

AIKIDO **SHUDOKAN** **INTERNATIONAL**

2024
MAGAZINE

MANY VOICES,
ONE COMMUNITY



Aiki
TV



FROM THE EDITORS

The theme this year for the Magazine is Many Voices One Community. This resonated deeply with us as Aikido is more than a martial art; it is a community that has not only been built at our dojo, but spans across continents and cultures.

In this community, every voice contributes to the understanding of Aikido's principles through every person bringing their own experiences, perspectives, and stories. It connects us all within the Aikido world, allowing us to unite through the shared commitment to training and to personal growth.

Aikido is more than just a practice; it is a way of life that fosters respect, harmony, and connection. Each time we step onto the mat, we're not just training our bodies, but strengthening the connections that unite us all. Our passion for Aikido transcends languages and cultures, creating a universal language of understanding.

Together, we are a community that learns, grows, and supports each other. Our shared practice and passion we carry for Aikido, is what brings us together and keeps us moving forward—both as individuals and as a global family.

Congratulations to all the junior students, adults and Dan grades who have tested this year. You have shown strong spirit and determination, pushing yourselves to improve and further develop your Aikido.

As we continue to explore and cultivate our practice, may we remember that we are all part of one vibrant, evolving community. Let's continue to listen, learn, and grow together, knowing that each voice is essential in shaping the future of Aikido.

A huge thankyou to those who took the time to contribute towards this year's magazine. Your dedication, effort, and personal perspective on Aikido are deeply appreciated.

From Evelyn and Olivia

Osu!

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Interview with Joe Sensei

James Booth

Thank you, Sensei, for making the time for this interview. The theme for the interview is: *Many Voices, One community*.

I have three basic topics to cover.

The first of the three aspects that I want to ask you about is the fact that you go overseas, talking to many different people and training with many different people.

The second one I wanted to touch on is something that occurred to me when I was listening to Jacques Payet Shihan, Mustard Shihan and yourself talking about the demise of the Yoshinkai and the possibility of starting up a new umbrella organisation - I have questions around that and whether that's a good idea.

My third question is about the recent changes to the Dojo structure and under the theme of hearing more voices and hearing more people - is a Dojo really a democracy?

Firstly, can you talk about the international seminar schedule and the different types of Aikido groups that you instruct or are invited to teach? How many different groups would you visit outside of Shudokan?

The groups are almost exclusively Yoshinkan and people that practice the Yoshinkan system more broadly. Some of them are still part of the YAF. Some of them have left like we have but we practice the same techniques even though we don't all belong to the mother organisation so to speak.

Differences? I think the differences are not political - more character- or personality-based. If a certain instructor is of a certain nature, then the dojo will follow. So, it is a fallacy to think that it is split along the lines of politics or identity. It is different because of the teachers who are involved in that particular Dojo, which is only fitting because it is an art form and the philosophy is open to interpretation. We are all guided by who we are.

Is that representative of the people who invite you or do you think that is Yoshinkan?

That's been passed down. It's through the Honbu Dojo that has maintained that spirit and

comradeship. I don't think that's changed much over the years. There's always been the Yoshinkan - it was a big organisation, a big family within which there were sub-groups, even from the mid- or late-90s. The Shudokan was a sub-group within the bigger Yoshinkan group. For example, Takeno Sensei had his family but everyone came together, though there was a hierarchy. It's like a family where everyone has gone off and had kids. You come back together and there is still a hierarchy.

That sort of thing - that hasn't changed. And now I think, I'm invited by people who I can relate to some or all of my teaching. I don't try to force them to do everything the way I do it. They are free to pick and choose.

That leads to the next question - if everyone is getting along, what would be the benefit in the discussion around having an umbrella organisation?

The umbrella organisation is essentially for people who, in some countries, need to belong to an international body. Otherwise, the government doesn't recognise you or you can't go and teach in schools. You can't get insurance for that sort of thing unless you belong to a bigger body so it's more of a practicality to some extent.

Then you also have some people who are Sandan and Yondan who have no one to advance them in grades and other things like that. So they are stuck and their students are stuck - so they need an umbrella organisation, too.

David Rubens and I looked into it and thought about starting something up. It didn't fly for a number of reasons. The name Yoshinkan could not be used in Japan. Outside Japan was problematic because the Honbu Dojo won't allow it to be used. Then there was always the sticking issue of how you handle giving out Dan grades. I wanted to have a group but I didn't want to be bogged down by being involved in other people's tests. I only test my own students. So that would have been, again, problematic. So, in the end, for a number of reasons, it didn't fly. There are still some 6th Dans and 7th Dans who are pushing for that kind of organisation to come up and everyone's got an idea of how to do it.

They may not want to join a particular organisation because they don't like a particular teacher. They want a group of teachers to come together to make something. So, all of a sudden, it's being driven from the ground up and I don't agree with that. It has to be driven from the top down. That's the nature of martial arts because like you say, it's not a democracy.

Can we talk about the recent Dojo changes you've made and the statement of stepping back and letting other people have a say and trying some new ideas. I was just thinking - is that really a possibility when it's a martial art? What are you hoping to achieve?

