

NEWSLETTER



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Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

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June Report

New members 4

Total number of adults training 65

Total number of children training 42

Results of SogoShinsa on 28th & 29th

Jun-Shodan	Dominic Hogan Steven Bannah	5th Kyu	Viraphong Phouunesana	9th Kyu	Jared Mifsud Wesley Drake
2nd Kyu	Vladimir Roudakov Janna Malikova Simon Nordon Lu Jiang	7th Kyu	Tim Bishop-Kinlyside Emil Pop Emmanuel Pop	5Y12 step	Brent Weston
		8th Kyu	David Abbott	2Y11 step	Peter Hills
Jun-3rd Kyu	Stephen Cuthbert	9th Kyu	Rhys Knight Shanoon Alhassan	2Y3 step	Jocelyn Fergusson
4th Kyu	Sean Keogh			S5 step	Darsy Darssan
				S2 step	Tony Starkie

Events in July

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- Training starts, Friday 19th 7:15pm~
- Steps, Friday 26th 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 27th 1:00pm~

2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class

- Dojo Holiday– Monday 29th July

A little more knowledge for learning Aikido

What a place called dojo should offer

What kind of place is a dojo? How I understand being brought up in Japanese culture is that a dojo is the place where we train and cultivate one's spirit and body. Sports gyms on the other side, I think, are the place where customers train their bodies scientifically and rationally using various equipment for their health, appearance or for other physical goals. Therefore, dojo and gym are absolutely different from my understanding. For instance, boxing is a type of martial arts and people visit boxing gyms to learn boxing simply to be better at punching. When beginners join in our dojo thinking they are joining an Aikido gym like any other sports gym then they feel awkward and uncomfortable due to our specific characteristics of dojo culture – there are plenty of particular protocols and tacit rules at the dojo.

Well, the most obvious protocol that beginners encounter is constant bowing. It starts even before the class; bow before getting on the mats in a standing position and bow in kneeling position after stepping on the mats to the shrine and to the photos of our Aikido masters, bow lightly to each other saying a mysterious Japanese word "OSU" whenever other students turn up on the mats. When the time gets closer to the class then "Seiza" is called loudly and they are forced to be in kneeling position for five minutes in silence. About the time when their legs start having pins and needles then the instructor shows up and here another bow to the shrine and to the instructor. Once they face a partner to practise a technique they need to bow at the start and at the end each time they change their partners. Furthermore, they are told to bow not only to people but even to a weapon before and after using it each time. If one forgets to bow at any situations then he is warned and they are reminded by senior students. I believe that these protocols are quite bothering and feel disoriented for these people who simply came to learn Aikido skills but did not expect this kind of other world. We know that no one bows to gym machines/equipment each time they use at the gym showing their respect and appreciation. Basically there are no protocols at the sports gyms other than safety regulations and that is just easy for everybody without any pressure or compulsion.



I think, however, this kind of bothering protocols is the great virtue and benefit of a dojo. Civilisation is about convenience that people take advantage of devices and gadgets like aeroplanes to fly or smartphones to manage all sorts of fancy stuff while culture is about sense of values and meaning with it by applying regulations, rules and discipline to find beauty of humanity in these manners. Dojo culture developed in Japanese martial arts has about four hundred years history and its most fundamental standard of regulations at dojo is “respect.” We respect a dojo that offers us a place to train, respect God that blesses us with the environment/nature and protects the place and our bodies, respect masters who invented and developed the arts, respect instructors who teach us the arts, respect training partners and take good care of weapons we use for training with respect. It is a wonderful culture to learn about the mind and attitude of respect on any and everything, I believe.

The name “dojo” originates from Buddhism where monks had ascetic training like a Zen temple to purify both mind and body for the achievement of enlightenment following the path Buddha demonstrated. The Age of Civil Wars ended around 1600 in Japan and the country was unified under a single government that samurais reigned over. The peaceful era lasted as long as two hundred years and martial arts such as Kenjutsu (swordsmanship) that most of men seriously trained for the purpose of learning killing-skills to survive were not needed any longer. Although samurais kept training martial arts they sublimated the arts from killing methods into means to train their spirits to form noble characters. “Satsujin-ken and Katsujin-ken (kill-people-sword and enhance-people-sword)” is the well-known phrase to describe the different means to utilise the sword –sword can be used to kill people but also to enhance and lift people spiritually. So, samurais changed their focus on learning “Katsujin-ken” to cultivate their spirits for serving others and therefore they started to call the place where they trained as “dojo” naming after the way of Zen temples. Some Western people call Aikido as “moving Zen” but I think that all of the Japanese martial arts are supposed to be moving Zen, not just Aikido, because the purpose of our training at the dojo is never to beat anybody or compete against others but to train and polish one’s spirit to overcome oneself more than learning battle skills for fighting to win.

Today, mixed martial arts are very popular to decide which style of martial arts is better than others or who is the strongest man out of different fighting skills. To me, this trend is something regretful because people of our time are retracing what samurais sublimated, from just a fighting skill to harm people into the spiritual development to enhance people.

What we, who train at the Aikido Yoshinkan Brisbane Dojo, should learn from the training? What I believe is that ‘respect,’ ‘the proprieties’ and ‘discipline’ are the beauties we can absorb from the dojo culture, and ‘harmony’ and ‘mutual help/support’ through training with different partners are the heart of learning Aikido. This is what an Aikido dojo should offer, I think. Besides, our bodies get healthier and stronger from the balanced exercise Aikido provides and we can master the ability of self-defence of course when we need to use. I remember that my senior uchi-deshis often said they looked about ten years younger than the other males in the same generation. Well, there are only benefits and advantages training at an Aikido dojo then – healthier, stronger, finer and younger both spiritually and physically. Knowing these benefits, we shall keep training happily at our precious dojo. By the way, I am getting interested in the benefit of getting younger part as my aged eyes have begun giving me problems in dark that I cannot see well during evening classes any longer. I hope my Aikido training helps my eyes get younger...?

OSU!

Michiharu Mori