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愛氣塾通信

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正勝吾勝 : *Masakatsu Agatsu*

True victory is victory over oneself

Neil Segal

At birth, our Self was a balanced sphere, mind in proportion to body and spirit. Over time, if the mind develops out of proportion to our physical abilities and spiritual power, the sphere can become unbalanced. Left unchecked the ego can grow out of proportion to its natural place in the mind-body-spirit wholeness. This leads to a lopsided Self. To regain balance, we must attain victory over our ego - subdue the ego to its natural status as one part of the sphere of Self.

Reconciliation of the inner connections between mind, body, and spirit springs out of constantly renewing our connection with nature. Aikido is *misogi*, purification of the Self through renewing our connection with nature— exchanging air, water and energy in the connection with others. Our mind cannot prevent an act of nature, our body cannot resist extremes of temperature, and our spirit cannot overcome a lack of oxygen. Recognizing that nature is more powerful than the Self is a step towards recognizing that the parts of the Self need to be proportionate to each other.

As the ego is subdued and the Self becomes a better balanced sphere, moments of life can be more richly enjoyed through realizing the interconnectedness of the universe. As far as we know, geese are not told to form a "V," they sense that the most natural place to be is behind and to the side of the next goose (possibly due to the updraft created by the vortex off the next goose's wing, but it is unlikely that they think about this). They are able to sense because thinking does not interfere with their feeling the most natural position.

Years of study in school may have improved our knowledge and cognition, but may not have provided us with guidance in the interaction between our spirit and the natural universe. A sense of inner peace follows when the spirit is tuned to nature and the mind and body are able to interpret this intuition. Intuition is present when we enter a room, and before seeing or hearing anything, feel tension in the room. This sensation is the True Self (Higher Self) communicating with the Conscious Self (Basic Self). In modern society, we lack training in interpreting this communication from our True Self, that is intuition.

Being further along in the maze, the instructor can see the dead end paths and protect students from wasting time. However, the instructor cannot teach Aiki.

Separating ourselves from nature by shelter, medicines, and machines leads to the illusion that we have power over nature. It is not wrong to enjoy these conveniences, but if we succumb to the illusion, we can lose our sensitivity to the fact that we are connected with the seasons, plants in our vicinity, and phases of light and dark. If we allow this illusion of separation from nature to become our perceived reality, then we will distance ourselves from our True Self and may even lose the sensitivity necessary for mind, body, and spirit to communicate. Without the awareness of our True Self, we cannot connect with others' centers.

Aikido teaches that our responsibility to the Creator is to maintain our connection with nature. This connection cannot be taught. The instructor is present to guide students on a path which will facilitate progress. Being further along in the maze, the instructor can see the dead end paths and protect students from wasting time. However, the instructor cannot teach *aiki*, "connectedness." *Aiki* must be discovered within. The path of *aiki* is not a means to an end - *aiki* is the path and the path is the goal. There is no end.



Couples Aikido

Training With Your Significant Other

Wendy K Haidukewych

My husband and I have been training together for nearly a year now. When we first began training, I was not sure it was something I wanted to do. My husband had had previous training in martial arts, and having once been naïve enough to hold targets for him to punch and kick I soon learned that that was not a path to a harmonious marriage, nor a path I wanted to travel. Personally, I had had no exposure to the martial arts.

The fact that there is no attack in Aikido, and the mere name itself: 合- union, harmony, also love (愛); 氣-Spirit, energy, and 道- the path or way, immediately interested me. Now *this* could be something we could share together for a lifetime. Thus we began our journey.

When we practice, we share different observations on the techniques we have been taught. We give each other feedback until the movement feels like it's flowing, without pulling, pushing or tugging. Usually "understanding" the technique requires extensive practice and a few trips down the "wrong path". We have found that by sharing our observations of Sensei's teachings we can minimize such "detours" along the path.

Aikido has helped us to be more patient and in tune with each other and has become a good way to connect at the end of a hectic day. We usually try to have two formal practice sessions between lessons but very commonly we practice techniques in our kitchen while waiting for dinner, before work or after the kids go to sleep. These "Couples Aikido" mini-sessions provide the opportunity to constantly improve techniques throughout the day when a formal training session is impossible.

I have observed that training usually fosters great closeness between us. However, we occasionally have days where we strongly disagree on something and until we can resolve our problem, practicing Aikido is very challenging for us. Sometimes we end up pulling, tugging, becoming frustrated, and even stop practicing altogether. At our level of proficiency, it is difficult to blend when one is upset. We have found it is best to work out the problem first, then our Aikido can flow and be quite healing. We are learning to use our training as a tool to blend such stresses, another advantage of couples training.

