

## **Aikido and the IAF:**

### **Some Personal Reflections**

The International Aikido Federation was created around 1975, with the inaugural congress taking place in Japan the following year. I myself moved to Japan in 1980 and attended the third IAF Congress in the same year. I began working for the IAF in 1982 and retired in 2016, after spending 12 years as Secretary and 20 years as Chairman. My association with the IAF, therefore, lasted for 35 years and I believe that this is some sort of record. It also exactly matches the time I have so far spent in Japan, where I am a permanent resident. In fact, I have been living in Japan rather longer than I have lived in my native country, which is Great Britain.

I believe that this long experience of working for the IAF and living in Japan provides a good foundation for making some analysis of the relationship between the IAF and the Aikikai Foundation. Both are aikido organizations, but they are organizations of a fundamentally different character and I believe that this important fact needs to be understood more clearly—hence these personal reflections.

### **Introduction: The Aikikai and The Role of the IAF**

This essay was originally intended as part of a series in which I discuss culture and organizations as they relate to a Japanese martial art like aikido. The emphasis is firmly placed on national cultures and how being part of a national culture shapes a person's view of reality. The model used is that constructed by the Dutch researcher, Geert Hofstede, in his study of IBM employees.<sup>1</sup> I first used Hofstede's work in a university seminar on comparative culture given to Japanese graduate students who worked for local companies or government organizations. The Aikikai and the IAF are in a very

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<sup>1</sup> The relevant texts are *Culture's Consequences* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2001) and *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (3rd edition, 2010).

different situation to IBM, but are still very suitable organizations for the serious study of national cultures. This series of essays is being published on *AikiWeb* as part of a much wider study on the history of aikido, and those who wish to study my analysis of Hofstede's view of national cultures should access this website (<http://www.aikiweb.com>). In these personal reflections, I will use Hofstede only to make use of his working concept of a 'national' culture when discussing Japanese culture and the IAF.

If we assume that Hofstede's general description and working concept of a 'national' culture is acceptable (it is not really defined by Hofstede), it is easy to see that the organization of the Aikikai is a very clear reflection of the 'national' culture of Japan. This culture is so pervasive that even non-native long-term residents like myself come to appreciate the dimensions of the very secure social and intellectual environment in which the Japanese are immersed.

These 'secure' dimensions of this pervasive 'national' culture featured prominently in an explanation once given to me by Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba about his operating concept of the IAF. Kisshomaru Doshu saw the IAF as a kind of 'international focus' of organizations recognized by the Aikikai, but was much less clear about the precise form of this focus. The IAF was considered democratic, but democratic with a very small *d*, as seen in Japanese organizations like universities. If there was any conflict between the democratic model and other organizational 'models' adopted, then the Japanese model was to be preferred. A more detailed explanation was given in his book, *The Spirit of Aikido*.<sup>2</sup>

As an aikido organization, the IAF is *sui generis*. Even though it was created on the initiative of the Aikikai, and although the structure is superficially similar—with both organizations embracing a supposedly democratic method of decision making, the method of operating is quite different from that of the Aikikai. Whereas in the Aikikai, the Doshu sits at the top of a pyramid structure and exercises real power, in the IAF his power is muted, or at least disguised. Doshu is IAF President, but

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<sup>2</sup> The Japanese original is 『合気道の心』 (1981) and the English translation appeared in 1984.

does not officially play any part in the organization, apart from his presence at congresses and more occasionally at the regular meetings of the management committee. As President, he is in a different category to the Senior Council, which is a board of advisors headed by the Hombu shihan with the most senior dan rank. This body has the power to veto decisions made by a congress, but the power has never been exercised and the effective decisions in the IAF are made mainly by the Chairman and General Secretary, who hold key positions in the management committee. Though my knowledge of the internal workings of the Aikikai is limited, it is my considered belief that the decision-making procedure in the IAF is rather more overtly democratic and I will offer some explanation of this belief later in this essay.

The IAF and the Aikikai present a very suitable subject for serious analysis for some other reasons. First, each organization has a distinct history and, secondly, the two organizations considered together are of a fundamentally different character. ‘Two sides of the same coin’ would not at all be a suitable metaphor to describe the relationship. The two organizations are completely distinct, but are not completely separate. They share the same headquarters and the same mission, but go about fulfilling this mission in separate ways and it seems to me that this situation is unlikely to change any time soon, especially in the case of a lineage-based art like aikido, where transmission within the founding family plays the central role in maintaining the art.

### **The Structure of this Essay**

The structure of this essay is rather episodic and abstract analysis of organizations is not the primary purpose. I begin with some details of my own training in aikido. This is really presented as essential background for making sense of my long association with the IAF: I did not arrive in the IAF out of the blue, so to speak, but became involved with the federation as a result of long association with an IAF official named Kazuo Chiba, now deceased, who was also a highly respected Aikikai shihan.

In Section 2, I move on to give a detailed account of the origin and early history of the IAF before my own involvement with the federation. Since I succeeded Chiba Shihan as the federation’s Assistant

General Secretary, a second focus of the account in Section 2 is to discuss his own involvement with the federation from its very beginning.

In Section 3, I move on to give an account of the later history of the IAF after my involvement with the federation. There is a double focus here. One important aim is to explain the relationship between the IAF and the sports organizations of which the federation became a member. However, again as essential background to this discussion, a second aim is to take account of what I might call ‘unfinished business.’ I need to explain some of the problems that I think Chiba Shihan had been unable to deal with effectively, and also other problems that arose after he had ceased his involvement with the IAF.

A major task here is to explain some essential cultural differences that affect aikido as a fundamentally Japanese martial art with a traditional Japanese structure—but an art that was exported overseas and grafted on to cultures that are vastly different in character. These issues are evident in an organization like the IAF and are discussed in detail in Section 4. The essay concludes with some additional remarks about why I decided to write it in the first place.

## 1. Some Details of my Aikido History

I began aikido training while I was a student at Sussex University in the UK. Before I started aikido, my chosen form of exercise was cross-country running (marathons: 26 miles, or about 42 kilometers) and so I had a fairly high level of general stamina. I met a Japanese student named Norio Tao, who had a 3rd *dan* in aikido and wanted to continue training. I had heard of aikido and—not without some incredulity—I remember a university friend telling me that aikido was a ‘martial art based on love.’<sup>3</sup> The result was that a few students gathered together with our Japanese instructor and we formed a new university club. We also trained at another club in Brighton and, although I did not realize the

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<sup>3</sup> This friend had trained in France, with a teacher named Masamichi Noro, but had ceased training as a student. I am still in regular contact with Norio Tao.

significance of this at the time, this club also had connections with Japan in the person of Kenji Tomiki, who had been a student of Morihei Ueshiba before World War II. This period marked the beginning of continuous training in the art that was interrupted only when I had to cope with serious illness and injuries (more about this later). The period also marked the beginning of half a century of reflection on my university friend's original statement about aikido being an art based on 'love'<sup>4</sup>.

### **Aikido Training in the UK, US and Japan**

Since I had already decided to become a university professor, which meant studying for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, the choice of dojos depended on the university where I was studying. Accordingly, I trained with my first teacher at Sussex University, but I also trained at a club in London that my teacher recommended. This was the Budokwai, the famous judo club founded in 1918 by Gunji Koizumi. Aikido was also taught there, by John Cornish, who had trained in Japan at the Aikikai. On my way to training at the Budokwai, I saw posters advertising another London club, located in Chiswick and called the Aikikai of Great Britain (AGB). The teacher there was a Japanese shihan named Kazuo Chiba, but Mr Cornish tried to dissuade people from training there, on the grounds that K Chiba was far too rough. I went to the dojo anyway and occasionally trained there, but frankly, the time and expense involved in making the trip from Brighton to London on a student stipend prevented training there very often and not long after, I graduated from Sussex and moved to the USA.

In the US I began my Ph.D. at Harvard University and trained at the New England Aikikai in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the instructor was Mitsunari Kanai, who was a friend of K Chiba and had trained with Chiba Shihan at the Aikikai Hombu. A few years later I returned to the UK and continued my Ph.D. at London University. In London I trained at the two different dojos with three teachers: M Kanetsuka, M Sekiya, and K Chiba on his occasional visits to the UK.<sup>5</sup> I also managed to

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<sup>4</sup> The Chinese character for the *ai* of aikido is 合, but has the same pronunciation as the character for love, which is written as 愛. Morihei Ueshiba often made use of this linguistic similarity.

<sup>5</sup> M Sekiya was Chiba Shihan's father-in-law.

train occasionally with Morihiro Saito Shihan and studied his weapons system with Mr Kanetsuka in London. Saito Shihan had begun to publish his books around this time and these were avidly studied in the dojo. My first teacher had used weapons, and K Chiba and M Kanai also taught iaido, but M Saito's books presented something new and interesting. They also revealed the curious fact of two main centers of aikido in Japan: Tokyo and Iwama, which was a small town situated north of the capital.

In 1980, I decided to move to Japan, to become a professor at Hiroshima University. Hiroshima was a long way from Tokyo, but there was a flourishing dojo there, which had been started by a Hombu Shihan named Masatake Fujita. I trained at this central dojo in Hiroshima, under the direction of the resident chief instructor, named Masakazu Kitahira. This training lasted for nearly 30 years and was supplemented by regular visits to Tokyo, where I trained with shihans from the Hombu, who also regularly visited Hiroshima to give seminars. I learned later that these shihans were rather special: Hiroshi Tada, Seigo Yamaguchi, the dojo founder, Masatake Fujita, and Sadateru Arikawa: all had spent long periods as direct students of Morihei Ueshiba.

I received my Ph.D. in 1983 and became a permanent faculty member at Hiroshima University. Since Hiroshima University was a national university, this meant that I became a Japanese government official. Being a professor carried a certain status (I am known simply as *Peter Sensei* by my neighbours here, since they find it impossible to pronounce my surname), but it also meant I had to function effectively in the Japanese language. I retired from full-time teaching in 2008 and became 'Emeritus'. I had already established a dojo and this dojo also became independent of any other aikido organization, apart from the recognition by the Aikikai. I thus became the chief instructor in my own dojo, which enabled me to conduct dan examinations and send the papers directly to the Aikikai Hombu. I received the rank of 7th dan in 2012.

However, there is another important aspect to my personal history and this profoundly affects how I see aikido and aikido training. There are two sides to this: my academic training; and living in Japan.

## **Academic Training**

My academic career has been almost exclusively concerned with training in philosophy, classics, language & linguistics, and history. Philosophy involves studying the external world and one's internal world at a very basic and fundamental level and, most importantly, asking largely unanswerable questions about these external and internal worlds. Philosophy is very closely connected with history and history writing, and it is no coincidence that all three began with the Greeks, who also took the study of language, rhetoric, and history very seriously. My doctoral thesis concerned Greek dialectic, more specifically, (i) how Plato and Aristotle conceived progress from a state of belief about the world to a state of knowledge about the world, and (ii) how Plato and Aristotle related this progress to teaching and education. Their respective approaches were radically different and in an important sense this is a matter of ideology: how one's basic values influence, or even condition, how one actually sees the world.

I believe that such training provided a firm basis for the study of the so-called 'spiritual' aspects of aikido as a 道 or martial Way. I also believe that this aspect of my personal history has been strongly affected by the second aspect, which is my long experience of living in Japan.

## **Moving to Hiroshima**

I decided to come to Japan when I was a graduate student in London University and I consulted K Chiba Shihan about this. He gave me some important advice, the gist of which was, 'Do not go to Japan purely to train in aikido. If you do, the circumstances and consequences might well be tragic, for your dream could turn into a nightmare. Instead, create a secure economic and personal base, from which you can become immersed in the culture and also, of course, pursue training in aikido.' Living and working in Hiroshima turned out to be a good choice, since this provincial city of about one million inhabitants is also world famous because of the atomic bomb. It is an ideal location to study the practical aspects of philosophy and history that I mentioned above. There are a few A-bomb

survivors still living and their experience gives them a secure ideological base from which to view the world.

