

From: Shizuo Imaizumi

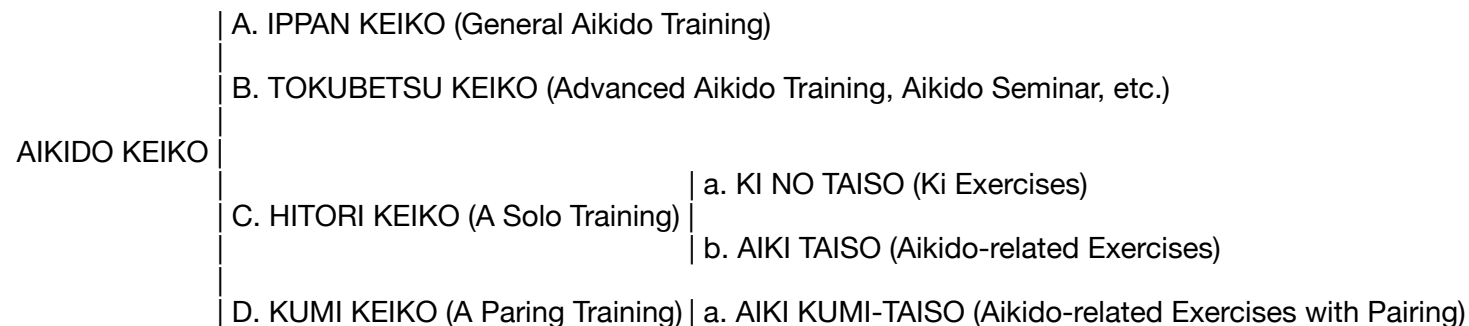
To: Melih Arslan and SBK students

Topic: Aikido Keiko (Aikido training)

Date: October 3, 2026

I received Aikido-related questions from Mel through his email dated on September 27. So I take an opportunity for writing a short article about Aikido Keiko at a dojo or any available location.

First, just take a look at the chart below:



Among the above-mentioned subjects of Aikido keiko, I don't guess you are familiar with the naming of aiki taiso and aiki kumi-taiso. Therefore, I focus on both topics in this short article. The word "aiki taiso" literally means exercises for solely performing the form of Aikido technique you select. Meanwhile, "aiki kumi-taiso" means exercises for a part of Aikido technique with pairing. The following is my explanation for practicing both exercises effectively.

AIKI TAISO (Aikido-related Exercises)

As you don't need your partner in aiki taiso, you can practice the form of Aikido technique solely whenever you want to do so. I take shomen-uchi kokyu-nage (irimi-nage) for the example. First, you disregard an uke out of your mind and practice the basic form of shomen-uchi kokyu-nage (irimi-nage). After you satisfy with your form of execution of shomen-uchi kokyu-nage (irimi-nage), you proceed to the next level of practice of that waza (technique), which I explain to you in detail. In this case, you visualize your uke standing at a proper distance in front of you. There are three ways of technical execution in accordance with timing: 1) sen no sen, 2) tsui no sen, and 3) go no sen. In other words, those three correspond to each situation of 1) nage initiates the movement and uke reacts to this attack, 2) both nage and uke move simultaneously, and 3) uke initiates the movement and nage reacts to this attack.

Keep in mind that timing of each of them is different from each other. As you are a solo performer in this aiki taiso, you should select which one of them you want to practice. I recommend to follow in order, that is, from easy to difficult. You should also understand the importance of timing of executing your Aikido waza (technique).

The following numbers of No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 match with the above-mentioned 1), 2) and 3) respectively. The explanation below is based on shomen-uchi (striking nage's head) with the right-hand of uke while nage is standing with mihi-hanmi posture.

No. 1: Nage initiates the first movement by raising his/her right hand anticipating an imaginary uke's reaction to it. When uke raises his/her right hand for blocking nage's right hand, nage takes his/her left foot forward, touches uke's neck area from behind with his/her left hand and strikes uke's right hand down. After that, nage raises his/her right hand toward uke's neck taking his/her right foot forward behind uke, and then nage throws uke down. Finally, nage gets into the pose of zanshin standing still.

No. 2: Both nage and uke move simultaneously. In this case, both right hands of uke and nage cross with each other over their heads. From there, nage takes his/her left foot forward, touches uke's neck area from behind with his/her left hand and strikes uke's right hand down turning his/her body right by taking his/her right foot backward like tenkan movement. After that, nage raises his/her right hand toward uke's neck with keeping the left hand behind uke's neck area, and then nage throws uke down. Finally, nage gets into the pose of zanshin. No. 2 is a standard of shomen-uchi kokyu-nage (irimi-nage) practicing in a general keiko in a dojo.

No. 3: Uke initiates the first movement by trying to strike nage's head. When nage raises his/her right hand to react to uke's attack, nage takes his/her right foot backward like drawing a curve with hiki-hiraki footwork, leads uke's right hand downward with the left hand behind uke's neck area, and then nage moves his/her right hand toward uke's neck for throwing him/her down. Finally, nage gets into the pose of zanshin.