We are enjoying our training, and we have much to learn. But no matter where our paths lead us, we plan to travel together.



味噌 *Miso*

Tradition in Soybeans

Kae Hino

Miso, soybean paste, along with rice and barley, has played an extremely important role in the dietary life of the Japanese for centuries. It is thought that *miso* came to Japan from China.

Originally, fermented foods, such as *miso*, were treasured as luxuries by Buddhist monks and nobles, but they became a daily necessity in the Nara Period (710-784). Later in the Muromachi Period (1392-1573), *miso* became a popular food of the common people. It was in the 17th century that industrial production of *miso* began.

Various kinds of *miso*, native to different regions, were developed based on the raw materials available, weather and climate conditions. The ingredients vary depending on the culinary customs of each region. For example, rice is used in northern part of Japan and Kyoto region, "*kome-miso*," which has relatively sharp taste. Oats are used in the southwest, "*Mugi-miso*," which has sweet mild taste. In central Japan beans are used, "*Mame miso*," which has a distinctive rich flavor.

There are hundreds of brand-name *miso* products, each with its own original taste. Some of the brands are available here in Rochester, at stores such as Barlow HyVee and Saigon Asian food market. Sweet oat *miso*, called "*Hishio*" or "*kinzanj-miso*," can be served as a dip sauce. *Miso* goes very well with fresh and cooled cucumber sticks (remove the seeds for a crisper taste), as well as other vegetable sticks.

The recipe this month is white bean *miso* soup, *shiro-miso*, which has lower sodium relative to other *Miso* and has the elegant slight sweet taste of the bean. I hope that you will explore the depth of *miso* to expand your recipes and deepen your taste appreciation.

Western Meatball *Miso* Soup (4 servings)

*1 lb. ground pork	*1 egg
*1/2 diced sautéed onion	*1 tbsp. Parsley
*1/3 tsp. salt	*black pepper
3 coarsely chopped potatoes	1 cup of chopped carrot
1/3 cup chopped green onion	1/2 cup chopped daikon
5 cups of soup made with 2 bullion cubes	
4 tbsp. rice <i>miso</i> or <i>Shiro miso</i> (substitute any sweet <i>miso</i>)	

1. Mix the * ingredients together until the mixture becomes smooth to touch. Form the meatballs to bite-size.
2. Put the meatballs into 5 cups of boiling bullion soup. When the meatballs start floating, boil 2-3 more minutes, and then take them out. Remove the residue from the surface.
3. Place the vegetables into the pot and cook until soft.
4. Once everything in the soup is cooked, add the white *miso* and stir well to dissolve the paste. To maintain flavor, do not boil the soup once you put *miso* paste in the pan.

Using Half & Half creamer contributes to a richer and milder taste.

The World in Black & White

Reflections on the Path of the Brush

Kae Hino

筆を立てる

Hude wo tateru:

Beginning the stroke with an upright brush

Have you ever compared *Shodo* strokes with strokes made with a pen or pencil? Believe it or not, there are differences in the strokes, and it eventually makes a huge difference in progress on the path of *Shodo*. The differences are based in the inherently different design of a pen and a brush. A pen has a stiff head and less flexibility, while a brush has a much softer touch with various kinds of hairs, which provide more flexibility for variation in strokes. Due to these important differences, depending how a stroke is begun, continued, and ended, a vastly different image and atmosphere can result in the work of *shodo*.

The phrase “*Hude wo tateru*” means “keep the brush upright” (*Hude* - brush; and *tateru* - to stand something up). Many people grip a pen tightly and hold it at an angle while writing, because it might feel more comfortable to lean the pen, allowing the palm to relax. Thus, pen use is focused on relaxing the palm and positioning the wrist to enable people to write faster and longer. Unlike with a pen, in *shodo*, the ultimate goal is to create strokes in harmony with breathing. It is important to create the posture which allows more freedom to move the body when creating strokes. In addition, since the brush has a very soft touch as a whole, and the appropriate amount of ink needs to be carefully adjusted by the writer, holding the brush upright over on the paper is necessary.

For this purpose, “*Hude wo tateru*” is the very first stroke which we will start learning in *Shodo* lessons. Once you learn how to do it, your calligraphy will appear sharp and crisp on the paper, and you will see how much it makes a difference. After studying “*Hude wo tateru*” to begin, there are more strokes to continue, and to end. We will deepen our study of other strokes in future articles!



SUBSCRIPTIONS TO AIKIJUKU TSUSHIN

\$30 for 1 year for non-members

Free to members who are enrolled in courses for Japanese language, Calligraphy, Aikido training, or other cultural arts.