It is also of some significance to me that this secure ideological base is almost completely unaffected by any training in Japanese martial arts, like judo, karate and, of course, aikido. Aikido is promoted worldwide as a profoundly spiritual activity—even down to the structure of the Chinese characters that make up the word, but the effects of this spiritual activity on the world view of citizens of a city like Hiroshima are virtually nonexistent. Here, aikido is largely practiced as a recreational / cultural activity and the Japanese members of my dojo have a very clear reason why they train and what they expect to gain from such training. This reason does not include anything specifically spiritual, such as one might gather from Internet aikido discussion forums outside Japan. There are no foreign members of the dojo apart from myself as the instructor and this is ironic, really, since we have the unusual phenomenon here of Japanese dojo members being taught important aspects of their own culture by a foreigner. This is not the first time that this has happened and for some of the more conservative prospective members this is a major obstacle to joining the dojo. For those who do, however, training is a very practical way of studying comparative culture, both for myself and for my aikido students.

There is one other important aspect to my personal history and this also profoundly affected my aikido training. This aspect is the matter of aikido injuries, and I mention it here because others might have had similar experiences and wonder whether to continue training in the art.

### **Illness and Injuries**

Aikido has been something I very much enjoy doing and the only times I have been unable to train during almost fifty years have been due to ‘normal’ illnesses like ‘flu and also injuries suffered during training. Two of these injuries required surgery—and I am now suffering the effects of the surgery. On a crowded *tatami* there is always the danger of serious collisions, especially if relative beginners (i.e., those not wearing black belts and *hakama*) have not learned to throw with any accuracy. Two such collisions required knee surgery and the surgeon warned me afterwards that I would have

arthritis later in life—and so it has proved. These injuries soon put an end to my earlier practice of running marathons. A further injury was received during a *randori* episode at the hands of a famous Hombu shihan, which involved him making a pile of four or five ukes. I was at the bottom of the pile and the combined weight of the other ukes focused directly on a shoulder joint. I assumed that the sprain injury would heal naturally, without any medical intervention, but this joint, too, became arthritic and the range of movement gradually diminished. These old knee and shoulder injuries are something I still have to work around.

There is a degree of ambivalence in the aikido world concerning injuries. The official (*tatema*) view is that aikido training is very good for physical and spiritual health, but there is also a more realistic (*honne*) view that injuries happen, despite all the precautions taken—or, more usually, taken and then forgotten. Stanley Pranin once wrote a memorable article about fatal injuries suffered during aikido training<sup>6</sup>, and I myself knew one of the victims. The university student involved was not particularly athletic and was actually frightened of *ukemi*. This is something that any dojo instructor needs to deal with, but the university club was run by the more gung-ho senior students and on this occasion the shihan who supervised the club was absent. The seniors thought the student was not showing proper ‘fighting spirit’ and forced him to take *ukemi*, straight down, from *shiho-nage* repeated many times and executed with as much downward force as possible. The student suffered concussion & brain damage and died a few days later.

Several points can be noted from this episode. The first and most important point is that Japanese notions of collective responsibility ensured that no individuals were held responsible. The episode was regarded as an unfortunate accident and the fine line between hard training and downright bullying was never explored. Secondly, the police were not involved, but the university paid out a very large sum in compensation to the parents and the club was formally banned from training for one semester. Thirdly, a directive was issued from Mr Kitahira, the chief instructor of the main city dojo,

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<sup>6</sup> The article appeared in an early issue of *Aikido News*, which was the original name of Mr Pranin’s magazine.

that the *ukemi* from *shiho-nage* should henceforward be the ‘jumping’ type, where *uke* was projected over tori’s projecting arm and executed a *mae-ukemi*. Beginners, however, found this impossible to perform and after a few weeks the usual practice of *ushiro-ukemi* resumed. Remarkably, the parents of the deceased student were persuaded by the shihan of his university club to practice aikido and see for themselves what had happened. They trained for about a year.

A final comment on the episode is that insurance provisions appear to differ from country to country. In my own dojos, students are obliged to take out comprehensive insurance and also to sign a waiver. In Japan, this waiver is legally binding, given that aikido is generally considered to be a potentially lethal Japanese martial art, which one embarks upon at one’s own risk. However, in the UK such a waiver can be overridden by a court and one instructor was once sued by a student who had signed such a waiver, but had suffered injury during training. The case was finally settled, but it was very upsetting and unsettling for the instructor. It would seem reasonable for prospective aikido students to be given some general guidance on insurance, especially if they attend international training seminars. Since the IAF is the sole international organization for aikido as taught by the Aikikai, the IAF could profitably offer such general guidance.

Before I discuss the origin and history of the IAF, there is another very important point that I have to make about aikido history—and this is perhaps somewhat controversial.

### **Aikido History**

There is no official history of aikido. In fact, there are no general histories of aikido at all. Kisshomaru Ueshiba wrote a biography of Morihei Ueshiba, which appeared in 1956, and this included much information on the early history of the old Kobukan Dojo and also rather less information on the development of aikido after World War II. However, despite the fact that Kisshomaru Ueshiba became the second Doshu and as a son of Morihei Ueshiba, was in a unique position to write such a biography, it is not an official life. Nor is it a history of aikido and, in fact, such a history remains to be written. Individual researchers like Stanley Pranin, Ellis Amdur and

myself have worked to illuminate the history of aikido, and John Stevens has written a number of popular books, including English translations of discourses purporting to have come from Morihei Ueshiba. Some of this material might even have the overt or tacit approval of organizations like the Aikikai, but none of it is in any way official.

This is one side of the historical coin; the other side is that research into the life of Morihei Ueshiba and the history of aikido is completely open. There are no restrictions at all and success or failure depends, as with any other research, entirely on the breadth and depth of the primary and secondary sources available and also on how well these sources are investigated and evaluated. In this respect, I acknowledge with gratitude the general openness of the present Doshu and his father. Unlike his own father Morihei, Kisshomaru Ueshiba wrote much about aikido and even gave me some personal hints and guidance for my own research. His son Moriteru Ueshiba, also, has always been very accommodating with my requests for access to archives at the Hombu to study material. I am happy to state this here, since this essay might be construed as being somewhat critical of the Aikikai.

## 2. Origins and Early History of the IAF

### **Spanish Origins**

It is important to understand that the initiative to create the International Aikido Federation (IAF) did not originate in Japan. The forerunner of the IAF as an international aikido organization was a European organization, called the Association Culturelle Européene d'Aïkido (ACEA), which was established in 1960/1963, and later became the European Aikido Federation (EAF). The main players involved in running the ACEA / EAF and, more importantly, in creating the IAF were **judoka** from France and Spain, who also practiced aikido under the direction of Nobuyoshi Tamura Shihan. When Tamura Shihan first came to Europe, he made the decision to place aikido under the general aegis of judo and the principal reason for this is that judo already had a functioning and efficient organization in Europe and also that some judo practitioners were increasingly attracted to aikido, which was an

unknown and interesting martial art. So, the idea was in effect, that the judo organizations in Europe would form an aikido group within or under their ‘protection.’

Tamura Shihan’s thinking is set out very clearly in his book *Aikido méthode nationale*, which was published in 1977.<sup>7</sup> On p. 257 there is an ‘organigramme’ of aikido in France. The diagram has two parts, the left-hand part dealing with aikido and judo, and the right-hand part dealing with aikido and the Hombu. On the left-hand side in the top position is the French Fédération Française de Judo et Disciplines Associées (FFJDA), which is placed above the Union Nationale d’Aikido (UNA). This seems to be an umbrella group with one member, the Association Culturelle Française d’Aikido (ACFA), which appears on the right-hand side of the diagram, directly below the ACEA, and which is designated as the ‘Ecole Française Aikido So Hombu.’ At the top of the right-hand column, in an analogous position to the FFJDA, is the Aikido So Hombu. It is hard to escape the message that (i) in Europe the ACEA is the aikido *so hombu* and (ii) in France the ACFA is directly affiliated to the French judo federation.

Of some importance in this connection is the fact that the French government took an active interest in the martial arts in France, with the result that there was a state diploma, which was over and above any *kyu* or *dan* rank issued by organizations like the Aikikai, the holders of which belonged to a national college of (*dan*) grades. Possession of these diplomas was a necessary condition for teaching aikido in state or municipal facilities.

One can certainly see the logic of Tamura Shihan’s idea to place aikido under the general patronage of judo, but there were problems. On the one hand, the aikido students who trained under his direction and became the backbone of the ACEA / EAF also practiced judo. On the other hand, it gradually became clear to me that other Japanese shihans living and teaching in Europe were not so convinced

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<sup>7</sup> I have given the details in the text. The name of the publisher is not given on the title pages, but at the end of the book, the information concerning the *dépot légal* gives the date and J.P.G. Impression EDIGRAPH s.a. The book was edited in Paris by UNIVERPRESS.

by Tamura Shihan's policy, for their own understanding was that judo was fundamentally different from aikido, since, for a start, it had competitive matches and championships. These shihans gradually coalesced into a tacit 'opposition' group against the policies of Tamura Shihan, which eventually was rather reluctantly led by Katsuaki Asai from Germany.

The contrast with aikido in the USA was striking. There were basically four main centers, each with a resident Japanese instructor. The pioneer was Koichi Tohei in Hawaii, which additionally had the distinction of hosting Morihei Ueshiba's only trip outside Japan. However, Tohei was on his way out of the Aikikai and the 1974 visit by Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba was an unsuccessful make-or-break visit. In New York, Yoshimitsu Yamada led the New York Aikikai and a few miles north in Boston Mitsunari Kanai headed the New England Aikikai. Further west, in Chicago, Akira Tohei was in charge of the Mid-West Aikido Center. There was no link with judo or other martial arts, no American Aikido Federation, and no idea at all of an 'American Hombu.' The four shihans developed their own local teaching networks, with local yudansha sharing the instruction, and when I was there, I met all the shihans on the US mainland when Doshu visited the US in 1974 and Osawa Kisaburo Shihan in 1975.

### **European Problems**

After I returned to the UK in 1975, the Aikikai of Great Britain (AGB) had become the British Aikido Federation (BAF), as a mark of membership of the new IAF. Eventually I became BAF Secretary and began to attend European aikido meetings and seminars. The first such meeting I attended was held in Cannes, France, around 1978. Attending this meeting was quite an illuminating experience, since I saw for the first time the extent of the influence of the French 'judo model' on European aikido—and also the wide gap in thinking between the francophone groups and the others. In Cannes, I was taken in hand by the French EAF officials, who made major efforts to convince me of the virtues of their continental model. A further meeting of the EAF was held in London and I think this was attended by some very senior shihans from Japan, including Rinjiro Shirata and Ikusai Iwata, who had joined the Kobukan Dojo in the 1930s. K Chiba also attended and during these years, from the late 1970s until

the mid-1980s, I enjoyed a close collaboration with Chiba Shihan, which lasted until his move to the USA.

The explosions within the EAF and IAF occurred during the period from 1978 to 1980. There were several causes, but one major cause was the rule for both organizations that only one aikido organization in each country could be a member. At the time, this rule was simply an expression of the actual situation in each country where aikido was practiced and so it was not thought to be unusual. In fact, after the IAF became a member of the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF / AGFIS) and the International World Games Association (IWGA), the IAF was advised not to change the rule. However, this rule, together with the dominance of aikido in Europe by associations in which judoka held the controlling power, led to a situation that became progressively intolerable.

Another cause was the broad division of the IAF into continental groupings, following the model of the ACEA / EAF. Though there was a worldwide model of continental groupings, in actual fact the only continental grouping in existence of aikido organizations affiliated to the Aikikai was the EAF. Some efforts were made later to create more federations based on the EAF continental model and there was talk of a worldwide network. However, these efforts did not lead to any concrete results and only one federation was created. This was the Asian Aikido Federation, based in Taiwan and sponsored by the Republic of China Aikido Association (ROCAA)<sup>8</sup>. Behind the EAF model lay an important ideology, which placed the main emphasis on decentralization, coupled with a rather superficial idea of unity and harmony. In contrast to the direct control by the Aikikai Hombu of each national aikido organization, there would be a looser network of continental groupings, each with its regional 'Hombu'.

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<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing this essay, I had no knowledge of whether the Asian Aikido Federation still exists.

In his book *Aikido méthode nationale*, mentioned above, Tamura Shihan gives an explanation of the ACEA as “le centre européen de l’aikido so hombu.” The term *so hombu* [総本部] is the Japanese term for ‘general headquarters’ and was commonly used during this period to refer to the Aikikai Hombu Dojo. (The nuance here is that the Japanese Hombu was general, and separate from the more specific ‘Hombu’ headquarters envisaged for each continent.) A document issued in 1973 designated the ACEA as the sole official association for representing the ‘Aikido So Hombu’ in Europe. Tamura Shihan assumed the role of ‘délégué général pour l’Europe’, but his functions were not specified. His book, of course, gives no hint at all of the tensions lying below the surface unity of the Japanese instructors teaching in Europe.

