba

Happy Anniversary! Let's keep growing..

**Fernando Delgado Y.**

**Technical representative in Chile of ISSASK**



Translation by: Christofer Reyes

A man in a blue shirt is sitting at a desk in a dimly lit room, working on a laptop. The room is dark, with light coming from the laptop screen and a window in the background. The man is looking at the screen with a focused expression. The background shows some hanging fabric and a window with a view of the outdoors.

# Editorial

In the field of sociology there are innumerable paradigms to interpret the social reality. From a positivist approach we can classify and identify this social reality in a more simpler way, by their rational, scientific, demonstrable and replicable aspects. On the other hand, we have a more constructivist paradigm, which proposes a more flexible interpretation, one where the reality we live in is nothing more than a social construction. The above does not represent a judgment in moral values at all, but rather is presented as a factual cause.





From the previous perspective, it can be said that we all inhabit a world full of symbolic representations and meanings, all connected together in a consensual collective vision. However, that does not mean that from the mere fact of living in it, these current issues become naturalized. When social contexts are changed, a cultural shock is the first proof of reaction. Sometimes frightening, others surprising, and certainly also attracting and enchanting.

The world of aikido, as we might know it, is full of tradition, culture, religious, historical and technical elements, among others. All these elements shared in the present time, can be experienced differently by each individual person. Some people will already have naturalized specific cultural aspects, while others will be constantly enchanted by the difference in culture. However, some might still be struggling to decipher the line between religion and martial arts. All of this comprises a massive, complex reality, rich in culture and traditions in which little effort is made to deepen this

understanding. In the process, It is easy to lose sight of the way.

The modern world allows us to have elements of augmented reality, graphic information mounted on a represented reality helps us to walk safely in an environment full of uncertainties. An example of this can be seen in the mobile application for traffic information: Waze. In some way, this communication effort aims to standardize a function. Serving as a guide to the beginner, collaborating in the integral formation of the advanced student, and making visible issues that for the most advantaged could simply ignore

Without a doubt, it is an ambition to reflect, nurture and promote the common present. It also offers a space for the meeting between knowledge and students, for the meeting of students and teachers, teachers and technical representatives from all over the world. This is a space to learn more about each other, about our activities, about our interests. In short, this is a space where we build together our learning.

# Budo: an approach to the complexity of the concept

Martial concepts

Budo 武道:

## The japanese basis of martial arts

By Juan Carlos Morales

*BUDO* is a Japanese word that in the western world has been understood as “the way of martial arts”, or “the way of war”. However, this definition quite differs from the Japanese language and our school interpretation, which better corresponds to: “the way to stop violence”.

The word *BUDO* is composed by two kanji ideograms (漢字): 武 (*BU*) and 道 (*DO*). The kanji that conforms the first part of the word *BUDO* is 武, which means: “military” or military related. 武 is composed by two radicals (*Kai Moji*): “*hoko*” (戈) which can be translated as “the halberd” and “*tome/dome*” (止) that translates as “to stop”. Under this criteria, 武 can be interpreted as “To stop the spear”, although the translation “To stop violence”, is the most widely used.

On the other hand, the second kanji 道 can be translated as “the path” or “the road that oneself passes through life”, but can also be interpreted as “the proper behavior” or “the lessons”. Therefore, 道 can be interpreted as “the path to self improvement that could ultimately lead to illumination”.

Generally, *BUDO* is confused or used indistinctly from the term *BUJUTSU* (武術). However, it is worth clarifying that *BUJUTSU* better translates as “martial techniques”, because it emphasizes only the physical side of martial arts. On the other hand, *BUDO* also considers the martial technique, nevertheless puts emphasis on the mind and its development during the martial arts training.

For the Japanese people, their skills in martial arts are not only seen as tools to maintain peace. These skills are also seen as a way to improve their lives, not only involving the physical aspects during training, but also adding an spiritual dimension during meditation.

Finally, we could understand 武道 (*BUDO*) as “the way (or path) to stop violence”, but not by “any” way (or path), but through the path of virtue. Therefore a more precise definition of *BUDO* could be: “the way (or path) to stop violence through virtuous and courageous actions that pursue justice”, which is necessary to reach illumination.

From the words of master Alessandro Tittarelli (R.I.P 1957 - 2018):

# Budo and the practice of aikido

*By Rodrigo Troncoso P. / Translation by: Juan Morales*



«Unlike the general knowledge, traditional aikido stands firm in its ultimate purpose: To achieve peace in the world. Perhaps, at the present moment, we might be the only ones who are still pursuing that goal», said the shihan from ISSASK, Alessandro Tittarelli, after concluding the second day of the seminar held in Chile on December 2012.

The former close student of Morihiro Saito, deepened into this idea by explaining that “in our practice, the concept of budo comes first, it implies the way of the no combat. We endlessly practice to prevent the violence. We do that to such extent, that in traditional aikido there is no combat whatsoever. It is based on the grounds that in the very concept of aikido there is no opposition. The combat itself implies competition and the use of an overwhelming strength; while in aiki-

do there is only the concept of blending yourself with the other. All the techniques in aikido aim at that”.

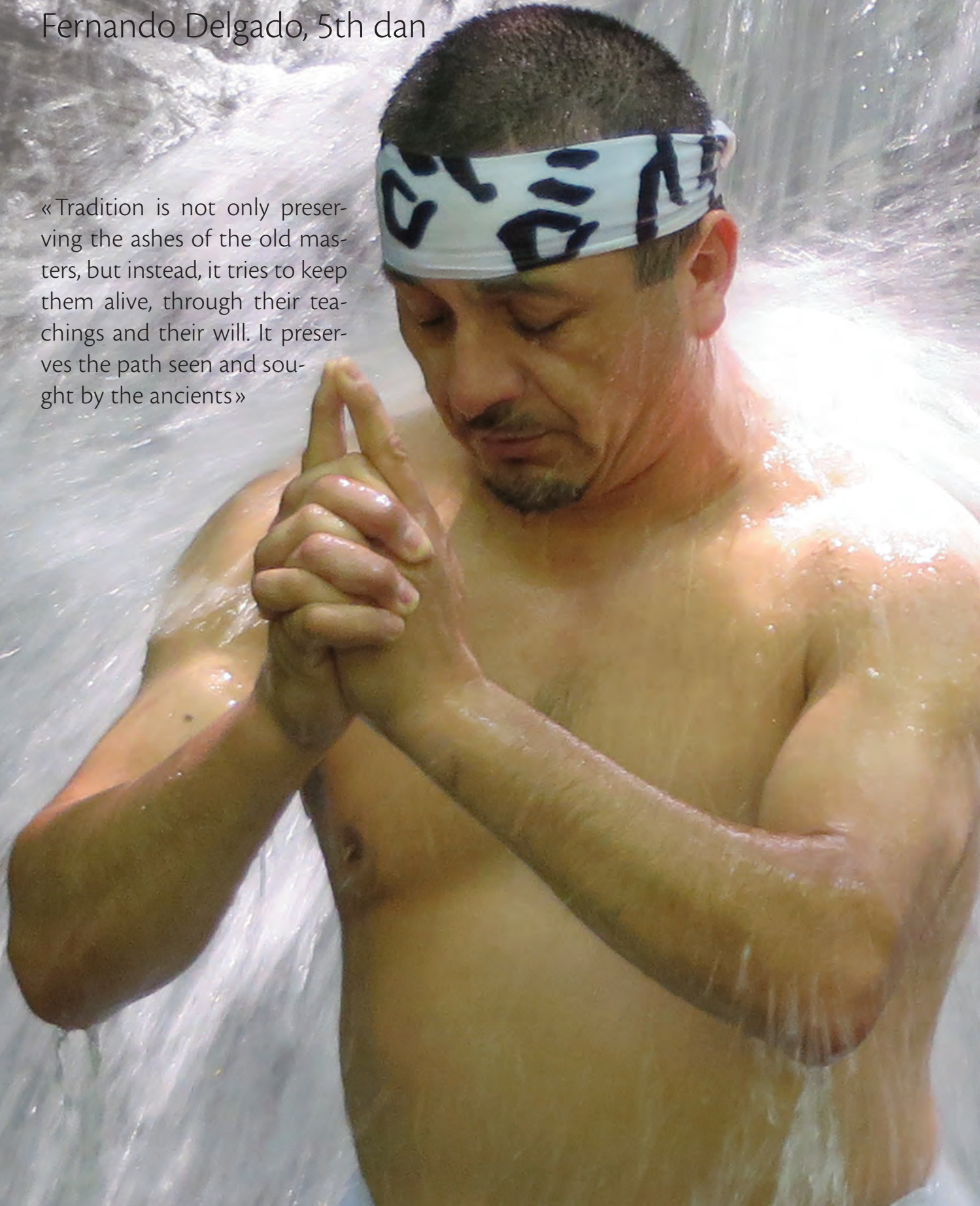
«To such extent, in the very kanji of budo, the “bu” is written and represented by two parts: the first one is the halberd and the second ideogram is that of a foot that stops it. This can be conveyed as to stop the halberd, to block it, not to fight it back. Thus, it can be implied that budo is truly the way of not fighting. All the above builds up the essential principle of traditional aikido, since without this fundamental concept there would be no aikido at all».

«Nowadays, martial arts schools have been simply revealing mere technical aspects of the art, more specifically, the sole combative aspect of it. In a certain way, the focus on deeper concepts of the art have been put aside», said Maestro Tittarelli.

# The tradition in our practice lives in Iwama with Hitohira Saito sensei.

Fernando Delgado, 5th dan

«Tradition is not only preserving the ashes of the old masters, but instead, it tries to keep them alive, through their teachings and their will. It preserves the path seen and sought by the ancients»



«I want to continue the training that O'Sensei gave to my father and me as well» Kaicho Saito Hitohira once said. In these words the concept of tradition lies implicit. Even so, what can we understand from that? Without being mistaken, this refers to a transmission - by means of oral or written way - A transmission done throughout an extended period of time, made of facts, customs, even doctrines related to religion, myths or legends. It is a transmission of ancient events serving the past, the present and what is yet to come. In the context of the martial arts, the tradition is always present and transmitted in each practice by preserving the teachings of the creator of each discipline. In Japanese there are many words to define practice or training, for example: *renshuu*, *keiko* and also *shugyo*. This last one is understood as a deeper practice that includes religious aspects.

Translation by: Natalia Farías



岩間  
神信  
合氣  
道

«In the context of the martial arts, the tradition is always present and transmitted in each practice by preserving the teachings of the creator of each discipline».



Saito family photographic archive.



*«The concept of keiko implies a strong commitment with the old teachings of the masters, with a constant retrospection on our mistakes to to be continuously improved. This takes time and dedication.»*



In the context of aikido let's review *renshuu* (練習) and *keiko* (稽古).

*Renshuu*, refers to the practice of the body, the development of a skill that is learned or acquired as a result of constant practice. *Keiko*, on the other hand, refers to practice that considers the ancient roots and comprises the three fundamental conditions for our practice: physical, mental and spiritual.

Regarding the physical aspect, there is no doubt that physical and technical preparation is necessary when facing an oponent. Secondly, the mental aspect is relevant: a psychological preparation allows you to have the right attitude to go through any conflictive situation. The mind should be ready for the stress of a confrontation and the consequences that come with it. Thirdly, the spiritual aspect, which involves a mind that constantly seeks the path, a mind that questions, that seeks control over its own state, it looks for a deep understanding of the commitment to an ethical path, in other words, commitment to a *DO*.

