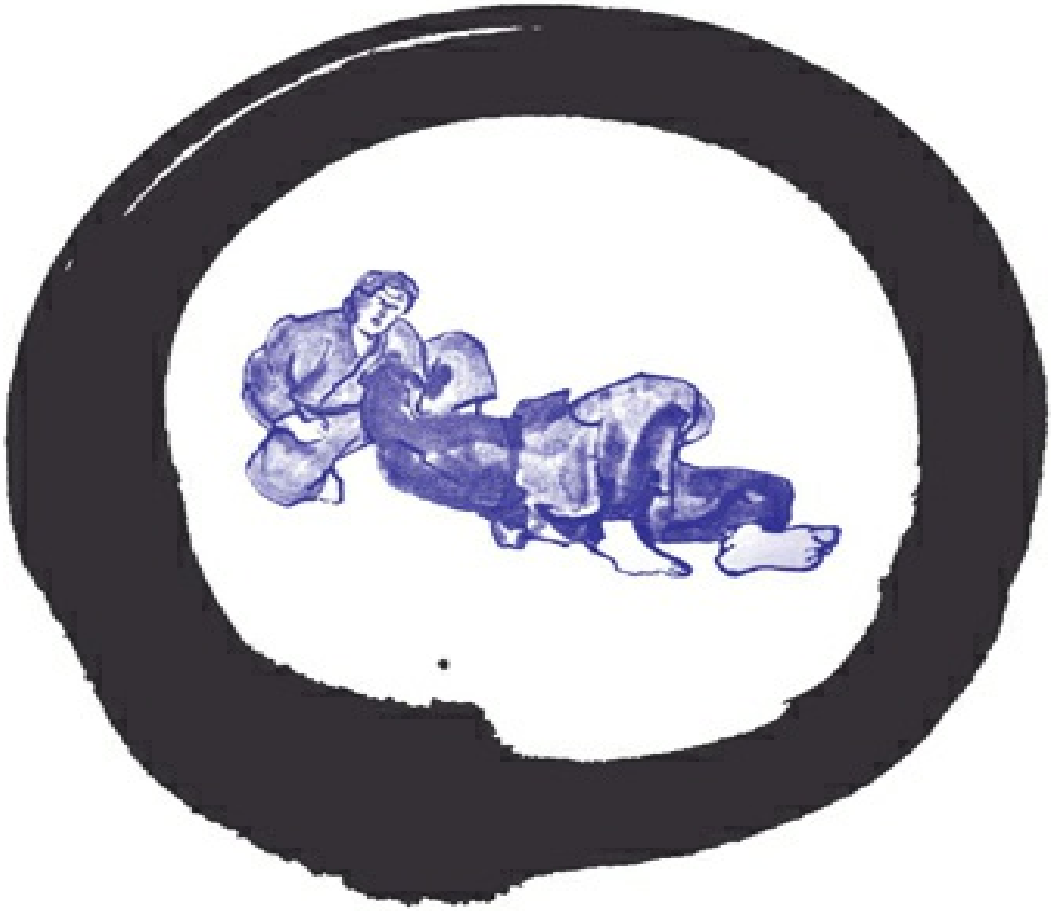

Aikido Ground Fighting

Grappling and Submission Techniques

Walther G. von Krenner
Damon Apodaca and Ken Jeremiah

Foreword by Carl Long

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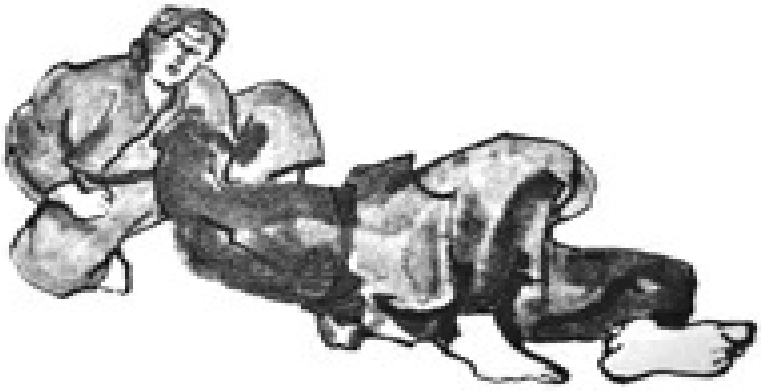

Walther G. von Krenner
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Foreword by Carl E. Long

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—Walther G. von Krenner

I would like to acknowledge the great teachers who passed along the wisdom found in Japanese martial traditions to future generations. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Nakazono Mikoto Masahilo (1918–94), my first Aikido teacher. Without his influence, I would not have had the opportunity to discover the true meaning of Budo and fulfill at least part of my capacity as a human being. The potential he saw in a fourteen-year-old boy from Santa Fe, New Mexico, has fueled my entire life. I hope to continue to progress in understanding and discovering my own potential. In addition, I sincerely desire to help humankind to understand its greater capacity toward humaneness and compassion.

— Damon Apodaca

Various individuals helped us in the creation of this book. Special thanks to my mother, artist Lori Jeremiah, for her support. She painted two great portraits of O-Sensei for our dojo, Aiki Kyodo, which is located in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Examples of her work can be seen at www.lorijeremiah.com. Thank you to Paulette Erickson, who allowed us to stay at her home when we traveled to Montana, and to Rick Testa, who allowed us to film a portion of the accompanying DVD at his dojo, City Aiki, in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to the following Aikido practitioners who helped with photographs and the performance of various techniques in order to clarify the information contained within: Chuck Ilgenfritz, Jay Carvalho, Jeannie Records, and Val Dobrushkin. Thanks also to Steve Fastow for his continued help. We are especially grateful to Bob Caron, who allowed us to use a picture of some calligraphy he owns. He also let us use his beautiful dojo in Worcester, Massachusetts, called Zenshinkan, in order to take some pictures. I would also like to recognize Daniel Xavier and Sayed Najem, cofounders of AlikeU.com, the premier online community for martial artists, for their support and assistance. Finally, thank you to Paul White, who assisted with photographs. He also created the DVD that accompanies this text.

— Ken Jeremiah

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FOREWORD

More than forty years of reading a plethora of materials written on martial arts tends to give one a somewhat critical view of the depth and credibility of most books written on the subject. Penning a column on ancient martial arts for years as a contributing editor for *Black Belt* magazine, as well as coauthoring books that focus on the ancient martial arts methods of Japan, has given me a keen sense of a martial arts author's breadth of knowledge. This critical view rises up whenever I'm presented with a book or article that explores any aspect of Japanese martial arts outside the mainstream thought on the subject. As a *kenshoin*, or inspector/advisor, for the *Dai Nippon Butoku Kai*, Japan's oldest and most revered martial arts sanctioning body, it is my responsibility to be vigilant in assessing and recognizing true Japanese Budo and offering guidance to teachers and practitioners worldwide.

The past four decades of practice and training have allowed me access to many of the finest Budo practitioners of the recent past and the present centuries. These men and women have displayed characteristics and insights that are easily recognizable in high-caliber martial artists and distinguish them as experts in their fields. The budoka I have had the privilege to train with and the honor to teach have brought new insight and often an enlightened perspective to this living art form. Consequently, whenever someone presents a new insight or new research reveals an "undiscovered" or rarely taught approach to training, I take a critical view of not only the material being presented but also the author's credentials and the motivation for his or her work.

When Damon Apodaca first discussed this book's concept with me, he expressed both his and Walther von Krenner's frustrations with the slow erosion of classical Budo spirit and intention from Aikido that they have seen. Together, they expressed a willingness to begin a conversation with their readers that would hopefully open the door to a more meaningful dialogue about the founder's original methods and a deeper understanding of the intent currently missing in Aikido techniques. The authors of the book you hold in your hands have spent their lifetimes examining, testing, researching, and (as you will learn) reforming the way you will look at Aikido in the twenty-first century. Their collective experience is influenced by those they have learned from. Mr. von Krenner studied directly under the founder of Aikido, Ueshiba Morihei, while Mr. Apodaca learned from some of the founder's first-generation students, including Mikoto Masahilo Nakazono.

The authors believe that most often Ueshiba's original students have translated and interpreted the founder's more esoteric writings on Aikido for their own students. Much of the written material available to Westerners has been introduced to the West by second- and third-generation authors and teachers of the art. The authors contend that the proliferation of these written materials, as well as society's penchant for easy and politically correct approaches to martial arts, has given rise to a completely different

Aikido than what was held in Ueshiba's heart. Rather than focusing on the literal intent of the techniques' physical implications, the modern Aikido practitioner is likely to concentrate on the esoteric and philosophical approach to his or her practice. Though this message was often communicated by Ueshiba in his later years, the authors argue that even at an advanced age, the Aikido of Ueshiba Morihei was first and foremost effective. As a consequence of his years of attention to the pragmatic application of the physical techniques, Ueshiba stressed the philosophic and esoteric philosophic underpinnings to balance the art and the practitioner.

Anyone familiar with Aikido's early Western pioneers understands the complexities and challenges these ambassadors faced in interpreting and transmitting concepts for which there were no foreign-language equivalents. In this book, we are fortunate to have Ken Jeremiah, an accomplished martial artist, linguist, and author whose works have often dealt with the esoteric and practical applications of Eastern philosophy and techniques. Dr. Jeremiah's fluency in four languages assists us in understanding O-Sensei's original intentions as presented to him by his teachers and colleagues. Mr. Apodaca and Mr. von Krenner are highly regarded throughout the Aikido world for their understanding of the seated combat methods associated with the older Aikido curricula. They are highly sought-after instructors of these suwari-waza methods. In this, their first corroborative effort, they communicate the effectiveness and practicality of teaching and exploring the combative nature of these techniques. The authors believe these methods have been displaced, reconstituted as less-effective techniques, or discarded entirely by many Aikido teachers today. This modern curriculum was not the Aikido practiced by Ueshiba Morihei, his teachers, or his most trusted followers, who were the stewards responsible for maintaining Aikido's original intent.

Thanks to ongoing study by Western Aikido exponents, these older forms of Aikido are beginning to be transmitted to foreign students in a comprehensive and informed language. Our gratitude should go to the practitioners—in this case, the authors of this book—for their years of dedication and perseverance, so they can now pass along the knowledge and understanding of an aspect of Aikido rarely seen today in the West. These techniques are directly connected to Ueshiba Morihei's original intent and experiences. They are more readily identified today as being related to Ueshiba's own training with Takeda Sokaku and the other jujutsu exponents he was exposed to throughout his lifetime.

The authors have demystified these often forgotten aspects of Aikido and presented them in this volume in a clear and concise format. Of particular interest to modern-day practitioners of the seated Aikido techniques, which the authors address in chapters 6 through 9, is the relevance and implied connection of movements to *newaza* and ground fighting. These techniques have become very popular today outside the mainstream of Aikido, and the authors contend that, without them, the practice of Aikido is not a complete art as originally formulated. The credentials and martial arts experience of this book's authors are formidable in the Budo world. Their insights and their recollections of the teachings they have received are a testament to the trust and confidence their predecessors had in them.

The martial arts world is inundated with literature that preaches a better or more efficient approach to combat and conflict resolution. As a martial arts researcher, practitioner, and teacher, I can confidently announce that few of these books approach the subject as an opening bid for real discussion. The writings and research of Mr. von Krenner, Mr. Apodaca, and Dr. Jeremiah represent a holistic approach to Aikido in order to challenge the thinking and conventions of modern aikidoka. Their hypothesis regarding the evolution or possible entropy of today's approach to Aikido's seated techniques is sure to inspire—or perhaps provoke—a conversation that will hopefully continue beyond the current generation of practitioners.

Carl E. Long

V. Chairman Kokusai Nippon Budo Kyokai/Jikishin-Kai International

Kenshoin, Dai Nippon Butoku Kai

May 28, 2012

PREFACE

This book was written by three individuals who have collectively been training in Aikido and other martial arts for more than one hundred years. Walther von Krenner, who was a Judo champion of Germany, studied directly under Aikido's founder, Ueshiba Morihei. He began his Aikido career in 1961 in California, training under Takahashi Isao and Tohei Koichi. In 1967, at Takahashi Sensei's suggestion, he moved to Japan to train directly under Ueshiba. Living in a dormitory near the dojo, von Krenner was one of the few foreign students who lived nearby and trained with the founder. After Ueshiba died, von Krenner moved to Hawaii, where he continued to train and teach at the Hawaii Aikikai Dojo with Aoyagi Shihan. In 1981, he moved to Montana and opened an Aikido dojo. He currently lives in Kalispell.

Damon Apodaca is a high-ranking student of Chiba Kazuo, Nakazono Mikoto Masahilo, and other master Aikido instructors. Having studied Aikido for almost forty years, he operates the Santa Fe Budokan in New Mexico, while Ken Jeremiah currently resides in Rhode Island. He has been training in Aikido and other martial arts for more than twenty years. In the process of putting this book together, the authors traveled frequently to discuss the nature of Aikido and its current state of affairs and to train together and share techniques. This text is the result of their efforts.

This book is about ground techniques. The specific techniques were modified and used by Walther von Krenner, and they differ from the ground techniques found in other martial arts because they are defensive, not offensive, in nature. Standard Aikido techniques have variations that allow them to be applied from different positions. For example, any technique that can be applied while standing can also be applied while on one's knees. This position, known as suwari-waza, contains important martial principles in Aikido; it is a middle ground between standing and grappling. However, many practitioners today might not recognize this practice's true purpose. In addition, students in the West likely find it difficult, and they might not train in such techniques as much as they should in their respective dojo. Some have possibly even misunderstood this practice's origin. They think that it was used during the samurai era when a warrior was not supposed to get off his knees in formal situations. Others believe that suwari-waza is an exercise alone, devoid of any real martial practicality.

All these misconceptions are dealt with in this text. Suwari-waza was not a historical practice (as it is utilized in Aikido). Certain aspects of it are conditioning exercises. Samurai knee-walking *(shikko)*, for example, helps students move from their centers, stay connected to the ground, and get underneath their attackers. Once students become comfortable with such movements, they are able to move swiftly and nimbly in any direction on their knees. They can also spring to their feet whenever necessary. After studying and teaching Aikido for decades (and traveling around in order to conduct seminars), the authors have come to realize that students do not typically understand

the martial aspects of this position. This book aims to explain suwari-waza's function and the advantage that aikidoists could have against other martial artists who do not fully understand or practice techniques from this position. This book also explains specific Aikido techniques that can be applied from a prone position on the ground.

In any physical altercation, there is a high possibility of ending up on the ground in a grappling situation. This is not a good place to be, as it is virtually impossible to defend oneself from multiple attackers from a prone position. Therefore, the major function of ground techniques specific to Aikido is to get back to suwari-waza. Specific techniques are needed to subdue an attacker or to make some space so a defender can return to this safe position. After briefly introducing readers to Aikido and its founder, Ueshiba Morihei, suwari-waza is explained from a martial perspective. Specific instances in which Aikido techniques directly lead to the necessity of grappling pins are also demonstrated and explained. These include seated techniques that are thwarted and then reversed, body-sacrifice throws, and other escapes from throws and pins.

Typically, reversals for techniques are not demonstrated in Aikido books and videos. Such counter techniques are considered to be high-level, secretive techniques, and they are generally not taught to outsiders or beginning students. The authors have not followed suit; they have not withheld information in this text. The weaknesses of certain Aikido techniques are explained, and escapes and reversals are presented to the readers.

Aikido students will be familiar with many of the specific ground techniques presented here, since they are similar to their standing or suwari-waza counterparts. However, the secret to performing such techniques effectively from a less-than-desirable position on the ground lies in the details. Sometimes small variations are needed, such as a subtle change of direction (while applying a technique) or the use of a different hand position when controlling a wrist or arm joint. In other circumstances, more noticeable changes are needed, such as using the legs rather than the arms to apply an arm lock or a choke.

All the techniques presented in this text are martially effective, and they are justified and supported by the writings and sayings of Ueshiba Morihei. Walther von Krenner took copious notes when he attended his classes in Japan. He also has countless photographs of Ueshiba, many of which appeared in his previous book, *Training with the Master: Lessons with Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of Aikido*. The notes von Krenner Sensei took while training with Ueshiba include some previously unpublished quotes from the founder that appear here for the first time.

An attempt has been made to blend the authors' three voices into one voice for the ease of readers. For this reason, the text is written entirely in the third person. In cases where we found it necessary to specify which author is providing information (such as the presentation of statements by the founder heard by Walther von Krenner and recorded in his training notes), the author's name is mentioned. However, the information is still conveyed in the third person.

Learning specific techniques from a book is not always easy. For this reason, the portions of this text that explain how to utilize locks or pins effectively are written in a straightforward, step-by-step manner, and the explanations are accompanied by action photographs. An accompanying DVD was also created to help students learn and perfect

these techniques. This video can be purchased from Catshot Productions (www.catshot.com). We believe this book will be of great use to Aikido students worldwide and that the information presented here will also interest practitioners of other martial arts.

INTRODUCTION

Aikido is a popular martial art practiced in many different countries. Ueshiba Morihei (1883–1969), who studied various martial traditions, created Aikido in the twentieth century. Aikido is not a classical or traditional art (although it does contain aspects of older styles). Rather, it is a modern martial art created to fulfill a mission of the founder. He saw Aikido as something more than simply a fighting art. For him, it was a way to improve humankind's moral nature, and he believed the art could join people together. Because of this, Aikido is often referred to as an art of peace.

Today, many individuals from other martial traditions do not have much faith in Aikido as a legitimate, effective fighting art. Due to the spiritual emphasis the founder held during the latter part of his life, Aikido practitioners do not generally resist techniques. When students attempt to throw or pin their partners, they seem successful—despite whether the technique was actually successful or not—because the Aikido practitioner never fights against the techniques. One reason for this is to prevent injury. Individuals who attempt to fight against arm or wrist locks using muscular force can actually damage their own joints, resulting in dislocations, breaks, or worse. Aikido practitioners are taught to blend with their opponents so the energies of the doer and receiver do not clash. Rather, they accord with one another, and there is harmony. Although this practice might illustrate an ideal envisioned by Ueshiba, it often results in Aikido students' gaining a false sense of security. They believe that their techniques are successful because they work every time in the dojo. When they try to utilize the same techniques on martial artists of different styles, however, they might not be effective.

When Aikido began, people came from all over to challenge Ueshiba Morihei. One of the most well-known challenges came from General Miura Makoto, a Russo-Japanese War hero. He had cut down more than fifty Russian soldiers with his sword after having been pierced completely through his chest by a bayonet. He was a seasoned fighter who feared little. When he fought Ueshiba, he was overcome and defeated. Miura then praised him and asked to become his student. Miura was certain that Ueshiba had great skill when facing off against a single opponent, but he wondered how he would fare against multiple attackers.

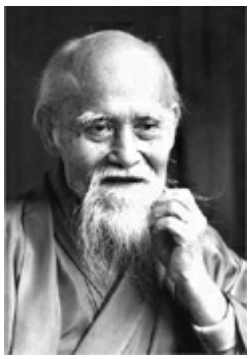


Figure 0.1. Ueshiba Morihei (1883–1969), Aikido's founder. From Walther G. von Krenner's collection.

He invited Ueshiba to put on a demonstration at the military academy. After the demonstration, a number of cadets surrounded Ueshiba with wooden bayonets to test his true power. Miura offered Ueshiba some protective armor, to which Ueshiba replied, “That will not be necessary.” The cadets readied their weapons and attacked all at once. Ueshiba stymied them, turning one attack toward the other attackers. He always managed to keep himself in a safe position, and thus the cadets could not defeat him. Amazed at his skill, they all bowed respectfully and praised him. Word of this challenge and others began to circulate. Because of Ueshiba’s growing acclaim, challengers became hesitant to face off against him. However, they still challenged his top students. One of his longtime students commented, “People hesitated to challenge Morihei because of his reputation, but we assistant instructors were continually put to the test by judo men, kendo men, sumo wrestlers, boxers, and just plain street fighters. We always attempted to avoid such confrontations, but usually there was no alternative. And once the contest commenced, there is no way we would allow ourselves to be defeated.”[1]

Many individuals challenged Ueshiba and, upon being defeated, asked to become his students. Martial artists from various styles—including weapon-focused styles, empty-handed striking arts, and grappling arts—came to meet him, and Ueshiba easily bested them all. His skills were not limited to one or two areas of combat, such as standing throws or seated pins; he had skills in all aspects of fighting, and his extreme power and ferocity could be channeled into any technique. For this reason, he is known as one of the greatest martial artists in modern Japanese history. His Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu teacher, Takeda Sokaku, is known for the same incredible skills, and Aikido took shape directly from this art.

Before beginning his study of Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, Ueshiba Morihei had already trained in a variety of martial disciplines, including sumo, Judo, Kito-ryu, and Goto-ha Yagyu Shingan-ryu. He also learned bayonet fighting techniques after enlisting in the army in 1903 at the age of twenty. His skill with the bayonet on the frontlines of the Russo-Japanese War, along with his nature as a hardworking and serious soldier, earned him the nickname the “King of Soldiers.” During military leave, Ueshiba studied Goto-ha Yagyu Shingan-ryu under the tutelage of Nagai Masakatsu in Sakai. After his military discharge in 1907, Ueshiba returned to his hometown of Tanabe, and his family’s barn was converted into a dojo where Takagi Kiyoichi taught him Kodokan Judo. Ueshiba continued training in Goto-ha Yagyu Shingan-ryu as well, traveling frequently to the dojo in Sakai. After being back home for three years, he planned to settle in Japan’s northernmost island, Hokkaido. An expansive wilderness, Hokkaido was known for its inhospitable climate and harsh challenges. Before his move, Ueshiba got involved in politics and became the leader of the local Young Men’s Association. In addition, he worked on his family’s farm, and so he knew a great deal about cultivating land. He was also physically strong and a hard worker. For these reasons, he was a logical choice for this difficult move. As the leader of the “Kishu Group,” he led more than eighty people to the town of Shirataki in Hokkaido.

Although some towns had already been established on the northernmost island, including Sapporo, the current capital, Hokkaido was still primarily an expansive wilderness at this time. Before the Japanese government began settlements there, its forests and mountains were only inhabited by the Ainu, the area's indigenous people (the term *ainu* means "person"). In their language, the term *kamuy* means both "bear" and "god," as the Ainu considered bears to be great mountain gods who brought food into their villages.

The plan to settle Hokkaido took shape in the nineteenth century. The Americans were considered experts in exploration, mining, farming, and creating settlements in the wilderness, so a delegation visited the United States in order to hire advisors. In 1876, William Clark, who founded an agricultural university in Amherst, Massachusetts, traveled to Sapporo with a number of other individuals. There, he built a Western-style barn and an agricultural college, around which a city would grow. Japanese citizens traveled to Sapporo from the mainland in hopes of being taught by Clark. One of his students was Nitobe Inazo, who married a woman from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and later wrote the famous book *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, published in 1899.

More than thirty years after Sapporo was established, Ueshiba Morihei led his expedition to Shirataki, located in Abashiri's Monbetsu District. The area's summers are mild, but the winters are extremely cold. Countless blizzards hit the area with a great deal of snow. In addition, the soil conditions were terrible at that time, and Ueshiba's group went through many hardships to bring the land under control. In the first three years, their farming endeavors were unsuccessful. They did not yet know much about growing potatoes, and grains would not grow. They survived by catching fish, collecting wild plants for food, and selling logs in order to buy rice. Eventually, they successfully began mint cultivation, dairy farming, and horse rearing. They also managed to establish a timber industry. Settlers' houses were improved, a shopping street was created, and a school was established. Eventually, Shirataki became a fully functioning village. It was here in Hokkaido that Ueshiba met Takeda Sokaku, who changed the course of his life forever. Takeda was one of the most famous martial arts instructors in the entire country. He was only 4 feet 11 inches tall, but he had incredible powers, and he was able to defeat opponents much larger than himself. Ueshiba wished to study under him, so a mutual acquaintance (Yoshida Kotaru, who trained under Takeda) arranged a meeting.

Figure 0.2. Waterfall in Hokkaido, Japan's northern island

Figure 0.3. Ueshiba Morihei's teacher, Takeda Sokaku (1859–1943)

In 1915, after meeting Takeda at an inn called Hisata Ryokan in Engaru, he immediately abandoned all his responsibilities in Shirataki and became his student. It is unknown what Ueshiba learned at this initial meeting, whether he experienced Takeda's jujutsu skills or just spoke with him at length about the martial arts. However, it is evident that he was thoroughly impressed. Takeda taught an art called Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu. Although Daito-ryu's history is debatable, it is necessary to briefly review the known facts, since the art has some important connections to modern Aikido. According

to legend, Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu can be traced back to a man named Shinra Saburo Minamoto no Yoshimitsu (1045–1127). The following is its history according to the Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu Hombu Dojo website:

> As a child, Minamoto Yoshimitsu lived in a place called Daito in Omi province (modern Shiga prefecture), and therefore was also called Daito Saburo. This is where the name Daito-ryu comes from. Yoshimitsu studied classical Chinese military strategies like those of Sun Tzu and Wu Tzu, made his name as a military commander who had mastered sumo and aiki, and excelled in both literary and military arts. He also held a supervisory position in the Left Security Department of the Japanese imperial court. The "aiki" mastered by Yoshimitsu had been a secret art transmitted in the Minamoto family, which he continued to perfect and develop.
>
> Aiki is said to have originated in the ancient art of *tegoi*, which is mentioned in an ancient Japanese myth about two gods, Takemikazuchi no Kami and Takeminakata no Kami. Recorded in Japan's oldest written document, the *Kojiki* ("Records of Ancient Matters," compiled around 712 AD), this story recounts how Takemikazuchi no Kami took the hands of Takeminakata no Kami and "as if he had taken hold of a reed, squeezed his hands and threw him."[2]

However, there is no hard evidence to support this illustrious history, one "based [only] on the written and oral tradition transmitted from the last two headmasters of the school, Takeda Sokaku and his son and successor Takeda Tokimune."[3] The first person known to have taught a martial tradition called Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu is Takeda Sokaku, one of the strongest and most skilled martial artists in modern Japanese history. References to the art are not found in any known historical record before him. Therefore, it is likely that he created it.[4] John Stevens seconds this conclusion: "While many traditional elements were absorbed into the system, it must be stated categorically that the Daito Ryu was the creation of one man and one man only, Sokaku Takeda."[5] Certainly, Takeda learned some deep martial principle from someone, but there is no consensus about the identity of his mystery teacher. Some speculate that it might have been Saigo Tanomo, who taught him something called *oshikiuchi*, but it is unknown what this actually was. The term *oshikiuchi* literally translates to "inside the threshold," and it may have been a systematic approach to the teaching of etiquette. However, it is possible that it was not just etiquette and that it also included some kind of martial training. Perhaps Tanomo taught Takeda how to develop and use internal power *(ki)* and its application *(aiki)*. Wherever the knowledge actually came from, Takeda Sokaku learned how to use aiki, the principle behind both Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu and Aikido.

Having learned this skill, he was able to apply the principle in a number of diverse martial traditions. He trained in various unarmed and armed martial arts, including Hozoin-ryu, Ono-ha Itto-ryu, and Jikishinkage-ryu, and also learned various forms of jujutsu. He likely took various techniques from multiple styles and modified them to fit his martial arts system based on the principle of aiki. Eventually, he traveled around the

entire country, teaching martial techniques to many people. He conducted seminars in Hakodate, Hokkaido, Akita, Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima, and Yamagata prefectures, among other places. This was unusual in Japan at the time, as most traditional martial arts teachers were secretive and never taught to outsiders. But Takeda also taught his Daito-ryu techniques to some non-Japanese students. (The very fact that he did this lends credence to the suggestion that Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu originated with Takeda. If it truly were a secretive martial tradition of the Takeda family that began almost one thousand years ago, it would likely have been kept within the Takeda family and not shared with outsiders.) However, he seems to have taught only the techniques and not the principles behind them. In other words, he may have taught many students the physical motions with which to protect themselves and injure an attacker, but he withheld the key to unlocking the power and adaptability necessary to make any techniques possible. This key is aiki: "Sokaku stated, on many occasions, that one had to restrict how one taught and with whom one taught, because aiki was so easy to learn. He only truly taught very few. To almost everyone else, he taught kata [alone]."[6]

Ueshiba Morihei was a good student with a great deal of respect for Takeda, showing him reverence until his death in 1943. Ueshiba too taught many different people later in his life, and he also underplayed the importance of his techniques. He claimed that true Aikido had no techniques. The important part of the art, he said, is the principle behind the movement—a principle that can be utilized in any technique, whether unarmed or armed with various kinds of weapons. Once this principle of aiki is understood, one can be successful using martial arts techniques with spears or swords and empty-handed techniques such as striking and grappling. The latter techniques can be applied from a standing posture or from the ground—whatever the situation requires—and they will be equally effective if aiki is utilized. All types of techniques can be used in Aikido; this means that students should train in all aspects of combat so they can defend themselves and overcome adversaries should the need arise. Ueshiba instructed, "Learn one technique, and [then] create ten or twenty more. Aikido is limitless."[7] It is not their form or appearance that makes the techniques unique to Aikido; it is the underlying principles behind their application.

Ueshiba said that Takeda opened his eyes to martial arts.[8] Later, Ueshiba modified Takeda's techniques, indicating again that aiki did not require a set form. Ueshiba's changes reflected his beliefs and his life's events. They may have also been made to help his students learn the underlying principle of aiki more easily. In order to explain this, a brief description of Ueshiba after his introduction to Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu is necessary.

When Ueshiba first met Takeda at the inn, they spoke for a while. Certain that Takeda had profound martial arts knowledge, Ueshiba asked to be his student, to which Takeda replied, "I will teach you—why don't you stay here for a while?"[9] Ueshiba stayed at the inn for the next month, learning Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu from Takeda during all his waking hours. He likely learned the techniques by day and the profound principles behind them in the evening. After a month, Ueshiba invited Takeda back to his home in Shirataki, and Takeda moved in with him. There, Ueshiba continued to receive instruction from Takeda while dealing with difficulties in Shirataki, including a

huge fire that destroyed many houses in the community and nearby towns. He also had to deal with other initiatives at this time, including making use of the mineral resources in the area and raising pigs (which he purchased from Engaru and Kamikawa).

Things changed in 1919, when Ueshiba received a telegram that his father was deathly ill. He immediately left Hokkaido, giving his home and possessions to his teacher, Takeda, and he headed to Tanabe. The trip from Shirataki to his hometown would have taken approximately ten days. It was during the last leg of this trip that he supposedly overheard something on a train that changed his life. He heard about a new religion called Omoto-kyo that was flourishing in Ayabe and about the leader of the faith, Deguchi Onisaburo, who could apparently work miracles. This was not the first time that he had heard about this religion. Initially, he heard some village council members talking about the faith in Shirataki. While in Hokkaido, he indicated to various individuals that he had heard of a woman named Deguchi Nao (1837–1919) who tried to change the world for the better, which interested him.[10] Deguchi Nao was a poor, illiterate woman from Fukuchiyama City, which is located in Kyoto. In 1892, when she was fifty-six years old, she fell into a trance. Seemingly possessed by some otherworldly being, she picked up a brush and began writing. These trances continued, and over the course of twenty-seven years she had written two hundred thousand pages, which became the holy scripture of the Omoto-kyo faith. Certain elements from this text became the "four elements" of the faith: the harmonious alignment between living beings and the universe; the revelation of heavenly truths; the natural behavioral patterns of humans, society, and the universe; and the innate desire to create. These are fundamental principles of the Divine Plan, as conceived by Deguchi and her followers, a plan that entailed the Reconstruction of the Greater World. According to believers, this reconstruction will eventually lead to the creation of a heavenly kingdom on earth, otherwise known as the Age of Maitreya, the future Buddha.

Ueshiba decided to stop in Ayabe to visit the Omoto-kyo headquarters before returning to Tanabe, since it was nearby. There, he went to the main temple to request that a prayer be said for his father's recovery. He was directed to a particular area of the shrine so he could pray. He knelt there praying when the leader of the faith, Deguchi Onisaburo, approached him. Ueshiba asked him to say a prayer for his father, after which Deguchi replied, "Your father is fine the way he is." These words influenced Ueshiba greatly, although he may not have instantly understood them. He remained in Ayabe for three days, possibly to fully understand Deguchi's words. Later, when he finally returned home (to Tanabe), he learned that his father had passed away two days earlier.

Figure 0.4. Ueshiba's spiritual teacher, Deguchi Onisaburo (1871–1948)

Ueshiba was an impulsive person, and this one episode at the shrine was enough for him to change his life plan. He moved his family to Ayabe, where he could dedicate himself to the study of this faith full time. It was here that Aikido as we know it began to take shape. Although Ueshiba had only studied under Takeda for less than one hundred days, he received the *hiden ogi* from his teacher.[11] This manual was filled with Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu techniques, and it signified that Ueshiba was proficient in the art and had permission to teach it. Once Deguchi found out about Ueshiba's move to Ayabe, he suggested that he combine both Daito-ryu and religion, turning a martial discipline into a means of spiritual attainment. This is how modern-day Aikido is often described (and it is one of the reasons why there are many interpretations of its true nature).

This unification of the martial and the spiritual paths began when Ueshiba opened his first dojo, called Ueshiba Juku, where he taught Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu. At first, Omoto-kyo members were the only students, but word got out about Ueshiba's skill and power and many non-members visited the dojo for instruction. These students included several well-known Aikido practitioners, including Tomiki Kenji, Nishimura Hidetaro, and Inoue Yoichiro. One of Ueshiba's prerequisites for accepting students was verifying that they would not interrupt his own training, as he was still developing his own skills, which included training in various forms of spear and sword arts as well as other unknown internal practices. Eventually, his martial training paid off, and he was able to unleash extreme power, power that others described as being divine. Ueshiba stated, "I realized that my body had become filled with vast *ki,* and had acquired powers [that were] more than just physical."[12] He attracted more students and eventually came to be called O-Sensei, which loosely translates as "great teacher." He may have exercised the same caution in his teaching as Takeda Sokaku, however. Although he taught many individuals, it is possible that he restricted his lessons, covering external techniques alone and not the internal techniques of aiki. If he had taught his students how to utilize aiki, at least some of them would have displayed similar power (and this does not seem

to have happened). Nevertheless, many individuals came to train under him, and in time, he was known as one of the strongest and most skilled practitioners of Budo in the entire country of Japan.

