

THE QUARTERLY AKBD

THE AIKIBUDO NEWSLETTER NO.7 FALL 2020 (THE FINAL ISSUE)

THE MESSAGE TO READERS

I, Shizuo Imaizumi, would like to provide you with the final article of “An Introduction to Descriptive Aikido.” The seven-part serial has begun since I created “The Quarterly AKBD” in spring of 2019. The motivation I wrote the article mentioned above was that I wanted to introduce to you how I had learned Aikido at Aikikai honbu dojo in Tokyo, Japan from Sensei Kisshomaru Uyeshiba (1921-1999) and Sensei Koichi Tohei (1920-2011) through their various books while I had been practicing Aikido under other instructors, including both of them. I am convinced that I could make you understand the importance of reading an Aikido book in addition to your own Aikido training and watchable Aikido DVD studying.

Next, I would like to take this opportunity to announce a change of the title of the newsletter from “THE QUARTERLY AKBD” to “THE SHIORI,” starting in January of 2021. The Japanese word “shiori” translates literally into “a bookmark” or “a guide.” This word derives from “bending a twig” (or “eda o shioru” in Japanese) that can be used as a makeshift signpost in the woods. The format of the future article is like this: 1) #6-digit number (year_month_date in this order) for the date of the proofs of the issue, 2) a category to which my articles belong, for example, budo, culture, health, sports, thoughts, etc., 3) a keyword / a theme, and 4) a text.

The following is an example plot in which I only wrote an introductory remarks and purposely dated November 3, 2020 to bring the US presidential election of this year to remembrance.

#201103_zen thoughts_what is zen?

I read a Zen book titled “What Is Zen?” by Fujiwara Toen, translated by Jeffrey Hunter, and published by Tankosha, Japan (2010). As this book was side-by side reading comparison, I first read the original Japanese text and then compared a part with the English equivalent one. It was very convenient for me to develop my translation skill. The article opens with the following quotation. Although I use a portion of translation by Jeffrey Hunter, I omit a Japanese portion of its original text because most of you don’t need its Japanese one.

A Frenchman asked a Zen master a question:

“What is Zen?”

Instead of answering, the Zen master replied with a question of his own:

“What do you do when your body is dirty?”

The Frenchman replied:

“I take a shower or a bath.”

The Zen master inquired further:

“What do you do when your mind feels dirty?”

The Frenchman couldn’t answer. The Zen master said:

“You do Zen meditation. When you quiet your body and your breath, your mind becomes clear.”

AN INTRODUCTION TO DESCRIPTIVE AIKIDO (7)

By Shizuo Imaizumi

CONCLUSION OF “AN INTRODUCTION TO DESCRIPTIVE AIKIDO”

This is the final article of “An Introduction to Descriptive Aikido” that began from the spring issue of 2019. I first wrote about various solo exercises (or tandoku taiso) and two-men exercises (or sotai taiso). Next, I wrote about ikkyo (or ikkajo in an old technical term), and then I wrote about kokyu-nage (or irimi-nage in an original name).

In conclusion, I would like to introduce to you the so-called kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi). This technique was originally called a method of developing “ki” (or kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho). There are two ways of “kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho:” 1) a sitting style (or suwari waza), and 2) a standing style (or tachi-waza). However, suwari waza “kokyu-ho” (or kokyu dosa) is omitted in this article because that is not a style of an arm down (or ude-oroshi), but a style of a push (or oshi) like a technique of “frontal push out” (or oshidashi) in Sumo. I hope you continue reading this concluding article to the end.

KOKYU-RYOKU NO YOSEI-HO (A Method of Developing the Power of “Ki”)

The following is a summarized article of “kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho” from the book by Kisshomaru Uyeshiba. [AKD-KU (1957), pp. 152-157]

Such words as “ki,” “the power of ki,” “the flow of ki,” etc. prevail among Aikido circle. The power of “ki” is one of the most important concepts of Aikido training. We generally call this “kokyu-ryoku.” That literally means the “power of breath.” When we are full of energy (or kokyu-ryoku) in executing all kinds of techniques, our movement becomes smoother like a flowing water without stopping. Simply speaking, “kokyu-ryoku” implies to breathe in and out together with the universe through our whole body, from the top of head to tiptoes. At that moment, our mind and body are harmonized with the nature. As a result, our power of “ki” breaks out fully. In other words, developing our “kokyu-ryoku” means to train ourselves so that we can naturally extend our power of “ki” as the occasion arises.

