

**04**

# **TAE JOURNAL**

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF  
TRADITIONAL AIKIDO EUROPE

**AIKIDO THROUGH  
THE WINTER**

**DOJO PORTRAIT:  
WEST CUMBRIA AIKIDO**

**TAE SURVEY:  
THE RESULTS**



**WELCOME TO THE  
ZOOMIVERSE!**

# **EDITORIAL**

TRADITIONAL AIKIDO EUROPE JOURNAL



## Welcome to the New TAE Journal

Since the start of the pandemic almost all international seminars of TAE had to be cancelled. The summer camp in Switzerland being the one exception which 'sneaked' into the perfect time slot where travelling from most countries was possible and numbers were still reasonably low. For those 30 lucky ones participating it was certainly a most memorable and intensive week!

So exchange and contact among our network has become more difficult, but various initiatives have sprouted to overcome this lack of direct contact:

The dojo-chos have made it a habit to meet monthly via Zoom to discuss their individual situation, exchange experiences and support each other over a glass of wine or beer and with sometimes fancy virtual backgrounds.

The TAE WhatsApp group is an ongoing exchange, where individual experiences, memories, links, films and photos are shared and where sometimes interesting discussions over aikido explode.

And there are the online seminars, intensives and regular classes via Zoom: this initiative is organised and kept alive by a bunch of very enthusiastic people who decided to approach life the aiki way: blend with what is and make the best out of it. The students dedicate their time to the online classes and work hard on themselves. Most of them, as Adrian admits in the opening of the 'Zoomiverse' article, would not have lasted long on their own. The challenges of solo work are several: having enough knowledge and experience to do it; having enough strength to fight the inner couch potato; and then having the experience of knowing HOW to improve, HOW to work on the different qualities, forms etc. So thanks to the effort of those organising it, the online classes really are a support: they are regular, there is individual feedback, there is someone to show the 'way'.

Of course there can be no substitute for the direct non verbal encounter with another human being under conditions of stress with the intention to train one's capacities for responsive, fearless and responsible engagement - as understood according to the spiritual or psychological principles of Aikido.

We probably all agree that we can't wait to get attacked for real again and get thrown around! But since it may be some time until this is the case, many of us are limited to non-contact or solo training. For us, Lewis' experience from his solo training time is a valuable insight.

**The Editors**, Lewis, Andrea, Michael and Adrian

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# AIKIDO THROUGH THE WINTER

LEWIS BERNALDO DE QUIROS





We are going through extraordinary times and for us practicing Aikido within this line, we have the advantage of the weapon system to rely on while contact training is largely restricted.

One of the cornerstones of Takemusu Aikido as transmitted by our teacher the late Saito Morihiro Sensei, is the principle of Riai: the complementary relationship between the underlying principles of training empty handed and with weapons.

So in this essay I would like to share my own experiences with weapon training and this core principle within our system. I share my experiences in the spirit of hoping to inspire training within our community as we head into the winter and face continued restrictions into the new year.

In the beginning of my stay in Iwama (I was there from 1986 to 1993) Sensei regularly talked about Riai and the relationship between weapons and taijutsu emphasising them as being one system and not two. I could hear this and agree with it but when thinking it over critically could see areas of 'overlap' between the movement patterns of certain obvious techniques in both branches but beyond those few, for most of the technical corpus, I could not find much real relationship. But the theory sounded nice.

That understanding changed when I tore the medial meniscus of my left knee seriously and was unable to train taijutsu for about 11 months in total. The origin of that tear was an old judo injury where in a competition I resisted a leg sweep that almost broke my leg, but which ended up severely straining the ligaments of my knee. In those early years Sensei was in good shape physically so we regularly did hour long suwari waza sessions where I would end up limping home after class with bloodied knees. Until the day my knee finally gave way.

Having family and friendly contacts within the medical community, the advice I got was to see a top sports orthopaedic surgeon (in London) to carry out the operation. But for that I had to wait 9 months. I could train the morning weapon classes but the taijutsu evening sessions were impossible.

The first weeks of morning training I would regularly make a misstep misaligning foot and knee. This would result in my knee 'locking' and me hopping about and shaking it out until I got it free again. Sensei of course knew my situation and allowed me space to go at my own tempo with the techniques. Everything slowed down as I investigated footwork, placement and movement within the shadow of painful instant feedback. Sensei would demonstrate technique but I focused mostly on how he moved. I looked at things I had not been looking at before. I marvelled at his smoothness of motion. It was as if he was wearing velvet slippers... gradually the 'locking ups' became less and finally ceased.

At night I would go to the Dojo and watch the taijutsu classes. Again, I was not so much interested in the techniques: in those days Sensei circled through a small repertoire of techniques mostly at the kihon level: Ikkyo endlessly followed by shiho nage most of the time. Most attacks from katate dori or shomen uchi. 20% of training time at most was dedicated to the rest of the technical corpus. My interest was focused on how Sensei moved.

Watching the classes I came to realise the huge gap between what Sensei was showing and what the vast majority of his students were doing.

Sensei was smooth, balanced and incredibly precise. No matter how ferocious his uke would attack, he never appeared disturbed. He could absorb it easily. His power was overwhelming (literally) and was coming from a clearly coordinated use of his whole body and center at precisely the right time and place in the techniques. He made it look easy and effortless. In contrast most of the class (and me included when I was training) were using lots of upper body force, were regularly unbalanced while applying the techniques and ukemi was mostly a matter of survival not grace. Everything Sensei did looked beautiful. The rest of us looked... much less so.

I came to see that Sensei was showing and teaching on two levels simultaneously. An outer level of Technique and an inner level of Principle. Every time with every technique. You had either to be uke to feel the 'inner' or be capable of seeing it. He was not emphasising this inner part in his overt teaching. Occasionally he would make comments pertaining to this level but it was as if most of us were deaf. All we could see was effortless result and power and we tried to copy that - using lots of effort!

After six years of trying with lots of effort I was finally in a place to look 'through' Sensei's technique. I also had tons of





**"Sensei was smooth, balanced and incredibly precise. No matter how ferocious his uke would attack, he never appeared disturbed."**

experience taking ukemi from his techniques so my body was as if saturated with 'kinaesthetic impressions'. What was he really doing? Why was it that no matter what technique he did it all somehow looked the same?

I could see the 'what' but I could not understand the 'how'. I could see his 'weight', his balance, his lack of reactivity, his exquisite timing, his presence in the midst of movement, the smooth transitions without 'signals', the extension beyond the finishes, his deep connection with uke: overwhelming and yet caring for their safety at the same time. Amazing... but somehow I could not put all the pieces together...



After six months of morning training and evening watching I had the opportunity to do an extended stay in a traditional Zen Monastery to deepen my meditation practice under a famous Roshi. I spent three months in this isolated mountain monastery which had a wonderful view of Mt. Fuji in the distance. The daily schedule there was brutal: up at 04:00 and to bed by 22:00. Nine hours of daily sitting meditation spread over seven sessions. Plus cleaning and kitchen duties. The monastery ran on wood and oil. There was no electricity. Food was donated from farms in the neighbourhood. No one spoke (only when absolutely necessary) and we did not know each other's names or stories. No books, no telephone, no radio, no distractions. Only being there in the practice and the daily schedule which was ironclad. The rest of the world more or less disappeared for me during that time.

It sounds crazy to say, but this was probably one of the happiest periods of my entire life. But that is maybe for another essay...

Three things converged for me there as far as my Aikido practice is concerned: mental focus, chopping lots of wood and half an hour of bokken practice every afternoon.

In such a setting it became clear that meditation is not so much about any kind of acquisition as it is about everything falling away from you. Silence or Presence is not something created. It is always



there, everywhere at all times no matter how chaotic or dramatic the life situation one finds oneself to be in. When all distractions fall away what is left? What is 'here' that never comes or goes?

The monastery kitchen and bath ran on wood. So every day there was a lot of wood to cut. Two of us did it. Number one was cutting and stacking the trunks. My job as number two was to take each trunk block (about 20 cm wide by 30 or 40 cm long) and cut them into four quarters. I would 'move' a pile of such trunks (almost my own height) from one side to another for about three hours a day. The axe was double headed and very heavy. From the beginning it was clear that the strike had to come from a swing and not from a lift. Every block of wood was different with different grain. Every strike had to be different and precise to cut through. I was terrible at it. My shoulders were killing me. The axe 'bounced' off the block, or got stuck half way through. It would take me a dozen or more strikes to cut through one block. My technique sucked and initially I wasted tremendous amounts of energy. Plus I was not able to cut enough wood in time.

Gradually I got better. I applied everything I had learned and practiced with Sensei: no power without the ground as source, focus on the point of impact and swing from the center and whole body. Be careful to not add shoulder power or redirect the arch from the arms. Allow the power of the body to flow through the shoulders as if they were

open gates and the arms as if they were thick ropes. Allow the axe to follow the mind through the block...