The unique position of the ACEA / EAF in this regard was significant, since it was thought to be the expression within budo of a certain model of postwar European unity: of nations recovering from a destructive war with Germany (now regarded as a contrite member) and also Japan (which had a rather ambivalent role—as the creator of the budo and therefore as a kind of model, but also as a fanatical former enemy). The hesitancy of Britain, which regarded the ACEA / EAF with a certain suspicion, matched its isolated geographical location on the northern fringes of mainland Europe—and I was sometimes pointedly reminded of this fact at EAF meetings.

The catalyst for the explosions was the existence in the Netherlands of a group of aikido practitioners who did not do judo and wanted nothing to do with judo. The group was headed by A H Bacas and wanted to form an independent group completely separate from the Budo Bond Nederland (BBN, later, Judo Bond Nederland = JBN). The group sought direct affiliation with the Aikikai and membership of the EAF, but without accepting the suzerainty of Tamura Shihan. The divisions were progressively laid bare at successive EAF meetings in London and Zurich, where the first explosion took place. Tamura Shihan walked out of the meeting after an allegation was made that delegates at the 2nd IAF congress in Hawaii had been deceived about Hombu approval of the formation of continental groupings. He was followed by his students from France, Spain, Belgium and the

Netherlands. A 'working party' was formed of delegates of those national organizations who remained in the meeting and this developed into an alternative EAF, which soon gained the recognition of the Aikikai Hombu.

### **Congress Chaos and Skullduggery**

The European split set the stage for the second explosion, which occurred in 1980 at the 3rd IAF Congress, which was organized in Paris by the French UNA / ACFA led by Tamura Shihan. The Chairman of the IAF at the time was Guy Bonnefond, also a French student of Tamura Shihan, but the general secretaries were both Japanese: Mr Seiichi Seko, assisted by Chiba Shihan. The group in the Netherlands led by Mr Bacas had succeeded in gaining recognition from the Aikikai and the recognition of the JBN / BBN had been withdrawn, in accordance with the rule of one member per country, for this rule governed recognition by the Aikikai as well as membership of the IAF.

However, the judo organization had already paid their IAF membership fees and therefore claimed voting rights at the Congress. The result was that the delegates at the Congress were unable to confirm the meeting agenda, since it was impossible to decide which organizations had voting rights. No business was transacted and consequently the officers elected in 1978 at the 2nd Congress in Hawaii continued in office. The sole decision, made by acclamation—by delegates anxious to end the proceedings and without any voting, was to hold IAF congresses every four years, with committee meetings held every two years.

The explosion in Paris was illuminating in many respects; it was as if some scales had dropped from my eyes. One thing I noticed with surprise was that membership of the IAF was regarded by some member federations as of prime importance, compared with recognition by the Aikikai. Another was the attitude of some delegates towards the Aikikai Hombu. Until this meeting in Paris, the Hombu Dojo in Japan had been regarded as an aikido *Shangri-la*, where pure techniques were practiced in an atmosphere of absolute harmony. The Japanese instructors who had been trained at the Hombu were popularly regarded as supermen, with Chiba as a very visible model. Tamura was a more shadowy figure to me, along with other semi-ethereal figures like Nakazono and Tada, but all were assumed to

embody all the virtues of aikido in all aspects of their lives. In Paris, this was revealed as a piece of mythology: enlightened mythology, to be sure, and passively propagated with the best of intentions, but mythology all the same. For the first time ever, I saw an enraged congress delegate verbally attack Chiba Shihan to his face in full view of the other congress delegates, and also saw an enraged Chiba pick up a chair, prepared to throw it across the room at another congress delegate who refused to stop speaking and resume his seat.

In this respect the 1980 IAF Congress was striking for what was left out in subsequent reports of the event. For example, no hint at all of any discord is given by Kisshomaru Ueshiba in the general account of the Congress that appears in his book, *The Spirit of Aikido*, mentioned earlier. The discussion appears in the final chapter, "Aikido Takes Root in the World." Of course, Doshu's interest in writing the book is to emphasize the importance of Japanese tradition and the positive spiritual aspects of aikido, but I have to state that when I first read Doshu's account, I had to wonder whether we had been present at the same event. I even acquired the Japanese original, in order to check the accuracy of the English translation.

A few months before the Paris IAF Congress I moved to Hiroshima. I visited the Aikikai Hombu and met Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Masatake Fujita Shihan, and Mr Seiichi Seko. Consequently, I became a regular visitor, both for training and discussion, and so became increasingly well known to the Aikikai. After the meeting in London in 1979, I had produced a detailed report about the situation in the Netherlands and K Chiba summarized the report in Japanese and presented it to Kisshomaru Doshu and the decision-makers in the Aikikai. It was on the basis of this report that the Aikikai withdrew official recognition from the Dutch Judo Bond and gave recognition to the non-judo group headed by Mr Bacas. However, a protest about the withdrawal of recognition came from an unexpected source, which was the Dutch Embassy in Tokyo. The Aikikai received this protest and I myself, of all people, was dispatched to the embassy from the Hombu to explain the situation. As I entered the embassy grounds, however, a secretary, who was actually a Dutch member of the JBN, saw me coming and rushed to intercept my meeting with the embassy official and this intervention

was effective in preventing any constructive discussion. The fact of the protest, however, coming as it did from such an important ‘official’ source as an embassy and coupled with the later chaos of the 1980 Paris Congress, proved a powerful inducement to the Aikikai to have second thoughts about its policies of official recognition.

After the Paris congress another major problem arose, which gives the history of the IAF at this time the atmosphere of a spy thriller. The official tapes of the congress minutes, recorded during the congress sessions, had mysteriously been erased by persons unknown, which made it apparently impossible to produce official minutes of this congress. I visited the Aikikai shortly after this discovery had been made and listened to the—silent—tapes. However, whoever erased the tapes reckoned without the cunning of the IAF Assistant Secretary. Chiba Shihan had secretly recorded the entire congress proceedings with a concealed tape recorder and it was clear to me that he had suspected that this would happen. I was requested to listen to his tapes and make a set of congress minutes, which would then be presented at the IAF Directing Committee meeting to be held in 1982.

Though I state this myself, I made full use of my academic language training to produce the best report of which I was capable, which included a detailed account of the Congress as well as a set of official minutes. I have fond memories of the stunned reaction at the 1982 IAF directing committee meeting when the lengthy document was presented and very quickly approved. Since such meetings were usually chaired by Chiba Shihan, who had previously resigned, I actually ran this meeting at the request of the General Secretary Seiichi Seko and this marked the beginning of my decades of working for the IAF.

Looking back, I think that what happened at these meetings was revolutionary in many ways. The meetings were scenes of serious disagreement among equally serious aikidoka, many of dan rank and with long experience of hard training, whose integrity and good faith were not in question. All were in a productive teaching & learning relationship with Japanese shihans who had studied with the Founder himself. Moreover, the disagreements were open: they did not follow the practice preferred

in Japan of disagreeing behind closed doors. To my mind, the disagreements underlined the fundamental difference between a vertical organizational structure, like a dojo, where there is no democracy for a very good reason, and a horizontal structure, like a federation, where structured disagreement, followed by a vote, has to be accepted as an essential method of procedure. I think this is partly why the events of the 1980 IAF Congress placed Chiba Shihan in a very difficult situation vis-à-vis the Aikikai Hombu, as I learned later, and a brief discussion of the problems he faced will perhaps illuminate what follows later in this essay.

### **Chiba and *Kokusaika*: Blinding Flashes of Idealism**

Kazuo Chiba was nothing if not an ardent idealist concerning aikido and it was very difficult for him to see this idealism shattered at the hands of those for whom aikido was equally important, but who blended their idealism with a cooler mixture of judo and realpolitik. He had taken the momentous decision to become a live-in student after being defeated in judo and seeing a picture of Morihei Ueshiba. Up to the time of the 1980 IAF Congress, Chiba Shihan had been closely involved with setting up the international department of the Aikikai and, very importantly, creating somewhat controversial rules for Japanese instructors living outside Japan. However, he was doing this in the face of only hesitant and grudging acquiescence on the part of the cautious decision makers at the Aikikai Hombu, where traditional Japanese factionalism and a rigidly vertical organizational structure made it much harder for them first to grasp the importance of postwar *kokusaika*—and especially the implications that this concept & ideology had for a traditionally conservative cultural art like aikido, and then to take effective action. (*Kokusaika* became a vogue term for the postwar ‘opening of Japan to the world,’ especially after the Meiji Restoration and the subsequent nationalist reaction that had eventually led to World War II. It was the intended opposite of *sakoku* [鎖国], the ‘closed country’ that characterized the Tokugawa era.)

In 1970, when I first met K Chiba, he was the Technical Director of the Aikikai of Great Britain (AGB). He had come to Britain as a result of a request made to the Aikikai by some British aikido

students and at the time he arrived, his command of English was only at the intermediate level, and this made his attempts to communicate the crucial ‘cosmic’ truths of aikido—which he believed it was his ‘mission’ to teach, as frustrating for him as it was for his students. When I returned from the USA in 1975 and resumed training in London, I discovered that he had turned over the direction of the AGB to his Japanese assistant, Minoru Kanetsuka, and had returned to Japan. I also discovered that his decision to return to Japan was as momentous—and as idealistically motivated—as his original decision to enter the Aikikai.

In a nutshell, Chiba Shihan believed that aikido and the Aikikai were losing the pristine freshness that he had experienced when he was a *deshi* of Morihei Ueshiba and he also believed that the Aikikai was not effectively dealing with the new situation that had arisen as a consequence of Kisshomaru Ueshiba’s crucial decision to spread aikido overseas, especially to the ‘victor’ countries from World War II. Kisshomaru’s decision was actually quite revolutionary and it posed a major challenge for an organization that was becoming an established part of Japan’s traditional cultural furniture. Morihei Ueshiba was a spectacular martial artist, but he was also basically a ‘loner’ and did not pay much attention to political matters. Even the name *aikido* had been coined as a result of upheavals in the budo world made in 1942 by Japan’s military government, and it is not often realized that the reason for these upheavals was to enlist the martial arts in Japan’s quest to fight a war that gradually increased in scope and violence.

After Japan’s defeat, it fell to Kisshomaru Ueshiba to deal with the new situation created and actively spread aikido overseas. He was prompted by the business interests gathered around him, but he also had to persuade his father, who was then holed up in Iwama. He was successful in this and as a result, Japanese instructors were ‘dispatched’ around the world to teach aikido, the understanding being that they had accepted a life-long vocation to stay in their chosen countries. Koichi Tohei spent time in Hawaii and later moved there and he was soon followed by Nobuyoshi Tamura in France. Chiba Shihan’s decision to return to Japan broke this convention and this created some waves within the

Aikikai, especially since his decision to return was closely connected with the internal operations of this conservative organization.

After K Chiba returned to Japan in 1975, he gradually created the structure that defines the Aikikai's overseas operations even today. The *Wikipedia* article on K Chiba gives the impression that he was actually summoned back to Japan by the Aikikai, to become the secretary of the international department, but I know from my own conversations with him that this is not correct: there was no international department. Nevertheless, he played a major role in creating this department and also in creating the rules that govern both the activities of Japanese instructors residing overseas and also Aikikai recognition of overseas aikido organizations. When the IAF was established in 1975 / 1976, it fell to Chiba Shihan to deal with this matter of recognition and rules and also solve the major problems created by this new organization. He resigned after the 1980 Congress because he thought that he had failed to do this—and he wanted me to resign with him. I declined and the main reason for my declining his request was, first, my optimistic belief at the time the IAF could play a major role as a medium of communication with the Aikikai and, secondly, my belief that in 1980 the IAF had passed its first major test, which was to escape the domination of the federation by one particular aikido cultural group, based in France. Given the overall domination of aikido by the Japanese, I suppose there is some irony here.