In 1931, Ueshiba built a new dojo in the Wakamatsucho district of Tokyo, where the current Hombu Dojo still stands. After the war began, he moved to Iwama, Ibaraki Prefecture. In 1943, he began construction of the Aiki Shrine. Two years after its completion, he built a dojo. Due to the postwar ban on martial arts, the Tokyo dojo, which was used as housing during the war, was converted to an office, and the Hombu Dojo moved to Iwama. The original dojo in Tokyo was nicknamed "Hell Dojo" because of the intense training that took place there. It was built after O-Sensei's religious enlightenment and after he had joined the spiritual and martial paths, yet the training that occurred at the Hell Dojo was unrelenting. In many modern dojo, students are taught not to fight against techniques so a teacher can use throwing or pinning techniques. Because there is no real opposition, these techniques are ineffective. This type of cooperative yet ineffective training did not occur at the Hombu Dojo. Students did not fully cooperate with their partners: the techniques had to be effective to bring down adversaries. Full cooperation does not assist students in learning how to perfect their techniques, so individuals would get out of techniques if possible. Serious aiki students would be on guard and ready to use their techniques from any position, whether standing or on the ground. However, the focus was not on grappling or throwing techniques at all; it was on the delivery of powerful blows with which an opponent can be overcome. O-Sensei said, "My way is basically seventy percent atemi [striking] and thirty percent throwing."[13] Besides striking, throwing and pinning techniques were also practiced; training was designed so students would become strong in all areas of combat. John Stevens explains, "A spiritual element was always present in Morihei's presentation of the art, but because his disciples repeatedly faced challengers …, the techniques had to be 100 percent effective."[14] Some big names in Aikido who trained under O-Sensei at this time included Shioda Gozo, Hoshi Tetsuomi, Akazawa Zenzaburo, and Shirata Rinjiro.

Things changed after Japan became involved in World War II. The end of the war and Japan's defeat brought the future of Aikido into question. For many Japanese, defeat was an initially unimaginable possibility. After it occurred, many civilians and military personnel reported feeling that everything they once had was gone and everything they believed was proven false. Matsushima Keijiro, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, wrote, "I was like other people, and I don't know if others were talking about this miserable possibility, but all of us had never considered that Japan could lose."[15] Ueshiba Kisshomaru likewise wrote, "On the day the war ended—August 15, 1945—we felt as if all that Japan stood for, its tradition, its history, and its culture, was suddenly coming to an end. Today, such an idea seems ludicrous, but at the time, these truly were our fears and anxieties."[16] Aikido practitioners thought Ueshiba's art would be gone forever. At that time, O-Sensei was living in Iwama, and Aikido was not formally practiced. The Tokyo dojo was not used for training, as it had been converted into housing for approximately thirty families who lost their houses in the bombing raids.

Despite his students' fears, O-Sensei continued to assure them that Aikido would not die out, that it was just beginning.

In the fall of 1944, the Aiki Shrine was completed in Iwama, and O-Sensei spent a great deal of his time there praying and training alone. After the war had ended, some of his top students moved to Iwama to continue training. They practiced outdoors during that time and planned to reestablish the dojo in Tokyo. Largely through the efforts of Ueshiba Kisshomaru, two years after the war had ended the Tokyo dojo was reestablished, and in 1948, permission to establish the Aikikai Foundation was granted, thus permitting Aikido to be publicly taught and practiced. Aikido students who fought in the war had returned and opened dojo in various locations, including Wakayama and Kumamoto. They also visited the Hombu Dojo to train and teach. Interest in Aikido grew. In 1956, the first public demonstration of the art was held in Tokyo on the roof of Takashimaya, a Japanese department store. After this, many individuals, both Japanese and foreigners alike, came to the dojo to train in Aikido.

O-Sensei took on many different roles throughout his life. He was rooted in Japanese tradition. For the greater part of his life, he was an ultranationalist. He believed in the Japanese world view of supremacy, the heavenly origin of the Japanese people, and the divine status of the Japanese emperor. Many of his poems *(doka)* illustrate such beliefs. He supported movements to ban foreigners from the country, and he associated with many high-ranking Japanese soldiers. His favorite reading material was the *Kojiki* ("Records of Ancient Matters"), a book of Japanese mythology that he understood to be the absolute truth. In addition, he became obsessed with his version of the nationalist religion, Shinto, and what was thought of (by others) as a dangerous cult, Omoto-kyo.

O-Sensei had seen the devastation of war. Many of his students had been killed in combat, and many who returned had been injured. This is difficult for anyone. Due to this experience, however, perhaps he began to feel that his art—which was only thought of as a martial art—could be used to join people together, thus becoming an art that focuses on peace. He worked hard to establish Aikido as an art of peace, and primarily through the efforts of Tohei Koichi, Aikido spread far and wide throughout the world. In the latter part of his life, O-Sensei did not put as much emphasis on the martial aspects of his art. He already had the skills needed to defend himself or attack others should the need arise. In his old age, he was a mystic first and a martial artist second. When Walther von Krenner trained with him, O-Sensei would often talk about the spiritual nature of the art. The following is a lecture that O-Sensei gave that von Krenner recorded in his notebook. There is little continuance or connection between some of his ideas and statements, but that is how he spoke. It is offered here so Aikido students understand how there can be various interpretations of the art. This particular lecture was given in 1967, two years before his death:

Everything becomes clear with the development of the spirit. For as long as I continue my life in this world, I hope to work toward establishing a true Aikido for the benefit of this world. There is no Aikido separate from me. Everything is based on the *su* [essence]

of the Divine Breath. The universe itself is the solidification of this essence. This is why I originally set out in the pursuit of studying *ki*, knowledge, and virtue. It is still the reason I continue to train and study. Aikido is the divine practice of Odo. First, it is necessary to begin by standing on the *Ame no Ukihashi* [Floating Bridge of Heaven]. Having one's feet on the Ame no Ukihashi, you must understand that *A* means to be completely natural. *Me* means to move. *Ame* then means to move around freely and flow naturally. This is like water. Combining water with fire moves the water, so water and steam is put to use by fire. Instruction must always follow this principle. I have achieved this with *iki* [breath]. From this comes *kokyu*. When one breathes in, one's spirit flows in as well. [Opponents'] breath can freely be removed by ki.

To complete the circle and make it perfect, to know the center of the circle, is the first step toward *Ai:* love and harmony. To stand always at the center of centers is to stand on the spirit of the world-forming process. In order to avoid conflict one takes steps beforehand to avert a fight. This is the function of true Budo. At the heart of this is the way of love. The way of love is the power and life of this world. It is also very important to use the spirit and the eyes. A conflict should not arise if one continues spiritual training, because this training is life itself. Aikido also serves as a way of maintaining good health and physical beauty, overcoming obstacles and promoting good manners. Aikido should always promote good manners. Good manners are the expression of love and tolerance. Bad manners have no place in spiritual training. Aikido is a true Budo and a spiritual training.

Figure 0.5. The circle, called Enso in Japanese, is an important concept in both Zen and Aikido. Image courtesy of Bob Caron.

These are the types of lectures his students would try to decipher. Aikido became complex during the latter part of O-Sensei's life. Although it was originally considered a martial art, and techniques of both attack and defense were practiced and perfected, the founder's emphasis changed as he grew older. He talked about spiritual components of the art and the nature of the universe as he saw it. Students that were not versed in

Shinto and Omoto-kyo religious beliefs were at a loss when interpreting his complex explanations. As a result, some students only focused on the martial aspects, while others tried to incorporate the spiritual teachings within their practice of the physical techniques. O-Sensei opened his art to the world, and at the end of his life, he continued to say that Aikido was a bridge that could unite the people of the world.

After O-Sensei's death in 1969, the high-ranking Aikido practitioners continued to spread the art, and now it is one of the most popular Japanese martial traditions in the world. However, there are various interpretations of Aikido's true nature. There are also different beliefs regarding how it should be trained. O-Sensei never taught a weapons system (with the exception of bayonet techniques in the army). In fact, he never formally taught Aikido weapons to anyone, yet some people train in Aikido-related weapon systems (developed by Morihiro Saito or other *shihan*, or master instructors), claiming that such training forms the basis of their empty-handed techniques. Others focus on the martial aspect of Aikido to preserve its martial efficacy. Still others cling to O-Sensei's spiritual beliefs, and they utilize Aikido for spiritual enlightenment. (However, such students rarely study Omoto-kyo, the religious system reflected in the art.) In addition, some consider Aikido an internal martial art, and they train to develop and utilize internal power and aiki. Such people believe that without aiki, the art would not be Aikido. O-Sensei said many things that support this belief. O-Sensei said, as reported by Walther von Krenner, that "Aikido is totally *ki* and the study of *ki*." There are many other dojo that maintain a combination of all these thoughts in their philosophies and training methodologies.

There are various interpretations of Aikido for several reasons. O-Sensei's students trained with him during different periods of his life, and as such, his emphasis differed at each stage. Prewar Aikido students are typically more martially oriented than postwar students, but this is not a hard and fast rule. Students took what they wanted and disregarded the rest. For example, many of his students strove to perfect Aikido's physical techniques but did not spend time to understand its Omoto-kyo philosophies and other spiritual and religious practices.

All the various interpretations of Aikido are valuable and worth examining, as only by studying all aspects of a phenomenon, including conflicting viewpoints, can we gain a true understanding of its nature. (Take religious studies, for example: there can only be one ultimate truth, and yet religions throughout the world have different explanations of it. By considering various viewpoints with an open mind, the truth can be found.) John Stevens wrote, "The best advice in judging the different interpretations of Aikido is this: Do not look for the differences; look for what is the same."[17] With this in mind, the focus in Aikido practice can vary from dojo to dojo. There are some Aikido organizations that focus on building up and utilizing ki in their training, such as the Ki Society. There are other organizations that make use of both attacks and defense, including the so-called hard style, Yoshinkan Aikido. There are many different foci in Aikido dojo. Some strive to maintain the martial efficacy of the art, while others have shifted their emphasis to more spiritual pursuits, using Aikido as a means to enlightenment. This might be laudable. However, it is useful to keep one thing in mind: Aikido is a martial

art used for self-defense, no matter the attack.

In order to preserve its martial effectiveness, students must train in all aspects of fighting. In other words, Aikido students must understand how to throw effective punches and kicks to be able to defend against them. They must also learn how to control an attacking opponent from any position, be it from a standing posture or from the ground in a seated or prone position. Individuals from various martial disciplines came to challenge O-Sensei, and they ended up studying under him. There is a reason for this: his fighting skills were superb. He claimed his art was largely based on strikes, and training was severe. Again, keep in mind that the Tokyo dojo was popularly called the Hell Dojo; how many Aikido dojo today could be properly called that? There are likely few. There is a famous story in which O-Sensei walked in on a class that Ueshiba Kisshomaru was teaching. He became furious when he saw the way they were training, stating, “This is not Aikido!” In order to truly follow the teachings of O-Sensei and to train in a manner that he would likely approve of, the martial efficacy of the art must be maintained.

There are several aspects of martial training that have possibly been overlooked or misunderstood by a majority of Aikido practitioners. These include sword training, which some aikidoka consider as a basis for their empty-handed movements. However, Rinjiro Shirata, one of O-Sensei’s longtime students, related to his own students that sword practice was not performed because the movements helped to perfect the empty-handed movements used when performing throws or pins. Instead, it was used to develop a mind-set needed to perform martial actions in a high-stress environment.[18] The other aspects that have been overlooked by many modern Aikido practitioners include the correct use of atemi (striking), which accounts for 70 percent of the art according to its founder yet makes up substantially less than that in most dojos’ training. Finally, defending oneself from the ground (i.e., using Aikido techniques from the ground) is largely ignored in many Aikido dojo. These three elements of Aikido—sword training, striking powerfully, and ground techniques—should be actively considered and practiced. This book will focus on only one of these: defending oneself and controlling an attacker from the ground. The other two aspects will be dealt with in subsequent volumes.

Figure 0.6. Hogejaku: “Throw down completely.” (Calligraphy by Walther G. von Krenner.) This statement has implications both in the dojo and in life in general. Similar to the famous martial and spiritual teaching of the overflowing teacup, it reminds practitioners of one truth: it is important to completely liberate yourself from preexisting ideas and dispositions in order to see things clearly.

1

THE STRUCTURE OF AIKIDO: SIX PILLARS AND PRINCIPLES

Ueshiba Morihei continuously told his students that “Aikido is limitless” and “there are no techniques in the Art of Peace.” In addition, some people once asked him if they could film his techniques. O-Sensei agreed but cautioned them, “Today’s techniques will be different tomorrow.” In all the texts written by O-Sensei, and in the accounts of many individuals who had known him personally, the nonexistence of techniques is a consistent theme. It was important to O-Sensei that his students did not get caught up in the form or appearance of either attacks or techniques. The underlying principles behind the techniques are the most important considerations. Another quote of O-Sensei in von Krenner’s notes states, “Within the varied techniques there is deep meaning. Throw away the concept of subject and object. Function as one. Forget self and other.” The deep meaning (i.e., principles) within each technique is more important than the physical motions. However, jumping into principles without understanding techniques would be near impossible for beginning students. They would not be able to grasp such esoteric concepts without physical movements to which they could relate the teachings. Therefore, there is an order to Aikido instruction and steps in place to facilitate understanding.

First, students are taught how to take a proper stance. Then they learn *aiki taiso*, the basic body movements necessary to properly perform throws or pins. Finally, they learn the techniques. All the basic Aikido techniques are typically grouped under one of the six pillars of Aikido, based on the underlying principles that make them effective. The six pillars are *shiho-nage, irimi-nage, kaiten-nage, kokyu-nage, osae-waza*, and *ushiro-waza*. Although all these techniques will be familiar to Aikido practitioners, a brief review of the nature of these techniques is in order. The focus is not on the techniques themselves, however: O-Sensei warned us against such a focus. Instead, the focus will be on the principles behind each technique, as the techniques are only conduits through which to teach Aikido’s principles. Although it is unknown if the order of the six pillars is important, we will begin with the technique generally considered to be the first: shiho-nage.

Shiho-nage is often described in sword terminology as a four-directional cut. This analogy may have been added by O-Sensei in reference to a religious ceremony called *shiho-hai*, in which the emperor would show reverence in four directions. However, it may have been described in terms of sword cuts because the empty-handed motion resembles, if not exactly duplicates, cutting with a sword. Sometimes, when this

technique is demonstrated by high-ranking *shihan* (master instructors), it is shown both while empty-handed and with a sword, as the movements are alike. Although this and all Aikido techniques can be performed no matter the attack, it will herein be explained from a straight thrust. For the purpose of simplification, consider that the *nage* (the one who will complete the technique) stands with his or her left foot forward. The *uke*, who attacks and then is later thrown or pinned, attacks with his or her right hand.

Figures 1.1–1.5. Shiho-nage (omote). While maintaining control of the opponent's arm, the defender pivots and cuts down, as though cutting with a sword.

The nage moves off the line of attack, taking control of the attacking arm not by grabbing it but by blending with the strike and then taking hold of the opponent's wrist with both hands. Then, facing ninety degrees from the starting position, the nage slides forward with his or her right foot, steps in with the left, and then turns to face behind him or her (figures 1.2 and 1.3), all the while maintaining tension (i.e., removing all slack) from the attacker's arm. From this position, the nage cuts down, as though cutting

with a sword, thereby throwing the attacker to the ground (figures 1.4 and 1.5). Various different pins, both seated and standing, can be used at the conclusion of this technique in the event that the nage decides to keep the joint locked instead of letting it go at the moment of the throw. Of course, just like any Aikido technique, a minor adjustment can result in permanent damage to the uke's arm. This is the *omote* variation of the technique. In the *ura* version, although the technique itself is the same, the direction in which the attacker is thrown is different. The nage does not step ninety degrees off the line of attack and step across the front; rather, he or she pivots on the front foot, turning behind the opponent and throwing him or her in the direction from which he or she came (figures 1.6 through 1.10).

Most Aikido techniques have omote and ura versions. The concept was first developed by Takeda Sokaku when he formulated Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, and it was thereby introduced to O-Sensei. In shiho-nage, the omote and the ura versions mostly deal with throwing an opponent in two different directions. However, shiho-nage literally translates as "four-directional throw": the idea of this technique is to be able to throw an attacker in any direction. By only adjusting the footwork, an attacker can be thrown anywhere. This might be done to stymie other attackers, but it might also be done to protect the attacker, as one of the goals of Aikido is to completely control a person without injuring him or her.

For example, if you are attacked on the deck of a bar near a staircase, you might realize that the omote version will send the opponent down the staircase, while the ura version might send him over the railing of the deck. As both of these could result in the attacker being either maimed or killed, a true Aikido practitioner would opt to throw him or her in a different direction. So the defender would modify his or her footwork to protect the attacker from (possible) irreparable harm. This scenario reflects the true teachings behind shiho-nage as we interpret it: the ability to throw an opponent in any direction in order to protect oneself against multiple attackers or to protect the attacker from serious injury or death.

Figures 1.6—1.10. Shiho-nage, ura version

The second of the pillars is irimi-nage. This term is often mistranslated by Aikido students, who think it means "entering technique." The real translation is "entering body throw," and although this misunderstanding might not affect the way the technique is performed, it is important when considering the principles behind it to understand the true meaning of the term. As its name indicates, irimi-nage involves entering into an attack. At one level, it involves taking the initiative and thereby overcoming an opponent's attack.

Judo and Aikido expert Tomiki Kenji explained the differences among various forms of seizing the initiative. He related that in the old books of secret martial principles found in various koryu (ancient martial traditions), there were three distinct forms of initiative *(sen)*. The first, called *sen sen no sen*, or superior initiative, occurs when one is confronted by an opponent who intends to attack, but the defender senses the attack and takes action to stop it. In other words, although the opponent intends to attack first, the defender makes the first move. Tomiki wrote, "This is the highest reach of the mental cultivation in any military art and is regarded as not easily attainable."[1] In

order to reach this stage, mental training and ki training is more important than physical movements. It is rarely attained by practitioners. The next level, *sen*, is the basic form of initiative. This is when a defender forestalls the attack of an opponent by launching an attack or beginning another motion before the opponent acts. The last form, the most common in Aikido, is called *ato no sen:* an initiative that occurs in defense. Tomiki wrote,

> This is not to guess the mentality of your opponent and check his action before it is done, but to start an action in defense the moment you have an inkling of the offensive of your opponent. It is to avoid the opponent's attack the instant it is about to be launched upon you and to make a counter attack taking advantage of a pause in your opponent's movement and a disturbance in his posture. A man who takes the initiative in defense rises in opposition to his opponent's attack, and parries it or averts it. Seemingly, it is a defensive move. In order to stave off the opponent's attack at the last moment and restore one's position, one must keep the moral attitude of initiative so as not to get worsted by the adversary.[2]

In Aikido, irimi-nage typically occurs once the uke has begun his or her attack, not before. For this reason, it is a defensive action (although to the nonperceptive observer, it might appear to be offensive in nature). The moment the attacker begins to move, the defender should enter into the attack, displacing the attacker's body with his or her own body. O-Sensei said, "One should be prepared to receive 99 percent of an opponent's attack and stare death right in the face in order to illuminate the path." He was likely referring to irimi-nage in this statement. As strange as it might sound to individuals who do not practice martial arts, to perform irimi (entering) properly, one must enter into the attack and thus displace it to dominate the attacker. This principle appears in various martial disciplines, including a sword art that Takeda Sokaku (and possibly O-Sensei) studied called Ono-ha Itto-ryu. There is a principle in this art that sums up irimi quite well: "Two swords cannot occupy the same space, so I will take that space."

Irimi exists in many martial arts techniques, as it does in most Aikido techniques. Irimi-nage is based on the concept of entering (iri), but the nage must enter with his or her entire body (mi). Either a throw (nage) or a strike is then applied to dominate the situation and to take control of the uke. This throw often looks like an open-handed strike to the face. Another variation (which looks like a brute clothesline move as seen in movies) requires a bit more subtlety: the nage enters into the attack and then turns to face the same direction as the attacker. (The nage's body must be about a body's length away from the uke.) Then the nage presses the uke's head to his or her chest, turns, and then throws with the entire body. Arms are extended, the uke's head is still connected to his or her partner's chest, and the thrower steps in to execute the throw. Certainly, there are many variations of this technique, and it can be applied either viciously or as a gentle unbalancing movement to take the attacker to the ground without injury. This technique, the second of the Aikido pillars, teaches practitioners to enter into an attack and to unify the body in order to generate power.

Figures 1.11–1.20. Irimi-nage

Kaiten-nage is the third pillar. Kaiten is an open-and-turn movement. The actual meaning of the term in Japanese is "revolution, rotation, or turn," and kaiten-nage is therefore referred to as a rotary throw in Aikido. The body movements of the nage differ depending on what variation of this technique is used. Like most other Aikido techniques, there are omote and ura variations. In addition, there are both *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) variations of this particular technique. Without getting into the particulars of the variations, it is sufficient to understand the technique's basic form to begin to reveal the principle hidden within. Consider that your partner attacks you with a straight punch to the midsection. Your left foot is forward, and he attacks you with his right fist. You sidestep and move into the attack to the outside of his body, and you meet his arm with your left hand as you turn to face the same direction as the attacker. Cutting down and into his right arm, your right hand comes down on top of the attacker's head (figures 1.24 and 1.25). Rather than striking him with a shomen, which could cause serious injury, you maintain pressure downward as the left hand rotates his

arm up high (figure 1.26). In this contorted position, the attacker has become similar to a wheel, and he can be easily thrown by simply shifting your weight forward (figures 1.27, 1.28, and 1.29). The key to making this technique work is to blend with his attack, add your own force to his, and then redirect that force elsewhere, thus unbalancing him. Certainly, this technique could be ended with a pin instead of a throw. The kaiten movement is the key to making this—and many other Aikido techniques—work.

Kokyu-nage, the next of the pillars, literally means “breath throw.” O-Sensei, referring to kokyu-nage, said, “Ki does not flow unless you breathe correctly. Unless you use kokyu power, ki is a difficult concept to master. Many people talk about ki without knowing what it is. Ki is part of kokyu; it is born of kokyu. Ki is everything. Your whole being must be ki. You have to know how to use kokyu to master the principle of ki. There is exhaling and inhaling ki. In practice, you should learn how to use this. You cannot throw someone when inhaling. Energy begins to flow as you exhale in harmony with your technique.” This statement, recorded by Walther von Krenner, indicates a strong correlation between ki and kokyu, intent and breathing. And although kokyu should appear in all Aikido techniques, kokyu-nage is considered to be one of the pillars.

This pillar includes a number of techniques that rely only on timing and blending to overcome an attacker. In the dojo, these techniques often involve the nage blending with a variety of the uke’s attacks. They typically are not real attacks but wrist grabs and the like, although they could be performed using real attacks like punches, kicks, and a variety of takedown moves. However, they are usually practiced using actions such as wrist grabs because that is the easiest way for both the uke and the nage to benefit from the training. In other words, what is typically seen in dojo is not the actual technique but a training method in which practitioners can learn the application of this movement. In the dojo, the uke generally takes a roll or a fall that he or she does not need to take. Again, this is just practice for both attacker and defender. It is likely that the attacker would just be unbalanced and in a weak position—a position from which an attack is no longer possible and defense is thereby seriously compromised.

Figures 1.21–1.29. Kaiten-nage technique

The key to performing this technique well lies in properly blending with the incoming attack and then finding the correct timing to throw the opponent so he or she does not know there is trouble until it is too late. The actual movement is subtle. If the aikidoka makes large movements, the uke might realize he or she is up to something and then either discontinue or change the attack. However, if the nage moves subtly so he or she slowly gains control without the uke's realizing it, a throw is then possible without interrupting the natural movement of the attack. Obviously, this is a high-level technique that even seasoned Aikido practitioners still train to perfect, but a beginner might be able to mentally grasp the principles behind the technique—principles like timing, continuity of movement, and correct application of the breath.

Considering how to breathe and when to breathe and coordinating attack and defense with the breath is a subject that has been dealt with in various classical and modern texts on the martial arts, and it is too expansive of a subject to provide more than an overview in this book. It will suffice to state that inhaling is considered yin, while

exhaling is considered yang. Coordinating yin and yang in motions of attack and defense is important. Typically, an attack should be launched when the intended target is in a yin state and the attacker is in a yang state. This is an oversimplification, but explanations of such matters can become overly complicated. When the principles themselves are difficult to comprehend, they can be revealed through years of practice alone. This is the origin of a famous statement heard among high-ranking teachers of the art: “Shut up and train!”

The next of the pillars is osae-waza, which means “controlling techniques.” Linguistically, this pillar would cover any pinning technique, including those applied at the end of previously mentioned techniques like shiho-nage and (sometimes) irimi-nage. However, osae-waza typically refers to specific techniques: ikkyo, nikkyo, sankyo, yonkyo, and gokyo. Recently, rokkyo has been added to this list, and one shihan has even added nanakyo. However, the basics, which have been grouped under the title of osae-waza, have always included the first five of these pinning techniques. Strangely, the names of each of the techniques refer to teachings, not techniques. Ikkyo, for example, translates as “first teaching,” while nikkyo means “second teaching.” Sankyo, yonkyo, and gokyo likewise refer to principles (i.e., teachings) rather than pins or controlling techniques.

The principle learned when training in these techniques can be summed up simply: practitioners must be able to pin and control attackers so they do not injure themselves or others. Although easily said, it is not easy to gain control of a person who is out of control. Establishing and maintaining control of an attacker requires solid mental intent and a technical proficiency while performing physical techniques. The physical aspect is obtainable in a reasonable amount of time. After only four or five years, Aikido practitioners may gain a sound knowledge of pinning techniques and may be able to execute pins and restraints with physical precision. However, the mental aspects of pinning are more elusive.

True martial artists must be settled in mind and body in order to overcome adversaries—to pin attackers who are doing anything they can to prevent being pinned. They must have no doubts regarding their abilities to overcome an attacker. This might not sound like much to the uninitiated, but to individuals who have trained for years in the martial arts, this mind-set is what separates the skillful from the weak. It does not matter how strong martial artists are physically. If they lack confidence in their ability to perform techniques (no matter how perfect their physical movements are), they will not be able to function efficiently. For this reason, the concept of pinning is much more involved than the study of physical movements alone.

In Aikido, as in other martial arts, the mental conditions needed to successfully execute techniques are developed over time. After years of training, practitioners will gain the mentality needed, and they will learn how to direct the intent to make any technique successful. However, some individuals may need supplementary training, such as various types of meditation, to gain this skill. The mental aspect is only one aspect of pinning. Regarding the physical side of the techniques, there are five major Aikido teachings (regarding pinning) that have existed since O-Sensei and his son Ueshiba

Kisshomaru arranged the art in a way that made it easier to disseminate to others. (Two other major pinning techniques, rokkyo and nanakyo, are included under the umbrella of osae-waza, but since they were not added by either the founder or his son, they will not be explained herein.) Each of the teachings and corresponding techniques relate to Omoto-kyo, but martially, a number of things should be learned from the practice of each pin. The martial principles revealed in such techniques originated in Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu.

Ikkyo is the first teaching. Taught in a traditional manner, the defender receives the opponent's attack, which is either a shomen strike with the hand or (in its original form) a straight cut with a sword. In either possibility, the defender enters into the attack, taking control of the attacker's elbow, and brings him straight to the ground in order to disarm him or to simply control him (figure 1.30).

There is an ura variation, in case the defender moves too late; if the attacker has already begun the attack, the defender now has to blend with the movement, getting behind it in order to come out on top. Within these two variations of ikkyo there are countless other variations that make use of different angles and subtle pressure changes. For this reason, the technique takes years, if not decades, to perfect. However, the basic concept can be grasped by beginners the very first time they practice the technique: controlling an attacker by gaining control of the elbow. In sum, by controlling one joint —the elbow—the entire body (and mind) of the opponent can be controlled. This concept carries over and can be applied to the other pinning techniques in Aikido: nikkyo, sankyo, and yonkyo.

Figure 1.30. Ikkyo (elbow control) technique

Nikkyo is the second pin. The body movement of this and subsequent pins almost mirrors that used to perform ikkyo, but the emphasis (and therefore the principles to be learned) varies. In nikkyo, one gains control of the uke's wrist and forces him to the ground. It is a pain-compliance technique (figure 1.31). Once control of the attacker is gained by blending with the attack and applying a wrist lock, the uke is forced to move downward to the ground.

Figure 1.31. Nikkyo pinning technique

In sankyo, however, the opponent is driven upward (figure 1.32). Again, sankyo involves gaining control of an attacker using the wrist, but the wrist is rotated into a position opposite that of nikkyo. The attacker ends up on his or her toes and is easy to move around. For this reason, the technique has been used by bouncers and law enforcement personnel as a come-along technique.

Sankyo has another principle that expands on those of the previous two techniques: although it appears to be a wrist control alone, the correct method is to send your intent (i.e., your energy) through the attacker's arm and into his or her shoulder, thus controlling the entire body. So the entire body is controlled by controlling one joint and then sending energy into the rest of the body. This is a profound teaching that can likely only be properly understood through the study of Budo for an extended period (although the physical movements can be mastered rather quickly).

Figure 1.32. Sankyo pinning technique

Yonkyo is also used to control the attacker, but it does not rely on an emphasized joint manipulation to perform the technique effectively. Rather, the technique focuses on pressure point control—in other words, making use of pressure points to create pain and thereby control someone (figure 1.33).

Figure 1.33. Yonkyo pinning technique

There are many pressure points within the human body, and these points can be used for various purposes, including healing. They can also be used for martial purposes. Painful pressure points are found on literally every part of the body, and martial artists

who know how to utilize these weak points by either striking them to cause serious damage or applying pressure to provide pain will have an advantage against others.

Gokyo is the last pin to be considered in this book. In all respects, gokyo looks exactly like ikkyo, but the position of the hand (holding the opponent's wrist) is reversed (figure 1.34). This technique is used instead of ikkyo when the opponent wields a small, short weapon such as a knife. There is one minor change that allows the same original technique to be applied successfully.

Figure 1.34. Gokyo pinning technique

Gokyo contains a profound principle that must be carefully considered in order to be grasped: practitioners should never get stuck on the specific forms of techniques, as the forms might have to be modified depending on the circumstance. O-Sensei said that his techniques differed from day to day. Even when referring to one technique alone, such as ikkyo, there are countless variations. Each technique must have variability and adaptability so it can be performed no matter the circumstance. If this adaptability is lacking, the techniques will not be successful in every circumstance. Students must consider this principle and understand it before gaining the skill. Confucius would refuse to teach students who would not take the time to figure out the remaining three-quarters of a problem after he taught them the first quarter. It is the same with regard to gokyo. Students must learn how to adapt all the techniques of Aikido based on diverse circumstances. They must never get caught up in the form or appearance of a technique. In Aikido, there are no techniques. There are only principles displayed in a variety of ever-changing, boundless forms. This must be carefully considered.

The next pillar is ushiro-waza, which means "techniques from behind." Regarding

these techniques, O-Sensei wrote the following:

> Through the practice of rear techniques, one learns how to prepare one's mind and body against attacks from all directions, beginning with attacks from behind, and how to handle opponents freely. When an opponent unexpectedly appears behind you, all your senses must be alert, allowing you to discern his movements—this is an important aspect of *bujutsu* practice. the key to rear techniques is immediately to sense the presence of another person behind you; as soon as the opponent attempts to grab you from the rear, you must open the eyes of the heart and the window of the mind, follow your intuition, and move swiftly and surely to the proper position to counter the attack. Attacks from the rear are extremely dangerous and difficult to deal with. If you are off guard and inattentive to an unseen enemy, you will be caught unaware. It is essential always to exercise care in this regard.[3]

All techniques can be applied from any situation, be it standing, from the ground, or in truly unique and bizarre occurrences. The true purpose of training in rear techniques is mental and ki related. Practitioners are supposed to fortify their internal strength so they are more aware of individuals who may attack from various directions. This final pillar is therefore not exactly physical. Though it does deal with some physical training, it is not external physical training. It deals with internal training performed in order to expand and extend internal energy so an attacker from the rear is felt before he or she actually attacks. One must be able to extend ki in all directions so any variation (e.g., someone attacking) can be easily perceived and dealt with. In other words, the practice of rear techniques develops an advanced ability: the understanding of internal energy and its projection as aiki. Of course, many Aikido students do not train in rear techniques in this manner, but this is the proper method according to our interpretations of O-Sensei's admonitions.

As discussed in this chapter, the six principles learned through the practice and study of all the techniques in the six pillars of Aikido are the following:

- Being able to throw an attacker in any direction
- Learning how to take the initiative; entering directly into an attack to gain the advantage
- Developing the ability to blend with attacks; joining your energy to the attacker's and then redirecting it
- Developing timing; after blending with an attack, learning when to execute a throw and how to properly time the breath to add power to the movement
- Learning how to control an attack and to restrain the attacker so he or she does not hurt you or others and so he or she does not cause self-injury
- Learning how to develop internal power and to extend it, thus being able to perceive attacks from various directions, including from the rear

O-Sensei said that students "must learn the essence of one thing and understand ten thousand things that operate under the same principle." Using the underlying principles, you are then able to create techniques spontaneously. He said that once the principles are understood, you can create techniques as you would like. "However, the techniques must be free from openings," he remarked. In other words, the techniques must be strong. They must not allow the opponent any possibility of escape.

The six pillars of Aikido are practiced alongside a number of other techniques. They are trained from various different postures in response to a number of different attacks, including shomenuchi, yokomenuchi, and tsuki attacks. Shomenuchi refers to a downward attack to the top of the head, and yokomenuchi is an empty-handed version of a kesa sword cut delivered to the carotid artery or the side of the head. Tsuki is any kind of a straight thrust. Other attacks include various types of wrist or sleeve grabs.

The attacks used in Aikido are sometimes mocked by real fighters who train in styles like mixed martial arts (MMA). They are mocked for good reason, as the attacks typically used in Aikido (at least as they are practiced in some dojo) are unrealistic and ineffective. Some Aikido practitioners might be offended by this statement. But for a sense of how unrealistic these practice attacks are, watch videos of real fights or talk to people who have been in real fights. Determine how often wrist grabs happen. In addition, determine how often yokomenuchi or shomenuchi strikes occur. Some Aikido practitioners who do not see this clearly will state that a yokomenuchi is the equivalent of a roundhouse punch, which does occur frequently. However, a yokomenuchi attack is not a roundhouse, and the timing and combative distance needed to deal with both attacks are different. Therefore, no one can deny that some of the attacks used in Aikido are unrealistic. However, they are not without purpose.

First, there is a historical reason such attacks are in Aikido. In most of the old Japanese grappling arts, such as Takenouchi-ryu, the opponent has a sword and you are empty handed or have only a dagger or a short sword, likely having had the long sword knocked out of your hands. Various techniques are used to get past the extended reach of an attacker with a long sword in order to temporarily control his sword. Conversely, there are some techniques in which you have a sword or dagger and the opponent grabs your wrist or forearm to stop you from attacking him. So attacks that deal with strikes are typically defensive, while grabbing attacks are usually offensive. Of course, the reverse of this could also be true, and the techniques from many of the old grappling arts could be applied no matter the circumstance.