Gradually I used less energy and got better results. In line with my experience in meditation it seemed more about doing less than more. More about getting out of the way than taking control.

Roshi knew I practiced Aikido and I had brought a bokken with me. There was one period during the whole day when we were 'free': from 15:00 to 15:30. Under the roof of one of the buildings of the monastery complex there was a wonderful open space with tatami (the perfect Dojo!) so I asked whether I could practice there and was given permission.

Sensations, deeper and deeper. Attention, body shifting, the feel of the dry tatami under feet, weight compressing, the wooden beams of the roof, the light cutting through the space....

After many years of having had the great privilege to teach Aikido I have come to realise that questions are far more important than so called 'answers'. If we approach our art with a curious questioning mind, doors and directions open up for us to explore - and hopefully take us to places we never suspected existed. In my teaching I try to open up these 'directions' for my students.

I think those solitary sessions in that setting opened that all up for me. No answers, only exploration.



**"Our art does not exist in some abstract space but exists in all of us, in our bodies, our knowledge, our abilities."**

After three months I left the monastery and had my knee operation. A skilful surgeon cut out the minimal amount of meniscus and told me three things: to not put on extra weight, to keep training. And ...to use my feet for walking and not my knees!

After a minimal rehabilitation I finally entered my first evening class in almost a year. I was nervous. I had the feeling that I had forgotten everything, that empty handed techniques were just gone. I had not paid them any attention at all in that period of intense focus on other things.

We bowed in and I bowed to my partner. Tai no henko. He grabbed my wrist fiercely. And ... it was easier! It was easier than I remembered! This infuriatingly incomprehensible exercise had opened up. I do not claim by any means that I had 'mastered' it. Not at all. But it was easier than before in the real sense of greater 'ease' of execution. And so it was with everything we did that evening. Somehow my taijutsu, just through focusing on weapons and movement, had improved. I realised in my body that evening that Sensei was right. It was one system. And not only that: that my previous understanding of Riai had been very superficial.

The deeper levels of Riai are in the use of the body underlying both empty handed and weapons training: grounding, centering and being whole, extension and connection. The deeper levels are all about structure, sensation and organisation. The movement patterns are secondary. Just cutting shomen uchi with the bokken had finally revealed this to me.

So that brings me in a long, roundabout way to our present situation.

As I write these lines it is early October 2020, since March dojos have either been closed or restricted to non-contact weapons training. We are six months into this now and it is looking like we could easily do another six months or more before we are through this in one way or another.

There is no doubt that these times are a body blow for many dojos and will decimate memberships. But as for those of us committed to this wonderful art, how can we turn the current situation to our advantage? How to join and blend with this so that our ability and understanding come out stronger? If this is a fire, how can we use it to forge something stronger? Something more resilient which allows us to deal even better with the challenges we are facing? How can all our training in structural organisation, appropriate action and non-resistance, be applied to the greater 'practice' that is daily life?

Our art does not exist in some abstract space but exists in all of us, in our bodies, our knowledge, our abilities. From the freshest beginner on the mat to the most experienced senior. The 'directions' we open up to in response to the questions above (and many more) will decide the future of our Aikido.

The treasure that Morihei Ueshiba left behind is in all of our hands. Let's take care of it.

Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros.  
October 12 2020.  
Zaragoza, Spain.





# **WELCOME TO THE ZOOMIVERSE!**

ADRIAN PUNT, SARINA ABDUL-RANI  
AND MICHAEL ORMEROD



This is a tale of a group of people, from both within and beyond TAE, that came together in April 2020 to train as part of the Takemusu Aikido Online Dojo. As a group, we have met via Zoom, five, for some six, and on occasion, seven times per week. This has been our routine for the last six months and as of the start of November 2020, this equates to over 200 hours of live online training – all of which you can find on YouTube:



Here, we would like to welcome you to the 'Zoomiverse'!!

We are going to tell our story in three pieces. Firstly, some initial impressions from early in the pandemic as countries went into lockdown; secondly, views from a range of online regulars from mid-summer time this year; and, finally, thoughts from Michael Ormerod who has now been teaching online, pretty much day-in-day-out for the last six months.

## Part 1 – 'In the beginning'

### - Adrian Punt

**Hello, my name is Adrian.** Around March this year, all of our aikido lives changed and for most they changed very quickly and quite dramatically. Our clubs closed, seminars were cancelled, country borders closed and people were put under lockdown. Aikido plans and dreams quickly evaporated...

People across TAE, and across the whole aikido community, started posting videos, things to train along to. I entered the lockdown in England making the resolution to do solo training of some form or other every morning for an hour starting at 7 am. I lasted three-days... I missed the community, the connection. My daily training schedule unravelled, there was too much opportunity to defer to later. Things were not going to plan...

Then something happened...

On my Facebook feed, posts for live, online aikido classes started to appear. I was curious, I started to explore with results that were sometimes positive and sometimes not!! The idea of online classes soon took hold in TAE and thereafter the first tentative TAE steps into live, online classes were taken.

In late April, in part replacement for the cancelled Motril (south of Spain) intensive training week with Lewis, Michael set up a series of daily online classes via Zoom. They were fun ☺. OK we weren't all together in the south of Spain, but I made tapas and drank Spanish beer in my garden after class. People asked Michael to arrange further classes, and the Takemusu Aikido Online Dojo was born!!

Over the subsequent six-months, a dedicated online community has developed. Whether from a kitchen; lounge; bedroom; office; balcony; garden; park; or, wood, we have 'met' regularly. We bow in with the cry of

"onegaishimasu" to our computer, tablet or smartphone. We peer through the 'letterbox' of whatever digital device we have, into the homes and lives of our fellow aikidoka. We become sensitive to what we see, is Bernie wearing his coat? Yes, so it must be cold in the Netherlands!! Where is Roland? An indication of weather in Germany. We listen to the sound of morning bird song as Ella finds a clearing in a Polish woodland to train in or laugh when we find out that her winter training hideaway is in the attic of the school she works at. Occasionally, an inquisitive child pops up in front of the camera – perhaps expecting to see grandparents on the other side of the digital lens. Classes finish with a chorus of "see you later" or "see you tomorrow".





**"One does not need buildings,  
money, power, or status to  
practice the Art of Peace.**

**Heaven is right where you are  
standing, and that is the place  
to train."**

- Morihei Ueshiba





This is the story of a few of us from TAE and from beyond, where weekly, if not daily, and at times twice daily, live online training via Zoom has become the norm, where logging onto Zoom classes is a daily ritual. Hence we welcome you to the Zoomiverse!! From an initial concept, TAE and TAE club online offerings have expanded and evolved. This is a story of just a part of that, of one particular group that came together, and has, by-and-large, stayed together.

From here I am going to let Sarina tell you the next part of our tale.

**Thank you Adrian, and hello everyone, I am Sarina.** I grew up in Malaysia and was exposed to Malaysian martial arts as a child, something that always fascinated me. I first came to England in the 1990s as a university student then subsequently worked and travelled abroad. I was first exposed to aikido in Darwin, Australia and again later in the mid-2000s after returning to the UK. However, the pressures of further study and family meant I couldn't continue my aikido studies at that time.

In mid-February this year, after several years of not doing aikido, I joined a club near my home in the East of England. It was exciting to be back on the mat after so many years! That excitement lasted for 6 weeks, then the club, and the country as a whole went into lockdown...

Fortunately, a few weeks later in April, a friend sent me a link about the online 'intensive'. I didn't know Michael, I had never heard of TAE and to be honest I didn't really understand that there were different styles of aikido. I had some doubts about learning a martial art via an online class, especially as I considered myself a



returning beginner. However, my local club was closed, I was working from home and my three children were at home with me, so I thought, gone on, give it a go!

I signed up for the intensive as soon as Michael reassured me it was essentially a 'back to basic' week. As days went by, I slowly understood the importance of keeping myself grounded and yet 'light' together with the fact that the intention with every move determines the outcome. I liked the way Michael encouraged us to explore the 'super basic' moves deeper and deeper through the week.

When the week was over, I was more connected with my 'centre', and could feel the palpable energy during my practise. The connection with my bokken and jo increased dramatically. Muscles that I never knew existed ached for several days but most of all, I had fun!

Personally, my greatest achievement for the week was to get the basic form of the 7 ken suburi. It is a real testament to Michael's passion of sharing his knowledge and ideas. Every question was answered thoughtfully, and as he encouraged us to explore and experiment, it helped tremendously in gaining an understanding of why certain techniques are done in a very particular way. I signed up for more, and even did every class of the 'Around the World' 24hr Aikido Challenge in July and raised some funds for a local charity too!

It has been awesome, and I feel very blessed to have participated in Michael's and the broader TAE group classes through the year. With the reopening of schools in England in September it has been very difficult to get to the morning classes, I truly miss them, but I will be back when I can! I am really grateful to Michael and to the group as the sense of positivity, silent encouragement and support were always there. If I may, I would also like to thank the TAE Online Classes teachers – Arjan, Paul, Brendon, Andrea, Nik, Johnny and Sascha – for some incredible and innovative ways of teaching over Zoom. Thank you all!