So, I'm not trying to be provocative. I've had so many people write to me and ask "Are you okay?" - you know, they're worried about my mental health.

I never liked the off-the-mats side of running a Dojo. Never liked it. Hated it. I enjoy training. I enjoy teaching. Never enjoyed the part of involving the reception and the office - I hated it. When we had a Dojo in St Georges Road, I used to threaten to throw the computer out into the tram tracks because I hated it. People hate working for me because, all right, I'm not a team player. And now, after all this time, I want to go back to just teaching if I can and occasionally train. But I just want to train and to teach.

I want to go back to doing what I like. I want to enjoy what I do - I enjoy Aikido. I don't enjoy SEO, websites or social media marketing. I do not enjoy that. I don't enjoy finances and dealing with accountants or the tax department. So, if other people are willing to take it on, you know, cool, then I just teach. I'm not pulling back - you'll find that I'm teaching the same number of classes, maybe more. It's what I want to do. I'm not retiring and I'm not ill!

And I've said that I probably want to take some time off. I've never taken time off. I'm going to talk to Enrica and maybe I'm going to take a lot of January off. Maybe I just come in and teach. I just turn up, put on my gear and train and that's it.

So that's me and my intentions - I'm not ready to retire. I don't want to retire. I want to keep teaching - I do. It's my passion. And as for handing it on - financially, the dojo is a basket case at the moment. It's the wrong time for me to leave both financially and business-wise but personally, it's

the right time to leave and I've got good people who are willing to take over: Enrica Sensei; Fulori Sensei and; Alia Sensei. They're going to run things.

The Dojo will continue. Maybe not in the current shape. Maybe we'll downsize. Same mat size, just a smaller building. Maybe we will just go, twice a week in Research, twice a week to Rodney's Dojo in Brunswick, twice a week in Mulgrave. That's me, still teaching full-time. We could find a couple of other places to train and all the instructors can rotate. Yeah, so, you know, I'm not giving up and I'm not retiring - I'm just wanting to do what I want to do.

If the dojo fails and I can't hand it on, then I failed as a teacher. Have you ever heard me ever blame anyone else or anything? No. I don't blame anyone for anything - I blame myself. I blame my own stupidity.

Why do you blame yourself? Isn't it just this period in time? People are just too distracted to do something that actually takes a lot of effort? You've blamed yourself for things going wrong at the dojo but that's just the way they are.

Things didn't change. There's an old Ben Harper song, "The more things change the more they stay the same".

What's changed? Nothing! People have always been busy. I don't know if you remember that back in the mid-to late-80s we had to pay a 17% interest rate, okay? At the St Georges Road Dojo, my mortgage on that was 40 Grand. I had three jobs not including teaching. I had three jobs to pay the mortgage! I literally ran from one hospitality job to another in the city.

Now, give me a reason to fight, give me a reason to keep the Dojo but I don't see the reason. I will probably hurt a lot of people's feelings by saying that but I don't see the reason.

When I was training for my Shodan, there was no one who could keep up with me. You know what I did? I put one guy here and another guy here and I said "I throw you, you throw me. I will throw you, you throw me." That's how I train. I didn't have my teacher barking down my neck. I was like "I've got to get fit. I've got to get good". This is how I'm going to do it. Keep up with me. So that's how I train. Give me two or three people like that and I'll go and get a night job and fight to keep this place open. Give me a reason.

I went to Malaysia and It was really satisfying - to know that I can teach the way I want to teach. It was really, really good. This is what I want to do. It's what I want to teach.

The dojo is not a democracy. It has to be run from the top down. Me choosing to step aside - not out but aside - leaves Enrica Sensei to run the Dojo with the help of everyone and all the other instructors. I will be able to spend more time on Aikido Shudokan International.

So the way we work is like in Malaysia , Ramlan Shihan has his Dojo. In Indonesia Mark has his dojo, in Poland, Pawel and in the UK, it is Phil and Tad and this will be Enrica Sensei's. Of course, I am based here but it will be Enrica's. She runs it. Just like they run their dojos and I oversee the whole thing. So if anything, we're all taking a step up, not out.

And it's not a democracy and having said that, I will not tell Enrica what to do. She will consult me. I won't consult her, she will consult me. So, she has the final say and she says what she wants to do. She's already doing that now, making changes very subtly as is her way.

And then, you know there is the perception that we are sacrificing the martial aspect of the business for the woke culture - I don't sacrifice anything for martial arts. I sacrifice everything for martial arts - everything! I sacrifice my life, my time, my priorities, my kids' inheritance - I sacrifice everything for martial arts. I will not push any agenda at the expense of the Dojo.

So one community of many voices?

Many voices, one community.

That's it. I believe that, I believe that. Great topic.

Thank you, Sensei!

A Time of Change and Growth at the Dojo

Enrica Cheung

It is truly an honour and a great responsibility to step into the role of Dojo-Cho, and I'm incredibly grateful for the support and trust that has been placed in me by Joe Thambu Sensei and the amount that he has given up to keep the dojo going. I feel incredibly well-supported with Fulori Smith Sensei, our Head of Marketing, Alia Nicholls Sensei, who leads our children's program, Wee Oon, our Financial and Business Development manager, and Zerena Thambu, our friendly-faced all-rounder, who supports all of us. There are also behind-the-scenes business experts supporting us and together, we are working to ensure the dojo continues to thrive, grow, and serve our community for many years to come.