Another important point that must be made here is that K Chiba had a very different view about the relation between aikido and judo from N Tamura. Chiba Shihan had practiced judo and karate, but although he gave seminars in Europe as a guest instructor, his AGB in Britain had very minimal relations with the ACEA in Europe and, in fact, Chiba formed the main behind-the-scenes opposition to Tamura Shihan's ideas about continental federations. I possess a large archive of private correspondence with Chiba Shihan which dates from around 1975 onwards, after he returned to Japan. In this correspondence, he sets out his position with extreme precision and I think he did so partly because English was not his native language, so he had to be very careful, and partly because of the

extreme delicacy of the subject. Such correspondence was also a means for Chiba of collecting his own thoughts on some very painful episodes and setting them out in great detail.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. The Aikikai and the IAF: Later Developments

I stated earlier that the initiative to create the IAF came from Spain and France. In doing so, the Spanish judoka made a major mistake: they sent the request not to the Aikikai, but to the Kodokan, which was the Japanese headquarters of judo. The Kodokan forwarded the request on to the Aikikai, and this posed a major dilemma. Sending the request to the Kodokan was regarded as a major affront, but to deny the request might well cause a major conflict and lead to an unwelcome change of balance between the Aikikai and the Yoshinkan, which was the other aikido organization created after the war by Gozo Shioda. It would not do for the Yoshinkan to be the creator and focus of a new world aikido federation and not the Aikikai. On the other hand, to accept the request would add a new element to the organization of aikido outside Japan and the Aikikai really had no idea of the likely consequences.

Eventually, the Aikikai accepted the request and a meeting of interested parties was held in Madrid, Spain, in 1975. The founding Congress of the IAF was held in Tokyo the following year, but even the founding date became a cause for dispute. The first IAF Chairman, Mr Bonnefond, always argued that the IAF was founded in 1975, in Europe, but Chiba Shihan insisted that the founding date was 1976, in Japan, and the crucial reason for this was that the laws of the country where such an organization was founded would regulate the operations of the organization—and the Aikikai wanted to make sure that the new federation was subject to Japanese law. It is the Japanese date that has become generally accepted.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In fairness to Chiba Shinan, I should add a reference to an interview with him conducted by Stanley Pranin and recently republished by *Aikido Journal* (at aikidojournal.com).

<sup>10</sup> Mr Bonnefond published a history of aikido in France. It is some evidence of how the situation has changed in France over the years that the co-author of the book is Louis Clériot, of the FFAB. The book, published in 2000 by Éditions de l'Éveil, is entitled, *Histoire de l'Aikido: 50 ans de présence en France*. I mention the book here because of the chapters devoted to the formation of the EAF and the IAF.

Nevertheless, since the initiative to create the new federation came from Europe, the Japanese played a largely passive role. French became one of the working languages of the IAF, along with Japanese and English. This fact alone proved a major problem at meetings, since the absence of an adequate system of interpreting or of simultaneous translation, on grounds of cost, always ensured that the meetings took much longer than usual, since everything had to be translated three ways.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba's decision to accept the creation of the IAF was also an attempt to deal with the new postwar situation, but I believe that the consequences of this decision were not adequately foreseen and created some major problems that have still not been solved. In fact, right from the very beginning the IAF has faced major structural problems and these stem from the fact that a democratic structure (a federation, which is essentially horizontally structured, based as it is on the supposed equality of all the members) has been grafted on to a structure that is strictly vertical, and based on a very traditional teaching and learning model known as SHU-HA-RI, which has its antecedents in Japanese traditional arts like Noh drama and which can be traced back to China.

Given the unusual circumstances of the IAF's gestation and birth, it is perhaps not surprising that the structural relationship between the IAF and the Aikikai is only now being clarified, 40 years afterwards. In the face of this uncertainty, there have been varying viewpoints about what this structural relationship should be, on a spectrum ranging from complete separation to complete integration. As Chairman, my general thinking was to encourage a higher degree of separation in several respects and clarify the ambiguities mentioned earlier, but I think that my successor has reversed this trend and changed the emphasis. The IAF now has a new logo and has engaged in projects that are calculated to have much general appeal to the member federations and give them a greater sense of belonging to a federation that is in a harmonious relationship with the Aikikai.

In fact, it has been argued that the IAF actually a part of the Aikikai, but I do not believe that this is correct. The Aikikai was instrumental in creating this democratically-run federation, but it has never

been a department of the Aikikai. The earlier problems partly stemmed from the fact that the Aikikai's general policy towards the IAF has been slow to evolve. The Aikikai has certainly changed its policy regarding recognition of aikido organizations and has abolished the rule of one recognized organization per country. This change of rule has created a major challenge for the IAF, since aikido organizations can quite happily enjoy a productive relationship with the Aikikai without having to consider joining the IAF. I think it is highly beneficial that the IAF uses social media like *Facebook* to emphasize that it is a federation based on friendship and promotes projects that clearly benefit the members. However, I also believe that this crucial collaboration between the IAF and the Aikikai should be based on a clear understanding of the relationship between two organizations that are fundamentally different in structure and these differences should be accepted and worked with, not obscured. I will discuss this problem further, later in this essay.

### **Background: The Vertical vs. the Horizontal Dimensions of Aikido Culture**

In discussing the differences between the Aikikai and the IAF in the previous section, I used the metaphor of the vertical and the horizontal, as this applies to social structures. Since I have studied the 'western' philosophical and pedagogical culture that began with the ancient Greeks, but have also lived in Japan for just over half my life, I think this gives me a reasonably strong basis from which to study the differences. The distinction was notably made by a Japanese scholar named Chie Nakane. Nakane wanted to explain to non-Japanese some crucial concepts Japanese group structure that come under the general category of *Nihonjin-ron* [日本人論], which are theories about the Japanese considered as a unique cultural or racial group. She admits that her ideas are not original, but she elegantly presents them in a small book that was first published in 1970.<sup>11</sup> In Japan, the use of a phrase like '*Wareware Nihonjin wa...*' ['We Japanese...'] usually signals that what follows is based on the assumption that the Japanese are culturally homogeneous. This might be quite true, but Nakane uses the distinction between vertical and horizontal to attempt to show that the Japanese are not only culturally unique, like all other cultures, but unique in a special, exclusive way that is not shared by

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<sup>11</sup> Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970; Penguin Books, 1973.

other cultures. I think this is rather like the medieval argument about how many angels fit on the head of a pin and admits of no reasonable solution. Nevertheless, though the exclusivist concept of *Nihonjin-ron* can indeed be found in aikido, I think it is possible to ignore these additional layers of *Nihonjin-ron* and focus simply on the vertical / horizontal dimensions of an organizational culture, in this case, the culture of aikido.

## Origins

The vertical vs. horizontal metaphor really considers the power centers in a social structure or practice and I suppose that the example that comes to mind most readily, when considering Japanese *bujutsu* and *budo*, is the period in Japan from 1600 till 1868. This is usually referred to as the Tokugawa Era (named after the ruling family dynasty), or the Edo Era (named after the city which the Tokugawa shoguns established). There is no space here for a detailed discussion of Japanese history, but the era in question was known for this rigid vertical class structure, which admitted very little movement in either direction. This structure was composed of four layers: samurai (侍 *shi*), peasant farmers (農 *nō*), artisans (工 *kō*), and merchants (商 *shō*). However, there were two more classes. At the very top of the pyramid was the *kuge* class (nobility) and below the merchants were a group that were not considered human to begin with. It was the samurai class who trained with swords, but the peasants, also, had their own training culture, which included training with weapons and also arts like sumo, at which both Sokaku Takeda and Morihei Ueshiba excelled.

It is commonly assumed that Japanese martial arts developed during the time of the samurai and that the samurai developed their skills in these arts as a direct result of practical experience on the battlefield. This is true to some extent, but the assumption underestimates the influence of the various *ryu* [流] and *ryuha* [流派] that developed, with their respective training schools. The Nisshinkan, in Aizu-Wakamatsu, is a relevant example here because the teachers of Sokaku Takeda studied there. The Nisshinkan was a domain school for the children of samurai and the training given there covered all the subjects thought necessary for such samurai. Of course, the curriculum also included extensive

training in *bujutsu* and *kenjutsu* and the teachers also trained in their respective *ryuha*. However, formal and stylized training in such schools played as much of a role in creating contemporary *bujutsu* and *budo* as any practical battlefield experience.<sup>12</sup>

Some of this Edo culture was swept away in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration, but much remained. Nevertheless, the samurai who brought about the restoration—more a revolution than a restoration—had to import western concepts of human rights and equality before the law, since these did not exist in Edo Japan. There is some very distant connection with aikido here, since a very young Sokaku Takeda, who taught Morihei Ueshiba, was a bystander in the Boshin Wars that consolidated Meiji rule (the film *The Last Samurai* being a somewhat fanciful recreation of one of the battles fought).

Morihei Ueshiba was born in 1883, not long after the new Meiji constitution was promulgated in 1879. He came from a wealthy peasant family and his wife was of samurai stock. The Meiji Restoration actually restored the power of the Emperor, but it is hard to tell exactly where Ueshiba stood on the political spectrum created as a result. The traditional Japanese terms *uyoku* [右翼 = right wing] and *sayoku* [左翼 = left wing] imply a polarization that was established quite early on, and Morihei Ueshiba's sterling service teaching aiki-budo in many of the military schools suggests strong support for the military, which has been closely associated with radicalism and the political right. However, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions here and in any case, it was Kisshomaru Ueshiba, not Morihei, who undertook the task of preparing aikido to cope with the defeat of Japan in 1945.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba made some bold decisions for which I believe he has not been given due credit. In Japan, he quietly reestablished the organizational structure that had existed before the war, but also became very active in promoting aikido as a truly 'peaceful' martial way, fully in tune with the new

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<sup>12</sup> The syllabus and teachers are set out in detail in a manual entitled 『会津藩教育考』, published by Tokyo University Press in 1931. My own copy was reprinted in 1978.

thinking brought about by Japan's defeat. In addition, when he surveyed the destruction brought about by the allied bombing of Tokyo, as he states in autobiography, he conceived the desire to present aikido to the victor nations in World War II as a way of demonstrating that there was something good and worth preserving in the culture of the defeated country. Kisshomaru thus began the tradition of inviting some of the *deshi* who joined the postwar Aikikai Hombu to go overseas and reside there as aikido teachers. We will discuss this in the next section.

### **The IAF and the Shihan Diaspora**

As I stated earlier, I trained in aikido for several years before coming to live in Japan and all my teachers were native Japanese. Most belonged to a category formalized by the Aikikai as *haken shihan* [派遣師範]. The usual English translation for *haken* is *send* or *dispatch*, but an Aikikai official once informed me that this was not strictly true of the aikido instructors in question: they were invited to volunteer and they accepted the invitation. In all cases the invitation was made in response to requests sent to the Aikikai by aikido practitioners overseas who wanted a Japanese teacher. Except for Minoru Kanetsuka, who went to the UK voluntarily, my two principal teachers in the UK and USA, Kazuo Chiba and Mitsunari Kanai, were both in this category, as were most of the other Japanese teachers who were resident in Europe. At the time when I lived in the UK, this first generation of *haken shihan* included Nobuyoshi Tamura, resident in France; Katsuaki Asai, in Germany; Yasunari Kitaura, in Spain; Masatomi Ikeda, in Switzerland; Yoji Fujimoto and Hideki Hosokawa, in Italy, and Toshikazu Ichimura, in Sweden. In addition to those listed, Yoshimitsu Yamada and Akira Tohei were resident in New York and Chicago, respectively, but all of these shihans taught in countries neighboring those where they were officially resident, with the result that Kisshomaru Ueshiba's decision to establish a network of overseas shihans was highly successful.

One problem here, of course, is that the system of *haken shihan* assumed that there would always be enough Japanese shihan available to meet any requests. On the other hand, the sterling work done by the shihans mentioned above led to a general maturing of the aikido communities overseas,

symbolized by the recent award, after a long interval, of another 8th dan rank, this time to the French shihan Christian Tissier. The result is that there has been a gradual shifting of balance, away from the need to invite a Japanese instructor to leave Japan and reside abroad with the specific aim of teaching aikido, in favor of leaving the teaching and grading responsibilities to the increasing numbers of non-Japanese who were taught by the first generation of *haken shihan* and who are now of 6th and 7th dan rank.

Another very relevant question here is what effect the creation of the IAF had on this ‘college’ of *haken shihan*, who had left Japan before the federation was created. I explained earlier the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the IAF and I believe that, except for Tamura Shihan, the Japanese shihans overseas were generally taken by surprise. I remember one shihan telling me rather bluntly that it was presented by Kisshomaru Doshu as a *fait accompli*. The bewilderment can partly be explained in terms of the distinction made earlier between horizontal and vertical structures in Japan. I remember as a student in the Cambridge dojo of Kanai Shihan that there was very little general contact with the other two *haken shihan* in the USA and I think that the only meetings that took place were when VIPs like Kisshomaru Doshu and Kisaburo Osawa visited the USA.

