



No.175 March 2010

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

January Report					
<u>New members</u> 2		<u>Total number of adults training</u> 64		<u>Total number of children training</u> 54	
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 27th February					
Jun-3rd Kyu	Peter Hills	9th Kyu	Ira Seidenstein	2Y12 step	Aarjaun Burch
4th Kyu	Brenton Bills		Lindsay Crawford	2Y11 step	Ryan Slavin
5th Kyu	Simon Foley		Joseph Filitoga	2Y3 step	Joseph Stuart
6th Kyu	Daniel Gort		Wen-Ting Liu	2Y2 step	Kaido Mori
	Rebekah Webb	5Y10 step	Richard Diehm	S4 step	Matthew Ryan
	Tony Starkie	5Y7 step	Emmanuel Economidis		Marek Coleman
7th Kyu	Simon Horn	3Y10 step	Matt Carpenter	S2 step	Oliver Bradshaw
8th Kyu	Jessica Chou				
Events in March			2. This Month's Holiday		
1. Sogo Shinsa			• Dojo's Holiday 29 th March Monday		
• Training starts, Friday 12 th 7:15pm~					
• Steps, Friday 26 th 7:15pm~					
• Shinsa, Saturday 27 th 1:00pm~					

A bit of knowledge for Aikido

OSU

Our dojo has been, thankfully, welcoming new students constantly. The most common question they ask when they start training at our dojo is the meaning of 'osu'. Although I have been involved in the Yoshinkan Aikido for the last twenty five years, since I was eighteen years old I still feel stuck for an exact answer. This is because the word 'osu' is not a proper Japanese word that you can find in a dictionary but is a coined word used only in a specific field. There are several views of how this word was created and we can also assume the meaning from the Japanese characters chosen to describe 'osu'.

First of all, please remember that general Japanese people never say 'osu!' In fact, even I who have been saying 'osu' everyday for the last twenty five years never used the word 'osu' until I joined Yoshinkan. So, when you travel to Japan and if you accidentally say 'osu' to a shop assistant as a reply you would experience a strange or fearful look on their face. Generally speaking, normal Japanese people would have heard 'osu' only in limited circumstances; in yakuza (Japanese mafia) movies with violent followers saying 'osu' to their boss; in watching martial arts fighting, fighters who are wearing white uniforms stained with blood in a group saying 'osu' to their seniors; in a cheerful uni campus unmatched rough students in uniforms jog around saying 'osu.' The image of 'osu' in general people is the rough world that they would never wish to be involved in.

The first time I said 'osu' in Yoshinkan is not a happy memory. The very first day I joined Yoshinkan at the age of eighteen, my senior uchi-deshi was explaining the protocols and rules of the dojo and I replied "Yes, I understand." Then he thundered at me saying, "Not yes, say Osu!" So, in the next moment I said "osu" timidly and then found myself in even more trouble being scolded for using 'osu' so lightly. It left me very confused as to when to say 'osu!' without being in trouble.



We, all of the uchi-deshis, had to wait outside in dogi's (uniforms) about half an hour before Kancho Sensei's (Master Gozo Shioda) car arrived at the Honbu Dojo (Headquarters) everyday. As soon as we had a glimpse of his car we, about ten of us wearing black belts, stood in a line and yelled "Osu!" at him as our first greeting of the day and then he walked gallantly in satisfaction passing in front us into the dojo. It looked like a scene in a movie and was very cool. I was also trained to yell "Osu!" in a high spirit whenever I needed to enter Kancho Sensei's room and also I was required to reply "Osu!" every time I was taught on the mats. So, 'Osu!' at the Honbu Dojo during my uchi-deshi life was always used to show our strong and high spirits.

The most fearful man in Aikido Yoshinkan's history, was surely Takeno Sensei whose nick name was 'Razor Takeno' officially and 'Yakuza Takeno' behind his back. Even now after many years have passed since Takeno Sensei quit the Honbu Dojo I cannot help myself but to stand stiffly at attention like a school kid in front of a frightening teacher whenever he rings me and I reply in loud voice, "Osu! This is Mori speaking! How are you, Sensei?" As I put the phone receiver down at the end of the phone call I yell "Osu!" with a bow at ninety degrees even though I am aware that he cannot see me anyway. Then, I need to change my wet clothes from sweating too much after being extremely tense.