A HUGE THANK YOU to the group who responded to our mini-survey on online training / learning, the results of which are summarised in Part 2.

I also pass you across to Michael to hear what it has been like to be teaching online for 7 months, where Adrian and I have set five questions for him to answer (see Part 3).





**"Day after day,  
train your heart out,  
refining your technique.**

**That is the discipline  
of the warrior."**

- Morihei Ueshiba



## **Part 2 – 'Summertime thoughts'**

### **- Sarina Abdul-Rani**

In July this year, we asked members of the Takemusu Aikido Online Dojo to respond to three questions on their experiences of online learning and training as part of a virtual group. We had 13 responses, thank you! These are summarised below.

#### **1) Why are we Zoom-compatible? Is it easier or more challenging to learn via Zoom?**

Members expressed a keen interest in morning training (asageiko), both from those whose clubs were closed and for those who do not live near a TAE instructor. Online learning was viewed as a great opportunity, not only providing access to guided training but also providing a regularity and routine to the early part of people's days. The social interactions of the group, both via the morning Zoom meet and the WhatsApp group were identified by many as important to them.

People enjoyed the opportunity to explore both jo and bokken basic exercises, in depth over a long period of days and at times weeks. People liked the way Michael moved the classes between the traditional weapon structures and the more exploratory approach. For many the training was seen as a kind of guided solo practice, not an alternative to in person partnered training, but as a way of maintaining both body and mind in a very difficult time. As one response noted "...it is our chance to access our inner teacher and trust in ourself and become our own teacher". Another noted "For me the morning classes feel very much like having a personal trainer. It feels like a very one-to-one relationship. They provide the motivation and inspiration and some technical guidance, they set the challenge. I remain focused on what I am doing and each class is an achievement of personal discovery".

The classes have also opened up the opportunity for people to train much more frequently, whether online or offline, daily and even sometimes more than once per day. The frequency of classes, consistency of the teacher and the focus on basics, specifically, the basics of movement have helped many. For some training in a solo setting relatively free of distraction and a class focus on finding 'this feeling' and 'that feeling' has allowed a much more internal focus compared to the experience you might get in a busy dojo.

The informal nature of no gi, no belt, no grade was also appreciated where people naturally fell into a polite and respectful way but were free to ask questions and train at their own tempo.

Remote classes work well for solo weapons training and tai subaki kind of exercises, effectively movement work. Obviously, some things are more difficult, for instance identifying proper foot and handwork, angles and timing and distance training is not the same. However, working in small indoor space can really improve your spatial perception!!

**2) What do you enjoy most with the Zoom classes? Any 'AHA!' moments?  
What is most important to you during these classes?**

Several people noted that they really enjoyed the warm-up, i.e. 10 to 15 minutes of strength, flexibility, and mobility training with common elements repeated day by day, but always a slightly different mix. One person noted that they were positively surprised to see elements comparable to yoga / tai chi / qi gong and that these had been very helpful in building up a better core and feeling for balance. Another person writes about noting a change in their grounding and centralised movements.

Again and again, people reflected that the important thing was the connection that you make with the people attending the Zoom classes. With regulars from Spain, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and the UK, we have not yet all met in person, but we see each other nearly every day!! As one person wrote "...we are enjoying, laughing and learning" and another says "We are a 'club' and we have the T-shirts to prove it!!".

As one person noted, you have the freedom to make mistakes and are focused on what your body is doing. This gives a very different feeling compared to training in a dojo, a feeling that can be almost meditative at times. However, at other times you need to be very focused! Others have also observed the discovery of new body feelings and sensations. As one person noted, "solo practice is essential for our development in aikido, but most of us are not at the level to feel when we use our bodies in a wrong way. We need someone to observe and instruct us. Therefore online training have been extremely helpful".





**3) Any other comments or feedback please? e.g. have you enjoyed the social interactions, any areas for improvement, would you want Zoom classes to continue after returning to your dojos.**

Everyone was very enthusiastic about the classes, wanting them to continue. Even people returning to work in the summer who were no longer able to attend the classes live, were interested in training along to the recordings. People also saw an ongoing opportunity for classes like this focusing on solo work and the basics even when society returns to normal. Not as an alternative to going to a dojo, but as a supplement to this, particularly where, for whatever reason people cannot access the level and frequency of training and support they need.

Some who are also teaching, noted the classes as a source of inspiration. Again, the freedom to explore and the flexibility to stop and watch or practice at your own pace was noted as something that helps people learn. One person notes that the online training process has opened doors to creative expressions in so many ways and that this has emphasised the 'Art' side of the 'Martial'.

Finally, as one person notes, "I found the essence of what I was looking for all these years in my aikido, that is feeling free and expand inside without heaviness, just a sensation of being light, but also with energy and power in the body".

Thank you again to everyone who responded! We have heard what the students have to say about the online classes, so now Adrian and I want to know what it's like from the perspective of a teacher.



**"So you have to be your own teacher and your own disciple, and there is no teacher outside.**

**You yourself have to change, and therefore you have to learn to observe, to know yourself.**

**This learning about yourself is a fascinating and joyous business."**

**- Jiddu Krishnamurti**



## **Part 3 – 'The View From the Other Side'**

### **- Michael Ormerod**

Thank you Sarina, and greetings from Spain! The lock-down in Spain meant the closure of the Motril Dojo and with it the cancelling of all my teaching responsibilities, my schedule suddenly became totally blanco! Seven months and well over 200hrs of online teaching, this is not what I had expected for the year...

#### **Adrian: What led you to start teaching the morning class?**

I started with a huge amount of resistance to the very idea of online Aikido classes. I had seen online classes before, 'sign up to our 6 Week Challenge', or 'Meet your Online Guru', They were gimmicky, and mostly heavily focussed on talking, not doing - something I am not very keen on! However, there was enough momentum building behind the idea from the TAE group (Adrian especially!) that it felt a little like, what the hell, let's give it a go. I had no expectations of the classes, apart from expecting them to be over before they started. So this all started with a heavy dose of scepticism mixed with an equal amount of curiosity. What could we do with this new medium? Would it be possible for students to make progress online? Would it be possible for teachers to facilitate meaningful change?

A now infamous tweet from Ivanka Trump reads:

*"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."* - Socrates  
(note: a fictional character not the philosopher).

I have always trained in some shape or form in the mornings, the strict Spanish lock-down didn't affect that, it even made it easier. It's always been my wish to increase the popularity of morning classes, of all the training I do this is where I find the most benefit and reward in terms of making changes to my body-being and making new distinctions of feeling. And here we all were in home confinement. What a great opportunity to go inside, turn the spotlight on ourselves and focus on the principles that underpin our art. So I literally had a captive audience!



**Sarina: Your classes are well structured and feel as if they flow from day to day. Do you plan the structure of each class and have some overall schedule?**

Every day is a new day, so I actually never plan my classes, online or not. The nature of group classes is the organic and dynamic interaction between the teacher and students. The classes develop naturally from how the students perceive and translate what I am trying to demonstrate. I want to live on the mat with the students not to impose my will on them, it's not all about me! Overall, the system itself has its own beautiful logic, so it's a matter of getting people into the stream and letting it carry them.

My initial concern with the lock-downs across Europe was for those who have a clear passion for the art but for reasons of a lack of experience or confidence wouldn't know how to approach solo training, home alone. My worry was that their training time would reduce and that eventually they may stop practising Aikido entirely. It's almost a given that we will see the pandemic diminish student numbers, but it shouldn't feel inevitable. Those of us that are in the privileged position of being teachers have a responsibility to the students, whatever the circumstances, global pandemic or not! So I want the students in the classes to feel that they are not alone, even if in truth, in the learning process, we all are!

**Adrian: How does online teaching and evaluating progress compare to having people there with you in the dojo?**

It is interesting to see how students present themselves for the online classes. Some will cloak themselves in the dark of the early morning, place their camera so it is impossible to see the whole body, whilst others make sure they are seen in full HD quality! This is probably for the most part done entirely unconsciously, but it is revealing nevertheless of the students openness to make changes and be corrected. As a teacher it's a tightrope between respecting peoples barriers and helping them to make progress. Because we are dealing with audio/visual technology, it's important online that I give as crystal clear an explanation and demonstration as possible. In comparison to the dojo we simply cannot, no matter what setup or how advanced the technology we use, ever replace the feeling of a one-to-one direct encounter with another living human being. And so online the impact of the teacher is logically less. But at the core it is really about the students making distinctions in their feelings and sensations, so the work is ultimately the same. One of the benefits of the online classes is that we are training almost every day, so we have a real chance to capitalise on the cumulative effect of daily training. Day after day of basics, over these months I can see people making leaps in learning, and occasionally it happens 'on-screen'. This gives me hope that the possibility exists online to create genuine change.