As we look ahead, we're in the midst of a significant transition period. Running a dojo is no small feat, and we are facing the challenge of managing this space in a way that will be sustainable in the long term. Whilst we have already started making changes, we're looking at a transition that could take 6 to 12 months, and during this time, we'll be refining and adjusting various aspects of our operations and structure.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Amazing Community

None of this would be possible without the incredible support we receive from each and every one of you. Your dedication to the dojo is inspiring, and I want to take a moment to thank everyone who has volunteered their time and energy to help make the dojo a better place. Whether you've helped move heavy items, watered the garden, organised events, or contributed ideas and actions to improve our financial situation, your efforts are noticed and deeply appreciated.

This level of commitment speaks to the strength of our community. The dojo is not just a physical space—it's a place where we come together to grow, learn, and support one another. It's clear that everyone involved believes in what the dojo stands for, and that shared belief is what makes us stronger every day.

Exciting Updates for 2025

As we look ahead, we have some important updates to share regarding our schedule and structure for 2025. These changes are designed to create a more streamlined and impactful experience for all our students. Here's what's coming in 2025:

- **Black Belt Class** to be held on **Saturdays from 2 - 3pm** from 1 February
- **Thursday evening classes** will resume with regular classes from 30th January
- **Tuesday evening classes** will resume and will be a self-defence class, providing an important and practical training opportunity for our students. This will begin from 4th February.
- **Testing will now be by invitation only.** We've made this decision to ensure that students are not only ready but also given the opportunity to test when they are best prepared to show their full potential.

These changes are part of our commitment to providing a training environment that helps all of us grow, both individually and as a dojo community.

We Want to Hear From You

As always, we value your thoughts and feedback. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about the dojo or any of the changes coming up, please feel free to reach out. You can speak with me directly at the dojo, or you can always email me at echeung@aikidoshudokan.com.

Our goal is to create a dojo that reflects our shared values and strengthens our community. Together, let's continue to train hard, push each other, and work to make the dojo even stronger.

Thank you once again for your ongoing support. Let's move forward with focus, determination, and the spirit of mutual growth.

Osu!

Uchi Deshi Gasshuku: High Points and Low Points

Mark Hadiarja (6th Dan) from Indonesia

High point: Sleeping in between classes.

Low point: Seeing Rowan in a women's one piece swimsuit.

Biggest lesson: Rowan doesn't look good in women's one piece swimsuit.



Rafal Rzepus (4th Dan) from Poland

High point: Being part of the last Gasshuku was just one two-weeks-long magnificent moment. Sharing space on and off the mat with the best people and being motivated and pushed to action by an outstanding teacher. Unforgettable.

Low point: The absolute worst time was when I stabbed Mark Sensei in his face with a tanto and thought I had just taken out his eye. Fortunately, it ended with a character enhancing scar.

Biggest lesson: That trip was a challenge in many ways. The Gasshuku confirmed my belief that everything is possible. Everyone has their own path of Aiki, but with the right people, with the right leader, it is much easier to follow it. The best summary of these two weeks was the Uchideshi group after 2 days of seminar in Kuala Lumpur standing in the corner of the hall. Satisfied, fresh, eagerly waiting for more training, looking at the other exhausted participants of the seminar. We were not better. We were better prepared. For me personally, it is also a new perspective on the main kanji hanging in my dojo: Masakatsu Agatsu - true victory is victory over oneself. Osu!

Marcin Wójcik (4th Dan) from Poland

High point: Sitting and letting the body rest, drinking 1-2 litres of sports drink or coke after the class, feeling how the cold drink is cooling the body from inside. Going for the next class knowing, that despite difficulties I have survived the previous one so I will

survive another one no matter what. Public demonstration, something we have drilled lots of times in pain and sweat, knowing everyone is giving 120% and we're like a well-oiled machine - especially after the demo the feeling was very positive.

Low point: When the knee problem got worse, there was an impossible choice - get easier on the knee in order to preserve it till the end or push to the limit and risk being eliminated by the injury. Finding that balance, how to push and don't cause worse injury was very hard. Injury would mean failing myself, failing Sensei, failing my training partner and the whole group.

Biggest lesson: We cannot survive for long as an individual in such harsh training conditions. We need to help each other, support each other, push the partner when it is needed and let ourselves be pushed, and helped. The spirit of this batch was very high and it would be much harder to survive without my partner and great people like Rowan, Suresh or Mark Sensei who would push everyone to do their best. Under such pressure I've once again learned that my limits are much further than I thought, but once again, without the instructors who pushed us beyond those limits we would never have had the opportunity to learn that. So I'm thankful for once again moving my limits and making me a better aikidoka and person.



Noveen Mannath (4th Dan) from Malaysia

High point: The bond we forged, on and off the mats, was the high point of the whole experience. Together we persevered, supporting one another through every challenge.

Low point: The training was intense, and my persistent bad knee was a constant challenge, testing my limits every single day.