There was another uchi-deshi who joined in the same year as Takeno Sensei. He worked as an uchi-deshi for seven years and left for the US after receiving his 4th dan. He began his own Aikido style called "Shinkendo" and he became a Hollywood action actor. You may have watched "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 1&2" and he was the boss of bad guys who was bald with a moustache, just the right appearance to be a bad guy. Toshihiro Obata was his name and he was called 'Power Obata' in Yoshinkan – and Takeno Sensei left a legend at the Honbu Dojo. During their grading together, they became so violent to each other and ended up striking uraken (backhand punch) each others' faces and bashed each others' heads sinking them into the mats. I heard that both of them were bleeding from their faces and they looked dreadful. His next junior uchi-deshi was Chida Sensei and he was the very victim. Mr Obata loved going out for drinks taking Chida Sensei with him and messed round badly; picking fights with drunken men who had a big build; wrecking things in pubs; throwing sign boards into a river, etc. One day when they were drinking at the Honbu Dojo Mr Obata being drunk said, "Hey Chida! Open your toes!" Chida Sensei did not know what it meant but replied "Osu!" and did as he was told. In the next moment he saw a dart in his senior's hand and it flew at his foot piercing the instep. How savage was that?! This is one of the tragic episodes of uchi-deshi who were not allowed to say anything other than 'osu' to their seniors.

A few years later after Mr Obata settled in the US, one day when Chida Sensei answered a phone call he heard the voice of the devil-like man on the other end and he instantly stood up straight and tense saying, "Osu! Senior Obata, how are you, sir?" Mr Obata in a fond voice replied, "Please do not use such a savage word as osu to me any more." Later on, Chida Sensei told his junior Mori with a bitter smile about such a boorish man like him asking not to use a savage word while he enjoyed having fights with some thugs in Los Angeles." So, there is no mistake in the image of general people that the word 'osu' is used by those who are violent.

'Osu' in Japanese consists of two characters; 'o' as push/force/restrain and 'su' as endure/suffer/persevere. So, these two meanings together, 'osu' can mean 'forcing the perseverance' against any orders made by one's respected teacher through severe training



and also through daily lives for uchi-deshis, showing their determination to persevere and carry on any hardships they are faced with. For instance during *Hajime* class when you are yelled at to bend your knees lower, and if you say 'Osu!' it means you are determined to force yourself to stay in a lower position persistently despite any pain or agony.

Well, 'osu' in the modern martial arts field is not used as strictly as the original way but it has extended its meaning far and wide in many decades. Let's see the way we say 'osu' in the dojo. "Osu!" when we enter the dojo, "Osu!" to Sensei and each other, "Osu!" to the dojo shrine at the start and end of a class, "Osu!" when Sensei or senior students give you instructions, "Osu!" to training partners when we bow before and after practicing technique, "Osu!" at the end of a class, "Osu!" when we leave the dojo in the end. Well, in these ways 'osu' covers all sorts of greetings and it is always used with respect and gratitude. The skill of martial art is gained not only when we are learning from seniors or Sensei but also by teaching beginners or juniors and therefore both teaching and learning sides keep the mind of gratitude and respect, and express it in the word "Osu!"

When we say 'osu' after getting any instructions on techniques from Sensei or seniors we do not mean "I persevere" like in the original way but now "Thank you for teaching me." I was trained to say 'osu' before I spoke to Kancho Sensei or seniors and here in our Brisbane dojo too students say 'osu' to me before they start asking questions, even though I did not tell them to say so. This manner shows that 'osu' is used to express students' respect to their Sensei and seniors. When students leave the dojo after the class most of them say "Osu! Good night" at the counter and I feel lots of gratitude and respect in the word.

I think that as the dojo's students get used to saying 'osu' with a bow they create a habit of thanking and respecting people through the word and the way they learnt at the dojo is taken into their daily lives improving the relationships between people. For that reason I personally believe that 'osu' is a beautiful word which lifts people's life more in maturity and harmony.

OSU!

Michiharu Mori