Takemusu Aikido Online Dojo - Private Class / Jo Turning Sk



**Sarina: In terms of online teaching and learning, what do you think the biggest challenges are?**

The main challenges for us all are best described by two words, presence and pressure. They both come down to making the mistake of seeing the online classes as a replacement for the dojo. The presence of the teacher and the relationship between the student is what makes the learning process so rewarding. My first online class was a disaster; between the new experience of teaching to a laptop with 50 little screens within another screen, and all the participants having their microphones muted, it felt like teaching in a graveyard! I made the decision to limit the morning classes to 15 students, which allows me to give each student the individual attention and feedback necessary during classes.

Aikido at its best is a constant invitation to inquire into our relationship to pressure, to be more responsive and less reactive, and allowing us to access non-resistance as a more functional and creative solution in our daily life. The danger is that without the presence of real genuine pressure, students may 'switch-off', stay in their comfort zone and begin to fall into a self-referencing practice separate from what the teacher is really doing. This is when the learning process stalls, and any hope of real change is inhibited. Of course this happens in the dojo too, but online the trap is easier to fall into. The only way to deal with this challenge is to go into it and explore it, to bring full consciousness to the issue as a teacher, and to make the students aware that this pitfall exists. Martial Arts should be about waking-up and moving towards freedom, it would be a shame to spend all this time training online only to find ourselves deeper inside the Matrix! Online interaction is becoming more prevalent, and as it's hard now to imagine a world without it, we need to use the online medium wisely to get the best out of it and try to avoid the dark side.

**Adrian: What are your longer term plans, do you have a vision?**

Fairly early it became obvious to me that there was a significant number of individuals committed to the idea of daily training online, and as long as the will exists I will continue to teach. Solo training has to be an integral part of anyone's practice, and the idea of guided solo training is an attractive option for students. Maybe we will all learn more together than if we were on our own. In the long term, the real test for the online classes will be felt in the months to come as we slowly begin to return to our dojos and begin the process of reintegration. If we can come back to the dojo more relaxed, grounded, balanced and with a greater sense of calm in the face of pressure, and as teachers more creative and clear in our methods; then the online classes will continue to have a role in the future.

Lastly, I want to say a huge thank you to all the students of the Online Dojo, those that have affectionately become known as the Zoomi-deshi! Your constant attendance in the classes and commitment to daily practice has been a huge source of inspiration for me personally. It's not always been easy, but it's always been a joyful experience and has been a real gift to share my practice with you all in this strange time. To be continued...



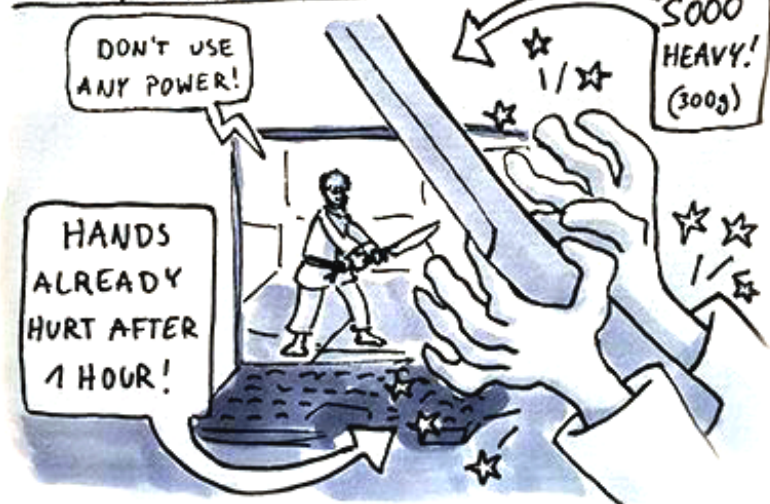


# TAE AIK AROUND IN 24

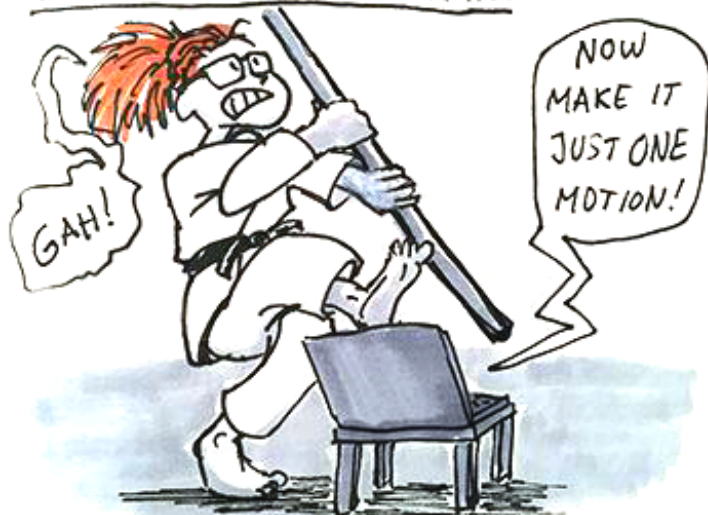
10:00: ANDREA - MEDITATION



10:30 ARJAN: 1ST SUBURI



11:30: PAUL - JO KATA



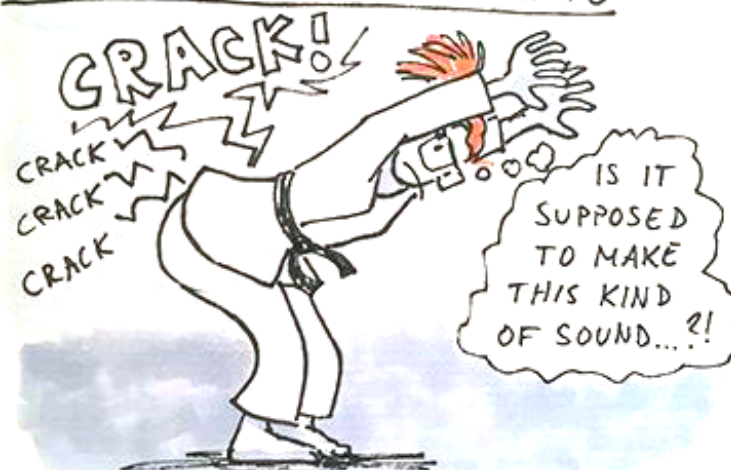
13:00: PIA & JAN - SINGLE EXERCISES



14:00: MICHAEL - IKKYO



15:00: MICHAEL - STRETCHING

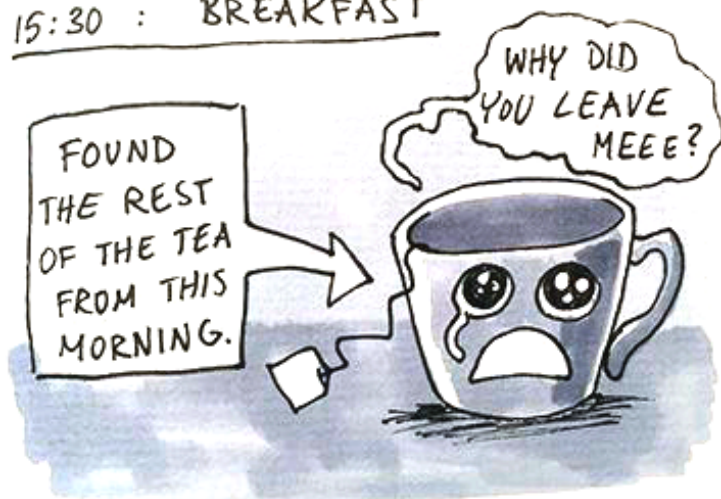




# IDO SEMINAR THE WORLD HOURS

©JUTTA BOSSERT

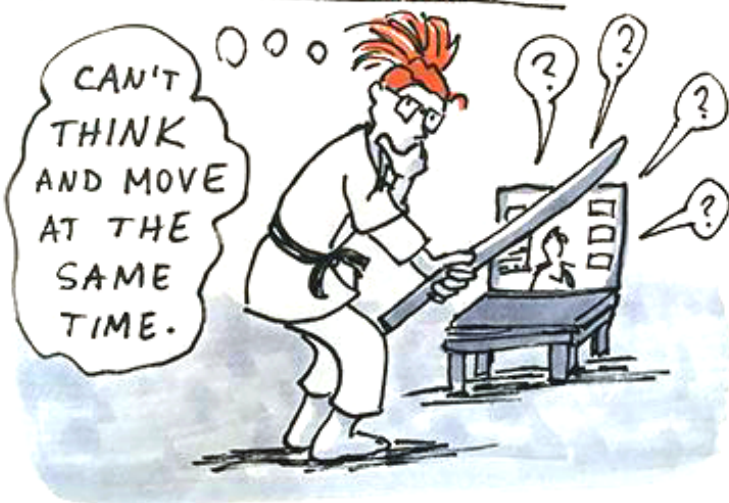
15:30 : BREAKFAST



16:00 : LARS - CHAIR



17:00 : CAROLINA - ???



