

AIKIDO BUKI WAZA



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**BY
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Aikido Buki Waza

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INTERVIEW WITH SAITO SENSEI

Interview with Saito Sensei in 1996

Saito Sensei is celebrating 50 years in Aikido this year. He began his studying of aikido in 1946. This led him to be a long time uchi deshi of O-Sensei's for more than 23 years. O-Sensei passed away in 1969 with his head in the hands of Saito Sensei, and a long time teacher-student relationship ended.

The Iwama Dojo and the Aiki Shrine was left in Saito Sensei's care. This and the Aikido the founder taught in Iwama is something Saito Sensei still today is preserving and teaching, not only in Iwama, the birthplace of Aikido, but all over the world. Saito Sensei's paramount objective is to preserve the Aikido the founder taught and not to change it in any way. In this perspective Saito Sensei is very much unique; since it has been common practise of aikido teachers to develop their own aikido. Saito Sensei has continued teaching the Aikido of the founder and left his mark in the Aikido community through a series of books and videos. Today when Saito Sensei is celebrating his 50 years in Aikido he is also the Dai Sempai at Hombu Dojo.

The Interview

During the week in Denmark Saito Sensei gave me the opportunity of an interview. As I had a great interest in, and several questions regarding, the background of Aikido I took the opportunity to find some answers. Today Saito Sensei is one of few who people who have a direct link to the founder and also one of few who can give first hand information on Aikido and its background.

Alexandersson: Did Saito Sensei train other forms of Budo prior to your Aikido training?

Saito: Yes I did. I did Kendo, Karate and some Judo.

Alexandersson: How come Saito Sensei started training Aikido?

Saito: I heard of a mysterious man doing an unknown form of Budo close to where I lived. This was in 1946 and I began studying for the founder. When I started with Aikido, we trained really hard. At times we did a lot of Suwari waza techniques; even if our knees were bleeding we still carried on training! We did Suwari waza for days and then changed to something else, like ryotodori techniques and did that for days. This was the way the training was conducted in Iwama.

Alexandersson: At the time Saito Sensei started Aikido, were there many other students in the dojo?

Saito: Well, there were several students at the time. Tohei, Abe, Tanabe and Shioda were training when I began. Tohei stayed only for a short time and then left due to the fact that he was forming a family. Abe stayed for a year and then left for France. Tanabe stayed there for a short time and so did Shioda, who left to work at a Steel Mill where he started teaching aikido.

Alexandersson: Besides Saito Sensei, who has been Uchi deshi the longest? And for how long?

Saito: There were not any other uchi deshis! Especially if you mean long term students who stayed for a year or more. Most of the students stayed not longer than 3 to 6 months.

Alexandersson: Who among the Senseis today have been uchi deshis?

1ST SUBURI

1st Suburi - Ichi no Suburi

- 1 Start out in hanmi and hold bokken in your center. The end pointing approximately to the belly button.
- 2 Raise the bokken straight up. The movement is initiated from the hip. Synchronize your breathing with the movement. Inhale through your nose when raising the bokken and exhale through your mouth when letting the strike fall. You actually find strength in exhaling, and using your abdomen to pressure out the air from your lungs. The movement should be one. One continuous movement, inhaling and exhaling, raising and striking.
- 3 Let the bokken move all the way back in basic practice. In partner practice this is not necessary or even generally advisable, since the movement in partner practice is generally a smaller movement.
- 4 When moving in for the strike you turn the hip and the hip movement pulls out the bokken's movement.



1ST SUBURI



5 You strike with the exact same movement as when striking shomen uchi.



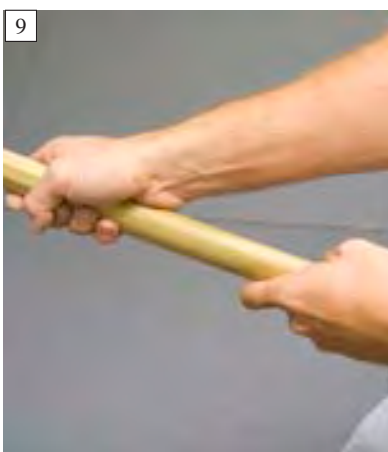
6 You end the strike horizontally. The position should be without correction leaving you ready for continuous movement.



7 You hold the bokken in the center with the end pointing to your center and about the height of the belly button.

8 You hold the bokken with the left hand all the way to the end and the right hand approximately with the space of two hands in between the two hands. You basically hold the bokken with the little finger and the ring finger. Those are your strong grabbing fingers. The other fingers maintain relaxed hold.

9 The hold when not actually striking is relaxed and therefore sensitive to any contact and pressure.



10 When ending a strike you turn your wrists inwards with the feeling of wringing out a wet rag. Note that you only turn the wrists, not all the way up and including your elbows. At this point the grip with the little fingers and ring fingers grab strongly, but also you let the inside of the index finger's joints lock on top of the bokken. This ensures that all kokyū power is extended through the bokken.