Going deep into this topic: the concept of *keiko* implies a strong commitment with the old teachings of the masters, with a constant retrospection on our mistakes to to be continuously improved. This takes time and dedication.



In Iwama, during a traditional practice these three aspects become evident: physical, mental and spiritual. At the physical level, there is a constant and relentless correction from sensei Hitohira. At the mental state, it is present in the constant attention to all details of the daily life. Finally, at the spiritual level, we find the continuous inner search present in every action.

In that sense, and concerning our practice, Morihiro Saito sensei, has been the only person, who for 23 years served and trained constantly with O'Sensei.

This has made possible the preservation of the tradition. The one that preserves not only the reminiscences of the old masters, but the one that seeks to keep alive the teachings and the meaning of the path they sought.

At Iwama, the legacy of the Founder lives and breaths through the Saito family, being alive in each practice.



# Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai

## The genesis of an institution







Alessandro Tittarelli (1957 - 2018):

# The aikido of the founder is in the hands of Saito Family.

«When my master passed away it was natural for me to stay close to the same family and keep doing the same things. I followed his offspring, for the reason that the same values from the father were inherited to his son».

*By Rodrigo Troncoso P.*

*Translation by: Marco Huircán*

Contrary to the general public perception of Christmas, the sun blazes in the region of Valparaiso. Here, surrounded by pompous gardens and carefully sculpted shrubberies, there is a fresh and humid oasis, with the lingering smell of fresh lawn grass. Here you can find the Sporting Club Gym, a refined space, with wide and clear windows which extends from the

roof to the floor, allowing the passerby to see everything from the outside. From inside of the building, occasionally passing cars can be seen, passing through the distinguishing qualities of the surroundings. I can not exactly recall how big the place was, but I do remember the tatami covering a square area of at least five hundred meters. Its surface was filled with ai-





kidokas coming from different countries, all of them sharing the same interest of being part of the seminar taught by shihan Alessandro Tittarelli.

Master Titarelli, a stylish man, as a fine Italian, he was quite tall near 1,80 cms, a robust man with white hair. He could be seen wearing glasses with a classic chrome frame.

With an always sharp and precise personality, a true kind gentleman. He was the kind of person that made it easy to understand

even the most complicated techniques.

All students sitting in seiza position, while sensei Tittarelli explained in meticulous detail every aspect of the irimi nage technique. He showed the technique with all kinds of students: big, skinny, robust, tall and short, instructors with a dan degree and students with a kyu degree.

When he instructed students to practice a technique, he would walk close to the students, always looking for a chance to help them, clarifying doubts, and solving any





complications students might have with a technique. He could be seen always wearing a small gray towel around his neck, drying his forehead from time to time. I recall that as the class continued, he started moving a little bit slower, yet still showing great enthusiasm. For a moment he would be sitting beside the kamidana. He asked me for some water, and took it with some medicine. The high fever he had had since last night would not be an excuse to continue teaching his class. After the class, and in spite of not being in the best shape, he granted me a few minutes of his time. I wanted to make a couple of questions for an audiovisual material I was working on. We sat together, next to Monica and Giacomo, who

*«The historical value of Morihiro Saito is without a doubt immeasurable, if sensei Morihiro Saito had not been there, we would have never known what O`sen-sei`s aikido really was»*



helped with the translation from Italian to Spanish.

**Sensei you were a direct student of Morihiro Saito sensei. You spent quite some time in Japan learning straight from him. How do you remember him?**

For me there is an emotional element about this. Every time I went to Iwama, he would be there to welcome me like a son. He was indeed a very strict teacher, but also had such a warm and open heart to everyone, always there to help. Morihiro sensei was for me the epitome of a true teacher, he was a guide, not only from a technical standpoint, but in my life as well. He had the ability to understand every single thing I needed, even before I spoke of it. I did not even finish saying “sensei” when he would reply to me

saying: “Okey, let’s do this and that”. He had that impressive rapport with people.

**From that close relation that you had with him. What place would you say Morihiro Saito holds in the history of aikido?**

The historical value of Morihiro Saito is without a doubt immeasurable, if sensei Morihiro Saito had not been there, we would have never known what O`sensei`s aikido really was. We could have grasped some aspects through different angles, but we would have never had the concise and general vision of the real heritage of the founder`s aikido we have today.

Morihiro Saito Sensei spent twenty three years of his life in iwama , training along with the founder, helping O`Sensei with the farm and home shores. He was the





only student that saw the progression of his techniques. He was the only student who stayed close to O'Sensei while he was improving and evolving each and every technique. He saw closely the teaching of the founder, and was the only student that would later preserve the legacy, he continued doing everything in the same way O'sensei did.

Thanks to Morihiro Saito Sensei, we have inherited that huge technical and methodological technical compendium which is part of our curricula today. That is why he is considered to be a person of immeasurable value in the history of aikido.

### **How close was Morihiro Saito to O'sensei?**

First, you need to understand that not everyone has the honor of receiving a name from his master. His name used to be "Morizō", he was named Morihiro by the founder, as the name precisely means "The one who preserves".

**When Morihiro Saito passed away, he marked a turning point in the history of aikido. A sorrowful event which produced a lot of changes. From that day on, how has the founder's aikido been preserved? And how did you experience that new stage?**

When my master passed away the most natural for me was to stay close to the same family, and keep doing the same things. I followed his offspring, for the reason that the same values from the father were inherited to his son.

Therefore, for me it was the most natural thing in the world to continue training with him. I knew Hitohira Saito sensei before going to Iwama. The first international seminar he did, was in Italy; so I can say that I have known him for a long time. I remember when Morihiro Saito sensei was in the dojo, Hitohira sensei was always there too, and so many times we have trained together, he was always so strong.

# The Successor

*By Tristão da Cunha, 2011*



Album Saito's family.



Recently I read in an interview an affirmation that much saddened me. This teacher, himself known to be a student of Saito Sensei, affirmed that Saito Sensei did not leave a successor.

Why on earth he said such a preposterous thing...I can only guess. This is almost an insult to his master who literally spent all his life trying to work as hard as he could to give it all to his children.

Maybe, if this teacher had made friends in the aikido world amongst the students of O'Sensei, and amongst the people of Iwama, he would have learned of the extraordinary difficulties that Sensei and his wife went through to raise their four children while at the same time serving O'Sensei and his strict wife.

Saito Sensei and his wife educated their three daughters and one son and set them up well in their own business. All of them also studied aikido. The son, Hitohira Saito, was not only made to study cooking (Saito Sensei said he made sure all his children have a craft, a trade, that they could depend upon in case their chosen business did not work) but also to study aikido so that he would one day succeed his father, like all the other masters of aikido in Japan who have sons who studied aikido. I could probably name dozens and, with research, I could name hundreds, but that would be too boring to post it here.

Hitohira Saito Sensei's aikido studies were not easy. His father was extremely rigorous with him, always forcing him to study aikido, to train and train. He also sent him to train under some of the closest students of O'Sensei making Hitohira Sensei well acquainted with many of the grand masters of aikido and of Kobudo in Japan.



Forget not that Hitohira Saito was born in Iwama and grew up under O'Sensei. He was his close student as well until he died. Many of today's international teachers were older than Hitohira Saito Sensei when they first went to Iwama. Also, they received grades, which he did not receive because of his age and because of the strictness of his father. However do not forget that none of these were O'Sensei's students. Also none were students of Morihiro Saito for a longer period than his own son. Isn't this what a sempai is? He is in fact the sempai to all who claim to be higher than him. Do you know what a sempai is? Does not a sempai take over the dojo when the teacher is absent? Does not a sempai take over the teaching when the teacher is absent?

Saito Sensei loved Rie Kajiwara like the grand daughter who practiced aikido. The relationship that existed between them was very close and familiar. Still to-

day it is so between her and the Saito family. When Riechan was *uchideshi* – four years! - She used to give all of the expenses receipts of the dojo to Saito Sensei. She taught me to do this. Eventually, I took over the job of *uchideshi daisempai* when she left and I went to Sensei with the receipts. Sensei grabbed them to see what they were and handed them back to me saying "I do not take care of this. I stopped taking care of this five years ago. Give them to Hitohiro!" He had the custom to accept the receipts from Rie because of this close relationship. Later he would give them to his son. He also said that Hitohiro (sensei) had taken over all the official business of the Ibaragi dojo, such as meetings with Aikikai, official ceremonies, gradings, etc.

All these jobs were done by Waka Sensei –the young master–. Surprised about this word? Yes, that is what the sempai were calling Hitohira sensei in the presence of Morihiro Saito. This meant that they looked upon him as the successor. Morihiro Sensei said nothing about this or against this treatment.

A friend of mine, Nakamura san, was surprised when I told him that Waka Sensei had taken control of all the official business five years before. In my presence he asked Sensei about this and Morihiro Sensei confirmed: Meetings with aikikai, official ceremonies, gradings, etc., all were done by Waka sensei. He was gardening, working in the vegetable garden and taking care of foreigner students' affairs, especially the higher graded foreigner students. Even many of the international seminars were taken over by Waka Sensei. This was done not only because Sensei was tired, but mostly to push his son



Album Saito's family.





as his successor in the face of foreigners too. Everybody knew this, whether or not they deny it now.

At the Ibaragi dojo, there was a student who I found out had been nidan for seven years. She was a regular student and had very good technique. Others, with less time, were passing ahead of her. I found this unacceptable and so I went to Sensei with this matter. Sensei's answer was, "Tell Hitohiro. I told you! I do not do this job anymore!" He seemed annoyed at the insistence with these matters. From then on all matters such as these were taken directly to Hitohira Sensei, his successor. Sensei, from the beginning, started to show his son as one of his main students. He made movies and books with him as

uke. Volumes III and IV of "Traditional aikido, for example, Morihiro Sensei used his son exclusively as uke for the pictures. Later on, it was his own son who showed most of the techniques in his series "Take-musu aikido". Why? Because he was the best and because Sensei wanted everybody to know that he was his successor. One year before Sensei passed away he was always saying, "Next year I die". He said this so many times, that one day I said "Sensei you are still very healthy, if you die who will teach us?" Sensei said, "Portugal has no problem, Hitohiro will teach you." We are thankful for that. We are really thankful that our teacher had already made up his mind about us, the paupers of Europe.



Album Saito's family.



Saito Sensei was a master strategist. He saw things happening long before they happened. When the Ibaraki dojo was for sale, he built his own dojo, which today everyone knows as Shin Dojo. He would not be without training if the dojo was sold. Practice in the new dojo was nevertheless very noisy for the neighbors when we trained there. It was used from then on by the growing numbers of *uchideshi* for free training (practice of *tobu ukemi* and loud *kiai* were not allowed) and to sleep. Some ceremonies were also done there. Today it is still full of *uchideshi* all year round. The Tanrenkan - the honbu dojo of Iwama Shin Shin Aikishurenkai - was then built by Hitohira Saito Sensei, and Sensei accompanied all the work and was there for the inauguration ceremony

and purified it with the traditional cuts of the sword. His successor now had a dojo. The money for this dojo...where did it come from? Sensei was the prime supporter of his own son. He was his number one fan! And the other way around too! I remember in 1986 the young Hitohiro Sensei being angry at us *uchideshi* because we were not quick enough to answer to Sensei and also because we were weak for not training enough. For him it was disrespectful towards (Morihiro) Sensei to be weak. Sensei taught us well, but we were too lazy to train hard in those teachings and therefore became weak. He said we should train more in order to show some respect for Sensei. He really had an enormous respect for his father whom he always called "Sensei".



