



No.233 January 2015

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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December Report

New members 2 Total number of adults training 51

Results of Sogo Shinsa on 19th & 20th December

Shodan	Vladimir Roudakov	Jun-3rd Kyu	Viktor Ovcharenko	8th Kyu	Samuel Herron
	Janna Malikova	4th Kyu	Andrew Crampton		Vaughan Gray
	Lu Jiang	5th Kyu	Sai Kiao	4Y3 step	Kaido Mori
2nd Kyu	Kent Windress	7th Kyu	Lily Crampton	2Y12 step	Murray Booth
3rd Kyu	Pedro Gouvea	8th Kyu	Bastian Hartmann	S5 step	Dean Jones

Events in January

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- Training starts, Thursday 22nd 6:00pm~
- Steps, Friday 30th 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 31st 1:00pm~

2. This Month's Holiday

- Australia Day – Monday 26th

An excursus ~ travel to Poland

To hug, or not to hug: that is the question

I had one concern as to travelling to Poland.

Back in 1998, we were enjoying a Christmas party for the dojo at Orleigh Park in the late afternoon. As it got darker students started to leave one after another. One female student, wearing a beautiful smile, came closer to me to thank for the year and to give me a Christmas wish. I, of course, returned a bright smile and bowed to her to respond to her greeting in appreciation, following a proper Japanese manner. Then, as I bowed I saw a shadow on the ground suddenly approached towards me. There, my instinct as a martial artist judged it as danger at once and I jumped backwards to avoid it without a thought. Nothing happened in the end and whatever the danger I felt was gone.

After I came back to the dojo half an hour later the phone rang. My wife picked the phone and it was from the female student whom I greeted politely at the end of the party. She was very upset, even crying, and wanted to apologise me about her manner that she believed I thought it was rude. Well, what happened was, from her eyes, while I was bowing she naturally approached me to give me a hug of love and thanks, following a proper Western manner. But I, without realising, judged it as a danger and avoided her blatantly. How hopeless, wasn't I? A very warm-hearted and courteous lady she was, she wanted to apologise for her rudeness, trying to explain that she did not mean to. Of course, she did not mean to be rude for giving me a hug, but my rude reaction gave her an impression of her being rude! Ha...my poor wife had to apologise her for her husband's discourtesy, explaining the Japanese culture to excuse my behaviour, while giving me a reproaching glare. I was absolutely embarrassed, judging an affectionate hug as a danger...I felt sincerely sorry to her.

Since this event I began to study how and when people hug or/and kiss around me, observing Australians closely. It has been sixteen years since then and you may think I have mastered the culture by now but no. No matter how hard I tried to mimic your culture and I hug whenever I think it is appropriate to do, I have no confidence and my hug is not natural, that is for certain. When someone hugs a female unnaturally it is more like a dirty old man or a molester touching a woman and I am so scared of an occasion when a female might scream at me in disgust...

Well, I was going to visit Poland. I was not worried about Aikido too much, being confident enough for doing it for nearly thirty years as a professional, but I was anxious about how I meant to greet them in an unknown country. Honestly, I was scared of hugs, although any types of violent attacks would not scare me. The event in 1998 surely became my trauma. I was frightened to be rude when I was invited and welcomed whole-heartedly in a foreign place. I had to simulate the scene of meeting people in my head to practice. Arriving at Warsaw airport firstly and I should find Gregory Sensei there. I would shake his hand with a big smile. That's good, no problem. Then, I would meet his wife and there I would do 'a light hug.' Yeah, I can do that and there should

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not be any rudeness at all, I thought to myself. Yet, a few days later, my wife who was studying the very basic Polish for me browsing the internet told me that the proper greeting in Poland is shaking hands with firmness. A light hand shake is recognised rude and not trusted, so as the Polish teacher said on the screen. I, listening to her information, understood that no hug was needed then. If I were to hug Gregory's wife it might have appeared to be very rude. Oops, close shave....

But then I remembered reading a book written by a diplomat who stayed in Russia for a long period, the next neighbour country to Poland, that Russian people including males hug and kiss all the time, the kisses to the both cheeks and even to the lips occasionally. I began wondering about it again. So, I asked one of my students who was raised in Italian culture though having been raised in Australia about the manners of hug and kiss in Italy. He believed that hugs and kisses were the must-have-manner in Italy. But when he travelled to Italy the last time, as he was about to hug and kiss his male cousin whom he had not seen for a long time the cousin got angry and punched him, so he explained. Well, I will never understand the culture of hugs, I thought. Anyway, he reckoned that Polish people have more serious nature than jovial Italians and therefore the handshake is more appropriate greeting than the hugs. Ok, that would be fine to me, I thought. I am ready to go then.

After about twenty eight hours since I left home I arrived at Warsaw airport. As I expected, I found Gregory Sensei and his wife, Monica, in the distance at the airport, both smiling. I walked forward waving my hand to them with my best smile in return, saying hello, and I was ready to exchange firm handshakes with them to express my friendship. They, however, came to a stop about two metres away from me. Then, they bowed deeply, saying "Welcome, Mori Sensei," which was surely a proper Japanese style. I did not expect this at all. I was taken aback for a moment and I also was amazed to see Monica was acting a perfect traditional Japanese woman's manner that she was standing a metre behind her husband, bowing very modestly. There was no need of hug or even a handshake as they were not within the reach. I could not be wrong in this way, I thought, as I returned a deep bow to them.

Although the Japanese greeting manner meant to be comfortable for me, maybe because I have been living in the Western society for the last nineteen years and I have been getting used to the hugging manner albeit not natural, I felt anxious about Monica's three metre distance which gave me an impression of 'she might dislike me.' This concern let me think of my own attitude of keeping distance from people without hugging in Australia that Japanese manner does not offer an impression of being close or friendly. Alright, I shall hug anyone more actively after I go home, I told myself. In the car on the way to Gregory Sensei's hometown from the airport, they told me that they love Japan very much and travel there almost every year for training Aikido and also sightseeing. Naturally, they mastered the Japanese style of greeting and offered it to me to display their moderate and humble attitude.

After seminars started I had no circumstances to greet anybody personally. So, there was no trouble at all that I needed to fear. The time, however, I needed to use my sensor to read the correct manner arrived at my farewell party. When the height of feast was over, the students from the Ukraine, who came from the farthest distance began to leave first and each student stood up to exchange their farewells in turn. They came to me too and I, of course, stood up and shook their hands firmly as I had simulated before I left home. But then I felt something was wrong or missing from their expressions and I realised everyone else was hugging each other as I looked around. Oh, I got it wrong again. Hugs were the must-thing in this county, I realised. So I began to hug anybody no matter males or females in desperation, more like a Hajime class with hugs, saying "thank you" whole-heartedly. Finally, I have mastered offering hugs without feeling fear, as I got to practise so much. I am not afraid of visiting any other overseas countries now.

The year 2015 marks 20th anniversary of our Brisbane Dojo as well as thirty years of my Aikido journey. I promise all of you that I will keep exercising my best to improve and develop Aikido at our dojo and maintain the place where anyone can learn to cultivate their lives. We shall demonstrate the principle of "Master is a disciple, a disciple is a master" to polish and enhance each other through the New Year. Thank you very much for your sincere devotion to the dojo!

Osu!

Michiharu Mori