Looking at the techniques and the attacks of Aikido, which came directly from Daito-ryu (which in turn came from other arts), the same paradigm is seen in strikes and grabs. There are shomen and yokomenuchi strikes, which are both types of sword cuts. Then there are thrusts, which are typically rendered as straight punches in Aikido, but the attacker usually has the same foot forward as the punch being thrown. This is not the best way to issue a powerful blow with a punch, but it is the way someone would thrust with a sword, as this setup provides more distance; the attacker can be farther away from the opponent when the attack originates. There are likewise a number of different grabs in Aikido, attacks that historically would have been used when someone

wished to stop an individual from drawing a sword. The attacks used in Aikido therefore teach practitioners how to deal with a sword-wielding opponent. Of course, anyone who knows how to use a sword well would not allow such disarming techniques, but facing off against a typical samurai (who historically may not have received a great deal of martial instruction), the unarmed defender might stand a chance, though a slight one.

Figures 1.35–1.38. Traditional Aikido techniques are meant to deal with attackers who have swords.

There are other reasons why these attacks might be used in Aikido. Attacks like straight thrusts (tsuki) and yokomenuchi are similar to real punches; a straight punch with the alternate leg forward would be most common for the former while a roundhouse punch would be the equivalent of the latter. However, the *maai* (combative space) used for both of these real attacks is much closer than the maai used in Aikido to deal with tsuki or yokomen strikes. By training in these strikes first, when beginners are still learning the basic body movements, they have more time to master these techniques. In other words, they have the opportunity to be successful in the dojo when they would still fail on the street. Success upon success increases confidence. Later, when the students are ready, they will train against realistic punches and other attacks. The yokomenuchi and tsuki attacks that they defend themselves against in the dojo, in this regard, are stepping stones. They get good at defending themselves against them, and then later, they use a similar body motion to deal with more powerful attacks issued from much closer, a combative space that requires more speed and quick blending abilities to succeed. In other words, attacks used while practicing in a dojo help students to be able to handle realistic attacks. The attacks used in a dojo are larger and slower

than real attacks, but the energy behind their issuance is similar. If practitioners learn to understand the correct body movements while being successful in blending with an attack and applying a pin or throw, they will be able to apply the same techniques successfully later on against a much faster and more powerful real attack.

The shomenuchi strike is similar: it can approximate a variety of unorthodox strikes in a realistic situation, and it does have a historical reference to swordsmanship. However, if properly executed, the shomen attack can be used to generate a great deal of power. Properly executed, the internal and the external will join. The body, thus unified, acts together, extending power through the striking arm. The spine moves in order to add more power, and the legs adjust in order to release stored power as well. A proper shomenuchi strike, if used correctly, can be one of the most devastating strikes in a martial artist's arsenal. The concepts learned from issuing a correct and powerful shomen strike can then be applied to all sorts of attacks, including those previously mentioned, but learning the principles involved is much easier using a shomen attack. The underlying principle behind the generation and issuance of power must be understood and then applied to all other techniques of the art. If approached in the correct manner, Aikido should teach students how to develop power and how to channel it through strikes. In addition, it should teach students how to defend against truly powerful attacks. There are many dojo that do not engage in this training. Others do, and their skills are noticeably different; they are more developed.

Regarding the grappling and throwing techniques of Aikido, normally they are trained from three different and unique body positions: *tachiai, hanmi-handachi,* and *suwari-waza* or *idori*. Tachiai are standing techniques, performed when both uke and nage are standing. Hanmi-handachi refers to one person standing, while the other is seated formally (i.e., kneeling). Suwari-waza encompasses kneeling techniques, performed when both attacker and defender are kneeling. This last type of training is the closest thing to ground fighting or grappling in many Aikido dojo. Of course, dojo that remain focused on the martial element of the art will train in ground techniques from prone, mounted, and other positions. For those that do not, suwari-waza is a logical starting point for an explanation about how such alternate positions on the ground might arise. This will be explained briefly in the next chapter before turning our attention to the ground fighting skills that should be actively trained and perfected by Aikido practitioners.

2

THE HISTORY AND USE OF SUWARI-WAZA

The techniques chosen by O-Sensei for use in Aikido include a number of ground techniques, known as suwari-waza. These ground techniques, however, are unlike the ground pins that one might find in arts such as Judo and other classical jujutsu forms. The ground techniques typically seen in Judo, for example, normally result in both uke and nage being in a (somewhat) prone position. The purpose is to keep opponents on their backs and to prevent them from rising. Many of the original ground pins were modified so they could be safely used in competition. These pinning techniques can be seen in the *katame no kata (grappling forms)*, the second kata within the *randori no kata (freestyle forms)*. This kata is composed of three varieties of techniques: *osaekomi-waza* (pin-down techniques), *shime-waza* (choking techniques), and *kansetsu-waza* (joint-pinning techniques). However, in classical Judo forms, other techniques are more similar to their Aikido counterparts. In the *kime no kata*, for example, one's partner has a sheathed sword and a dagger, and the uke and nage both kneel, facing each other. The attacks include double wrist grabs, punches, *yokomenuchi* and *shomenuchi* strikes, and a variety of different grabs. Clearly, the techniques here are more akin to their classical forms, and they remind the practitioner of the roots of the art in feudal Japan, when the samurai were at the height of their power.

The Aikido variations of such ground techniques are similar to the kime no kata in Judo. All the techniques done in standing Aikido can be accomplished in suwari-waza. Every attack and pin can be utilized, and the attacker can initiate an attack from a standing position while the defender is seated (called *hanmi-handachi*) or with both the attacker and the defender seated. Some claim there is a historical reason such techniques exist in Aikido. Hanmi-handachi techniques are said to have been useful when someone standing approached a kneeling individual and then grabbed him to prevent him from drawing his sword or in an effort to disarm or control him. In both Aikido and Daito-ryu techniques, if the seated defender stands up to complete the pin or the throw, this does make sense; no intelligent warrior would remain seated when under attack if he had the ability to stand. A defender has much more mobility while standing. If the historical explanation for these techniques is correct—that they originated from a grab intended to prevent the defender from drawing his sword—the pin or throw would be executed while moving to a more advantageous, standing posture. (Of course, there are some exceptions. Some techniques allow the defender to generate more power by using the force of the ground, and therefore it is likely that he or she would remain on the ground until the completion of the techniques.) Although hanmi-handachi techniques can be justified in some historical scenarios, suwari-waza is a different story.

Suwari-waza is an unusual practice. Both attacker and defender are on their knees, and neither of them rises. One explanation for this practice is that when samurai were in the presence of feudal lords (daimyo), they were expected to kneel and move around on their knees. This is said to have been done for two reasons. First, reverence was especially important in the samurai era in Japan, and one way of demonstrating loyalty and reverence toward one's master was to be physically lower than him. This is why reception rooms in castles (such as Nijo, in Kyoto, Japan) have different floor levels; any visitor kneeling in front of the daimyo (who would typically also be kneeling) would be lower due to the floor's height. If the visitor stood up to move around (in order to present a scroll or a gift to the lord, for example), he would be temporarily higher than the lord, which would be unacceptable, so they developed a method of moving around on the knees.

In our opinion, this reasoning does not make any sense. Such rules were not strictly adhered to; when samurai in a formal meeting had to get up for one reason or another, they did not move around on their knees. They bowed, stood up, and walked out of the chamber while remaining low. Then they knelt again, bowed to the individuals whom they were leaving, stood up again, and headed toward the exit. They never moved around on the ground in any historical records the way that aikidoka move around on the ground.

Figure 2.1. Nijo castle (Kyoto, Japan)

The second reason samurai retainers were supposed to remain on their knees was for the safety of the daimyo and his personal attendants. If a visitor intended to assassinate the lord, it would be much more difficult to initiate an attack from a seated position. Attacking and defending are both difficult in a seated position, which is why some

individuals do not wish to practice suwari-waza. Also, since individuals (in the West) are not accustomed to kneeling and moving around on their knees, this position is painful. In addition, some practitioners do not see the value of such techniques, since they no longer have a street application; in other words, people are most likely not going to be attacked while kneeling. (They may be attacked while seated in chairs and would therefore practice techniques from this modern seated position instead.)

Some even doubt the historical origin of suwari-waza as a whole. Aikido's seated techniques are so similar to the Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu versions that it is difficult to deny that this is where they originated. Therefore, if we can figure out where the Daito-ryu forms originated, we can apply the same historical origin to Aikido's version. Supposedly, the reason for the existence of the Daito-ryu martial art was to protect royal family members in the palace, and the hanmi-handachi forms resulted in the defender on his knees (in a weaker position) defeating a standing attacker (and therefore in a stronger position). In other ancient martial traditions such as Araki-ryu, however, the opposite occurred; hanmi-handachi techniques were designed so a standing warrior could defeat a downed opponent. How is it that this changed, and for what reasons? It seems unlikely that a seated warrior would be able to defeat a standing warrior of similar skill level. It is also unlikely that a seated samurai would remain seated when attacked.

Ellis Amdur explained,

> Imagine the scene—there are a number of seated retainers, and suddenly, an assassin leaps up, draws a concealed weapon and, dodging among the seated men, plunges toward the feudal lord or other high ranking retainer in an all-out attack. Considering that studies of reaction time have established that a knife-wielding assailant can stab a police officer before he can unholster, aim, and shoot his gun from a distance of 21 feet, do you the reader, really imagine that the feudal lord's defenders would not leap to their feet any more than you can imagine a Secret Service agent trying to protect the President while remaining seated?[1]

It is unlikely that the president's guards would remain seated during an attack today. It is just as unlikely that a feudal lord's guards would remain seated in a similar situation.

Some might think the scenario is more plausible with a sword. Various *iaido* and *iaijutsu* styles have techniques that begin from a seated position. Some are defensive: the practitioner only draws the blade when he or she perceives that someone is about to attack. Others are offensive, wherein the practitioner feigns the presentation of a gift to get close enough to attack. However, even this scenario doesn't make much sense when it comes to protecting or attempting to kill a daimyo. First, in an audience chamber, a guest was not permitted to come close enough to ever strike. Second, the attacker would not have a long sword such as a tachi or a katana; he would carry a wakizashi—which is a much shorter blade with a shorter reach. Risuke Omiya, headmaster of the oldest extant Japanese martial art, Katori Shinto-ryu, explained, "Feudal culture forbade

warriors of old to wear their long swords indoors. In addition, the katana is not worn with the *tsuba* [hand-guard] along the centerline; to do so would leave no place for the *wakizashi* (short sword) to be worn, and positioning the sword in such a way [as it is in many iaido styles] does not allow an effective cut from the draw."[2] The final reason suwari-waza does not make sense historically is that a daimyo was rarely, if ever, alone. And certainly, he would never be alone when receiving guests. Guards were always in the room between him and any potential assassins. Often, other guards were just behind a shoji-screened door, ready to spring into action should the need arise.

It is much more likely that suwari-waza was practiced for a much different yet more important reason: to teach proper body mechanics, such as the correct movements of the hips, remaining centered, and using the ground for leverage. If so, then the historical source for the practice might not have been the impetus for its inclusion in Aikido.

O-Sensei himself left us indications that this may have been the case; he wrote, "Even though our path is completely different from the warrior arts of the past, it is not necessary to abandon totally the old ways. Absorb venerable traditions into this new art by clothing them with fresh garments, and build on the classic styles to create better forms."[3] This statement can be interpreted in various ways, but it seems clear that he may have incorporated elements of ancient (or simply older) martial arts for a unique purpose. In some of the ancient sword and empty-handed arts, hanmi-handachi techniques were designed to swiftly kill an individual on the ground. In Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, hanmi-handachi and suwari-waza both reversed that role, and the person in the weaker position emerged the victor. Of course, this could have been done to increase the confidence of practitioners, which would likely lead to further success, but it also may have been used for training. Shiro Omiya explained the inclusion of such seated techniques in the Daito-ryu curricula:

> In seated techniques the basic posture is *seiza* (kneeling with the back held straight), which is very solid and stable. The lower half of the body is firmly rooted to the ground while the upper half can be projected upwards with much power. Movement in seated techniques is accomplished by "knee walking," an exercise that greatly increases the strength and flexibility of the legs and hips. In standing techniques you learn how to move freely in any direction—forward, sideways, backward—and guide the opponent. One-seated-one-standing techniques combine the solidity of seated techniques with the flexibility of standing techniques. The techniques in this stretch from heaven to earth. It appears that the partner standing has a great advantage when he attacks with a blow to the head or attempts a two-handed grab but in fact the partner who is seated can neutralize the attack with relative ease by means of good posture and simple movements. The practice of one-seated-one-standing techniques such as shiho-nage and aiki-nage are valuable for beginners because they teach good posture and solid movement.[4]

It is clear from this passage that suwari-waza is considered an exercise in Daito-ryu and not a means of self-defense. Takeda Sokaku never taught kneeling techniques. One

of his most skilled students, Sagawa Yukiyoshi, saw some individuals practicing shikko, the knee-walking utilized in suwari-waza techniques. He commented, “What is this shikko—There is no such thing in Daito-ryu. Anyway, Takeda Sensei never sat and bowed to his students. He would show up standing and announce, ‘All right, come on!’ then begin immediately. It wasn’t at all formal. You students should stop doing shikko, it looks disgraceful.”[5] Shikko and suwari-waza are not historical in nature. They are exercises added to the aiki arts to develop certain muscles and movements and to clarify some important concepts.

Although Aikido’s suwari-waza techniques are similar to those in Daito-ryu, the body movements used are different. Similar techniques like an arm bar, called *ikkyo (osae)* in Aikido and *ippondori* in Daito-ryu, use different body movements, though both techniques could be effectively accomplished using the same motions. O-Sensei changed the body movements so that they differ from the original positions found in Daito-ryu. From a seated position, martially, the change in body position (between these two specific techniques) cannot reasonably be defended. However, if the techniques were performed on the knees to teach something explicit—such as a specific, correct body movement—then any change instituted by the founder would be justified. In other words, if suwari-waza is an Aikido exercise to teach students how to move properly, O-Sensei would have likely altered the techniques to highlight such important concepts. If this is the case, Aikido’s true secret might lie in the practice of seated techniques. (It should be remembered that in traditional Japanese martial arts, instructors did not typically explain specific movements to students. They simply demonstrated the techniques and then expected their students to copy them. If a teacher truly wished to help his students, he might accentuate the physical movements, making them larger so they could be more readily seen and understood.)

Another reading of the same Sino-Japanese characters for *suwari-waza* is *zagi*. No matter what pronunciation is used, the term means the same thing: seated techniques. However, they are not simply techniques one applies while immobile in a seated position. On the contrary, there is a lot of motion, and practitioners must train to develop the correct body movements. Aikido as a whole, to the untrained eye, might appear to use a lot of hand manipulations. However, one of the most important aspects in executing proper techniques is hip movement and using the hips to lead movements. Beginning Aikido students struggle to get this movement correct. From a standing position, they move their legs and hands, attempting to duplicate the motions demonstrated by their teachers, but they miss the crucial element of training—that the leg motions and arm motions follow the hip movement. In suwari-waza, this sequence cannot be changed. Practitioners cannot easily step, since they are on their knees. Therefore, they must use their hips to move.

Besides teaching students how to correctly use the hips and therefore the body center, suwari-waza contains a number of other keys to the proper performance of Aikido techniques. It also teaches students to maintain their balance and their centers of gravity and thus remain centered. According to founder Ueshiba Morihei, this is one of the most important considerations in applying techniques properly. He stated, “The key

to good technique is to keep your hands, feet, and hips straight and centered. If you are centered, you can move freely. The physical center is your belly; if your mind is set there as well, you are assured of victory in any endeavor."[6] Suwari-waza also teaches practitioners how to use the ground for leverage. As far as body conditioning goes, the practice definitely serves to strengthen both the hips and the legs. All these benefits carry over into standing techniques.

These are important concepts in standing Aikido techniques, but learning such concepts while standing is difficult. That is why Aikido seated techniques should be practiced. Seated techniques should not necessarily be thought of in a martial sense; rather, the entire practice is an Aikido training exercise, teaching students how to improve their technique through practice on the ground. Shikko, samurai knee-walking, is an essential component of proper ground technique. Beginning students sometimes try to drag the knees, which can lead to injury. They must learn to step with the knees, using the hips (and not the legs) to affect movement. Typically, students first learn how to move forward, but moving backward, from side to side, and in a circular fashion are also important movements. Students should be able to move in any direction, as necessitated by the specific attack that they face. Once students are able to move smoothly on their knees, the same movements will be easily accomplished from a standing posture. It is one of the most effective ways to train in the proper movements of Aikido.

There are other benefits from this exercise. Kondo Katsuyuki, holder of the *menkyo kaiden* (certificate of complete transmission) in Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, stated that the practice of seated techniques can lead to the development of internal energy. He wrote,

> Unlike techniques in the *tachiai* [standing] and *ushirodori* [attacks from behind] series, *ikkajo idori* series techniques are practiced from a seated position that considerably restricts the movement of the hips in all directions. Particularly, since the hips cannot sink any lower than they already are, there is hardly any possibility of breaking your opponent's balance by sinking your center downward or trying to move your center under his. Consequently, even for techniques with names and basic movements similar to those in the tachiai series, performing *idori* [seated] techniques successfully involves a completely different approach that relies much more on subtle upper body shifting, deft hand movement, excellent coordination of the legs, hips and arms even while kneeling, and the subtle extension and application of ki.[7]

As previously mentioned, the founder of Aikido likely changed the seated techniques in Daito-ryu in order to clearly demonstrate to students what he believed were the most important body movements and principles of his new art. However, like the practice of such techniques in Daito-ryu, one skill developed through such training is the use of internal energy. According to O-Sensei in his book *Budo*, techniques practiced from the knees, such as *kokyu-dosa* or *kokyu-ho*, are instrumental in developing ki (internal power). Kokyu-ho is a training exercise performed from the knees in which two

individuals sit close together, facing each other. The uke forcefully grabs the wrists (or elbows) of the nage, at which point the nage seeks to unbalance and thereby overcome the attacker without the use of force. This is not a martial technique but a training exercise utilized to develop internal power. This internal power is called ki in Japanese and *chi* in Chinese. The (original) ideograph is the same. Its manifestation in the dissolution of another's power is called aiki. This particular seated technique has been called the secret to Aikido by various shihan (master instructors), including Endo Seishiro and Saotome Mitsugi. Saotome wrote, "Kokyu ho is the power structure of *musubi*, its movement the basis of all Aikido principle.... All Aikido movement is condensed into the kokyu ho exercise. It holds all of the technical secrets. Therefore, all other techniques extend from this training."[8] If this is true, then extended suwari-waza training could lead to substantial improvement in Aikido and the development and use of aiki power.

Figures 2.2–2.8. Examples of suwari-waza movement

Besides the development of correct body movement, an understanding of body mechanics, and learning how to use the ground for leverage, suwari-waza techniques also point to an often overlooked martial aspect of Aikido: ground fighting. Often, in classical Aikido pinning techniques, the nage is in a kneeling posture while pinning. When an individual struggles out of the pin and attempts a reversal, however, it could lead to a contest on the ground. Therefore, it is necessary to apply the concepts of Aikido without limit, so one can be victorious in any endeavor. This is called *takemusu aiki*. The term *takemusu* is made up of the words *take*, or *bu*, which means "martial," and *musu*, which is an alternate pronunciation of the verb *umareru*, which means "to be born." The term *musu* (as it is used in Aikido) is short for *musubi*. John Stevens explained, "Bi signifies the 'wonderous light' of the vital force, much like 'And God saw that the light was good' of Genesis 1:4. *Musubi* links all things together in an interconnected web, a web that extends without beginning or end. *Musubi* 'ties the knot' and is a symbol of marriage and coproduction. *Musubi* transcends the distinction between self and other and thus leads to the wholeness of Aiki, the harmonious force that reconciles and blends opposites and calms all discord."[9]

Figures 2.9–2.17. Kokyu-ho training technique

Physically, takemusu aiki refers to the internalization of Aikido principles so that its techniques can be spontaneously created, without thought and without reliance on (specific) techniques. In other words, it is not the utilization of memorized techniques but the spontaneous creation of whatever technique might be necessary, springing from an overall immersion in Aikido's underlying principles. The founder considered takemusu aiki to be the highest manifestation of the art.

There is another interesting point having to do with the *kanji* (Chinese pictograph or ideograph) for *take*. The term is typically translated as "martial," but the ideograph is composed of a sword clashing with a spear, while the kanji for *tomeru*, "to stop," is positioned beneath. So although the kanji refers to fighting, it more specifically refers to stopping the fight and therefore restoring peace. This is an important consideration, and it points toward the very heart of Aikido. O-Sensei wrote, "*Take/bu* is Divine. It is a path established by the gods grounded in truth, goodness, and beauty. *Take/bu* is righteousness. It makes us strong and heroic, and it allows us to manifest courage, wisdom, love, and empathy. *Take/bu* is a mirror that reveals all things and exposes evil."[10]

Takemusu aiki, as perceived by the founder, has spiritual and possibly even religious significance. However, from a purely physical standpoint, it is the epitome of training. After training in basic techniques for years to understand their inherent principles, the essence of takemusu aiki is to cast aside these techniques. As many martial arts masters have written, "True technique is no technique." This refers to moving beyond the reliance of certain techniques. If practitioners are caught up on a certain attack or the use of a certain technique, their minds are trapped, and they can therefore no longer adequately defend themselves. Likewise, many martial arts masters have passed down the admonition, "Learn and then forget!" This again points to the importance of maintaining a clear and undistracted mind in combat in order to function with complete freedom. Issai Chozanshi (1659–1741), a samurai of the Sekiyado fief, wrote,

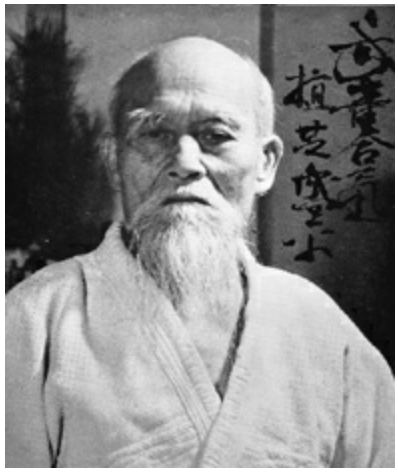


Figure 2.18. Photograph of the founder with Takemusu Aikido calligraphy, signed Ueshiba Morihei. Written in 1967 for Walther G. von Krenner at Hombu

Dojo.

> Facing your opponent, you forget about life, forget about death, forget about your opponent, and forget about yourself. Your thoughts do not move and you create no intentions. When you are in a state of No-Mind and leave everything to your natural perceptions, metamorphosis and change will be conducted with absolute freedom, and practical application will have no obstacles. When in the midst of a great number of opponents, you will cut and thrust before and behind, and to the left and right. And even if your body is smashed to bits, your ch'i will be under control and your spirit settled.[11]

Martial art masters of the past, including Ueshiba Morihei, admonished practitioners to move beyond the memorization and duplication of techniques. One must learn them but then forget them. Internalize the underlying principles so that techniques can be spontaneously created. Thus the true techniques of Aikido's highest aspects will not have a set form; they will emerge naturally as the circumstances dictate. When attackers can be dealt with from a standing position, fine. But when a defender finds himself attacked on the ground, he must be ready and prepared to deal with the attack.

3

GOING TO THE GROUND FROM SUWARI-WAZA

Before explaining specific techniques that can be used in various situations, it is important to understand how one might end up on the ground while practicing standard, traditional Aikido techniques. It is also important to understand how one could be forced to defend oneself from the ground in an actual combative situation.

Anything not practiced in an art is a weakness of that art. In other words, a martial artist who is not taught to strike properly will be unable to defend against actual punches. Likewise, martial artists who do not know how to use a variety of kicks in their defense may be unable to defend against such attacks as well, since they do not practice such movements and are unaware of the movement and force behind them. It does not take martial arts practitioners long to realize this. They know that when facing a skilled boxer, they want to try to avoid boxing with him. Instead, they want to grapple with him or to keep their distance by using strong, rapid kicks. Likewise, when facing a skilled wrestler, a smart fighter will try to avoid wrestling with him, since a wrestler's strength is on the ground, grappling. Intelligent individuals with no formal martial training will know and understand this. Good martial artists will analyze their own arts, determine their strengths and weaknesses, and then do everything possible to minimize those weaknesses. Otherwise, they will likely be defeated in an actual engagement.

When analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of Aikido, practitioners must try to separate themselves from the art. In other words, by training in Aikido (and in some other arts), certain things might be trained and ingrained that would never happen in an actual situation. In addition, sometimes Aikido students are indoctrinated to move in certain ways, ways that skilled attackers would not use. In other words, they are trained to use unskilled and unrealistic attacks. This is unfortunate because it does not help practitioners deal with realistic attacks and reactions. For example, Aikido punches normally follow a set format on the mat. The uke will step forward and issue a punch to the face or midsection with the hand that was previously back. In other words, when striking with the right fist, the right foot is also forward. Although this is possible and might occur in a real-life struggle, various martial arts that specialize in striking would prefer to do the opposite: to attack with the right fist while the left foot is forward and vice versa. When this is done, it changes the maai substantially. The attacker must be much closer to the nage in order to strike with any kind of power. Certainly, some might argue that a skilled aikidoka would be able to naturally adjust his or her maai in order to effectively deal with the attack. Although this might be true, why would anyone train in a way that avoids dealing with certain attacks?

Likewise, if kicks are not trained in the dojo, it is very possible that Aikido

practitioners would not expect such attacks in a real situation. In addition, if they have never been kicked before, they would be unfamiliar with the force of the blow. It could easily lead to defeat. All aspects of attacks should be trained so Aikido students are prepared for any situation. Training is successful when students do not have any expectations regarding the nature of the attack and when they are relatively unfazed when actually struck. To accomplish this, Aikido students need to be struck in the dojo by a variety of different attacks, and they should be real attacks. In some dojo, attacks are weak; the attacker does not wish to hurt the defender. Although this is understandable, it does not help the defender. If he or she is struck, it would be unlikely that any injury would occur. This is not to say that all dojo train in such an inefficient manner, but those dojo that do not implement an element of danger and injury are doing a disservice to their students. Some longtime practitioners of Aikido might counter all this by stating that Aikido is the art of a pacifist, and therefore, such training is not beneficial. However, if Aikido practitioners do not have the skill to hurt people, they will not be able to defend themselves or others should the need arise. A true pacifist is one who has the ability to kill and maim but chooses not to.

It is difficult to defeat an out-of-control opponent without causing injury. It is far easier to strike him in a vital area and then finish him with a bone-breaking or other maiming technique. Aikido techniques are at a higher level. The true aim is not to meet force with force, no matter how fast the attacks come, but to get behind the attacks and control the attacker without causing grave injury. This was one of Aikido's ideals as envisioned by Ueshiba Morihei. He explained that to injure an opponent is to injure oneself. To control aggression without inflicting injury is the deepest principle of Aikido. This does not mean the founder was unable to injure others; it only means that he chose not to. This is an important difference, and it is something that Aikido practitioners must keep in mind. It does not take much to change the method of training in order to be effective in all situations. As far as striking attacks and defenses are concerned, simply strike with intent. In addition, do not limit your attacks to the orthodox. Use a variety of strikes and learn how to properly utilize power.

With this in mind, it is important to reconsider the true nature of *ukemi* and the inherent problems that surface in the way it is trained. There are various interpretation of ukemi's meaning and significance in Aikido as in other martial traditions. The Japanese characters for the word literally mean to "receive with the body." Just considering the Sino-Japanese characters used for the term might cause one to reconsider the actual meaning of ukemi. The topic is not as clearly defined as some might think. However, for most martial artists, ukemi is how one accepts a strike or a throw. In Judo, for example, ukemi is learning how to be thrown and land in a way that does not cause permanent injury. In Judo matches, opponents try to throw each other, and (although in a perfect world there might not be any resistance), in most matches, opponents will resist their adversaries' attempts and try to throw their attackers, until someone manages to execute a throw. When this occurs, the person being thrown must instantly shift from resisting the technique to flowing with it in order to ride out the throw, possibly gaining the advantage once on the ground. For individuals to become

skilled at Judo, they must know when to provide resistance, when to blend with a movement, and when to ride a throw. This is proper ukemi: knowing when to resist and when to protect the body while receiving an attack.

In various other martial arts, ukemi is combined with both attack and defense techniques. Practitioners of Fujian ground boxing (also known as dog boxing), for example, will ride out the throw and then kick the thrower. They land in such a way to facilitate a strong, devastating attack with the legs. The important point is that they are not simply allowing themselves to be thrown where the nage intends to throw them. They are making a conscious choice to land in a certain position at a certain distance from the attacker so they can issue a devastating counterattack. Because the object is to debilitate the thrower with one kick, dog boxers train to harness as much power as possible through the legs so that the force of the entire body, braced against the ground, can be used to maim or kill an opponent.

In Aikido, some practitioners do not think about ukemi in this way. Certainly, high-ranking Aikido practitioners likely think about these aspects, as martial efficacy and countering possibilities are an important part of training, but some do not. Typically, when watching Aikido classes, observers will see the so-called good uke moving exactly the way that the nage wants them to move, falling the way that the nage intends them to fall, and landing exactly where the nage wants them to land. There are reasons behind this kind of practice in Aikido; through it, practitioners can learn how to blend with their partners, but this is a lower level of training. Beginners need a fully compliant uke in order to learn the techniques. In higher levels of training, however, practitioners already know how to perform throws and pins on compliant attackers. They know that a sympathetic uke will land where they are thrown. However, how does one perform the same technique on a noncompliant uke, one who does not want to be thrown or pinned? Strength can be easily overcome, and skilled aikidoka will tend to move around it, redirecting the force and overcoming it, but (internal) power is a different story. How does one overcome a noncompliant individual who has a great deal of internal power? And how does one defeat an attacker with internal power who uses a series of short, devastating punches? These considerations are important.

Another important consideration regarding ukemi is the indoctrinated response. Aikido practitioners are used to throwing people that do not fight them. The person being thrown also has a conditioned response to being thrown, and he or she takes ukemi as taught. However, the person throwing does so in a way that actually protects the person being thrown. (This, of course, is done for safety reasons: it is simple to turn many techniques into really devastating joint-breaking techniques, but people cannot train in this fashion. One bad injury and they could be done for life.) Aikido practitioners are sometimes so caught up with being compliant that they do not consider the real reasons behind the ukemi. Martially speaking, it is not a matter of being compliant. Nor is it a matter of blending with the partner. Ukemi is to protect oneself when attack is no longer an option—when you are being struck or thrown—and the attacker intends to cause injury. He intends to break a bone, put the defender into a position in which he can be maimed or killed by a powerful strike, or throw in such a

way that death is near certain. One only has to look at older martial traditions, such as Araki-ryu or Takenouchi-ryu, to see such techniques. The following example clarifies this point.

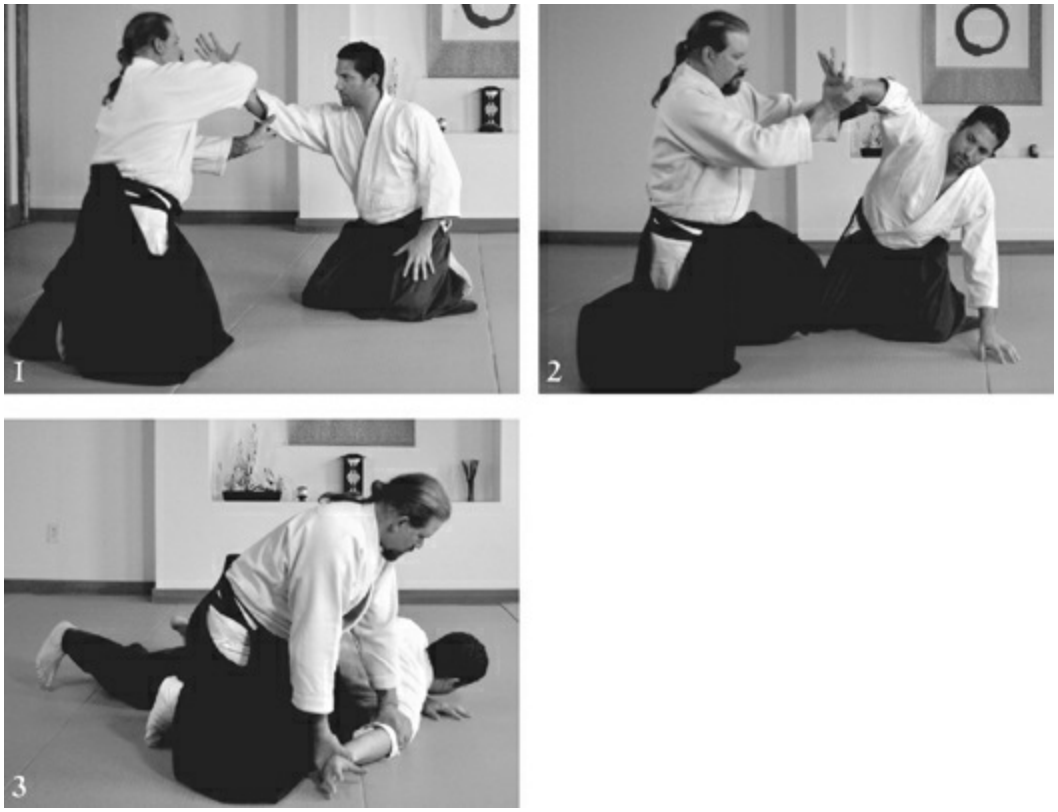
Assume that someone is about to attack you. He has his hands up like a Western boxer would, and you assume that he is skilled in this art; you assume he will be using a combination of punches in order to defeat you. Not wanting to box with a boxer, you decide to take him to the ground, and you move in with a wrestler's single-leg or double-leg takedown. He bounds backward, making space, and then wraps his arm around your neck, apparently hoping for either a headlock or a choke. Having some martial experience, you tuck your head to prevent this. However, he has his arm wrapped around your neck. He then finishes the technique by executing a body-sacrifice throw backward. Your neck breaks on the way over, and your head smashes into the ground as your body is wrenched over. It is likely that you will never get up again. This technique is meant to kill, and a skilled execution of the technique is designed to not permit any opportunity for ukemi. However, a martial artist skilled in ukemi must try to find a way out; he must try to save himself. This is a high level of training and understanding of ukemi.

Considering these normal martial responses that an Aikido practitioner might face when in an actual engagement, it is easy to see that those skilled in ukemi are going to look for a way out; they are going to try to find a way to protect themselves when the thrower is out to injure them. Keeping such considerations in mind, it is important to be prepared for counterattacks. When throwing an individual skilled at ukemi, the individual will move in such a way that not only protects him or her but also facilitates a counterattack or reversal. Aikido practitioners must be able to take their skills to the ground.