COURSES

AIKIDO:

THE PATH OF HARMONIOUS SPIRIT

Aikido is a path of discipline aimed at perfection of the spirit, through flowing with the natural energy of the universe. The art and path of Aikido was discovered and taught by Morihei Ueshiba, known as O'Sensei. Through practicing circular movements for the restoration of harmony out of conflict, the aikidoist develops sensitivity for flowing with universal energy. Classes are ongoing with group and private lessons available.

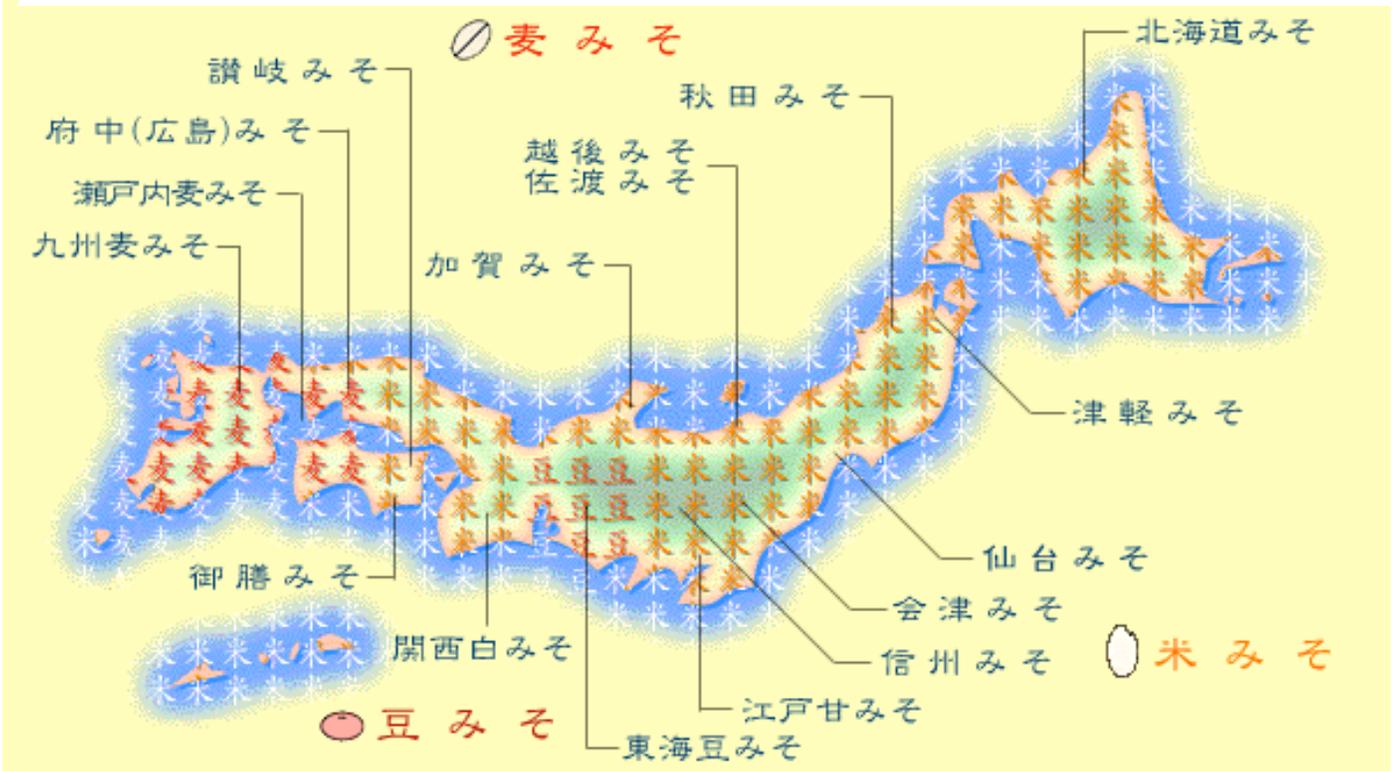
SHODO:

THE JAPANESE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY

Through focus on the basics, students will learn the joy of expressing one's ki through ink brush to paper. Lessons will be held 1-2 times per week and will begin with the fundamentals of holding a brush, forming basic strokes, and hiragana. Private Lessons are ongoing.

NIHONGO: JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Two courses will be offered this term. One will focus more on introducing terms used in Japanese arts, such as Aikido and *shodo* and will enable students to develop a deeper understanding of common concepts in Japanese culture through understanding of the language. The other will be a more formal course aimed at developing proficiency in reading, writing and speaking Japanese. As language and culture are linked, students will find greater satisfaction in their other studies with a basic knowledge of language. The next term will begin in October 16, 2002.



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