Biggest lesson: My biggest takeaway is the responsibility to carry forward what I've learned. It's not just about personal growth; it's about finding ways

to pass on the lessons, camaraderie, and spirit of perseverance to others. OSU!

Jan 'Honza' Kubovy (4th Dan) from Czech

High point: The strongest moments were when the fatigue started to show and everyone was supporting and heckling each other. It helped me push the imaginary boundary. Best time = best team.

Low point: It was the last day I went to training with a fever and 2 aspirin and Ondra Sensei took me to the dressing room when I collapsed in training, when I realized what had happened, the worst feeling was that I would not be allowed to continue and I would have to sit on the chairs prepared for the renegades.

Biggest lesson: It was that "feeling" - respect, humility, being a part the spirit of the group, the spirit of Shudokan. Learn from the best.

Martin Pohl (4th Dan) from Czech

High point: Methodical practice of koshinage. Total mutual support of each participant for the successful completion of each training.

Low point: Leg injury. Unfortunately, the injury limited the performance of some exercises. I did not want to become a brake and influence the course of the entire UDG.

Biggest lesson: How easily and effortlessly I manage to perform the techniques after returning compared to before the UDG.

Koh Soon Kim (3rd Dan) from Hong Kong

High point: One of the high points was that I noticed our camaraderie and friendship grew stronger throughout the program and we were able to support each other (more others supporting me instead, to be honest) when faced with difficult challenges. I understand now that you don't have to be alone and you can achieve much more together as a team.

Low point: The hardest part for me was probably on day 5 or 6, trying to get up in the morning to repeat the day of training and chores with the physical and mental exhaustion, only to notice that we are only halfway through. I still remember Ramlan Sensei's words "think about what you are going to do next after this program", somehow that kept me going.

Biggest lesson: The biggest lesson I had was realizing that my current limit stems from my fear of failure. Now that I know this, I will strive to break this and hopefully move forward.

Suresh Krishnamoorthy (2nd Dan) from Singapore

High point: Being smashed by Honza, getting back up, and unleashing a gutteral challenge to go again.

Low point: Being assigned the responsibility of creating an arts and craft project. Without materials, inspiration or a single iota of creative artistic ability.

Biggest lesson: The spirit Shudokan carries is not something easily developed, and yet without care, may disappear like smoke in the wind. Find and choose a teacher, or teachers, able to develop that desire in you. In the course of training, learn about them; their stories, motivation and struggles. Try to see them for who they are in totality. Try to do the same for your peers, your juniors and perhaps one day, your students.

Rowan Garton (2nd Dan) from the UK

High point: Having the opportunity to train everyday at a high intensity with high level people. Creating a family-like bond and being part of something special.

Low point: Feeling like I could have done better during the demonstration.

Biggest lesson: Don't wear Olga's swimsuit again.



Mateusz Adamek (2nd Dan) from Poland

High point: The strong spirit during training sessions, when the whole group started shouting and motivating each other, and the opportunity to engrave "Aikido Shudokan" on bokkens, tantos, or even a table. (I had a lot of fun during this task).

Low point: Being sick for two days. I didn't want to show weakness or make anyone feel sorry for me.

Because of this it was hard but fortunately I recovered quickly.

Biggest lesson: The biggest lesson is that I am able to do more than I think I can and the gasshuku proved this to me. If I'm surrounded by the right people, who share the same goal as I do, they motivate me, and because of that, I can push more and more.

Dominik Tokaj (2nd Dan) from Poland

High point: Supporting each other in difficult times.

Low point: Additional exercises after the classes.

Biggest lesson: Breaking own barriers in my mind. Showing that everything is possible.

Adrian Fillardo (1st Dan) from Australia

High point: The opportunity to train with the likes of Mark, Rafal, Noveen, Marcin, who are all sensei in their own right. That's an experience that money can't buy.

Low point: Knowing you have to keep going when you want to quit. Passing out and then having to get up and finish the class and then do another class was one of the hardest things I had to do. It's changed my way of thinking and looking at training.

Biggest lesson: I always wanted to know what it was like living in a dojo and I've had that now.

Dallas McKenzie (1st Dan) from Australia

High point: Dominik entangling himself in door curtains when we were all waiting for him for a team meeting.

Low point: Being blamed for putting the bananas in the fridge.

Biggest lesson: You can achieve anything if you help each other out and Malaysians do not put bananas in the fridge.

Olga Slivinska (1st Dan) from Australia

High point: Every single minute of the Gasshuku except from the below.

Low point: Watching Mark Sensei hiking with his big bag was painful.

Biggest lesson: Only by supporting each other can you achieve your goal as a united team without losses.

Joe Thambu Shuseki Shihan

High point: Watching everyone do the demonstration was a high point. To see everyone finish what they started under trying circumstances. Full credit goes to everyone's determination both individually and as a group.

Low point: Kim's coffee and watching everyone try to dance after the demonstration.



Two Events, One Spirit: From Uchi Deshi Gasshuku to Ramlan Ortega Shihan's Milestone Anniversary

Navin Francis

Under the glow of Malaysia's rich martial arts heritage, two extraordinary events unfolded this August, uniting Aikido practitioners from across the globe. Together, they celebrated not just the art of Aikido but the enduring bonds of community, discipline, and harmony that define it. From the intense training of the Uchi Deshi Gasshuku to the joyous celebration of Ramlan Ortega Shihan's 30-year milestone, these gatherings revealed a heartfelt story of dedication and legacy.

