

COVER

THE
AIKIDO
OF SHIN-BUDO KAI



A GUIDE TO PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE



EDITED BY RALPH T. BRYAN
FOREWORD BY SHIZUO IMAIZUMI

FRONT FLAP

The Aikido of Shin-Budo Kai provides an insider's view into one of the lesser-known Aikido organizations in the United States. As a Guide to Principles and Practice it offers guidance on navigating the dojo and includes a practical overview of the SBK curriculum. It also presents essential Aikido practice guidelines that will be useful to any practitioner, regardless of style or organizational affiliation. This Guide, however, intentionally deviates from the usual technical manual approach. Focusing less on how to, it delves into a number of underlying principles that are foundational to most forms of Budo, the Japanese martial Ways. Many of these key concepts are often misunderstood or underappreciated, yet are critical components of meaningful engagement in Aikido and related Budo arts. Examples include:

- *atemi* (strategic strikes)
- *kiai* (combative shout)
- *kuzushi* (breaking balance)
- *ma-ai* (space-time interval)
- *hara* (spiritual center)
- *mushin* (no mind)
- *ki* (universal energy)



BACK FLAP

The Aikido of Shin-Budo Kai also offers a rare glimpse into the long-standing Aikido career of **Shizuo Imaizumi Sensei**, including his time with Aikido's Founder, Morihei Ueshiba (O Sensei), and the second Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba; his association with Koichi Tohei Sensei; and, ultimately, his establishment of Shin-Budo Kai.

Imaizumi Sensei is of the last generation of Japanese sensei to have trained directly under O Sensei. Having first taught in Tokyo at Waseda University and at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo, he has been teaching Aikido for over 50 years. Imaizumi Sensei resides, and teaches regularly, in New York City. He also conducts annual seminars in Albuquerque, NM.



Editor and principal author, Ralph T. Bryan, is Chief Instructor of Albuquerque Shin-Budo Kai. A student of Imaizumi Sensei since 1994, he has been active in Aikido for some 25 years.



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A Guide to Principles and Practice

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CONTENTS

Foreword		ix
Preface		xiii
Chapter 1	Introduction	
	A Primer on Budo	1
	Aikido and the Founder	4
	Shizuo Imaizumi, Shihan	8
Chapter 2	The Shin-Budo Kai Organization	15
Chapter 3	Navigating the Dojo	
	Etiquette	19
	Practice	21
	Safety	22
	Dojo Care and Maintenance	23
Chapter 4	SBK Curriculum & Practice Guidelines	
	Genkido	27
	Aikido	30
	The Uke/Nage Dynamic	33
	Ukemi – The Art of Receiving	34
	Kuzushi	39
	Atemi and Kiai	41
	Bokkendo and Jodo	46
	Ma-ai	49
	Progression of Practice	53
	Shugyo	60
Chapter 5	Ranking and Shinsa	63
Chapter 6	Key Concepts from Budo	67
Chapter 7	In Closing	91
Appendix		
	Glossary	97
	Genkido Practice Guidance	113
	Sources and Recommended Reading	118
Acknowledgments		126
Index		128

FOREWORD

I am very pleased that *The Aikido of Shin-Budo Kai – A Guide to Principles and Practice* was published in this form and wish to express my appreciation to the editor and principal author, Ralph Bryan, as well as the other Shin-Budo Kai instructors who contributed to and supported this project. Take a look at the table of contents for a moment. You will see that the pages that follow are filled with both useful and necessary information to support your practice in the arts of Shin-Budo Kai. Begin anywhere you like, but read these pages often and repeatedly. There is an old Chinese saying that goes, “*Dokusho hyappen gi onozukara arawaru.*” The word *dokusho* literally means, “to read a book”; *hyappen* means “one hundred times”; *gi* is “the meaning”; *onozukara* means “naturally”; and *arawaru* is “to come out.” That is, as you read a book again and again, you will naturally come to understand its meaning. I encourage you to make good use of this guide, as it will help you in your pursuit of higher levels of *shugyo* or “spiritual training.”

Since the days of my youth, this concept of *shugyo* has been very important to me and I have been guided by the maxim, “*Shugyo toha taerukoto no nai denaoshi no ruiseki dearu.*” Literally translated, this phrase might read: “*Shugyo* is the endless accumulation of fresh starts,” and it implies that “continuation is power.” I would paraphrase its meaning as follows:

“*Shugyo* is the persistent effort to keep moving forward in your training with an enthusiastic perspective no matter what setbacks or challenges you encounter.”

I would like to take this occasion to explain in detail why I chose the name, Shin-Budo Kai, when I established this organization in October of 1988. First, the word *kai*

THE AIKIDO OF SHIN-BUDO KAI

literally means “gathering,” “society,” or “association.” In Japan the word *kai* is generally added to the end of the name of an organization, such as the *Aikikai* and the *Ki no Kenkyukai*. As I was both a student and an instructor of *aikido* at each of these organizations in Japan, I chose to follow a similar naming style and include *kai* in the name of my new organization. Next, I had to decide what kind of *kai* I wanted to establish. Because my plan was to teach what I knew about other forms of *budo* as well as *aikido*, I decided to use the word *budo*, meaning “the martial (*bu*) way (*do*),” in front of the word *kai*. I next added the word *shin* (meaning “true” or “truth”) and the name of Shin-Budo Kai was born.