18:00 : KAYLA - SHIHONAGE/IRIMINAGE



19:00 : NIK - MEDITATION



21:00 : LEWIS - SUBURIS





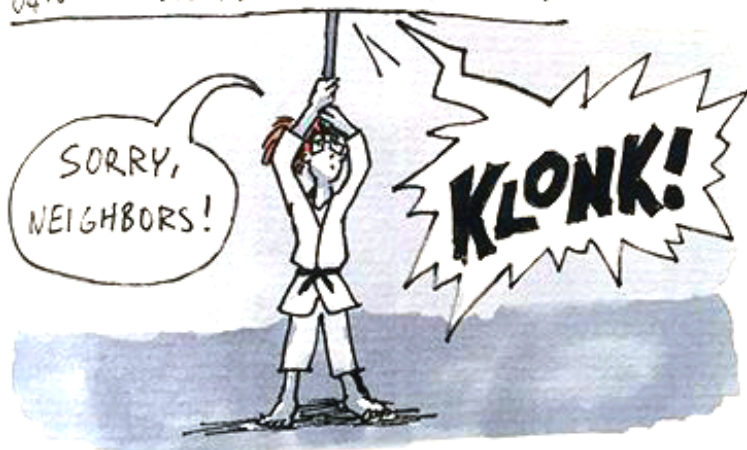




# IDO SEMINAR THE WORLD HOURS

©JUTTA BOSSERT

04:00 : ALAN - 3RD SUBURI



05:00 : ANDREA - MEDITATION & JO



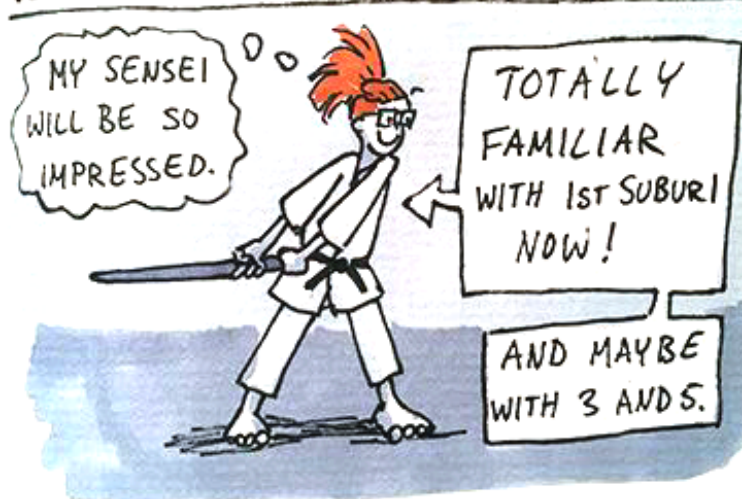
07:00 : BRENDAN - JO AWASE



08:00 : JOHNNY - LETTING THE JO DROP



09:00 : TAE TEACHERS - 7 SUBURI



10:00 : 24 HOURS OVER





# TAE SURVEY: THE RESULTS

ANDREA PFISTERER

with the

AIKIDO ANIMALS © JUTTA BOSSERT

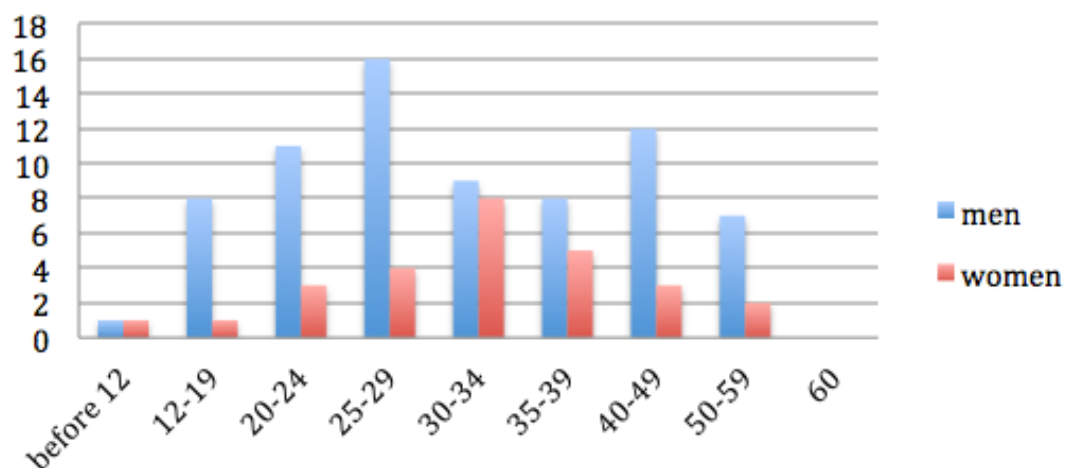


As you are probably aware, we conducted a survey among our members to get a feel for the reasons somebody started aikido, the motivation to keep on training, the generally perceived atmosphere in the dojos and what aikido offers for everyday life. Here we present you the most important findings. We would like to let the results speak for themselves, so first we leave out our comments.

The survey lasted from February 22 until May 30. In this time 136 aikidokas participated, of which 114 finished the survey. In this overview we only included these 114.

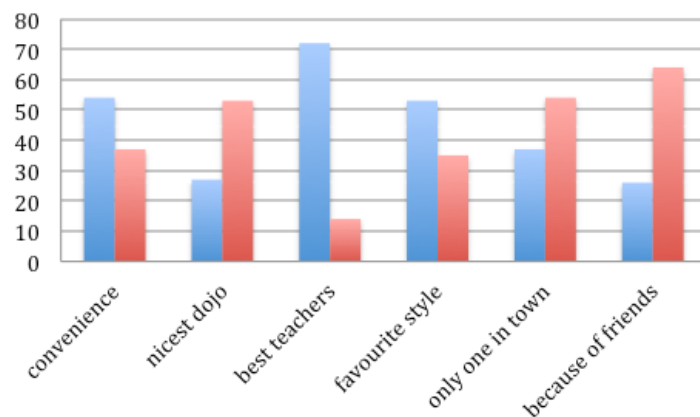
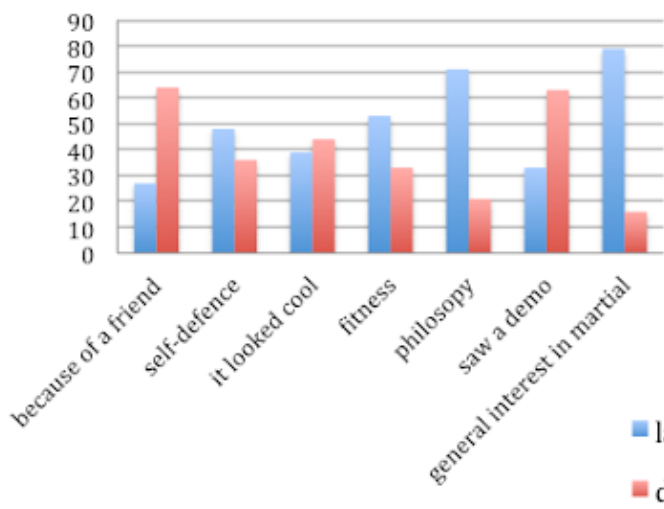
Age distribution: 81.2% are 40 years or older, only 3 participants were younger than 30. About a third were women (27.3%). More than half of the participants (58.6%) were Shodan and above. 48% of the participants started their aikido career before they turned 30, with a tendency for women to start slightly later on.

## When did you start with Aikido?

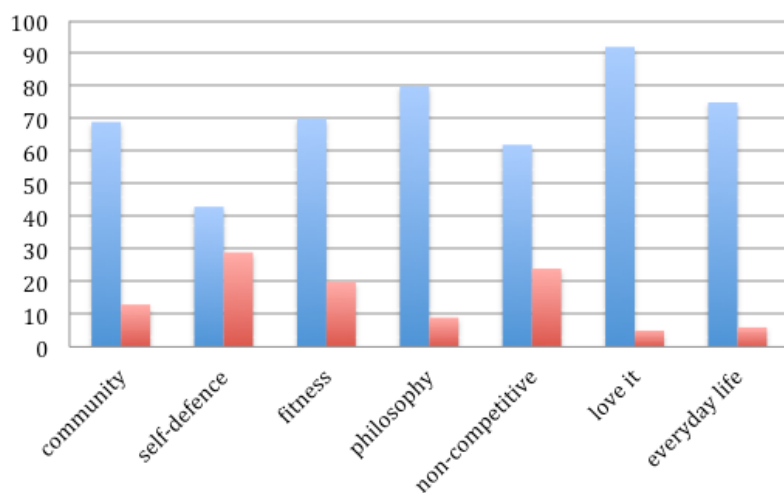


The most important reasons to start Aikido stated were: general interest in martial arts and the philosophy behind it.