Album Saito's family.

It hurts me that a main teacher does not know these things or chooses to ignore them. Had his son chosen not to do aikido, this would have been an understandable statement. But even if his son was too young to succeed him, eventually, upon reaching adulthood, he would take over as his successor. Make no mistake about it!

Do you think that Sensei would raise his only son as an expert in aikido and then simply ignore him? I start to wonder how well all these people really knew Sensei and how well they knew Sensei's and Sensei's family life.

When Sensei was in bed, in his last months, many people came to visit him, warned by me and other *uchideshi*, of his final condition. We phoned dozens of interna-



tional teachers. When they got to Iwama all went to see Sensei and talk to him. Tea was served. I helped in some of this. To the people that openly opposed his son, Sensei said, "Moriteru san is a very good person. Please work with him" or "Stay with Aikikai and work in harmony". To the people he absolutely trusted, the closest students, long time friends, he said, "Please help my son." He was opening the last path to his beloved son, knowing all along how all would finish. I was absolutely amazed at this teacher, on his deathbed, still working for his son's future. He was indeed a fantastic man, dedicated to his family as only a father can be. As a master strategist he placed the pawns in the correct place for a final check mate. Hitohira Sensei inherited all: position as head of Ibaraki dojo, his father's house, and the leadership of Iwama Ryu. That is why soon after his death many of the main (foreigner) teachers had meetings with Hitohira Sensei to find out what was going to happen to Iwama ryu, to gradings, etc.

Later on, for reasons known to many, ignored by others, Iwama Shin Shin Aikishurenkai was created to safeguard O'Sensei's and Morihiro Sensei's teachings. This was foreseen by the grand master Saito. Iwama Ryu was not created to oppose Aikikai, but to preserve what the Way of Aiki is in Iwama and to give a future to his son. Iwama Shin Shin Aikishurenkai is the end result of Morihiro Saito Sensei's work toward giving his son a secure future and towards preserving all that he had learned under the Founder. Yes. Saito Sensei left a successor and this successor is Hitohira Saito Sensei, his only son.



# Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai

Statement from our Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shuren Kai kaicho after the passing of Morihiro Saito sensei.

Hitohiro SAITO Sensei, Son and Successor of Morihiro SAITO Sensei, 9th Dan  
Translation by: Aikido South Florida and Miguel Infante

10 months have passed since the Iwama group left the Aikikai Federation and became an independent group. It gives me great pleasure to tell all our members that I have been developing my activities slowly but surely with confident steps. In this letter, I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all of you who have been constantly supporting me and offering me your sincere collaborations.

First of all, I would like to tell you about what happened after my father, Morihiro Saito, died on May 13th 2002. I visited the head office of the Aikikai Federation together with the chairperson of the committee of the official funeral ceremony for my father, and we had a meeting with *Doshu* and another person from the All Japan aikido Federation.

The following is what was asked of us to do at that meeting:

1. To return the name of "Ibaraki Dojocho" to the Aikikai.
2. That the Saito family will cease to use the title of "the Aiki Shrine Caretaker"
3. That we will stop conferring the Iwama-ryu certificates, if we remain inside the Aikikai Federation.

I had already been thinking that I should return the Ibaraki dojo in the near future so I replied immediately that there was no problem in agreeing to the first and second requests. However, I was a little perplexed about their third request. As everyone

knows, the training we presently do at Iwama, is different from the training held at many other aikido dojos.

This is because we have faithfully preserved the Founder's teachings and my father was always very proud of this. This training is based on the principle of the union of *Ken*, *Tai-jutsu* and *Jo* and was transmitted only to my father. My father dedicated his whole life to working with the Founder in the fields and woods, helping him with farming and taking care of trees. He served the Founder in full resonance, literally offering his body and soul. He used to say, "I am sincerely teaching the techniques taught to me by the Founder because this Ibaraki dojo belongs to the Founder alone".

The Iwama-ryu group with its own grading system was created for those who were touched by my father's way of living and who chose to follow him as their teacher. These grades were mostly given to his students outside of Japan. Therefore my answer to *Doshu* regarding the third matter was that it was my father's wish to preserve the Iwama-ryu and I asked him to do one thing in return for my acceptance of his request. This was to announce in their official newsletter that Iwama-ryu is practicing the Founder's aikido. If the Aikikai could show their recognition and acceptance of us, I thought, then the Aikikai certificates would become a shining treasure for all the students of the Iwama-ryu. However, this



did not happen and no one in the Aikikai Federation was informed that this meeting between the Aikikai and us took place.

I thought I should not bother the Aikikai Federation or Doshu with the question of the Iwama-ryu during the mourning period of three years for my father, so I was not planning to give out any Iwama-ryu certificate. However, after less than one year, my students began to ask me, after receiving the Aikikai certificates, to give them the Iwama-ryu certificate as well. After my father passed away, the elder students of my father wanted to become independent and founded their own organization with the name of "Takemusu Aiki". They also started to give out their own certificates to their students. In this situation when a split was happening inside our group, there were still many students who chose to follow me in the same way as they followed my father. They are the true treasure my father left for me.

Therefore, when I was asked to give the Iwama-ryu certificates, I could not refuse their request. I feel very proud of my father. I could always understand exactly what my father was thinking at any time. Today, I still ask myself what would my father do if he were still here. I have come to understand that I cannot continue my father's mission inside the Aikikai Federation, without cau-

sing more trouble with them. So I decided to leave the Aikikai and founded my own association.

There is no change in my feelings of gratitude to the Founder and I will continue to follow faithfully the Founder's spirit. I also respect the former *Doshu* and the actual *Doshu* as well. My independence is not the result of conflict between the Aikikai and us. I believe that Doshu understands this.

We, the Saito family, will continue to live next to the Ibaraki dojo. We offer our prayer at the Aiki Shrine and wish the Ueshiba family good health. We feel grateful to the people who are now taking care of the Ibaraki Shibu Dojo. I think it is the best way that many people share the task of taking care of the Aiki Shrine and the dojo. I will continue to elevate and improve myself, maturing and developing the aikido techniques. At the same time I will continue to follow the Founder and dedicate myself to preserving the teachings of my father.

I deeply wish to work with you, and I would like to meet and connect with many people. It is my sincere desire to help as many people as possible to understand "the principle of the true basic techniques" of the Founder. With best regards,  
Hitohiro SAITO September 2004, at the International Seminar in Italy, Europe.

Sensei Kenny Sembokuya  
**The Institutional  
mitosis**

*"I did not understand why my sempai walked away, but at the same time I felt that I was very lucky to be among the few students who could see Sensei's technique up close."*

By Rodrigo Troncoso P.  
Translation by: Jorge Ulloa, Natalia Farías.



At 53, sensei Kenny Sembokuya, fifth dan, father of three children and gastronomic entrepreneur, leads the aikido group Iwama Busenkai, which has achieved a presence not only in Japan, but also in Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia and Taiwan.

Attracted by the techniques of bukiwaza and taijutsu, he started aikido at the age of 20 under the gaze of sensei Shigeru Kawabe in the Japanese city of Akita. Later on, he would continue with sensei Makoto Otaka at the Uehara dojo in Tokyo, with whom he regularly attended sensei Hitohira Saito's classes at the Tanrenkan dojo in Iwama.

The vast trajectory of sensei Sembokuya has allowed him to be a witness and participant in the most recent history of the Founder's aikido. He has experienced relevant milestones that have marked stages, such as the flowering of the Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai after the independence from the Aikikai.

“When sensei Hitohira Saito left Aikikai, I was practicing Iwama aikido at the Uehara dojo in Tokyo. At first I was not sure about the reasons, or the exact details Sensei had for taking that decision, but even so I regularly went to practice on Sundays at the Iwama dojo, together with sensei Makoto Otaka.

I remember there were many sempai in Iwama at that time, but gradually some of

them began to leave the dojo. I did not understand why my sempai walked away, but at the same time I felt that I was very lucky to be among the few students who could see Sensei's technique up close. During keiko, I always listened carefully to the explanations about the techniques, and the principles behind them. I was also able to deepen into the stories around the figure of O'Sensei, and about the teachings

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of sensei Morihiro. All these priceless teachings are now the fundamental structure of my aikido.

I remember that during those days and from the first moment many of my sempai supported sensei Saito and the new organization, among them: sensei Ogoshi in Ibaraki, sensei Takamo in Nagoya, sensei Kajiwara in Osaka, sensei Okubo in Sendai, sensei Miura in Akita and sensei Otaka from Tokyo. I also remember sensei Tristan, sensei Alessandro, sensei Stephanie and many other foreign instructors who supported sensei Saito and promoted the Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai in their dojos.

These instructors among others are key elements, and still communicate directly with sensei Saito to support the organization in different ways. I remember that in my first international seminar I was very nervous. It

was the first time that I experienced those foreign senpai's techniques in a seminar. I briefly met some of them at Iwama headquarters, but it was during the seminar that I felt a great impact as I experienced their technique up close.

All this internationalization, that the original aikido developed by O'Sensei in Japan has spread to many countries is thanks to the work and teachings of sensei Morihiro, Hitohira, Yasuhiro and Mitsuyoshi. I must say that I am really impressed to see how sensei Hisako, Yasuhiro and Mitsuyoshi have supported sensei Hitohira. I see in them the strong ties of a traditional Japanese family, and I respect them very much for that.

I believe that sensei Nidaime Morihiro will take all of us who are members of Iwama, to even higher levels of aikido at the global stage. This will undoubtedly be a new page in the history of aikido ”.





# Irimi Nage

## Relevant aspects of a cinematographic technique

# 入り身投げ

## Generalities of irimi nage

By Milton Carelli

Translation by: Abraham Conejeros

Irimi nage is a technique known to be the pinnacle of the art, this is thanks to O'Sensei's legacy that traditional aikido has inherited its characteristic version.

If we dig deep into the Japanese word and its conceptual ideogram, the iri in iriminage refers to the idea of passing through the gate of a structure, a facility or housing; being this act motivated by its own will, or by a third party. On the other hand, the mi section reminds us of an infant still inside the womb. In simple words, irimi, could be understood as the idea of folding one's body with the other.

It can be said that O'Sensei's irimi nage promotes or encourages the tori to enter

deeply into the attack, to reach the rear of the adversary (or opponent). Thus, becoming part of his intention and unifying himself with the movement. From that position you can better perform the technique to unbalance the opponent and dynamically take control of the situation. Furthermore, this placement is also known as a strategic position when facing multiple attackers.

To summarize, it can be said that irimi nage offers the possibility of being performed, regardless of the coming attack, or how the attack began. In addition, you also have the possibility of using your opponent as a shield, or project him as a counter weapon.