Reviving Ancient Traditions: The Uchi Deshi Gasshuku Experience

The Shudokan, Malaysia's first Aikido dojo and a cradle of martial arts heritage opened its doors for the Uchi Deshi Gasshuku from August 11 to 22. The term *uchi deshi* translates to "live-in student", and for 14 practitioners – Mark Hadiarja (Indonesia), Noveen Mannath (Malaysia), Suresh James Lee Krishnamoorthy (Singapore); Koh Soon Kim (Hong Kong), Olga Slivinska, Adrian Filardo, Dallas McKenzie (Australia); Rowan Charlie (United Kingdom), Rafał Rzepus, Marcin Wójcik, Mateusz Adamek, Dominik Tokaj (Poland); Martin Pohl and Jan Kubový (Czech Republic) – this camp was a journey of self-discovery.

Participants trained tirelessly under the watchful eyes of Joe Thambu Shuseki Shihan, the nephew of Malaysia's "Father of Aikido," the late Thamby Rajah Sensei. The rigorous schedule demanded resilience—not just physical, but emotional. Days were filled with exhaustive training and the quiet discipline of martial living, creating a crucible for personal growth and camaraderie.

"It was transformative," said Mark Hadiarja Kyoshi of Aikido Shudokan Indonesia, who participated in the Gasshuku. "We struggled and pushed each other to limits we didn't know existed. Friendship and perseverance now carry a depth we hadn't known before."

This spirit of perseverance echoed the values instilled by Thamby Rajah Sensei, who, as Joe Thambu Shuseki Shihan reminisced, had once hosted similar camps in the dojo's early days. "The lively spirit of the past came alive again during this

Gasshuku. Seeing so many people come together to train is a testament to my uncle's enduring influence," Thambu Shihan shared.



A Celebration of a Life in Aikido: Ramlan Ortega Shihan's Milestone

The intensity of the Gasshuku gave way to celebration just days later, as the Aikido community gathered from August 23 to 25 to honour Ramlan Ortega Shihan's 30 years of devotion to Aikido. Over 200 practitioners from 11 nations came together at Pusat Komuniti Bukit Cheras in Kuala Lumpur, transforming the space into a vibrant hub of energy, technique, and connection.

Ramlan Ortega Shihan's journey is a story of unwavering commitment. From his early days learning Silat and Taekwondo, he found his true calling in Aikido in 1994. Guided by remarkable mentors, including Joe Thambu Shuseki Shihan and the late Thamby Rajah Sensei. His passion has touched thousands, teaching not just the techniques of Aikido but the philosophy of harmony that underpins it.

Guest of honour, Aiko Inoue Kaicho (President) of Aikido Shudokan International, and Joe Thambu Shuseki Shihan, together with Darren Friend Shihan, Australia (Aikido Shudokan NSW); Jon Marshall Shihan, Singapore (Gyokushin Ryu); David Dangerfield Shihan, Australia (Aikido Shudokan International); Ondrej Musil Shihan, Czech Republic (Aikido Shudokan International) and Paul Cale Shihan, Australia (Aikido Shudokan International), led sessions showcasing the rich diversity of Aikido's techniques for three days.

Reflecting on his milestone, Ramlan Ortega expressed gratitude: "It's been a privilege to walk this path for 30 years."

“But I didn’t walk it alone. Every student, teacher, and moment of struggle and triumph are all part of this journey. Together, we’ve built something truly special.”

The celebration culminated with a gala dinner, uniting the Aikido community in a shared appreciation of their art. It included an incredible demonstration by participants of the Uchi Deshi Gasshuku, a culmination of 12 days of intensive training, embodying the meaning of OSU and Esprit de Corps.

Aiko Inoue Kaicho lauded Ramlan Ortega’s contributions to Aikido and his role in carrying forward the legacy of Thamby Rajah Sensei.

“Congratulations on 30 years of spreading Aikido far and wide while carrying the torch started by your teacher, Thamby Rajah Sensei, who I fondly remember.

Preserving a Legacy, Inspiring the Future

These two events highlight more than milestones—they are a testament to the timelessness of the Shudokan’s philosophy. From the immersive spirit of the Uchi Deshi Gasshuku to the jubilant camaraderie of Ramlan Ortega Shihan’s anniversary, they reveal the true heart of the Shudokan: connection, resilience, and harmony.

The Shudokan, Malaysia’s first Aikido dojo and first outside Japan, continues to thrive under the leadership of Joe Thambu Shuseki Shihan and Ramlan Ortega Shihan. It remains a beacon of tradition and modernity, inspiring a new generation of Malaysians to embrace the martial way.

As the year unfolds, the Shudokan has more to offer. Through it all, the dojo’s mission remains clear: to keep the flame of Aikido alive, ensuring

that it remains a vibrant and unifying force for future generations.

“It’s not just about techniques,” Ramlan Ortega Shihan concluded. “Aikido has taught me how to live, connect with others, and bring harmony into every aspect of life. That’s a gift I want to share, one student at a time.”