People chose their dojo because of teachers, style and convenience:



The motivation to train Aikido was quite varied, but self-defense was rated low:



■ largely or fully applies  
■ does not apply



Regular training seems to be important to most:

How often do you practice?

less than once a week

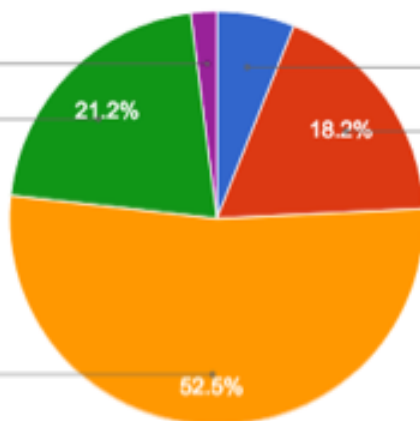
2%

once a week

21.2%

at least 2 times a week

52.5%



everyday

6.1%

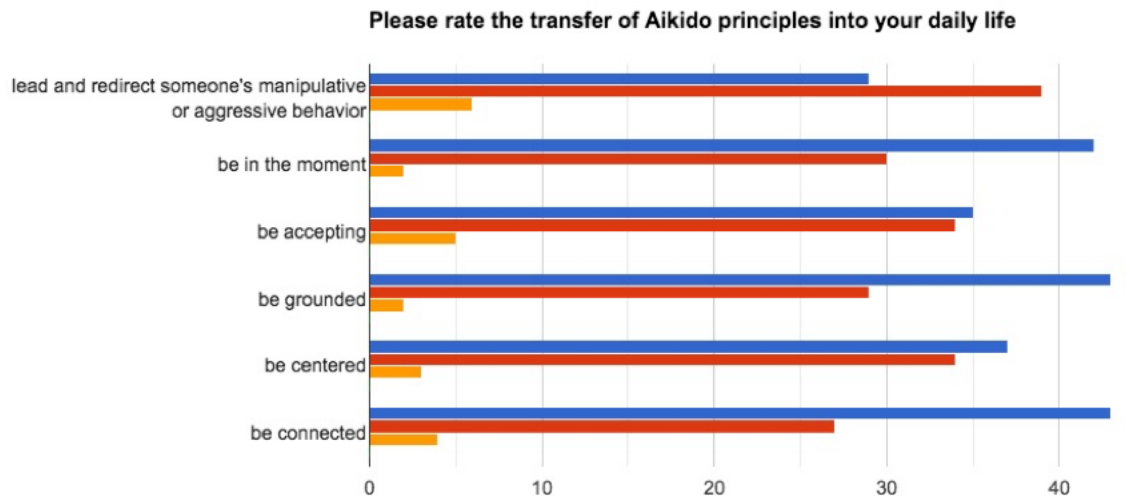
3-4 times a week

18.2%





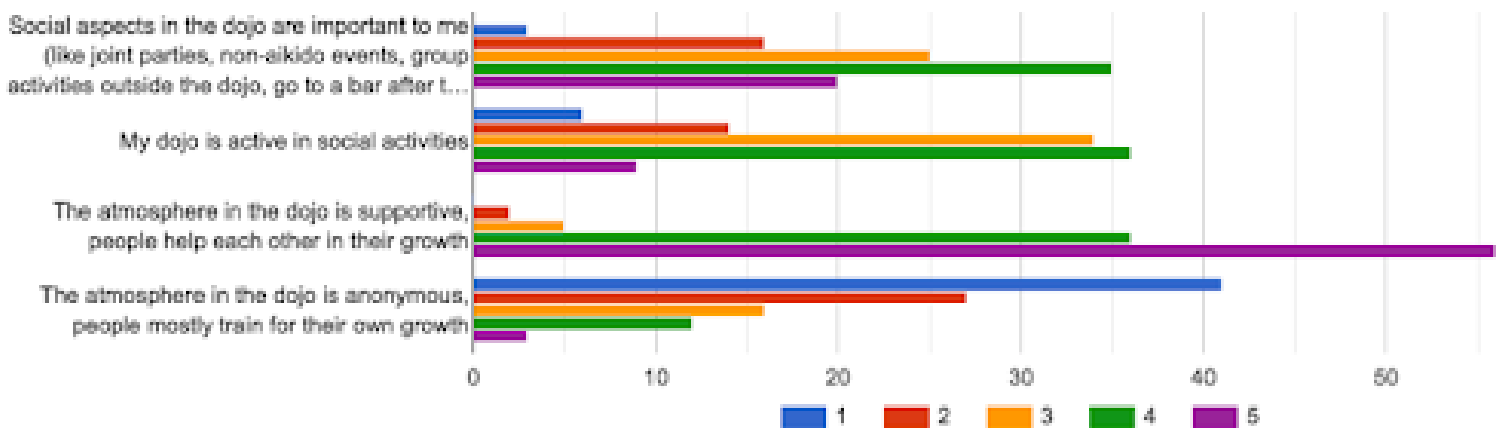
**A majority experiences the spiritual or psychological aspects in the training.**  
Specifically, participants generally experience the following transfer into daily life:



(blue is high, red is ok, yellow is no transfer):

**Dojo community is perceived positively, especially in that people help each other in their growth.**

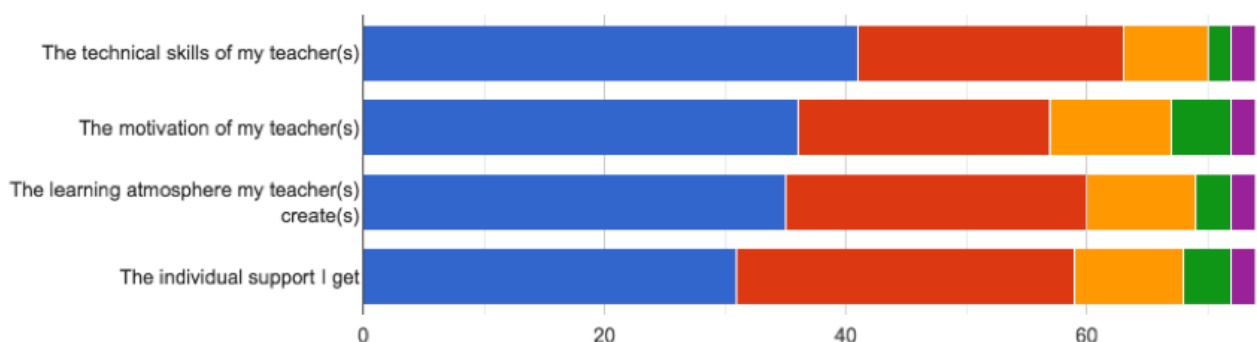
#### Dojo Community



(1 'does not apply at all', 2 'does rather not apply', 3 'undecided', 4 'largely applies', 5 'fully applies'):

**Almost 90% are generally satisfied with the training. When the quality of teaching was evaluated in detail:**

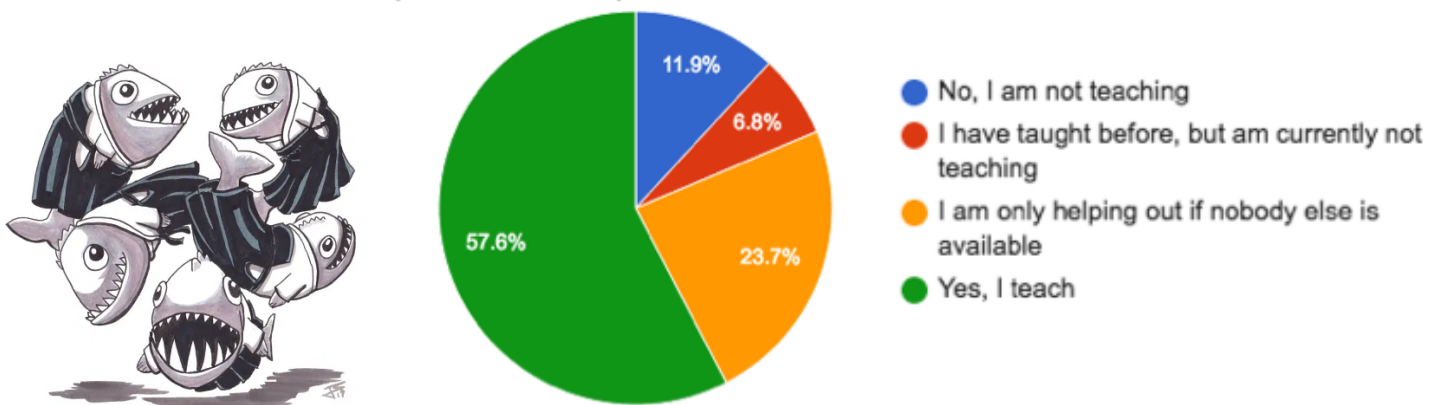
#### Quality of teaching



(blue=very satisfied, red=satisfied, orange= neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, green= dissatisfied, purple= very dissatisfied) With only 4-7 people who evaluated 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.