After I returned to the UK, I saw that the situation was not so different in Europe. I knew of the other shihans by name, but attending an EAF congress in 1978 as the delegate for the BAF was the first occasion for a meeting. This congress held in Cannes was largely organized by the French students of Tamura Shihan, who in any case was senior [the *sempai* = 先輩] to the others. (Hiroshi Tada had spent some years in Italy, but he had returned to Japan. His regular visits to Europe followed an established pattern and had little connection with the EAF.) The Japanese shihans in Europe attended the Cannes congress, but did not really play any part in the proceedings. The meeting was a congress and therefore followed a ‘horizontal’ democratic procedure, with delegates having equal voting powers listening to formal discussions and then voting on whatever proposals were presented. This would have happened even if none of the Japanese shihans had been present. Consequently, the

projected role of the IAF: how it would contribute to the development and quality of aikido worldwide—was a valid and pressing question for them and I suggested earlier that solutions to this question have been slow in coming.

The shifting of balance mentioned above raises an important question, especially vis-à-vis the IAF. If the Aikikai can no longer send Japanese instructors to reside abroad and spread aikido overseas, but has to leave this essential task to a developing corps of non-Japanese instructors, what is the most appropriate role of the Aikikai as the ‘aikido world headquarters’? There are several possible scenarios. One scenario, envisaged by Tamura Shihan in his continental model, is to leave the Aikikai Hombu as the Aikido *Shangri-la* and entrust the worldwide development of aikido to a network of continental Hombus. A second scenario is to leave the Aikikai Hombu in the same situation, but entrust the worldwide development of aikido to the IAF. A third scenario is to place the Aikikai Hombu in the center of a worldwide web of recognized organizations, with very effective control of teaching, examining and award of *dan* ranks. In this scenario the role of the IAF would be marginal, to say the least, but I think that this scenario is closest to the present situation.

### **The IAF, Judo, and the World of Sport:**

#### **GAISF, SportAccord, AIMS, and the World Games**

In 1984 I was elected IAF Assistant General Secretary, in succession to K Chiba Shihan. After this election an unusual episode occurred. I had a meeting with Kisaburo Osawa, who was General Director of the Hombu, and was requested to visit the Aikikai Hombu the following day. In particular, I was expected to wear a suit and tie and have with me my *meishi* [名刺: name cards] from Hiroshima University. I duly arrived at the Hombu and met Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba and Osawa Shihan. A car was waiting and Doshu got in and invited me to get in, too. We were seen off by Osawa Shihan and drove to Akasaka in the center of Tokyo and there met the IAF General Secretary, Mr Seko. After some coffee—and this was the only time ever that I was served coffee by the Aikido Doshu, who had insisted taking a tray and waiting in line at the self-service counter—we went to a

nondescript building and were introduced to an elderly man with white hair, sitting behind a truly enormous desk. This was also the only time in my experience that I saw Doshu very much in the junior position, making a deep bow to someone who did not respond in kind. I was introduced and my *meishi* duly requested, with the white-haired man clearly showing his approval. After a few more minutes of mutual pleasantries, the meeting ended and we were driven back to the Aikikai Hombu. I was profusely thanked by Doshu and also by Osawa Sensei—and left the Hombu completely bewildered by what had happened. All I knew was that the white-haired man was known as Sasakawa Ryoichi Sensei. Later, back in Hiroshima, I asked my aikido teacher who Sasakawa Ryoichi Sensei was and he was very surprised that I had actually met him. He said that Sasakawa was the millionaire ‘godfather’ of Japan. He was an ex-war criminal who had made his fortune from betting and controlled a vast network of influence and contacts within the Japanese government establishment. I learned later that he regularly donated a substantial sum of money to the Aikikai and that this was the reason for our formal visit.

### **From GAISF...**

I mention all this because I also learned later that it was Ryoichi Sasakawa who suggested to Doshu Kisshomaru that the IAF join GAISF, which is the acronym for the *General Association of International Sports Federations*. I also realized that, coming as it did from Sasakawa, the suggestion was one that could not easily be rejected. The result was another source of acute bewilderment for Japanese teachers, who had taught their students that aikido did not have championships or competitions and could be called a ‘sport’ only if the term was being used extremely loosely. As Assistant Secretary, I was the IAF delegate who attended the 1984 GAISF Congress in Monaco, at which our membership would be decided and so I travelled to Monte Carlo from Hiroshima.

At the GAISF Congress, I met the president, Thomas Keller, and the main players, and also discovered that the IAF had been taken under the wing of judo. Charles Palmer was President of the International Judo Federation (IJF) and had also been president of the Budokwai, where I had trained previously. Mr Palmer shepherded the IAF application through the process of evaluation by the

GAISF management committee and only one question remained, which was the question of the IAF and worldwide sports championships. One of the conditions for joining GAISF was that the candidate international federation had to hold such championships annually in three out of five continents. The IAF could satisfy this condition if I agreed that the term ‘tournament’ could be substituted for ‘championship’ and that summer intensive training courses, known in Japanese as *gasshuku* [合宿], could count as tournaments. This would not be the first time in aikido and the IAF that potentially crippling ‘political’ problems were solved by the creative use of language.

One consequence of the explosions at the 1980 IAF Congress in Paris was that Mr Bonnefond had retired as Chairman of the IAF and that the influence of the French organization headed by Tamura Shihan had declined. The new Chairman, Giorgio Veneri from Italy, had asked me to go to Monaco as the IAF delegate, but he had also written to the GAISF President. He declared that no one apart from myself had the power to represent the IAF or make any decisions on behalf of the IAF, and that I was the only person connected with the IAF allowed to be present in the congress room when the application was decided. This meant that Tamura Shihan and his senior judo students could not attend the congress session, even as observers.

In fact, much of the groundwork (*nemawashi* [根廻] in Japanese) had been done before the formal vote was taken and the IAF was admitted to GAISF membership with no dissenting votes or abstentions. During the time I was in Monaco, I met Tamura Shihan, who lived nearby, and these meetings served to repair some of the damage caused by the explosions in 1980. As a result of the time I spent in Monaco and the meetings with Tamura Shihan, I saw the merits and demerits of his decision to place his aikido organizations in Europe under the wing of judo, with his organization in France recognized by the French Ministry of Sport. All his top students did judo as well as aikido and seemed to have no difficulty in keeping the two apart—and I think that this is something that other Japanese aikido teachers did not realize sufficiently. I will discuss this issue further and in more detail below.

### **...to SportAccord...**

One unfortunate fact about GAISF is that they were working in the shadow of a larger and more prestigious organization, with a much longer history that harked back to a glorious sporting tradition. Some members of GAISF practiced Olympic sports and were also members of the various satellite organizations recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The result was that Thomas Keller's presidency led to suspicions that he was trying to set up an organization that could rival the IOC. His successor was a Korean named Un Young Kim, but his presidency was marred by his own arrest for corruption and subsequent imprisonment in his home country. It fell to the third president, Hein Verbruggen, who was a Dutch marketing expert, to make some real changes to the organization.

The first major change made by the new president was a change of name and as a result, GAISF became SportAccord. This was a source of some concern, since it gave the concept of martial arts as sports more prominence, which was of no relevance to aikido. The second major change was to introduce 'martial arts games' as part of its core activities. However, the name eventually chosen was *Combat Games* and I wrote to Mr Verbruggen as IAF Chairman to protest strongly that the change of name made the sporting base of the organization too obvious. In a cautious and considerate response, Mr Verbruggen explained why he had suggested a change of name and invited me to find a more suitable name, which he would consider. I also wrote to Doshu in the same vein and Doshu kindly responded that he thought that aikido could participate, so long as the essential non-competitive nature of the art was not compromised.

Mr Verbruggen also took the initiative to invite the IAF to participate in the Combat Games and so August Dragt, who was the Dutch IAF Assistant General Secretary, became a member of the preparatory committee. Since I regularly visited the Netherlands to give aikido seminars, Mr Dragt arranged for me to meet Mr Verbruggen and I discovered that he had practiced aikido in Belgium and had reached the level of first kyu. Thus, right from the start, the IAF was involved in SportAccord activities and gave large demonstrations during the first Combat Games events, held in Beijing. There

was no IAF member for mainland China, so IAF participation was limited to the Combat Games themselves, but the success of these demonstrations and large numbers of participants and spectators were effective in establishing aikido and the IAF as a valued participant in the event, even though these aikido events had to consist solely of demonstrations of the art. The Chinese government was behind the event and expressed great interest in creating an aikido organization in mainland China. The IAF member for France expressed readiness to give assistance, but the Aikikai expressed extreme reluctance to become involved, on the grounds that it was a private school and not a government organization.

The successes in Beijing paved the way for participation in the second Combat Games, which were held in St Petersburg. Since there was a large and active IAF member organization in the Russian Federation, having strong links with government sports and martial arts agencies, a large training seminar was also organized, with instructors coming from the Aikikai Hombu and from Europe. Despite these successes, the same political issues had arisen for SportAccord as had arisen for GAISF: why was the IAF participating in a sports organization and a sporting event, since aikido was not a sport? These issues were left on the table, but great care was taken to ensure that participation in these events always remained purely voluntary for IAF members.<sup>13</sup>

### **...via AIMS...**

The GAISF that became SportAccord was a hybrid, composed of a core of organizations that were members of the IOC or recognized by the IOC, and also other organizations that had no connection with the IOC. These latter organizations created a third component, named the Association of Independent Members of Sport (AIMS—meaningful acronyms are quite important in the sporting world and this one is especially appropriate to describe an organization that is going places, but has not yet arrived). One might assume from its membership of AIMS that the IAF is a sporting organization and correcting this impression this is a permanent problem for the IAF. In fact, the IAF

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<sup>13</sup> I understand that another Combat Games is now in the planning stage and that the IAF will participate.

has played a prominent role in AIMS since its foundation and the present IAF Chairman is also the secretary of this organization.

The fact that the IAF is a prominent member of AIMS is one way of coping with the problem mentioned in the previous paragraph. When I was Chairman, my main source of worry was the need to define more exactly the relationship between the IAF and the Aikikai, but I think the emphasis has shifted since then. I believe that my successor has adopted the principle of *solvitur ambulando* – which is to deal with this problem less by analyzing it than by taking concrete steps to show the relationship in action. One consequence of this strategy is that it requires the IAF to be seen to be an important member of AIMS by initiating projects in its own right—as the IAF, and not simply participating in events organized by AIMS. The recent focus on women’s issues and events involving children and young people is good evidence that this is happening.

#### **...and back to GAISF**

Mr Verbruggen was always careful to maintain a relationship of benevolent non-interference with the IOC, but after he retired, relations between the two organizations deteriorated. The fourth president of SportAccord also came from the martial arts. Marius Vizer was the President of the IJF and he, too, struck up a friendly relationship with the IAF. However, Mr Vizer used a SportAccord congress to deliver some stinging criticisms of the IOC management and this led to resignations of SportAccord members who were also participants in the Olympics. The result was that Mr Vizer resigned as President and there was some doubt whether SportAccord could continue as a federation. Under a new president, SportAccord licked its wounds and adopted a much lower profile, and the name of the organization was again changed. The GAISF acronym reappeared, but *Global* was substituted for *General* in the name. I had retired as IAF Chairman by this time, but there is no reason why my successor should not continue to develop the good relationship previously built up between the IAF and SportAccord / AIMS / GAISF in its new incarnation. One example of this good relationship is a recent training seminar for young people, which took place in the Netherlands last November.

## **IWGA and the World Games**

When the IAF became a member of GAISF in 1984, the federation became eligible to join the International World Games Association (IWGA). The sole mission of the IWGA was to hold the World Games and it is difficult to avoid the impression that these games were organized on the model of the Olympic Games, so much so that the event itself has perhaps unkindly been dubbed the ‘Poor Man’s Olympics.’

