

THE ART OF AIKIDO

KISSHOMARU
UESHIBA

Principles and Essential Techniques



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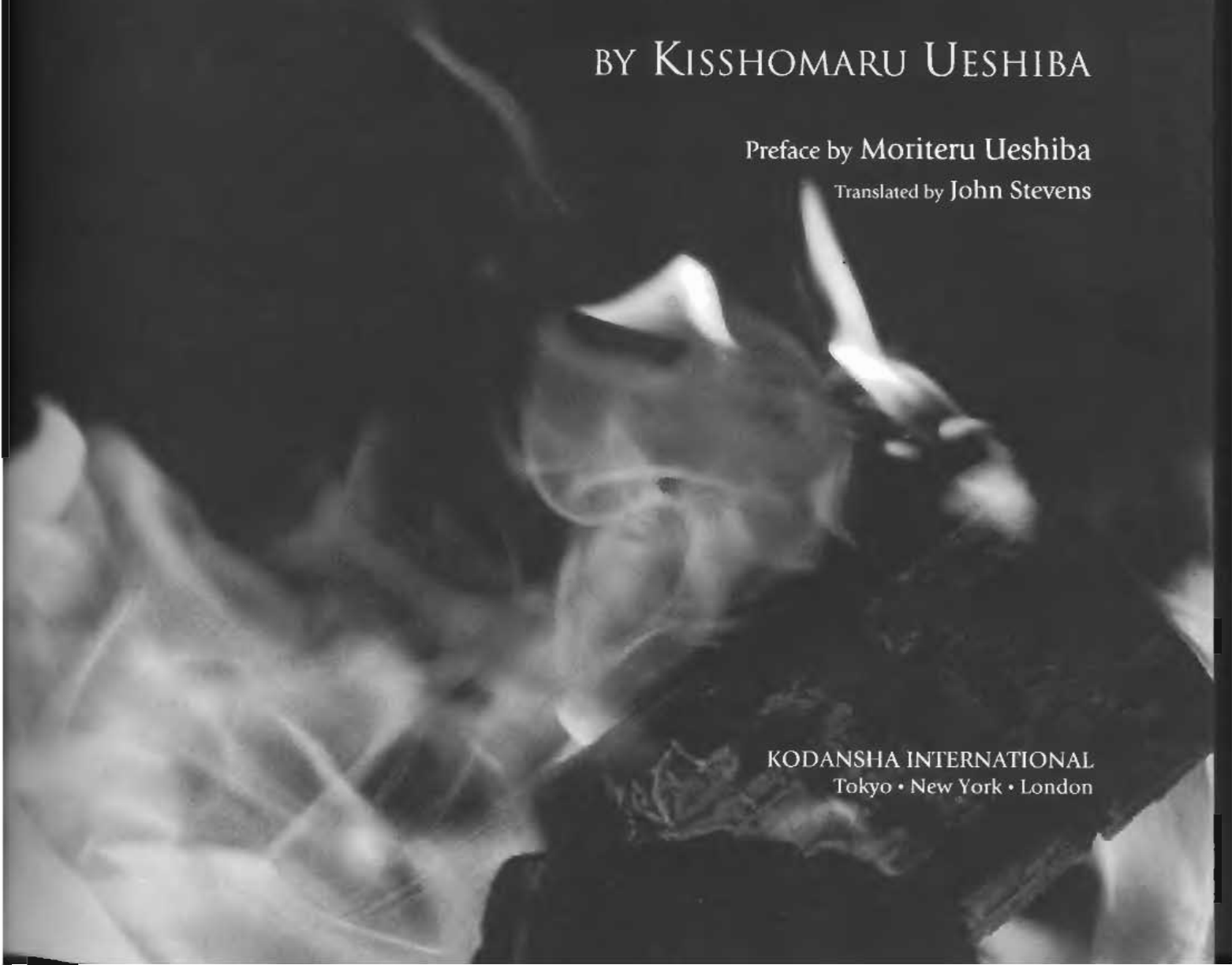
Principles and Essential Techniques

BY KISSHOMARU UESHIBA

Preface by Moriteru Ueshiba

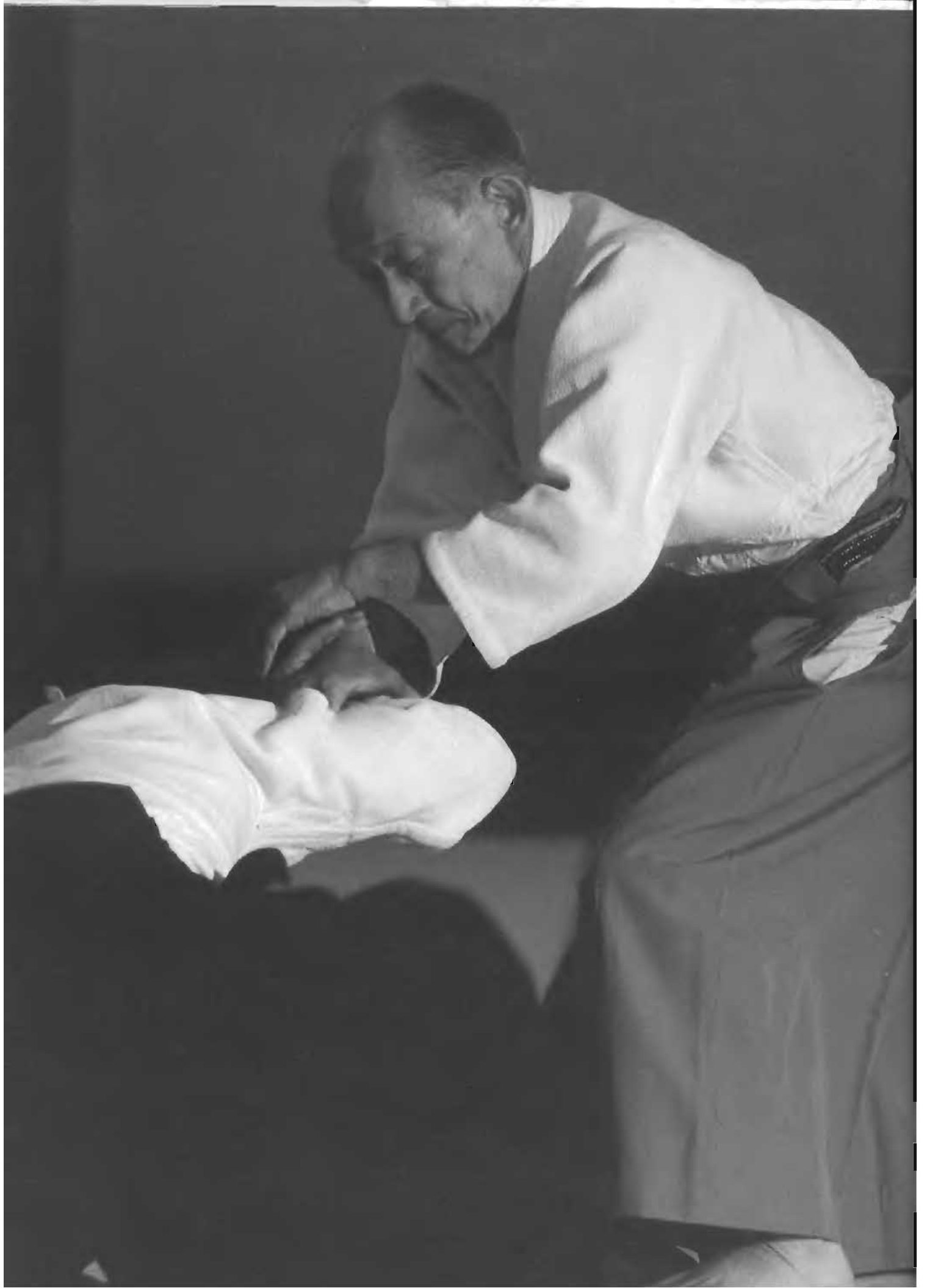
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NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER:

The names of modern and contemporary Japanese appear in the Western order, while those of historical figures (pre-1868) are written in the traditional order: surname preceding given name.

For reference, the following chart shows those periods of Japanese history which will be most relevant to the discussion.

PERIOD	APPROXIMATE DATES (A.D.)
Nara	710-784
Heian	794-1192
Kamakura	1192-1333
Muromachi	1392-1573
Nanbokuchō	1337-1392
Sengoku	1467-1568
Azuchi-Momoyama	1573-1600
Edo	1600-1868
Meiji	1868-1912
Taisho	1912-1926
Showa	1926-1989
Heisei	1989-

(Historians do not agree on exactly when the various periods started and ended, so the dates listed are approximate. Japanese writing often refers as well to *nengō*, or shorter periods named after each reigning emperor. Some of these will be introduced where relevant.)

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P R E F A C E

Aikido is a modern Budo founded by Morihei Ueshiba after he had mastered many traditional Japanese martial arts and engaged in profound spiritual training.

Master Morihei Ueshiba once explained the true mind-set of Aikido by saying: "In true Budo, there is no enemy. True Budo is the function of love. It does not contend and destroy but rather fosters and nourishes all things. A martial art solely concerned with winning and losing is not true Budo. True Budo is *masakatsu, agatsu, katsu hayabi*—"True Victory is Self-Victory, Victory Right Now!" This is an absolute victory, absolute because it does not contend with anything. Victory is to thoroughly rid the mind of contention and conflict within ourselves."

The importance of Morihei's role in Aikido can perhaps be best summed up in the following adage: "Without Morihei Ueshiba there can be no Aikido." Here, I can give just a brief outline of his career but I encourage readers to learn as much about the life and thought of Morihei Ueshiba as possible. Morihei was born in 1883 in Tanabe city, Wakayama prefecture. With the full support of his family, Morihei followed his own inner call throughout his life and established Aikido during a tumultuous period of human history. It is important also that we do not overlook the contribution of Morihei's many martial art teachers and his spiritual mentors who assisted him in his quest. Aikido has deep roots in many renowned traditions, and its essential nature will remain unchanged regardless of social upheaval.

This book was composed by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Morihei's son and successor as the Second Aikido Doshu. Born into the household of a martial arts genius,



The Founder Morihei Ueshiba

Kisshomaru naturally absorbed many teachings from his father as he was growing up. In the traumatic aftermath of World War II, Kisshomaru believed that the remarkable art of Aikido—established by his father Morihei and based on the best aspects of traditional Japanese culture—could be a positive contribution to the creation of a new society.

Previously, Morihei taught Aikido in archaic, esoteric language, and limited his instruction to a select few. In order to introduce Aikido to the world, Kisshomaru simplified the philosophy and arranged the techniques so that it would be possible for any sincere person to practice Aikido. That effort was a great success—Aikido is now practiced all over Japan and in eighty-five foreign countries. The Aikido ideal of “refining one’s mind and body to foster a spirit of harmony” has obviously struck a common chord among the peoples of the world.

It was through the genius of the Ueshiba and the wise administration of the Second Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba that today’s Aikido came into existence. This book is a compilation of Kisshomaru’s writings on Aikido. It will provide the reader with deep insight into both the spiritual and technical dimensions of Aikido. Use this book as an indispensable reference in your daily training, and always keep in mind the words of the Second Doshu Kisshomaru: “Nothing surpasses daily training in Aikido.”

Moriteru Ueshiba
AIKIDO DOSHU

An abstract ink wash painting (suiboku-ga) in shades of grey and black. The composition features bold, expressive brushstrokes that sweep across the frame, creating a sense of movement and depth. In the upper left, a cluster of small, dark dots is visible, possibly representing a constellation or a specific motif. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and contemplative, characteristic of traditional East Asian art.

AIKIDO PHILOSOPHY







合氣道

松本







Sumikiri (Perfect Clarity)

**Focus on stillness rather than motion
in order to master Aikido techniques.**

For a heart instantaneously at one with the clear and serene sky, all of existence appears in crystal clarity. When the Founder Morihei realized that state of mind, he felt bathed in golden light, and perceived the true mission of Aikido. The center of a spinning top appears to be completely still. That kind of stillness, rather than the rapid motion of the top, is where we should focus. It is where the secret of perfect clarity can be perceived. That stillness also lies at the heart of Aikido techniques. When speaking of the mysteries of centripetal and centrifugal forces, Morihei said, "Large has no outside; small has no inside." This is a maxim on which we need to reflect deeply.

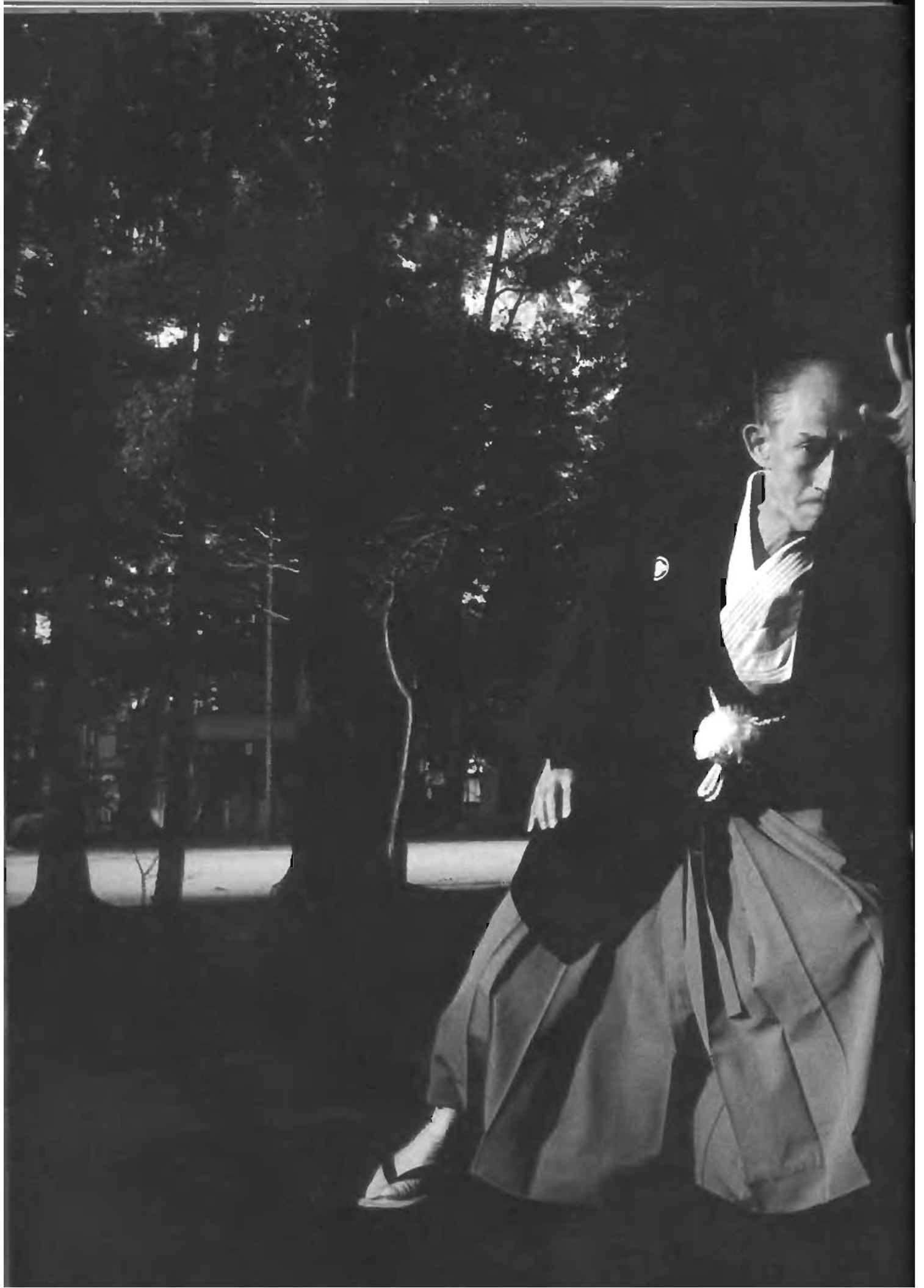


Enten (Circular Integration)

All physical forms of existence, when animated in mind and body, breathe in conjunction with the universe; that breath expands circularly, wider and wider, linking each and every individual to the cosmic breath of life.

