



BACKGROUND TO THE DOSHU'S SEMINAR

by David Yates

In March 2007, at Hombu dojo, I presented an invitation to Doshu requesting a visit the UK. This was a joint invitation from the British Aikido Federation and the Scottish Aikido Federation. I was informed that Doshu would consider it but he was, obviously, inundated with requests of this nature and usually only accepted them for special anniversary events. The invitation did not specify when we would like him to come but pointed out that he had not been to the UK since becoming Doshu in 1999 and we would really like to see him over here.

In May 2008 I was informed by Tani-san (head of the Hombu dojo International Department), who has been a tremendous help in arranging this event, that Doshu would accept the invitation. However he would like an invitation from the five Hombu dojo recognised organisations in the UK, i.e. the British Aikido Federation, the Scottish Aikido Federation, the United Kingdom Aikikai, the Komyokan Aikido Association and the British Birankai. Now, bearing in mind that all these groups had, at one time or another, split from the original Aikikai of Great Britain and with very few exceptions, had barely spoken to each other for many years, that was quite a challenge.

However, in July 2008 a meeting was held near Stafford



which was attended by myself and my wife, Susan (the REAL brains behind the whole operation!!) representing the B.A.F., Matthew Holland shihan (S.A.F.), Terry Ezra shihan (Komyokan), Gordon Jones shihan (U.K.A.) and Pauline Wilson sensei (Birankai). At that meeting old friendships were rekindled and a joint agreement was reached which resulted in all five groups signing a joint letter of invitation to Doshu, asking him to come to visit us in June 2010.

At that meeting Gordon Jones suggested that we really should let bygones be bygones and as we were all promoting Hombu dojo standard aikido in the UK we should, perhaps, be a bit grown up about the whole thing and work a little closer together. It was as if someone had flicked a light switch. This was, after all, what Doshu wanted when he asked for the joint invitation. So it was agreed that we would meet again fairly soon and discuss the matter.

A number of meetings took place over the next 18 months or so. Mike Flynn shihan was elected the chairman of Birankai, so replacing Pauline, and Peter Gillard sensei represented the B.A.F. as its chairman, with the full co-operation and blessing of Kanetsuka sensei. So was born the Joint Aikikai Council. This is a joint working agreement

between the five groups which indicates to Hombu dojo that we are working together for the benefit of Doshu and Hombu dojo's teachings. It demonstrates the willingness of the groups to promote Hombu dojo aikido within the UK without living in each others' pockets. We can all get along together, which, to be fair, is the whole point!

The Joint Aikikai Council is an administrative



The Shobukan team with Doshu, Waka Sensei and Kodani-san.

The B.A.F. has Full Recognition from the Aikikai Foundation (Aikido World Headquarters, Tokyo), President: Moriteru Ueshiba; and it is a member of the International Aikido Federation and of the British Aikido Board.

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collaboration between the groups and we will come together for a joint course now and again, perhaps annually to celebrate Doshu's visit. The first such course was the Birankai autumn course in October 2009 where an instructor from each group taught a class (me, on this occasion). Then in early 2010 the U.K.A. kindly hosted a course in Telford at which, again, each group sent a representative (Peter Gillard sensei was ours).

Then, on 18 June 2010, the big weekend arrived. As I said, Mrs Yates was the main organiser of the event from taking bookings, organising the sports centre, arranging hotels and entertainment for Doshu and his party etc, etc, etc. The general consensus of opinion I have received was that it was very well organised. Thank you, Susan. However, the event needed willing helpers and we found them supplied by Peter Gillard. The members of Sho Bu Kan dojo in Cardiff were outstanding. They gave up their time and effort to make sure that everyone who needed help was helped, everyone who needed direction was directed, everyone who needed raffle tickets, t-shirts, jackets were sold them and everyone who wished to donate to the charity we adopted for the event, "Help for Heroes", donated. These were the people in the red t-shirts that you saw running around the sports centre, always with a smile, helping wherever they could. Thank you guys, you were worth your weight in gold.

Then, all of a sudden, it was over. Three years in the planning and it went in the blink of an eye.