The IAF duly joined this organization, but at some point, various issues arose that had not occurred with SportAccord under Mr Verbruggen’s presidency. The IAF had initially participated in the World Games as a ‘demonstration sport’ and the federation was subsequently expected to change the demonstration format to involve real competitive championships. The rules of the IWGA provided for ‘demonstration sports’ to hold events at the World Games only on condition that the demonstrations later became fully-fledged championships. Since this was not possible for the IAF, I took steps to withdraw from this organization and discussed the matter with Doshu. Doshu’s advice was that the IAF should remain a passive member of the IWGA and the reason was to prevent other aikido organizations from joining. The IWGA, however, made some efforts to persuade the IAF hold an event at the World Games that at least looked competitive, such as holding a dan examination. This was dismissed by the Aikikai and I suspect that the prospect of the IAF holding an ‘international’ dan examination would have horrified the Aikikai, and to do so at a major sporting event would have compounded the horror.

As far as I know, the IAF is still a member of the IWGA, but plays no real part in this organization. The problems with this organization, and also with SportAccord and the Combat Games, are some of the general issues faced by the IAF, which I will consider below.

## **4. Miscellaneous Issues Affecting the IAF**

The two previous sections dealt primarily with the history and general development of the IAF as an organization and the complex interplay between the federation and the Aikikai Hombu. I now consider other issues that affect the IAF, but these issues relate to the general problems affecting an aikido organization—probably any aikido organization, as much as the history of the federation and I think that it is more convenient to consider these issues separately.

### **Finance Issues**

When the IAF was first created, the annual affiliation fee was set at 100 US dollars per member country and the reason for this was to make it easy for the smaller organizations to join. Since there were 18 founding members, the annual income fell just short of US\$ 2,000. It was acknowledged at the time that this amount was clearly insufficient to meet the costs of running an international federation, with a congress taking place every two years and a management committee meeting taking place in the alternate years, and the suggestion was made that the shortfall would be met by aikido training seminars conducted by Japanese instructors in the member federations. No concrete steps were taken, however, and so the IAF fell increasingly deeply into debt and had to be bailed out by the Aikikai. The situation was not helped by the heavy costs of holding a congress in a location like Tokyo, where it was virtually impossible to hold a training seminar that would yield income for the congress.

Eventually a decision was taken that tied membership fees to the size of the member federation, with five or six categories, the first category being for federations with less than 100 members and the last category being for federations with more than 30,000 members. There were several problems with this decision and these have not yet been solved.

One major problem is that virtually none of the IAF member federations have in place a system for accurately calculating the number of their active (paying) members. Only France has such a system and this is largely due to the government control of the martial arts in this country. Other members make a very rough estimate based on the numbers in each of the affiliated dojos. Even the All-Japan

Aikido Federation has to make such an estimate, based on the number of member dojos in each of Japan's 47 prefectures. Though this federation and the Aikikai share the same headquarters in Tokyo, they are different organizations.

Another problem was where to fix the boundaries between each payment category. There is a wide gap between 100 and 30,000, but the majority of IAF members organizations had between 1,000 and 5,000 members. The intermediate steps could be placed in regular increments of 5,000 members, or could be clustered more closely together at certain points of the spectrum, in order to maximize income. A further problem was the seeming lack of natural justice involved in having variable membership fees, but a voting system that was not weighted in favour of members who paid higher fees. Although the largest members paid the highest membership fees, the voting powers remained unchanged, with each member having one vote. The voting system remained unchanged in order to prevent the largest members from being able to control the decision-making process by means of weighted votes, but the sense of injustice remained.

### **Congresses vs. Training Seminars**

After the 1980 Paris congress, things settled down somewhat and two important decisions were made. One was that the default location for IAF congresses would be Japan, unless another country made a definite offer. One reason given for this was to allow the Japanese shihans living overseas to return to their cultural roots, but this was complemented by another decision, made as much in the interests of finance as of the 'spirit' of aikido, that a congress would always be accompanied by a major aikido training seminar, the proceeds of which would help offset the costs of organizing the congress. A consequence of this was that Tokyo ceased to be only possible location in Japan for a congress, and successful meetings were held twice in Tanabe and in once each in Katsu'ura and Takasaki. In all these cases, a seminar lasting several days was held in a large sports hall. Together with the revised fee structure, the seminar had a positive effect on IAF finances, but another effect of the seminar was to turn IAF congresses into major international aikido events, more like intensive training *gasshuku*

(合宿, which is the Japanese term for a residential training course, like a summer school or summer camp), with the drama of congress proceedings and disputes diminishing in importance.

In one respect this development was very welcome, since it served to underline the main purpose of having the IAF at all, which was to facilitate aikido training on the tatami, for the members and also for the elected officers.

### **The IAF as a Sports Organization?**

In some sense, the issues concerning aikido and sport arose as a consequence of Kisshomaru Ueshiba's decision in 1945 to 'export' aikido to the victor countries in World War II. The Japanese shihans who established aikido organizations outside Japan were faced with the problem of maintaining relations with government sports organizations where these existed, especially for the purpose of insurance. The situation differed from country to country, but I know from experience that this was a problem in the UK. The affiliation of the IAF to GAISF in 1984 gave greater prominence to the problem, since the IAF was openly affiliating to a sporting association, even though it was not itself a sports federation. I have already explained the issues above, and also explained how the matter of 'tournaments' was resolved, but it is necessary to emphasize that this sleight of hand was not really a solution to a fundamental problem, which in my opinion, has the potential for causing great damage to aikido in the future.

### **Terms of Office**

I began working for the IAF during 1980, when I prepared the official minutes of the third IAF Congress, held in Paris. This was unofficial, as was my role in chairing the 1982 Directing Committee Meeting, held in Tokyo. I was elected Assistant General Secretary in 1984 and succeeded Mr Seiichi Seko as General Secretary in 1988. In 1996, I succeeded Giorgio Veneri as IAF Chairman and remained in this position until I retired in 2016. After much thought I decided to retire and now I have no connection at all with the IAF. If we calculate the creation of the IAF in 1976, with congresses and

elections occurring in even-numbered years, we find that the terms of office for IAF chairmen have become increasingly longer. Mr Bonnefond was in office for eight years, Mr Veneri for twelve, and I myself for twenty years. There is no limitation on how long an IAF official may remain in office, but it seems reasonable to me to introduce term limits, in order to prevent well-meaning individuals such as myself from remaining in office for too long: it is never good to outstay one's welcome.

### **Legal Issues**

When the IAF was created, the Aikikai took steps to ensure that it was created in Japan, the assumption being that the federation would be subject to Japanese law. The result was that the headquarters of the IAF are located at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo. When I became the IAF General Secretary in 1984, I began to investigate the legal issues affecting the IAF and this became a long-term project. Since I was living in Japan, I regularly visited the Hombu Dojo and did some training, as well as discussing IAF issues with those who ran the Hombu's international department. I did this partly to put some flesh on the bones of the IAF skeleton and give the lie to any impression that the IAF was a phantom organization within the Aikikai Hombu. After I became Chairman in 1996, my successor, Hiroshi Somemiya, continued this research and had some conversations with Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba. Mr Somemiya had been taught by Morihei Ueshiba and was always a stalwart supporter of the Aikikai. However, we both believed that it was in the best interests of the IAF and its members if the federation achieved some sort of proper legal status. In Japan there are various types of 'legal person' and the dojo in Hiroshima where I used to practice not only had such status but was one of the first aikido organizations after World War II to acquire it. The type of legal status agreed upon by Mr Somemiya and myself as most appropriate for the IAF was *NPO Houjin* (Not-for-Profit Organization).

Discussions about the IAF's legal status had also taken place among members of the IAF Directing Committee and the reason for this was the matter of legal protection for the committee members. The IAF had changed the format of congresses to include a large international training seminar, sponsored

by the IAF and attended by congress delegates and aikido students in general. The question of liability for any injuries suffered during such seminars was a pressing one.

Mr Somemiya retired as IAF General Secretary and his successor lived in the USA, so was not best equipped to pursue the question. I did however, frequently discuss the matter with the present Doshu and it was during these discussions that I noticed hints of anxiety. Doshu stressed more than once that Morihei Ueshiba had entrusted the mission of spreading aikido worldwide to the Aikikai and not to the IAF. Since it was never my intention to question this, it seemed to me that communication of the IAF's intentions had not been effective and that I was responsible. Doshu suggested a meeting with the Aikikai's lawyer and such a meeting took place. However, the meeting was more of a lecture given by the lawyer, than a meeting of minds and did not lead to any fruitful results.

Basically, the lawyer's position was that it was not possible for the IAF to have the status of a *houjin* in Japanese law because the Aikikai Foundation already had this status. I could not accept the lawyer's argument and told him so. My position was, and still is, that an organization's legal status does not entail any claim to exclusivity about the organization's aim and mission. The IAF could thus quite reasonably have an aim such as 'to give structured support to the Aikikai in its mission to spread aikido worldwide' and also have appropriate legal status.

My discussions with the lawyer confirmed what I had suspected previously, namely, that pursuing appropriate legal status for the IAF that was separate from the Aikikai would set the IAF on a collision course with the Aikikai. This was never made clear by Kisshomaru Doshu, but it became very clear indeed from the discussion with the Aikikai's lawyer. It was this discussion, more than anything else, that precipitated my decision to retire as IAF Chairman and I suspect that this is also the reason why my connection with the IAF has been completely severed. However, the matter of appropriate legal status for an organization like the IAF still remains.

## **Democracy Inside and Outside Japan**

Working as professor in a Japanese university for many years has enabled me to study quite intensively how democracy works here in practice, the study being both theoretical and from the grass roots upwards, so to speak. My very first aikido teacher emphasized that aikido was in no way democratic; the line connecting the teacher with the student was vertical and an aikido community in Japan was always envisaged as a group of people committed to training, each of which had such a vertical connection with the instructor. This vertical structure is not, however, limited to aikido and the Japanese martial arts and it certainly existed within the university community.

Useful concepts in this connection are the trio of *sempai* [先輩], *kohai* [後輩], and *douhai* [同輩], but the last is rarely used. The first two have the reasonable English translations of *senior* and *junior* and are very commonly used; they also have a very precise meaning, which is completely lost when *sempai* is used as a general category in some dojos. The passage of Japanese through the various stages of their lives is sometimes marked by a ceremony and the entrance ceremonies for school, universities, or companies serve to mark the precise time of entry. Thus, I was promoted to the rank of full professor at Hiroshima University on a certain date, with a diploma signed by the Education Minister, and all professors who were promoted before me were *sempai* and all who were promoted after me were *kohai*. Since there was no one else who was promoted at the same time, there were no *douhai*. Entry into companies and, especially, into discipleship of Morihei Ueshiba and organizations like the Aikikai Hombu, are similarly marked and on one occasion I was surprised to hear one eminent shihan refer to Tamura Shihan as ‘Sempai’ and address him as ‘Tamura Sempai’. (Of course, these terms are quite different from the title *Sensei*, which is used as a title, not a category, for teachers, lawyers and politicians.)

Given such a cultural context, where every adult is at the same time equal and not equal to all the others, the exercise of democracy in Japan is a very delicate affair, where correct use of social antennae is absolutely crucial to ‘smooth’ decision-making. (‘Smooth’ [スムーズ] is even a common Japanese term to describe such decision making and the effects. Thus, events such as elections and

evacuations are considered to take place ‘smoothly’ when no ‘problems’ occur and everyone follows an expected role.) It hardly needs stating that the exercise of ‘democracy’ in a Japanese organization is especially fraught. Even such a simple exercise as giving one’s opinion requires ample use of one’s social antennae both beforehand and during the process, to ensure that it is carried out with due ‘smoothness’ and I witnessed this dramatically when I spent time as head of my department at the university. This job is usually given by rotation among the full professors, but foreign faculty are sometimes passed over, since they are presumed not to understand the full complexities of Japanese democracy. I was pleased that I was not passed over, but I saw at first-hand how complex the supposedly democratic decision-making process actually was.

Departmental meetings were held monthly and run by the department head (講座主任). Of course, they were done in Japanese and I had no problem with this. However, problems did arise when I asked my colleagues for their opinions. I went around the table and asked everyone individually and this caused a major panic. Later, a *sempai* colleague advised not to do this, but to ‘let the flowers of argument bloom.’ The Japanese phrase for this is ‘*rongi no hana wo sakaseru*’ [論議の花を咲かせる] and I suspect it is well known, for it always causes some amusement when I use it. Letting the flowers of argument bloom goes hand in hand with another important practice, called *nemawashi*, referred to earlier. *Nemawashi* [根廻] is binding the roots of a tree before it is transplanted, the binding ensuring that all the roots are transplanted and none are left out. I used the phrase earlier in connection with the IAF’s admission to GAISF, since it was very clear that much preparation had indeed taken place to ensure that the operation of electing the IAF went ‘smoothly’ but the practice is much more common in Japan and is indeed crucial for ‘smooth’ decision-making.