*«Irimi Nagae helps the practitioner of aikido to develop the hara (center of your one Self and spiritual root to one's life), to strengthen balance and to deep connection to the earth»*

Functional analysis

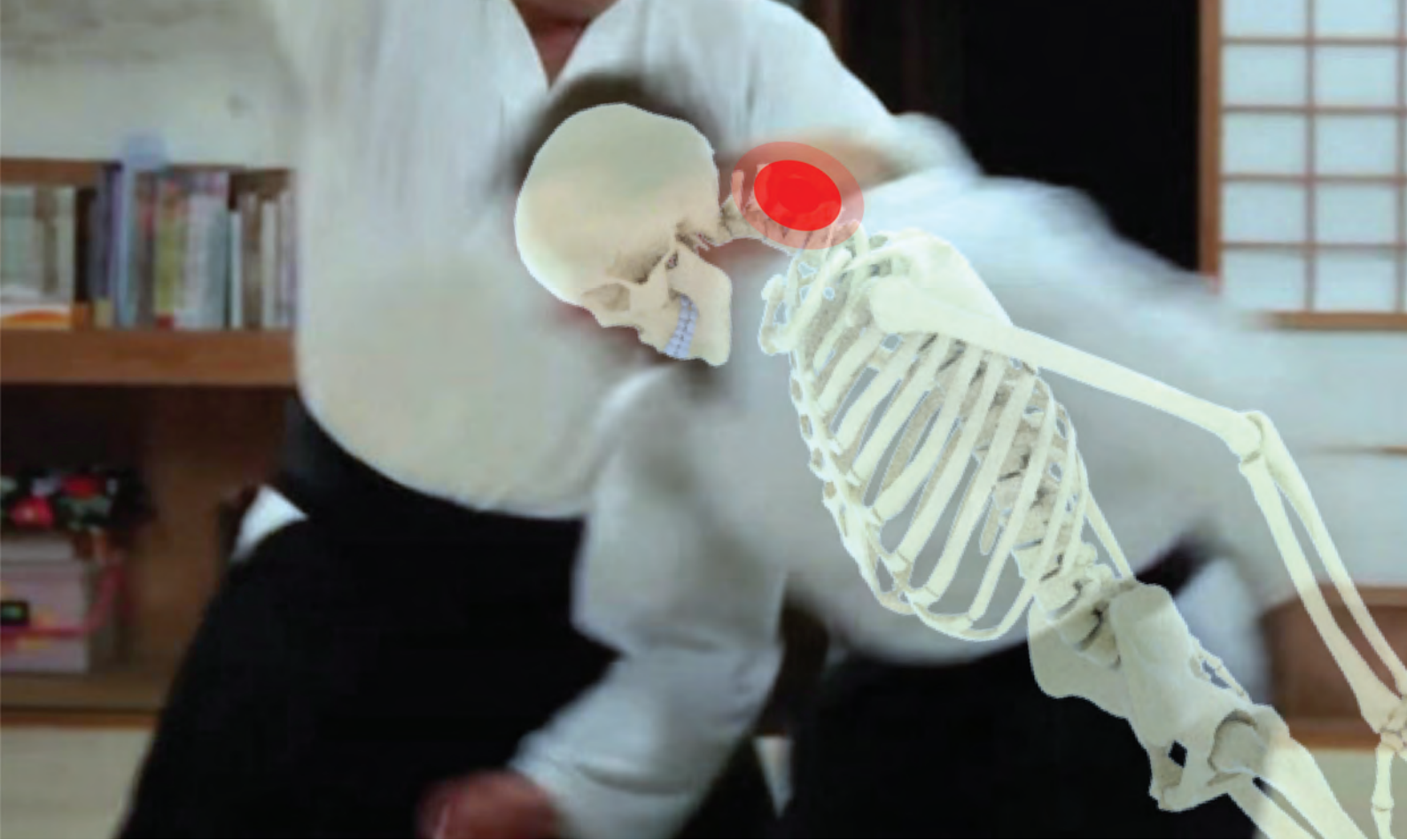
# Irimi Nage 入り身投げ

*It might also create odontoid fractures and create a series of spinous process breaks on the cervical spine.*

*By DR. M. Pía Tapia*

*Translation by: Miguel Infante*





In physiological terms, irimi nage can be considered a high-energy event. This technique involves a quick and sudden application of force and speed, both present during the acceleration and the sudden slowdown. This event transfers and focuses all the kinetic energy straight into the neck, ending up in something known as cervical whip, or whiplash of the cervical vertebrae.

At the instant of the application, the technique might create a fast forward shift of forces towards the head axis, producing an hyper-flexion. At the muscular level, this movement can cause partial or total rupture of the fibers behind the neck, resulting in micro bleeding and inflammation, which might even end up damaging the neck joints in charge of cervical mobility.

*A bad evolution of the injury might cause a sharp or even chronic pain, generating restriction in the amplitude of the cervical mobility*



On the second stage of the technique, at the point when the tori's arm has reached the front part of the uke's neck, it creates a cervical hyper-extension. These compressing forces would end up affecting subsequent structures and over-elongating others, such as the esophagus, the front vertebral ligaments and muscles on the back of the head.

To add up, it might also create odontoid fractures and create a series of spinous process breaks on the cervical spine. These micro fractures might affect the spine at the medular level, thus limiting the mobility of limbs, producing dizziness, headaches and tinnitus. In more severe cases, ending up in tetraplegic injuries affecting the breathing capability of the body.

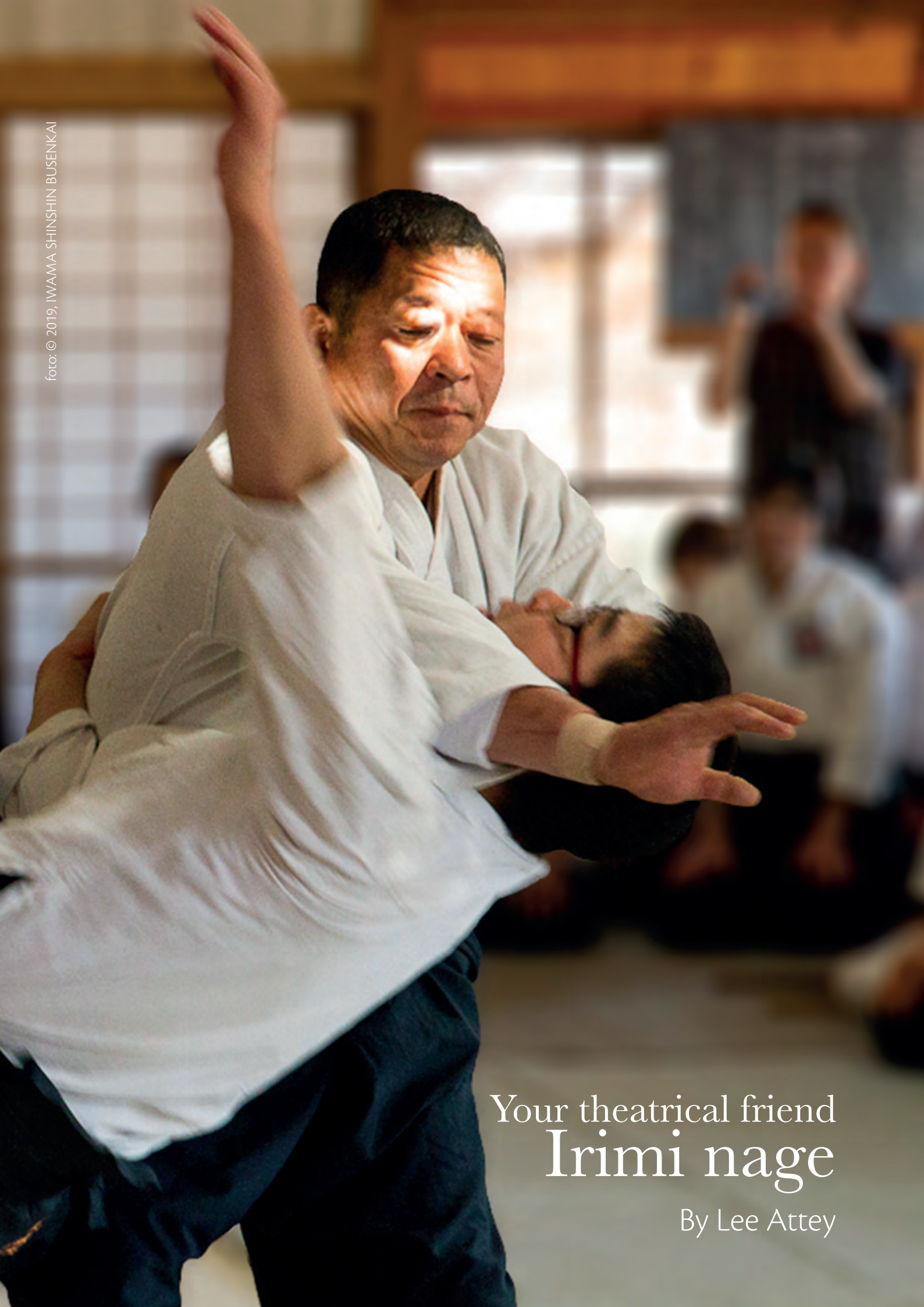
### Recommendations to prevent injuries during *keiko*

To prevent injuries, it is recommended to exercise a continuous repetition of the whole movement, always practicing both right and left sides. This repetition process is essential to form a brain engram, meaning that through the constant practice of being thrown, the body will gradually learn and store the correct movement required to skillfully receive this technique. Thus, minimizing the possibilities of being injured. It is necessary to note that adopting vicious positions, such as walking with your head

bent forward, or bending the neck during prolonged use of mobile phone, might also end up in injuries due to the body learning bad postures.

On the other hand, doing long stretches before and after *keiko*, will avoid fiber adhesions and trigger points, commonly known as muscle knots. Stretching will prevent muscular cross patterns that might limit the range of motion and affect motor skills performance.

foto: © 2019, IWAMA SHINSHIN BUSENKAI



Your theatrical friend  
**Irimi nage**

By Lee Attey



foto: © 2019, IWAMA SHINSHIN BUJENKAI

Demonstrations are a big part of aikido. Since usually there is no competition in aikido, demonstrations and tests tend to be the way you can measure your progress. How far have you come? Has your technique improved?

When preparing for a test, chances are that the techniques have already been decided, but when you are preparing for a demonstration the choice of techniques can be much more open. When you are making a list of techniques for a demonstration I'm willing to bet Irimi nage will probably be one of your first choices. Iriminage is a wonderfully cinematic technique. For many people witnessing Irimi

nage was what made them take up aikido. Watching a demonstration by Christian Tissier as he gracefully glides around the mat poleaxing people with Iriminage or viewing the opening scene of "Nico" Where Segal flattens his Uke with his 1-2 combo Iriminage. It is a technique worthy of an action hero (if you pull it off). Irimi nage is arguably the most visually impressive technique in aikido. It is also a technique, which is executed very differently depending on which style of aikido you perform.

The history of Iriminage is that it was a technique included in the Syllabus of the daito ryu aiki jutsu style.

It was considered a very high level technique, some may even say it was one of their "secret" techniques. This technique is of special interest because you are able to perform it regardless of how many opponents you face. Usually your choice of technique is restricted by the direction in which

*«The history of Iriminage is that it was a technique included in the Syllabus of the daito ryu aiki jutsu style»*

you can move. So if surrounded by several opponents you may have no available route in which to travel. Irimi nage answer is that you step into the space created by the attacker, therefore the number of people surrounding you is irrelevant since the space you will be moving too will become available once you are attacked. So in theory even if you are surrounded and attacked simultaneously you will escape. Iwama's Irimiage begins with nage moving directly behind uke while breaking their balance in such a way that their chest faces upwards toward the ceiling. This is the complete opposite of the "Aikikai" Iriminage where uke is turned to face the floor. The Iwama version of Iriminage tends to be much more direct

and quicker, with much less movement. However should nage need to, a turning movement similar to that used in the Aikikai can be employed. Once the balance is broken you complete the technique by connecting with your opponent and using your body to throw them. There are many variations of the technique and it is always aesthetically pleasing to watch it being performed. Taking ukemi from a Irimi nage is not so simple and will require practice however a kind training partner will allow for this during the final phase of the technique. I would argue that the study of irimi nage is in reaching the point that you would throw the uke. After that it's all downhill from there.



foto: © 2019, IWAMA SHINSHIN BUSENKAI

*«The Iwama version of Iriminage tends to be much more direct and quicker, with much less movement».*



## JAPANESE RITES

# Temizu(手水)

The rite of ablution that cleanses evil and contamination.