KUMI TACHI

Kumi tachi is a set of partner practices with bokken. There are 7 kumi tachi and the exercise, ki mu subi no tachi. These exercises make up for the basic curriculum for bokken. There are also numerous variations, henka waza. The henka waza includes bokken variations and tai jutsu variations that tie together the concept of riai in kumi tachi. However in this book no henka waza are shown.

1ST KUMI TACHI - ICHI NO TACHI

Each picture is numbered with two numbers. Top number describes where in the kumi tachi we are, and the bottom number describes the order of the image.

- 1 Start out in ken no kamae.
The 1st set of movements are images 1-6.



- 2 Uke tachi raises the sword to strike a shomen uchi.



- 3-5 Uchi tachi steps off the attacking line and starts a horizontal cut towards the abdomen.



- 3-6 Uke tachi slides back and cuts straight down.



1ST KUMI TACHI - ICHI NO TACHI

1
5



1
6



2
7



2
8



7-8 Uchi tachi steps forward and strikes a shomen uchi. The 2nd set of movements are images 7-11.

8 As this is more of an exercise where you practise aware, control, stability and other things, than an actual practical technique, there is a strong element of co-operation in the very end. Here you try to tie ki together, by blending in together to make a firm stable finish and with a feeling of having the focus and stability concentrated in one point.

There is no finite way of controlling your partner in this exercise, therefore it is more of an exercise to mould important skills you

2ND KEN TAI JO

As far as I know there have been few or no real changes of the second ken tai jo. It seems to have been pretty much stable from the start.

- 1 Uchi starts out in ken kamae, and uke starts out in tsuki kamae.



- 2 Uke opens up the stance, allowing uchi to strike a straight forward shomen uchi.



- 3 Uke turns the hip and steps backwards blocking the attack with what was the back end of the jo, now being the front end.



- 4 Uchi turns the hip, moves forward and strikes a yokomen uchi.



2ND KEN TAI JO



- 5 Uke steps backwards and blocks the yokomen uchi.



- 5-8 Uchi initiates another yokomen uchi. Uke steps across the attacking line and turns the jo around, stopping uchi's movement with a tsuki towards the upper part of uchi's chest.

It is important to actually step across the attacking line so that uke ends on the other side, and not in direct line with uchi's bokken. This is to avoid injury.



MEN UCHI GEDAN GAESHI

Men Uchi Gedan Gaeshi

- 1-3 Start out in ken no kamae, then take a step back slightly off the attacking line. Let the jo remain on the attacking line. Turn hip and body back onto the attacking line again and strike a straight strike, shomen uchi.



- 4 Slide off the attacking line to the left, simultaneously pull the jo back and conceal the jo behind your body.



MEN UCHI GEDAN GAESHI

5



5-7 Turn the hip and step forward slightly off the attacking line, at the same time start raising the jo in an arch-like movement. The aim is to strike from above and the side across an imaginary opponent's knee.

6



7



8



9



8 Detail. Strike towards the knee and stay off the attacking line.

9 Detail. Conceal the jo behind your body. As in picture no. 4.

31 KATA KUMI JO SEGMENT 1 - 11



26 Uchi moves forward to strike a shomen uchi. Uke moves off the attacking line, feet together and strikes at the wrist, stopping the attack momentarily.



27-28 Uchi's strike continues and uke moves into strike yokoemn uchi.



31 KATA KUMI JO SEGMENT 13 - 17

13
1



Start out in position number 12.

1-3 Uke strikes a tsuki.

13
2



13
3



13
4



4 Uchi performs a maki otoshi.

1ST KUMI JO

- 1 Uke starts out in jo kamae and uchi in tsuki kamae.



- 2-5 Uchi strikes a jodan tsuki. Uke moves off the attacking line to the right and executes a kaeshi tsuki. Note, when striking jodan tsuki be aware of the obvious danger in practice. Its is common to alter the jodan tsuki, for safety reasons, so it will be executed somewhat lower.



1ST KUMI JO

1
5



2
6



2
7



2
8



6-8 Uchi blocks uke's kaeshi tsuki with maki otoshi, a circular movement done with the right hand, starting from below then upwards and down. Afterwards uke directly moves in with a jodan tsuki. Uke move off the attacking line to the right and blocks the tsuki by lifting the jo high, above the head.

The block has a sticky feeling so uke should try to maintain contact with uchi's jo. By doing so uke will have control of uchi's jo and being able to sense the intentions of uchi.

JO DORI #9

This variation is based on kokyu ho.

- 1 Uke is prepared to strike a choku tsuki.



- 2 Nage blends with the attack and steps forward off the attacking line to the left. Nages prepares to grab uke's hand.



- 3 Nage grabs uke's hand and prepares to move further in the grab the jo between uke's hand.



- 4 As nage grabs the jo with left hand, nage turns the hip 180 degrees, and positions himself hip to hip. As you would do in morote dori kokyu ho.



JO DORI #9

5



5-8 Uke completes the hip turn and maintains the hold of the jo, so that the grip is front of the center. Nage simultaneously raises the arm and starts to turn the hip yet again 180 degrees while cutting down with the arm, throwing uke.

6



7



8