Morihei Ueshiba







Ki Shin Tai Ichinyo
(*Ki*, Mind, and Body as One)

**Within the flow of life, human beings
must link themselves to the cosmos**

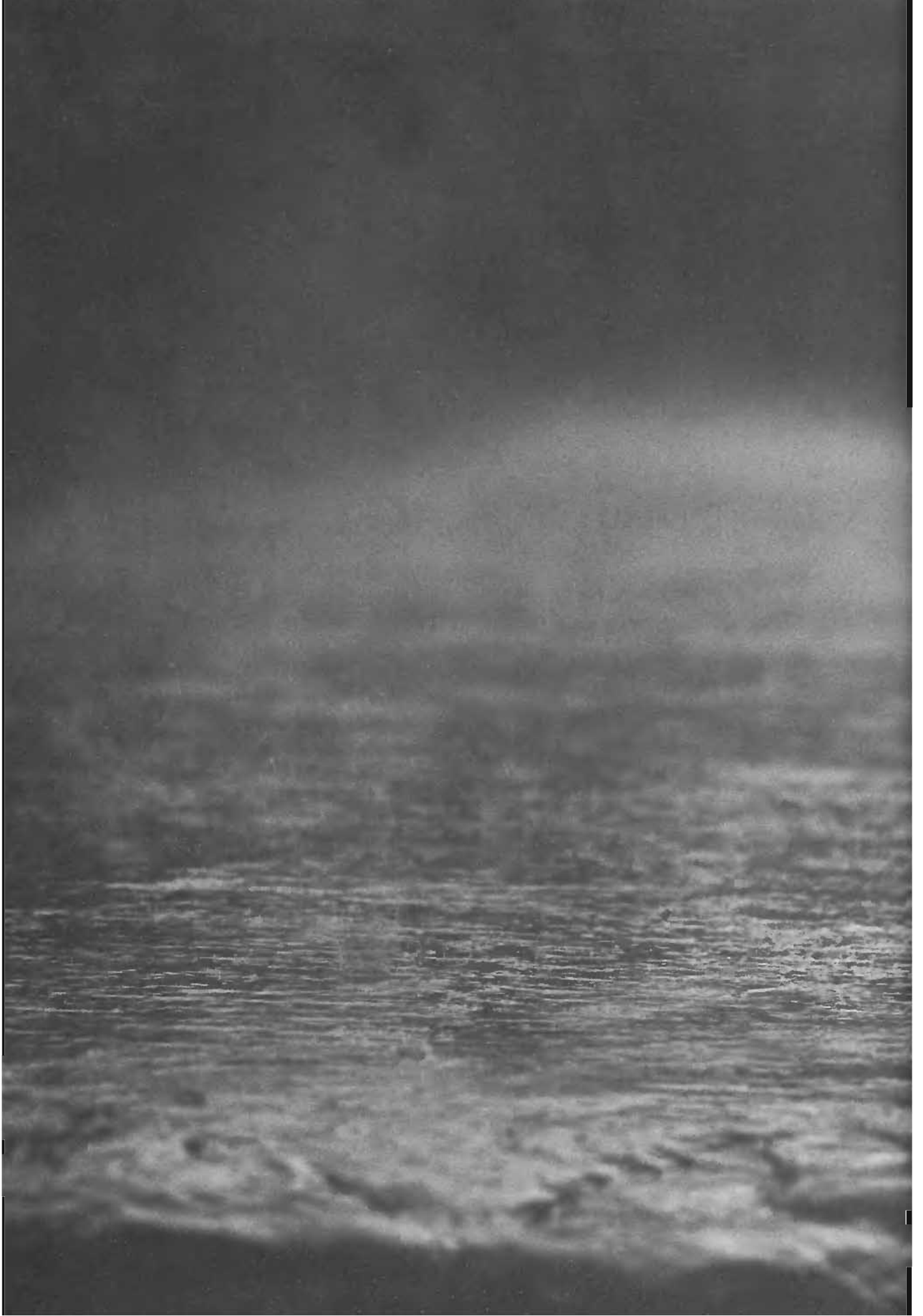
All phenomenal existence is in ceaseless flux yet bound together through the three elements of *ki*, mind, and body. This is the basis of existence. Aikido is a vehicle to unify mind and body, to link oneself to the energy of the universe, and to establish a bond between universal vitality and each human being. In Aikido, one's thoughts are centered on the harmonization of *ki*, mind, and body. This is where unlimited, vital energy is generated.



Ki Soku (Energy-Breath)

*"Ki is the fullness of life."—Enanji:
Huái nán zǐ*

Sages of old taught that: "Ki is the source of the life force; it is the principle of life that pervades all forms of existence." *Soku*, also known as *iki*, is the core of breath, indispensable for life. Right from the beginning of creation, *ki* and *soku* have been one. From that essential harmony, nature sprang forth in abundance; it is the source of unlimited energy. That essential harmony is the basis of the Way of Martial Valor, and the key to *aiki*, "ideal unity." *Aiki* breath-power is most enhanced when *ki* and *soku* are unified.





Wago (Harmony)

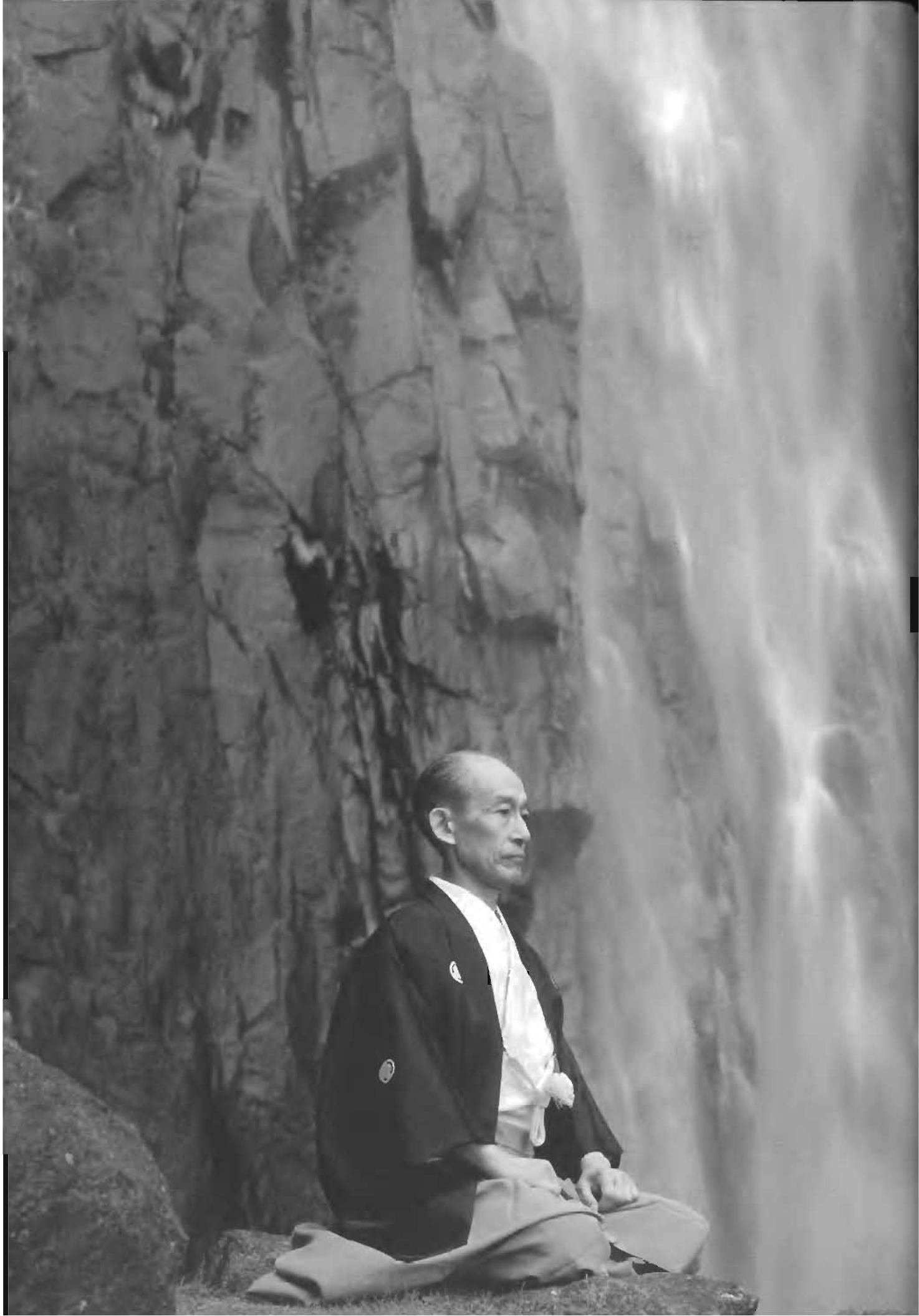
**With love fixed in your heart, connect
directly to the cosmos**

When asked, "What is Aikido?" the Founder Morihei would reply, "The Way to harmonize heaven, earth, and humankind." "Harmony" in Aikido means both to connect oneself to the cosmos (the universal) and to blend with a partner (the particular); in Aikido we draw an opponent into our own sphere of movement in order to guide them. This is true of any of the other arts as well—opposition must always be reconciled to create something of beauty. Here are two *doka* ("Poems of the Way") by the Founder:

Aiki

Is the base of
The power of love.
Let that love
Ever flourish!

The form of
This beautiful Heaven and Earth,
A gift of the Creator.
We are all members
Of one family.

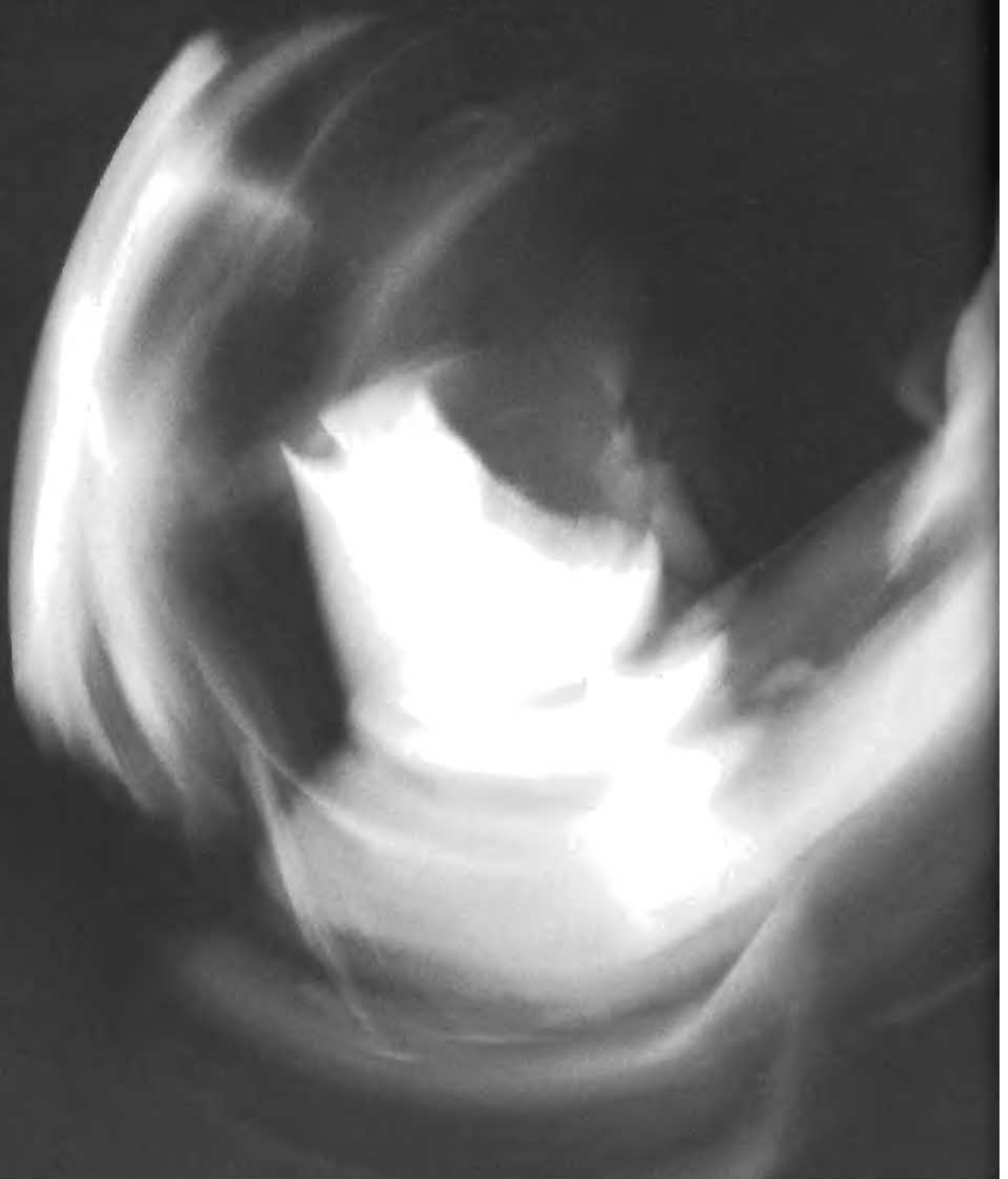




Seiza Naikan
(Settled Introspection)

Movement within Stillness: this is where the base of Aikido lies.