Doshu, Waka sensei and Kodani-san have all been in touch to say how much they enjoyed themselves. Kodani-san told me how much he had enjoyed drinking Italian beer with Holland shihan (It's a long, but enjoyable story!!). Doshu told me how much he had enjoyed standing next to the mounted guard at Horseguards parade in London to have his photo taken, on the trip just before they flew home, until the horse tried to bite him! (I think the horse was just curious!!).

And then there are all of the people who attended. It would not have been the success it was without you. Thank you all for taking the time, trouble and expense to get to Cardiff for the seminar. I really hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.



DOSHU 2010 AT CARDIFF

by David Wulstan

As we heard at Summer School, this course was a resounding success both from the point of view of the participants, and for Doshu and Waka Sensei, together with Kodani san, who served as their *uke*. Doshu particularly commended the organisation of the event: the smoothness of what he saw was heavily dependent on what went on behind the scenes, both at Cardiff, but in the months of preparation. So our heartfelt thanks must go to Dave and Sue Yates whose labours were Herculean; to Peter Gillard, Ron Watts (of the Sports Centre) and to the 'red-shirts', all

of whom worked indefatigably to make the weekend memorable and who betrayed no anxiety despite many problems which appear to have been ridden over with hands firmly on the reins.

At the first Friday session, Doshu began with demonstrations of *kokyu*, *tai-sabaki* and circular movement, stressing their relationship to aikido techniques: an instance was *irimi-tenkan* and the spiral movements which make up *irimi-nage*, his version of which was neither brutal nor over-elaborate. He went around the great number on the mat, practising with almost everyone there. Jean Pasley managed to translate his remarks with a virtuoso performance of concision. All techniques, he said, were connected by the basics.

On Saturday, Terry Ezra Shihan and his assistants showed us fluent *kokyu-ho* and emphasised the essential nature of centre-to-centre connexion, behaving like water, and with no pulling or pushing. He was followed by Waka Sensei who continued on a similar theme, demonstrating unfussy versions of technique such as *kote-gaeshi*. One participant (not from the B.A.F.!) could not resist 'instructing' his *uke* even when Waka Sensei was demonstrating to a pair only a couple of feet distant from him. Indeed, despite being issued with a little guide to the Hombu conventions (at the request of Doshu himself),



some of our guests showed such a woeful lack of etiquette that Dave Yates was moved — on more than one occasion — to remind participants of elementary conventions governing movement to, from and on the *tatami*.

Doshu's second session carried on from his previous demonstration of the unity of various techniques; he reminded us that that power was not the same thing as strength, and that blending rather than collision should be our aim. Whatever the attack, basic movements were the key to the response. Waka Sensei followed with a similar message, an instance being his showing that *kokyū* is the basis of a gentle but effective *irimi-nage*.

Doshu's next class introduced *morote-dori*, whose techniques differed somewhat from other attacks, he said. Nevertheless, the same combinations of movement were applicable here, too. One of his demonstrations was *morote-dori ikkyō* leading to *jūgi-nage* after which he reminded us that when doing various *tenkan kokyū* techniques and exercises, *tori* should not look at *uke's* face. He also stressed the correct method of practising *suwari-waza kokyū-ho*.

On Sunday, Kanetsuka Sensei's session, including *ninin-dori* and many of his characteristic techniques involving multiple attackers, demonstrating some prodigious forms of *kokyū*: this attracted a good deal of attention from those participants who were unfamiliar with his expertise. He insisted that correct *rei* and other common actions, inform techniques.

Waka Sensei followed by practising many more *kokyū-ho* techniques such as *tenchi-nage*. The following session by Doshu included various *ura* techniques, embracing *kote-gaeshi*, *shiho-nage* and *kokyū-ho*. He highlighted the importance of the respect and consideration due to one's partner, saying that practice was not a matter of one-way traffic.

The Sunday afternoon concluded the course by demonstrations by B.A.F. and allied bodies (my thanks to Don Morgan and Ruth Abbot who reported on some of the sessions from which I could not attend). These included Birankai instructors who displayed their students' skills showing techniques including *irimi-nage* and *shiho-nage*, though in a somewhat more robust style than that of Doshu. The U.K.A. representatives, Gordon Jones, Keith

Hayward, Chris Mooney and other senior sensei from the West Midlands gave impressive contributions.