There are various situations in which Aikido practice leads directly to ground techniques. One, which has been previously mentioned, is when an individual struggles out of a seated pin. In such a scenario, both uke and nage would be on the ground, and the fight would likely continue. Another aspect of training that leads directly to the necessity of ground techniques is *sutemi,* or body-sacrifice throws. Finally, aikidoka may end up on the ground unintentionally when their techniques are thwarted by the opponent. First, we will deal with intentionally going to the ground.

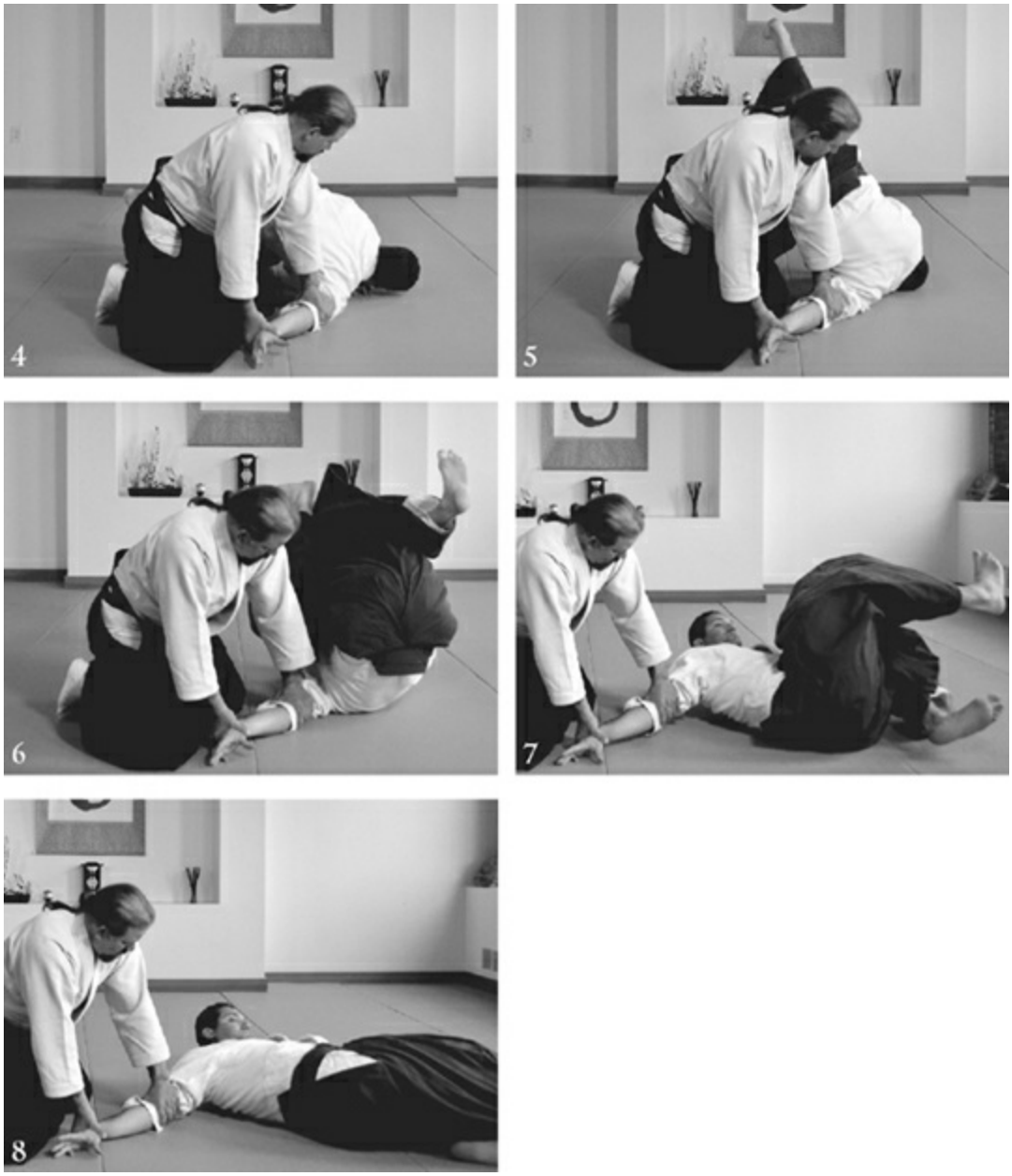
One pillar of Aikido is osae-waza, or pinning techniques. In their formal applications, the nage ends up on his or her knees, but he or she is also on the balls of his or her feet, a position called *keiza.* Ikkyo, which literally translates to "first teaching" (and may be directly correlated to the spiritual teaching of Omoto-kyo), is an arm bar. The defender takes his opponent's balance by seizing the initiative (in the omote version) or blending with the energy (in the ura version). If the attacker comes in with a right-handed attack, the defender would blend with the movement, take control of the elbow with his or her left hand, and take control of the attacker's wrist and hand by grabbing it with his or her right hand. Once unbalanced, the defender turns his or her hips, making sure that the attacker's elbow is below the wrist, and then he or she steps in and then out, making use of gravity in order to force the opponent to the ground. Once on the ground, the

proper position of the pin includes making sure that the attacker's arm is at an angle greater than ninety degrees from the body. The defender's left knee will be tight against the armpit of the uke, and his right knee is against the forearm. He or she is up on the toes of the feet, and energy is directed downward. Typically, the uke will slap the mat when the technique reaches this point. Ikkyo is not a pain-compliance technique; it is an immobilization technique alone.



Figures 3.1–3.3. Ikkyo pinning technique (seated version)

From this position, and during any previous stage of the technique's application, the uke may get out of the pin, reverse it, or even counterattack. One way out of this pin, even from its conclusion on the ground, is to roll forward (figure 3.4 through 3.8).



Figures 3.4–3.8. Ikkyo escape

Once the uke rolls forward, his or her body position is reversed and the arm lock is no longer effective. The person applying the technique will likely be focused on maintaining the pin, even when it is unsuccessful, and so will not let go. Therefore, the uke now has one free hand, while the nage uses both hands. It is likely that the uke is temporarily in a more advantageous position. If he or she takes advantage of it, the nage can be defeated. The ending position on the ground, after this initial reversal by the uke, will result in a ground struggle. In other words, ground techniques will be necessary. However, the initial position from which they begin is different from the positions typically found in Judo, Brazilian jujutsu, and other arts. They are positions that may be unique to Aikido (although there are some similar positions that may occur in other arts). Therefore, such positions must be considered in the application of ground techniques.

Another major consideration regarding technical applications on the ground involves the notion of fighting. One of Aikido's tenets is the principle of nonviolence, which may

sound like simply avoiding a conflict but actually has serious martial wisdom. If Aikido practitioners put a pinning technique on someone, and they feel resistance, they should not fight that resistance. Instead, they should move around it, using the force of the attack to overcome the attacker. In other words, Aikido students train to blend with an attacker and then to direct him or her where desired. This is difficult to put into practice. Human beings, by nature, are prone to fight back. When pushed, they push back. As an experiment, try this: stand in a natural position and have a friend put both hands on your chest and push slowly and softly. Then have him or her quickly and unexpectedly remove his or her hands. Often, you will find that you move forward. This occurs because you are fighting the push, consciously or subconsciously, with force. You are meeting force with force. And although Aikido students may say otherwise, many of them still meet force with force. For those that do not believe this, try this secondary experiment: in the dojo, when practicing any technique with a partner, without warning, try to resist the technique. See if your partner blends with the new energy that you are providing or if he or she muscles down and tries to complete the technique with additional force. (If he or she does blend with it, was there a brief moment in which he or she resisted? In other words, sometimes the aikidoka resists because that is his or her natural reaction, and then he or she remembers to blend.) More often than not, you will feel muscles engage, force is met with force, and Aikido's base principles are lost.

Aikido's principles must never be lost. Even when doing Aikido techniques from the ground, practitioners must not forget the teachings of the founder. They must not meet force with force. Rather, they must redirect it and blend with it to establish control. It was said that wresting with Kano Jigoro, the founder of Kodokan Judo, was like wrestling with an empty jacket, because he did not fight his opponent's attacks; he blended with them and redirected the force in other directions, which led to throws, pins, or other techniques. When performing Aikido on the ground, it is common for students to muscle up and use force against force. If this happens, there is no possibility for Aikido. Students must remember to blend with the force, redirect it, and thereby gain the advantage. By practicing Aikido ground techniques regularly, students will become more comfortable with the unique body positions, and their fear and apprehension will cease. Then they will be able to overcome that innate desire to fight back, and they will be able to perform Aikido from any position, even while on their backs on the ground.

When an opponent rolls out of an ikkyo pin, there is space between the two bodies, but there is still a physical connection. The nage will still be touching the uke's arm. And unless the nage is adept at Aikido, the uke has the advantage, since the nage will temporarily be focused on performing a technique—a technique that can no longer work in the same way. Using base principles of Aikido, the uke can perform a number of techniques, including ikkyo, nikkyo, kote-gaeshi, rokkyo, or a shiho-nage variation, shifting to his or her knees as the technique is applied. If the distance changes (and it is likely to do so) and the uke and nage are closer together, other techniques must be applied, such as irimi-nage or some form of shime-waza. Specific techniques will be dealt with in the following chapters, but it is important for readers to understand how ground fighting can occur in Aikido, what types of positions they will find themselves

in, and the types of Aikido techniques that are possible from such positions. It is also important for them to realize that just because they are on the ground, it does not mean Aikido is not possible. If practitioners have a thorough understanding of Aikido techniques and their corresponding philosophy, Aikido can be applied successfully from any position and in any circumstance.

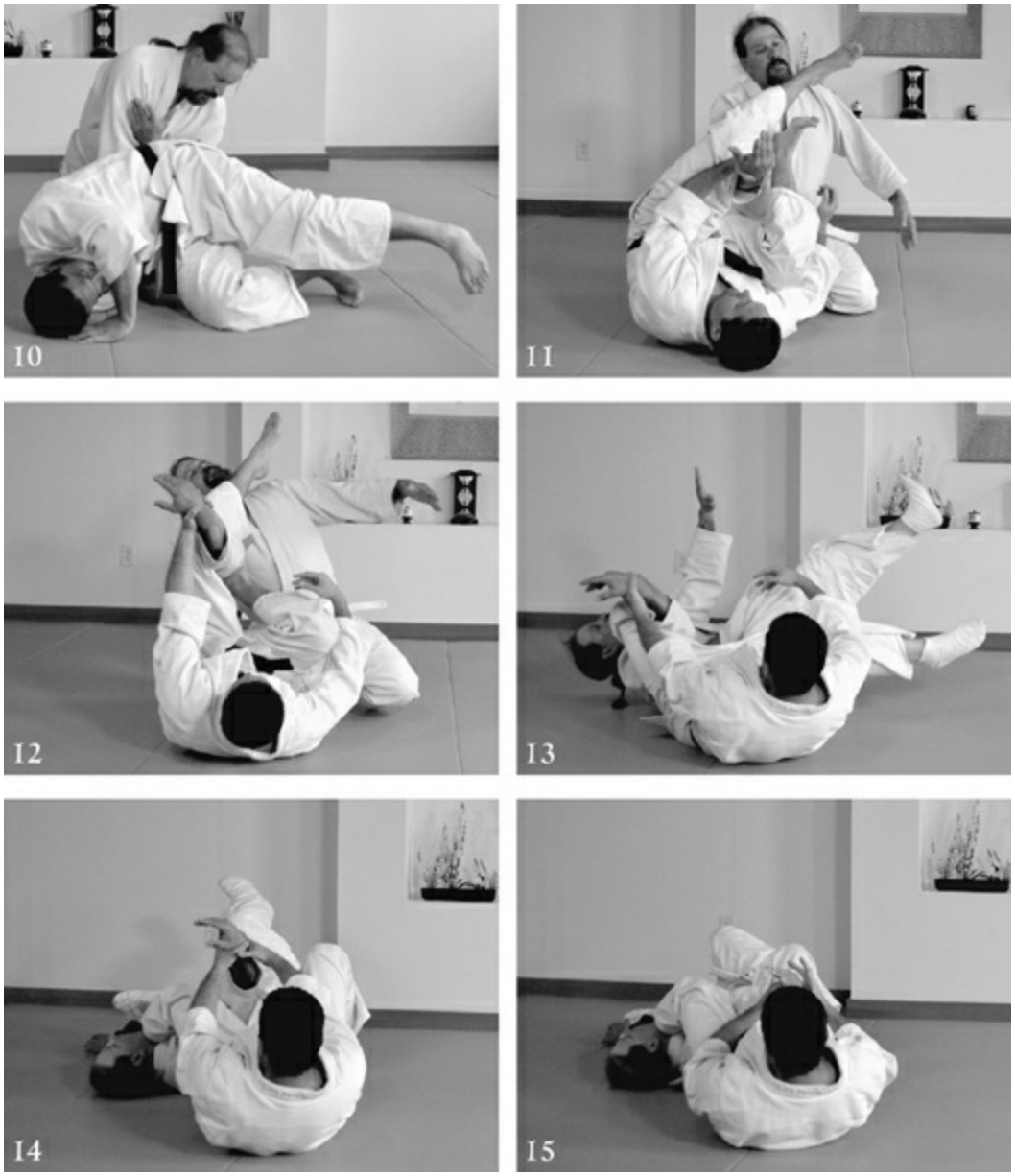
Nikkyo and sankyo are two techniques that can emphasize another aspect of Aikido ground fighting, an aspect that has to do with dominating space. To understand this, the reader must understand how the techniques are performed and what the ending pin looks like. The body movement used in the execution of both nikkyo and sankyo are similar to that used in ikkyo, but these two techniques are not elbow controls. Rather, they are wrist controls. Of course, the idea behind both techniques is to gain control of the entire opponent's body through the wrist and hand, but to simplify things, we will refer to them as wrist locks. One of them (nikkyo) forces the opponent down, while the other (sankyo) can be used to force the uke up before taking him or her down to the ground. In other words, it can function as a come-along technique for use in law enforcement or security. Nikkyo has some variations that can accomplish the same goal. Although these two techniques are different in their execution and in the proper maai, their ending pins are similar. In both cases, the arm is twisted into a painful position. The nage will place both knees outside of the uke's shoulders and squeeze while lifting up, thereby taking all the slack out of the body while securing the shoulder to the ground (figure 3.9). Once in this position, assuming that the nage has control of the uke's right arm, he or she will turn his or her center toward the opponent's head, thus applying more tension. At this point, the uke slaps the mat to signal that he or she has had enough.

Figure 3.9. Nikkyo concluding pin

At the very end of this technique, reversals are difficult. However, they are still possible. Some individuals with internal power will keep the arm alive so that the pin can be dissipated throughout the entire body rather than have it isolated in the wrist or arm alone. When this is done, the uke can slip out of the pin any time he or she wants. However, individuals with this kind of power are rare in the Aikido world, although they are not rare in other forms of martial arts. In Aikido individuals will do the same thing most of the time to get out of this pin: before the knees tighten in on the elbow, while the nage shifts, the uke will push forward a bit to relieve some of the pressure on the shoulder and elbow joint, and then he or she will bring the opposite shoulder slightly ahead of yet toward the nage's head, moving the legs quickly toward the nage as the locked-up arm is stretched toward the lower back. The aim of the uke is to apply a choke, arm lock, or a combination of the two with his or her legs. (See figures 3.10 through 3.15 to get an idea of the types of counterattacks that might be common.)

The possibility of this counterattack is considered and expected in Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, and there are different variations of pins that lock both arms (when the opponent turns to strike the nage with the unlocked elbow) or an arm and a leg (when the opponent attempts to either strike with the feet or use the legs to pin or choke). Such pinning variations should be studied by aikidoka to prepare them for such scenarios. If the uke is highly skilled, however, he or she might slip through such attempts at elaborate, multilimb pins. In this case, the nage could have a problem. He or she is in a slightly weaker position, as legs are stronger than arms. Ground fighting could commence from this position. It is different from the ground fighting that resulted from ikkyo, however, because the uke and nage will occupy the same space. In other words, their torsos will likely be touching rather than their extremities. Since the maai is different, the ground skills necessary are also different. The starting point of techniques on the ground with escapes from nikkyo or sankyo is different from the starting point with escapes from techniques like ikkyo, but they are still different from standard Judo or jujutsu positions. They are unique to Aikido. Although some of the techniques found in Judo or jujutsu might be utilized in Aikido in such situations, they need to be modified to fit the existing circumstances. They need to be Aikido techniques.

The founder always said that Aikido has no techniques. Most techniques practiced in Aikido today come from Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, an art that O-Sensei studied intently. Some of the more dangerous techniques were discarded, and many of the adopted techniques were modified so they would not cause irreparable injury. In sum, he modified techniques found in other arts so they could demonstrate the principles of his new spiritual art. The modifications needed to establish an arsenal of effective ground techniques are not for spiritual reasons but for practical ones. The techniques in the following chapters are specifically designed to fit into the existing structure of Aikido while remaining true to the principles of the art. They are designed with escapes from osae-waza in mind, such as those already mentioned. They were also planned while considering other ways in which Aikido practitioners could end up on the ground. These include dropping to one or both knees with techniques like kokyu-nage or shiho-nage or sutemiwaza: body-sacrifice throws.



Figures 3.10–3.15. Nikkyo counter technique

The effectiveness of kokyu-nage and body-sacrifice throws lies in the momentum of the uke. This momentum comes from a committed attack, and the uke adds his or her energy to it, making it more powerful. However, no one with any real martial sense would completely commit to an attack. When kokyu-nage is carried out and there is not enough momentum to unbalance the opponent, it can result in a stalemate, with both the uke and the nage in equal positions: both could attack and defend. To create the momentum necessary to avoid such a situation, some practitioners use their bodies and the force of gravity. They drop to the ground as they send their energy down and forward. This can launch uke who know how to take standard Aikido ukemi, but for those individuals who are not cooperative—who do not want to be thrown—they may keep hold and try to collapse on top of the nage. Either that or they may let go at the right moment in order to attack the thrower. A skilled aikidoka must be ready for both, and both scenarios might lead to a struggle on the ground, one in which Aikido ground techniques are necessary.

Many of the throws and pins done in Aikido are taught and practiced in a basic way

to demonstrate a principle. Certainly, individuals in an actual bout are not likely to grab their opponents' wrists, nor are techniques like kokyu-nage going to be performed in the same manner as in the dojo. The underlying principle of each technique is taught and trained in the dojo. Yukyusha (kyu-ranked students) work on these techniques for years in order to understand what makes them work. Once this understanding is in place, and as the yukyusha advance to yudansha (dan-ranked students), they explore the application of such techniques in an actual bout. If an Aikido expert was in an mixed martial arts (MMA) match, for example, observers would likely not see any Aikido techniques that are the same as those trained in the dojo. However, the underlying principles would be there, perhaps manifested in diverse ways. For Aikido students to be able to do this—to be able to successfully apply Aikido techniques and principles in a real engagement—they must not only train in the traditional forms with compliant uke but also learn to apply aiki against noncompliant uke. They must learn to properly utilize power so that a punch can create the opening necessary into which a technique is then applied. Again, remember Ueshiba Morihei stated that Aikido is 70 percent striking. Although there have been various interpretations of this statement, perhaps it should be interpreted as simply as possible, without conjecture by individuals who are unaware of O-Sensei's meaning. This statement is simple, and it implies that aiki can be properly applied through atemi. Such strikes are therefore the heart of Aikido.

The way many individuals train in Aikido today is not the way that the founder trained. Individuals came from all over Japan to study under him and his teacher Takeda Sokaku. They were considered some of the most powerful fighters in the entire country, and they were often challenged. When facing a challenger, one must be ready for any kind of attack, as martial artists training in different styles have diverse specializations. Some might like to fight on the ground, while others like to throw and pin. Still others might like to punch and kick. Great fighters have a combination of all these skills that are organized using the underlying principles of a given style. The point is, for Ueshiba and Takeda to have been considered the top fighters in the country, they must have been proficient in all aspects of combat. If Aikido students today disregard certain elements, such as developing aiki and channeling it through a punch or kick or having a repertoire of ground fighting techniques, they are not following Ueshiba's art as we interpret it. In addition, if practitioners choose to limit their knowledge of techniques and if they ignore certain elements of martial arts, they will likely be defeated in an actual bout, no matter how good their techniques are. We will elaborate on this so there are no misunderstandings.

When students begin studying any martial art, they work hard on their form. Eventually, their forms are perfected: each punch and kick have the correct shape, and each body position mirrors the forms found in kata or other set forms (such as basic techniques carried out from grabs in Aikido with cooperative uke). At this point, although the forms might look great, the practitioners most likely cannot channel power through the strikes or into the throws yet. This is the next stage, when the students learn how to coordinate the technique with correct body movement and maai, integrated breathing, and proper timing. At this point, students may begin to learn how to develop

internal power and aiki. Slowly, they will learn how to manifest that power in their movements. They will also learn how to move from their centers. Eventually, they will gain an understanding of how to apply such techniques against resisting opponents and how to use their formal techniques in realistic (or real) situations. This process takes years (and might not follow the exact order as presented herein).

There is a very famous martial parable that illustrates this process: A man named Shoken wanted to get rid of a rat. It was a giant rat, yet he could not corner it. He chased it around his house with a wooden sword, but every time he swung the weapon, he knocked down screens and furnishings. He had no luck whatsoever, and he knew that he would completely destroy his own home if he carried on in this way. He decided to borrow some of the most skilled cats in the neighborhood, cats that were known for their martial prowess. However, each time he put a cat into the room with the rat, the cat was soundly beaten. He was amazed, but he had not given up hope. Having heard that there was another cat that was particularly good at getting rid of mice, he borrowed it and brought it home. It did not look like anything special. It moved slowly and it seemed lazy. Upon placing it in the room, however, the rat cowered right where it was, and the cat strolled leisurely over to it, picked it up, and took it away. The other cats who saw this—cats proud of their abilities and who made great efforts in their martial disciplines—were curious, and they asked the cat to explain this mysterious technique that they had witnessed. The cat agreed, but he first wished to know how the other cats disciplined themselves.

The first cat came forward and said that he had trained for years jumping over high screens and squeezing into tiny crevices. He could pretend to be asleep or suddenly jump forward with a blast of energy. There was no trick that he could not do. The old cat responded, “Your discipline is only a performance of skill. Thus, you still haven’t escaped from the mind that aims at something.”[1]

Another cat came forward and stated that he had spent years training his internal energy, becoming increasingly powerful so that he could defeat any opponent who came forward. But the old cat explained that just because he may be strong, that does not mean the opponent is weak. You might hide your power from the opponent in order to gain the upper hand, but the opponent might do the same. Therefore, attacking an opponent with internal energy alone might not work.

The third cat stated that he did not contend with others. (Much like Ueshiba’s statement about the nature of Aikido: There are no competitions in Aikido. A real fighter is victorious because he or she contends with nothing.) The cat commented that when others came at him with force, he would blend with the opponent, thus creating harmony. However, the rat he faced could not be overcome by harmonizing or by the use of force. The old cat admonished him, stating,

> Your harmony is not natural harmony. You think, and so create harmony. Though you intend to avoid your opponent’s sharp spirit, you still retain a small bit of intention, so your opponent sees through your tactic. If you attempt to reach harmony by inserting your mind, your ch’i will be corrupted and you will be

> approaching negligence. When you think and then do something, you obstruct your natural perception. And if you obstruct natural perception, how can the mysterious function be given life from anywhere? Simply without thinking, without doing anything, move by following your natural perception and your movement will have no form. And when you have no form, there is nothing in heaven and earth that could be your opponent.[2]

All the cats who had been brought in to take down the rat were accomplished martial artists. However, in every one of their cases, their skill was lacking, despite how competent they felt. There is wisdom in this. The old cat, which had bested all their skills, looked lazy and unskilled, and yet his power was so palpable that merely being in the same room with an adversary caused that enemy to surrender. The old cat also told the following story of yet another cat who was far superior to him in martial disciplines:

> Long ago there was a cat in my neighborhood; it slept all day and had no vitality at all. It was like a cat made out of wood. People never saw it catch rats, yet wherever the cat was, there were no rats in the vicinity. And this was true even if it changed locations. I went over and asked why this was so, but it gave me no answer. Though I asked it four times, still four times it did not answer. It was not that it could not answer, but that it did not know what to say. This is an example of "Those who know don't speak; those who speak do not know." The cat had forgotten that it had forgotten itself, and had returned to a state of nothingness. The very spirit of martial, it killed nothing. I am far and away unable even to approach that cat.[3]

This story might be a bit esoteric, but its teaching can be applied to the development of skills in any martial art. Students must move beyond form, applying the deep principles learned to all aspects of combat so they are prepared for any kind of attack. There are different levels of martial skills. One important consideration on the path is to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the art studied. Then, if one is to advance, he or she must turn the weaknesses into strengths. Students must train in all aspects of martial arts so they can deal with any attack, using various forms of defense. This chapter has presented various ways in which Aikido practitioners may be forced to defend themselves from the ground using standard, traditional Aikido techniques and variations of others (that can be used in accordance with the principles of Aikido). In the following chapters, we present specific ground techniques that Aikido students can add to their repertoire of techniques. It should be remembered that these techniques are Aikido techniques, so the principles of Aikido must not be ignored. The modifications in place take into account the ground, which alters body positions and changes the way strength can be used. It also changes the angles needed to successfully perform techniques.

Ueshiba Morihei stressed the importance of takemusu aiki: the spontaneous creation of techniques that naturally arise based on what is needed in a given circumstance. Keep

this in mind when reviewing the techniques presented herein. These are not the only techniques for use in Aikido ground fighting. Just as the basic techniques, organized in what are called the six pillars of Aikido, are designed to teach students specific principles, the techniques herein are also meant to target those principles. Each technique demonstrates the specific modification necessary to carry out all pillars of Aikido from any body position, even on the ground. Readers that study this section carefully and train in these techniques will develop an understanding of the principles behind them, and they will eventually have unlimited techniques at their disposal.

GRAPPLING TECHNIQUES I: SUWARI-WAZA AS A MIDDLE GROUND

Although suwari-waza is primarily considered an exercise in Aikido, it does contain substantial martial applications. Students training in suwari-waza develop a freedom of movement from a kneeling posture. They become more comfortable in this position, and they can easily shift from standing to kneeling and vice versa. Expertise in suwari-waza, combined with Aikido practitioners' ukemi skills, can make practitioners formidable in combat. This is because they can easily shift from any position into a more advantageous one. Sometimes, an aikidoka would want to remain on the ground. In other circumstances, he or she would want to stand. Suwari-waza is a middle ground: one that allows the practitioner to remain in a strong position in which he or she can easily shift to another position. For this reason, most Aikido ground techniques are those techniques that can be used to change from a seemingly weak, prone position to a strong and maneuverable position on one's knees.

When referring to a suwari-waza position, most Aikido students would picture a stance in which both knees are on the ground and the balls of the feet are also touching the ground, a position known as keiza. Although this is one stance found in suwari-waza, it is not the only position that can be utilized. There are variations, including a stance in which one knee is up. Some call this a half-body stance. It occurs when one knee is on the ground and the sole of the opposite foot is flat on the floor, the knee up, forming approximately a ninety-degree angle. This position is familiar to all students of Aikido. It occurs in some pins and pinning variations. It also shows up in almost all the pins of Yoshinkan Aikido, which is accredited to Shioda Gozo, one of O-Sensei's prewar students. (Many consider that this style of Aikido is one of the most martially oriented.) This is an extremely useful stance with countless martial possibilities.

Figure 4.1. Half-body stance

In order to clarify the martial applications found in suwari-waza (and of this stance in particular), several variations of techniques will be mentioned and explained. Then specific techniques for getting from a prone position back into suwari-waza will be covered in detail. It is believed that an understanding of these aspects of ground fighting will help practitioners to gain the skills needed to counter techniques on the ground and to get back into advantageous positions in which they are more comfortable. Ground techniques are typically not practiced in Aikido dojo. However, it would not take much effort to understand these principles, practice some additional techniques, and fight effectively on the ground. This is because Aikido students have already been practicing with these same principles in mind. First, practitioners must understand the true efficacy of suwari-waza body positioning. Consider the following techniques, which can illustrate some martially oriented uses of suwari-waza and half-body positioning.

Kote-gaeshi Pinning Variation

Kote-gaeshi is a familiar technique for any Aikido student, even a beginner. It is the first technique taught in some dojo for two reasons: First, it is simple to explain. Second, it is easy to do, so a beginner can see results right away. For the sake of readers who are unfamiliar with Aikido, a brief explanation of this technique is in order. Assume that the attacker comes at the defender with a right punch to the face. Although the stances of either person do not matter, for the purpose of this explanation, assume that the defender has his left leg forward.

The attacker will close the distance so he is able to launch a strong punch with his right fist. The defender performs either a tenkan or an irimi movement, attempting to blend with the attack and to get behind it. Although easier said than done, and

practically impossible when dealing with uncommitted attacks like a boxing jab, this is typically how the technique is explained and first taught to beginners. The defender will slide or step in toward the attack, blending with the movement while turning his center to face the same direction as the attacker. He makes contact with the attacker's right forearm area with his left hand. As he drops his weight, the hand (maintaining the connection) slides down to the attacker's wrist and hand. He grabs it at this point, not before, in such a way that the nage's left thumb is in a position just below the knuckle of the ring finger of the uke's right hand. The rest of the fingers envelop the base of his palm (figure 4.2).

Figures 4.2–4.4. Standard kote-gaeshi technique

Then the other hand is added, crushing the attacker's fingers downward and inward, toward his wrist, while the entire hand and arm unit is directed to the ground (figures 4.3 and 4.4). There is more to it than this, but this explanation provides the basic idea. Eventually, practitioners will want to completely blend with the attack and get behind it, adding their own force to the force provided by the attacker. They will want to unbalance the opponent using subtle shifts in movement to affect the technique. Once this skill is conditioned, kote-gaeshi can be less painful and yet equally (if not even more) effective.

Gaeshi is a voiced pronunciation (i.e., a pronunciation of a term when it is combined with another word) of *kaeshi*, which can be translated as "turn." *Kote* does not mean "wrist," as some aikidoka believe. Kote was the piece of armor worn by the samurai that covered the wrist and forearm together. The outer side of it was metal and strong, while the inner part of it was made up of leather straps used to secure it to the forearm. This is why swordsmen who know what they are doing would never strike the backside of the wrist. They always try to slice the inside of the wrist, where they could cause damage.

With this in mind, kote-gaeshi does not need a wristlock to be successful. Of course, novices must begin this way, and manipulation of the wrist to cause some pain has several important benefits. These include teaching the attacker and the defender how to correctly apply painful techniques and how to deal with pain in order to be successful in an engagement. It also ingrains the correct arm movement of both the nage and uke so that the understanding of the technique can later be expanded upon. Whether you are a beginner or an advanced student of Aikido, once the attacker is on the ground, the pin

begins.

The nage still has the uke's right wrist and forearm, the kote area. This is held by the defender's left hand. The attacker lands on the ground on his back. The pin must be put into place quickly. Although there are variations in which a pin is put on while the uke is on his back, the standard variation involves forcing the uke onto his stomach on the ground. Both possibilities have some strengths and weaknesses. Generally, aikidoka would prefer to pin an attacker face down so that an attack from that position is less likely. To move the attacker over onto his stomach, the nage maintains the grip with his left hand and places his right just below the elbow joint. (Keep in mind that the uke's arm is upside down: opposite from its position while standing. In order to gain control of an elbow while he is standing, the hand would be placed above it, on the shoulder side of it. While the attacker is on his back on the ground, the nage's hand will go in the same place, but when describing it herein, it is now below the attacker's elbow.)

Keeping the left hand in place on the attacker's right wrist and hand, the defender spreads his fingers and places the tight area between the thumb and the index below the uke's elbow. Keeping this position, he pushes the opponent's hand into his face. He keeps it there. Then he rotates the elbow around the uke's head in a clockwise direction. Due to the pain felt in having his elbow joint turned in this way, he will flip over onto his stomach. From this position, the pin can be completed from a standing posture by pulling up on the arm (to remove slack) and then pushing it forward toward the attacker's opposite shoulder while maintaining downward pressure.

The standard seated pin is the same pin used to complete the nikkyo technique. The right knee touches the mat first on one side of the shoulder (assuming that the uke attacked with his right arm), and then the left knee is placed on the other side. The arms in this pin cradle the attacker's arm. The left one is close to the attacker's wrist, while the right one is beneath his elbow. The person performing the pin squeezes his knees together (with the attacker's shoulder between them). This immobilizes the joint. At the same time, he straightens the uke's arm upward to remove the slack. Then he pulls it in and across his chest so the affected arm cannot move. It is trapped, pulled tightly into the nage's body. From this position, the nage can turn his torso toward the attacker's opposite shoulder in order to add pain. In the dojo, the uke will tap, and the nage will release him.

There is one variation that Aikido students have most likely seen that will herein be used to explain one of the most important points of suwari-waza. Although some readers will be familiar with the physical motion of this pin, an in-depth analysis of the specific pinning position and what that position accomplishes will illustrate an important concept in Aikido ground or grappling techniques. Sometimes, as soon as the attacker hits the ground, instead of maintaining the kote-gaeshi pin, the nage will immediately let go of it and instantly grab the arm with his forearms—applying the ending nikkyo pin right away. Then maintaining this tight connection with his arms, he will move the uke in the same direction as the standard standing or seated versions. However, this pin will be applied quickly. If the nage goes down to his knees, he limits his own mobility. If he remains standing, the pin in which the elbow is trapped against the ground cannot

be applied without making the nage unstable. Instead, he must utilize a half-body stance, in which one knee is up and the other is on the ground.

Figures 4.5–4.9. Kote-gaeshi variation

From such a position, he can leap quickly to his feet or drop his body weight onto the opponent's body or arm, whatever the situation requires. This stance also allows the user to apply much more downward pressure than the standard pinning pressure. This downward pressure alone can prevent a practitioner from rising, never mind the lateral pressure that creates a painful spiraling in the uke's trapped arm.

Kote-gaeshi is a technique nearly everyone is familiar with and possibly even comfortable performing, no matter how long he or she has been studying Aikido. This variation is easy to perform, and the qualitative differences in the technique will instantly be recognized when it is used. When performing this technique in a dojo, feel what happens to the attacker, but also feel what happens to you as the defender. You will find that you can easily move up or down; it is versatile. You will also notice that you are able to apply a great deal of force into your opponent and that your stance is

incredibly strong and solid. Try this technique in your respective dojo. It will facilitate an understanding of the martial benefits of this stance and its relationship to the techniques that will be described next.