**Participants of Shodan and above were asked whether they were teaching or not:**

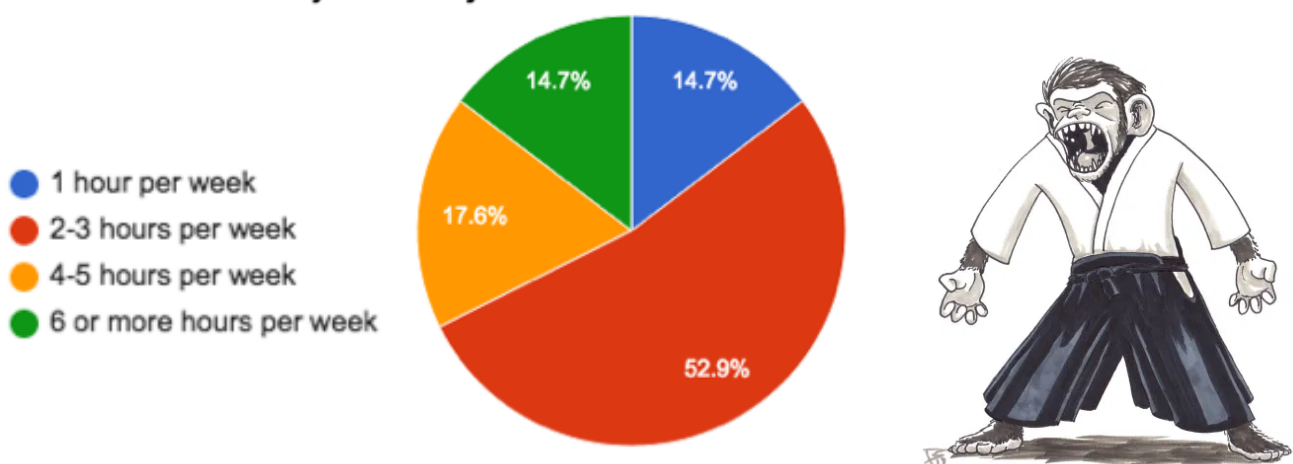
**Senior ranks (1. Dan and above)**



10 of those not teaching would like to teach, but almost all of them do not feel ready. Only one does not feel supported by the teachers.

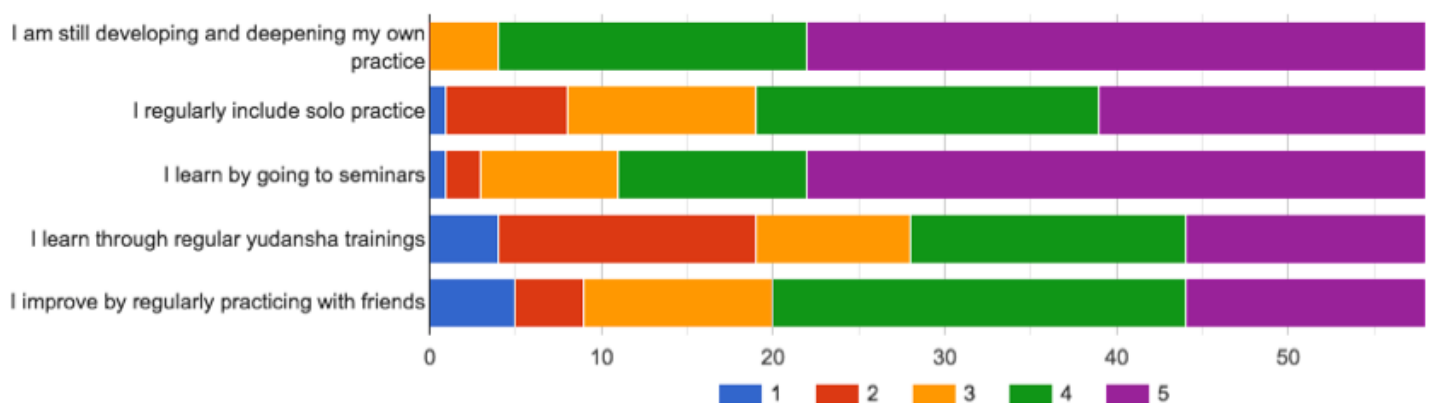
**Of those who do teach, the majority teaches 2-3 hours a week:**

**How many hours do you teach?**



**The majority of teachers also train regularly in other classes.  
When asked to rate their own personal development:**

**Personal development**



(blue= does not apply, red= does rather not apply, orange= partially applies, green= largely applies, purple= fully applies)



### What benefits do you see for yourself in training?



### Which aspects would you like to see more developed in yourself?



With the last three questions we aimed to get a feeling for what members feel could be the relevance of aikido for a broader community.

**How do you see the relevance of a traditional Japanese martial art such as Aikido in modern society?**

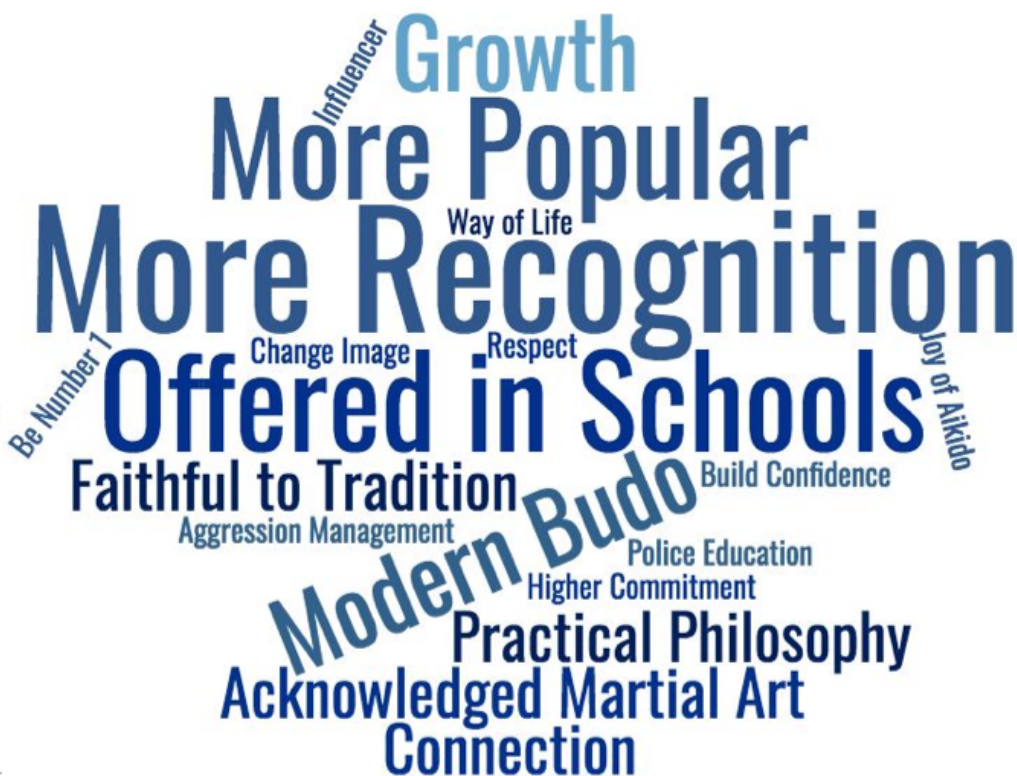




How do you see Aikido in relation to other martial arts -  
traditional and modern (MMA, boxing etc)?



Vision: What role and position would you like to see  
Aikido take place in the future?



We would like to offer you some of our thoughts on these findings. They are a result from our last meeting in the physical world at the summer camp in Switzerland:

People start Aikido before they are 30. This for us means, that's when they generally decide on a 'new path'. And therefore for new members we need to target especially this age group.

People got interested in Aikido because of philosophy and for general interest in martial arts. Self-defense was not an important driver. These points could also be taken into consideration for advertising / branding, together with the stated benefits: Fitness, Flexibility, Awareness, Balance, Deal with conflict, Calmness, Self Confidence, .....

A good sign for our organisation was that the satisfaction with the training quality was generally high and that the motivation to teach was on the 'right' track: learning, sharing, and spreading the Art.

The relevance of a traditional martial art in these aspects - Respect, Body Awareness, Discipline, Inner Peace, Openness - could again be used in 'branding', on dojo websites or for programs targeting schools or companies.

The differences to 'modern' martial arts should not be seen as weaknesses, but rather as 'unique selling points': Non-competitive, non-resistance, Cooperation, no quick success.

The last question, your/ our vision for Aikido, is certainly an area that needs more work and discussion, in our organisation, within the different dojos and national groups. For the moment, our wish is to soon be able to develop our joint vision together in seminars, come out of this crisis stronger and be ready to present Aikido as Modern Budo in our societies!