*By Natalia Farías*

O'Sensei's aikido has remained permeable to the influence of *Shintoism* (神道, *shintō*), a primary religion in Japan that professes the belief in the forces of nature present in deities called *kami* (神). These deities are respected and revered in Japan through a series of solemn practices.

An example of the above is the *temizu* (手水), a Shinto ritual which is believed to take away all evil and contamination

from the practitioner. This practice can be seen every time a devotee visits a sacred area, a shrine or a temple.

In a practical and descriptive way, it can be noted that this ritual involves washing some parts of the body, such as hands and mouth, without lasting more than a few seconds. This act would allow the devotee to raise his prayer to the deities, which otherwise would not be heard.





The temizu is executed in a specially designed area called *temizuya* or *chouzuya* (手水舎) This area has a fountain made of stone, from which one or more water

threads come out. To perform the ritual, the so-called *hishaku* (柄杓), or ladles made of wood or metal can always be found.

### How is it performed?

To perform the temizu, the hishaku must be held with the right hand, and used to take water from the fountain and pour it over the left hand. The same process is done, but this time using the hishaku with the left hand to wash the right hand. Subsequently, the hishaku must be taken again with the right hand to pour over some water on the left hand and then bring it to the mouth to take a small sip. Just enough to rinse your mouth. After this, the whole body is symbolically cleansed.

Finally, the hishaku is arranged vertically and the handle will be cleaned with the decanting water. It should be left facing down on the temizuya.

«In the old Japanese shinto belief we find the Izanagi no Mikoto, an ancestral kami who went deep down to the land of the dead to see his wife, Izanami. To get rid of all impurities after seeing his wife, He purifies himself with water. The act of temizu is a reminder of that moment.»





Key Concepts:

# Kamisama, kamidana y kamiza

By Jorge L. Ulloa

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*Commonly used Japanese words that every aikidoka should know.*

Japanese culture is well known for having a myriad of elements, most of them, being shaped by Shintoist and Buddhist beliefs. Although these two religions have old roots, their basic components are still deeply embedded in the daily life of most Japanese people. Many of these features can be found in social activities like marrying ceremonies, funerals, or in places like sanctuaries, temples, parks, or even in most Japanese houses. Furthermore, these elements can be engraved at the conceptual level, by being fully embedded in the Japanese language itself. With its native expressions and words, the Japanese language has reached a relevant place in the international martial arts world scene. In this regard, the practice of aikido outside Japan has embraced the use of Japanese language in its daily practice. Terms like kamisama, kamidana and kamiza can be heard during the practice, but it requires a deep understanding to fully grasp their true meaning.

**Kamisama** (神様) This term in particular can be considered quite abstract to the western people. In general words, it refers to a “deity”, or a “god”. Although it might also refer to either the God of christianity, as well as any other big or small deities present in the Japanese system of beliefs. More precisely, in the Shinto religion, this term also makes reference to a more universal deity, or the original creating force of the universe. This is also present in the teachings of O’Sensei and in the recitation of the Amatsu no Norito, a practice that is also present at the beginning of each practice at the Hombu Dojo in Iwama.

*«In present Japan, the practice of the kamiza seat is still present in some Japanese companies and corporations. Particularly in those with a traditional approach to their internal structure and employees ».*



**El kamidana (神棚)** It refers to a traditional Shintoist altar, although it might have some variations, it has certain common elements like the kamidana, a small wooden structure resembling a Japanese shrine. According to the Shinto practice, it holds the spirit of a kami. Among other elements present in the kamidana we can find the following: The sakaki date, or long necked sake jars; the mizu tama, which contains a small amount of water; the heiji, or small bottles containing sake and the sara, or small plates containing rice and salt. The kamidana might serve as a decoration purpose, or include other elements corresponding to Shintoism or other practices. In the end, each dojo should reflect on this matter, while taking into account each country's cultural context.

**Kamiza (上座)** This term in Japan usually refers to the honor seat, which can be either for a host, or reserved for a very important person. During the feudal times of Japan, this place was strategically located

at the end of the room, far from the main entrance. Placed with the clear intention of protecting an important person against any attack that might come from the outside, it was also used to shelter the guest from the cold days of winter, or the blazing temperatures in summer. Throughout Japan, and also at the hombu Dojo, students still preserve this practice, allowing the sensei and their senior students to oversee the class. Regarding the physical distribution of the space in the dojo, the area of the kamiza is commonly used to place the kamidana, which is usually set in an elevated position, highlighted among the other elements.

*« Kamiza: During the feudal times of Japan, this place was strategically located at the end of the room, far from the main entrance. Placed with the clear intention of protecting an important person against any attack that might come from the outside »*

*Kamidama at the Hombu Dojo in Iwama / Courtesy: Shin Shin Aiki Busenkai Dojo, Tokyo*





Mónica Ramírez, 2nd dan, ISSASK

# The female colonization of traditional aikido in Chile.

After more than 16 years from her arrival to the discipline. The first woman with an Iwama Ryu aikido dan degree in the country tells us about her experience in a martial art, which at the time, was mostly practiced by men only.

“It was more difficult for them to get used to having a woman in their lines. At the beginning, being the only woman around, was not that comfortable either”

Written by Marcela Cabezas and Josefina Ibáñez

Translation by: Josefina Ibañez

It's 7:45 pm in Chile. Another cold evening, and the night has descended not long ago. The melodic rhythm of a few shy drops of water falling over the roof foreshadows the rain. On any other normal day, Mónica would be teaching the aikido kids class. But not today. Since march 2020, and with the arrival of COVID-19, all martial arts practitioners have been unable to conduct face-to-face practice. Quarantine has confined everybody to stay at home. In front of our computer screens, we manage to reach her. We crossed glances, in a somehow curious way, that at times bring us up closer and apart. We experience a minor

problem with the audio connection, and after a few minutes and multiple attempts we manage to sort it out.

Now we are ready, and fully connected, we laugh about our struggles with computers, which also helps us to break the ice. We take a sip of hot tea, and under the warm shelter of our homes, we join the talk.

Mónica Ramírez has a firm and kind voice. She wears her brown hair up, as usual. No doubt she is quite tall. Although it is difficult to fully perceive that through the screen. Although she has a pleasant smile, at the beginning of the conversation her looks de-



note a slight nervousness. As an experienced psychologist, she is the one used to ask all the questions.

Although she is not wearing a keikogi, by her fluid hand movement, her confidence and the pedagogical rhythm of her words, allow us to catch a glimpse of a person with sixteen years of practice on her body. As she speaks, Mónica conveys true passion for her life dedicated to the traditional Iwama Ryu aikido. Her brown eyes, despite the quality of the connection, shine when she says “Everywhere in the world, people know that my priority in life is aikido”. Those words, without a doubt, become evident as we talk.

**aikido used to be mostly a male activity, we are curious to ask you: What events made you end up involved with aikido? And how common was female participation back then?**

Everything started in 2004, as a part of my work as a psychologist, it had not nothing to do with the fact that there were men only. I was working on the development of a mental health program, and aikido seemed like an interesting discipline that could contribute to my cause. That is how my first approach was like.

At that time, during the first beginnings, there was no female participation at all.



**What made you stay?**

When I started to unfold the basics of traditional aikido, I began to understand that there was something beyond a mere practice of a martial art. There was evidence of elements connecting physical improvement with personal development. So I said to myself: “This is gonna give me an opportunity to help other people grow, and at the same time, it will help me grow myself”. As a matter of fact, I saw personal changes in myself, and due to being a psychologist, I thought “I am gonna be a therapist with hakama, this is gonna be a way to help other people and I am gonna do psychology through aikido!”.



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**You were the first woman with a dan degree in Chile. You even went as far as going to Japan to become an uchideshi student and to achieve a second dan. How would you describe the path you followed to reach your goal? and what this meant to you?**

Since the beginning of my practice I embraced this art with discipline and commitment, I did it in a similar way like when you start studying for a university degree.

As the years went by, I started to understand the importance of continuity and qualification. Specifically in martial arts, where it is common to see people claiming to do things they have never been trained in. This is why I

was working hard to achieve a qualification that made me reach the first dan.

After seven years of practice, it came as a requirement from Fernando sensei to move to the next step. Not only because I would be the first woman to achieve this, but also because this would be in my interest to do a good professional job, to help other people. Fernando sensei always had in mind the idea that if we wanted to keep improving, we had to fly and study in Iwama. "You have to go to Japan, go there and study from the source, that's your goal from today", he said.

And so, we did! As far as we could go, we had to attain that level of achievement. So,



since the first and second dan, three years of hard training went by. It has been a fulfilling a path of great technical effort, dedication and personal sacrifice.

**About the technical aspect, how did your partners react to having to share the tatami with a woman for the first time?**

I think they did not notice at all (laughs). I found myself in a dojo filled with testosterone. At the beginning I felt observed, they probably thought “wow! A woman in the dojo!”. I must say, I also felt quite ashamed to see their eyes looking at each other with signs of concern in their faces. But I ignored all of that and just kept going on.

Among them, I thought there could be quite the concern, probably thinking “hmmm, a woman...not a one to last too much”. But the truth is, there was nothing like that, there was no competition, no evil intentions to win a position. I was so focused on keeping up with the training and to absorb as much technical knowledge as everyone else.

In the end, I think it was more complicated for them to adapt themselves to have a woman in the group. They also ended up

changing somehow, from the way they talked to each other, to the distribution of the space at the gym we used to train at. That place had other people training martial arts, and there was a tatami with two dressing rooms. In the end they had to adapt themselves to the fact that every time I was there, they had to use only one changing room.

**I imagine there were plenty of situations about this process adjustment.**

Sure indeed, I had to see a couple of naked young men hanging around as they quickly covered themselves with small towels. They were like “Hey! There is a woman around now, you must change the way you behave here!” I was not ashamed at all, and I knew it was part of this growing experience.

It also happened at that time that I saw a male student who always looked at me with consenting eyes, with the kind of look that says “What is that woman doing here?”. He was not even training that day, and he only went to watch the class. I could barely stand his attitude towards me. But long story short, after sometime training together, we ended up becoming great friends.







### **What can be done to develop a better environment for a mixed practice?**

It is a whole process, depends on how everything starts and requires adaptation. Through training and mutual confidence, male partners gradually understand that while females might not be physically the strongest, we are physiological different, but we all receive the same training.

On this matter, Fernando sensei always said: “When practicing a technique, always grab your females partners in the same way you would grab each other, don’t give away the technique making them feel a false sense of security”.

If you ask me, I find it fascinating, as a woman, to have been training with partners who might be stronger, heavier, more flexible or even lighter than you. That makes us develop the

self knowledge about how to physically react when being confronted by different people. From my experience as a female practitioner, I might add that I never felt overprotected, nor over demanded. On the contrary, the training has always been honest, rigorous and strict. I really feel grateful for that.