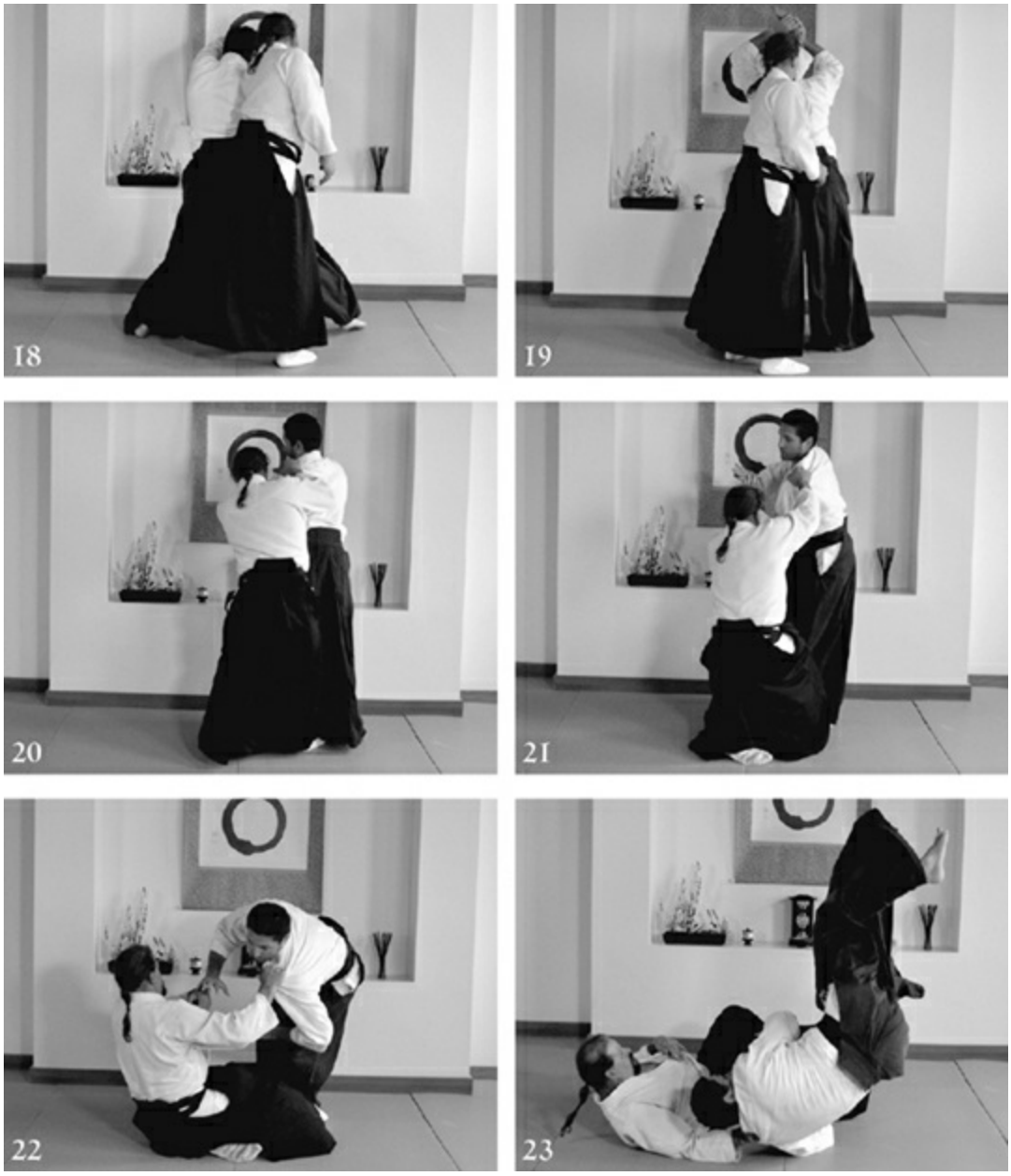
Shiho-Nage Counter Technique

For almost every technique performed, there is a way to reverse that technique. Sometimes, the reversals lead directly to a posture on the ground. Take shiho-nage, for instance. The attacker comes in with some kind of a strike using the right hand. The defender blends with the strike, grabs hold of the inside of his wrist with his right hand, and while keeping his arm taut, steps across his front and then turns around. This is the omote variation of this technique. In the ura version, there is no step across the front. There is simply a pivot on the front foot (the left foot as the technique is herein described). No matter what variation is used, the attacker's arm should wind up in a position similar to a chicken wing with pressure applied backward. To finish the pin or throw, the defender will cut down with the attacker's arm, as though it were a sword.

Now let's consider the reversal. Consider that you are attacking someone with your left hand (figure 4.10). In the related pictures, the attack is a yokomenuchi. The defender blends with the movement to the inside while stepping back (and around) with his right foot (figures 4.12 through 4.15). This motion is continued in order to bring you off balance so that shiho-nage can be applied. Once the balance has been broken, the defender (i.e., the one performing shiho-nage) stretches your arms forward and across the front of your body. His left leg is forward. Then he steps in with his right foot (figure 4.17), and while keeping the arm taut, he pivots to face the opposite direction, thus putting your elbow joint in a compromised situation and adversely affecting your balance (figures 4.18 and 4.19). The reversal begins from this position.

First, step back slightly to remove some of the pressure on your arm. With your right hand, grab the thrower's clothing. In the accompanying pictures, it is a training uniform, or *keikogi*, but it could just as easily work with any other kind of shirt. Keeping this hold, you will perform a body-sacrifice throw *(sutemi)*. Where you move your feet and where you actually hit the ground may change depending on how your partner moves and reacts to your initial tug. One way that this is performed is the following: Step forward and underneath the opponent with your right foot. Then drop to the ground, attempting to put your butt right next to where your right foot is. The left leg should be relatively straight and forward. If this step is performed correctly and quickly enough, the momentum created by dropping your body is enough to throw the opponent back and to your right (figures 4.20 through 4.23). In this scenario, you will be temporarily on your back on the ground as he is thrown. Ukemi skills will allow you to quickly regain a strong position in suwari-waza. Depending on how the attacker moves once you have begun to apply shiho-nage, it might be possible to simply drop to one knee and complete the throw. In this case, you will never be on your back on the ground. You will finish this throw in suwari-waza, with both knees on the ground. From

that position, move quickly to gain complete control of the uke. Maintain the grip you have on his clothing and lift one knee so you establish the half-body stance previously mentioned. If you wrap your left arm around the uke's left arm, you can gain control of the appendage. Then use your raised knee as a fulcrum and apply pressure to the elbow joint. While this pin is applied to the arm, the other hand must apply pressure downward on either the side of the head or the throat.



Figures 4.10–4.23. Shiho-nage reversal

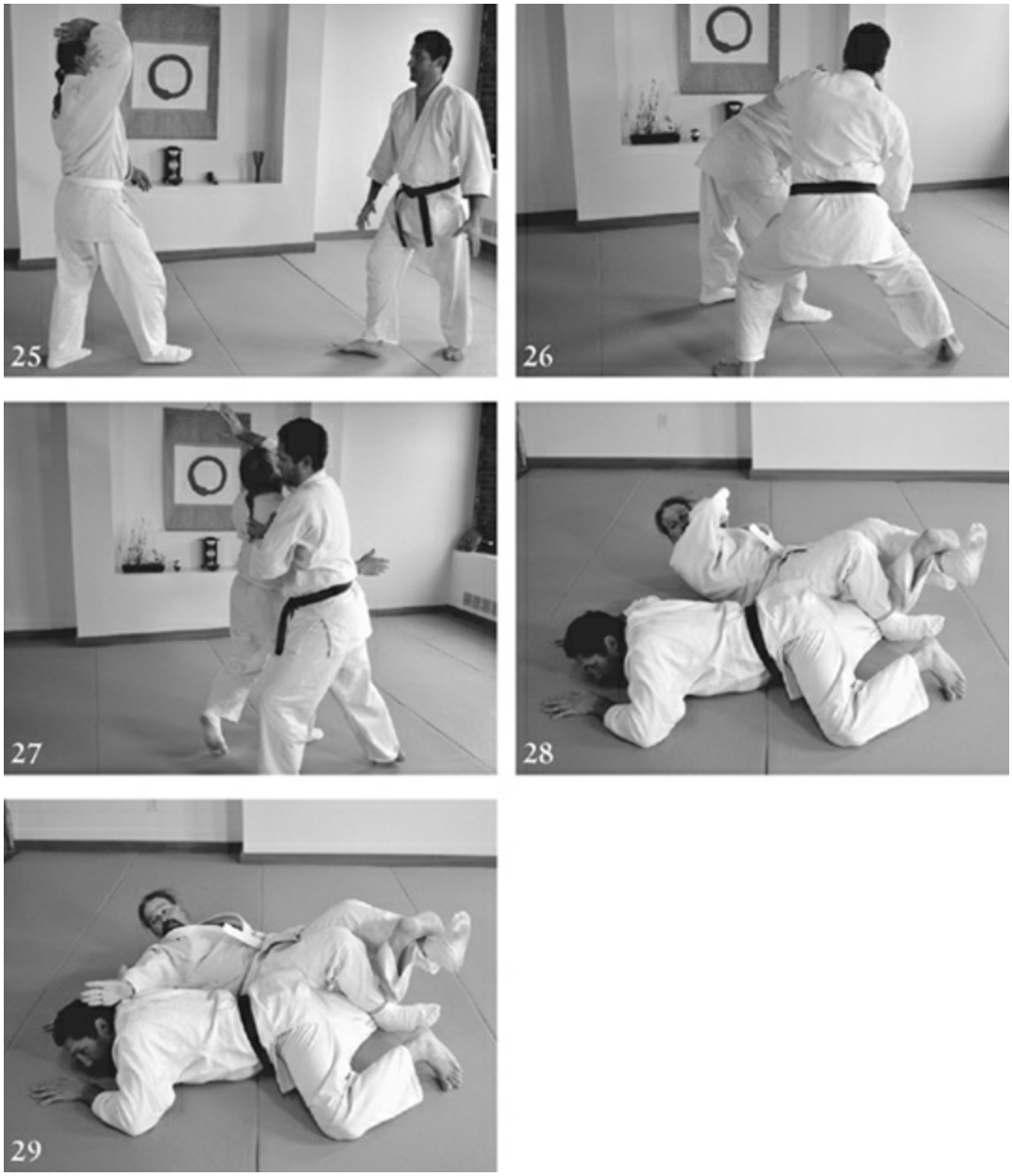
This ending position for the person pinning is exactly the same as that found in the kote-gaeshi pinning variation. However, the uke's position is reversed. In kote-gaeshi, he was facedown, and pressure was applied downward with the hand opposite to the raised knee. This position allowed the nage to easily jump to his feet or to move into other types of newaza from a prone position. In this current technique—a shiho-nage reversal—although the nage is in the exact same body position, the uke is reversed. His chest faces up, which means he might be able to use his legs for an attack. The raised knee provides a leverage point upon which an elbow pin (an ikkyo variation) can be applied. Downward pressure is still applied (as it was in the first example), only this time it is directed against the opponents head or neck rather than his shoulder. While applying this pin, using this stance, the nage is able to apply pressure downward while affecting the elbow joint and immobilizing the neck, yet he can still spring to his feet or shift to an alternate pinning position on his back or side.

Figure 4.24. Example of face-up pinning technique

One more example should be provided to illustrate the half-body stance, suwari-waza in general, and actual ground techniques. After this final example, ground techniques designed to get an aikidoka back to suwari-waza will be explained in detail. The following section involves the standard omote version of the irimi-nage technique.

Irimi-Nage Counter Technique

Irimi-nage, as it is typically applied, involves sidestepping an attack, grabbing the back of the attacker's head, and then dropping with your full body weight while bending the knees into what is generally called a horse stance. Controlling a person's head means controlling his or her entire body. When you drop your full body weight, maintaining control of the uke's head, his or her entire body is forced downward and off balance. In an actual situation, if this first part of the technique were pulled off, it would result in the attacker falling headfirst to the ground. It might very well be the end of the technique. However, in Aikido dojo, students are trained to bounce back to their feet using their ukemi skills. The nage uses the momentum of the uke when he rises, blending with it. Then he cuts down on the opponent's head (figure 4.26). He takes control of the uke's head and neck by pulling it into his chest, and then he steps forward with his arm outstretched to unbalance and down the attacker (figure 4.27). This waza looks like a clothesline technique when performed.



Figures 4.25–4.29. Irimi-nage technique with ground reversal

The reversal of this technique needs to be attempted early. Fighters will exploit any weaknesses in the technique to stop, get out of, or reverse its execution. The initial movement would be made while the nage attempts to break the uke's balance downward. If this does not occur in time, he might use a body-sacrifice throw (like the one previously mentioned) to throw the nage when he moves forward with his arm outstretched. However, it is possible that a fighter might be unable to regain his balance at this point in the throw. His center of gravity is up, and his body is arched backward. The nage has control of his head and steps in, slipping the arm underneath the uke's chin. Then he forcefully throws the uke to the mat. At this point in the technique, the uke has missed all the standard opportunities that are typically taught for a reversal. However, it does not mean that he is finished.

Often, techniques in martial arts do not work out as planned. If you missed earlier attempts at a reversal and are thrown to the mat, do not give up. There are still ways to gain the advantage, and your ukemi skills will assist you in being successful. Here is just

one example from this stage of an irimi-nage throw: Assume you are the attacker. You attack the defender with a right-handed shomen attack. The defender slides or steps in, blending with the attack. He cuts down on the attacking arm while gaining control of the head, turns, and then steps forward while extending his right arm to upset your balance and throw you. You have lost your center and are unable to fight the movement with force. However, one of the key principles of Aikido is to never fight anything with force. It is important to exploit weaknesses. In this position, if you are being thrown by an unskilled martial artist, it might be possible to grab his clothing or a weak part of the body (like an elbow joint) and then drop to the floor, performing a body-sacrifice throw. However, if the thrower has some skill in staying centered, this move may be ineffective. Your last-ditch effort to gain the advantage lies in attacking the thrower's knee.

If you have an opportunity to kick the side of the knee with some force, take it, but as you fall to the mat, this possibility is unlikely. It is unlikely because you are off balance. In addition, this would require perfect timing, which is difficult to attain while not in complete control of your own body. Instead, use your legs to collapse his (right) leg and keep hold of the thrower's arm to force him onto the ground next to you (figure 4.28). If you are fast enough, you can end the engagement with a lethal strike (figure 4.29). If not, you will find yourself in a situation virtually unpracticed in Aikido dojo. Both attacker and defender will be on the ground, prone. Certainly, both individuals will try to get back to suwari-waza as soon as possible. One will gain the advantage by moving to this middle ground faster than the other. Therefore, it is important to defend oneself from both positions: from the ground, dealing with someone who is in a half-body stance, and from suwari-waza, dealing with a prone individual struggling to get up.

Consider the latter scenario first. When you hit the ground next to the thrower, both of you will be situated in the same way. In other words, your heads and feet will be close to each other (in the same direction). While gaining the positional advantage by moving to suwari-waza, grab an arm or a leg. If it is an arm, you can utilize the pin previously described in the shiho-nage reversal scenario. It is possible, however, that the opponent will be face up (like in the shiho-nage example), but you will be in the reverse position. In another scenario, you may face opposite the opponent's feet. The same pin could be applied here, but the opponent's feet, which can be used as weapons, become a more significant threat. For this reason, it might be safer to use a complete ground pin, at least temporarily, and move your body to a safer position while maintaining pressure on (and hence causing pain to) the joint. Such pins include the popular Judo pin *ude hishigi juji gatame*.

Ude Hishigi Juji Gatame

Neil Ohlenkamp explains the ude hishigi juji gatame:

> Commonly called *juji gatame*, this cross arm lock gets its name from your position

across your opponent's body. One of the most effective arm locks in judo, it is consistently the number-one winning arm lock used in international judo competition. It is a specialty of the 1981 World Champion, Neil Adams, of the United Kingdom. It is equally effective in high-level competition and in self-defense, and is included in many modern and traditional jujutsu systems. It is particularly powerful because you use your entire body, including the strength of your legs and hips, to control uke and apply tremendous pressure to the straightened arm. For this reason, it can be used easily against larger or stronger opponents.[1]

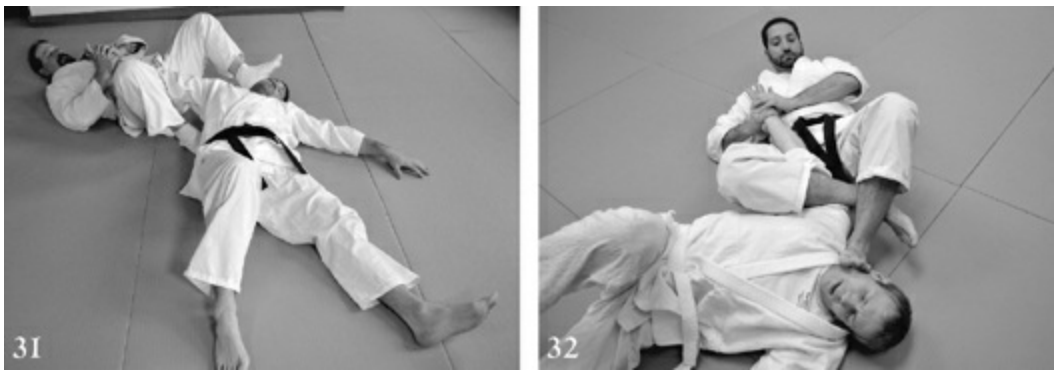
This pin can be easily learned and applied. First, take control of the opponent's wrist with one or both hands. Then gain control of his shoulder by squeezing it with the knees. Place the elbow joint against the inside of the thigh, and leverage against the joint by leaning backward. A common mistake for beginners is to try to leverage the pin directly against the crotch; do not fall for this common mistake. Instead, if the opponent's right arm is pinned, pull it across the right side of your crotch.

Figure 4.30. Ude hishigi juji gatame

Often, when this pin is applied from the ground, the legs are stretched across the body, one on each side of the arm. However, other positions can be used, including keeping one leg on one side of the body while stretching the other across the opponent's torso. In our opinion, one of the best ways to apply this technique is the following: To simplify the explanation, assume that you have just thrown someone down using kote-gaeshi. You have his right wrist in your hands. Kick his side, just below his shoulder, with your right foot, and then place the right foot underneath his body. You need to be able to apply pressure downward and across with your left knee. Keep your right leg and foot where they are and drop down to the ground while lifting your left leg up and over the opponent. Once on the ground, your left leg will be over his throat, applying pressure downward, while your left foot will be on the opposite side of his body. Your right foot will be under the side of his body on which the arm is being pinned. The arm

is pulled backward and leveraged against a spot on the inner thigh to the right of the crotch.

The application of this pinning technique has been described as a possible conclusion to kote-gaeshi. By thinking of such pins in this way, they can naturally be added to dojo curricula and practiced. However, these pins can be applied from any position, including prone positions on the ground. Applying a ground pin like juji gatame from the side might eliminate some of the dangers a single opponent could provide. However, a ground pin does not allow a practitioner to defend against multiple attackers. For this reason, it is not usually advisable in Aikido. If such a complete ground pin must be utilized, it is a good idea to reposition your feet so your opponent's head can be kicked while you maintain an arm lock. (See figures 4.31 and 4.32 for clarification.) If other aggressors approach, a hard kick could prevent further attacks from the individual on the ground. Considering this possibility, situate your body in such a way that facilitates this response.



Figures 4.31–4.32. Pinning variations: these minor changes from the standard pin enable the practitioner to issue lethal kicks while maintaining an arm lock.

If a leg is grabbed instead of an arm, a leg pin should be used, if even just temporarily, so you may gain control of the adversary's neck, head, or elbow or wrist joints. A knowledge of leg pinning techniques is necessary. Some are practiced in Aikido dojo, such as yonkyo applied to the inside of the ankle or ankle locks applied from a standing posture. However, joint manipulation learned from Aikido training can be applied to the legs. Leg locks can be applied from various positions. Most of the time, they are most effectively applied from a standing posture, which provides more leverage. However, when you and your opponent are struggling for the advantage on the ground, it might not be feasible to rise to your feet while applying a leg pin. For example, if rising to your feet would result in losing control of the opponent's joint, it does not make sense to rise, as standing up will allow him or her to regroup and possibly attack again. In such situations, the pin must be applied from the ground first. Once it is applied, you can move to your feet while maintaining control of the attacker.

The following is an example of one particular leg lock. Typically, it is put into place from a mounted position, in which your opponent is on his back on the ground while you are on top of him. If you find yourself in this position, you might first attempt to strike him. He will naturally have his arms in front of his face to block any such attack.

Once he attempts to defend himself using his arms, they are made available for a joint-manipulation technique like kote-gaeshi, ikkyo, nikkyo, sankyo, or yonkyo. However, from this position, leverage is difficult, and such pins may be difficult if not impossible to apply. In this situation, while maintaining a grip on his arm or wrist, try to apply a lock and slip one of your feet inside the opponent's leg by stretching your leg backward. Bend the foot at the ankle joint and then pull back toward your center. In other words, the bent ankle functions as the head of a rake, while the leg functions as the rake handle. As his leg is raked in toward you, turn your body to the opposite side of his chest, rising up to the half-body position. At the same time, extend the involved leg away from you. Stretch it away from your body. While stretching it, you must apply downward pressure with your leg against his thigh. The position of his leg will resemble a chicken wing; it looks like a shiho-nage applied against the leg. In Aikido, it is a shiho-nage variation against a leg instead of an arm. If you extend the leg a bit more, your opponent should tap out. If he rolls toward you in an attempt to lessen his pain, he puts himself into an even more disadvantageous position: he exposes his back. In such a situation, he will be unable to adequately move and as such cannot attack or defend effectively. If he does this, and you wish to continue applying the pin until he taps out, shift the direction of the pressure toward his head, and bend his leg inward. This is extremely painful, and he will tap out. Just like all other Aikido techniques that make use of pain-compliance techniques, the attacker is perfectly fine once he is released. In other words, he can be completely controlled without injury.

This is just one variation of a leg lock that can be used from the ground. No matter what leg technique is utilized, once control is gained, you can shift positions in order to weaken the opponent. In other words, the leg locks are only used to buy you time; they provide an opportunity to move into an advantageous position. No matter what, you do not want to remain on the ground for long. The key is to take the advantage from the ground while you are in a prone position and then rise as quickly as possible to a half-body position in suwari-waza.

Now the former situation should be considered. You and your opponent hit the ground, but he beats you by moving into an advantageous posture in suwari-waza while you are still prone. This must be reversed as soon as possible as your movements are limited from the ground. Gaining the advantage means rising into suwari-waza while forcing your opponent into a prone position. It means literally trading places, which is difficult. During the ensuing struggle, you may find yourself on your back, stomach, or side. If you do not know how to gain the advantage from such positions, your opponent will lock you down and restrict your movements, which will then lead to defeat. Specific techniques are needed in order to be successful in this endeavor. These techniques form the basis of what is herein called Aikido ground fighting. They are covered in detail in the next chapter.

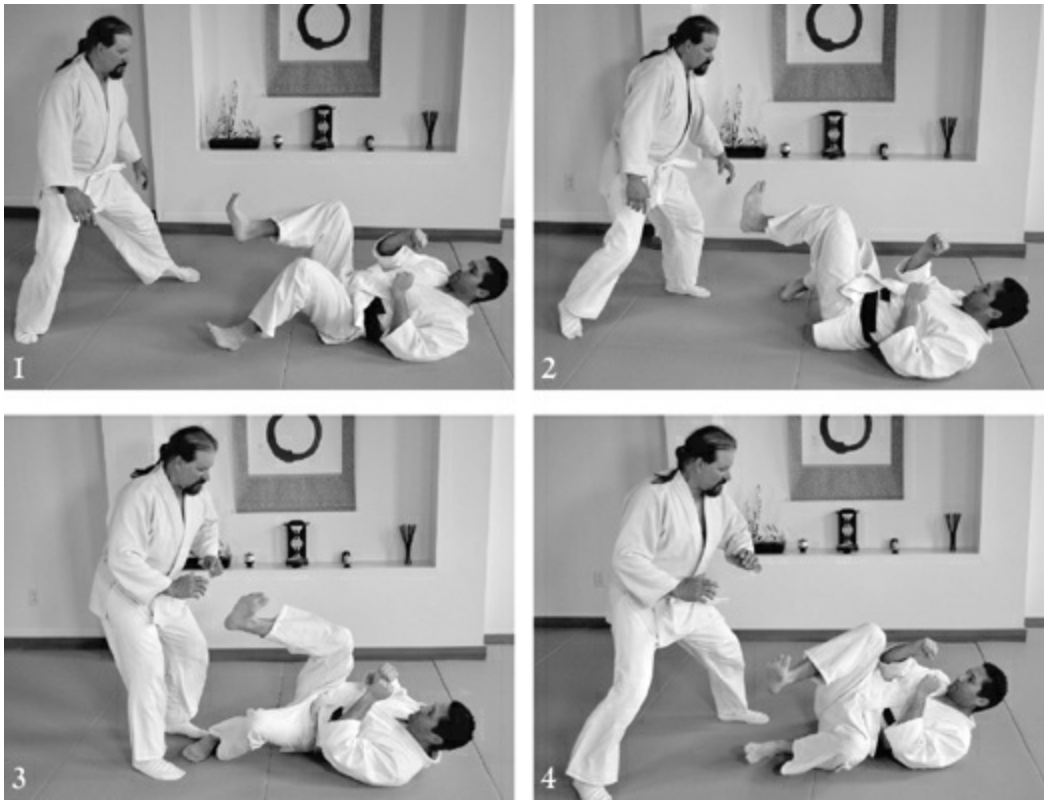
5

GRAPPLING TECHNIQUES II: GETTING BACK TO SUWARI-WAZA

If you are thrown or forced to the ground, you will be in an unfavorable position. Your options are restricted due to the position of your body and the limiting nature of the ground itself. Likewise, your opponent has more freedom to attack in suwari-waza or in a standing position. That is why it is so important to have a basic understanding of ground techniques. In an actual situation, the person who has thrown you will likely rush in to kick you, choke you, or apply some other pinning technique. Aikido ground fighting skills rely on the knowledge of how to create space and get away from your attacker long enough to rise to suwari-waza. They also require a knowledge of how to apply pins and chokes from a variety of unorthodox positions. First, it is necessary to learn how to keep an attacker at bay while he is standing.

Body Manipulation on the Ground

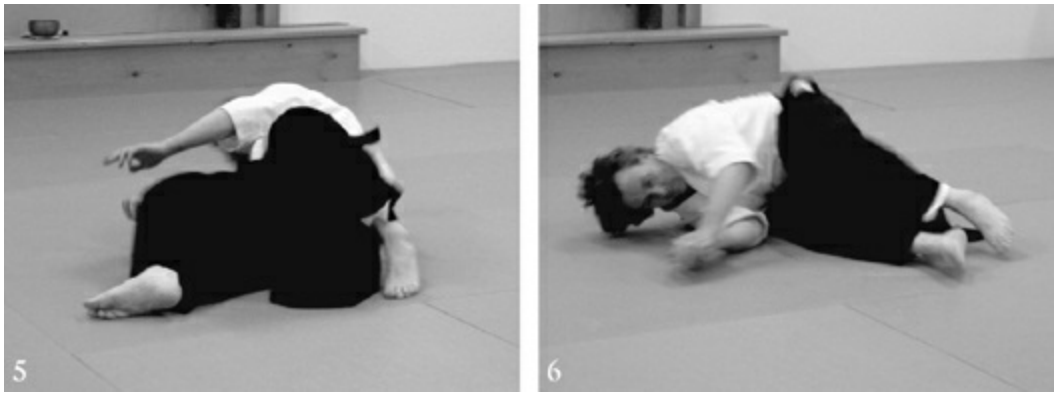
The first body technique that should be learned will not change the distance between you and a standing attacker. Rather, it will help you change your position so you are relatively safe from being pinned or kicked. Assume that you have been thrown. The attacker will either rush in to kick you as soon as you land or attempt to move to the side of your body, where a pin can be applied more easily. To prevent these possibilities, get to your side and ready your legs for potential kicks. If you are on your left side on the ground, your left forearm will be on the ground with your hand flat. The fingers of your left hand will face your opponent, as will your right knee, which should be raised, poised for action. Your left leg will be bent with the outside of the leg on the ground. Your right leg will be bent but straight in relation to the attacker. In other words, although the leg is bent, ready to kick, a straight line drawn from the kneecap or from the toes will point at the standing attacker. Keep your right arm ready in case you need to block an attack with it, and never take your eyes off your opponent.



Figures 5.1–5.4. Maintaining distance on the ground

From this position, you can quickly pivot in any direction—more quickly than a standing attacker can shift positions. Use your left leg as a pivot point, and move so your opponent is always in the same position relative to you. As you rotate around, using your left leg as a pivot, be ready to flip to the other side as the need arises. Just turn over, maintaining a duplicate version of the pin on the right side. When practicing in the dojo, make sure that you can move just as easily from both sides. Most individuals have one side that they are more comfortable using. In combat, preferring one side over another is a weakness that can be exploited. Learn to use both sides equally: this will make you a more capable fighter.

Another body manipulation, often referred to as pulling rope, should also be practiced. This movement is used when you are unable to immediately rise to your feet but want to create some distance between you and the attacker. If you have been thrown down and are on your back, turn to the side. Then pull your hips and butt backward, away from the opponent. Turn over and do the same thing on the other side, using your legs and hips in unison in order to move smoothly. Think of the movement as pulling rope to help you perform it correctly.



Figures 5.5–5.6. Pulling rope body movement

No matter how you move along the ground, keep in mind that the opponent will want to get to the side of your body. Your hands and feet do not obstruct him when he is beside you; therefore, he can easily apply a pin or kick you. If he gets close enough to grab your legs and you do not kick him, he will throw your legs out of the way and then move into the gap he has created in order to apply a pin or execute an attack. It is helpful to understand how to throw your opponent's legs out of the way so you can pin someone if the situation were reversed. If you are able to get your hands on someone's legs on the ground and he or she resists you, you will not have much success matching his or her force. This is for two reasons: legs are stronger than arms, and an opponent on the ground can use the ground for leverage. Instead, use a basic principle in martial arts regarding balance breaking *(kuzushi):* If you want to pull, first push. And if you want to push, first pull.

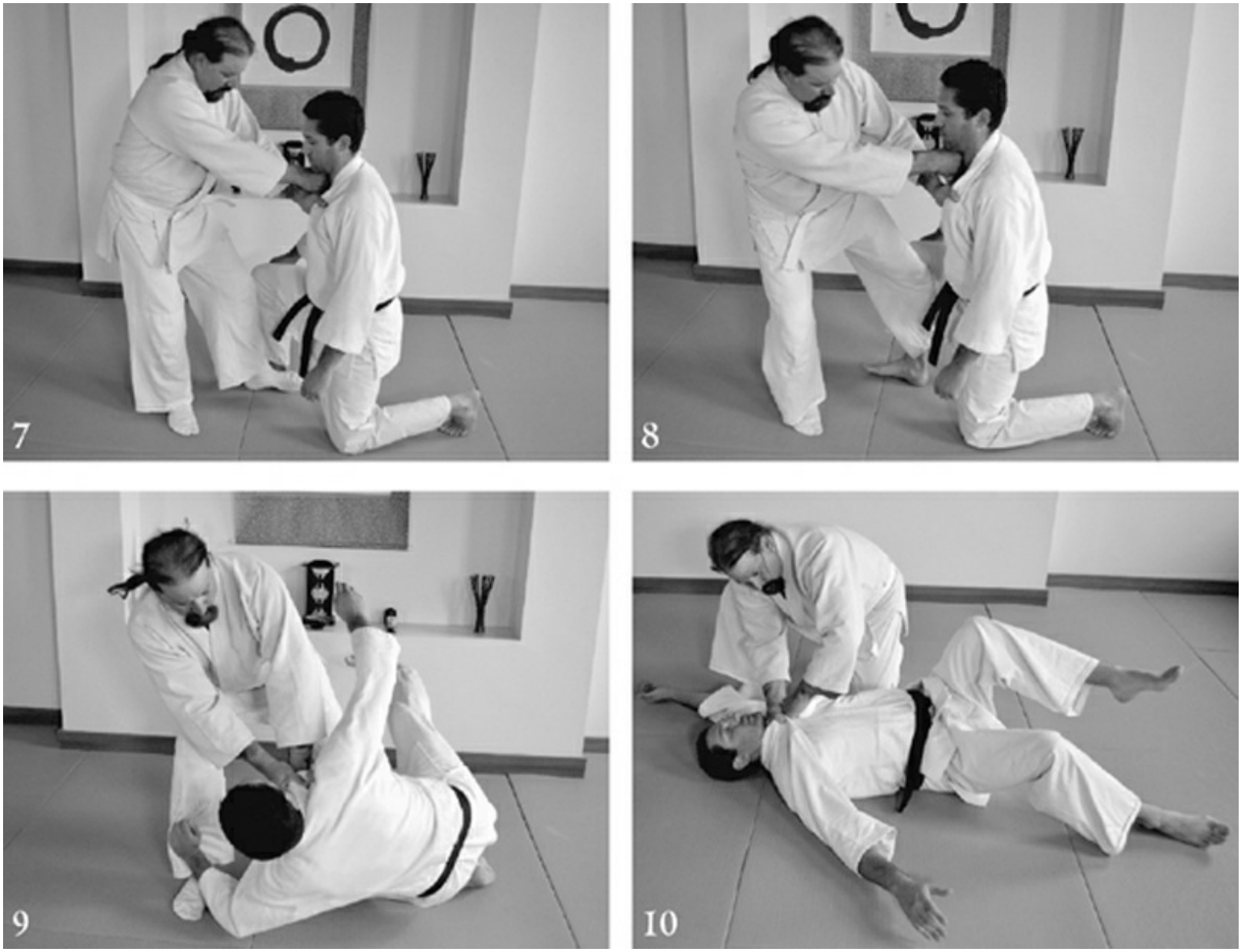
This will not likely work against extremely high-level (i.e., skilled) Budo practitioners because they will not engage in a struggle. However, most people, including highly ranked martial artists, are inclined to push back when pushed. As described earlier, meeting force with force is a natural tendency. Martial artists spend a lot of time retraining themselves to avoid this habit, but it is difficult. In Judo, if you intend to throw someone using a hip throw or a shoulder throw, first push him backward (i.e., in the opposite direction of the intended throw). Your opponent will naturally shift his weight forward in order to retain his balance. Use this forward motion to break his balance and then throw him. If you want to take advantage of an opponent who has been thrown, use this same principle to get his legs out of the way so you can access his torso. Push his legs to one side. Once he begins to fight that push with force, release the pressure and add your force to his own momentum in the opposite direction. Once his legs are out of the way, you can kick him or apply any number of pins. Now that you know how to gain the advantage, keep in mind that this is the same technique a skilled martial artist would use. Be on guard, and do all that you can to prevent this from happening.