Komyokan Aikido (headed by our old friend Terry Ezra Shihan) demonstrated basic *suwari-waza* techniques: Terry's students showed the equivalent *tachi-waza* techniques. The S.A.F. session (Matthew Holland Shihan) was short, sharp and concise (each demonstration was encapsulated within a duration of about three minutes only): it featured the basic techniques upon which the Doshu had dwelt over the weekend — *ikkyō*, *irimi-nage* and *shiho-nage*.

The Doshu had specially requested that the B.A.F. should be represented by Kanetsuka Shihan. Again, his demonstration (although many of his astounding escapes from multiple attacks were familiar to B.A.F. participants) was exceedingly interesting to those from other aikido bodies. He displayed the importance of his use of centre, thus being able to control his attackers regardless of where they grabbed him and despite varied body shapes (Don Morgan, Ian McClarence and Colman Glynn acted as *uke!*). Often curled into a ball, his movements were miraculously swift and almost impossible to understand.

Finally, Doshu, with Waka Sensei and others as *uke*, recapitulated some basic techniques worked upon during the weekend, but now including *jo-* and *bokken-dori*. A smooth and flowing aikido was emphasised, as was the need to blend, rather than clash, with *uke*. Weapon techniques inform empty-handed techniques, he said; flowing *jo* movements should lead to equivalent techniques without weapons, as was shown by the smooth and quiet *ukemi* demonstrated. As before, Doshu stressed the importance of basic techniques and *ukemi* rather than the use of complicated contortions or perilous *ukemi*. The basics, done well, were the key to a solid aikido technique.



Kanetsuka Sensei demonstrating at the Doshu's seminar.



DOSHU COURSE IN CARDIFF, JUNE 2010

by Alex Megann, Southampton Aikikai

We arrived slightly late for the Friday class, and were greeted by the warm and muggy atmosphere in the main hall of the Sports Institute for Wales, which was filled almost to overflowing. Later on in the weekend the humidity seemed to drop a little, which made training more pleasant, and I was surprised (and relieved) that the dojo didn't become noticeably any more crowded that it was on the Friday evening. Unlike at most weekend courses (or even Summer School), it was difficult to see clearly what was being shown: if you were any further back than the front three or four rows, you couldn't see much of the foot movements being demonstrated. Despite the huge *tatami* area (over seven hundred square metres), there was little space to do "proper" *ukemi* for most of the techniques – though this did have the advantage of making almost everyone slow their technique down to a safe speed, and there was very little sense of people trying to prove a point.

Doshu has gained enormously in confidence and skill over the last twenty years. When I first saw him at the B.A.F. Summer School in 1990, I was impressed by his mission to communicate "textbook" aikido with the stress on good posture and *tai-sabaki*, but his aikido is now extremely smooth, precise and powerful. His *tai-sabaki* is beautifully clear and controlled, and his posture is consistently excellent. Waka-Sensei (Mitsuteru Ueshiba Sensei) is clearly very much from the same mould as his father, and his teaching is remarkably confident considering his youth. Both of these teachers followed a logical



sequence through the weekend, with particular focus on particular attacks or techniques: for example, one of Doshu's classes concentrated on *yokomen-uchi* attacks, and another on *morote-dori*, and the final class on Sunday consisted of techniques from *ryote-dori*. He regularly emphasised the similarities in body movement between different attacks: for example the *tai-sabaki* from *yokomen-uchi* is similar to that from *kata-dori*, and that from *shomen-uchi* is like that from *kosa-dori*, and he also showed that the techniques from *tachi-waza*, *hanmi-handachi* and *suvari-waza* are in essence the same. Despite the continuous translation into English, the teaching of both Doshu and Waka Sensei came across very clearly. As well as the technical demonstrations, Doshu repeatedly stressed the use of *kokyū* throughout the techniques, rather than muscular strength, and on the importance of not fighting the partner.

