

NEWSLETTER

No.313 September 2021

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/dojojb>

August Report		
New members 0	Total number of adults training 32	Total number of children training 42
Events in September		
1. Sogo Shinsa		2. This Month's Holiday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 10th 6:00pm~• Steps, Friday 24th 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 25th 1:00pm~		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dojo's Holiday: Monday 27th

A little more knowledge for your Aikido

Jiyu-waza – “Originality is produced if imitative learning reaches its highest”

A long time ago, at the Yoshinkan Honbu dojo (Headquarters,) I remember the day when I stood proudly on the mats with my first colour belt, a brown belt, after I passed the 3rd kyu rank. A black belt senior student approached to congratulate me for the promotion and asked me to train *Jiyu-waza* with him. I, however, had no idea at all how to perform techniques in the *Jiyu-waza* style even after having had six months of hard training. It was after one and half years of training that I was officially allowed to practise *Jiyu-waza* in the preparation for the Shodan grading, to be a black belt.

In contrast here in Brisbane dojo, even beginners at 9th kyu level start learning *Renzoku-waza* (throwing uke continuously like *Jiyu-waza* even though the techniques are set beforehand.) In this way, both shite and uke can get used to throwing or being thrown continuously at a very early stage of their Aikido journey, which can lead them to learn *Jiyu-waza* more smoothly afterwards. *Renzoku-waza* practice is an original grading syllabus item made by me because of the bitter memory that I mentioned above. The order of *Renzoku-waza* for brown belt grading (3rd kyu- 1st kyu) is what I composed when I graded for my Shodan. I used seven basic *Jiyu-waza* techniques and ordered them to make a smooth flow in the balance of inside and outside turns with the dynamic technique *Kokyū-nage*, at the end. White and brown belts performing *Renzoku-waza* looks as if they are doing *Jiyu-waza* and it raises the standard in their grading tests. I can affirm that the level of white and brown belts at Brisbane dojo is much higher than what mine was.

I assume that most of the black belts thought a lot about what techniques they wanted to perform for their Shodan grading. It was the same in Japan. We, students at the honbu dojo, discussed about what were the points of “good” *Jiyu-waza*. I thought, at the beginning, displaying all the different techniques I knew to show my knowledge would boost the level of *Jiyu-waza*. One fellow said that good *Jiyu-waza* had to have a story like a drama; introduction, the rising development, a turn of events or change, and a conclusion. He thought it should have a sharp slope, a storm with rain and wind and fine weather at the end. Well, honestly, I could not understand him... Another guy said it was more like a poem than a story, and another fellow said it was more like music with a beat and rhythm. Anyway, we were all young and in our early twenties with lots of passion about what we loved. I thought it was interesting to hear all the insights of others.

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After I became a black belt, I began imitating senior *uchi-deshi's Jiyu-waza* by watching the past videos closely instead of composing my own. I had to throw out my big ego and my worthless pride and focus on learning and absorbing from my seniors to improve myself. I studied each senior *uchi-deshi's* movements, angles, timing, choices of techniques and so on. Since the word of "learning" was derived from "mimicking" in Japanese, my training then was copying various *Jiyu-waza* recorded in videos from different *uchi-deshi*, not only the orders and choice of techniques but I also tried to mimic everything I observed: the distance between uke, the timing of when to step in, the angles to turn, the speed of techniques - either faster or slower. There was so much to learn from imitating their Aikido. "Originality is produced if imitative learning reaches its highest" was a phrase by a famous essayist I respected. I had a hope that I was developing my style of Aikido through copying others' Aikido, day after day for my future.

These means of learning *Jiyu-waza* were all when I was working at the honbu dojo. I was thinking and training in a position of being an *uchi-deshi* who needed to show his status within the Aikido world. This changed after I became independent, opening my dojo here in Brisbane, and I became an Aikido-ka who represented Aikido among other martial arts. I needed to consider how Aikido was regarded by people outside of the Aikido world and how I wished Aikido to be recognised. This is why I have developed a lot of "new" programs and grading syllabus, to raise the standard of Aikido as a martial art.

I agree with some of Aikido's criticism about it being useless in reality. I am aware that there are Aikido movements and techniques that are effective only against other Aikido practitioners, even though they may look and appear to be beautiful and elegant. I see many *Jiyu-waza* with a lot of unnecessary flow in which people believe they are performing harmonious Aikido movements. I think that is one of the reasons why Aikido is often regarded as dancing more than a martial art. On the contrary, I wish to exclude all these needless movements and to simplify techniques to make them more useful in reality where possible. I believe that a technique which needs only a single movement, eliminating unnecessary steps and actions, is ideal in reality where the situation is dangerous. In the end, my Aikido even in *Jiyu-waza* style has become very simple, yet it does not mean I am excluding circular motions. In fact, I use a lot of small circular movement to harmonise with uke's force, even though it may not look like that to the untrained eye.

I think that Aikido needs to continue to be modified and developed to maintain it as a martial art and become more suitable in modern day contexts. I wrote about *Jiyu-waza* in this article to represent Aikido itself since it is the advanced form of training Aikido techniques where you need to react against any attacks instantly and continuously. We train Yoshinkan Aikido at our Brisbane dojo, where its characteristics are of a practical nature (applicable in the street); a practical style of Aikido and the Aiki of Master Gozo Shioda. I do not wish to teach anything useless in my dojo. Instead, I wish our Aikido to be genuine and not something that looks good but has no use. It must be something our students can be confident in what they are learning.

Osu,

Michiharu Mori