After you have gained enough distance using such *tai-sabaki* (body movements) on the ground, rise up to a half-body position. Once you are in this position, you instantly become more formidable, and a wide range of possibilities are open to you. However, if you rush to get up into this position while the opponent is still close to you, there will be

some serious danger. If you raise one knee up off the ground while your attacker is in range, he will throw you with a technique such as *uchi-mata*, an inner-thigh reaping throw (figures 5.7 through 5.10). In order to be able to defend yourself against this and similar attacks, it is important to understand how the throw would normally be applied in this situation.

Uchi-Mata

This technique is found in many different martial arts. In order to be able to defend against it, its application should be understood. The following example shows how this technique is applied while standing: Assume that you have grasped your opponent's clothes or arms, and you want to throw him to your left and behind you (when facing him). First, affect his balance by pulling with your right hand. He will step forward with his left foot to maintain his balance. When he does, edge your left foot toward him to your left. Then initiate the throw by pulling him to your right, trying to get him to step forward with his left foot. As soon as he does, before the foot can hit the mat, change directions. Pull with your left hand as you push with your right. While you do this, turn and sweep his inner left thigh with your right leg. As you throw, turn and lean into the movement. The downward motion of the upper body, along with the pulling and pushing motions of the hands (pulling the left hand and pushing with the right in a circular fashion), breaks the opponent's balance. The leg moving upward to take his balance as well makes this throw exceptionally powerful. Performed like this, it is one of the most powerful Judo throws. It is not an Aikido throw. However, an understanding of the principles behind it is necessary in order to defend against it. In addition, a variation of this throw can be used in standard Aikido. This can function as a kokyu-nage throw. The action of the legs and arms together can make a balance-breaking kokyu-nage throw more effective.



Figures 5.7–5.10. Uchi-mata

Many kokyu-nage throws, as they are performed in dojo, are not martially effective techniques. They will not work against uncooperative uke. However, knowledge of the principles behind this particular Judo throw (uchi-mata) can help practitioners make their kokyu-nage (throws) more effective. For our purposes herein, knowledge of this technique's underlying principles is sufficient to explain how to avoid it. When you have been thrown to the mat, and you attempt to get up, you must be careful to avoid a variation of this technique. If you are too close to a standing attacker, and you attempt to get back to your feet, he can easily throw you to the mat.

To rise to your feet, you first move up to your knees. Then you raise one of your knees in order to stand up. So one knee will be on the ground, while the other foot is on the mat, the knee forming a ninety-degree angle. This position might look exactly like the martially efficient half-body stance. However, to properly utilize this stance while your opponent is on the ground, the aikidoka's intent must be downward. In other words, while in this stance, you should feel heavy; your energy and intent should be downward. Feel as though your body were being pulled through the ground, though it will not

change its external form. When your intent is pulled in this direction, the entire body will become heavier and more powerful. This feeling is downward, not upward. When you change to this posture with the intent of rising to your feet, however, you will be light and easily maneuverable. Intent can make a person feel heavier or lighter. For example, a baby who wants to be picked up generally feels lighter than one who does not wish to be handled. If your intent is upward in this or any other technique, you can be easily uprooted. If it is downward, you will feel heavier and be more difficult to move. When a skilled practitioner uses the half-body stance to apply a pin, the intent will be downward, because the opponent is downward. However, when attempting to rise from this position, it is different. Before you rise to your feet, your brain generates the intent to move upward. This intent makes your body feel lighter and more maneuverable. For this reason, you must separate yourself from a standing opponent before rising into a half-body stance. If you get into this position when the opponent is too close, he will slip his leg into the gap created by raising one leg. At the same time, he will use a combined pushing and pulling motion of his hands in order to throw you. This is a variation of uchi-mata. Keep in mind that your opponent will use this technique to dominate you. To avoid this, you must learn to use body manipulations on the ground to keep yourself in a safe and unassailable position or to gain space. Once sufficient maai has been attained, you can quickly but safely rise to your feet. Back on your feet, you will be on equal ground with a standing opponent.

It is important to understand that the two means of manipulating the body previously explained do not function independently. They should be practiced and perfected so that the movements blend with both ukemi and standard Aikido suwari-waza skills. For example, when thrown, your ukemi can protect you and create some initial distance from the thrower. Once you hit the ground, turning over and then rolling away can extend this distance. This rolling is a form of ukemi. If the opponent is right on top of you or closing in quickly, turning over or rolling might be difficult (as you will expose your back to the opponent for a brief moment during the roll). If the opponent is too close, get to your side, raise one leg to a striking position, and then pivot off the other leg in order to keep yourself in a martially safer place in relation to the attacker. Once you are able to gain some space using the pulling rope method, rise to your knees. Do not yet rise to a half-body position, however, as you could be easily thrown by an uchi-mata. Instead, as soon as you are able to get to your knees, use shikko (samurai knee-walking) to increase that distance. Once you can step out into a half-body stance and then instantly rise to your feet, do so. However, do not rush this move. Only take the actions when it is safe to do so.

O-Sensei used to caution his students to always be aware, to always expect an attack. There is a Japanese expression that reads, *“Isshun no fui uchi.”* It translates literally as, “In a moment, a sudden attack,” or, alternatively, “A moment’s vigilance will decide your fate.”

This mentality is important for any serious martial arts practitioners. One must be ready for an attack wherever he or she is and no matter what he or she is doing. Maintaining this constant awareness requires full attention. It is a worthwhile practice

both on and off the mat. Do not let this mentality lapse, especially the moment after you have been thrown. Sometimes, forced to face such a situation, the person who has been thrown or struck stops thinking clearly. He just wants to escape quickly. This is sometimes seen in Aikido with knife techniques. For example, when the wielder is in enough pain, he might forget that he still has the knife in his hand. Likewise, it is sometimes seen in the application of pain-compliance techniques like nikkyo. Even some students who know better will stop thinking when in intense pain. They will try to get away from the pain, even though they know better. By doing this, they put themselves in a much more dangerous situation. When surprised, scared, or in pain, even seasoned martial artists sometimes stop thinking clearly.

Figure 5.11. "A moment's vigilance will decide your fate." (Calligraphy by Walther G. von Krenner.)

After being thrown, do not forget that your attacker may wish to harm you. If you expose any vital area—if he senses or sees an opening—he will attack. For this reason, do not be in a rush to get away from the opponent or to get up too quickly. Carefully consider your movements before you make them to always keep yourself in a safe position. A combination of body movement on the ground, shikko, suwari-waza postures like seiza and keiza, and ukemi skills can help Aikido students recover after being thrown. Such knowledge can help them keep attackers at bay while they safely move into more efficient stances.

You may be unable to gain sufficient space to safely rise to your feet. Ground pins will help you in such situations. Once you have gained control of someone on the ground, the position that you establish can vary; you can shift to safer places. When

considering pins from a prone position, you must think about a wide variety of possibilities. First, the opponent might be on the ground next to you. This position could occur after you utilize a leg takedown from a position on your side. If your opponent moves in to attack you, you might decide to use both your legs to collapse one of his legs, thus forcing him to the ground. When he lands, he will be right next to you. This is the first position that you must learn to pin. There are other situations that also need to be explained, such as scenarios in which your opponent is quick and he ends up on top of you as soon as you are thrown. In such a situation, you need to understand how to pin from the ground on your back, while your opponent is above you. First, we will explain some pinning variations when both you and the opponent are on the ground next to each other.

Ground Pinning Techniques

There are many useful immobilization techniques that can be applied from a prone position. The following example, called *kesagatame*, demonstrates three different types of pins all rolled into one. It is extremely effective. Mastery of this particular pin will allow practitioners to seize control of the attacker's arm or torso and then to use that to gain control of other joints. Once this control has been established, the attacker can shift from a prone position to suwari-waza and then to standing, or vice versa. Although this pin can be applied at the conclusion of any Aikido technique and performed from any position, for the purposes of simplifying the explanation, let us say that you are able to grab kote-gaeshi from either suwari-waza or standing. Assume that you have grabbed the attacker's right wrist in kote-gaeshi, and you apply the technique quickly in order to get him to the ground.

Kesagatame, Ude-Osae, and Ude-Gurami Combined Pin

Once on the ground, the person being pinned has many opportunities to counterattack. He could kick from that position; he could use the ground for leverage in order to halt and redirect the pinning force, thus reversing the technique; or he could apply different pins by wrapping his arms or legs around the defender's torso or limbs. One way to prevent such actions is to use a ground pin. Consider this scenario: Once the (initial) attacker is on the ground, before the nage forces him onto his stomach, the uke starts to resist. He is able to shift positions so that it is no longer feasible to pin him using either the standard seated or standing pinning variations. Instead, place your right knee to the right of the uke's elbow joint. Keep control of the attacker's right arm, but lean your torso across his body, utilizing your body weight to keep him down (figure 5.12). If situated properly, your right armpit will be directly over the center of his chest. You must lean your upper body forward, toward his head, in order to create the pressure needed to prevent him from extricating himself from the technique.

Figure 5.12. Kesagatame pin

Extend your right leg forward, keeping it tight against his body, and pull your left leg back. In other words, spread your legs apart from each other (figure 5.12). This will provide a more stable base should he attempt to get up. Someone who is versed in ground fighting will attempt to get out of this technique by pushing off the ground with his or her legs. Once your opponent has created some space, some leeway, he or she might be able to sit up by rolling forward. If he or she is able to get to this seated position, he or she could counter the technique. Another specific counter to this technique is the following: the uke will attempt to sit up while raising his left leg. He will reach under his left leg with his left hand and grab the back of your collar. Then using the entire force of his body—his leg swinging downward as his upper body springs upward, he will thwart your pin. To prevent this possibility, keep the legs separated. Push off of the left leg to keep the opponent down on the ground.

If this is the only (hold-down) pin being used, a good way to apply it is to grab his collar behind his head with your right hand and to control his left arm by keeping downward pressure on it with your left hand. However, this pin by itself is not enough. In Aikido, defending oneself from multiple attackers is always a concern. After this first portion is quickly applied, two other aspects (i.e., additional pins) will also be applied. This is so practitioners can learn to shift between one ground pin and another. If they do not have time to rise to their feet, they can establish control and then relocate while switching the pin. In other words, practicing the complete pin will actually teach students how to apply three different types of ground pins. It will also teach them how to shift between one pin and another easily. Once the first portion of the pin has been applied and you have successfully pinned your opponent to the ground, the other aspects of the pin should be added. They will be described next.

Everything so far described should occur simultaneously. Once the attacker is down on the ground and you feel him resist, move into the aforementioned position as quickly as

possible. Your left leg is bent and pulled away from the right. The right leg is also bent, but it is extended forward while you reach over his body with your right arm, pressing your torso down against his body. This alone should be enough to immobilize him. However, it is not a safe position to remain in for long, as the attacker may have friends who also wish to attack you. From this position, you should still be holding the uke's arm with your left hand. Pull it across your right leg so that his elbow is in a position just above your knee. (The inside of his wrist and elbow should be facing upward so that you can add pressure against the natural motion of his elbow joint.) Apply pressure downward while you maintain the immobilization technique. If everything has gone according to plan, your opponent's torso is effectively immobilized and his or her arm is in a painful lock (i.e., arm bar). Now begins the next stage of this technique.

First, you must free your hands. Currently, your left hand should be holding the opponent's wrist, applying pressure downward. The elbow joint levers against the knee, which functions as a pivot point, and causes pain. If needed, you could break the joint. However, if there is no need to put him out of commission and instantly rise to your feet, move the left leg up toward your right one and then place your left knee on top of the opponent's wrist. Do not change the position of the arm, however. The hand, which applied downward pressure, is simply replaced by the left knee, which applies the same downward pressure (figure 5.13). Done correctly, the uke's experience does not change (i.e., he still feels the same pressure and the same pain), but now your hands are free. If you want him to tap out from this position, just raise the right knee slightly.

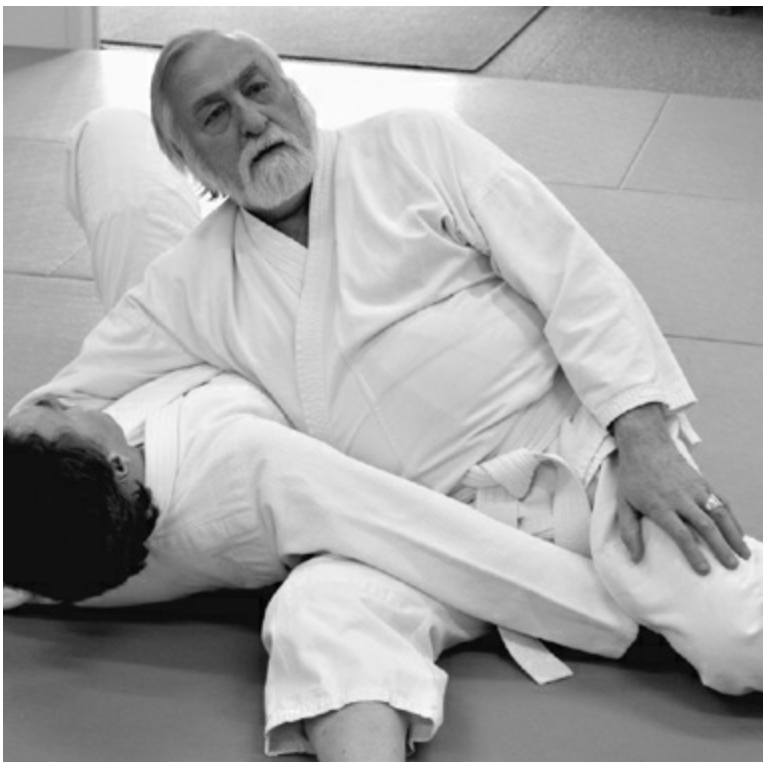


Figure 5.13. Close-up of applied arm lock

Now that your arms are free, it is time to lock up the opponent's other (left) arm. Try to grab his wrist with your left hand. (This is easier if he attempts to strike you. If you

are a confident martial artist, give him some freedom. Let him feel like he has a chance to escape by striking you; give him an opening that he will want to take. Make it seem like you are vulnerable and that you are unaware of your vulnerability. Once he moves in to strike, you can gain easy access to his arm. However, if he does not strike, you can still reach across and take his arm.) When gripping in Aikido, the idea is to maintain a connection to your partner. For this reason, although the grip itself might be incredibly strong (and there are immobilizing grips found in Aikido's predecessor Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu), it is flexible. This flexibility allows the user to stay connected and yet completely dominate his partner. The same grip must be utilized in this technique as well. With this grip, it does not exactly matter in what position you grab your opponent's wrist, as the connection can be maintained and the grip can shift to the correct position. Keep the connection with the left hand, and snake your right arm around the opponent's left arm. Grab your left wrist with your right hand. In this position, you have a shiho-nage variation on his left arm—a sort of chicken wing position (figure 5.14). In Aikido, this technique is properly called *ude-gurami*. If you extend pressure outward, away from the attacker's center, you can make him tap out.

Figure 5.14. Completed pin

While applying the final portion of this technique, do not release the downward pressure against your opponent's chest with your torso. If this pressure is maintained, you have three distinct pins in place, all of which are independently effective. The opponent's right arm is trapped with your legs, and there is still pressure applied to his elbow joint. His torso is still pinned downward by your position and pressure. His left wrist and elbow are also poised for a potential break, should the need arise. The important consideration in the application of this technique, however, is the maneuverability of the pin itself. In other words, by gaining control over one portion of the attacker's body, you can easily shift into other locks and pins. This maneuverability is extremely important in Aikido ground pins.

Once any part of this pin is applied, you can shift your position when necessary. This shifting does not have to be variations within the same body position as previously described. For example, the aforementioned technique involved three distinct pins

within one all-encompassing ground pin, but throughout its application, the nage does not change from a prone position. This does not have to be the case, and in some situations it makes much more sense to rise to suwari-waza during the pin itself. From suwari-waza, it is simple to rise to a standing position, where more downward pressure can be easily applied. Consider the pin as described. Once any of the three aspects of the pin has been applied, you can forget the other aspects and rise up into a half-body stance while maintaining the pressure (whether it is against an elbow joint, a wrist joint, or the torso itself). However, variations in pinning techniques should be learned while in a prone position.

The prone position in martial arts is the least desirable position; maneuverability from this posture is severely limited. If practitioners are able to freely shift from one pin to another while in this position, rising up while maintaining control becomes easier. In other words, if you train in such a way that you become strong and successful from a weak and undesirable position, you will be relatively unstoppable from a position of strength. In order to develop this strength and skill, do not train with submissive uke. Ask your uke to struggle against the technique—to do everything that he can to prevent being pinned. Only through dealing with such a struggling partner can you know if your technique is truly effective.

Shime-Waza

Choking techniques *(shime-waza)* are as much a part of Aikido as they are a part of any legitimate martial art. It is important to know how to choke someone, and through this understanding, martial artists can learn how to defend themselves from such attacks. Chokes can be applied while standing, in suwari-waza, or on the ground. If you are on top of the opponent, you can apply a choke downward to make him pass out or simply tap out (figure 5.15). Likewise, if the opponent is on top of you, attempting to pin you, strike you, or choke you, a properly applied choke can turn the tides quickly (5.16). Applied correctly, it can help you to shift from a relatively dangerous position to a stronger one.

Figures 5.15–5.16. Variations of chokes applied on the ground

There are many variations of chokes, but the basic principle is always the same. When

training to utilize chokes correctly, learn to use them from a standing posture first. Then apply the same principles from suwari-waza and then from the ground. Not all chokes target the throat. There are others that target the carotid arteries. For the purposes of cataloging techniques, these are often grouped under shime-waza as well. One example of a shime-waza technique that targets the carotid arteries is *gyaku-juji-jime*.

Gyaku-Juji-Jime

Assume that your opponent is wearing a shirt. Face him. Slip your right hand, palm up, deep between his collar and the right side of his neck. Do the same thing on the left side: slip your left hand between the collar and the left side of his neck, palm up. Your arms will be crossed. Grabbing the collars from this unchanged position, turn your hands over as you pull your elbows apart, thus applying severe pressure to the arteries on each side of the uke's neck. Properly applied, he will lose consciousness in three seconds. This is a simple technique to understand and to execute, and it works not just from a standing posture but also on the ground. This pin can also be maintained while executing a backward body sacrifice throw (figure 5.17 through 5.22).

Figures 5.17–5.22. Choking technique and body-sacrifice throw

Another effective move involves using clothing instead of the hands to choke. If you can grab his upper left lapel with your right hand, pull him downward. The left hand should grasp the same lapel on the same side, but the hand should be lower. Once his head drops slightly, move your body and raise your right arm without letting go so you can pull your arm over and behind his head. The left arm will remain where it is, but you should pull downward on his training uniform. The tension created by pulling the cloth will cut into the neck. By maintaining the grip with the right hand, rotating the right arm, and pulling downward with the right elbow, you can affect a choke (figure 5.23).

Figure 5.23. Basic choking technique making use of the uniform

This works well if you are above the opponent, but it cannot be used if you are on your back on the ground. It is presented here only so readers understand that clothing can be used to restrain an opponent. Likewise, it can be used to make a person lose consciousness. Gyaku-juji-jime works from any conceivable position. The following choking techniques likewise have the same adaptability.

Nami-Juji-Jime

Gyaku-juji-jime can be used everywhere, including from the top or the bottom position on the ground. A minor variation of this technique is called *nami-juji-jime*. In the previous choking technique, the hands were inserted between the sides of the neck and the collar of the training uniform palm up. Then as the technique was applied, the hands turned over and the elbows drew downward and outward to apply pressure. Ueshiba Morihei always talked about elbow power. Focus on the elbows to get the most out of this pin. Nami-juji-jime looks just like gyaku-juji-jime, but in it, your hands are reversed. Your palms are facing downward, not upward. However, other than this minor variation, the technique is the same. Therefore, learn the basic principle of all the cross-handed chokes and apply them no matter the position of your hands. A struggle on the ground will contain a lot of movement. Opponents will be constantly shifting, trying to apply techniques while countering techniques. If you are able to apply one of these chokes, do not concern yourself with the position of the hands. Instead, practice both hand positions so you can be effective no matter what situation you find yourself in.

This technique is simple when you are in a higher position than your opponent. You can take a position directly on top of him, mounting him, or you can apply the choke from the side. Both are equally effective. If you are on the bottom, however, you need to

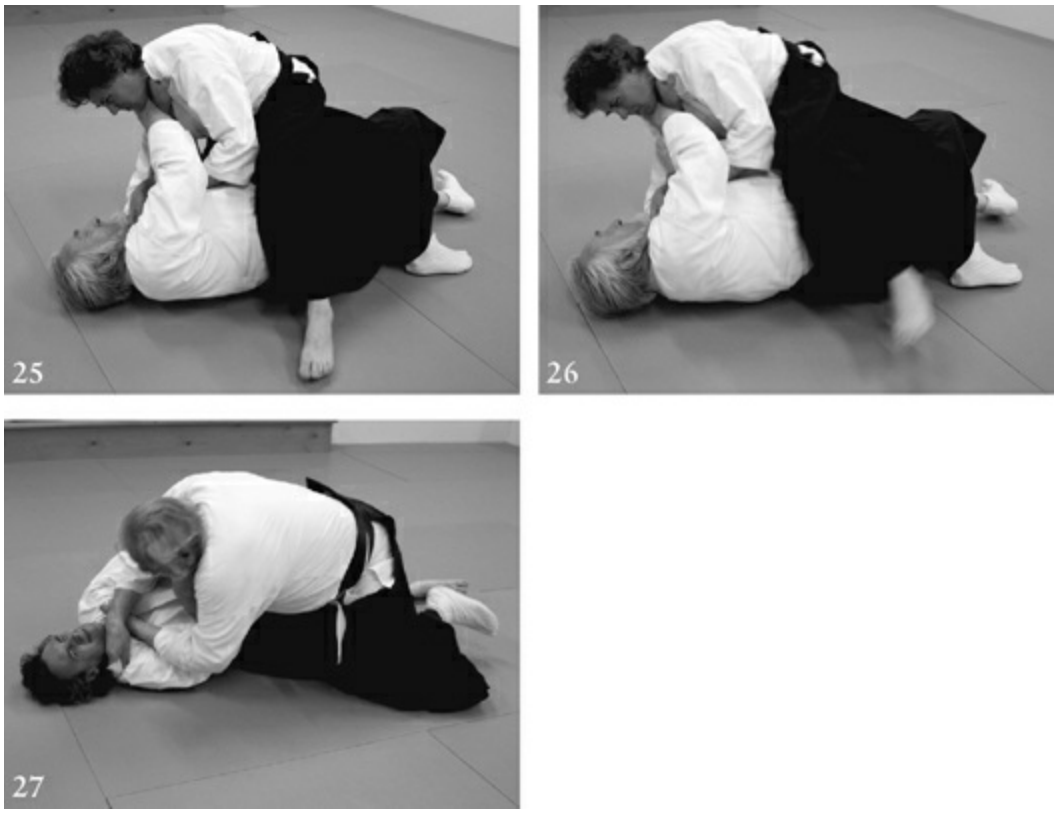
be aware of one additional component. Your movement is limited when you are on your back on the ground. Your opponent has many options if he is on top of you. To prevent him from shifting his position to nullify the technique or reverse it, you must control his body. Wrap your legs around his torso, and tighten them to prevent him from moving too much. This control is needed to put the choke on effectively and to make him lose consciousness (in a real situation).

There is another benefit to making use of the legs on the ground. Consider that the body position previously described is still there. You are on your back on the ground while your opponent is on top of you. However, in the previous example, you were applying a choke to make the opponent lose consciousness. Now assume that you were unable to get your hands in an effective position to apply the technique. However, he is in an extremely powerful position, and he puts a choke on you using his hands or forearm. His body weight will be pressed downward, making the motion powerful. If your legs are around him, however, you can dissipate the force and make some distance between you so that the technique is no longer effective. Simply squeeze the legs around his torso and then extend them away from you (figure 5.24). Once you have dispelled his force and created some space, you can turn or utilize a number of techniques to gain the advantage.

Figure 5.24. Using the legs to create some space and protect against a choke

If you want to apply a choke from the bottom position, you may need to turn the opponent to get the correct angle. Due to the position of the opponent's neck while he is above you, a choke applied from beneath might not have sufficient pressure against the carotid arteries. Use your elbow power and shift your body so you can turn the opponent to one side or the other (figure 5.25 through 5.27). Make sure that you use the legs as well in order to move a resisting opponent. Once his body shifts to the side just a bit, the choke can be effectively applied. If this motion is done quickly and decisively

enough, you can shift positions with the opponent so you are on top and he is on the bottom. The actual movements involved with such a switch are subtle, but Aikido students train to blend with force and redirect it. This is no different in principle. This technique is just on the ground instead of from a standing posture. The principle is exactly the same: blend with your opponent's force. Do not fight it. Then redirect it and take control of the situation. Once any choke that targets the carotid arteries is properly applied, the individual upon whom it is applied will lose consciousness in just about three seconds.



Figures 5.25–5.27. Shifting from the bottom to a more advantageous position on the top

Hadaka-Jime

There are also a variety of chokes that can be applied from behind. For many reasons, this is one of the best places from which to apply any technique, including chokes. Chokes can be applied from any position, and the types of chokes previously applied can get you out of the least favorable positions on the ground. If you are able to slip behind an opponent, you can apply hadaka-jime or a variation of it. In the basic version of the technique, use a half-body stance. Keep your left knee on the ground, while your right knee is raised. Wrap your right arm around your opponent's neck so the inside of your right arm is against the front of his neck. Then clasp your hands together and place the right side of your head against the left side of his. Apply pressure with the arms, hands, and head in order to end the fight.

One variation of this technique should also be mentioned, as it is extremely effective

in combat, whether standing or on the ground. Similar to the basic version, this technique is applied from behind. The half-body stance will still be utilized. This time, wrap your arm around your opponent's neck so that his throat lines up directly with your elbow. Assume that the first arm that you engage in this pin is the left one—the same as in the standard version of this pin. Once the arm is in the correct spot, with his throat against your elbow, apply pressure to the back of his head with your right hand. Grasp your right arm with your left hand to complete this pin. For additional power and control, you can drop down onto your back on the ground while maintaining this pin. Once you are on your back, wrap your legs around his torso to prevent him from moving. The pressure applied with this version of the technique is intense, and it feels like it is impossible to counter. The truth is, although there are counters to most techniques, once a choke is properly applied, there is little to nothing that a person can do to get out of it. A person who is choked will lose consciousness in seconds.

Walther von Krenner was choked out by one of his teachers, Kondo, once. He said, "Before you do shime-waza on anyone, I want you to know what it feels like to be choked out." Kondo choked him out and let him lay there for a moment. According to von Krenner, that moment seemed like an eternity, and when he regained consciousness, his body felt cold. He moved around awkwardly, as if he had not regained full control of his body. It was a strange feeling. Recalling losing consciousness during the choke, von Krenner said it was like the lights went out and everything floated away. And the choke only took about three seconds. Chokes come on quickly, and a person being choked will lose consciousness quickly. For this reason, you must be extremely careful in your respective dojo when training these techniques. If something bad happens, you must be ready to take action in order to prevent further harm. For this reason, you need to know resuscitation techniques if you are going to practice choking techniques.

Figures 5.28–5.29. Examples of chokes applied from behind

Kappo (Resuscitation Techniques)

When practicing any techniques, there is a possibility of injury. When working on chokes and using them in randori situations, there is a possibility that someone might

lose consciousness. If this happens, it is important to revive the person immediately, as being unconscious for too long can result in brain damage. Resuscitation techniques, known as *kappo* in Japanese, developed within the curricula of classical jujutsu styles. They went hand in hand with *sappo:* attacking the vital points of the body. Kappo and sappo techniques were originally secretive and not revealed to outsiders. However, if martial artists today wish to utilize effective yet dangerous techniques like striking the vital points of the body or applying variations of chokes that target the trachea, vagus nerves, or carotid arteries, they must also know how to utilize resuscitation techniques. Even practicing a technique like uchi-mata can result in an injury that requires resuscitation techniques. When your partner attempts to get back to his feet after being thrown to the ground and you move in to apply uchi-mata or a similar throw, your leg rides along the inside of his thigh, moving upward as he is thrown down to the mat. Your leg heads toward his groin. If either of you move and the spacing between you changes, it is possible that he will be kicked in that sensitive area.

When male practitioners are kicked in the groin, it is possible that the testicles will be kicked into the pelvis. If this happens, have the affected person sit on the mat with his legs out in front of him. Approach him from behind. Slip your arms under his armpits and hold your hands together. Lift him up off the ground a bit and then let him drop. You might need to do this a few times to release the testicles. This particular method is known as *kogan-katsu* in old Japanese martial arts.[1] Although unpleasant, this problem is not as serious as when someone has passed out due to anemia, compression of the brain, or defective blood oxidation that occurs as a result of a strongly applied technique.

If a person is choked out and he loses consciousness, he must be treated immediately. Lay him on his back and kneel astride his torso. Using both of your hands, apply upward pressure to his upper rib cage. Then relax the pressure. Continue to repeat the procedure until he regains consciousness and is able to breathe on his own. This technique is called *so-katsu* in Japanese. During the samurai era, this technique was used to revive individuals who may have had a heart attack. The similarities between this movement and the standard CPR procedures used today in order to assist someone who has had a heart attack are noticeable. Of course, in any kind of emergency situation, do not hesitate to call emergency medical services. The resuscitation techniques presented herein do not take the place of medical treatment. However, knowing how to use them when something goes wrong in the dojo can prevent further injury or harm to those afflicted.

Aikido Ground Techniques

Reading about ground techniques might seem strange to some Aikido practitioners because, when dealing with such techniques, there is no clear-cut distinction between uke and nage. Typically, in Aikido dojo, there is an attacker who is restrained, controlled, or thrown by the defender. On the ground, a defender must take advantage

of a minor shift in positions and then apply a technique while his or her partner tries to escape from or reverse it. The roles are reversed. The defender becomes the attacker, and the attacker turns into a defender. These roles are never exclusive in combat, however. There is a constant flux between the two. One reason that Aikido is considered to be ineffective by other martial artists is because its followers do not seem to recognize this fact. In some inefficient Aikido dojo, techniques are practiced in the following manner: someone attacks with a single strike, be it a kick, punch, shomenuchi, or yokomenuchi attack, and then the defender applies a technique. In other words, the attacker never attacks with more than one strike. He or she comes in with one punch (or similar attack) and then waits to be pinned or thrown.

This type of training does nothing to increase martial skills. It only helps the defender to increase his or her ego—to become more proud of his or her accomplishments. It is ineffective for training someone to be successful in a martial situation. For this reason, some aikidoka (who practice in this manner) get overwhelmed when facing a Western boxer. They do not train to deal with quick jabs and multiple attacks. Therefore, they are easily overwhelmed and defeated. If this were not the case, then Aikido practitioners would be seen competing in and winning martial arts competitions, such as mixed martial arts (MMA) bouts or open tournaments. Some might counter this statement, saying that there are no competitions in Aikido. This sentiment is fine on a philosophical level. However, a martial artist who actually wants to become a good fighter must test out his or her skills. This is why swordsmen in feudal Japan used to travel around the land challenging others. It is why Ueshiba Morihei accepted the challenges of others. (He did not turn down potential opponents nor did he tell them that he did not compete.) Individuals who remain in their dojo without testing their skills are like frogs trapped on the bottom of a well, to quote Sagawa Yukiyoshi. They become confident in their own abilities, and they think they know how others will fight and react because they only see their own environment—their own little world.

Once they get out of that well, however, and they realize that they only saw a small aspect of the world, their insight broadens. They become wiser, and as martial artists, their techniques become more effective. They learn how to apply techniques against individuals who attack with quick jabs, and they learn how to perform techniques against resisting opponents. Aikido students who only train against one single attack will always be deficient, and they will always be defeated by other (more advanced) martial artists. Such individuals, who may even have high ranks in Aikido, know nothing about fighting. What is interesting is that some of these individuals may believe that their art originated in swordsmanship. Apparently, they think that the samurai ran into a battlefield, swung their sword once, and were then done. They also might think that samurai would use a big shomen cut without using any feints—one big attack that everyone could see and avoid. Aikido students who use such cuts or attacks and who claim that their techniques stem from swordsmanship know nothing about the sword. The true dangers in swordsmanship are not the cuts that can be seen. They are the thrusts and slices hidden within the movements of the blade. A great swordsman will make it seem like he is going to cut with shomen or kesagiri but is only doing so to

psych out his opponent. The real attack will appear when the opponent reacts to the feint. Aikido practitioners who truly use swordsmanship as a basis for their Aikido movements know this. Such individuals do not train by defending against one single attack. They train to deal with a flurry of attacks, one after the other, the real attacks disguised by feints.

Figure 5.30. To understand how to defend against real attacks found in swordsmanship, it is important to train in traditional sword arts that were designed for use on battlefields.

Training in ground techniques can help Aikido students develop more martially oriented training. It can prepare them for the fact that not everything goes according to plan. This holds true both on a philosophical level, talking about life in general, and when referring to fighting. You will not always be effective. It is important to learn to not care if you are successful or not. Instead, worry about surviving. If you are in a bout and you survive without any major injuries, you were successful. It does not matter if others say that you were defeated or not. By eliminating this desire to win, you will become a more efficient martial artist. You will learn to push your limits while training, attempting to gain the advantage from a disadvantageous position. If you are concerned with always coming out on top, you will not want to fail. If you do not want to fail, you will not push your limits. And if you do not push your limits, you will not improve. Consider all aspects of combat, and train appropriately. Otherwise, Aikido will be a joke.

Once you begin training with opponents who do not go along with the pins and throws that you apply, the need for ground techniques will naturally become apparent. Ground techniques exist in every effective martial art. However, each art has its own principles and specific applications. Aikido ground techniques are unique because they arise naturally through resisting standard Aikido techniques. Aikido practitioners are

highly skilled at ukemi and at techniques from suwari-waza and a half-body stance. These skills can make them extremely difficult to deal with if they know how to blend these abilities with specific techniques on the ground.

Aikido ground skills have one major aim: to get back to suwari-waza as quickly and as efficiently as possible. To accomplish this goal, body manipulation skills are needed. It is necessary to move to a protected position or to gain some distance while in a prone posture. Once there is adequate distance, an aikidoka must know how to get back to suwari-waza and then to a standing position while avoiding potential throws or strikes. Sometimes, an opponent is quick, and he will attempt to pin you before you are able to gain some space. In such situations, ground pinning techniques are important. Becoming skillful at applying chokes or joint manipulations from a prone posture gives you the opportunity to move to more efficient postures. Techniques applied from the mat are temporary techniques, used to gain control of the situation long enough so that you can change stances and maneuver around your opponent. In other words, the whole point of ground techniques in Aikido is to gain control of an opponent long enough to get back to a standing posture where standard Aikido techniques can be used.