And so, under the banner of harmony, Aikido Shudokan Malaysia continues its journey—stronger, closer, and ever-inspired.

AIKIDO SHUDOKAN MALAYSIA



Three Transformative Days at the YAF Downunder Seminar in Brisbane

Becky Kidd

Attending the recent Aikido seminar in Brisbane was an unforgettable experience. Over three days, Yoshinkan Aikido students from around Australia, and the world, came together to train, learn, and grow. The event was held at a great high-quality venue, equipped to handle the intense schedule of four training sessions each day. Despite Brisbane's heat, the energy and enthusiasm of everyone in attendance made the experience super rewarding.

We were fortunate to be taught by an exceptional group of instructors, each bringing their unique perspective and depth of expertise to the mats. The instructors included Jacques Payet Sensei, Darren Friend Sensei, Jon Marshall Sensei, Joe Thambu Sensei, and Mori Michiharu Sensei. Their combined knowledge and teaching styles enriched the seminar, offering a diverse view of Aikido's principles and techniques.

Day 1: Shuchu Ryoku – Focused Energy & Centre Line

The first day focused on the principle of **Shuchu Ryoku**, which translates to "concentrated power" or "focused energy." This principle is fundamental in Aikido, emphasizing the cultivation of a stable and aligned core from which power is generated, and balance is maintained. Through *Shuchu Ryoku*, we learned to coordinate the body, mind, and intention to connect dynamically with uke. By aligning our movements with this principle, we practised channeling energy along our centreline to redirect or neutralise an opponent's force seamlessly.

The day's lessons highlighted the harmonious blend of physical structure and internal focus required in Aikido. The instructors emphasised how *Shuchu Ryoku* is not about strength but about precision and blending, allowing us to maintain balance and connection with uke throughout each interaction.

Day 2: Irimi – Timing: Entering & Turning Angles

On the second day, the spotlight shifted to **Irimi**, the principle of "entering" into uke's space to neutralise their attack. Irimi embodies the essence of moving directly toward the opponent while positioning oneself at an advantageous angle. This principle requires blending with the attack, stepping in, and turning at precise angles to unbalance uke while maintaining control and one's own balance.

The concept of Irimi was particularly fascinating, as it demonstrated the power of harmonising with force, rather than resisting it. Each Sensei's interpretation of Irimi brought fresh insights, making the day's lessons both challenging and inspiring.

Day 3 – Teacher's Choice and Speciality

On the third day of the Aikido seminar, each instructor focused on their unique specialty, offering diverse and enriching lessons. Joe Thambu Sensei emphasised *hiriki no yosei* as a vital movement for generating *kokyū* power. Jacques Payet Sensei highlighted the significance of proper posture, alignment, and relaxing the shoulders to enhance fluidity. Mori Michiharu Sensei demonstrated a range of *kokyū* techniques, while Jon Marshall Sensei provided insights into effective anti-lock techniques.

A Fusion of Perspectives

One of the most enriching aspects of the seminar was hearing the diverse thoughts, techniques, and approaches from the various instructors. Each instructor brought their unique understanding of the principles, offering different ways to interpret and apply them in practice. This fusion of perspectives deepened our appreciation of Aikido's complexity and practicality.

Reflections

The seminar wasn't just about techniques—it was about the amazing Aikido community, connection, and growth. Training with the YAF community from all over the world was a privilege. The camaraderie on and off the mat added a special dimension to the experience, reminding us of the universal spirit of Aikido.

As I reflect on those three days, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from such skilled instructors and to train alongside passionate aikidokas. This seminar was a vivid reminder of why Aikido is not just a martial art but a way of life.



Women's Self-Defence at Aikido Shudokan

Eva Lee

“The practise of Aikido is to overcome oneself instead of cultivating violence or aggressiveness”

- Joe Thambu Shihan

Firstly, I would like to thank Enrica Cheung Sensei, Fulori Smith Sensei and the assistance of other seniors in leading and raising the true meaning of self-defence through hosting the yearly Women Self-Defence seminar for the general community.

Just like First Aid training, I strongly believe that self-defence requires ongoing learning and practice in getting yourself prepared anytime for when a situation arises. As the saying goes “Fear is in the mind, danger is real”, regardless of your age, size, and level of experience, the self-defence event promotes the cultivation of an awareness mindset with your surroundings in preparation for any potential risks. At the start of the event, I recalled Enrica Sensei asked the group if they were aware of how many doors they walked past before getting into the building. Not surprising that most were struggling to recall. This reminded us that we cannot take any situation for granted, especially given the constant distractions and multitasking in our daily lives, such as walking whilst texting, running with earphones etc. has significantly increased our exposures to dangerous situations.

In Aikido, we practise harmony by being aware through learning safe distancing and timing to respond, not react. Fulori Sensei mentioned that in every situation there will be a leader and follower. She taught us a helpful exercise that we can practise with a counterpart on sensing and safeguarding the distancing. Responding means we take the lead and be able to control the situation with composure, whereas reacting is merely a fight or flight response stemming from fear without a calm mind and strategies to overcome the danger.