Why did I select the word *shin* to precede *budo* in naming Shin-Budo Kai? Before answering that question, I should explain something about the use of Chinese characters, or *kanji*, in the Japanese language. Although written and spoken in similar manners, some *kanji* have different meanings depending upon context and the intent of the writer. For example, the *kanji* for the *ai* in *aikido* may be written to mean “harmony,” as it is usually translated, or, as O Sensei did in the latter part of his life, to mean “love” or “compassion.” In the case of *shin*, I selected the form meaning “the truth,” which may seem as though *shin-budo* was intended to mean simply “the true (*shin*) martial (*bu*) way (*do*).” That, however, was not what I had in mind at all. Across all the martial arts, not one is known as “the true martial Way.” I used the word *shin* to convey my determination to search for the truth of *budo* throughout my life.

In addition to conveying the concept of truth, *shin* may also mean “faith,” “heart or spirit,” or “core.” Whenever and wherever you encounter the words *Shin-budo* or *Shin-Budo Kai*, such as in a *dojo*, a brochure, a newsletter, or a book, I would like you to reflect upon these thoughts:

“I want you to have faith (*shin*) in Budo, to maintain Budo spirit (*shin*) in your daily life, and to practice *aikido* as the core (*shin*) of your Budo training.”

From my standpoint as an *aikido* instructor for over half a century, *aikido* is indeed a matrix of *budo* training. O Sensei often used the expression, *takemusu aiki*. In one sense, this expression refers to the *aiki* (the principle of harmonizing with the universal energy) that “gives birth to martial ways.” As the mother’s womb gives birth to a child, so then does *aikido*, as the core of your *budo* training, give rise to, and support, your pursuit of other *budo* arts.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from a poem written by the Chinese Zen Master, Mumon Ekai (1183-1260) that you can find in his preface to the *Mumonkan* (“The Gateless Barrier”) published in 1229.¹ He wrote, “*Daido mumon, sensha michi ari. Kono kan wo totokuseba, kenkon ni dopposen,*” which literally translated would read, “The Great Way is gateless, approached in a thousand ways. Once past this checkpoint, you stride through the universe.”

I would paraphrase this passage as follows:

¹ In Chinese, *Wumenguan* by Wumen Huikai.

THE AIKIDO OF SHIN-BUDO KAI

“The Great Way is gateless, but there are a thousand ways to approach it. Those who pass through this gateless barrier will henceforth stride through the universe spiritually awakened and liberated.”

I quote this poem here because Shin-Budo Kai has always maintained an open-door policy. We invite anyone who has an interest in *aikido* or other *budo* arts to train with us. We also allow every Shin-Budo Kai *dojo* to study and teach any *budo*-related subjects that may be available to them. Through the many ways of *budo* available to you, with *aikido* as the core, I believe you can find your way through the gateless barrier to the Great Way. To accomplish this passage, I encourage you to cultivate and strengthen your inner power of *aiki* through daily *budo* training.

As you continue to devote yourself to *budo* training, I will always be with you in spirit.

Shizuo Imaizumi
New York City
October 2013



PREFACE

PREFACE

The idea for this guide to the principles and practice of Shin-Budo Kai first arose sometime prior to 2009 and began to evolve into a tangible project during conversations with Imaizumi Sensei that started in the fall of 2010. Following these fundamental conversations, the preparation for writing began with a thorough review of Imaizumi Sensei's writings that included his articles for the *Shin-Budo Kai Newsletter* series from 1988 – 2002, as well as a number of his letters. A core-writing group was formed, composed of the current and former chief examiners at the NYC Shin-Budo Kai (SBK) *dojo*, SBK chief instructors from Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, New York, and Wyoming, and the assistant chief instructor from Connecticut. Other senior SBK *yudansha* contributed as well. Imaizumi Sensei was closely engaged in all phases, helping to review and edit all sections.

The authors' intent in making this guide available is fourfold: 1) to help to preserve Imaizumi Sensei's legacy – a legacy that encompasses some 50 years as a professional instructor of *aikido* and related arts; 2) to promote consistency and quality in the practice and instruction of the SBK curriculum; 3) to provide both new and seasoned SBK practitioners with a better understanding of the philosophy and practice of *budo* and *aikido* in general, and the SBK approach specifically; and 4) to share this information with others who may be interested in learning more about SBK and Imaizumi Sensei in the context of a myriad of options for *aikido* training in the United States today. To the latter readers, this guide also offers a manageable introduction to *budo* and *aikido* that includes explanations of several of the key conceptual, cultural, and philosophical components of *budo* that are not often found together in one source.

