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AIKI SHUREN DOJO

Iwama Takemusu Aikido

Nikyō Osae – O Sensei’s Kuden: *Aodake wo heshigu yō ni (as if breaking a young bamboo shoot)*

Kuden 口伝

Kuden means oral transmission. Kuden are brief sentences that explain the important aspects of a given technique. There are many kuden to be found in Morihiro Saito Sensei’s old book series “Traditional Aikido.” Saito Sensei would often quote the kuden of O-Sensei when teaching. Saito Sensei also had many kuden himself; we as his direct students would recognize the terms and explanations he would use regularly when teaching the techniques. We now quote these terms and explanations, and consider them kuden as well.

Nikyō Osae 二教抑え

In the Iwama Aikido tradition, the way that we lock using the Nikyō pin is slightly different than you see in many other lineages.

Uke’s arm is locked onto nage’s chest with a hold that is done with nage’s one hand (the “rear” hand – the hand furthest from uke’s head when pinning on the mat) grabbing near the lapel of the keikogi, and the other hand (closest to uke’s head) using *teगतana* (sword edge of the hand) to stabilize uke’s elbow. Nage’s rear knee goes right into uke’s armpit, and the other, front knee slides outward past uke’s head to establish a wide base for the seated position. This wide base ensures stability even if uke’s arm is flexible and nage therefore needs to lean more into the pin in order to make it work actively.



Photo: Lars Beyer



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Pain or No Pain?

The final locks and pins in Aikido are primarily used to hold uke in a neutralized state of submission – with a feeling of controlling the “attacker.” If uke resists, then they will thereby end up inflicting pain upon themselves. One could consider the locks and pins as first and foremost immobilizations.

But in training we work on strengthening ourselves – and this entails allowing the locks and pins to be done actively, so we thereby get to build up our pain threshold, and we also get our joints, muscles and sinews stretched and strengthened as well – aikido physical therapy!

It is important that nage is very connected to uke so that both nage and uke are in sync, and wary of how much pressure uke wants to absorb before tapping out. This process should be done with a feeling of working together rather than nage forcing pain on uke.

First kuden

There is a kuden that I heard from one of the Japanese instructors in the Iwama Dojo. He was quoting O-Sensei. The kuden goes *Jibun ni kibishiku – aite ni yasashiku*.

Jibun ni kibishiku: *Jibun* means oneself, *kibishii/kibishiku* means to be strict with yourself. *Aite ni yasashku*: *Aite* means your partner and *yasahii/yasashiku* means to be kind.

This refers to the fact that you yourself can feel how much pain the given lock or pin is producing on yourself. For the sake of becoming stronger and more flexible, you can be strict with yourself, and allow nage to put more pressure into the lock or pin before tapping out. This is, by the way, best done when nage gives a kind of continuous pressure and doesn't rip into the pin or lock in an abrupt manner.

But you, as nage, cannot feel what uke is feeling, so therefore you should be kind to your partner, and allow them to determine how much pressure they want to take before tapping out.

Back to Nikyō Osae – second kuden



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Returning to the physical part of the nikyō osae (pin or lock): when applying the grip of the lapel-holding hand, there is a special way this is done. Nage's lapel-holding hand not only grips the lapel – thereby locking uke's wrist via this movement, but also twists the grip "inward," by rotating the wrist so that the underside of the forearm presses into uke's wrist/forearm actively and strongly.

In Iwama, Saito Sensei would quote this kuden of O-Sensei: *Aodake wo heshigu yō ni*. This means "as if breaking a young bamboo shoot."

For Japanese language enthusiasts: the verb *heshigu* means *heshi oru* – (圧 atsu/en/ou/osu, hesu/asaeru – English: pressure, push, overwhelm, oppress, dominate) 折る oru/setsu/shaku English: fold, break, fracture, bend, yield, submit).

Further: Saito Sensei often simplified the verb *heshigu* to the simpler verb *oru* (to break) when quoting this kuden. The version with the verb *heshigu* was kindly explained to me by Shigemi Inagaki Sensei, acting person in charge of the Ibaraki Shibu Dojo (Iwama Dojo, as we call it in daily use, direct student of O-Sensei and close direct student of Morihiro Saito Sensei).

It was said that O-Sensei's grip when executing the nikyō osae had this feeling. This doesn't mean that he performed the lock with the intent of breaking his partner's arm, but rather that his grip had this power in it.

Even though this kuden makes the pin or lock sound quite rough, it actually isn't. On the contrary, if done properly, the pin stretches uke's arm out, making it elongate, and with the firm grip on uke's arm, nage can apply downward pressure, thereby pinning the whole arm, shoulder and upper body of uke effectively, without twisting uke's elbow and thereby risking damage to uke's elbow joint. When done effectively it actually feels quite comfortable; as uke, you feel immobilized but not in pain. And then, working together with nage, uke can let the pin become activated, adding pressure downward and at an angle forward over uke's head, until reaching the point where uke decides to tap out.

I recommend taking time to work on this special osae form and feeling how it works and feels, with a feeling of mutual development between uke and nage.

In aiki,
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