A giant tree is rooted deeply in the great earth, so firm that nothing can shake it. When a human sits quietly, with a body rooted to earth like a tree, it is the first step in becoming one with heaven and earth. Look deeply inside and see the truth in all its severity. Use your settled meditation to pierce heaven and earth. Overwhelm all external distractions, and awaken to your heart's true calling. Maintain a steadfast mind; without this, one's body can easily fall like a dead tree. Movement within Stillness: this is where the base of Aikido lies.





Enryu (Circular Flow)

**Follow the principle of circular flow
and maintain true freedom**

It can be clearly stated that the essence of Aikido technique lies in free flowing circular movement. Draw your opponent into the circular flow of your movement; this is the sphere of "moving Zen," and indicates a mind that is settled and secure. The impressionistic photo here shows the circular flow of Doshu Kisshomaru's movement as he performs a technique. In the center of this beautiful circular flow, notice that there is a vital still point. In the free flow of circular movement, nothing is stagnant.

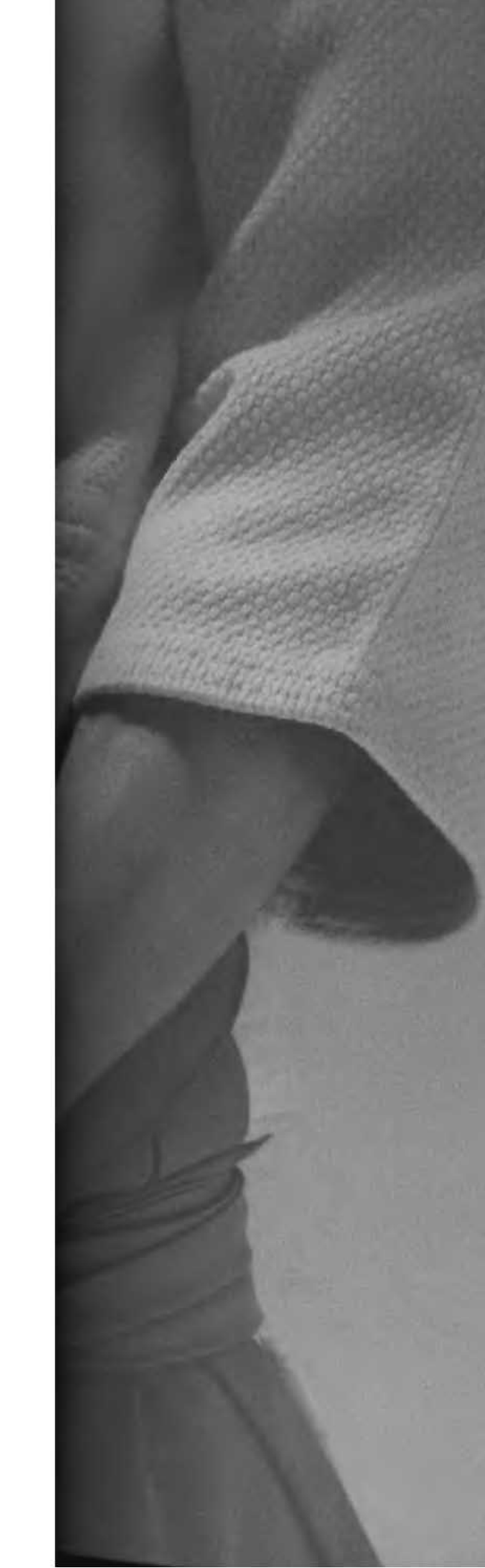


Ki

The marvelous functioning of *ki* originates in the subtle variations of breath; this is the Generative Principle. It is the essential principle of love that manifests martial valor. In accordance with the marvelous functioning of *ki*, body and mind are unified. When Aikido is practiced, the subtle variations of breath flow through one's being, and allow one to manifest techniques in total freedom.

Morihei Ueshiba





Seika Tanden (The Body's Psycho- Physiological Center)

"Draw the *ki* of the universe into your *seika tanden** as if it were a great boulder settling to earth." This was an ancient Shinto form of meditation adopted by the Founder Morihei as an integral aspect of Aikido. He also emphasized the ancient purification practice of *ama-no-torifune*** as a good first step for training. The ancient Shinto texts describe *ama-no-torifune* in slightly different ways, but in essence it is a traditional purification practice used by Shinto shamans, especially those in Kumano where it was called *morota-fune*. Morihei venerated those rigorous purification practices and believed that they fostered the unification of *ki*-mind-body. The lower part of the body is called the center of human life, and that is where one's *ki* should be gathered. This allows one to put forth unlimited amounts of mind energy.

*In Asian thought, the psycho-physiological center of a human being, a point believed to be located about two inches below the navel.

** An exercise that employs rowing motions with the arms, hips, and legs.



Shikko (Knee-walking)

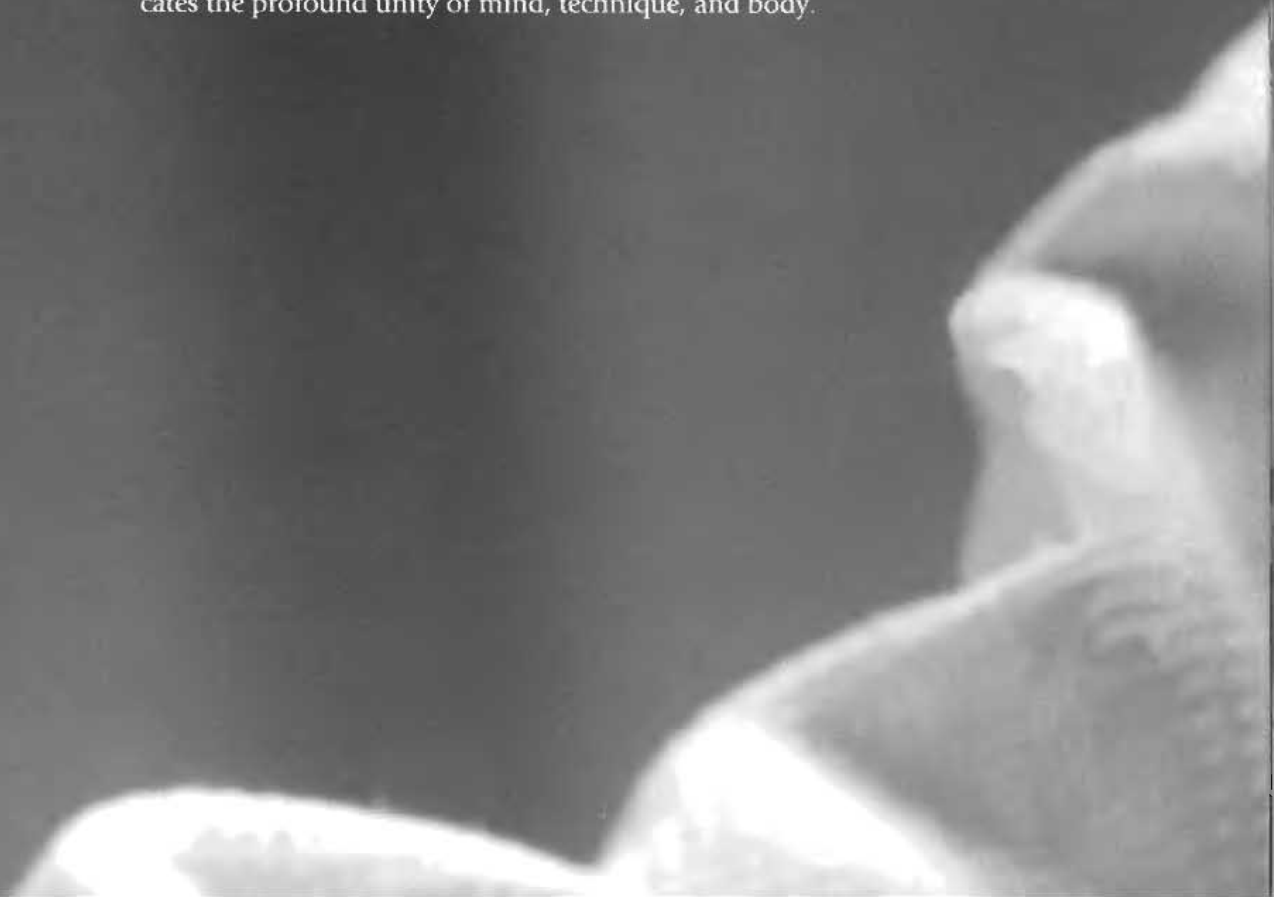
During ceremonies in Shinto shrines and at formal events in old samurai society, etiquette demanded that all actions be performed in a seated position, and that all movements, to and fro, must be done on the knees. Such movement is called *shikko*. The Founder Morihei believed that proper etiquette is very important for Aikido practice, and he incorporated many *suwari-waza* (seated techniques) into his system. He felt seated techniques to be more suitable for Aikido than the ground techniques of other martial arts. In executing seated techniques, one must employ knee-walking, keeping the upper torso straight, thus facilitating freedom of movement. Continual practice of seated techniques makes the legs, hips, and the rest of one's lower body stronger and more stable. The smooth, graceful, gliding movements of knee-walking will blossom into real Aikido techniques.

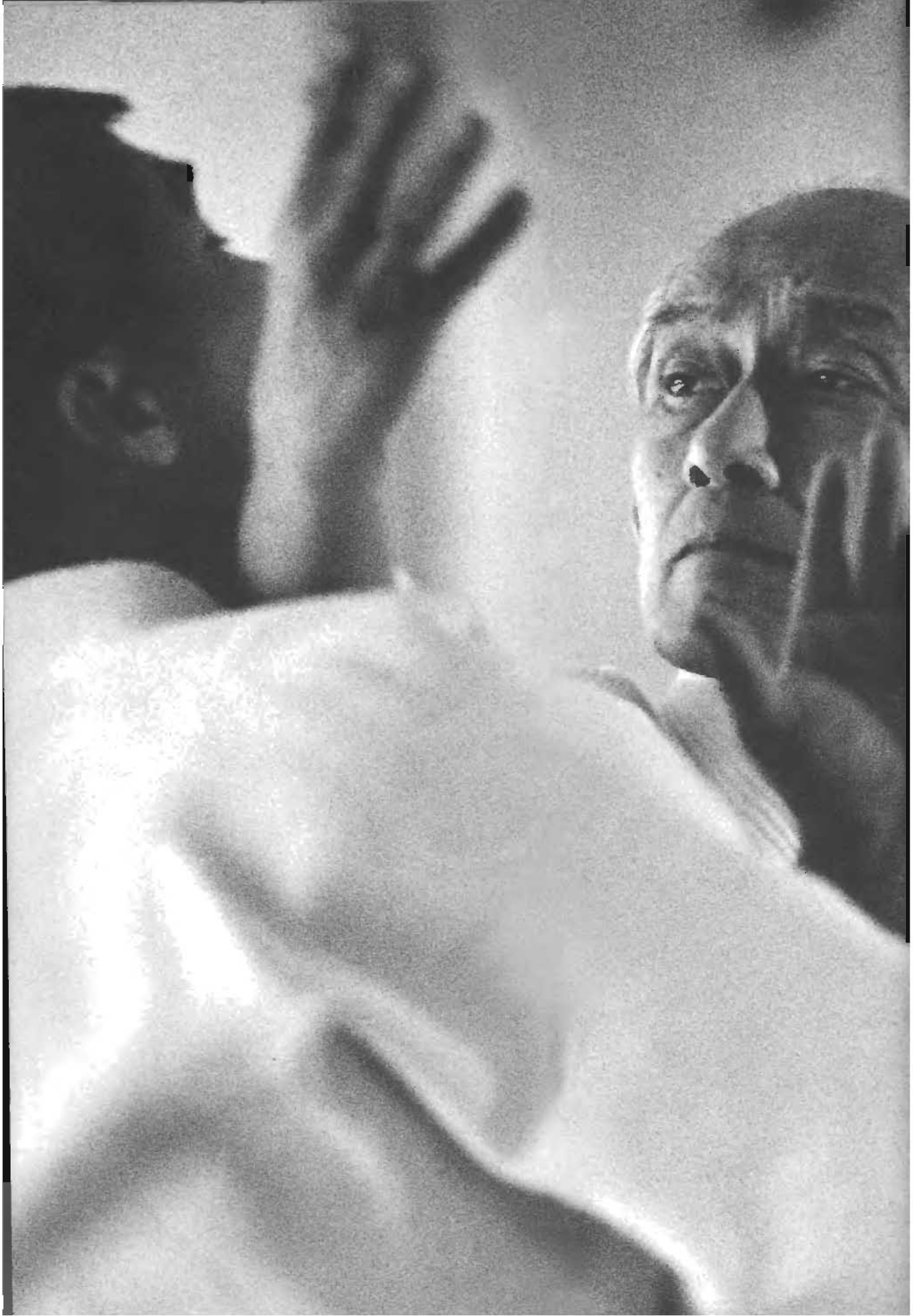




Tegatana (Hand-sword)

This hand is used in the same manner as if holding a sword. Aikido is an unarmed art but the stance we assume is that of a swordsman, ready to swing a blade up and down. However, in Aikido a hand-sword is not a weapon to cut down an opponent; it is a vehicle employed to project and direct one's *ki*. The fingers of one's hands are widely splayed to facilitate the projection and concentration of *ki* energy. In Aikido, we use the hand-sword to thoroughly project and completely manifest *ki* in an instant. When the ten fingers of our hands are charged with *ki*, it indicates the profound unity of mind, technique, and body.