Uke: Uke stands with the right foot forward (or migi-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori’s right hand with his right hand. Furthermore, uke takes the left foot forward (or hidari-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori’s right hand with his left hand.

Tori: Tori stands with the migi-hanmi posture in front of uke, and lets uke grasp his right hand with katate-tori-ryote-mochi as mentioned above. As soon as uke grasps tori’s right hand like that, tori, based on his lower back (or koshi) for his initial movement, pays attention to his lower abdomen (or tanden) extending his right fingertips, and then turns his body counterclockwise shifting whole weight on the right foot and pivoting the left foot. At that time, both uke and tori come to look at the same direction so that tori can stand with the hidari-hanmi posture with his right hand over the head as if he were raising his sword. Furthermore, tori moves the right foot behind uke, turns his koshi clockwise, and, finally, he swings down the right hand near uke’s face with its palm upside and puts his left hand on uke’s chest until uke falls backward.

Kisshomaru Uyeshiba suggests the following about practicing “kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho” mentioned above. [AKD-KU (1957), pp. 152-157]

(1) The “kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho” is not a mere physical exercise in which tori starts his own action after being tightly held his right hand by uke. On the contrary, tori should take the initiative in letting uke grasp his right hand as if he were suggesting uke to do so.

(2) When tori raises his right hand while turning his body counterclockwise, he should keep his right arm closer to his own right side without losing his elbow-down posture. In other words, if tori loses the positive attitude of letting uke grasp his right hand intentionally, uke can easily push up tori’s right hand toward his right shoulder, and that causes tori to raise his right elbow unnecessarily and lose his balance.

(3) When tori practices “kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho” with uke, it is often apt to have a contest of strength as if he were arm-wrestling about whether he will win or lose. Therefore, tori should keep in mind that he doesn’t exercise for strengthening his physical force, but he does for developing the power of his own “ki” through this exercise.

KATATE-TORI-RYOTE-MOCHI KOKYU-RYOKU YOSEI WAZA (OR KOKYU-NAGE UDE-OROSHI)

The following is a summarized article of “katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-ryoku yosei waza” (or kokyu-nage ude-oroshi) from the book by Kisshomaru Uyeshiba. [AKDGH-KU (1962), pp. 79-83]

OMOTE (IRIMI) WAZA

Uke: Uke stands with the right foot forward (or migi-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori’s right hand with his right hand. Furthermore, uke takes the left foot forward (or hidari-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori’s right hand with his left hand.

Tori: Tori stands with the migi-hanmi posture in front of uke, and lets uke grasp his right hand with katate-tori-ryote-mochi as mentioned above. As soon as uke grasps tori’s right hand like that, tori slightly takes the left foot forward in front of uke, and moves the right foot closer to uke’s body. At the same time, tori, based on his lower back (or koshi) for his initial movement, pays attention to his lower abdomen (or tanden), turns his body counterclockwise, and raises the right hand over the head extending his right fingertips. Furthermore, tori moves the right foot behind uke, turns his koshi clockwise, and, finally, he swings down the right hand near uke’s face with its palm upside and puts the left hand on uke’s chest.

UKE: Uke takes a backward roll (or ushiro ukemi).

URA (TENKAN) WAZA

Uke: Uke stands with the right foot forward (or migi-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori’s right hand with his right hand. Furthermore, uke takes the left foot forward (or hidari-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori’s right hand with his left hand.

Tori: Tori stands with the migi-hanmi posture in front of uke, and lets uke grasp his right hand with katate-tori-ryote-mochi as mentioned above. As soon as uke grasps tori's right hand like that, tori, centering on his right foot as its initial movement, takes the left foot backward with his body turning counterclockwise. At the same time, tori extends his right fingertips drawing a semicircular motion with his right hand toward his own chest, and raises his right hand over the head. Furthermore, tori moves the right foot behind uke, turns his koshi clockwise, and, finally, he swings down the right hand near uke's face with its palm upside and puts the left hand on uke's chest.

UKE: Uke takes ushiro ukemi.