6

Adaptation of Other Aikido Techniques for Ground Fighting

The list of techniques described in the previous chapter is not exhaustive. There are countless variations of techniques, and all Aikido techniques can be adapted for use on the ground. If the underlying principles of these techniques are understood, practitioners will be able to apply them from any posture and in any given scenario. Some technical changes must be utilized in order to make Aikido techniques work while in a prone position. As angles change, directions of throws and pins also must change. On the ground, some significant factors must be understood for techniques to work. The first is the impact that the ground itself has. Sure, it can be used for leverage and strength, but it also severely limits movements. For this reason, techniques on the ground have to be applied more directly, using smaller (and hence faster) movements. The following technical examples are provided to demonstrate how standard Aikido techniques can be modified to be equally effective on the ground.

Consider the first of the pillars, shiho-nage. Of course, the principle has to do with the ability to throw an individual or to simply direct him or her in multiple directions. However, there is an actual technique called shiho-nage. How do you perform this technique from a nonstandard body position? If you can get to a kneeling posture on the ground, you can perform the technique similarly to the standing version and exactly the same as the suwari-waza version. If you are prone, however, the technique must be modified in order to work. The change itself is simple. Assume that you gain access to the opponent's right wrist. Typically, in a standard version of shiho-nage, the yonkyo spot of the nage's right hand is placed in a position on top of the attacker's pulse. The yonkyo spot is a location in the palm between the thumb and the first finger. Stretch your palm out so that the fingers flare backward while the palm moves forward. Then follow the pointer (finger) downward with a finger of the opposite hand until you reach a protruding bone. It will be located just above the middle crease in the palm. Of the three major lines that dissect the palm, this spot is just above the middle one. (See figure 6.1 to understand the correct yonkyo spot and its standard placement.) In the variation that should be utilized from the ground, however, the hand position must change.

Figure 6.1. Standard hand placement for shiho-nage

Take the exact same corresponding position, in which your yonkyo spot covers the attacker's pulse, but do it with the opposite hand. Now you do not have to move at all to create this pin. Simply send your energy up and in, and the uke will move himself into a shiho-nage position. In other words, your opponent will react to your intent. You do not need to physically move much. Your intent will get the job done. On a physical level, the opponent's arm will be twisted in a spiral motion counterclockwise and upward. However, do not think of the physical motion, as it will trap your mind. Instead, send your energy and intent in the correct direction. The opponent will have nothing to fight against, and he will maneuver into a position in which you have total control. This will place you, the nage, in a different position from a standard shiho-nage: you will now be behind the uke (figure 6.2). If you pulled back on the now twisted arm, the uke could land right on top of you. Instead, switch the left hand with the right and then slip the left hand behind the opponent's free arm. Continue moving the hand toward the locked-up arm and take hold of the nage's other wrist with the left hand, releasing the grasp with the right. Bring your right tegatana to the uke's neck, and cut him to the ground, using your body and intent to keep him on his side, not on his back. From this position, you have control of both his arms with only one of your hands, and your free hand can be used to strike or to create more pain in order to stop his struggles (figure 6.3).

This is a minor change to an existing technique that can easily be put into place. This change must be understood and enacted to free up some of the static forms in Aikido. More techniques will be mentioned to clarify this. However, please keep in mind that these are not the only techniques available. All Aikido techniques can work well from the ground. One just has to understand the principles behind them in order to make the correct modifications. O-Sensei himself was able to perform impressive techniques with a sword, even though he never received any formal license from a koryu. Master swordsmen claim that his swordsmanship continued to improve despite his advanced years.[1] He was able to use this weapon freely and skillfully because he applied Aikido principles to it. He firmly understood aiki and was therefore able to become proficient in all types of arts, including swordsmanship, jojustu (the art of fighting with the short staff or *jo*) and the empty-handed techniques of Daito-ryu and other arts that he adopted

for use in Aikido. Countless stories about O-Sensei describe him watching demonstrations of various martial arts and commenting about how he would do it differently in Aikido. Please remember that Aikido has no techniques. Apply Aikido's principles and the modifications needed to make the techniques work from diverse circumstances will naturally reveal themselves.

Figures 6.2–6.4. Shiho-nage variation for use on the ground. Just switching the position of the hands makes this technique effective from an unorthodox position.

The second of the pillars, irimi-nage, might look substantially different from the ground, but the principle behind it is maintained. Think about the true purpose of irimi-nage. It is an entering technique: when an opportunity presents itself in which you can enter, take it. The technique should flow naturally. It could be a punch to the opponent's center, thus taking his balance and gaining the advantage, or it could result in any number of chokes. Entering does not have to be done with the upper body alone. The legs are much longer that the arms. Therefore, in a variety of entering techniques (irimi-nage), using the legs from the ground is more efficient than using the arms. Keep this in mind when training to make use of the correct techniques at the correct time.

When exploring varieties of pins to be used from the ground in Aikido, one should not neglect studying similar techniques that exist in other arts, such as Brazilian jujutsu, Judo, and even mixed martial arts. There are two reasons for this: first, your opponents might be experts in these arts, and they may try to use such techniques on you. You cannot adequately defend yourself against a technique that you have never seen or considered. If you know how to do it, you can manufacture an escape. Very few

techniques in the martial arts do not have an escape. Sometimes, the escape must be considered and put into place early; for example, if someone can gain a full choke, there is nothing that can be done to escape. However, if you feel the intent and sense the change in movement, you may be able to make the adjustments necessary to dissipate the force of the choke or to reverse it before it is completely applied.

The second reason that such techniques should be studied has to do with following the founder. He studied many arts, and as he was creating Aikido, he continued to learn from experts in various arts, including kenjutsu and jujutsu styles. He took the techniques that he liked and turned them into Aikido. Likewise, we can take techniques that would be beneficial to our training as martial artists, and we can turn them into Aikido. This is true for all Aikido's pillars. They are meant to teach principles, but techniques from various styles now form techniques that stand within the pillars. They also form techniques that stand outside of the pillars—techniques like hip throws, head throws, body-sacrifice throws, and the like. To be successful as a martial art, Aikido practitioners must know what techniques exist in the other styles, and they must have developed adequate counters and preventative measures to overcome such techniques. If some people think that this is unnecessary, then they are no longer training in a martial art. There is nothing wrong with using Aikido for higher purposes, but if it is not trained as an effective martial art, it should not be labeled as such. Perhaps a distinction can be made between Aikido (the martial art) and maybe something like Aikibo (exercise) or Aikikyo (seeking enlightenment through aiki; in other words, spiritual training). The point is, if it is not a martial art, it should not be described in the same way. Those individuals who wish to follow the founder as a great martial artist must be able to use aiki to overcome individuals from different arts. In order to facilitate this, a knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses is important. While studying such techniques, you may find some that are easily adaptable for use in Aikido, especially in ground technique variations. Regarding irimi-nage, choke variations making use of the arms and legs or strikes can be utilized. And as long as you are entering with the whole body (as much as you are able to from the ground), it is irimi-nage.

Kaiten-nage is the rotary throw, but there is no way that the throw could occur from the ground. The leverage would not be sufficient. Some Aikido practitioners might read this and think, "Wait … we do this technique from suwari-waza, and it works!" To those people, we suggest that they go back to their respective dojo and perform the technique —with one caveat: the uke can only move and take a roll if he or she has to. In other words, the uke cannot roll just because he or she is conditioned to do so. They will find that the throw is ineffective. In Aikido, techniques like this performed from the ground are training exercises, not efficient techniques. One must discern between training movements and actual, effective techniques. However, the principles found in the kaiten-nage technique can be effectively applied from standing, seated, and prone positions. It's just that they will often not be throws. Here are some examples of kaiten-nage variations that can be extremely effective from the ground: If you are able to get to the side of the opponent and cut down on his arm, his head will naturally dip slightly. If you are quick enough, you can put some pressure downward with anything that is

free. If your hand is free, fine. If not, use any body part possible, including a shin or a thigh. Keep the downward pressure on the head in place, and pull the arm upward and across your partner's back. If you succeed and he does not struggle out of this motion, you can continue the motion a bit further to cause pain and make him tap out. Or once you have control, you can change to any other pin that you would like to use, including nikkyo and katagatame. The key to making this technique work is to take action quickly and decisively. You must use all your intent to be successful. If you do not trust yourself or move too slowly, you will fail. Be decisive and direct, and you will have the best chance possible of pulling this technique off.

The previous example assumed that you had (at least) one arm free and that you had some freedom in body movement: in other words, you were able to move one or both legs and to use them or a connected body part to apply some pressure to the head. (This pressure, by the way, is to stop the opponent from getting out of the technique by moving forward.) Assume, however, that you have very little motion available, that you are in one of the most uncomfortable and frightening positions for most fighters in the world: assume that you are flat on your back and the opponent is on top of you in a mounted position. From this position, he can strike you freely, and your motion is severely limited. First, you must learn to sense and exploit the natural weaknesses in a person's balance. There is usually the possibility of some hip movement as well. The more this is trained, the easier it gets. The idea is to shift the hips in such a way that the opponent's balance is temporarily disturbed. The person's balance will shift slightly, and then it will return to its original position. While it is shifted, try to get one arm around the back of the opponent's head. If you can apply a full choke, fine—the match is likely over. But if you cannot complete the choke (and a seasoned fighter will not be easily choked), try to snake your other arm underneath your opponent's arm (as though you were performing kaiten-nage from the front of the person). At the same time, try to kick your body out from under him in either the same or the opposite direction, whichever feels free.

If everything worked well, you are now in an unusual yet safer position. If your right arm is around the opponent's head, and your left arm is wrapped around his right arm, the natural body movement forced his arm to rise, and it forced his head (and therefore his body) to turn to the side slightly. This is now a weakness of yours that he can exploit, and that turn must be stopped. Quickly, abandon the thought of keeping your arm wrapped around his head or hoping that you will be able to apply a choke. As soon as the body kicks out and you pull his extended arm toward you, cut down on the back of his head and maintain that pressure into the ground as you pin the arm and shoulder using any variety of standard Aikido pinning techniques.

Situations on the ground, like realistic situations from a standing position, will not be clean. The attacker will not move where you want him to move. Nor will he let you perform the technique. People will fight to keep their freedom. They will fight to avoid being pinned or thrown. Sometimes, this can work to the advantage of an aikidoka, as the ultimate goal of the art is to not fight at all and to simply exploit the opponent's movements. The same goal is present in Judo, too. Remember it was said that when

fighting with Kano Jigoro, it was like fighting with an empty jacket. This is because he did not fight the attacks of his opponents; he blended with them and redirected the force. However, this is an extremely high level of martial skill, and it is likely that few individuals out there actually have this expertise. Many might kid themselves and their students, thinking that they have mastered the "divine techniques of aiki," which are found in all high-level martial arts. However, there is an easy test to see if this is true. When training in grappling techniques, tell your uke to struggle out of every possible move. This struggle might continue for a bit until you have him under control and you pin him. Now think about the engagement. How many times did you meet force with force? Are your muscles a bit sore? That means you have been using them—using brute force to subdue an attacker rather than aiki's subtle techniques. This is not a high-level performance of skill (although it still can be extremely effective).

Most martial artists do not possess the incredible skills of individuals like Kano Jigoro, Ueshiba Morihei, Takeda Sokaku, Funakoshi Gichin, Bokuden Tsukahara, and Itto Ittosai Kagehisa. That is why these individuals are looked up to and admired even today, decades if not centuries after their deaths. They had skills that are not easily attainable. Normal martial artists, who strive to emulate one or more of these individuals (or other unlisted experts), must always believe that their techniques will work and apply them fully with intent, but he or she must always be ready for a counterattack, a reversal, or any variety of possibilities. When considering the examples listed of performing kaiten-nage from the ground, you might try them and find that they do not work in exactly the manner described. This is and will always be true. The amount of force exerted, the opponent's balance, his counter motions when the technique is applied, and many other factors change the angles needed to make the technique work. They may also change the technique itself. Maybe the opponent moves in a direction that makes kaiten-nage unfeasible. If so, trying to perform the technique from an unfavorable position will end in your defeat. You must let all desire for applying techniques go. You must have a clear and focused mind. If you can do this, then you can freely use all the techniques in your arsenal. Going a step further, techniques can be generated on the spot depending on what is needed in a given situation. This is Takemusu Aiki.

Examples of variations can be provided without end, but that is not the point of this. The point is, change your focus from a technique's form and appearance to the principle that makes it effective. If you can do this, the variation of technique that you will need to emerge successfully from a martial encounter will naturally appear. This is an extremely high level of martial skill, and it will not be easily attained. But by keeping this in mind throughout decades of martial training, this goal will slowly be approached. In order to solidify this understanding, let's take a brief look at the variety of osae-waza that can be applied from the ground.

Osae-waza, as it has been previously explained, translates to "pinning techniques" and so can refer to any pin. For this reason the actual number of pinning techniques are infinite. There are countless variations available depending on the circumstances. The way a technique is performed today will be different tomorrow, as Ueshiba Morihei stated. The principles themselves allow for unlimited responses. The specific techniques

categorized as osae-waza in Aikido are in place to teach specific pinning principles. (For reasons of simplicity we are bypassing the religious teachings of Omoto-kyo that may be related to each pin. We are concentrating only on the physical pins.) The different pinning principles can (in a limited sense) be simplified to the following:

- Ikkyo: a pin in which one takes control of the opponent's elbow joint
- Nikkyo: a pin in which one takes control of the opponent's wrist, forcing him downward
- Sankyo: a pin in which one takes control of the opponent's wrist but forces him upward
- Yonkyo: a pin that makes use of rotating a joint and pressure points simultaneously
- Gokyo: variations that occur within any of the pinning techniques to be successful in abnormal circumstances, such as when the attacker has a weapon

It is important to not get caught up in form and appearance. To avoid this common trap (of holding onto the appearance of a particular technique), try to consider the principles themselves. Then consider how they might be applied from all situations, whether you are standing or on the ground. Ikkyo can be applied from a standing position or from the ground. Any technique that attacks the elbow can be considered Aikido. In order to make it work well, the fundamentals of the technique must be adhered to. The elbow should be higher than the shoulder from a standing position. However, when pressure is applied to the elbow from underneath, the position itself is (obviously) reversed. The same relationship must be maintained. This means that the shoulder must be below the elbow. Using your legs and hips to keep the opponent flat on the ground on his or her back, leverage the elbow upward. This is a common technique in various arts that make use of ground techniques. This same technique can be justified and explained by Aikido principles. For this reason (in our opinion), it is a legitimate Aikido technique. It is the only way ikkyo can be performed (in certain circumstances) on the ground.

Nikkyo is a pin in which the wrist is turned to a painful angle. The wrist forms a ninety-degree angle to the forearm, and the nage maintains this position and cuts the little finger of the locked hand through the opponent's center. There are variations in movement—subtle adjustments to make the technique more effective—but such techniques cannot adequately be explained in writing. They must be felt and experienced firsthand in order to learn how to perform them properly. Generally, the pressure is downward. The pressure causes the uke pain, and thus he or she moves to the ground and taps out. Someone who is very skilled at ukemi—how one accepts a strike or a throw—will move in a way in which he or she is constantly protected, just in case the pin is applied too harshly. When pinning individuals who have this particular ukemi skill using nikkyo, you will hit a point on the ground in which the technique cannot be applied any more. The ground itself provides resistance, so eventually, the pin itself is absorbed through the uke and into the ground. From a standing position, once this

happens, the angle changes and the transition into a seated (or standing) pin begins. For this reason, it does not cause any problems. From the ground, however, the downward pressure of nikkyo applied into the opponent's center will not be overly effective because of the absorptive quality of the ground itself. Thus the angle of the pin must change. Pressure must be applied to the side, not downward. The opponent's hand can be in the same position, but the pressure of the pin should be directed to either side, just not straight down. Find the opponent's center, and then decide which direction to move him. This is how nikkyo can be applied successfully from the ground.

Sankyo is another wrist control, but the pressure is extended upward so that it locks up the elbow and the shoulder as well. In this manner, the technique, like other Aikido techniques, is meant to take control of the entire body by means of one joint. The wrist is connected to the elbow, which in turn is connected to the shoulder. A change in the direction of a joint, if properly applied, can transfer to the others. This connection makes it a highly effective technique. From the ground, sankyo does not need to change much, if at all. The idea of this technique is to force the uke up onto his feet. So if one is able to apply this technique from the ground, it may end the need to fight on the ground. It will force the opponent to his feet. However, putting it on forcefully is a bit more difficult from the ground. If you have some freedom of movement, once you take control of the opponent's hand, place it on your chest. Then use the rotation of your entire body to apply pressure. If you do not have the capability to maneuver as such, do not bother trying to move the opponent up. Instead, cut his arm down. Then turn it (as you would in a standard sankyo seated technique) in order to subdue him.

These are minor changes that will allow sankyo to be successfully applied from the ground. When practicing this technique, along with ikkyo and nikkyo, experiment with different angles. It is nearly impossible to point out minor variations in pressure and angles in writing. However, it will not take much practice for Aikido practitioners to discover a variety of angles and adjustments that will or will not work in certain circumstances. Practice such variations and you will be successful.

Yonkyo teaches Aikido students how to apply pressure point pain. Typically, yonkyo refers to the pressure point located on the inside of the opponent's wrist, either directly in the center (for the omote version of the technique) or to the outside of the arm (for the ura version). However, all varieties of pressure point techniques in Aikido are typically stuffed into this category of pinning techniques. Such pressure points are literally found all over the body. A sound knowledge of where these points are located (and how they can be activated and utilized) can be beneficial for students of any martial art. By understanding their location, martial artists can protect themselves from such attacks, and they can exploit such weaknesses in their attackers. In addition, there are many ways to use these points for healing purposes. It is beyond the scope of this book to explain techniques found in acupuncture and acupressure, but these (or other similar) healing arts were often found in the curricula of traditional martial arts. This is because the same pressure points that can be used to dominate and control an attacker can also be used to heal an injured practitioner. The first step in this study is to locate these points on the body.

Pressure points, beside the standard yonkyo spot on the wrist, include similar spots just above the ankle, near the elbow joint, and on the back of the upper arm. Typically in Aikido, the nage applies pressure to these spots with the slightly protruding bone located at the base of the proximal phalanx of the index finger, which is located just above the middle crease (palmar arch) in the palm. For lack of a better term, this spot is referred to as a "yonkyo spot" by practitioners. Keep in mind that this pressure can be applied with any number of hard body parts, including knees, elbows, heels, and even the forehead. Many of these pressure points were initially targeted while wearing armor in old Japanese martial arts. Feeling them without armor makes practitioners aware of just how painful this must have been. It would almost be preferable to be cut down with a sword than to experience the consistent, enduring pain that such techniques cause. In order to truly experience and understand this pain that your opponent experiences, you must practice such techniques and endure such pain. The great thing about the use of pressure points in Aikido is that the attacker can be completely controlled through intense pain, but as soon as the opponent is released, he or she is fine. In other words, there is no real damage caused. Therefore, they can be used to safely restrain an attacker without injuring him or her. On the ground, these pressure points will likely be targeted with elbows and knees more than any other body part. However, once you understand where these points are and the type of pain that they can cause, when the opportunity arises to exploit one of them, take it. It can save your life.

Kokyu is another principle that should be specifically mentioned when discussing ground variations of Aikido techniques. Just what kokyu is and how it is interpreted vary from person to person. Looking at it from a linguistic standpoint, kokyu means "breath," and it is for this reason that kokyu-nage is most often translated as "breath throw." The technique has to do with the interaction between yin (inhalation) and yang (exhalation) within the body. Neither is in isolation, as there is a constant flux. Yin changes to yang, and yang in turn returns to yin. For the most part, it is better to attack when the opponent inhales, as he or she is stronger while exhaling—hence making the body more yang. Sensing the proper time to attack is an important principle of martial arts that requires decades of study. However, it is easier to determine how your partner breathes while on the ground. A struggle on the ground typically involves bodies, usually the torsos, that are much closer to or in contact with each other. Such contact makes it easier to feel what is occurring—to perceive the strengths and weaknesses of the body. From such positions, learn to sense the rhythm of the breath. Then once you have blended with him or her on more than a physical level, take advantage of his or her weaknesses while avoiding his or her strength.

An important teaching in Aikido and in other martial arts is absorbing the opponent's attacks. O-Sensei wrote, "In our techniques we enter completely into, blend totally with, and control firmly an attack."[2] The same concept is expressed in various arts in more explicit terms. In some sword arts, the opponent's absorption is a critical mental component. Some swordsmen strove to extend their intent in all directions so that their will could be felt without physical contact. If their energy was strong enough to actually envelop the adversary, the opponent would be drawn in and trapped. If this occurred,

the opponent would become reactive, and he could be easily controlled and defeated. This is a technique of energy manipulation that is considered secretive, only to be imparted directly from teacher to student. The practice itself stems from some meditative practices found in esoteric Buddhism (although these practices may, in turn, have stemmed from Chinese or Indian practices). Some types of meditation involve the union between the practitioner and the divine. A person meditating will sit in front of a holy statue and envision the object within himself or herself. Then he or she pictures it expanding to encompass everything—including the meditator. This concept has been successfully applied to various koryu and more modern martial disciplines. Karl Friday explained,

> Visualization and expansion exercises have several practical applications in terms of a martial art. In the case of archery and the use of other missile weapons, such as shuriken or throwing knives, the warrior expands the target and places himself within it before releasing the arrow or throwing the missile. Thus because—at the moment of release—there is no place that is *not* the target, the arrow or missile cannot miss its mark. Similarly, swordsmen and other hand-to-hand fighters envision absorbing their opponents into themselves, so that their own movements become part of and control the movements of the opponents.[3]

Aikido students are aware of blending, as they consistently practice it. However, they primarily practice physical blending with attacks and techniques. This is only an aspect of blending, and it is a base level of it. There are higher levels of blending, which even incorporate some ethical behavior outside of the dojo. (For example, rather than directly stating one's point in an argument, one can blend with the opponent's argument by initially agreeing with one or two of his or her points. Once this blending occurs, a redirection can take place to reach a truly mutual agreement.) If you can mentally blend with your opponent, get into his or her mind-set, you can see things from his or her perspective, thus empathizing with him or her. This can be taken a step further, however. If an unstable man has it in his mind to injure others, simply empathizing will be ineffective. Seeing his point of view will not prevent him from injuring others. However, if your intent is strong enough, you can use it to capture the opponent's mind and movements. If you have spent a considerable amount of time training to strengthen and direct your intent, then you can truly blend with him. If this high level of blending is possible, the opponent can be completely absorbed so that he ceases to exist. He becomes a part of you. If this happens, you can lead him where you wish. O-Sensei said, "Opponents confront us continually, but actually there is no opponent there. Enter deeply into an attack and neutralize it as you draw that misdirected force into your own sphere."[4] This is complete blending. It is becoming one with the opponent. Once completely enjoined, you can move where you wish and the opponent will follow. This is a high-level interpretation of blending as it relates to Aikido and other martial arts—a level not easily reached.

In order to learn this principle, students must practice techniques incessantly. Then

once the techniques have become second nature, students must forget them, as true techniques are really no techniques. The principles learned from such techniques will be engrained, and if practitioners continue to train earnestly, they will be able to apply them in various circumstances. They must be effective from a standing posture and from the ground. When performing them from the ground, students can gain a greater understanding of blending and of kokyu—dimensions that cannot be easily learned from a standing position alone. In order to learn and perfect all the principles of Aikido, students should continue to practice defending themselves from all variety of attacks. They should be prepared for resistance, and they must be comfortable in all positions. In sum, internalize the principles of Aikido and use them to make all techniques effective, whether from a standing position or from the ground.

7

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE ART

O-Sensei changed his art continuously. In the early days, he taught Daito-ryu. After he joined the Omoto religion, he combined the martial and spiritual paths, as his teacher Deguchi Onisaburo had suggested. His Daito-ryu changed. After he made progress blending these two paths, his techniques naturally transformed. They became more circular. His emphasis turned from the martial aspects of the art to the spiritual aspects. O-Sensei was not unique in this regard. Many martial arts masters have done similar things, including Kano Jigoro, the founder of Judo. He stated, "I believe that world peace and the welfare of humankind must be realized through the spirit that judo brings about."[1]

Ueshiba Morihei had seen great evil during his lifetime. Living in Japan during World War II and seeing his friends and students injured or killed must have been influential beyond words. Some of his students, including the navy admiral Takeshita Isamu, were high-ranking soldiers in the army and navy, so war and fighting were likely common topics of conversation. In addition, one of the great goals in the Omoto-kyo religion was to create a new kingdom based on love and mutual respect. This religion and its director influenced O-Sensei and were so significant that he left his martial arts teacher Takeda Sokaku and moved all the way to Ayabe to live in the Omoto-kyo compound. He wanted to be near the leader of the faith, Deguchi Onisaburo. He was clearly focusing more on the spiritual aspects of life than the physical.

Rather than quit martial arts, Deguchi suggested that Ueshiba teach the art to Omoto students. He also gave him a personal directive to strive to unify the physical and the spiritual paths by means of his martial training. O-Sensei selected students who would not interfere with his own personal training, and he engaged in solo practices in order to develop power and to learn how to utilize aiki. No longer needing to rely on physical techniques to overcome adversaries, his techniques became more flowing. Attackers were thrown outward safely instead of being defeated by an inward, crushing force. And although some martial artists claim his techniques were becoming less effective, these techniques reflected his spiritual beliefs. Addressing the spiritual essence of the art in Tokyo, O-Sensei once commented, "People who think of Aikido simply as another martial art will not improve beyond a certain point no matter how much they practice. In order to help them the shihan should always talk about the spiritual aspects of Aikido and relate their meaning to techniques."

Eventually, the martial art that he taught, which was a unification of the teachings learned from two men—Takeda Sokaku and Deguchi Onisaburo—came to be called Aikido. O-Sensei believed the art could be used to spread peace and harmony throughout

the world. For a time, he spread Aikido throughout Japan. He performed demonstrations and taught many students. His senior students in turn began teaching at different dojo, which also helped to disseminate the art. Once Aikido had become popular in Japan, O-Sensei turned his attention to other countries. In 1961, O-Sensei traveled to Hawaii. He made the following statement after his arrival: "I have come to Hawaii in order to build a silver bridge. Until now, I have remained in Japan, building a golden bridge to unite Japan, but henceforward, I wish to build a bridge to bring the different countries of the world together through the harmony and love contained in Aikido. I think that aiki, offspring of the martial arts, can unite the people of the world in harmony, in the true spirit of Budo, enveloping the world in unchanging love."[2]

O-Sensei explained to the students in Hawaii that he was still developing his techniques, that Aikido was not yet fully created.[3] He never stopped training. His techniques were in a constant state of flux, and he changed them as his understanding grew. O-Sensei seemingly never thought of himself as an all-knowing martial arts master. Rather, he thought of himself as a student on the path, just like his followers. He cautioned, "In your training, do not be in a hurry, for it takes a minimum of ten years to master the basics and advance to the first rung. Never think of yourself as an all-knowing, perfected master; you must continue to train daily with your friends and students and progress together in the Art of Peace."[4]

Figure 7.1. O-Sensei stressed that training should never cease. He himself trained his entire life, right up until his death in 1969. He never thought of himself as an all-knowing, perfected master. (From the collection of Walther G. von Krenner.)

On March 8, 1969, O-Sensei, bedridden, stated that the gods were calling him. He had been ill for some time, and his doctor suggested that he rest and see a specialist as soon as he could. However, O-Sensei got out on the mat and trained. He only lasted a few minutes, and it proved to be the last time he practiced. He was admitted to the Keio Hospital and diagnosed with a terminal case of liver cancer. The doctors suggested surgery, but O-Sensei vehemently refused, stating that he would prefer to die in the dojo. His wife, son, and students did not want to go against his wishes, so they took him

home on March 26. His condition continued to worsen, and on April 15, he was close to death. His students gathered around his bedside, and he said to them, “Aikido benefits our society and our nation. It is not only yours. Think that you are practicing for the good of the nation and of the world.”[5] The founder passed away the next day at the age of eighty-six.

However, Aikido did not end. It continued to expand, gaining in popularity throughout the world, and Aikido is now practiced in hundreds of countries. Aikido varies from place to place, and it is easy to differentiate between students of Kanai Mitsunari, Toyoda Fumio, Chiba Kazuo, and Tohei Koichi just by watching them perform their techniques. Each of the founder’s students had his or her own take or understanding. He or she understood the principles of the art and then made the techniques work to the best of his or her abilities. Some of these individuals also studied other arts, like Judo, Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, or swordsmanship. Their experiences with other arts can also be seen in their performance of Aikido techniques. The founder seemed to encourage this blending of styles. It is what he himself did during his lifetime, and it is what his writings reveal: “Even though our path is completely different from the warrior arts of the past, it is not necessary to abandon totally the old ways. Absorb venerable traditions into this new art by clothing them with fresh garments, and build on the classic styles to create better forms. The Art of Peace never restrains, restricts, or shackles anything. It embraces all and purifies everything.”[6]

Takemusu aiki, an extremely high level of training, has been described as the spontaneous generation of technique. Sunadomari Kanshu, a student of O-Sensei, wrote the following to describe the nature of takemusu aiki:

1. Break old forms and craft new forms free of forms. Continuously giving birth to new forms generated in response to the situation at hand, this is the heart of takemusu.
2. Takemusu is the generation of spontaneous martial techniques by remaining in accordance with the power and structure of nature. It is constantly giving birth to new creations.
3. The essence of takemusu is the creation of infinite, universal variation in accordance with the laws of heaven and earth.
4. The martial arts are given life through constant change. Takemusu is giving birth to endless innovation evermore.
5. We must break from set form, create, generate, and evolve. Takemusu is both vast and subtle.[7]

One undeniable facet of takemusu aikido has to do with readily accepting change. This is not easy in practice, as human beings, for the most part, are naturally resistant to change.[8] This resistance is seen in the way Aikido is often practiced today. In many dojo, ikkyo looks the same. There might be minor angle changes and the like, but it is typically always applied in the same way. There is no major deviation. Although there is nothing wrong with working on the same technique repeatedly so that it can be

perfected, this practice does not embody the principle of takemusu aiki. We must move beyond set form in order to accomplish this. When considering ikkyo, think of the other ways in which it can be applied. Ikkyo can still be applied when reversing the hand position or using the knees or head instead of the hands. In addition, it can be applied from standing positions, but it can also be applied from the ground. Consider the principles behind the techniques carefully, and then make those techniques work from any position.

Figure 7.2. Takemusu aiki is the spontaneous generation of technique. Calligraphy by Walther G. von Krenner.

Sometimes, people who have been training for years get tired of training. It is as if they hit a wall. The same techniques, performed over and over again, lose their luster. This is why some individuals quit Aikido (and other martial arts). One change can be put into place to prevent this from happening: go beyond set form. Think of strange scenarios that might come up in which a technique needs to be applied. In addition, let yourself be put into a disadvantageous position. This is difficult, as human beings have egos that sometime get in the way. However, if one can find a way out of seemingly perfect pins, he or she not only will expect such action by the attacker but also can make adjustments to allow the techniques to work more effectively. In addition, it is more advantageous to train from a weak position. If you can emerge victorious while in a weak position, how much easier will it be while in a strong position?

Aikido, from the very beginning, has been a martial art designed for change. It must not stop or the art itself might lose something. O-Sensei said, “Life is growth. If we stop growing, technically and spiritually, we are as good as dead.”[9] Aikido is trained in various ways, and the emphases are different among dojo. All manifestations of this art are good, provided that they maintain Ueshiba’s teachings. Training that does not

maintain these teachings can no longer be appropriately called Aikido. However, no matter how the art is trained, it must be remembered that Aikido is a martial art. It is an art used for protection—for both attack and defense—in order to remain safe and to keep others from being injured. If an aikidoka lacks either skill (i.e., attack or defense), he or she may not be able to step up and do the right thing, should the need ever arise. If a madman brandishing a weapon is threatening a crowd of people, for example, an Aikido practitioner might have to take the offensive to disarm the individual. He may have to strike the man or use other tricks to make him loosen his grip on the weapon. If a student of the martial arts does not train for such scenarios—if they only practice defensive movements—they may not be able to act quickly and decisively in such situations. If they lack this skill, they are not fulfilling Aikido's true purpose. Practitioners must train with such possibilities in mind. They must train in a manner that will allow them to be successful from any martial situation, both offensive and defensive, whether they are standing or on the ground.

With this in mind, consider adding the techniques presented in this book to your training. In addition, have a special class set aside for training in takemusu aiki, where students can discuss situations and then determine how an Aikido technique can best be used to defend oneself. By doing this, Aikido will change. Practitioners will become more well rounded and skillful, and Aikido will once again move forward. It has been stalled for too long. In order to make this move, consider alternatives to rote, traditional training, and learn to accept defeat. When trying anything new, you might not be instantly successful. It is difficult for high-ranking martial artists to try things that they are not comfortable with and thereby put themselves into a position they may not be able to recover from (such as opening oneself to the possibility of a choke, etc.). However, only through this training can one improve.

Kano Jigoro cautioned individuals about training with winning in mind. He wrote, "There is clearly a difference between becoming able to beat someone at a future time and being obsessed at beating someone now."[10] It is important to forget about winning or losing so that you may learn new techniques. First, the physical movements of the techniques must be put into place. Then the principle behind the movement must be clearly understood and considered so that any variation needed can be easily put into place. Once the physical movements and the underlying principles are understood, students can begin to apply the techniques effectively with speed and power. These stages cannot be bypassed. In order to eventually be successful, it is important to forget about winning and losing while learning the techniques. Ironically, the techniques learned will eventually cease to exist. Techniques are spontaneously created after students obtain a thorough understanding of the principles behind the basic movements.

Sawada Hanae was a teacher of Tendo-ryu. She once said the following to her students: "Only through losing can you understand what it means to win. But you only know about winning. You need to lose and then examine your mental state. You have to realize, 'Ah, this is what it feels like to lose.' Then, you must do the same thing next time you win. If you don't know what it feels like to both win and lose, then you cannot win. If you can't lose, you can't win. This is a very important thing."[11]

Winning and losing are important considerations in perhaps all martial arts, as they are in sports and in other endeavors. However, to reach higher levels of training, the concern for victory or defeat must be considered and then dismissed. Thinking too much about winning or being worried about losing can be detrimental, and they can adversely affect performance. Consider being a samurai or an ashigaru during the Warring States era in Japan. Your job is to cut down opposing warriors, and when the battle breaks out, your fellow soldiers begin to die. They are struck with arrows, pierced with spears, and cut with swords. If you let fear of defeat—fear of dying—take over, you will be unable to move freely, which would likely lead to your death. Likewise, if you look into the battlefield, pick out a high-ranking warrior, and rush forward to engage him, you will likely be stabbed or killed from behind while you make your way toward your target. Being overly concerned with victory or defeat is detrimental, and a gifted martial artist must move beyond such concerns to truly become proficient. This is perhaps the origin of a teaching that has been passed down by sword masters of ancient times: life and death are the same.