Irimi (Entering)

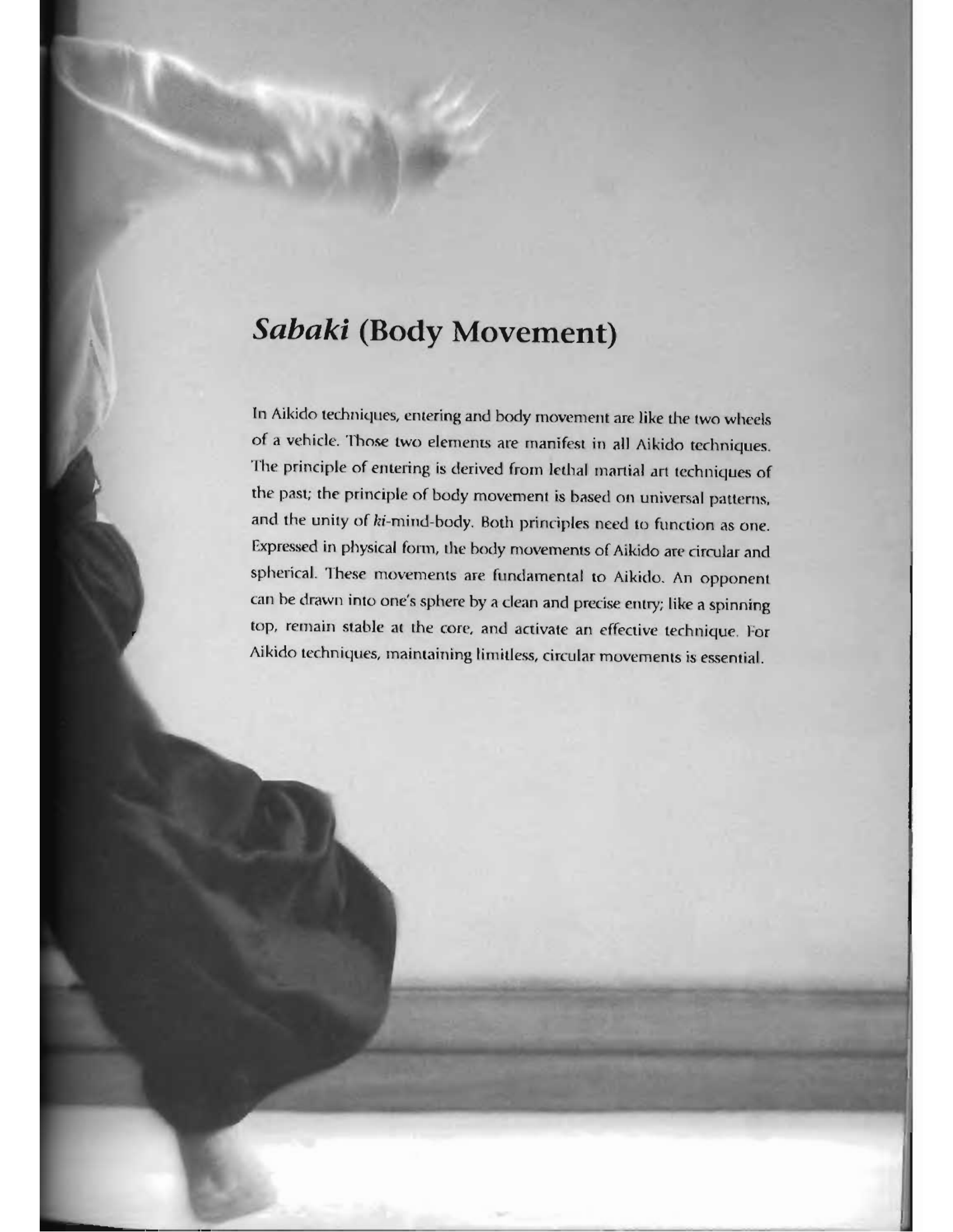
When an attack comes head on, in Aikido we instantaneously slide to the side, enter the opponent's dead angle (a place where the opponent cannot counterattack), and avoid the blow. This kind of decisive entering, an instant that (in the old days) was a matter of life and death, lies at the heart of Aikido techniques. The principle of entering must be mastered in order to execute Aikido techniques precisely. The Founder Morihei taught:

As soon as
The enemy before me
Attacks with his sword,
I am already
Standing behind him

When enemies
Rush in to strike
Take one step in
To the side,
And cut deeply!

These poems reveal the severe and uncompromising nature of *irimi*, entering to control an opponent.

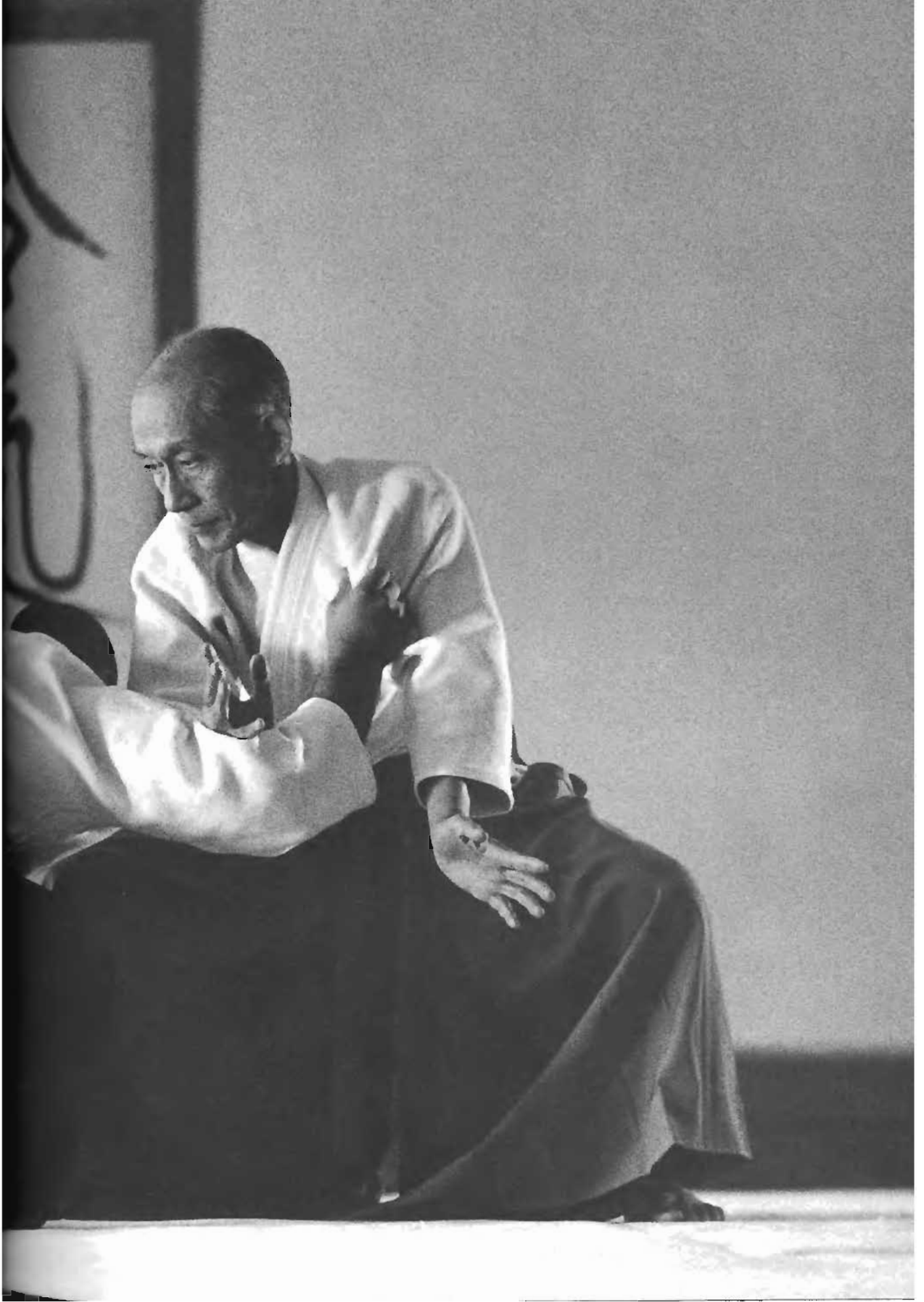


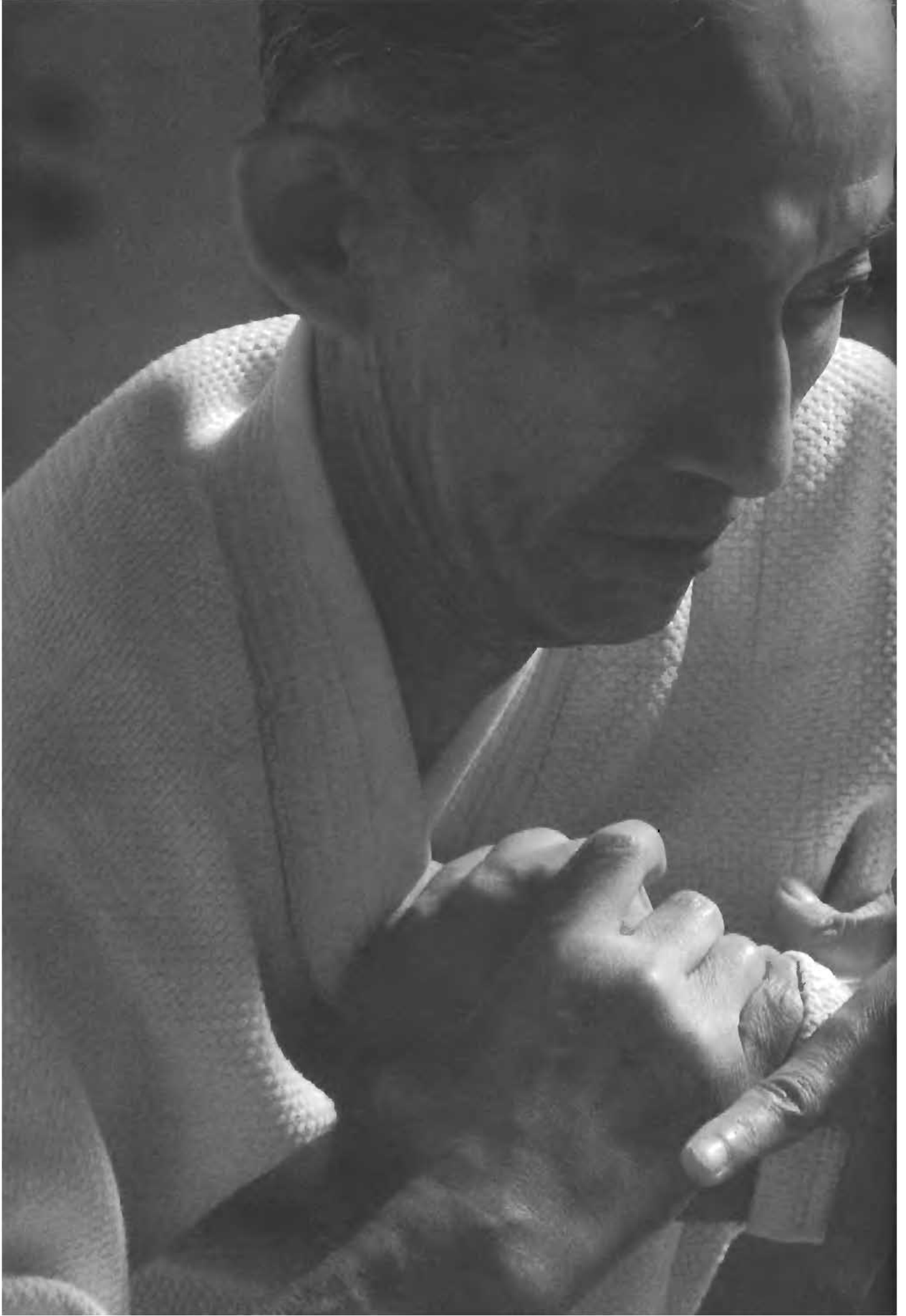


Sabaki (Body Movement)

In Aikido techniques, entering and body movement are like the two wheels of a vehicle. Those two elements are manifest in all Aikido techniques. The principle of entering is derived from lethal martial art techniques of the past; the principle of body movement is based on universal patterns, and the unity of *ki*-mind-body. Both principles need to function as one. Expressed in physical form, the body movements of Aikido are circular and spherical. These movements are fundamental to Aikido. An opponent can be drawn into one's sphere by a clean and precise entry; like a spinning top, remain stable at the core, and activate an effective technique. For Aikido techniques, maintaining limitless, circular movements is essential.