Kisshomaru Uyeshiba suggests the following about practicing both "omote waza" and "ura waza" mentioned above. [AKDGH-KU (1962), pp. 79-83]

- (1) Tori should not compare his physical power with uke when executing this technique.
- (2) Tori should move smoothly like drawing a circle with keeping his posture round and moving his right hand in a spiral so that he can avoid receiving uke's holding strength.
- (3) Tori should make use of his whole strength of body so that he doesn't need to rely on his cheap tricks [like punching uke's face with the left hand or kicking uke's leg] intentionally.

KATATE-TORI-RYOTE-MOCHI KOKYU-NAGE (UDE-OROSHI)

The following is a summarized article of "katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi)" from the book by Koichi Tohei. [AKDNM-KT (1967), pp. 150-158]

IRIMI (OMOTE) WAZA

Uke: Uke stands with the right foot forward (or migi-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori's right hand with his right hand. Furthermore, uke takes the left foot forward (or hidari-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori's right hand with his left hand.

Tori: Tori stands with the migi-hanmi posture in front of uke, and lets uke grasp his right hand with katate-tori-ryote-mochi as mentioned above. Tori points up his right fingertips like holding a sword with chudan position, and extends ki through his hand so that uke cannot push down tori's right hand. Tori takes the right foot backward so that it can reach his left foot as close as possible. This movement is called "hiki-tsuke." At the same time, tori raises his left knee at right angles without moving his right hand, and takes the left foot forward slightly so that both legs can cross in front of uke. At that moment, tori lowers his lower back (or koshi) with his right elbow bending and pointing up his right fingertips.

Uke: Uke moves his upper body forward as if he were bowing.

Tori: Tori stands up with its reactivity arising from an action of lowering his koshi. At that time, tori's right elbow should remain unmovable in the same position without trying to lift his right hand. In other words, when tori stands up like that, he still keeps his bending-elbow position near his chest.

Uke: When tori stands up in front of him, uke's holding hands reach near his face.

Tori: Tori thrusts his right hand upward passing in front of uke's neck with his palm upside. At that moment, tori moves the right foot behind uke, and, finally, he moves the right hand all the way down near uke's neck and puts the left hand on uke's chest.

Uke: Uke takes a backward roll (or ushiro ukemi).

Koichi Tohei suggests the following about learning "katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi irimi)" mentioned above. [AKDNM-KT-(1967), pp. 150-158]

(1) The reason why tori raises his left knee at right angles after drawing his right foot toward his left foot (or hiki-tsuke) is to avoid colliding with uke's power with katate-tori-ryote-mochi. If tori raises his left knee without drawing his right foot, tori's weight moves to the right foot and the central line of his body (or taikan-jiku) also moves forward. As a result, tori collides with uke's holding power. Therefore, tori should first draw his right foot toward his left foot, and then raise his left knee so that he can keep his taikan-jiku without colliding with uke's power.

(2) After tori gets used to moving like that [drawing, raising, and lowering in this order], he tries to practice of taking action with one count. Keeping his taikan-jiku in the same position without moving his right hand, he changes his standing positions of both feet at a stroke and, at the same time, lowers his lower back (or koshi) bending his right elbow and crossing both feet. After that, tori must stand up without colliding with uke's holding power.

(3) When tori bends his right elbow with his koshi lowering, the weight of his right arm should be on underneath of his right elbow. When tori stands up from there, he must still keep the weight of his right elbow underneath. Simply speaking, "the weight is on the underneath" corresponds to "relaxing his whole body completely." So, as tori relaxes his body and his ki is extending, he can stand up without colliding with uke's holding power.

(4) After tori stands up, all he needs to do is point up his right fingertips and change the direction of his right hand passing in front of uke's neck with its palm upside.

TENKAN (URA) WAZA

Uke: Uke stands with the right foot forward (or migi-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori's right hand with his right hand. Furthermore, uke takes the left foot forward (or hidari-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps tori's right hand with his left hand.

Tori: Tori stands with the migi-hanmi posture in front of uke, and lets uke grasp his right hand with katate-tori-ryote-mochi as mentioned above. Tori turns his body counterclockwise without moving his right hand and keeping it straight down, At the same time, tori moves his left foot backward together with his upper body's movement, and stands straight looking at the same direction as uke. After that, tori should lead his lower back (or koshi) closer to his right elbow so that he can continue to take his next action without being pushed up his right hand.