In many Aikido dojo today, practitioners aim to gain something. They may aim to execute a technique and pin another, or they may find other ways to feed their egos. However, accomplished martial artists do not attempt to achieve anything. If they are focused on the end result, perhaps obsessed with winning, they will lose track of the path and thereby lose their way. Consider the parable of the cat as described in chapter 3 and its relationship to martial training. The old master cat had said to a nimble mouser, “Your discipline is only a performance of skill. Thus, you still haven’t escaped from the mind that aims at something.”[12] Aikido practitioners put techniques on their partners, and they feel a sense of fulfillment when their partners flip in the air and then land on their sides. The sense of excitement can be seen by observers because the throwers will look satisfied and (possibly) increase their speed while moving into the pin. The nage develops a sense of confidence, and that confidence is not disturbed by the innate understanding that the uke cooperated with the throw. Uke are trained to not fight back. They know where the nage wants them to go, so they go there when thrown, whether the technique is effective or not. This occurs repeatedly, day after day, for years. Eventually, Aikido students don’t realize the flaws in training this way. They become effectively indoctrinated, and they enter their dojo knowing that they will be successful in anything they attempt. They train and forget about their other concerns, feeling better about themselves with each throw or pin. When they leave, they will be more confident in their skills—skills that they may not even have. In order to verify this, resist a technique next time you are being thrown or pinned. Make sure that the nage cannot complete it. Feel the change in the atmosphere: typically, the nage will get angry, and he or she will apply more force to complete the technique.

Figure 7.3. A fighter must eliminate all thought of winning or losing, life or death, in order to be successful. This is a state of being called *mushin* ("no-mind") in Japanese. (Calligraphy by Walther G. von Krenner.)

Although wishing for success is a human tendency in general, a true Budo practitioner must move beyond this low-level desire. He or she must learn to love the difficulty faced in a dojo. When faced with a noncompliant uke, the nage must learn how to make the technique effective. Facing such difficulties in the dojo is beneficial for many reasons. Practitioners who perform in this way can perfect their techniques. Therefore, should they need to defend themselves in a real situation, they are able to make these techniques work. The layperson on the street will resist being pinned, as people will generally do anything they can to keep their freedom. If a wrist lock is applied, they may shift the position of the arm, they might fight the technique using force, or they might use a combination of both. In addition, if there is any opening, any place where they can forcefully strike, they will take it. Aikido practitioners who train only in a compliant and cooperative manner will be unprepared for such realistic circumstances. Although they may feel successful in the dojo every day, they will fail in real-life situations.

For Aikido to maintain its efficacy as a martial art, aikidoka must train with such possibilities in mind. Resist techniques when possible. Strike hard and fast, without worrying about hitting your training partner. Even if he or she is struck, it is beneficial. If martial artists do not know what being hit feels like or what happens to their bodies when struck, they will be unable to defend against such attacks. In addition, all possibilities of countermoves must be considered and then practiced. With this in mind, there will never be an end to training, as every move has a countermove. Every countermove, in turn, also has a countermove. When exploring such variations, Aikido students will find themselves in a variety of unusual positions. These include standing, kneeling, and prone positions. Understanding the underlying principles of Aikido

techniques (and practicing them in applied situations) will allow students to be successful in all these positions.

Suwari-waza is a movement that has been dealt with at length in this text, and it is perhaps unique to Aikido. Some aspects of it, like shikko (samurai knee-walking), are exercises alone, with no real historical origin and no martial basis. However, suwari-waza does have some important martial considerations. It is a middle ground between standing techniques and prone positions on the ground. Aikido students spend a great deal of time practicing techniques from suwari-waza, and they spend time during every class working on their ukemi skills. This practice pays off, and it can be extremely beneficial in martial engagements. Suwari-waza teaches students how to perform techniques effectively from a kneeling posture. In fact, many Aikido practitioners might even feel stronger from this position than from a standing posture because they can use the ground for strength and leverage. Their ukemi skills help them to quickly rise from suwari-waza to a standing position and likewise from a prone position on the ground to suwari-waza. Therefore, the true key to effective ground techniques in Aikido is through suwari-waza.

Train your ukemi and your kneeling techniques with such possibilities in mind. Make sure that, when thrown, you can instantly get to your knees. Then make sure that when on your knees, you are able to instantly spring to your feet, should the need arise. Solo ukemi training exercises can help establish these skills, as long as they are properly considered in a martial context. Forget about how ukemi looks. Instead, think about its function. It is not only defensive but also has offensive, aggressive applications. This is perhaps different from the understanding that some Aikido beginners might have, but it is one of the most important features of ukemi training. The relationship between suwari-waza and ukemi must also be considered. If these two facets are practiced and perfected, an Aikido student can be successful from any position, no matter how advantageous or disadvantageous their positions might seem. Aikidoka can be thrown to the ground and yet instantly spring to their feet. They can be pinned on their backs and yet slip out into a position on their knees, and they can apply powerful, effective pins from this position. If these elements are not ignored but actively considered and practiced, Aikido practitioners could become a nightmare for students of other martial arts. They could be some of the most dangerous fighters to deal with.

O-Sensei stressed that Aikido is a changing art. Therefore, Aikido students must constantly consider variations to counter techniques and to prevent techniques from being countered. This is the only thing needed to make Aikido the devastating martial art that it once was. Such considerations will naturally lead students to training from standing, kneeling, and prone positions. Through intensive training, they can learn to make their techniques work from any of these positions, whether or not their opponents struggle against them. If effective techniques can be applied from any of these positions, Aikido students will naturally have become well-rounded martial artists.

The origins of Aikido are found in Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, which was created by Takeda Sokaku. Some consider Takeda to have been one of the greatest martial artists in modern Japanese history. He traveled around teaching techniques to hundreds of

individuals, and he was challenged frequently. Based on all the available information, he was never defeated. In one famous incident, he was attacked by a group of construction workers who brandished picks, shovels, rakes, and other weapons. Takeda effectively defended himself using a short sword that he always carried with him. Having killed many of them, he was forced to respond to allegations of murder in a courtroom. Takeda explained the situation, telling the judge that he was only defending himself. After hearing his testimony and weighing the available evidence, Takeda was not charged with any crime, but they took his sword away from him.[13] Pranin explains, "It seems that Sokaku was goaded into a fight by a group of construction workers involved in repairing the road joining Sendai with Tokyo. Takeda killed several of the attackers with his kotetsu sword and wounded numerous others. He barely survived and was detained by the police for nearly a month. In the resulting trial, Sokaku's actions were judged a case of legitimate self-defense and he was acquitted. It appears that the construction workers had committed numerous crimes in the area and were somewhat akin to present day gangsters."[14]

Takeda Sokaku's son, Tokimune, described the extent of his injuries: "When that incident occurred, Sokaku had wounds all over his body. He was even stabbed in the back with a pick. He was rescued after he lost consciousness. According to Sokaku, it was dark and he could see a fire in the distance. He said that he felt good when he followed the fire with his eyes. Then, he gradually regained consciousness and heard his uncle, Shinjuro Kurokochi, calling his name."[15] This event occurred in 1882, when Takeda was twenty-two years old. There is another famous tale told about Takeda, although it is unknown if it is historically accurate. Supposedly, he was attacked by a group of men when he was unarmed and alone in a bath house. Some gangsters who had taken issue with him burst into the room. Carrying swords, they aimed to kill him. Takeda rolled out of the bath and grabbed the only thing he could get his hands on: a towel. He dipped it into the water and twisted it. Then using it like a whip, he defended himself against the armed attackers. One of the attackers supposedly suffered some cracked ribs, while others were said to have been knocked unconscious. The last of the attackers, having seen what happened to his companions, turned around and fled. Takeda dropped the towel, dried off, and put his clothes on. He then went to see the owner of the inn where he was staying, and he requested a sword. Someone gave him a blade, and Takeda went outside to deal with the rest of the gangsters. Although they outnumbered Takeda, they were frightened. They gave up their attack and fled, and the leader of the group later sent a note to Takeda requesting a truce. Although this story may be of dubious historical authenticity, there are other confirmed accounts of his incredible martial abilities. For example, in 1876, when he was only sixteen years old, three outlaws ambushed him. He killed one of them and injured the other two.[16] Later, he squared off with two fighters in Kumamoto who were experts in the use of the spear. Like all of his other fights, he managed to survive despite being outnumbered, although his two front teeth were knocked out in the engagement.[17]

Takeda was clearly a seasoned fighter, and he used his martial prowess on multiple attackers intent on killing him. In such important situations, the efficacy of both attacks

and defensive movements are literally a matter of life and death. He had to be able to defend himself no matter what the attack might be and no matter what position he was in when attacked (such as relaxing in a bath or lying down on his futon). Takeda was therefore a serious instructor, and some of his closest students, including Sagawa Yukiyoshi, learned to utilize the same power in a wide variety of techniques. Ueshiba Morihei learned from Takeda, and he too was known as an accomplished martial artist.

Ueshiba also taught Daito-ryu, and he was challenged by various fighters. For this reason, he worked hard to make his techniques effective. Challengers did not allow themselves to be thrown or pinned. However, he was able to subdue his attackers despite their greatest efforts. Word of his martial prowess spread and individuals stopped showing up to challenge O-Sensei. But they still challenged his students. These students refused to be beaten, so they too practiced hard. They trained to deal with a variety of different attacks, including punches, kicks, single- and double-leg takedowns, rear attacks, and more. They practiced to be able to defend themselves and apply techniques from all imaginable positions. This was a time in which Aikido was one of the most effective martial arts in the entire country.

Today, some individuals disregard Aikido's martial aspects. This should not be the case, and this disregard does not accord with what the founder himself did. O-Sensei blended the martial and the spiritual paths in Aikido. Aikido's spiritual aspects include meditative practices such as kotodama. O-Sensei, however, never disregarded martial efficiency. The martial and the spiritual paths both share equal importance in Aikido. Neither of them should be trivialized or disregarded. For those students who place great importance in the spiritual teachings of Aikido, continue to study the Omoto-kyo philosophy and how it relates to the physical movements of Aikido techniques and exercises. However, always question the effectiveness of techniques. Always strive to maintain the martial efficacy of the art. With goals of spiritual enlightenment and martial mastery in mind, practitioners must train hard to advance along the path. If students train and contemplate each technique from a martial perspective, their fighting abilities will increase. Stop going through the motions mindlessly with compliant uke. Make the techniques count. Make sure that they can be applied against everyone, even if the opponents resist. Thus aikidoists will become stronger and more well-rounded martial artists. It is time for Aikido to reclaim its proper place as an effective fighting art.

Conclusion

Aikido has changed a great deal since Walther von Krenner studied it in Japan from 1967 to 1969. Many times, O-Sensei said, “There is no Aikido separate from me.” And with the exception of Tomiki Kenji and Shioda Gozo, there were no other Aikido teachers. Students trained under the founder, and there was little conflict. But after his death, the power struggle began. Some high-ranking students began their own splinter groups. In time, since there was money to be made, many more organizations popped up, and today there are at least fifty organizations competing for students, each one proclaiming that they know best and that all the others are wrong. We do not believe that this is what the founder would have wanted.

Some Aikido practitioners cannot easily disregard the practices perpetuated within their organizations and look at O-Sensei’s teachings anew. It is difficult for them to view the history of both Ueshiba Morihei and Aikido outside of the lens that has been put into place by various groups, each of which wants their members to pledge their allegiance to them. Many of these organizations have become so wrapped up in their own histories and beliefs that it is nearly impossible for students to see the bigger picture and compare their own practices to the practices and teachings of O-Sensei.

One example is the question of rank. Remember that O-Sensei was not concerned with ranks; he had no rank. Nor did most of the senior teachers and students at his dojo. Such students were only given rank by the Hombu Dojo before they came to the West. The addition of a ranking system was for the benefit of Western students. The system that Aikido used was adopted from Judo, which made use of the *kyu* and *dan* system that Kano Jigoro invented. Aikido practitioners like to claim that there are no competitions in the art of peace, but ranking itself has become a form of competition; it has caused a great deal of disharmony and political strife in an art that is supposed to value harmony and blending with others. Students end up being rank conscious rather than skill conscious. Sometimes, when guests stop by Walther von Krenner’s dojo to watch a class, they ask, “How long does it take to get a black belt?” He generally will hand them a martial arts catalog and state that they can buy one right now. People are so engrossed in this meaningless award system that it is difficult for them to step back and view Aikido objectively.

Another problem we see with the current state of Aikido is the way in which many non-Japanese Aikido students idolize their Japanese shihan. Of course, the Japanese shihan were extremely important in bringing Aikido to the West and disseminating it to foreigners. But today, there are individuals training in Aikido who have been training longer than some of these shihan and who are more skilled at the art. Further, even those shihan who are quite skilled may be unable to teach American students as effectively as their American counterparts; the educational system in Japan is different from that in the United States, and Japanese practices do not always work well when

instructing non-Japanese students. Yet many American students persist in the frankly racist assumption that Japanese martial artists are superior simply by virtue of their being Japanese. The concept is ridiculous, and it has occurred only because people have lost sight of Aikido's original goal.

We feel that much of the essence of Aikido has been lost in the way it is currently trained. This is true when referring to all of Aikido's aspects, from the use of atemi (which accounts for 70 percent of the art according to O-Sensei) to even the terminology used to describe its techniques. Today's standard Aikido techniques, such as ikkyo, nikkyo, and sankyo, went by different names when O-Sensei was alive. The names for Aikido techniques used today were, for the most part, made up by Tohei Koichi. Walther von Krenner was there when this happened. Tohei believed that foreigners would not be able to remember the real names of the techniques—techniques such as ude-osae, kote-mawashi, and kote-hineri—so he simplified them. He removed the real names and gave them numbers: ikkyo (technique number one), nikkyo (technique number two), and sankyo (technique number three).

O-Sensei did not use these terms. He called them ude-osae (arm control), kote-mawashi (forearm turn), and kote-hineri (forearm twist). He also grouped them into categories called ikkajo, nikkajo, and sankajo. These terms translate as category number one, category number two, and category number three. Ikkajo in Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu encompassed thirty different techniques. There were ten standing techniques, ten seated techniques, five techniques in which the attacker is standing while the defender is seated, and five rear defenses. Nikkajo, sankajo, and yonkajo likewise contained numerous different techniques. The thirty techniques in the ikkajo series of Daito-ryu were eventually reduced to just one technique in Aikido: ikkyo. Likewise, all of the techniques of the nikkajo, sankajo, and yonkajo series were reduced to singular Aikido techniques. Before adopting modern terms like ikkyo, ude-osae was called ikkajo. The name of the series (in Daito-ryu) was used to describe the one remaining technique that was adopted into Aikido. However, the idea of a category was still maintained. Although the same technique, ude-osae, was performed, the various attacks that led to the technique were thought of differently. Today they are thought of as variations alone, such as ikkyo from a punch or ikkyo from a grab, but early on this was not the case: ude-osae applications from a punch, shomenuchi, or yokomenuchi attack were all thought of as distinct techniques in the same category.

Traditionally, ikkajo was the first thing that students would learn from O-Sensei. This included all the ude-osae techniques: from the rear, with a variety of different strikes, and so on. Walther von Krenner tried to catalog all of them with some of his training partners once. They reached ninety-four and then had to give up. The idea was that each technique could be used to defend yourself adequately no matter the attack. Whether someone attacked you with a sword, a knife, empty-handed strikes or kicks, a grab, or a choke, an understanding of one single technique would provide the defender with a way out of any possible problem. Thus each of the pillars in Aikido have limitless techniques. The ikkajo category contained all the variations of ude-osae (ikkyo) needed to defend oneself against any attack. Then students would learn nikkajo, the second

category, which contained countless variations of kote-mawashi (nikkyo), which, like ude-osae, could be used to defend against any conceivable attack. This was how Aikido used to be structured. All varieties of attacks were considered, and techniques were practiced so students could deal with them effectively.

Today, most aikidoka have never heard of terms like ude-osae, kote-mawashi, and kote-hineri. There are few practitioners that would understand what technique O-Sensei was referring to if he suddenly reappeared on the mat and asked them to perform ude-osae or kote-hineri. Because of this, Aikido has lost something. At first it was nothing but the terminology used to describe certain techniques. But the differences continued to broaden, and Aikido continues to degenerate.

One comparison can be found in the sword arts. There are noticeable differences between the country arts that were used on battlefields and the so-called Edoized arts that were only used in dojo. During the Edo period in Japan, after the Warring States period had concluded, many of the sword arts changed. Martial efficacy was no longer a primary concern, and students began to practice the arts with the goal of self-realization. How the arts looked to observers became more important than how they worked on a battlefield. Arts that changed in this way are said to have been Edoized. In true, martially efficient sword arts, the practitioner does not slide his or her feet, as sliding the feet does not work too well on battlefields. In addition, the strikes and cuts in the country arts aimed for the weak points that someone would have when wearing armor. These concerns were not even considered in most arts that were standardized in Edo. The new arts strove not for efficiency but for beauty in technique. With this new emphasis, the martial element of the martial arts waned—and the same is true for many martial arts today, including Aikido. A pattern emerges in which instructors teach students to take high, beautiful falls, landing exactly where their teacher intends them to go. After they do this faithfully for a number of years, that student will open their own school, where they will likewise train students to put on a show. It is easy to become brainwashed in such a manner.

The only way to step back and see Aikido for what it has become is to separate yourself from the politics. Follow O-Sensei, not the head of an organization. Look at the history of Aikido: Ueshiba Morihei was introduced to one of the most gifted martial artists in all of modern Japanese history, Takeda Sokaku. Although he did not train under him as long as individuals like Sagawa Yukiyoshi did, he still learned a lot, and from that he became a decent martial artist. After training under Takeda, he left the art to start a new one. He did not attend seminars or join martial artists' organizations. He trained himself, on his own.

Walther von Krenner left Japan when O-Sensei died. He has been striving his entire life to follow the teachings of his great teacher. He moved from Japan to Hawaii to Montana, where he raised horses. He opened a dojo where he could train away from all the external influences and Aikido politics. This is exactly what O-Sensei did. He stayed away from Budo competitions and politics to create and perfect his Aikido. Many years ago, when von Krenner meditated on his decision, he wrote himself a letter:

Lately, much has been written about Aikido's connection to nature and farming. Because of this connection, my wife and I left Honolulu many years ago, came to Montana, and bought land to start a ranch. At that time good land was available, and we were fortunate to acquire a place with a beautiful view, rolling hills with good pasture, and a beautiful forest with a stream running through it. We started by building our own road. We built over two miles of fence, and we drilled a well for our water. The goal was to raise and breed Arabian horses, create an Aikido setting, and be as self-sufficient as possible. This was a dream, and we were convinced we could make it into a reality.

The question I was asked the most was, "Do you think you can make a living?" I have thought about this and realized that one does not make a living; one simply lives a life. A conventional financial statement is narrow and leaves out indications of value and the quality of one's life. By widening this definition we can include factors that do not fit into the lines and boxes of a conventional financial statement. For example, we grow and provide food for ourselves and friends that is healthier than food bought in the supermarket. The labor we perform is not an expense but a product. It is healthy in itself. Through our ranch and animals we are able to live out our passion for this land. We are able to shape, nourish, and maintain our own surroundings according to our plans, which are frequently corrected and changed by nature. Slowly, step by step, season by season, one comes closer to the center of things as they really are, instead of how we think they are. You cannot get this from spending a couple of hours in a park.

This wealth that comes from the land is considerable, regardless of how undervalued it is in the marketplace. Each year when the geese fly south and the days are getting shorter I question myself: would I rather have money in a substantial savings account, a health plan, a pension plan, life insurance, yet hate the life I lead in order to have all those things? We have chosen to live a life, not to endure one. The winter is near and the numbers are always unsatisfactory, but even the winter with all its hardships is beautiful, and next year will always be better, without drought or flood or hail or snow too late or too early. Next year I will be stronger, wiser, perhaps less idealistic, perhaps less of a dreamer. But the cycle will always be flawed. There can be no perfection, only dreams of it: dreams of the easy life and completion.

However, the dream will fail. There is no perfection. There will be droughts, frosts and storms, but you can feel those things first hand. You can feel alive, and with your imagination and labor you can overcome them. Creation and recreation! In a world of consumerism, instant gratification and artificial values, this imagination and unification with the land are our most powerful and most human defense.

This is Walther von Krenner's Aikido. It is what he believes O-Sensei taught. Some individuals might not see how this relates to practice in the dojo. However, another lecture by the founder might clarify this. O-Sensei said the following in 1967, two years

before his death:

> To fall in with the movements of the circle is the technique and essence of Aikido. The movements of technique act upon the body and buildup of these effects in the tamashii [spiritual essence] of the circle. This circle is in the all-void, and that which is born out of the center of this void is the kokoro [heart]. The all-void is free and self-existing. When a center arises in this space, ki is created. The life producing and ki generating power in the immeasurable and infinite universe that arises out of the center of the void is the spirit. This spirit is indestructible and has produced everything that exists. When one has acquired the circle in the whole being of one's body, it creates the elemental foundation of all technique. This productivity is without limit, ever changing and adoptable. This is takemusu. The circle becomes the means that fulfills all needs most profusely. The circle gives birth to forms that protect and bring to completion all that exists and all that live in the entire universe. This is *ki-musubi* and *iku-musubi* [tying up ki and tying up life]. In this world even the karmic action of cause and effect is in harmony with the circle and round movement. The spirit of Aikido is circular. To understand Aikido and bring together the physical and the spiritual in such a way where both aspects live and prosper is to create the circle of the soul. All the ki in the universe is appeased and well controlled by the circle of tamashii. Without this the entire cultivation of the physical body comes to nothing. The emptiness or void of the essence of the circle comes to be the harmony in the universe. This is the root of the spirit of Aikido and it is the secret principle revealed when this tamashii is mastered and understood by the body. Embraced within this circle are the movements of mutual destiny and all things are understood as if held in the palm of your hand. When you cultivate tamshii it is also for the benefit of others. When all things are solved freely, then you understand the secret principle of the circle. This is the act of giving birth to techniques by moving freely, adopting and not being attached to useless methods, by thrusting to the very center of the void.

O-Sensei was a human being. As such, his ideas and emphases changed throughout his life. However, O-Sensei left his students a trail, and if they can find and follow it, they can achieve the same martial prowess that he himself possessed. The techniques that he passed on to us all contain a variety of principles, both martial and spiritual. They must be studied intently. It is not enough to enter the dojo and to mindlessly execute a body movement repeatedly. Instead, students must make efforts to perfect the physical motions while considering the philosophical and spiritual elements within the techniques.

O-Sensei was from a different era, and like the teachers before him, he did not explicitly teach people about the principles found within Aikido techniques. He pointed the way, but it is up to each individual student to follow him along the path. Some of them find their way. Others get lost. The lost ones skip steps, and without the requisite knowledge, they cannot advance along the path. Having found themselves in a clearing

halfway up the mountain, they think that they have reached the top. They do not realize that they can progress further because their path does not lead to the top. Some students think that they understand right away what O-Sensei realized after training for decades. He developed his spiritual outlook only after training to perfect his martial abilities. Yet some people want to disregard the martial elements of the art to only focus on the spiritual. It is not possible to access the spiritual dimensions of the art until the physical principles have been mastered.

Onuma Hideharu, kyudo (archery) instructor, wrote, "Technique is the stairway to the spiritual level. Students think of the study of technique as something they must endure, like some form of punishment dispensed by the teacher. They want to dispense with technique as soon as possible and move on to the more creative, spiritual aspects of study. But to learn technique you must carefully control the workings of your mind and body. And that is what students misunderstand. Controlling the mind and body does not stifle the spirit; it sets it free."[1]

In order to progress in Aikido, students must forget what they think they know, and they must approach each day of training anew. Strive to learn the hidden meanings within each movement. This is how the principles of Aikido will be revealed. Remember too that Aikido is a high-level martial art. Try it out against other martial artists. Make sure that you can successfully deal with any attack from any position. The art must be martially effective. Otherwise, the skills that O-Sensei attempted to pass down will be forever lost.

This book specifically deals with ground techniques that can be used in Aikido, but it aims to accomplish much more. People who consider the martial aspects of the art will broaden their scope. They will develop more expansive vision, and, hopefully, they will dig a little bit deeper into their Aikido techniques. They will look past the set form, and they will start to understand the principles embodied within the movements. After the physical techniques have been mastered, a spiritual component will naturally arise. Only then can we rethink Aikido in its entirety. O-Sensei said that Aikido is the art that is not an art. It is an art that completes and perfects all other arts. It is our hope that this book starts a conversation—one that might never end.

Sino-Japanese Character Glossary

Abashiri 網走
aiki 合気
aiki taiso 合気体操
Aikido 合気道
Aikikai 合気会
aiki-nage 合気投げ
ainu アイヌ
Akazawa, Zenzaburo 赤沢善三郎
ashigaru 足軽
atemi 当身
Ayabe 綾部
Budo 武道
bujutsu 武術
bushi 武士
bushido 武士道
Chozanshi, Issai 佚齋樗山子
Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu 大東流合気柔術
Deguchi, Nao 出口なお
Deguchi, Onisaburo 出口王仁三郎
dojo 道場
Endo, Seishiro 遠藤征四郎
Engaru 遠軽
gokyo 五教
hadaka-jime 裸絞
hanmi-handachi 半身半立ち
Hokkaido 北海道
Hozoin-ryu 宝蔵院流
iaido 居合道
iaijutsu 居合術
idori 居捕り
ikkyo 一教
Inoue, Yoichiro 井上要一郎
ippondori 一本捕
irimi 入り身
irimi-nage 入り身投げ
Iwama 岩間
Jikishinkage-ryu 直心影流
jojutsu 杖術

Judo 柔道
jujutsu 柔術
kaiten 回転
kaiten-nage 回転投げ
Kano, Jigoro 嘉納治五郎
kansetsu-waza 関節技
kappo 活法
katagatame 肩固技
katana 刀
Katori Shinto-ryu 香取神道流
keikogi 稽古着
kenjutsu 剣術
kesa 袈裟
kesagatame 袈裟固技
ki 気
kime no kata 極の形
Kito-ryu 起倒流
Kojiki 古事記
kokyu-dosa 呼吸動作
kokyu-ho 袈裟
kokyu-nage 呼吸投げ
Kondo, Katsuyuki 近藤 克幸
koryu 近藤 克幸
kote 小手
kote-gaeshi 小手
kotodama 小手返し
maai 言玉
Matsushima, Keijiro 間合い
Monbetsu 松島 圭次郎
musubi 結び
Nagai, Masakatsu 永井 正勝
nage 投げ
nami juji jime 並十字絞
nanakyo 七教
newaza 寝技
Nijo 二条
nikkyo 二教
Nishimura, Hidetaro 西村秀太郎
Omiya, Risuke 大宮利助
omote 表
Omoto-kyo 大本教
Ono-ha Itto-ryu 小野派一刀流
osaekomiwaza 抑込技

osae-waza 抑え技
randori no kata 乱捕りの形
rokkyo 六教
Sagawa, Yukiyoshi 佐川 幸義
samurai 侍
sankyo 三教
Saotome, Mitsugi 早乙女貢
seiza 星座
shihan 師範
shiho-nage 四方投げ
shikko 膝行
shime-waza 絞め技
Shinra Saburo Minamoto no Yoshimitsu 新羅三郎源義光
Shioda, Gozo 塩田剛三
Shirata, Rinjiro 白田 林二郎
Shirataki 白滝
shomen 正面
shomenuchi 正面打ち
soto 外
sutemi 捨て身
suwari-waza 座り技
tachi 立ち
tachiai 立会
tai-sabaki 体捌き
Takagi, Kiyoichi 高木京一
Takeda, Sokaku 武田組閣
Takeda, Tokimune 武田時宗
takemusu aiki 武産合気
Takenouchi-ryu 竹内流
tegatana 手刀
Tendo-ryu 天道流
tenkan 転換
Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu 天真正伝香取神道流
tomeru 止める
Tomiki, Kenji 富木 謙治
tsuba 鍔
tsuki 突き
uchi 内
uchi-mata 内股
ude hishigi juji gatame 腕挫十字固
ude-osae 腕抑え
Ueshiba Kisshomaru 植芝吉祥丸
Ueshiba Morihei 植芝盛平

uke 受け
ukemi 受身
umareru 生まれる
ura 裏
ushiro-waza 後ろ技
wakizashi 脇差
waza 技
Yagyu Shingan-ryu 柳生心眼流
yokomen 横面
yokomenuchi 横面打ち
yonkyo 四教
Yoshinkan Aikido 松心館合気道
yudansha 有段者
yukyusha 有級者

Notes

Introduction

1 Stevens, *Abundant Peace*, 75.
2 Kondo, *Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu*.
3 Ibid.
4 Amdur, *Hidden in Plain Sight*.
5 Stevens, *Abundant Peace*, 69.
6 Amdur, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, 90.
7 Stevens, *Abundant Peace*, 82.
8 Ueshiba, *Life in Aikido*.
9 Ibid., 96.
10 Ibid.
11 Kimura, *Transparent Power*.
12 Ueshiba, *Life in Aikido*, 183.
13 Ibid., 231.
14 Stevens, *Abundant Peace*, 75.
15 Matsushima, *Death of Hiroshima*, 9.
16 Ueshiba, *Life in Aikido*, 277.
17 Stevens, *Abundant Peace*, 82.
18 Amdur, *Hidden in Plain Sight*.

1. The Structure of Aikido

1 Tomiki, *Judo, Appendix*, 31.
2 Ibid., 31–32.
3 Ueshiba, *Budo*, 37.

2. The History and Use of Suwari-Waza

1 Amdur, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, 62.
2 Otake, *Katori Shinto-ryu*, 51–53.
3 Ueshiba, *Art of Peace*, 49.
4 Omiya, *Hidden Roots of Aikido*, 22.

5 Kimura, *Transparent Power*, 132.
6 Ueshiba, *Art of Peace*, 69.
7 Kondo, *Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu*, 114.
8 Saotome, *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, 186–87.
9 Stevens, *Essence of Aikido*, 30.
10 Ibid.
11 Chozanshi, *Demon's Sermon*, 103.

3. Going to the Ground From Suwari-Waza

1 Chozanshi, *Demon's Sermon*, 181.
2 Ibid., 183–84.
3 Ibid., 184–85.

4. Grappling Techniques I: Suwari-Waza as a Middle Ground

1 Ohlenkamp, *Judo Unleashed*, 142.

5. Grappling Techniques II: Getting Back to Suwari-Waza

1 Kano, *Kodokan Judo*.

6. Adaptation of Other Aikido Techniques for Ground Fighting

1 Amdur, *Hidden in Plain Sight*.
2 Stevens and von Krenner, *Training with the Master*, 130.
3 Friday, *Legacies of the Sword*, 156–57.
4 Stevens and von Krenner, *Training with the Master*, 130.

7. The Changing Nature of the Art

1 Kano, *Mind over Muscle*, 84.
2 Ueshiba, *Budo*, 21–22.
3 Ueshiba, *Life in Aikido*.
4 Stevens and von Krenner, *Training with the Master*, 133.
5 Ueshiba, *Life in Aikido*, 315.
6 Stevens and von Krenner, *Training with the Master*, 122–23.
7 Sunadomari, *Enlightenment through Aikido*, 24–25.

[8] Fullan, “Understanding Change.”

[9] Stevens and von Krenner, *Training with the Master*, 116.

[10] Kano, *Mind over Muscle*, 137.

[11] Skoss, *Koryu Bujutsu*, 50.

[12] Chozanshi, *Demon’s Sermon*, 181.

[13] Pranin, *Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu*, 18.

[14] Ibid., 18.

[15] Takeda, “Tokimune Takeda,” 51.

[16] Pranin, “Chronology of the Life of Sokaku Takeda.”

[17] Ibid.

Conclusion

[1] DeProspero and DeProspero, *Illuminated Spirit*, 124.

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About the Authors

Walther G. von Krenner has studied martial arts and other Japanese (spiritual) traditions, including calligraphy and sumi-e, since 1957. He is a direct student of O-Sensei, the founder of Aikido, and he was a Judo champion of Germany in 1959. He was interviewed for issue 109 of *Aikido Journal*, and he was inducted into the Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 2000. He is the coauthor of the book *Training with the Master: Lessons with Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of Aikido*, and he continues to write for both the French and German versions of *Aikido Journal*. He currently teaches Aikido in Kalispell, Montana, at the Aikido Kenkyu Dantai. More information can be found at http://www.kalispellaikido.com. His calligraphy, which is featured in this book, is available for sale at http://www.bugei.com. Other artwork by von Krenner can be purchased at http://www.saatchionline.com/wgvk.

Damon Apodaca is the chief instructor and founder of Santa Fe Budokan, located in New Mexico. A practitioner of over thirty-six years, he is ranked as sixth-degree black belt (rokudan) by the Aikido World Federation, Hombu Dojo. He is a certified Shidoin by the United States Aikido Federation, under the direction of Yamada Yoshimitsu (eighth-degree black belt). In addition, he also holds various levels of instructor certification from Saito Morihiro, shihan (Iwama Dojo, Japan) for *aikiken* and *aikijo*. Apodaca spent his formative years of study with Nakazono Mikoto Masahilo in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and later moved to San Diego where he spent six years of study under Chiba Kazuo, the chief instructor of San Diego Aikikai and director of Birankai International. All Apodaca's teachers were direct students of the founder of Aikido. Besides Aikido, Apodaca also started the practice of iaido under the direction of Chiba, and he is currently a student of Shimabukuro Masayuki (hanshi) under the direction of Carl Long (kyoshi). He holds the rank of nidan in the Jikishinkai International, and Santa Fe Budokan is a member dojo. More information can be found at http://sfbudokan.com.

Ken Jeremiah has written extensively about Japanese Buddhism and other spiritual phenomena. His articles have appeared in various publications, such as *Kansai Time Out, The Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, and *Southern New England Golfer*. His previous books include *Living Buddhas: The Self-Mummified Monks of Yamagata, Japan; Christian Mummification: An Interpretative History of the Preservation of Saints, Martyrs and Others*; and *If the Samurai Played Golf: Zen Strategies for a Winning Game*. He is a PGA golf professional, and he teaches comparative religion and world languages, including Spanish, Italian, and Japanese. He has been studying Aikido since 1997. Currently, he teaches and practices Aikido and related arts at the Aiki Kyodo, in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Dojo information can be found at http://aikikyodo.com. More

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Figure 9.1. The authors: Walther G. von Krenner, in the center, is flanked by Damon Apodaca (on the right) and Ken Jeremiah (on the left).

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