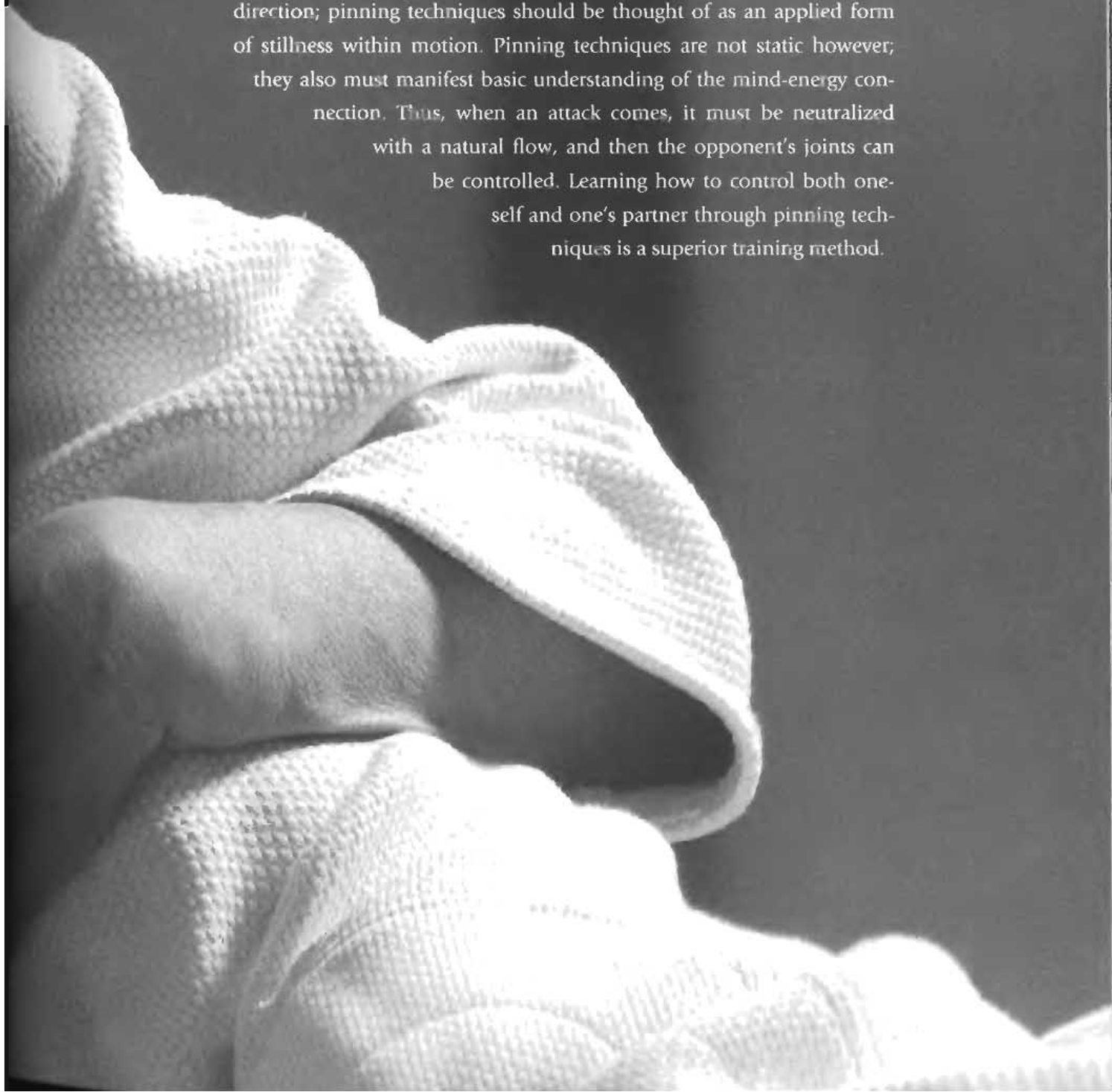


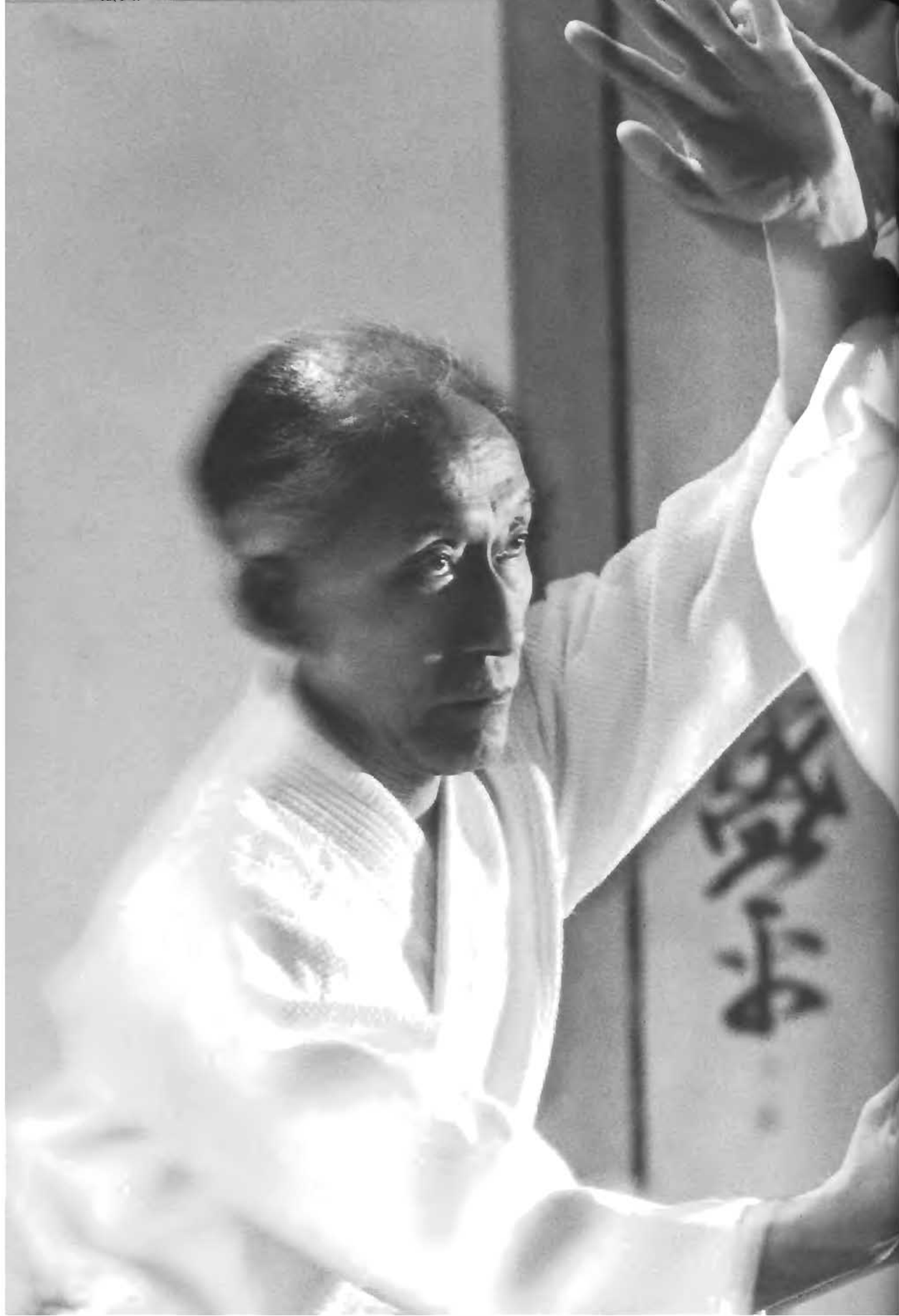




Katame (Control)

Many masters of various disciplines have spoken of the unity of stillness and movement as the very core of their art. This is also true for Aikido movements. Even though free-flowing, circular motion is emphasized, the Founder Morihei also taught that controlled pinning techniques were necessary. In Aikido techniques, the joints are never bent in an unnatural direction; pinning techniques should be thought of as an applied form of stillness within motion. Pinning techniques are not static however; they also must manifest basic understanding of the mind-energy connection. Thus, when an attack comes, it must be neutralized with a natural flow, and then the opponent's joints can be controlled. Learning how to control both oneself and one's partner through pinning techniques is a superior training method.







Inyo (Yin-Yang)

In the practice of Aikido techniques, there are two basic forms: *omote* (front) and *ura* (back). Entering is an *omote* movement, *sabuki* is an *ura* movement; one needs to master both forms to execute the techniques properly. Once mastered, the proper response will be made no matter what arises. To insure that this principle is maintained, Aikido techniques are always practiced in *omote* and *ura* forms. The Founder Morihei often spoke of the harmony of yin-yang, and demonstrated the practical application of that concept in Aikido techniques. Reflecting on the yin-yang concept, Morihei composed this poem:

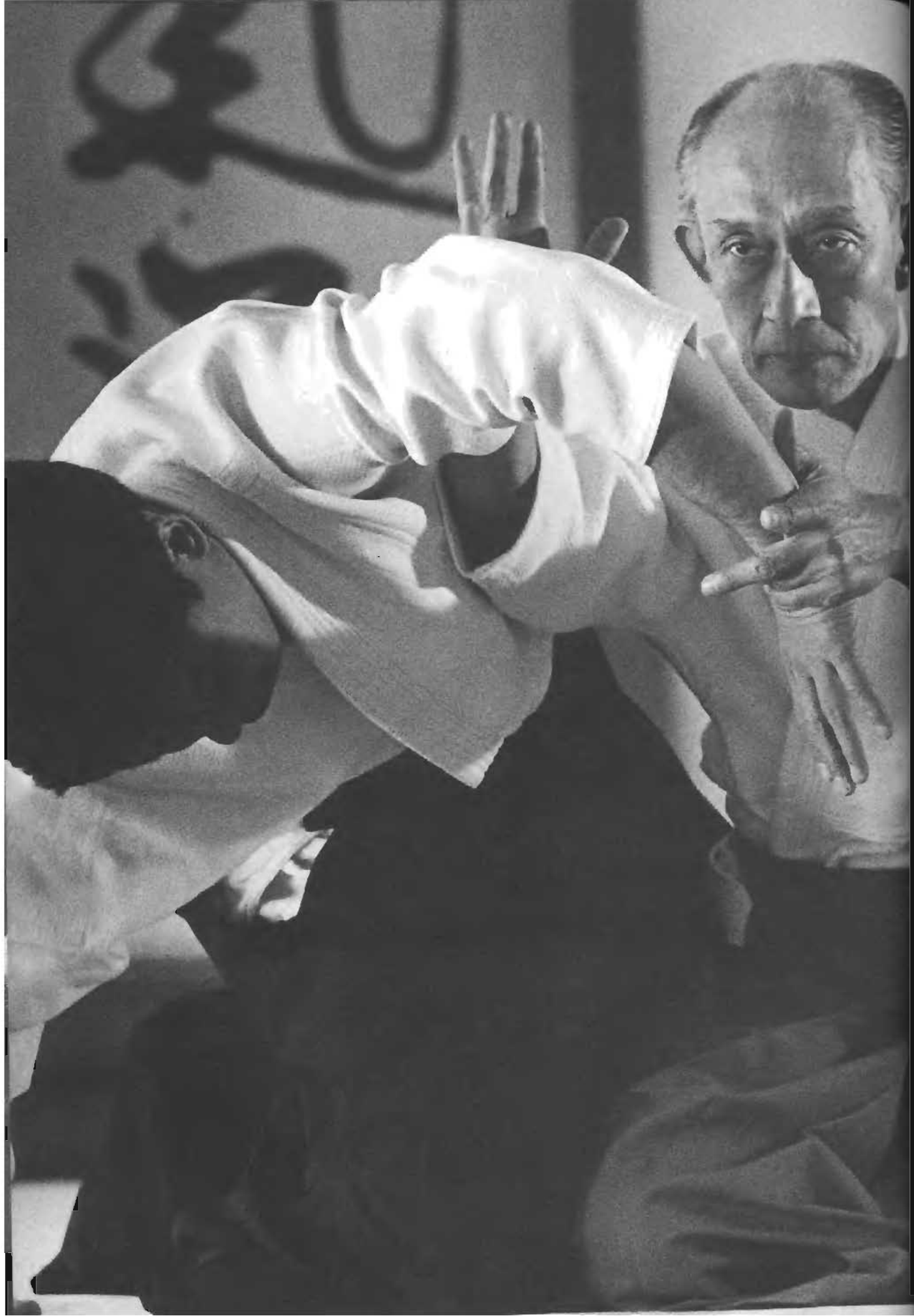
When your opponent
Shows yang in his
Right hand,
Guide him with
The yin of your left hand.



Hoki (Projection of *Ki*)

Ki is the life form of the universe, the primordial source of all vital power. When a human being harmonizes mind, body, and *ki*, and links him- or herself to the universe, unlimited power is generated—the Founder Morihei never tired of declaring this truth. In Aikido techniques, *ki* is projected through the hand-swords, then unified with various breath-power techniques, performed in *omote* and *ura* forms. The student should always be concerned with the proper projection and utilization of *ki*. Such unified movement of *ki* projection and breath power is a physical manifestation of the highest philosophy of Aikido. When the entire body is permeated with *ki*, the tremendous power of the life force is realized.