### **How can you cope with the differences?**

The differences that I can appreciate are more like a complement. During practice, while men might grab you with all of their strength, women adapt themselves by using technical body positioning, connecting with your partner and strategizing the technique. If we are not strong enough, we have to get out of that situation by performing the correct technique, always taking into account your own capabilities.



I have quite a strong physical build, but I also have female practice partners with a small one. They also have to find the technical way to execute each technique and to find a way to solve the conflict, without receiving any special treatment for just being women. The way women and men approach practice, lies only in the way everyone adapts themselves to face each technique.

### **From your experience, why should women practice Iwama aikido?**

Iwama ryu aikido has a lot of elements that give balance to everybody. Personally I think, any woman should practice, as from the practice elements needed for daily life arise, such as: body awareness, observing your surroundings, knowing how to move yourself in certain contexts, and also how to recognize your strengths and weaknesses. The practice also offers a rich ceremonial and spiritual experience.

All of this, integrated in a practice that generates positive changes in each person, especially at the neurophysiological level, the brain

reacts and adapts directly to new stimulus, this is the fundamental contribution of the practice of aikido.

### **What new projects are you working on?**

Few months ago I started to contact other women from the Latin American dojos. That is my job now, to reach each of them to create a space where we can all share our experiences. The idea is that each country could generate a communication network, allowing us to reach other women in this aikido community. I do not know if we will have the chance in the future to meet all together, maybe somewhere in another country, not sure yet. But this is a huge starting point, and I can see the need of connecting all women around the world towards the same goal.

### **Are you active as a group?**

We are all connected on WhatsApp and Skype. Now we are creating a page on Facebook as well. Using all possible social network platforms to stay in touch. The idea is to maintain regular meetings, at least once a month, so we



can know what is going on with each of us. As today, we are struggling through this wide scale pandemic, and while we have all been absent from normal practice, it has given us new chances of communication and networking among women. It has been an amazing chance for all of us!

**If we think about the role of women in the traditional aikido. What do you think is still missing?**

Demystification of women. We need to get rid of that old view that traditional aikido is just for men. We also have to understand that women as well, need to embrace this discipline. Women need to make this budō a part

of themselves, embracing elements like the rigorous training, consistency and systematic training. Only this way will open a sure path to truly grasp the concept of “personal self defense”, a true way where female self defense goes beyond the mere knowing a isolated techniques, but deepens the development of self knowledge, a deep understanding of their own physical limitations and advantages, singular abilities, muscular development and the most important thing, which is the right attitude to face every challenge. This also requires commitment to the demanding systematic work of a qualified teacher, someone with the recognition and approval from Saito sensei.

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# A word from Saito Hitohira Sensei

Translation by: Nakajima Miki

In the midst of the coronavirus outbreak and the global lockdown situation, Saito Hitohira Sensei would like to address all of the people training **Iwama Shin Shin Aikishurenkai** across the world.

Dear Iwama Shin Shin students,

First of all, I would like to express my deepest concern about this global coronavirus situation. My heart goes out to those who had been preparing for the events or the seminars which were supposed to be held this year.

Recently humanity has been confronted with a worldwide enormous difficulty. In the sweep of history, however, humans have evolved by being often attacked by viruses and bacteria.

Speaking of what can be done now, it is to live our daily life practicing both mind and body through purification of Misogi as Aiki teaches us.

And now might be the time for all of us to reconsider our own selves as we are staying home.

O Sensei, the founder, said in his oral teaching, "You can even train aikido with your eyes closed or without going to the dojo if you get in such situation."\*

Please keep training and faith in the Kami (deity in the Shinto religion). I am looking forward to the day when we will meet healthily again and train with you all together from the bottom of my heart.

Sincerely,

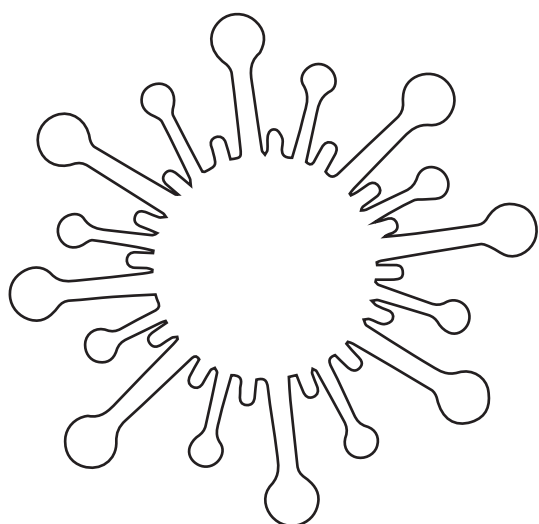
*Hitohira Saito*

*Headmaster of Iwama Shinshin*

*Aiki Shurenkai*

岩間神信合気修練会長 齊藤 仁平

Post published April 17, 2020



# The global pandemic debacle and the current conditions for the aikido practice in three acts.

By Rodrigo Troncoso P.

Translation by: Juan Morales

## Prelude:

According to the Resource Center of COVID-19 at Johns Hopkins University, and as of the writing day of this article, the number of worldwide infections reaches 19,909,062, with 732,128 deceased people. In Europe, the virus quickly spreads over the continent, hitting very hard countries like Italy and Spain. The latter, with a number of infections reaching 314,362 people, with 28,503 people who have lost their lives.

Within a few weeks of delay with Europe and Asia, the virus quickly spread in South America. A good example of this happened in Argentina, where even

while implementing an early preventive lockdown, the infections rapidly reached 246,499, with 4,634 people deceased.

Brazil has attracted international attention due to its current fragile political-health stability, holding the second place in the ranking of infections and deaths, just below the United States. Today, Brazil has a rising number of cases, corresponding to 3.003.422 infections and 101.049 fatalities. Exponential numbers considering those of China, known to be the origin of this pandemic, which has 88.793 infected people and a number of deaths not exceeding 4,686.



## Act 1

# Brazil, the pandemic situation and aikido

In Brazil, the Iwama Shinshin Aiki Shurenkai has held a robust presence since August 2010, time when 3d dan José Silva, opened the first official dojo of the school. Sensei Silva, marketing manager of V.I.P. Players at Enjoy Casino, began his long road with aikido back in 1993. In regard to the current events he said: “The situation is quite complicated, the biggest and most serious outbreaks come from the north of the country, where there are some cities having up to 25% of their population infected”.

### In which ways has the political-health situation evolved in Brazil?

“As of March 18th, the country has adopted a non mandatory quarantine measure. Since then, several situations have become visible: At the beginning, the president was handling the situation. Then the Court of Justice ruled that each State should have the autonomy to make decisions, and from that each municipality had the responsibility for managing the pandemic. In the meanwhile, the federal state provided the economic resources. However, here in Brazil, everything ends up in political competition, and everything can be used as a tool to gain advantage over their rivals. It is quite tragic because local people end up being affected”.

### Still, some measures have been implemented to contain the expansion of the pandemic.

Only Pernambuco was on lockdown. Here in São Paulo the quarantine was voluntary. They have appealed to the population to stay at home. Although to move to the next phase, 70% of self-isolated people were necessary. Yet, it never exceeded the 52% when they moved to the next phase. Despite the fact that most parks and sports centers are closed. It is actually not forbidden to do physical activity outdoors. You can even go cycling or running, and there are no problems with that. Use of masks has also been implemented, although it took some time for people to adopt its use. Starting this week in São Paulo, people not

wearing masks will be fined, but if you come across ten people on the streets, only three will be badly wearing them, commonly leaving their noses out. On the other hand, all stores check the body temperature of clients and there is alcohol gel everywhere around markets.

### How would you evaluate these measures considering the actual advance of the pandemic?

I believe the answer to this problem is not to repress people, but to educate them. If people are not aware of this, the fact that we need each other to fix this, then we are not going anywhere, right?

*Until August 2020, Brazil holds four ISSASK dojos distributed along the cities of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Ribeirão Preto and Fernando do Campo, with a total of 37 active students.*

### How did this pandemic have affected the practice of aikido?

In our group we had two cases of COVID-19. Thank god, it was not serious and they are both medics. One of the cases was from Rio de Janeiro, who got it over quite quickly, and the other from Ribeirão Preto.

All dojos are currently closed. The last face to face class was on March 12th in São Paulo, the other dojos closed right about the same week. Last Thursday we discussed the idea of when to resume face to face bukiwaza training, at least in open spaces. Members from San Pablo and those from San Bernardo are very excited about it. In Rio de Janeiro, they already had a face to face keiko, although only Álvaro and one more student joined the class. In Ribeirão Preto, where there is a 95% of hospital bed occupancy, Vinicius sensei stated that until everything is over, he will not take the risk to do face to face keiko.

*40 days after dojo lockdown, Brazilian dojos have started online keiko every Tuesday and Thursday over Zoom.*





## Act 2

# Argentina and the face to face options

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More rigorous measures have been taken in Argentina to control the spread of the pandemic. Even from the initial stages, preventive lockdowns were activated confining millions of citizens to their homes or apartments. This situation has forced Argentinian practitioners to look for new ways to practice aikido.

From Buenos Aires, 3rd dan sensei Andrés Bellini, began his studies of aikido in 1998 and was reborn in the Iwama ryu in 2004. Regarding this matter, he says: "After the state of health emergency was declared in Argentina, all martial activities were cancelled. There can not be any kind of physical contact, so people are not allowed to do face to face training.

There are still some small towns, and cities with few cases, and surely activities like going to a gym, while respecting social distance, are still allowed. At gyms facilities, people follow a strict cleaning protocol to use the equipment. Nevertheless, while for a gym that might be possible, is not for a martial arts dojo, where close physical contact among practitioners is involved. Due to those reasons, today all martial arts activities in the country were cancelled".

### **What is the situation in Argentina regarding outdoor physical activity?**

At some point, we were training outdoors, on public open spaces, and that ended up being a good chance to promote the dojo during the summer. But that was also later banned, now we are not allowed to gather, and the police are quick to ask "Where is your permission to do this activity here?". In the end, we are not allowed to be outside. If you ask me, has it been hard? Yes of course! You can tell that by all the cancelled seminars we had.

### **New creative ways to keep up with the training.**

Online lessons started as a casual Instagram broadcast. There were so many errors in the beginning, like placing the phone with a mirrored camera, thus mixing left and right and ended up turning the phone all over, and so many other technical problems we had in the beginning. But everything I have done online is not with the intention to make it the official way to practice, nothing compares to a full face to face practice.

Through the online mode, I can just share a bit of this and that, few things can be taught through this medium. Sensei Stefano Di Carlo said about this: "I don't give lessons over the internet, for me that is crazy, there is nothing like training and doing keiko face to face".

I would love to practice face to face too, but it can not be done now. At the moment there are many students who just started to practice. From the camera, I have been helping them to practice the kumitachi, suburi, ken and jo, while also doing happo giri training. While teaching online, I also check their hamni, always reminding them to drop their hips.