Essentially, true strength is not violent nor aggression nor winning over others. Aikido training emphasizes on strong postural alignment and projection of power in overcoming attacks. In life practice, this starts by cultivating inner harmony and self-confidence against any barriers. Likewise, the alignment of physical and mental strength, starting with awareness, safe distancing, and timing, is a lifelong journey that comes with deliberate and relentless training. As such, I would strongly welcome you to come train together with us.

Osu!

Student of the Year

Dallas Mckenzie

At our recent Annual Demonstration at Heidelberg in Melbourne, there was a mistake made giving out the first award. When my name was called out for Student of the Year, I naturally thought they had made another mistake. It was a strange feeling accepting the trophy from Joe Thambu Sensei, as I had not won an award for anything in well over 30 years. I thought that the time for being awarded trophies had passed me by.

I do not do Aikido for awards or recognition. I do it because I enjoy it. For me, it is a great challenge, physically and mentally. Being a part of the Aikido community, has certainly given me a sense of purpose outside of work in these middle years of my life.

I cannot really explain why I was chosen as Student of the Year. It is certainly not because my Aikido is good. My techniques are pretty ordinary and I cannot even keep my leg straight when I am falling (just ask Sensei!). However, I always try to show up with Spirit. The following are a few of the things I try to uphold while I am training at the Dojo:

Be on time for classes and do the warm up. If it is ten minutes until class starts and no one has stepped up, take the warm up. It might be stressful the first few times, but the more you do it, the more comfortable you will become at taking the warm-up.

Take Uke for the Sensei's when they are demonstrating techniques. It is a great way to learn how the techniques should be done.

Train with different students, of all levels, and always introduce yourself to the new students. Make them feel welcome at the Dojo.

Give your all on the mats and always train with the right attitude. You are there to train and to learn. When it is physically challenging, or difficult to concentrate, that is the time to try harder. Train after class (or before) and work on the things you may not have understood during the class.

If it is grading time, train with intent, and if you are not grading, help out those who are, even if it is a few rounds of Jiyuwaza after class.

Go to dinners, events and seminars when they are on and help out around the Dojo where needed. Even if that's as simple as emptying bins that are full or helping with dishes, set up, clean up etc).

Most importantly, train. Even on those days, when you can't be bothered or are too tired. It happens to me all the time, but once I am there on the mats, I forget about all the little things (or big things) I was worried about, and walk off the mats feeling much better.

Hope you all have a wonderful festive season and see you on the mats soon. Osu!

Paul Cale Shihan Seminar

Maggie Truong

My experience of Shihan-cho Paul Cale Seminar on that day has widened my experience and opened more learning paths for me to acquire. I began to understand the "Do" which Shihan-cho Paul Cale has shown me, and explanation from Joe Thambu Shihan (師父) from time to time, and yet, I still struggle to learn the balance (the effectiveness vs ineffectiveness) of self defence techniques using aikido variation. This was not easy. Even more so, knowing the learning of "How & Why" still remains my challenge. Although it was a one off seminar, I did enjoy it very much. I will look forward to future seminars and definitely would encourage others to participate. Osu.

Shodan Grading

Sid Whittle

Grading for Shodan was an event I have been anticipating for many years now, and I have many of the people at the Heidelberg Dojo to thank for pushing me to my limits during and after every class. These past few years building up to this have been an amazing experience, and I couldn't have done it without the assistance of all my friends at the dojo, as well as the expert teachings of all the Senior Instructors that have allowed me to progress this far in my time at Aikido Shudokan. The grading itself was challenging, but was an experience I will never forget, and one that I am very thankful I had the privilege to train for alongside all my fellow students at the Shudokan Heidelberg and Mulgrave dojos. I will strive to improve my techniques and form and will continue to push other people to do so too. Osu!

Research Dojo

Willem van Zantan

At our dojo in Research we've had the pleasure of being taught by Shihan Joe Thambu for about half a year now, and even-though the rest of our community is slow to realize how fortunate we are having someone of such great skill over, I've come to love Aikido and have progressed fairly fast with just one hour of training a week.

What personally stands-out for me is the precision of the movements, the focus on principle (centre of gravity among a few others), the traditional approach and the eye contact.

The precision of movement has been challenging as often taking the slightest misstep and/or gripping wrong would make the technique come apart. What's useful about this is that the feedback is very direct.

Focusing on principle, has personally helped with other Martial Art forms that I practise, like Jiu-Jitsu & Kickboxing. Shifting your centre of gravity correctly for example is fantastic for striking arts because your stances are where your power comes from.

Aikido being a traditional Martial Art has brought a different perspective to my life, one of tradition, respect and discipline. The bowing, sitting properly, refraining from laughing and more have been very useful.

Lastly, the eye contact is something I've never been aware of as Martial Arts like Judo, Kickboxing, Jiu-Jitsu etc. don't focus on this at all – It used to be very confronting to stare at someone during class, but overtime it's turned into a second nature and has helped me in other aspects of life.

It's a true shame that Aikido gets such a bad rep and I will personally see to it that this will change at Eltham Martial Arts Academy.

Joe sensei, thank you for your undivided passion for art and for teaching us your ways.