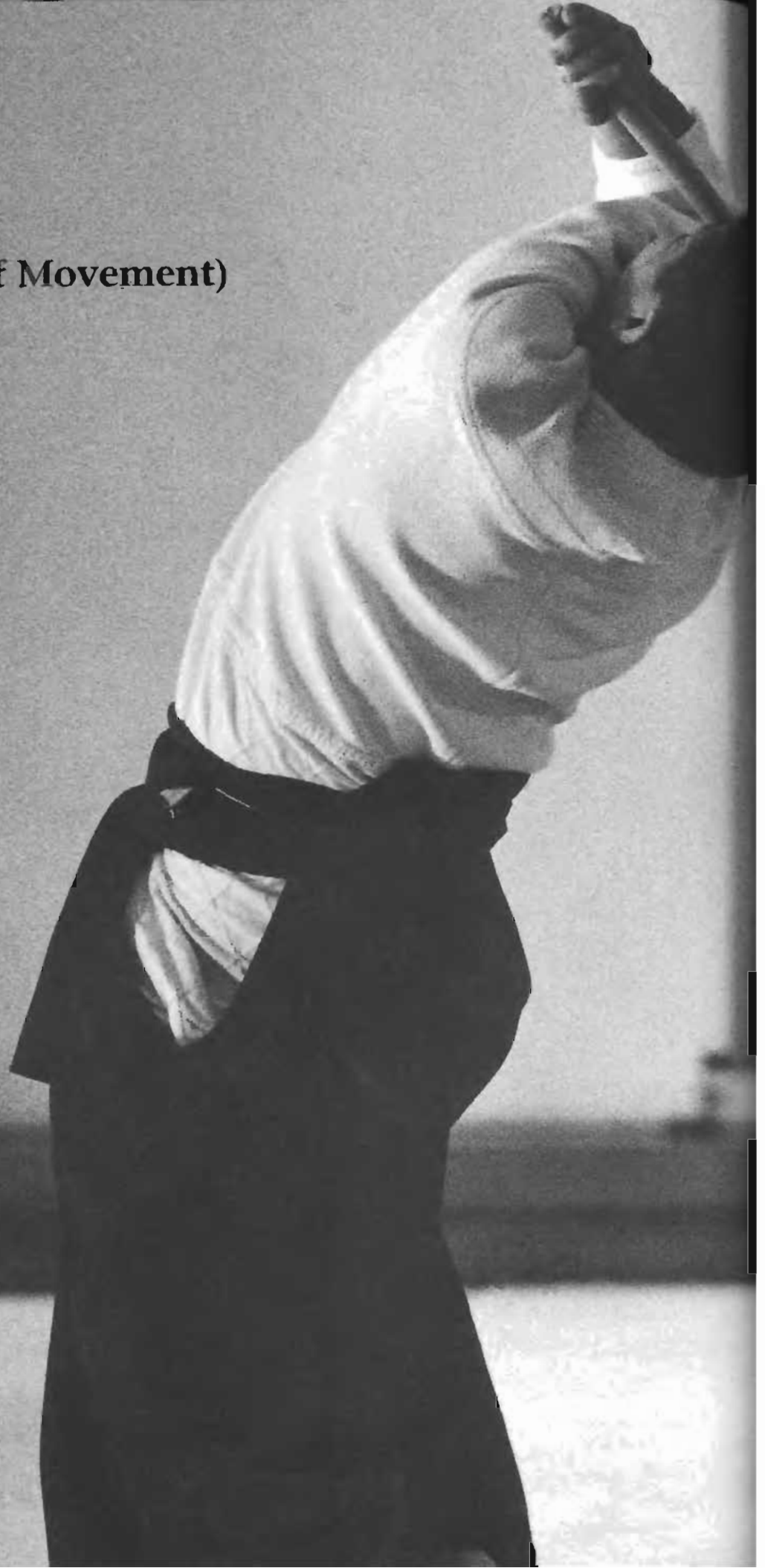


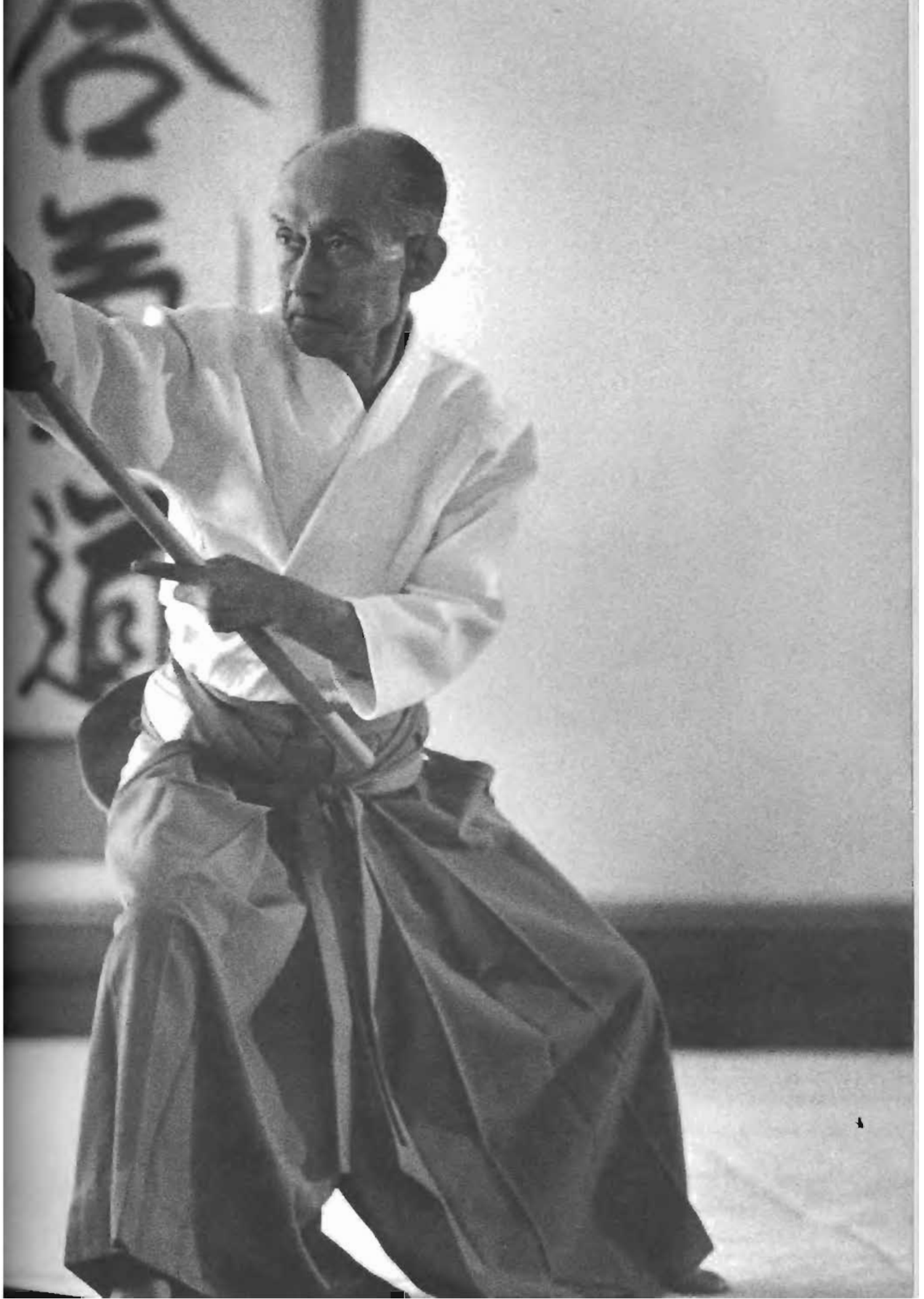


Suwari-waza (Seated Techniques)

As mentioned earlier, seated techniques are based on traditional Japanese etiquette; such techniques improve the strength and stability of the legs and hips, as well as foster the unity of *ki*, mind, and body. Training in seated techniques engenders manifold Aikido techniques. Seated techniques demand an instantaneous and unassailable response, a response that must be natural, beautiful, and true. Seated techniques make the lower half of the body more stable, and help develop a mind-energy that extends to the upper half of the body, allowing for unlimited variations in movement. Seated techniques are the key to Aikido movement. Nearly all standing Aikido techniques can also be performed in seated form. The corresponding nature of standing and seated techniques is one of the distinctive features of Aikido, and the interplay between standing and seated techniques is a valuable training method.

Issen no Mai
(Moments of Movement)

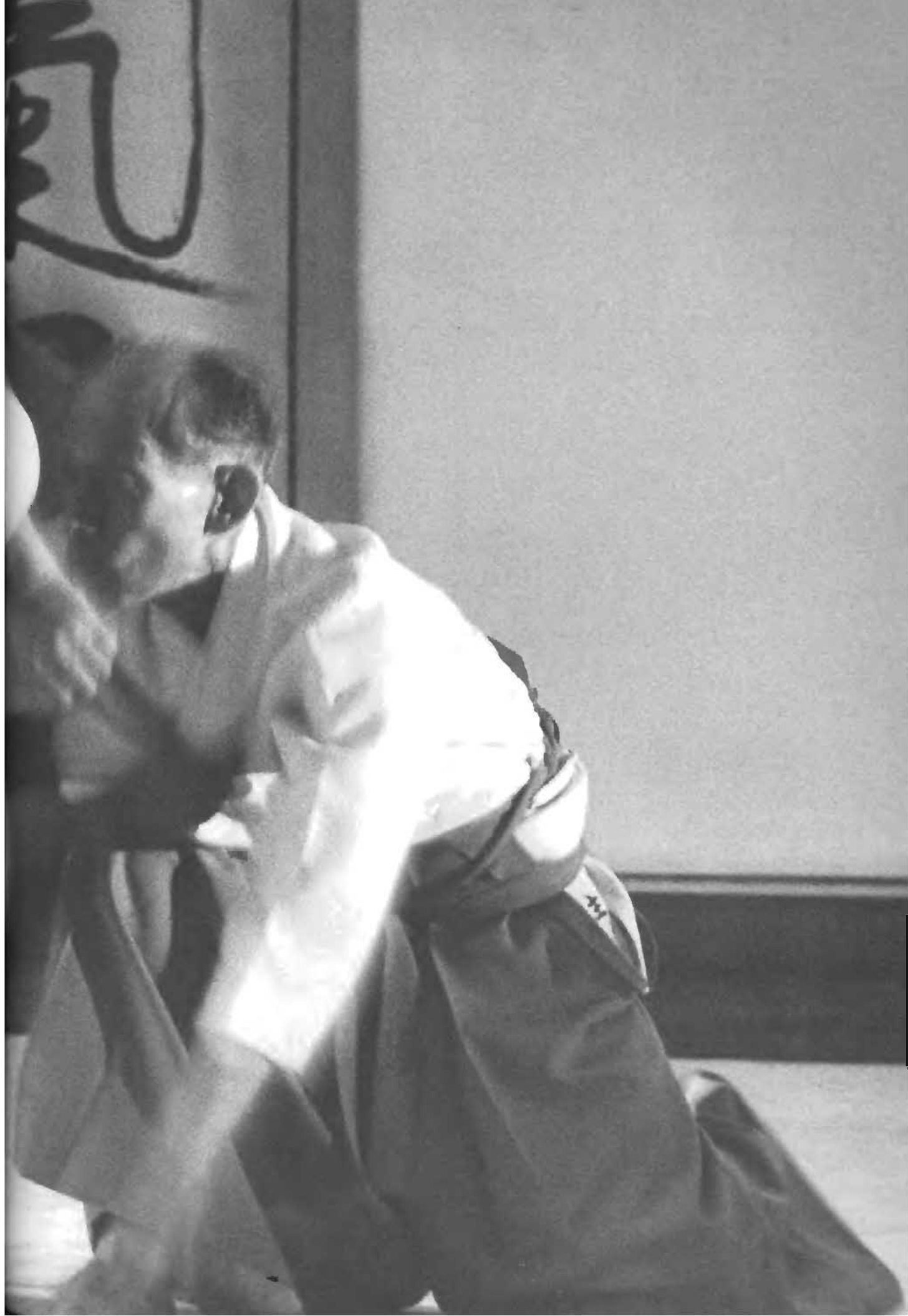














THE ESSENCE OF AIKIDO

I. WHAT IS *KI* ?

AIKIDO: a Continuation and Perfection of Japan's Traditional Martial Arts and Ways

From a historical perspective, what is the place of Aikido within the context of the traditional martial arts and ways of Japan? Are there any traditional forms and attitudes from the old-style martial arts and ways that are still preserved in Aikido? To be sure, Aikido is a modern martial way founded by Morihei Ueshiba, but he was influenced by many traditional martial arts and in his new system he incorporated, and breathed new life into, many technical and philosophical aspects of those venerable traditions.

For example, if we consider the technical side of Aikido, we can see many elements—striking, punching, grappling, pressure-point attacks, binding, seizing, Jujutsu arts, throws, weapons, and so on—taken from the old-style martial arts but selected and refined according to Aikido principles. There is also a clear influence of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu and Kito Ryu Jujutsu systems, and the swordsmanship of the Yagyū Shinkage Ryu, traditions in which the Founder Morihei trained. Thus, it is safe to say that many elements of the traditional Japanese martial arts found new life within the context of Aikido. Furthermore, on a philosophical level, many ancient concepts—yin/yang, hard/soft, physical power/breath-power, body/mind movement, and the *Wu-ke*--were adopted into Aikido thought. In this manner, and from any perspective, it can be said that Aikido is a continuation and perfection of the traditional martial arts and ways of old Japan.

The Concept of *Ki*

"Aikido" is comprised of three characters: *ai-ki-do* (合気道). Whether we approach this concept from either a historical or philosophical standpoint, correct understanding of those three words within the ideal Aikido system is essential.

Let us consider the concept of *ki*. Right from the beginning, the notion of *ki*

was deemed to be of utmost importance in the traditional martial arts and ways of Japan and East Asia. *Ki* was researched intensely and extensively by all schools, much like a Zen *koan*, a riddle that had to be pondered deeply before it could be solved. In every ancient transmission scroll or philosophical treatise, the concept of *ki* is discussed at length. *Ki* words pervade the Japanese language: *shiki* (spirited); *seiki* (vital); *genki* (healthy); *kasei* (ardor); *kihaku* (vigor); *kiat* (spirited shout), *yoki* (cultivation); *iki* (disposition); *shinki* (mind); *konki* (patience); *kiyoku* (vitality); *kibun* (feeling); *yoki* (cheerful); *iniki* (gloomy); *kisoku* (breath); *tsuyoki*, (powerful); *haki* (ambition); the list goes on. It would be very difficult to have any kind of conversation in Japanese without some word or phrase that has a reference to *ki* in it. Nowadays, the Chinese character for *ki* is written in abbreviated form but let's look at the construction of the classical character. The pictograph for *ki* depicts steam arising from cooking rice, representing the energy of life. Beginning with the Daoist philosopher Lao-Tzu, who lived in the 6th century b.c., every school of thought in China came up with its own interpretation of *ki*.

氣	→	氣
classical character		modern character

The Concept of *Ki* in the Kito Ryu

Let us now take a look at the concept of *ki* as presented and explained in two transmission scrolls that have a direct relation to Aikido: the Kito Ryu *Densho Chushaku* and the Yagyu Shinkage Ryu *Heiho Kadensho* ("The Life-Giving Sword"). The Founder Morihei had training in both martial art systems and he adopted and incorporated certain elements of each system into Aikido.

Here are three excerpts from the Kito Ryu *Densho Chushaku*.

Ki fulfills the body. When *ki* arises, it is called yang, when it is suppressed it is called yin. In this system, we employ *ki* in the instruction of all the techniques, but *ki* is not a manifest object. If the body is not set aright, *ki* cannot be brought forth. Within everyday life, when one is in a sitting position, vigorous *ki* flourishes, and one becomes stable and secure. However, when

techniques are executed with gestures to the right or left, it adversely affects the *ki* equilibrium of everyday life. *Ki* pervades the body. Therefore, to set aright the body and correctly perceive *ki* everywhere is the tradition of our system. "Correctly" means through proper physical forms. The secret teaching of our system is this: continually polish your *ki*, do not be captivated by worldly objects, and keep firmly to the fundamentals. Do that, and when you execute the techniques, following the dictates of original *ki*, you can utilize *ki* and conduct yourself freely, right and left, back and forth. This is true for all aspects of life; stand, sit, move, remain still in a state of natural *ki*. Heaven calls this Unshakable Wisdom.