There is still much training that can be done online, but not everything can be practiced that way. Probably a 10% or 5%, maybe a 3%, only the basics so I can oversee their training. While teaching online, maybe I can't reprimand them with a stick (laughs), but I can still see and check their progress and give them the support they need. For instance, one student bought a hoe handle and made a suburito, he also made a tanren uchi and





started training with it during the pandemic. He often sends me videos showing me his training, so I can give him instructions and feedback, things like: “Hold the bokken higher, lower your hips, don’t make it bounce off”. That is also part of mental training. I say it because you can probably relate to the experience of having a technique learned hours, or even weeks after you practiced. That insight process can be felt when you exclaim: “I should have done this or that, or I can also change this”. Later when you come back to the dojo, you realize the mistakes you were making and how to improve your technique. So then, we can infer there is so much thinking and maturation in the practice of every technique.

#### **Are these online lessons still available?**

Yes, every Saturday. Sometimes during weekdays at night, but we prefer Saturday mornings, so everyone can be connected from home; some of them practice from their gardens. If it is cold, they make space in their living room to do keiko. Even myself, I live in an apartment, so I do the same as my students, using my living room as a training area.

The whole point of this is that all students can participate in the class, they do not have to pay any fees or anything, I just want everyone to keep training all together.

#### **Let’s dig more into the interviews you have been conducting and the talks with relevant people from the Iwama ryu aikido community. How did you get into that?**

It just happened during one of the first Instagram broadcasts I did with sensei Jose Veiga. Everything happened naturally, as a simple “Let’s chat a little bit”, then later the idea evolved into the actual interviews we know today. No need to be a genius to do something like that, not much thinking behind, it just happened. Later I saw that people liked the interviews, and I just kept going. I enjoyed this new challenge, something I never did before.

As for the interviews, I usually go with no script. I enjoy a good honest talk with people; even with those that I don’t know much. It is through the interviews that I want to know more about them. That was the case of the interview with Danilo, from Italy. We did not know much from each other, so I



opted for this approach: We had a couple of short phone calls, and then I said to him: “Danilo just relax, we don’t know each other that much, but we both love aikido, and that unites us all. You knew Tittarelli sensei more than most people, so please tell me anything you would like to tell us. We are not that close yet, but for sure we will be after this interview” And it happened as I just said, after our talk, Danilo said to me: “Please

Andrés, when you come to Italy come to my house and you can use the same room sensei Alessandro had in my house. Please consider yourself a part of my own family”

And so it happened, as well with those who I have shared a lot in Iwama, and those I have not met, or have not shared that much yet. In the end, that is the beauty of all of this, we are all connected through the aikido that lives within all of us.



### Act 3

## End of the lockdown and the new sanitary measures

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While Latin America is still at the peak of the pandemic; Spain is gradually moving towards the next phase. Although with some outbreaks, they are gradually moving towards the new normal. This temporary gap allows Third World countries carefully look at the future of healthcare, and to better understand how the solutions found in Europe can be applied to the practice of aikido.

Living in Galicia since 2002, the Uruguayan sensei Jose Veiga (56 years old, 5th dan), said to the magazine: “Under normal conditions we had training lessons with adults three times a week, mornings and evenings, and afternoon with kids class. But on a Friday, March 13th, the Government informed through the press that the following Monday the whole country would be under lockdown. Then I began to get phone calls from everybody, all of them being so concerned about this, many said to me: “We can not make it to the afternoon class, nor the night class.” That very same day we had to stop all practice”

## Sensei, did you see teaching online as an alternative?

I had no way to teach them online, but I did encourage them to prepare something to share, maybe some videos or anything like that. Due to the poor wifi connection in some student's houses, doing live lessons was not possible. Still, they always said to me: "Don't worry, we are here with you on this, even if we're not training face to face, we are still here with you". From there, we ended sharing and discussing a lot about literature, working with books like Hagakure, Go rin no sho, and even some publications written by sensei Tristão and other sources. We even had a discussion or comment thread, which ended up becoming so interesting and evolving into a written or verbal way of practice.

## How long did that stage last?

A month and a half.

## And how has the pandemic evolved since then?

Not long ago during the lockdown, people were allowed to go outside only to get groceries and medicine, to stock up with the essentials. There were strict fines for anybody who dared to break the lockdown. There was an absolute recess in everything, then talks and rumors appeared about high numbers of infections and the rising of deceased people.. After the initial lockdown, the situation

*In Spain, there are currently seven established Iwama ryu dojos, with a total of 40 students.*

gradually progressed towards the opening of the country. It was named as "phases", with numbers going from 1 to 3, being 3 the current active phase.

During phase 1, people were only allowed to go out for only an hour a day. To do exercise and outdoor activities we had different time

gaps to choose from,. We could choose the morning time gap: from 6:00 to 10:00, or the afternoon gap from 20:00 to 23:00. Being the last one the time to do my outside walks and personal training. Most of the time I just did it behind the buildings I live close to.

During phase 2, a limited number of people were allowed outdoors in small groups for physical activities. I think the limit was 25 people. We did not manage to gather that much, so we had no problem at all. In fact, during outdoor training, on several occasions the police passed by, looked at us, and kept their way. There was never a problem with our group. Even when we practiced outdoors and in the open air, we kept enough social distance so masks were not mandatory for us.

When phase 3 was activated, we were finally allowed to access the training grounds with a limited capacity. In our case, we had 7 students for a space designed for 25 people. In places outside of Santiago, we shared the tatami with people from other disciplines, where the space for each student was delimited using duct-tape. We used that space to our advantage, and each student used a section to train weapons. For the children class, each of the kids brought their own buki, to avoid sharing personal items. As an extra measure, even those students who could not bring their own equipment, had disinfectant spray





ready for them, so they could have a weapon to practice.

**The main problem seems to be around the practice of taijutsu. How did you face this health challenge?**

Senior students requested the practice of taijutsu, and I can totally understand. So for every class of taijutsu we used masks as a first sanitary measure.

We know the virus spreads through drops of saliva, expelled during talking. Thus, we might infer that with the right practice of aikido itself, you are already preventing direct exposure. For example, when you do tai no henko you do not place yourself in front of your partner, but you turn to the side. For more front faced techniques, like Morote dori kokyū ho, or ikkyō-type techniques with kiai, we make sure to put on masks and to focus on the form. Always avoiding people getting too excited (laughs), so I tell them: “No hurries, take it easy”

In general terms, our current training has not changed dramatically. Certainly, we had to get tons of alcohol gel for cleaning

the tatami. Also for hands sanitization, we insist on regular hands washing with soap before having contact with other students. Health care is the most important thing for everybody, so students are also asked to clean and disinfect their keikogi after each practice.

**Are there any other measures to keep the tatami mats free from the spread of COVID-19?**

We also belong to the Spanish Federation of Korean Martial Arts and Associated Disciplines, so they have suggested checking the body temperature of each student before the class. I understand their reasons, although that might be a little exaggerated in my opinion. Body temperature might differ drastically due to other external elements like hepatic problems, bad digestion, or a simple headache. Nobody is a full fledged doctor here to claim that a certain person is Covid-19 positive just because of a minimal change in body temperature.

Other suggestions from the federation seemed more like entering a NASA laboratory, I might say. But the practice of





leaving all shoes outside the training area, was not that different from our current custom in traditional aikido. I must say, as there are less people and more social distance during practice, the use of masks is only required for close contact techniques only.

**Considering that from here and on, this virus might be part of a new normal. How do you see the practice of aikido in the future ?**

I worry sometimes about what to expect from the future. Nowadays there are already talks about a second outbreak in October

or November. That means the virus might be here until the end of summer or the beginning of autumn. With all of this, you end up wondering who can go through all of that? Luckily, the people working with me share the same views and have already decided to give me all the support to continue through all of this. Still, some people have preferred to delay their comeback to the dojo until this is over, that is something to be understood considering the actual sense of fear people feel about this.

## Epilogue

# The new etiquette

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In order to minimize the chances of spread within the ISSASK facilities, each dojo-cho from all countries have established a series of measures that could be useful when it comes to preventing the spread of the virus. These measures might constitute the new post-pandemic etiquette for each practice.

Social distancing should be an integral part for each practice.

Members should avoid the use of shared dressing rooms.

Each dojo, or training ground should be disinfected before the beginning of each class.

Avoid coming to the tatami with the same mask used on the street. It is recommended to use a new clean mask for each practice.

Alcohol gel should be available to be used at any time.

Each training Gi should be washed and disinfected right after each keiko.

Shoes can not be carried inside the dressing area (if used)

All members should use their own weapons

Exclusive sandals or flip flops should be used within the training facilities.

The use of A/C should be avoided.

Instead of using your training Gi sleeve to dry off sweat, each student should carry their own tenugi or personal towel.

Before entering the dojo, all members should wash their hands with soap and water, or use alcohol gel.



Do it yourself:

## Tanren (鍛練)

*The basics of aikido training*

*By Daniel Foncea*

*Translation by: Abraham Conejeros*

If our goal is to study O'Sensei's aikido, it is essential to train with the tanren. The meaning of the word lies in these two kanjis: *tan* (鍛), meaning to forge through discipline, and *ren* (練), which can be understood as polishing or training.

Originally built from logs arranged horizontally on fixed wooden struts. Its main purpose is to resist the hits from the weapon training. This practice helps the practitioner to build core strength and feel closer to the real act cutting with a katana.

This practice is essential to lay the foundations of the aikido training. Earnest and correct training with the tanren also contributes to improving body posture and core strength, which eventually has an impact on weapon technique. This

practices also deepens the understanding of *kokyu* (呼吸).

It is essential to have a correct form during practice, this will help to avoid injuries on the upper body and to get rid of bad habits in the technique.



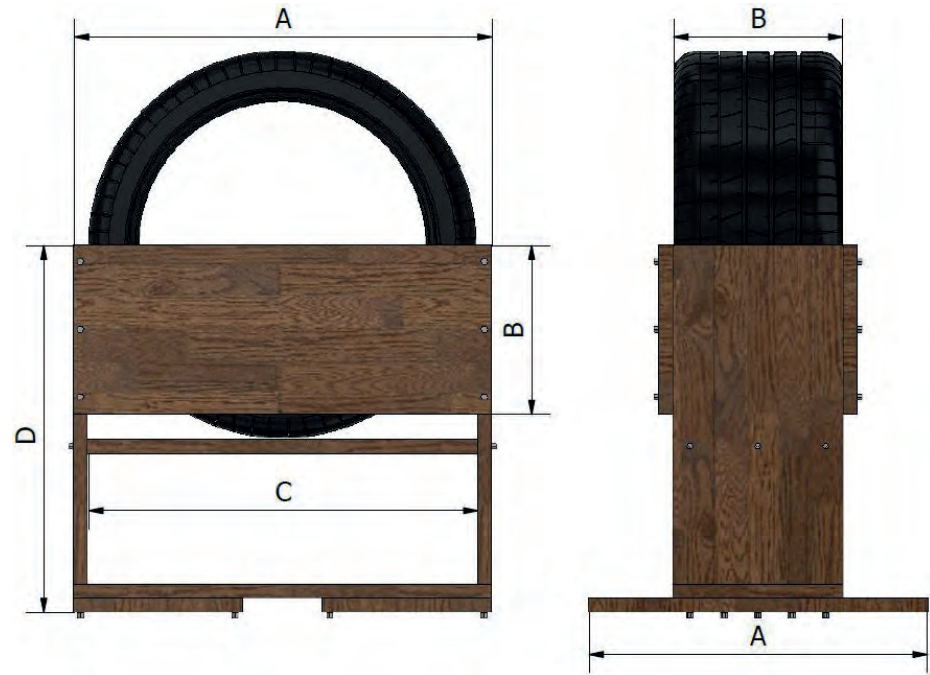
*Tanren from Saito family dojo.  
Tanrekan Iwama.*



The construction of this training tool involves the use of an old tyre. This material has the advantage of absorbing the impact while avoiding damaging the joints. Besides, it is not hard to get one or replace it. It is recommended to use a car tyre, size number R17 or R15.