For my next department meeting, I consulted all the important professor *sempai* in the department beforehand and explained very clearly what decisions I hoped would be taken and why they were important. I then ‘let the flowers of argument bloom’ and the resulting prolonged silence was only very occasionally punctuated by comments, all more or less irrelevant to the matter in hand. The

meeting was regarded by my colleagues as a great success because I used these two techniques. This was at the level of a department meeting, but promotions are decided in a secret ballot by all the full professors in the whole faculty and my faculty was very large, with over 90 full professors (or *kyouju* [教授]). I had to do this once in my department and it was a very daunting process. Wearing a formal suit and tie, in impeccable Japanese I had first to explain the process of selection in the department and then explain why my department wanted to promote the candidate. The result was a unanimous vote in favour and I was very happy later when a *sempai* colleague told me that ‘your explanation was very logical and you led us from one step to another, so we really had no choice but to accept your proposal.’ He added that this was quite a rare occurrence, since colleagues sometimes relied more on their seniority than on their skills of logic and persuasion.

I hope it will be clear why meetings in the IAF were so unusual and to see the issues here, I recall being summoned to a meeting with Kisaburo Osawa, Hombu General Director, during an IAF congress. In the middle of a Directing Committee meeting, I received an urgent message that I must leave the IAF meeting and attend another meeting, this time of the Aikikai and some Japanese shihans teaching in IAF member countries. Osawa Shihan announced that the Aikikai had decided to change the rules regulating Hombu recognition. Henceforward there would be two types of recognition (the Japanese terms being *kounin* [公認] and *jun kounin* [順公認]). The former denoted official recognition, as before, but the new variety indicated unofficial recognition and Osawa Shihan expected me to convey the Aikikai’s decision to the IAF Congress. He left it to me to translate the Japanese appropriately, and added that this was a one-off decision of a temporary nature and applicable to organizations in France and the Netherlands only. In all other cases the normal rule of recognition of one organization per country would continue. It was indeed temporary, for after a short period the Aikikai abolished the category of *jun kounin* completely, but also changed the ground rules, in order to give *kounin* recognition to any organization in a country that met the Aikikai’s criteria.

I will discuss the rule itself in the next section, but point out here that Osawa Shihan was being quite reasonable, despite the shocked faces of some of the Japanese shihans in the room, who clearly saw the likely consequences of the decision in their own countries. The Aikikai was not obliged to defend its internal decisions in any way, but Osawa Shihan quite rightly decided that the decision was of such importance to the IAF that it needed to be conveyed formally.

This was the situation seen from Osawa Shihan's viewpoint, but from my own viewpoint and that of the Japanese shihans in the room, the situation was somewhat different. The Aikikai had made a momentous decision, with drastic consequences for the IAF, but there had been no consultation with the IAF beforehand. It was as if two different organizations were operating in parallel, but with very little overlap. The IAF held its congresses and committee meetings and the Aikikai also held its meetings at the same time. Occasionally there was direct contact between the two organizations, as had happened here, but there was no doubt at all about which organization was in overall control. The children could play their games, but the grown-ups were always on hand to keep them in line and make sure that the situation did not become out of control. To my mind this indicated a certain lack of trust in the ability of aikido students, some of whom had trained for many years, to manage a large international organization in the same spirit of openness and honesty that they brought to their own aikido training.

### **Recognition of Aikikai Grades**

When I began to practice aikido, my training environment was a gymnasium situated in a university. It was a club activity, one of the many such activities encouraged and subsidized by the university. There were classes in physical exercise and athletics, but a large part of the activities going on in the superb purpose-built sports center were club activities like aikido, using *tatami* mats purchased by the university. Our teacher considered *kyu* gradings, but he did not want to issue his own *kyu* grades. He therefore approached an organization in the UK, which was only too happy for this young dynamic instructor, a graduate of the very best university in Japan, to hold grading examinations and award the grades issued by this organization. As I stated earlier, I also trained at two large general dojos in

London, but it was not until I returned from the USA and became secretary of the dojo and, later, the national organization that I became aware of the world of aikido politics.

In the USA I met Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba for the first time and learned that he was on his way to Hawaii to meet Koichi Tohei. From the discussions in the dojo, especially from Kanai Shihan's suggestion that he would accompany Doshu with a sword, so he could put an end to the discussion swiftly and cleanly, I gathered that Tohei was in very serious conflict with the Aikikai and would probably leave and found his own organization. I remember wondering why this mattered, but more perplexing to me was the discovery that the conflict involved the nature of *ki* [気]. Kanai Shihan never ventured to define or discuss this term, but some students readily explained aikido to me as the *do* [道] of the *ai* [合] of *ki* [気], or the Way of Harmonizing Ki. Ki, left untranslated, was apparently located in the *seika tanden* [臍下丹田, lower abdomen], and was activated especially by the *tori-fune* [鳥船, boat-rowing] and *furi-tama* [振り玉, ball shaking] exercises practiced at the beginning of classes. They assumed that this major feat of intellectual gymnastics needed no further explanation.

I never considered grades again until it was time for me to go back to the UK. I asked Kanai Shihan if I should take a grade and his answer was simply to smile and give me a dojo registration card as a souvenir. On the card I was ranked 1st *kyu*.

Back in the UK, after a break for surgery on both knees I resumed daily training at the Ryushinkan Dojo in London. My enthusiasm resulted in my being appointed dojo secretary and this involved attending meetings and seminars of the national organization. Chiba Shihan had called his dojo the Aikikai of Great Britain, but this dojo had developed into a nationwide organization, which was now called the British Aikido Federation (BAF). This was officially recognized by the Aikikai Foundation in Japan and the technical director, who also happened to be the head of the Ryushinkan Dojo,

conducted *dan* examinations nationally and sent the applications to the Aikikai. At that point only Mr Kanetsuka had the power to do this.

The BAF was a very large fish in a sea of smaller UK aikido organizations that had no relationship with the Aikikai. More perplexing was the fact that my first teacher at Sussex University had received his 3rd dan from Morihei Ueshiba himself, but had chosen to register his UK grades with one of these organizations that had no links with the Aikikai. The perplexity was not diminished by the discovery that Norio Tao's teacher was Tanaka Shigeo, who had been one of the early disciples of Morihei Ueshiba, but who directed a dojo in Tokyo attached to the Meiji Shrine. This was the Shiseikan, the home dojo of Tokyo University's aikido club, where Tao had been a student. Tokyo University was the top academic establishment in Japan, but its aikido club was somehow outside the mainstream of Aikikai organizations. An explanation was given by Kisshomaru Doshu and later by K Chiba. Doshu told me that the Shiseikan grades were given by him personally and not via the Aikikai and Chiba explained that, well, Tao was from the elite Tokyo University and it was left to me to conclude that, well, different arrangements clearly operated. (This anomaly has now ended and the grades of the Shiseikan Dojo are processed by the Aikikai.) I accepted these explanations without comment, but the suspicion of more intellectual gymnastics was not really allayed.

With grades I believe that the central concept operating is that of lineage. My *dan* diplomas are signed by Doshu, who is the grandson of Morihei Ueshiba, and so a connection is thereby created. I never received a *kyu* diploma from Kanai Shihan, but he had been a student of Morihei Ueshiba and so shared in the lineage. In my own dojos the *kyu* diplomas are also signed by Doshu and come from the Aikikai, but this practice appears to be restricted to dojos in Japan. Behind the lineage is, of course, the unstated promise that the diploma has value, in the sense that it indicates a level of skill and proficiency that can be publicly attested. Thus, the grade is recognized—and the same is true of the organization awarding or validating the grades.

### **Recognition of Aikikai Organizations**

Kisshomaru Doshu's explanation about the Shiseikan dan grades indicates a certain dilemma: there is a tension between the person awarding the grade and the organization of which the person is a member. Each Aikikai *kyu* and *dan* diploma is numbered sequentially and the number on the last *dan* diploma awarded to me is 570. However, this number, appearing in very small Japanese characters on the top right of the diploma, is registered with the organization: the Aikikai. Doshu's name appears more prominently on the left of the diploma and behind it is a large square red seal. It is clear from the diploma that it is given by the Doshu of Aikido. Doshu is also President of the Aikikai, but this is nowhere stated on the *dan* diploma.

Another example of the tension between individuals and organization is the Aikikai shihan system. In Japan a shihan is commonly recognized a teacher who possesses a certain level of expertise in the art, and if the art uses a *dan* system, a shihan is someone who holds 6th *dan* rank or higher. This is common knowledge and does not need the support of signed certificates. In aikido such certificates are now issued for organizations outside Japan and they are issued by the Aikikai and in accordance with certain rules. The title is operative only within the organization in which the person trains and the person must be a resident of the country in which the headquarters of the organization is situated. This explanation was qualified by a Hombu official, who listed four categories of shihan who were resident outside Japan. The first category included students of Morihei Ueshiba, like Hiroshi Tada and Yoshimitsu Yamada, who were sort of 'super-shihan' and who could teach and conduct *dan* examinations anywhere in the world. The second category included those who were not direct students of Morihei Ueshiba, but who had been dispatched by the Aikikai to reside in the country where they taught aikido. The third category included those who resided outside Japan and had become Aikikai instructors, but had not been 'dispatched' by the Aikikai. The final category included shihan, whether Japanese or non-Japanese, who had been appointed in accordance with the rules stated above.

In both cases, the *dan* ranks and the shihan title are issued by the Aikikai, and to organizations that it has officially recognized as being competent to organize the teaching and dissemination of the art of

aikido in their respective countries. In Japan the situation is much more fluid. There is no system of giving official recognition to national organizations, so much as recognizing individual dojos or groups of dojos as competent to manage the teaching of the art. There is an organization called the All-Japan Aikido Federation, but membership is voluntary and the sole aim of this organization appears to be to organize the vast annual demonstration, like a scout and guide jamboree, that takes place at the end of May each year. The IAF is entirely outside this system of national recognition, which would still operate quite effectively even if the IAF did not exist. The only connection with the IAF is the condition that an organization has to have Aikikai recognition, in order to become an IAF member. However, such membership is not compulsory and it is noteworthy that there are more recognized aikido organizations outside than inside the IAF. This is sometimes pointed out at IAF congresses and the unstated implication seems to be that the IAF is somehow failing in its purpose.

There is another aspect of recognition that has not yet been considered. The Aikikai is recognized by the Japanese Ministry of Education, but is a private school. The question of recognition of nationally based aikido organizations is of some relevance to the role of the IAF. When I was secretary of the BAF, I took steps to have the federation recognized in some way by the UK government, since such recognition in some form is usually a necessary condition for the use of municipal facilities. However, the only non-sporting categories of such recognition were to become a registered charity, dedicated to the pursuit of good works, or become a limited company, with capital and shareholders. The problem here was that the BAF was not a religious organization, despite the 'spiritual' dimensions of aikido, and to become a limited company would raise severe questions about the role of the technical director, for he would have to become an employee of the company and this was not acceptable to Kanetsuka Shihan. In Italy, the Italian Aikikai became an official *ente morale*, the stated aim of which was the study of traditional Japanese culture, but there was no such category in the UK. The only alternative was for the BAF to be recognized by a government sports agency, like the Sports Council, and a crucial condition for this was that the BAF had to belong to a recognized international federation for aikido, namely, the IAF. Recognition by the Aikikai alone did not satisfy this condition.

I suspect that nations have different rules and conditions for recognition of national organizations and that no one size fits all. However, when I was Chairman of the IAF, I learned from some members that membership of the IAF, and, through the IAF, membership of GAISF and SportAccord, was very important for keeping in good standing with their national sports organizations. Other members had no need of such recognition and in fact did not really approve of IAF membership of sports federations like GAISF and SportAccord. Their reason for being in the IAF was that it provided a link with the Aikikai that was 'horizontal' in structure: a communication link between equals, and not a link via a vertical teaching & learning relationship.