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It is difficult to make a distinction between vigor, *ki*, and power. If such a distinction is made, however, it would be in this manner: vigor initiates the action, *ki* issues forth, and the concentration of *ki* leads to the manifestation of physical power. Concentration of *ki* brings forth more *ki*, generating physical power—this is the standard. *Ki* and physical power are not two separate things. If one tries to separate them, and first rely on power alone to execute the techniques, it renders them ineffective. It is best not to rely on physical power, but to concentrate on the fostering of *ki*. In order to obtain mastery of the techniques, it is essential to actually experience the nature of innate physical power and the flow of *ki* in various ways, rather than just discuss them on a theoretical level. Again, *ki* and physical power are not two separate things.

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In the Kito Ryu, *ki* means "rise," and *to* means "fall." *Ki* is in the form of yang, *to* is in the form of yin. Utilize yang to attain victory; utilize yin to attain victory. When the opponent attacks with yin, use yang to win. When the opponent attacks with yang, use yin to emerge victorious. In our system, all the techniques are defined in terms of yin and yang. There are countless possible

attacks and responses, but in an actual combat situation, all such contrived strategy is mere distraction. Rely on the interplay of yin and yang to achieve certain victory. A strong will with weak technique will not do; do not rely on your own strength but instead utilize your opponent's strength to achieve victory—this the manner in which we employ *ki* in our system. Everything reverts back to this principle—abandon the reliance on physical strength and obtain victory. If you abandon force and utilize *ki*, the opponent will defeat himself—this is the key to total victory. Transcend fixed patterns, and learn the meaning of the saying “mind over matter.”

From the Shinkage Ryu *Heiho Kadensho*:

Ki (opportunity) equals *ki* (vital energy). Perceive your opponent's *ki*, preempt his *ki*, neutralize his *ki*, and seize the opportunity. This is the same function as *zenki*; complete and concentrated control. Discern what is hidden and hard to discern, seize the opportunity and function totally. This is called the “strategy of seizing the initiative.”

Here is a related excerpt from a book entitled *Budo Hiketsu: Aiki no Jutsu*:

The most marvelous thing in this world is the art of *aiki*. The art of *aiki* is a mystery, the secret to all the martial arts of this sacred land. A *kiai* projected with *aiki* is so powerful it defies all definition. The most marvelous things cannot be explained with words, nor be measured with a ruler. Learn the secrets of *kiai*, make progress, and stride single-mindedly and with confidence through the world.

***Ki* as a Vehicle to Overcome Mental Obstacles**

From these excerpts we can see how important the concept of *ki* is in East Asian life and thought, and how it is related to yin and yang, the source of the Oriental view of the universe. From life and death experiences on battlefields, our predecessors learned the nature and quality of life power, spirit power, integrated body/mind

power, meditative power, self-controlled power, ordinary power, and so on. In short, they learned about the functioning of "mental potential energy." All those qualities are a functioning of *ki*. *Ki* is the source of all activity.

In the old days, the quality of one's *ki* was tested on the battlefield, and thus was cultivated on the most practical levels. Those methods were used to control rebellious enemies. However, the real purpose of Budo is to defeat the enemies within one's own mind. Drawing on the wisdom of ancient philosophies based on the yin/yang world view, our predecessors developed mental potential energy systems. From the concept that gentleness controls toughness, based on life and

death battlefield experience, the notion that an "ordinary mind" is the key to free-flowing, liberated movement arose; in that state of ordinary mind it is possible to develop ways to perfect the human character. All of this, as our venerable predecessors indicated, is derived from *ki*.

In regard to the teachings of the past, the Founder Morihei said: "One's *ki*, mind, and body must be linked harmoniously to all phenomena through the marvelous functioning of universal *ki*." In regard to *ki*, Aikido maintains and expands upon the venerable traditions of the past.



Kisshomaru Doshu sitting before a photo of the Founder Morihei Ueshiba and examining the heirloom sword "Banfujū Gassan Sadayoshi." Kisshomaru Doshu devoted his life to preserving the true legacy of Aikido.

II. THE ESSENCE OF BUDO CULTURE

Common Points between Jujutsu and Aikido

In regard to the Budo culture of Japan, the first tradition we have to consider is Jujutsu. As will be explained later, the movements and body placement of Aikido are more closely akin to the sword techniques of old, but nonetheless it is undeniable that Aikido techniques were also influenced by traditional Jujutsu methods.

The historical background of Jujutsu has been covered at length elsewhere, so suffice to say that various Jujutsu systems developed over the centuries from the Muromachi period (1392-1573) to the Edo period (1600-1868), based on actual battlefield situations and conditions. For example, the Takenouchi Ryu was said to have originated with Takenouchi Nakatsukatasayu Hisamori, a samurai in what is now Okayama prefecture. An old text states: "He [Takenouchi] was a master of unarmed combat. In the Takeuchi Ryu this kind of unarmed combat is termed *koshi-mawari* [literally, 'hip turns']. The original Takenouchi transmission scrolls list twenty-five *koshi-mawari* techniques, five *torite* (capturing and binding) techniques, and so on. "Unarmed" in those days meant, "without body armor and no weapons." It also referred to disarming an opponent of his sword, spear, or whatever other weapon he was using, and then delivering punches to his body with the fists and strikes to his face with a hand-sword to weaken his resistance. Next, a throw or pin could be applied. In short, it was not classical battle with complete armor and a full array of weapons but a style of "hand-to-hand combat."

There were many other well known Jujutsu systems such as the Araki Ryu, founded by Araki Muninsai, and the Seigo Ryu, said to have been established somewhat later by Mizuhaya Chozemon after he received secret teachings from a monk named Seigo, but Jujutsu techniques were more or less the same, regardless of the school. In the Edo period, several styles of Chinese Kung-fu (believed to have originated in ancient India) were introduced to Japan and had a strong influence. Since the Edo period was relatively peaceful, there was less emphasis on lethal battlefield techniques. Dojo (training halls) were established, places where mar-

tial art practitioners could polish their techniques and build their strength, often in competition with other members of the dojo. A samurai needed to be accomplished in the martial arts, of course, and Jujutsu schools flourished. As the name indicates, *ju* refers that which is soft, pliable, and easily applied. From a martial art standpoint, it refers to avoiding rigid attacks, relying instead on strikes and blows to pressure points, and throws and pins, to subdue an opponent.

There are also techniques in Aikido designed to disarm a knife, sword, or staff attack with an instantaneous response; in many of the body arts, deep entry combined with counter strikes and blows are employed to knock an opponent off balance in order to facilitate the application of a throw or pin. All of these Aikido movements are based on solid Jujutsu methods.

Differences between Jujutsu and Aikido

Despite the many points in common, it is clear that Aikido is not Jujutsu from both a technical and philosophical standpoint. The biggest difference is the shift in perspective from "actual combat" to the "perfection of the human character." In other words, "harmonization between self and others" rather than "survival of the fittest." Aikido is a system of self-defense, defined in the widest possible terms, and a complete way of life.

The Founder Morihei was a genius who raised his art from a martial system of battle to a way of life, a spiritual path. He wanted his disciples not to fight but to work together, making a great joint effort to understand the true nature of Aiki. This perfection of the human character is the first principle of Aikido. In Aikido, a mind set on victory by any means is not allowed, as it creates a very bad environment; rather one must learn how to work together with a partner, in a spirit of mutual protection, and to strive to demonstrate that harmony when performing the techniques. In Aikido, we say: "A mind filled with love and harmony is the way of valorous creativity." This is far beyond the scope of most Jujutsu systems.

Let us consider how Aikido has adopted and refined some Jujutsu concepts: In Aikido, the basic principle of avoiding an attack is body movement; not just a physical movement, but a movement that is calm and centered in the *seika tanden*. The hips must be stable while one rotates in a complete circle, a movement that

is both circular and spherical. These circular and spherical movements must be as free flowing as those of a ballet dancer, or a spinning top. Whatever the technique—a counterstrike or blow, a throw, a pin—it must emerge from within these rhythmical, free flowing movements.

A standard saying in Jujutsu was: "When pulled, push; when pushed, pull." This advice is based on linear movement. In Aikido, however, we say, "When pushed, turn, when pulled, turn and enter." In Aikido we never start from a static position. Applying the principle of circular movement, the response to an attack is immediate, and the opponent never has a chance to get a firm grip. One movement flows into another until an attack is completely neutralized, and there are no fixed patterns to adhere to. Hence, in Aikido there are no complicated ground grappling techniques, no unusual chokes and holds, and no fancy kicks.

Similar to Jujutsu, in Aikido we have controlling pinning techniques, but in Aikido, unlike Jujutsu, the pins are never applied in a forced reverse direction. The holds and pins of Aikido are always applied towards the natural bend of the joint, using just enough pressure to render resistance futile. This use of a normal bend prevents unnecessary injury, and in fact works better than harsh, bone-breaking holds, which are difficult to apply.

We have shown how body movement and pins are viewed and executed differently according to Jujutsu and Aikido. In Aikido, above all, we want to avoid rigid and harmful movements. In Jujutsu, which derived from a battlefield mentality, the aim is to incapacitate or injure an opponent, but in Aikido we base our training on how to avoid causing harm, focusing our efforts on the perfection of the human character. Aikido's techniques of circular integration are used to bring practitioners together, in perfect accord and in a spirit of mutual protection. Likewise, the natural holds and pins are meant to strengthen the joints and stimulate the nervous system. This is the real meaning of Aikido training methods. In Aikido, if your movements are free and your body is strong, your mind will also become free and your spirit will strengthen. Solid *ki* breath-power, combined with an open mind and a strong body, will improve your character, the main goal of Aikido. This attitude is what most distinguishes Aikido from Jujutsu.

A useful definition of the difference between *hiai-jutsu* and *aiki-jutsu* would be: "In *hiai-jutsu* the mind follows the power of the body, and the force is expressed

externally; in *aiki-jutsu* the body follows the power of the mind, and the opponent is controlled internally."

The Principles of Swordsmanship and Aikido

We have shown how Aikido differs from both old-style Jujutsu and modern Judo. However, Kano Jigoro, the founder of Kodokan Judo, had this motto: "Maximum efficient use of power, mutual benefit for oneself and others." That motto expresses much the same sentiment as Morihei Ueshiba's declaration that: "Aikido is the path of love and protection for all things, and the way to harmonize and unite self and other." Judo, however, includes many forms of grappling, ground fighting, aggressive attacks including strangling techniques used in one-on-one matches, and other stances and techniques that are not found in Aikido, which is essentially a system of self-defense. The biggest difference lies in Judo's emphasis on formal competition within strict limits and organized according to weight categories; in Aikido, on the contrary, we have no organized competition, focusing instead on daily training and self improvement, and the manifestation of Aikido principles in free-flowing demonstrations. Judo and Aikido are two different martial arts.

Aikido in fact has more in common with classical Japanese swordsmanship. The stances and body movements in Aikido parallel those of the sword. It should be noted, however, that Aikido is not like modern Kendo, which has become, like Judo, more of a sport complete with strictly regulated formal competitions, and matching opponents clad in heavy protective gear.

Leaving behind the issues of modern competitive Budo, let us consider the relationship between Aikido and classical swordsmanship. In swordsmanship, the response to an attack is immediate, as in Aikido. The initial stance, the combative distance, the eye focus, and the movement of the feet are also very similar.



Instead of a real sword, in Aikido we employ a hand-sword that functions in the same manner, and according to the same principles, as a sword, with the added element of a steady flow of *ki* projected through the fingers, to insure that the hand-sword is not just a stiff appendage to the body. For example, let us consider the basic Aikido technique *shiho-nage*, "four-directions-throw." This technique will be fully illustrated in the following section, but in essence it is based on the cutting up and cutting down motion of a sword, not just in four directions, but in eight, sixteen, and even more. Aikido employs entering, circular movements and the hand-sword to project one's power freely in any direction. Like this, *shiho-nage* can be applied against all kinds of attacks: *yokomen-uchi*, *ushiro-ryotekubi-dori*, *hanmi-hantachi ryokata-dori*, and so on (refer to the following section). Regardless of the attack, the basic principles remain constant: utilizing entering and body movement to break the opponent's posture, keeping yourself centered in order to lead your partner, and then at the right moment, cutting down with the right, left, or both hand-swords, depending on the situation, to effect the throw.

In short, Aikido's *shiho-nage* is based on the cutting of the (hand-) sword, and even though both practitioners may be unarmed, the sense of sword against sword is always present. In executing *shiho-nage*, the movements must be sharp and precise, just like when cutting with a real sword, and one's *ki* must be concentrated. When one's breath power overflows with *ki*, the technique works well, but if the attempt is only half-hearted or incomplete, the technique will not be effective. This demonstrates that one has not grasped the principle of "sword cut" in Aikido, and more training needs to be done to master the unity of mind, *ki*, and body.

The Way of the Sword and the Sword of No-Form

As we have seen, even though Aikido is essentially an unarmed martial art, a "sword of no-form" is always innately present when the techniques are performed, from initial stance and combative distance to final resolution. Like Kendo, and unlike Judo, in Aikido we wear a *hakama* (divided skirt), for centuries an essential part of martial arts training, representing the formal etiquette demanded of a samurai. The long, flowing *hakama* adds an elegance that a plain Judo uniform lacks, and

renders one's movements more graceful and free-flowing, echoing the renowned movements of the sword masters of old. The *hakama* has always been an integral element of martial art culture. Unlike Kendo, where the competitors are heavily padded, covered in body armor, in Aikido we maintain the pure, simple fashion of the classical martial artist. This is an external symbol of the spiritual aspirations of Aikido practitioners. As emphasized above, Aikido is primarily an unarmed martial art, employing a one-to-one training method; however, applied techniques are practiced against knife, sword, and staff attacks as well. In such cases, even though some of the techniques are derived from Iujutsu, most of them follow sword movements. When partners are both armed with a sword or staff, we do not refer to those instruments as "weapons." In Aikido, we consider a sword or staff as an extension of the body, moving in harmony with each and every step and turn. In Aikido, a hand-sword is the "sword of no-form;" an actual sword is "an extension of the body." The classical Budo culture of Japan has influenced Aikido in many different ways, and on many different levels, but the primary objective of Aikido is to create a martial way based on harmony and love, and that transcends all other considerations.