## Characteristics of high resistant TANREN



A: Diameter of the tyre + 2 times the width of the wood. B: Similar width with the tyre. C: Tyre diameter. D: Around 80cms, half of tyre diameter.





# The Katana

## Origins, typology and symbols of the Samurai soul.

By Roberto Urbina

Translation by: Francisco López

Throughout the development of civilization, human beings have used various kind of weapons, these have evolved along the human race. Some had their origin from mere peasant tools, while others were used for hunting, such as: bows and arrows, spears, axes. Other weapons with metal blades were made for cutting or stabbing. These are known as cold weapons.

Among these cold weapons, we can find four main classes: the stabbing type, cutting type, cut-stabbing type and the incise-bruising class. From these last kinds, the ax, used by the Vikings, stands out, as it was cheap to produce and common among them, it could also be used in multiple ways on the battlefield.

On the other hand, we have the sword. Widely used in war situations due to its ductility. The pinnacle of the sword can be tracked down to the Middle Ages, carried mostly by knights and kings.

Finally, we can feature the saber, which can be easily identified by its curved shape with a single cutting edge; It is also characterized by its right weight to ensure lightness and ease of use. The katana is also part of the same class.

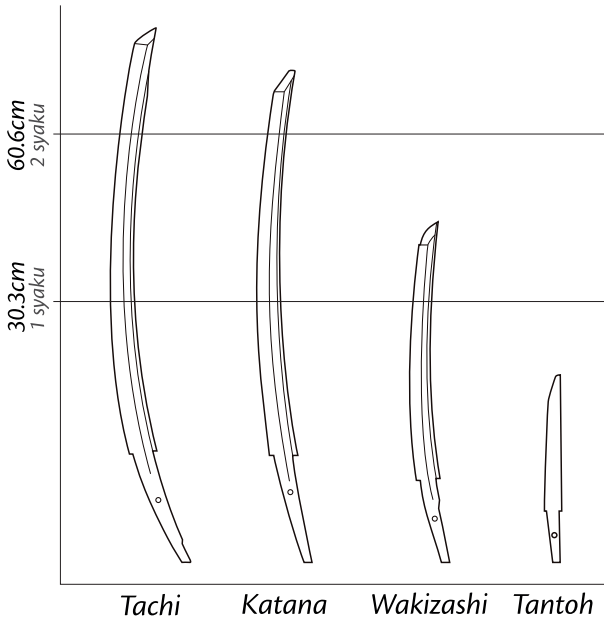
The Japanese word for Katana, Nihonto, literally means Japanese sword. According to Gilberston, E.; Kowaki, G (1892), "A blade was considered a katana, only when worn in a

It is said that Amakuni, who lived during the age of Emperor Mommu, 697-708 AD invented the katana or single-edged sword, dividing the ken sword in two.

sheath on the belt», and it would become «a tachi when the sheath was carried". However, for the West, katana is synonymous of Japanese saber and it refers particularly to its







curved, single-edged blade, about one meter long and one kilogram in weight.

The origins of the katana can be tracked down to the period between the 10th and 12th centuries, during the age of Chinese Song dynasty. It would have been introduced as a combat tool against enemy cavalry. At that time it would have been known as zanbatô or "horse ripper". Over time, it evolved to the current kind we know today.

According to the characteristics of its blade, we could categorize it into different kinds:

**Naginata:** A classic samurai weapon. It was made up of a pole attached to a curved blade on its end. On the battlefield, it was mainly used by the infantry to protect themselves from the onslaught of the enemy cavalry.

**Nodachi:** Literally means battlefield sword, it was conceived to be used in open field battles against rival cavalry. Its use requires both hands and a considerable physical strength. Its large dimension ranges from 90 cm to even 2 meters long. Handling this weapon was one of its disadvantages, and its forging process was a highly complex task at the time.

**Tachi:** From the Japanese term *tachikiru*, which means "to cut". It can also be translated as "big sword", and it was the predecessor of the *katana*, it is somewhat longer and more curved: its extension ranges from 61 to 76 cms. The *Tachi* goes on the belt with the sword edge pointing down and it was widely used among the cavalry.

**Wakizashi:** A sword with a length ranging from 40 to 50 cms. Its edge is narrower, made to inflict severe damage. It was used as an auxiliary combat weapon, fulfilling other functions, such as: beheading of an enemy or being used during the ritual suicide. With the



*«There is, perhaps, no country in the world, where the sword has received in its time so many honors and fame as in Japan»*

*McLatchie (1873-74).*



coming of the Edo era, it put an end to this blade as an exclusive weapon of the samurai class. Later becoming a blade for self-defense, even being used by some citizens.

**Tanto:** Close to a knife in appearance, has an average length between 15cm and 30cm. It was kept in the obi, and unlike previous weapons, it could be kept hidden. Its main

use was in hand-to-hand combat in indoor situations, mainly used for stabbing attacks. In the practice of aikido, the awareness that our life is at risk and that it can be lost at the slightest mistake in combat, becomes relevant when training with a katana. To avoid damage and injury during practice, a bokken or wooden sword is normally used.



Symbolic dimension

# The soul of the katana

In Japan, the forge of a saber has always been considered as a “greater art”, loaded with so much symbolism. Even to this day, the preservation and appreciation of these weapons have granted them the category of National Treasure.

By Alberto Villarroel ISSASK, Dominican Republic

Translation by: Francisco López

The katana should not be seen as a mere sword, instead, it should be appreciated for its strong symbolic value. Although the sword itself, being an inanimate object, can come to life by the spirit breathed by the wielder, which in turn, endows it with its characteristic temper, thus achieving its symbolic and intrinsic value.

With the establishment of the samurai as an influential social class, the symbolism achieved by the katana ascended to unprecedented degrees, to the point of being considered among most valued possessions, worthy of ostentation. No resource was spared in its making to achieve the best forging and temper, all along with detailed ornaments and luxurious decorations.

The blade of the sword was among the most revered elements. Once forged, the blade was taken to a shrine for a sacred ritual that included prayers, or *shimenawa*, which was taken straight from the pillars of the *torii* or gate of the gods. According to the belief, the ceremony infused a soul into the sword. From that day on, the saber was believed to reach a new existence: one as a living, intelligent and autonomous being.

The owner of the sword could reach such a level of connection with its weapon, embedding into it an anthropomorphic vision. Connecting himself with each element of the sword, as the blade becomes the soul, the hilt comes to be the head and the sheath and its ornaments get to be the body with its clothes. Finally, the sword is placed on a *daisho*, and put on a privileged place in the house, called *tokonoma*, where it is paid respects, receives reverence and devotion.



Sacred blades can be found in various stories among the founding myths of Japan, some of them being linked to the divine origins of Japan. The oldest known mention appears in the Kojiki, also known as *Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi*, or *Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi*.



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## The metal of the katana

Since its origins, to get the manufacturing materials for the forge, meant a huge effort.

There are very few iron mines in Japan. However, most sand in Japan contains high ferrous content, at around 85%, it provides the raw material necessary for the making of an innumerable number of these historical pieces.

Not much is known about the origins of these extraction techniques, much less about the smelting furnaces, known as *tatara*. It is believed that the technique came from Korea, where since ancient times had a lead on this crafting art

# Between the artistic forging and the myth The ritual of *kaji* and the forging of the katana

Forging is an activity of tremendous relevance. Before the beginning of their duties, forge masters undergo a profuse cleansing with ice water, then they perform a purification ceremony to cleanse their bodies and spirit.

During the times of the feudal Japanese, there was a stiff social pyramid. Here, the *kaji*, or forge master, had a highly valued status, far above that of goldsmiths, they held different status among artists. The forge master was seen as a link between the artistic creation and religious mysticism.

Before the beginning of their duties, forge masters underwent a profuse cleansing with ice water, then they performed a purification ceremony to cleanse their bodies and spirit. To achieve a blessed and pure state, the forge master also dressed in pristine white garments, as a symbol of purity, in a similar fashion of a Shinto priest. He fasted and prayed to the deities and to the five natural elements, which were an intrinsic part of the forge.

At the same time, during the forge, a series of elements were disposed to guarantee the absence of evil spirits, a deep cleaning was also carried out. All done with great emphasis on details, surpassing those of the symbolic ritual of *osoji*, all with the aim of achieving highest purity of the steel.

## The Forging Process

The forging process was a rigorous and laborious task. The piece of steel extracted from the sands was then taken into fire and turned it into a

rectangular block of almost 5kg. From that point, the creation process began.

The main block was broken into smaller pieces, from then, they were melted to form a single block. This process was repeated several times, bending the block over and over again, and each time, drawing perpendicular guiding lines for subsequent bending. With each fold, more layers were added, reaching several thousand.

In detail, this process of drawing lines and bending over the block many times, melting, recasting, molding and cooling produced three desired results: get consistency in the metal, eliminate its impurities and lighten its weight. At the end of this phase, a bar had been obtained with the general outline of the blade and an extraordinarily hard metal, but lacking, however, the necessary flexibility



*Tamahagane*



*Main block and pieces of tamahagane*



*They are piled up and melted*



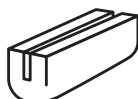
*They are melted to form a single block*



*It is bent and cut*



*They are piled up again*



*It is fold for they molding*



*The process starts from the tip*

From here on, another process takes place, now with the tempered steel bar being melted several times until its weight is reduced by a third. The result is a soft unified metal bar. The heart of the blade remains inside as a soft metal while surrounded by the harder part.

The bar is kept under high temperatures, fusing the layers together through the tempering, thus giving the characteristic quality of the blade. Before cooling down, from the tip is extracted a triangular piece, which through another process of casting, will end up becoming the tip of the sword, or kissaki.

By a combination of changing temperatures, the last temper is given, this will give the blade its final quality and provides the necessary edge. To achieve this, the blade is carefully wrapped from the back with a layer of ferruginous clay, this will allow the

blade to cool down while it regains its length.

In this process, the ash from the used coal is mixed with yakibazuchi clay, then, a metallic powder called sabí doro is also added to the mixture. While the blade is still covered by the mix, the forger uses a bamboo pole to remove a narrow strip from the side near the edge, then the forge master inscribes his personal seal, which was a characteristic from each teacher and his school of forging. It is precisely in this phase where the great secrets of the Japanese blade can be found. Once the mixture is dry, the exposed part, the edge, is heated until it reaches a very specific incandescent point, identified by forgers as the “color of ripened khaki”. Once this point is reached, the blade should be immediately immersed in water. After cooling, the difference in mass between the back and the edge will give to the blade its characteristic curvature.





The Great Forger

# Gorō Nyūdō Masamune (1264 - 1343)

One of the greatest forge smiths of all time was Gorō Nyūdō Masamune. Master Masamune forged the best known katanas, among them the best and most emblematic were: the Honjō Masamune, which represented the Tokugawa shogunate and became the National Treasure of Japan since 1939.

Master Masamune left behind an immense legacy and an entire school from which extraordinary forgers emerged.





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In memory of  
**Alessandro Tittarelli**  
*Shihan*  
(1957 - 2018)

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岩間  
神信  
合氣  
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