### **Recognition of the IAF**

The Aikikai does not have any official recognition outside Japan and this is also of major relevance to the IAF. In fact, one powerful argument for the existence of the IAF is that it is not a private school, but an international federation that is recognized by international sporting bodies and I suspect that this might have been behind the suggestion of Mr Sasakawa to Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba that the IAF should become a member of GAISF. Aikido is clearly not an Olympic sport and the likelihood of recognition by the IOC is practically zero, but membership of GAISF was quite a different matter. The organization was basically a kind of sports club, dedicated to harmless exchange of views by people long past their sporting prime and in very congenial surroundings, with ample time for the pleasures of gastronomy and the gaming tables (for the organization's permanent base was Monte Carlo). To be taken seriously, it was important for GAISF to be as inclusive as possible and so there was no difficulty for the IAF to join other martial arts organizations and become a member. Judo and karate no longer need to be in GAISF, since they are both Olympic sports, but for many other sports federations membership of GAISF was the only means of being internationally recognized. This point was strongly argued by a friend of mine who is a shihan and a member of the IAF Senior Council. His point was that since the whole purpose of the IAF is to give international recognition to aikido, the federation needs only to exist: it does not need any other purpose, like being a second Aikikai, or even a friendship association.

## Separation and Discord

I have put separation first in the title because this can happen without the discord. This is clear, even from basic concepts governing Japanese traditional arts, such as *SHU-HA-RI* [守破離]. The character for the last stage, *RI*, can be read as *hanareru* and means to separate. Thus, the close teaching and learning relationship implied by the phrase entails a final separation, usually expected and amicable, but indicating that the student, while still a student, has completed the process represented by the triple combination of the Chinese characters, and become independent. Separation in aikido, on the other hand, seems rarely amicable and also is rarely the result of a productive teaching and learning process.

One separation occurred quite early in the life of aikido. One of Morihei Ueshiba's early students joined the Kobukan Dojo well before World War II. Kenji Tomiki did judo and eventually taught at Waseda University, a prestigious private university in Tokyo. Tomiki was the Kobukan's 'brainbox' and I understand that he was responsible for the common introduction to the two early manuals that appeared under Morihei Ueshiba's name. These were *Budo Renshu* (1933) and *Budo* (1938). The former, with line drawings, records aiki-budo *waza* taught at an intensive Kobukan training session and the latter is a manual to be used by the Japanese army. Later on, Tomiki believed that aikido actually needed some form of competition and he spent much time and energy in expounding his theories to Morihei Ueshiba. I understand from one of Tomiki's students (in Manchuria's Teikoku University) that Ueshiba was not entirely happy about the direction that Tomiki was taking, but the separation was really brought about by the requirement at Waseda that martial arts taught there had to have competition. (Hiroshi Tada, who was a student also at Waseda, had to found a separate aikido club in consequence.) Tomiki's student, named Shigenobu Okumura, became a student and instructor at the Aikikai Hombu on his return to Japan after World War II and became a member of the IAF Superior Council.

I have discussed the matter of Kenji Tomiki because it occurred very early on, well before the founding of the IAF. The break with Koichi Tohei occurred later, but appeared to be more acrimonious and was a clash of personalities, as much as of aikido doctrine. The ostensible reason given by Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba for the creation of the IAF was to ‘unify’ the world of aikido and in this respect the IAF has been a singular failure, matched only by the failure of the Aikikai to achieve any similar result.

I became uncomfortably aware of this fact when I arrived in Hiroshima. After a few years I began teaching at a second university in Hiroshima and sought to pursue aikido training in this university, as I did at Hiroshima University. I also trained at the central dojo in Hiroshima and was surprised to see many of these students on the mat at the second university. After an interesting class, notable for showing *waza* that I had not seen before, I was approached by students from the central dojo, who earnestly requested me to keep their training at this dojo secret from Mr Kitahira, on the grounds that he would be ‘very angry indeed’ if he found out.

The Hiroshima central dojo had been started by Masatake Fujita and on a visit to the Hombu I asked Fujita Shihan about this situation in Hiroshima. Fujita Shihan’s explanation seemed me at the time to be another example of the intellectual gymnastics that occur quite often in explanations about aikido. Basically, the dojo at the second university owed its allegiance to another shihan with whom Mr Kitahira had a very severe disagreement. The shihan’s name was Shoji Nishio and I understood that he was something of a maverick. He taught in northern Europe and in many places in Japan, but I believe that the issue with Mr Kitahira was a territorial issue. The Aikikai’s target in Japan was to place each of the 47 prefectures, or the larger groupings of prefectures, under the control of a shihan ‘*sekininsha*’ or ‘person responsible’ who conducted examinations and sent *dan* applications to the Hombu. Nishio Shihan did not fit into this model and Fujita Shihan spent much time in explaining in what respects Nishio Shihan was, and also was not, a Hombu shihan. Kisshomaru Ueshiba was Doshu at the time and he overheard much of Fujita Shihan’s explanation. He simply laughed and made a few remarks about squabbling children. Closer to home, my two German colleagues with whom I share

the running of the dojo also trained with Nishio Shihan and this was one reason why I eventually became independent, and the fact that I got to know Nishio Shihan quite well, but was never able to train with him and experience his aikido at first hand, was one of my many aikido regrets.

I have discussed these matters here, in order to show that the explosions that occurred in the EAF and the IAF were not really new in aikido, though they added a level of openness and a degree of venom that were not common in Japan. The explosions in Europe also paved the way for a series of later splits and disagreements in various countries, which neither the Aikikai nor the IAF were able to prevent.

One such split occurred in France and others in the rest of Europe, notably Germany and the UK. The split in France was sufficiently severe that a delegate from the French judo federation, the FFJDA, came to an IAF meeting to see what could be done about it. Basically, aikido students in France split into two main groups: one group, called the FFAB, directed by Tamura Shihan, and the other group, called the FFAAA (popularly known in French as the *Deux Effs—Trois Ahs*), directed by Christian Tissier. This second group quickly requested IAF membership and this was accepted. However, Tamura Shihan was a member of the IAF Superior Council and he and representatives of the other group always attended IAF meetings. The aikido organization in neighboring Monaco was also directed by Tamura Shihan, but remained a regular member of the IAF despite the situation in France.<sup>14</sup>

In Germany, a substantial group left the German Aikikai, directed by Katsuaki Asai, and became independent. The new group owed its technical allegiance to Seigo Yamnaguchi Shihan, who, like Asai Shihan, was also a member of the IAF Superior Council and this led to some very full and frank exchanges within this body. Occasionally, Doshu had to step in and keep order.

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<sup>14</sup> Mr Bonnefond, in the work referred to earlier, gives some account of the problems in France.

In Britain, there were two de facto groups within the BAF: the original group of seniors who were Chiba students; and the new group, composed of students who had never trained with Chiba Shihan and were taught by Kanetsuka Shihan. Eventually, some dojos from the original group broke away from the BAF and formed a new organization, called the United Kingdom Aikikai (UKA). Further splits have occurred since then.

The splits in the three countries mentioned above were not the only such occurrences and proliferation of groups within national boundaries seems to become an accepted fact of aikido life. After the departure of Tohei in 1974, the only country where there have been no serious splits within the Aikikai is the mainland United States and I suspect that this is due to the vast size of the country and the fact that there have always been many resident Japanese instructors, including teachers like Mitsugi Saotome and, more recently, Haruo Matsuoka, who have never had any relationship with the IAF. The USAF briefly left the IAF, after I became General Secretary, but soon returned, and Yamada Shihan became a very valuable source of support and advice after I became IAF Chairman. One major event occurred in 2000, when K Chiba created the Birankai. Y Yamada also created the Sansuikai in 2010. Both organizations are international and represent less of a fragmentation of existing groups than the creation of new groups centered round a particular shihan.

### **One Organization per Country**

Rather than the myth of *Shangri-la*, alluded to earlier, the myth of Aladdin and his magic lamp, or of Pandora and her magic box, might be more suitable metaphors for the development of aikido after World War II and the proliferation of different aikido groups naturally leads to the question of why the IAF continues to maintain the rule of one member per country and we can end this section on miscellaneous issues affecting the IAF by discussing the pros and cons of this rule.

I have already explained one important reason for the existence of the IAF and this is to give recognition for the martial art of aikido outside Japan. The membership by the IAF of organizations like GAISF and the IWGA is also one reason for maintaining the rule of one organization per country,

since this follows the pattern set by the other member organizations. Such organizations follow the established model of one organization for each sport—clearly defined and with no overlap, and the members of such organizations are the national sports associations in each country. The Aikikai followed this model with its network of national Aikikais and when the IAF was created, the most natural course was to rename these Aikikais as federations and to make these federations the members of the IAF. For many years after its founding, the IAF had no membership certificates and these were originally issued only to those members who requested them.

The fact that the Aikikai was able to change the rule quite quickly can be explained by the vertical structure of this organization, where there is a measure of correspondence between the decision taken and the seniority of the person who leads the decision-making process (which always involves *nemawashi*, as explained earlier). When I was IAF General Secretary, I had a plan to revise the IAF Statutes and the revisions involved abolishing national federations and removing the power of veto by the Superior Council. In place of national federations, the IAF membership would simply consist of any organization recognized by the Aikikai that wanted to join. The matter of decision-making in this much larger IAF was a problem, since there had to be a way of ensuring that any system of weighted voting based on membership numbers would protect the independence and integrity of the smaller members. I was dissuaded from pursuing these revisions by two responses. One was from GAISF, which strongly urged the IAF to maintain the one-member-per-country membership system and the other was from the Aikikai, in the person of Kisaburo Osawa Shihan, who thought that my projected revisions were ‘too early’. He did not elaborate further, but I suspect from later discussions at the Hombu that my plan to curb the veto power of the Superior Council would take the IAF too far in a democratic direction, which was not appropriate for aikido. The IAF is therefore left with the problem of fitting a proliferating number of quarts into the original pint pot created in 1975/76.

## **5. A Brief Conclusion, in Which Nothing is Concluded**

The unusual title here is lifted more or less intact from a short novel by Samuel Johnson, which I studied as a student and which, I suppose, could be taken as a model for this essay. The title is *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, and the book was first published in 1759. The book was similar to Voltaire's *Candide*, and the focus is on young men travelling the world, usually in a close relationship with their teachers, and returning home sadder and wiser. Rasselas wanders the world in pursuit of happiness and undergoes many adventures, but he, too, finally returns home after coming to believe that his quest is fruitless.

One aim of this essay has been to discuss problems and delineate their main features as I see them, rather to undertake the much more difficult task of giving any solutions. If it is of use to those involved with the IAF in any way, it will have served this purpose, but this is not really my main reason for writing these reflections.

I gave an earlier draft of this essay to a very close friend, whom I have known for decades, and his trenchant criticisms were striking. My friend wanted to know what purpose I had in writing the essay and I assume he meant another, deeper, purpose, other than what I stated in the introduction. I suppose that this deeper purpose, if there is one, is basically cathartic: a way of working the IAF out of my aikido system. *Catharsis* is Aristotle's term for what happens in a Greek tragedy. It is a form of purging, or cleansing, perhaps like the *misogi* that people practice in aikido. *Misogi* originates in the purifying activities recounted in the *Kojiki* involving the deity, Take-haya Susa-no-oo, after his visit to the (underworld) Land of Yomi. However, I do not want to push this analogy too far.

In *The Hobbit* and its sequels, after Bilbo has had his adventures he returns to Bag End and resumes his life, greatly enriched by his experiences. The full title of Tolkien's book is, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*, and the addition is a good metaphor for my own involvement in aikido and the IAF. Aikido is often described as a journey and I consider that I am now back to where I was when I started training in the art in 1969 / 1970, but in another country. I had been training for over ten years before becoming associated with the IAF and this in itself involved several journeys, literally and

metaphorically. Working for the IAF has been an enriching part of these journeys, but I now train and teach in two dojos that are completely unconnected with the IAF or any other aikido organization, apart from the essential and fundamental association with Doshu and the Aikikai.

I have few regrets, either with the years spent working for the IAF, or with completely severing any connection with this federation and simply training and teaching in my own dojos. After a long diversion, I suppose I have resumed the main route. Morihei Ueshiba had several designations for this, but one, again referring to the *Kojiki*, was *Masakatsu Akatsu; Katsu Hayabi*. This phrase, referring to a deity who came into being as a result of a struggle between two other deities, could roughly be translated as, ‘*I won. I beat the pants off you – and I did it immediately, like a flash of lightning.*’ The emphasis on personal **self**-victory through aikido training is a later interpretation of the original text, though this, too, is relevant and important. If we keep the journey metaphor for aikido, I prefer to see the art simply as a journey, without worrying too much about the nature of the destination or the nature of the transportation involved. In this respect, Tolkien’s tales of Bilbo and Frodo offer a very good parallel.