There was a pleasantly open and sociable feeling on the mats – with almost every partner I practised with, we exchanged our names and dojo. I was reminded of the size of the Aikikai community in the UK: although the B.A.F. (the largest of the Aikikai groups) was well represented on the mat, and I recognised many friendly faces from weekend courses and Summer School, most of the people I trained with were unfamiliar. The weekend was a great opportunity to practise with people from overseas (particularly Ikuko and Yuichi from Japan, whom we know well from Summer School), and with many people from the UK whom I hadn't seen for years. It was also a pleasure to meet in person Daren Sims from Bristol: I had been "virtually" familiar with Daren through the Aikiweb discussion forum, but it was good to see his face for the first time and practise *irimi-nage* with him. I understand that Doshu was very pleased with the way his visit to the UK went, and his smile throughout the weekend seemed to infect all of us who attended!



DVDs OF THE DOSHU'S COURSE

A package of 2 DVDs covering the whole weekend, including:
the Doshu's teaching, Waka Sensei's teaching,
Kanetsuka Sensei and Ezra Sensei
plus the demonstrations

Cost: £20.00 inc. P&P
(cheque payable to MJ Thorne)
Order from:
John Thorne
67 Richards Terrace
Cardiff CF24

THE STATUE OF THE FOUNDER AT THE AIKI SHRINE AT IWAMA

Towards the end of 2009 an imposing bronze statue of the Founder was set up at the Aiki Shrine in Iwama, where Ueshiba Morihei spent much of his time from 1942 until his death in 1969. The Aiki Shrine is set in roughly 17 acres of oak forest about 60 miles north-west of Tokyo and remains practically the same as it was 50 years ago. A fund-raising initiative was begun in early 2009 and contributions poured in not just from within Japan but from Aikido organizations all over the world, including of course the British Aikido Federation.



NEW B.A.F. DOJO

A thriving dojo in Tyne and Wear has recently affiliated itself to the B.A.F. It is at Killingworth, not far from Newcastle. Details can be found on the B.A.F. website.



B.A.F. NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR 2010 — 2011

Executive Members:

Peter Gillard (Chairman)
Dave Yates (Vice-Chairman)
Peter Megann (General Secretary)
John Parkinson (Treasurer)
*Don Morgan (Vice-Chairman of the
 Technical and Grading Committee &
 Chief Instructor for Wales)*
Ken Marsden and Allan Rowley (Senior Members)
Andrew Peterson (Child Protection Officer)

Co-opted members:

Ian McClarence (Chief Instructor for England)
Steve Parr (Course Organiser)
James Anderson Simon Fraser

B.A.F. TECHNICAL AND GRADING COMMITTEE FOR 2010 — 2011

Kanetsuka Sensei (Chairman)
Don Morgan (Vice-Chairman)
Peter Gillard Ian McClarence
Ken Marsden Peter Megann
Steve Parr Allan Rowley
David Yates

Shido-in

Don Morgan Peter Gillard
Colman Glynn Ian McClarence
Ken Marsden Peter Megann
Steve Parr Allan Rowley
Brian Smith David Yates

Fukushido-in

Bill Jackson Alex Megann
Byron Thomas

Shido-in: From the Japanese *shi-do* meaning 'guidance'. *Shido-in* means 'teacher' and in the context of Aikido is used of a senior instructor. In the B.A.F. *Shido-in* have authority to grade nationally up to 1 Kyu.

Fukushido-in: *Fuku* means 'assistant'. In the B.A.F. *Fukushido-in* have authority to grade locally (i.e. in their own area) up to 4 Kyu.

YUDANSHA PROMOTIONS AT SUMMER SCHOOL 2010

1 Dan

Leonid Rozman (North London Dojo)
Lucy Aitken (North London Dojo)

2 Dan

Wan Man (Ryushinkan, Holland)

3 Dan

Jane Hosgood (Bishopston)
Paul Hughes (Ryusuikan, Chester)
Russel Milton (Shobukan, Cardiff)

SENSEI BYRON THOMAS

Byron started Aikido in 1969 after studying Judo for a few years. He became Shodan in August 1977 and has now progressed to 4 Dan and is a Fukushido-in. On 13th October he reached the ripe old age of 70, but he still shows us youngsters that age doesn't matter when practising Aikido. Congratulations from everyone in the Cwmaman Aikido Dojo.