Uke: Uke stands still with his both hands holding tori's right hand with katate-tori-ryote-mochi.

Tori: Tori lowers his koshi with his right elbow attaching to his trunk (or dotai), and points up his right fingertips when he bends his right elbow. At that time, tori's right wrist remains still at its original position. Tori's knees eventually squat down. After that, tori stands up with his right elbow attaching to his dotai.

Uke: When tori stands up at his left side, uke's holding hands reach almost his face.

Tori: Tori thrusts his right hand upward passing in front of uke's neck with its palm upside. At that moment, tori moves the right foot behind uke, and, finally, he moves the right hand all the way down near uke's face and puts the left hand on uke's chest.

Uke: Uke takes ushiro ukemi.

Koichi Tohei suggests the following about learning "katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi tenkan)" mentioned above. [AKDNM-KT (1967), pp. 150-158]

(1) When tori executes irimi waza, he enters his body in front of uke with avoiding a collusion with uke's holding power, and then throws uke down. On the contrary, when tori executes tenkan waza, he should turn his body counterclockwise leading uke's body.

(2) The reason why tori doesn't move his right hand when turning his body counterclockwise is to avoid colliding with uke's holding power. In this case, tori should turn his body using the function of his right shoulder's joint with keeping his right hand straight pointing down his right fingertips. At that time, tori should not approach his body toward uke, but turn his body moving his face at the same direction as uke is facing.

(3) The reason why tori turns his face when moving his left foot behind uke is to coordinate his mind and body correctly. If tori's face remains without moving and looking at uke, his mind also remains in front of uke while he is turning his body counterclockwise. That causes to lose his coordination of mind and body, and, as a result, uke can push up tori's right hand easily.

(4) The reason why tori should put his right elbow closer to his koshi when lowering his koshi is to avoid uke's holding power. When tori lowers and bends his right elbow together with the movement of his koshi, however uke's holding power is strong, he can bend his right elbow without moving his wrist at the lower position. At that moment, tori should points his right fingertips upward so that he can stands up later easily.

KATATE-TORI KOKYU-NAGE (UDE-OROSHI TENKAN)

Koichi Tohei applied "katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi)" to a style of "katate-tori kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi tenkan)" waza. That includes "tai no henka" (or a method of changing a body's direction or tenkan) and "kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho" (or a method of developing the power of "ki"). After Sensei Tohei left Aikikai and established Shinshin Toitsu Aikido in May of 1974 as Aikido division in Ki no Kenkyukai (or Ki Society), he created Taigi as a performing art consisting of 30 categories to preserve his style of Aikido. He selected this "kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi tenkan)" under the name of "onshi no gyoji" as the first waza of "Taigi No. 1 katate-tori."

The Japanese phrase “onshi no gyoï” literally means “kimono clothes being given to by the Emperor.” I guess that this historical story derives from an ancient event in a palace. You had better imagine how honorable to be given to you by the Emperor and also how difficult to carry kimono clothes after receiving them directly with both hands. I think that Sensei Tohei made the right decision of selecting this technique as the first waza of “Taigi No. 1 katate-tori.”

The following is a summarized article of “katate-tori kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi tenkan)” from the book by Koichi Tohei. [AKDNM-KT (1967), pp. 99-108]

TENKAN WAZA

Uke: Uke stands with the right foot forward (or migi-hanmi) in front of tori, and grasps the left hand of tori with the right hand.

Tori: Tori stands with the left foot forward (or hidari-hanmi) in front of uke, and lets uke grasp the left hand. Extending ki through his whole body, tori bends his left wrist with the back of its palm thrusting out so that it can contact uke’s right palm from underneath. After that, tori moves his lower back (or koshi) toward uke without moving the position of his left wrist, moves his right foot behind uke turning his koshi clockwise, and then moves his left foot closer to his right foot so that he can naturally stand with the hidari-hanmi posture. At that moment, the direction of the power of tori’s left hand and uke’s right hand is in complete agreement.

Uke: Uke stands still with the right hand grasping tori’s left hand.

Tori: Tori continues to turn his body clockwise without moving his left hand, and, when he decides to stop walking, he lowers his koshi with the left wrist keeping bent.

Uke: Uke follows tori’s walking-style guide (or michibiki), and, when tori lowers his koshi, uke also bends his upper body forward losing his balance.