Next, I take shomen-uchi ikkyo for the example. First, you disregard an uke out of your mind and practice the basic form of shomen-uchi ikkyo. But this is not the same as ikkyo undo in ki no taiso. Although you swing your hands up and down in ikkyo undo, you must change your form into an actual ikkyo execution, including your footwork. After you satisfy with your form of execution of shomen-uchi ikkyo, you proceed to the next level of practice. There is a slight difference from the standpoint of 1), 2) and 3).

No. 1: As nage initiates the first movement of shomen-uchi ikkyo, nage first raises both hands like ikkyo undo in ki no taiso. After that, nage moves both hands downward with a gripping style, and then nage walks forward lowering his/her upper body until he/she finishes executing ikkyo. Finally, nage gets into the pose of zanshin.

No. 2: Both uke and nage move simultaneously. In this case, both right hands of uke and nage cross with each other over their heads. From there, nage grabs uke's right hand and elbow area while moving his/her right foot sideways for making an open stance.

After that, nage pushes uke's right arm downward, and then nage walks forward lowering his/her upper body until he/she finishes executing ikkyo. Finally, nage gets into the pose of zanshin.

No. 3: Uke initiates the first movement by trying to strike nage's head. When nage raises his/her right hand to react uke's shomen-uchi attack, nage takes his/her left foot forward behind uke with the left hand reaching his/her right elbow area. After that, nage takes his/her right foot backward like tenkan footwork. Finally, nage lowers his/her upper body until he/she reaches the pinning position on the floor. Finally, nage gets into the pose of zanshin.

AIKI KUMI-TAISO (Aikido-related Exercises with Pairing)

In aiki kumi-taiso, you have a partner. Main purpose of pairing training is that you feel actual uke's weight in comparison with an imaginary uke of aiki-taiso for hitori keiko. Even though your uke doesn't resist against you, you understand that this uke is heavier than an imaginary uke. Therefore, you can find your mistake easier than when in your solo training.

I take katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-nage (ude-mawashi horizontally) for the example. Keep in mind that you practice a part of Aikido waza. Therefore, when you change your final action of this kokyu-nage into the form of ikkyo, that becomes ikkyo (tenkan). But here I only explain to you under the name of katate-tori-ryote-mochi kokyu-nage (ude-mawashi horizontally). Both nage and uke perform both roles during turning around. This is the good tai-sabaki exercise to coordinate the movements of hands, feet and body of both persons. Although you can start with the style of Aikido katate-tori-ryote-mochi (uke grabbing nage's hand with both hands), for convenience' sake of explanation of process, I give you an easy method for this practice.

Nage: Nage raises his right hand thrusting horizontally sideways. (In Aikido style, nage just thrusts his right hand downward.)

Uke: Uke grabs nage's right wrist and elbow area gently. (In Aikido style, uke grabs nage's right hand with both hands.)

Nage: Nage initiates the first movement by taking his/her left foot backward turning the body like tenkan movement. After that, nage moves the right hand horizontally toward his/her own chest.

Uke: Uke follows nage's movement by taking his/her left foot forward that means the foot closer to nage's body, and then uke takes his/her right foot forward. All uke has to do is follow nage's leading to the next action.

Nage: After nage's right hand reaches his/her own chest, nage flexes his/her right fingers so that he/she enables to grab uke's right hand. At the same time, the left hand reaches uke's right elbow area. The finishing posture of this process should be the same form as uke did at the beginning of this exercise. Now from here nage takes the role of uke.

Uke: After uke lets go his/her hold on nage's right hand and elbow area, this time uke gets into the pose of nage's beginning style. Now from here uke takes the role of nage described above.

Repeat this rounding movement several times at the same space standing with each other. That means something is wrong when both of them are standing at the different spot, several feet away from the original starting spot. Finally, the person who plays the role of nage executes Aikido technique by grabbing uke's neck area with the left hand (in case of kokyu-nage) or grabbing uke's elbow area with the left hand (in case of ikkyo).

Below is a checklist of both roles of nage and uke for your reference:

UKE

Beginning form:
Migi-hanmi (the right foot forward),
With the right hand holding nage's hand
and the left hand holding elbow area.

Count 1: (The uke follows nage's count 3.)
Take left foot forward.

Count 2: Take the right foot forward.
This is the end of the role of uke.

Count 3: (Act as nage.)
Take the left foot backward like tenkan movement.
Move the right hand horizontally to the chest.

Count 4: Grab your uke's right hand and elbow area.
This is the end of your role as the nage.

NAGE

Beginning form:
Migi-hanmi (the right foot forward),
With the right hand thrusting horizontally sideways.

Count 3 (The nage initiates the first movement.)
Take the left foot backward like tenkan movement.
Move the right hand horizontally to the chest.

Count 4: Grab uke's right hand and elbow area.
This is the end of the role of nage.

Count 1: (Act as uke.)
Take the left foot forward.

Count 2: Take the right foot forward.
This is the end of your role as the uke.

In conclusion, I recommend you to practice exercises for visualizing each movement I explained to you through this article on aiki taiso and aiki kumi-taiso. Mind moves body. So you must develop your mind effectively so that your body can bring into full play. I remember catch phrase of some TV commercial saying "TIMING IS EVERYTHING." Yes, timing in executing an Aikido waza is very important. Indeed everything is timing. So no hesitation is allowed to execute your technique. I anticipate you understood the meaning of aiki taiso and aiki kumi-taiso. GASSHO! (合掌!)