Andrea Pfisterer

# AIKIDO



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'Aikido Animals: An illustrated safari through Aikido stereotypes':

[Buy](#)

More info on the 'Aikido Game':

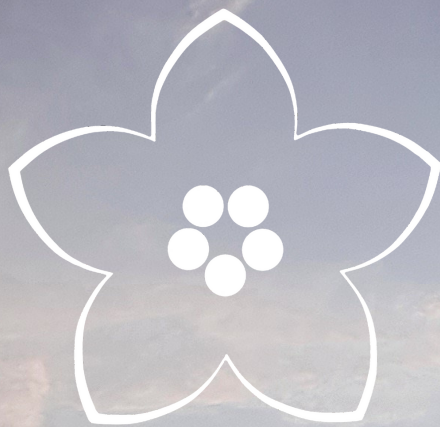
[Info](#)

If you want to order the card game, please contact: Andrea Pfisterer via:

[igaikido@kokorodojo.ch](mailto:igaikido@kokorodojo.ch)

Cost: 20CHF (plus shipping.)

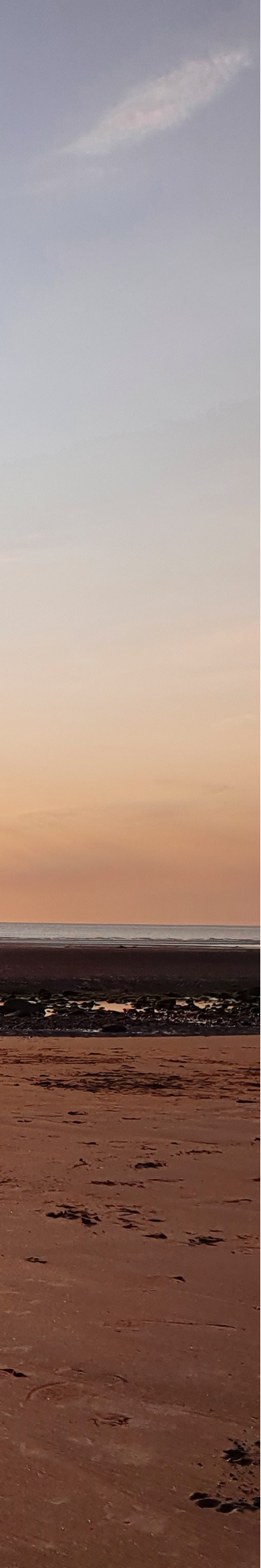




# DOJO PORTRAIT: WEST CUMBRIA AIKIDO

ADRIAN PUNT AND JASON FISHER





Hello from Jason and I, or as they say around here “arreet mara”, and welcome to West Cumbria Aikido, proud to be a TAE member dojo since February 2020!!

If you hadn’t already guessed, we are in West Cumbria, which is in the English North West, about 80 km south of the Scottish border, between the Lake District and the Irish Sea. Currently that makes us the most northerly of the UK TAE clubs, where we are about a 1.5 hr drive north of our nearest TAE neighbour, Lancaster Aikido Club of Steve Nardone, Aaron and Ellie et al. That puts us on a latitude a little less than that of Copenhagen.

We train in the coastal village of St Bees, historically a UK Victorian era beach holiday destination and still a popular and vibrant village. Specifically, we train at St Bees School, a school that was founded in 1583 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal, as a boys’ “free grammar school”. The school has been our home since February 2019. This is the school that Rowan Atkinson (AKA ‘Mr Bean’) attended before going to university, hence we like a bit of humour when we train!!

Our history is a bit complicated. I started aikido in 1994 in Devon in the South West of England. My first teacher was a former karate-man who started aikido in 1967, very much inspired by Kazuo Chiba Sensei. He subsequently joined the UK Ki Federation (under the direction of Koichi Tohei Sensei) in the 1970s, then in the 1980s trained under Tomio Otani Sensei, a student of Kenshiro Abbe Sensei. In 1999, I moved from Devon to West Cumbria, and with the agreement of my teacher, started an aikido club almost immediately. The club was never large, but we survived. However, around 2003/2004, I was suffering from severe back problems and the club had to close. For the next 15-years, I had limited engagement with aikido.

Jason and I met early in 2018 after I discovered that there was a ‘new’ aikido club in the area, one that had actually been running for 5-years, and had coincidentally also started at St Bees School. Jason had been one of the first students of this club and was at this point a local instructor. The club was part of an international Takemusu association, albeit one with a strong influence on UK activities from Tadashi Abe Sensei and Nobuyoshi Tamura Sensei. Jason’s teacher had moved away and with a 4 to 5 hr drive each way, it was very hard to maintain a connection.

Jason and I then discovered Lancaster Aikido Club in late 2018 and we became regulars there. In March 2019, I met Lewis for the first time and then attended my first TAE summer camp later that year. In February this year (2020), with the relationship with TAE building, Jason and I decided it was in the best interest of our members to leave the organisation we were with and to seek affiliation with TAE. An application which I am very glad to say was successful!!



Our acceptance into TAE was very exciting!! Needless to say, the rest of 2020 didn't turn out as expected... In mid-March we suspended indoor training, but continued to meet up outside to train. However, that had to stop relatively quickly as the whole of England went into strict lockdown. However, by the start of June small groups could meet up outside so we started weapons classes four nights a week. The summer was kind to us and many hours were spent practicing on the playing fields of the school.

We started indoor classes at the start of September and in mid-September hosted a weekend buki waza (weapons) seminar



led by Brendon Buchanan of the TAE club Kou Ki Do Kan Aikido, from the English midlands. It was a lot of fun and the English weather was surprisingly kind to us!!

We are not a large club, nonetheless everyone is very enthusiastic. Not everyone has yet been able to return to training, but equally we have managed to attract new members - and a big round of applause to Jan, Alex and Tom for starting in such strange times 😊.







Our Cumbrian coast location is not the easiest to get to, but if you are visiting the north west of England, or the southern half of Scotland let us know – we would be delighted to see you!!

See [www.westcumbriaaikido.com](http://www.westcumbriaaikido.com) for more details.

In Aiki

Adrian and Jason





# SEMINARS

2020/21 SCHEDULE



**2020**

**NOVEMBER**

**29 PRINCIPLES OF POWER**  
**ONLINE WORKSHOP**, Zoom  
 Takemusu Aikido Online Dojo  
 Contact Michael:  
[takemusuaikidoonline@gmail.com](mailto:takemusuaikidoonline@gmail.com)  
[www.aikidoonline.org](http://www.aikidoonline.org)

**DECEMBER**

**12-13 ONLINE SEMINAR**, Zoom  
 Traditional Aikido Europe  
 Online Dojo  
 Contact:  
[contact@traditionalaikido.eu](mailto:contact@traditionalaikido.eu)



## 2021

### JANUARY

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#### **16-17 Copenhagen, Denmark Yudansha camp with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Lars:

[lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk](mailto:lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk)

### FEBRUARY

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#### **19-21 Malsheim, Germany Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Barbara:

[coyote.blue@gmx.net](mailto:coyote.blue@gmx.net)

### MARCH

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#### **12-14 The Netherlands Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Paul:

[paul.keessen@gmail.com](mailto:paul.keessen@gmail.com)

### APRIL

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#### **17-18 Motril, Spain Weapons course with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact:

[lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)



#### **27-28 Lund, Sweden Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Moa:

[moalindell@gmail.com](mailto:moalindell@gmail.com)

#### **20-24 Motril, Spain Intensive with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact:

[lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)



## 2021

### MAY

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**22-23 Basque Country (Euskadi), Spain**

**Bukiwaza seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Iñigo: [yogarate@hotmail.com](mailto:yogarate@hotmail.com)

### JUNE

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**5-6 Lancaster, United Kingdom**  
**Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Ellie:

[edenvir@gmail.com](mailto:edenvir@gmail.com)

or Aaron:

[aaronwieclawski@gmail.com](mailto:aaronwieclawski@gmail.com)

**26-27 California USA**

**Aikido Institute of Bolinas**

**Gasshuku with Hoa Newens**

**Shihan and Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros.**

Contact Lewis:

[lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)

### JULY

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**19 - 24 Switzerland**  
**Summer Camp with Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Andrea:

[info@kokorodojo.ch](mailto:info@kokorodojo.ch)

or Lewis:

[lewisbdeq@gmail.com](mailto:lewisbdeq@gmail.com)



## 2021

### OCTOBER

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**2-3 Copenhagen, Denmark  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Lars:

[lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk](mailto:lars@aikido-copenhagen.dk)

**15-17 Zaragoza, Spain  
Seminar with Hoa Newens and  
Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros**

Contact Arturo:

[aikidojozaragoza@gmail.com](mailto:aikidojozaragoza@gmail.com)

### NOVEMBER

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**5-7 The Netherlands  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Paul:

[paul.keessen@gmail.com](mailto:paul.keessen@gmail.com)

**20-21 Dorset, United Kingdom  
Seminar with Lewis Bernaldo  
de Quiros**

Contact Mark:

[mark@yogawithmark.co.uk](mailto:mark@yogawithmark.co.uk)







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AIKIDO EUROPE

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[www.traditionalaikido.eu](http://www.traditionalaikido.eu)