Tori: Tori stands up at the same position, leads uke’s right hand over the head, moves his left foot behind uke, lowers his left hand toward uke’s upper chest with his left palm upside, and, finally, he throws uke down.

Uke: Uke takes a backward roll (or ushiro ukemi).

Koichi Tohei suggests the following about learning “katate-tori kokyu-nage (ude-oroshi tenkan) waza” mentioned above. [AKDNM-KT (1967), pp. 99-108]

(1) The most important thing in executing this technique is that tori leads uke's right hand without colliding with the power of his grip. In other words, tori should follow “the principle of no-fighting” in Aikido. Also he should execute the technique in accordance with “the principle of leading an opponent’s ki” mentioned above.

(2) When tori bends his left wrist and puts together with uke’s right palm, uke’s gripping power naturally merges with the direction of tori’s bending left wrist. If tori’s left hand is likened to the flow of one river and uke’s right hand to the flow of another one, two rivers merge and water naturally flows in the same direction. Similarly, after the power of both uke and tori moves to the same direction, tori turns his koshi clockwise moving the right foot behind uke, and then makes a circular motion without worrying about whether or not uke follows him.

(3) Tori holds a jo or a short staff with the left hand, thrusts it in front of uke, and lets him grab the tip of it with the right hand. When uke pushes back a jo, he can easily push it back when tori is holding it tight. Next, tori holds a jo gently with his ki extending, and asks uke to push it back again. This time the energy of tori is reaching the tip of a jo so that he can block uke's pushing power. In the same way, tori bends his left wrist thrusting the back of its palm, and thinks that his energy is extending through the center of the back of his left palm. At that time, uke cannot push it back easily. If tori walks forward (or irimi) from there, uke starts to walk backward losing his balance.

(4) When tori first turns his koshi clockwise, he should not move the left foot forward in front of uke. Tori must first move the right foot behind uke clockwise the moment the power of both hands of uke and tori merges toward the same direction. After that, tori should immediately draw his left foot toward his right foot (or hiki-tsuke). Doing so, he can keep his one point in the lower abdomen, relax his whole body completely, and stand naturally in the state of coordinating his mind and body.

(5) When tori starts to walk after turning his koshi clockwise as mentioned above, he should not pull uke's right hand with the power of his left hand. Once the direction of both hands accords with the same way, tori doesn't need to move his left hand. All tori has to do is keep the upright posture still and walk as if he were drawing a circle using his body. When tori lowers his koshi after turning his body clockwise, he should just lower his koshi without moving his left hand.

(6) Finally, when tori throws uke putting his left arm on the upper chest of uke with its palm upside, he should not try to throw uke with the power of his left arm. When tori relaxes his left arm completely, he should think that the weight of his left arm is on the underneath. When tori lowers his whole body, uke loses his balance, and falls backward.

SOME ADVICE

The word "kokyu-nage" derives from "kokyu-ryoku" (or the power of "ki"). You should keep in mind that "kokyu-ryoku" is a core of all Aikido techniques you practice. You may notice that Kisshomaru Uyeshiba and Koichi Tohei explained the methods of "kokyu-nage" in this article differently. You should not worry about its difference because that isn't a matter of right or wrong. Sensei Uyeshiba explained it from the viewpoint of "kokyu-ryoku no yosei-ho" that was an original instruction of Aikido. Meanwhile, Sensei Tohei explained it from the standpoint of "nage-waza" in Aikido.

In conclusion, you should continue to train yourself in Budo by reading, watching, or moving amid the pandemic. One last comment about the words "shugyo" in Chinese characters (or kanji in the final line of this paragraph.) You must realize that the word "shugyo" that is written in the Roman alphabet includes a dual structure, that is, a homonym. The first "shugyo" literally means "to learn a technique" that you want or need. After you are, to some extent, satisfied with it, you might discontinue to learn it. The second "shugyo" literally means "to do an action" or "to practice asceticism or endurable training" you decide. Simply speaking, the former corresponds to a style of how-to-do, and the latter a style of what-to-do. You should notice the difference between two kinds of "shugyo." I hope you continue to do both of them.

[SHUGYO 修業(technical) ==> 修行(spiritual) ==> 修業 ==> 修行 ==> 修業 ==> 修行]

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