Mulgrave Dojo

Emily Chew

When I first started Aikido, I was 4 and a half years old. I was enrolled at the same time as my older sister, and from then on, we've trained together for years and made new friends along the way. I am so grateful for the opportunities Aikido has given me, including meeting new people, practicing discipline, social skills, and overall improving myself both physically and mentally. Aikido has also given me a chance to practice my skills as a leader through leading the warmups and helping with signing people in when they arrive to train.

Children Classes

Alia Nicholls

Highlights from 2024

Every year I am surprised at how much each and every junior student has improved in their aikido. I don't mean it as in I am surprised because they aren't capable of this level of improvement; I mean it as in it is a shock that these kids can develop their practice and focus so much in just a year! I think some of this comes down to really only getting to see the changes in students a few times a year i.e. during a grading or a demonstration.

Mainly, I get to see the kids training in a class and it is difficult to spend a lot of time just observing one or two pairs. However, in a grading or demonstration, all eyes are on the students who are on the mats at that time. I get to see how their understanding of the technique has deepened, how their ukemi (falling) has progressed, how their attention and focus have sharpened. It is very impressive and also very inspiring to see people take their training to increasingly higher levels.

There have been many moments and students this year who have stood out but I wanted to make special mention of four students who I thought particularly excelled.

Firstly, Maximus and Aiden for doing such a strong Junior Shodan test and then transitioning to the regular classes and testing for Senior 6th Kyu with skill and confidence.

Secondly, Alexia and Achilles for leading the Brown Belts at the Children's Demonstration. Both these students were told the day before the demonstration that they would be responsible for walking their group on the mats, giving the commands and performing all their techniques with precision and spirit. They did all of this without balking. Most remarkable effort!

Osu!

Children's Submissions

The Art of Kintsugi

By Elsa Lim

What is Kintsugi?

Kintsugi is a Japanese art of mending pottery that has been broken, by adding powdered gold/ platinum or silver on the edges of the pottery.

What this art is saying is that there is no need to try and hide the broken parts, but instead you can fix and embrace the broken pieces by adding powdered gold.

What is the point/meaning of Kintsugi?

The idea of Kintsugi is that when going through tough times, you always see them as new chances to develop and learn, as well as overcoming those challenges and accept that this is all a part of life.

This is important in Aikido because if you won't accept this, you can never achieve your goals but only dwell on your mistakes, which will do you no good.

One example of Kintsugi in Aikido is when I realise that I have made a few mistakes during the class and instead of sulking and feeling embarrassed, I accept the mistakes and keep going. This really helps me get better at Aikido each time.



Christmas 2024 & January 2025 Dojo Schedule

Heidelberg Adults

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
22 Dec	23	24	25	26	27	28
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		Dojo Closed		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm
29	30	31	1 Jan	2	3	4
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		Dojo Closed		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm 2:00 - 3:00pm
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm 2:00 - 3:00pm
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm 2:00 - 3:00pm
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm		New Schedule Starts 6:30 - 7:30am 2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	6:30 - 7:30pm (Regular Class)	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm 2:00 - 3:00pm (Black Belt Class)
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	6:30 - 7:30pm (Self Defence Class)	6:30 - 7:30am 2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	6:30 - 7:30pm (Regular Class)	2:00 - 3:00pm 6:30 - 7:30pm	12:30 - 1:30pm 2:00 - 3:00pm (Black Belt Class)

Mulgrave Adults

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
15 Dec	16	17	18	19	20	21
						No Classes due to Grading
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
		Dojo Closed		Dojo Closed		4:30 - 6:00pm
29	30	31	1 Jan	2	3	4
		Dojo Closed		Dojo Closed		4:30 - 6:00pm
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Normal Schedule Resumes 7:00 - 8:30pm		7:00 - 8:30pm		4:30 - 6:00pm

Research Adults

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
15 Dec	16	17	18	19	20	21
		7:00 - 8:30pm				
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
		Dojo Closed				
29	30	31	1 Jan	2	3	4
		Dojo Closed				
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Normal Schedule Resumes 7:00 - 8:30pm				

Heidelberg Children

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
22 Dec	23	24	25	26	27	28
			Dojo Closed			11:00am - 12:00pm
29	30	31	1 Jan	2	3	4
			Dojo Closed			11:00am - 12:00pm
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
			5:00 - 6:00pm			11:00am - 12:00pm
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			5:00 - 6:00pm			11:00am - 12:00pm
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			5:00 - 6:00pm			11:00am - 12:00pm
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
			Normal Schedule Resumes 5:00 - 6:00pm			11:00am - 12:00pm
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	5:00 - 6:00pm		5:00 - 6:00pm			11:00am - 12:00pm

Dan Grade Results

Godan

Fulori Smith

Nidan

Kristian Barrett

Shodan

Telly Geenens

Isabelle Ky

Adrian Filardo

Paul Shelton

Sid Whittle

Hieu Nguyen

Key Dates 2025

29th March	Childrens Grading
26th April	Adults Grading
13th September	Adults Grading
18th October	Childrens Demonstration
18th October	Childrens Demonstration
13th December	Childrens Grading
20th December	Adults Grading

*Dates subject to change