THE AIKIDO OF SHIN-BUDO KAI

In developing its content, we have intentionally strayed from the usual handbook format – avoiding, for the most part, any detailed, step-by-step instructions for specific exercises or techniques. We felt that information of that type was better suited for more technically focused handbooks, such as those specifically targeting beginners. Technical manuals for SBK *aikido* and its related weapons arts will be future projects. Herein, we attempt to capture the essence of what Shin-Budo Kai is about, focusing more on the “what” and the “why,” rather than the “how to.”

Beginning with an overview of *budo* and its evolution from *bujutsu*, this guide next presents a brief history of *aikido* and the Founder, followed by a biographical sketch of Imaizumi Sensei. A separate section describes his creation of Shin-Budo Kai and the principles that guide the organization. The chapter on Navigating the Dojo touches on the deeper meaning of the *dojo* as more than a place to practice; explains the importance of *reigi*, or etiquette, in the practice of *budo*; and addresses the topics of safety and care/maintenance of the *dojo*. The SBK core curriculum and its component arts of *genkido*, *aikido*, *bokkendo*, and *jodo* appear on page 26, followed by a more detailed discussion in the text of Chapter 4 – including a useful explanation of the *taijutsu* (*aikido* techniques) nomenclature. Subsequent sections cover some key principles of practice, including the *uke-nage* dynamic, the art of *ukemi*, the use of *atemi* and *ki-ai*, the concepts of *kuzushi* and *ma-ai*, and Imaizumi Sensei’s ideas on progression of practice, as well as his thoughts on *shugyo*. In the sections on *bokkendo* and *jodo*, the emphasis is on *kata* and the key principles underlying *kata* performance. Chapter 5 provides a brief overview of the SBK ranking and promotions process.

Chapter 6 speaks to the importance of understanding *budo* in the context of Japanese culture and presents overview discussions of some key *budo*-related concepts. In

PREFACE

Chapter 7, the authors chose to close the main body of this volume with our thoughts on why we walk this Path. We offer our perspectives on the role of *budo* in our lives, reflect on the value of *budo* to society at large, and express our gratitude to Imaizumi Sensei for guiding us along this Path and sharing his life's knowledge with us.

The Appendix contains an extensive glossary of Japanese words and phrases important to the study of *aikido* and *budo*, as well as some practical guidance on *genkido* exercises and *misogi* practices. Also in the Appendix, there is a bibliography of sources and recommended reading – the latter derived from Imaizumi Sensei's recommendations and the authors' collective experience. In keeping with Imaizumi Sensei's spirit of openness and our recognition of the many influences on the development of *aikido* specifically, and *budo* overall, these sources and recommendations reflect input from an array of contemporary and historical authors writing about various *aikido* styles and other forms of *budo*, as well as wisdom imparted by some of the classic Chinese and Japanese thinkers.

We are pleased to bring this volume to publication in the year 2013, which marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Shin-Budo Kai. We sincerely hope that *The Aikido of Shin-Budo Kai* proves useful to all who read it and that it maintains a timeless quality for current and future generations of SBK practitioners.

On behalf of Imaizumi Sensei and the contributing authors,

Ralph T. Bryan
Sandia Park, NM
October 2013

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing and editing of this volume was a group effort that presented many challenges – a number of individuals helped to make those challenges both manageable and rewarding. Imaizumi Sensei was unflappable amidst an ongoing barrage of questions and requests for input and detailed explanations. He was endlessly generous with his time and knowledge in support of this effort. Atsuko Imaizumi provided invaluable assistance with electronic communications and was also instrumental in making a number of illustrations available to us. In a gracious display of generosity, Walther G. von Krenner spent several days sifting through hundreds of his vintage photographs to identify a few examples wherein Imaizumi Sensei was identifiable, including the photo from his collection that appears at the end of Chapter 1. We thank Hiroko Watanabe Kim for reaching out to her cousin in Japan, Kimie Kawashima. We are deeply grateful to Mrs. Kawashima for many of the brushed *kanji* appearing in Chapters 4 and 6. With minimal coaxing from her editor son, Peggy M. Bryan kindly assisted our efforts by providing the original watercolor illustrations on pages 59, 66 and 77. Steve Self's artistic talents were brought to bear on all elements of the book design. The contributing authors, Marc Abrams, Michael Chaney, Michael Paradiso, Philip Riffe, Bob Tullman, and Mark Winkworth, were all generous with their time and thoughtful contributions to the text, all the while exhibiting remarkable tolerance of an obsessive editor. Worthy of a special nod of gratitude is Philip Riffe, whose enthusiasm and productivity were unmatched. Among those providing conceptual and editorial input, Kevin Lam's technically insightful comments and astute historical observations were particularly helpful. Evan Stover's editing improved the manuscript in subtle, yet very meaningful,

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ways, while his candid critiques saved the editor certain embarrassment and spared the reader from some horribly mangled metaphors. Andrew Bordwin, Ralph Hutchins, Joel Minton, and Adele Riffe all provided helpful comments and support. Donna Carlson's input and encouragement made the process whole.

As noted, the production of this volume was a group effort; however, any and all errors found herein, including those of omission, are the sole responsibility of the editor.

RTB

About the Editor

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