III. KI AND TAKEMUSU

Breath-Power and the Nature of Human *Ki*

The Founder Morihei had two major awakenings that transformed his teaching from a martial art of fighting and contention to a martial Way of human perfection:

- (1) Morihei's many intense first-hand experiences on the battlefields of life led to a physical awakening
- (2) Morihei's deep, life-long interest in religion and philosophy led to a spiritual enlightenment.

Awakening (1) will be covered later in the technical section. Here I would like to discuss enlightenment (2), especially the concepts of *kototama*, universal breath-power/individual human *ki*, and *takemusu*.

Kototama

Morihei's interest in the study of *kototama* (also pronounced *kotodama*) was based on his personal research into the nature of breath-power and the generation of *ki* and his varied practical experiences of the breath-power/generation of *ki* continuum. His enlightenment in regard to that continuum led to the creation of Aikido principles and techniques. Since those principles are inherent in Aikido techniques, it is not an absolute requirement for Aikido practitioners to study *kototama* theory, but it is a good idea to have a general idea of *kototama* ideals.

In 1920, Morihei came under the influence of the famous Shinto shaman Deguchi Onisaburo (1871-1948), and he developed a deep interest in ancient Shinto meditation techniques, especially *kototama*, as espoused by Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), Kiyohara Michihisa, and other mystics. *Kototama* theory is quite complex, but in simple terms it is the "science of sacred sounds." The first appearance of the word *kototama* is in the ancient collection of Japanese verse, the *Man'yoshu*: "Japan is a blessed country where *kototama* is offered." From the earliest times in

Japan, *kototama* was considered the highest and most pleasing form of speech, speech that could only be spoken and understood by people of the highest character and possessed of total integration of body and mind. Furthermore, if mastered, *kototama* was believed to be the secret speech of the gods, a potent source of incantation, magic, and miracle-working. One who truly understood and uttered *kototama* was revered as a person of truth and divinity.

***Kototama* and the Unification of Man and the Divine**

What are "Words spoken by a person of the highest character and possessed of total integration of body and mind?"

First of all, it is not a kind of ordinary, discursive, external manner of speech; it is a profound, pure, intuitive, internal manner of speech. *Kototama* lies beyond the realm of speech, words, voice, sound, or intonation. It is the essence of all those vocalizations. In esoteric science, there are secret sounds such as "Ah" and "Un" (akin to *ki* and *soku* in Aikido) that encapsulate the inner core of sound, the spirit of existence, and the utterances of the gods. Mastery of such sacred sounds enables one to communicate with the unseen powers that drive existence. Unification with the divine promotes the development of *ki/soku* in its purest and most concentrated form, and brings forth the tremendous power of life. This transcendent experience is at the heart of Morihei's teachings on breath-power and the generation of *ki*.

The Miraculous Functioning of *Ki*

Morihei had the remarkable ability to unify himself with the Divine spontaneously, and often went into an Aikido trance. Prior to training, Morihei always sat quietly before the dojo shrine, calming his spirit, setting aright his breath, and concentrating his *ki*. Once his mind was prepared, he was able to perform techniques that seemed miraculous; when he was finished training, Morihei once again sat quietly before the shrine, composed himself, and entered a deep meditative state. He never failed to do this. When he was in meditation, Morihei frequently uttered, in a dramatic manner, such *kototama* as SU, U, or A/UN as an extension of *ki/soku* breath. From these rich personal experiences, Morihei's awareness and

understanding increased, and he was able to transform the nature of Aikido into an art of the highest quality. Regarding this Morihei said: "The marvelous function of *ki* originates in the subtle variations of breath; this is the Generative Principle. It is the essential principle of love that manifests martial ardor. In accordance with the marvelous functioning of *ki*, body and mind are unified. When Aikido is practiced, subtle variations of breath flow through one's being, and allow one to manifest techniques in total freedom."

In this way, *ki/soku*—that is to say, breath-power, and the generation of *ki* through breath-power—has always been, and remains, the central principle of Aikido training. This is the principle that must be reflected in Aikido techniques, without mistakes and with great dynamism; if *ki/soku* is lacking then the techniques are inadequate, no matter how finely executed or in how grand a manner.

Musubi and Takemusu

When Morihei talked about *musubi* (the principle of continuous creation) he approached it from three aspects: *kimusubi* (life force), *ikumusubi* (generative force) and *omusubi* (harmonizing force). How are these three aspects taught in Aikido? Morihei said: "Breath activates and links one with the primordial *ki* of the universe (*kimusubi*), generating the life force (*ikumusubi*), and then a harmonizing force (*omusubi*) that transforms the universe." In accordance to the yin/yang principle, *musubi* is life's great creative force; after his all-encompassing enlightenment, Morihei fully grasped this spiritual principle and used it as a base from which to create Aikido, "The martial way of love and perfection for all things" and "The martial way of great harmony and great love."

Morihei called his martial way *takemusu*, "Valorous and Creative Living." He wanted Aikido practitioners to train to develop and foster the life force, the generative force, and the harmonizing force; he wanted all his students to become "spiritually strong with hearts full of great harmony and great love."

IV. THE PROCESS OF UNIFICATION WITH THE UNIVERSE

Nen

Through sincere and dedicated training according to Aikido principles, a practitioner strives to unify *ki*, mind, and body in order to generate a powerful flow of energy; such a mind-set was called *nen* by Morihei. That kind of *nen*, set in the center of universal *ki*, is the source of miraculous power, and it also engenders a special kind of intuition that can immediately respond to any contingency.

When that type of pure intuition—symbolized in the Japanese martial arts as the state of “still water/bright mirror”—is attained, the true Aikido practitioner innately grasps the meaning of Morihei’s motto *masakatsu agatsu katsu hayabi*: “True Victory is Self-Victory, Right Now!” That is to say: “Emerge victorious at all times and all situations by not fighting!”

Masakatsu is to properly set your heart according to the truth and persevere to the end to achieve victory. *Agatsu* means to defeat your lower nature and to transcend selfishness; *katsu hayabi* is the ability to respond to any contingency in a free-flowing, harmonious, and unhindered manner without hesitation or wavering. In short, in the Way of martial valor, true victory is victory of the spirit.

The Process of Uniting Human *Ki* with Universal *Ki*

How can we implement Morihei’s teachings on the linking of *nen* and universal *ki*, and the transformation of breath-power into a cosmic force? Let’s examine the issues more closely.

Aikido cosmology has five premises:

- (1) As described by the philosophers of ancient China, the universe functions according to the principle of yin and yang manifest in five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. The universe came into being through the

interaction of the *ki* of heaven and earth, and the interplay of yin and yang in all things.

- (2) In ancient Shinto cosmology as expounded in the *Kojiki* and other old texts, the prime generating force is *musubi*. Morihei emphasized the importance of the interaction between *ku-mi* (fire and water) and the power of *i-ki* (breath, or life force) in the creation and maintaining of the universe.
- (3) The view that nature has regular cycles of life that define existence and that human beings are subject to the laws of karma. For example, plants and trees have a natural cycle of budding, flowering, bearing fruit, and fading that recurs year after year; human life seems to be guided by similar patterns not only in this present life but in future ones as well, according to the notion of reincarnation taught, for example, by Buddhists. In Japan, the distinction between the four seasons is quite clear, and that environment affects in various ways the character development of the Japanese people. Samurai constantly faced life and death on the battlefield, and such extreme experiences made them keenly aware of the mortality of human life; another view that shaped the Japanese character. Although Aikido is not fatalistic, it would be wrong to say that the concepts of karma and the world's impermanence had no influence on Morihei's thought.
- (4) A belief in the cosmic rhythm of life and that all existence functions according to innate natural laws. This perspective has had the greatest impact on Aikido. There is a day and a night, high tide and low tide, sunny days and cloudy days, hot periods and cold periods—such patterns constitute the natural flow of existence, on a cosmic level. On an individual level, within the human body, air and blood circulates, and hormones create a biological rhythm that corresponds to the cosmic rhythm.

There are many different perspectives on the nature of a human being in relation to the laws of nature. In general, there is a consensus that existence functions according to certain cosmic patterns, and that each individual organism has a biorhythm encoded in its DNA. According to the theory of evolution, the earth came into being, formed from stellar matter and

gas, billions of years ago, and spun around the sun in an orbital pattern. Thus, a day/night rhythm was established. Later, the interaction of amino acids gave birth to life, beginning in the oceans and then spreading to land. About 200 million years ago, humanoids appeared. It is said that a human being has 50 billion bites of memory in his or her brain and millions of years of evolution imbedded in his or her DNA. Each human being is an extraordinarily complex entity.

The central nervous system of a human being, and the hormonal flow to such organs as the heart and lungs, follows a natural biorhythm based on day/night and other universal patterns. This is the scientific explanation, but all of us know from personal experience how we are affected by biorhythms both individual and cosmic. The condition of mind and body varies constantly, and if we ignore the dictates of biorhythms by not sleeping, eating, or moving properly we suffer the consequences. At any rate, Morihei had an acute sense of the rhythms of life and his Aikido was, in essence, a means to maintain an invigorating and balanced rhythm on all levels of life.

- (5) The distinctive Aikido world view revolves around the concepts of circularity and spherical motion. Aikido uses this symbolism: move just as the earth spins on its axis, and turn like the earth rotates around the sun. Morihei often spoke of a "state of perfect clarity," symbolized by a spinning top, seemingly completely still in the center. However, any object that comes in contact with the top will go flying, propelled away by the top's centrifugal force. In Aikido, when *ki*, mind, and body are unified, the circular movements appear similarly calm and relaxed, but can be applied with great and immediate efficacy if activated. This principle lies at the heart of the Aikido world view.

Morihei enjoyed using the phrase "A state of perfect clarity" and the metaphor of the universe as a "cosmic whirl." Though the earth seems to be firmly anchored, it is in fact spinning at great speed, revolving around the huge spherical sun. Morihei had a profound sense of this cosmic motion. Morihei believed the sun to be divine, a transcendent spiritual force that draws the earth into its sphere, and bestows life upon each individual. In a state of perfect clarity with *ki*, mind, and body

unified, god and man are one, and all things appear as a single, seamless sphere. This is what Morihei realized and it was the source of the vision he propagated.

Mind, Body, and *Ki* as One

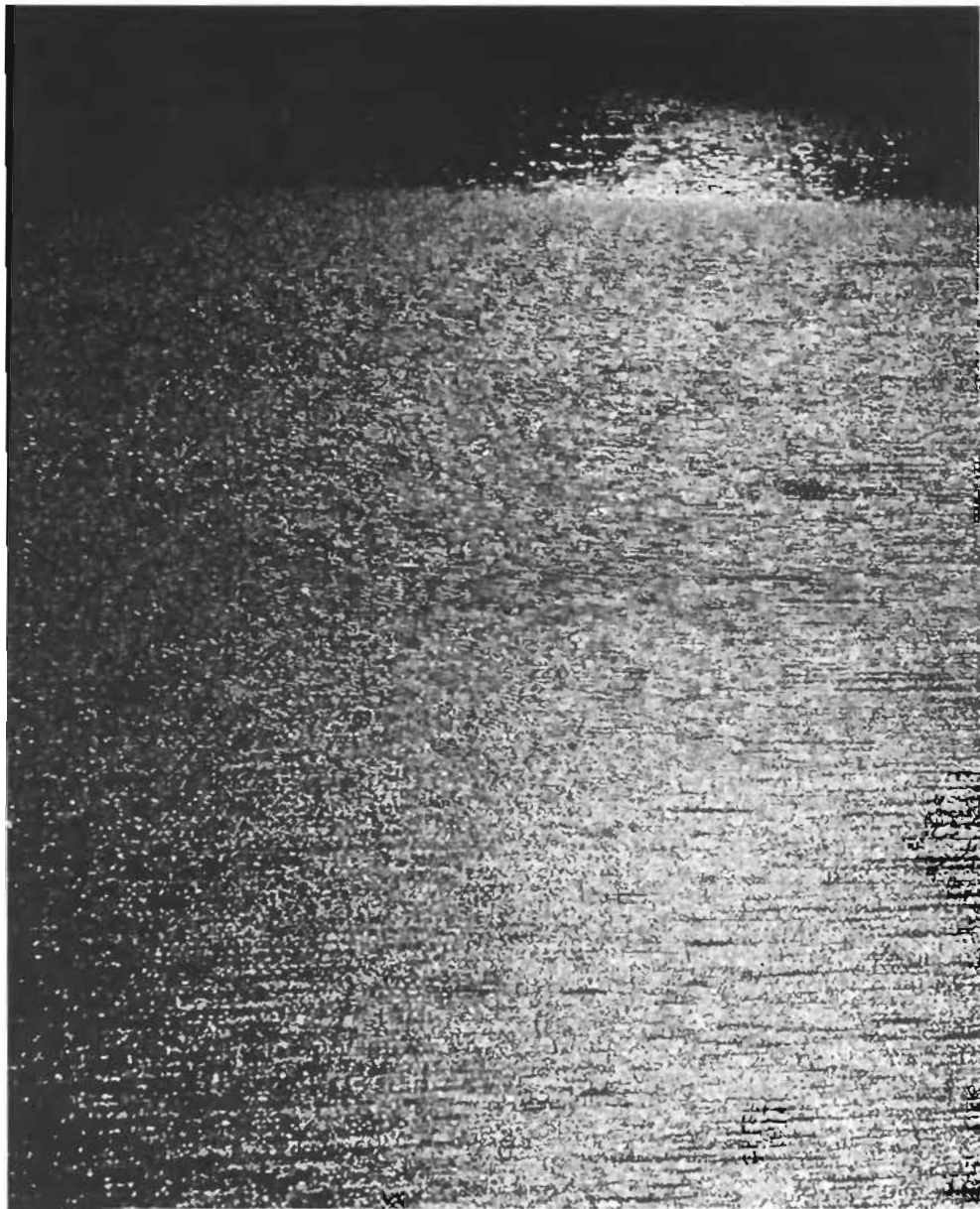
As outlined above, Aikido incorporates five world views: (1) the traditional East Asian world view; (2) the traditional ancient Shinto world view; (3) the karmic world view; (4) the natural cycle of life world view; and (5) the correspondence between the spherical nature of existence and the movements of the human body, as understood and applied in Aikido techniques.

The Founder Morihei said:

“I forged my body through training in Budo, and when I attained ultimate understanding of the Way of the warrior, I realized an even greater truth. Through Budo, I grasped the essence of the universe, and realized that the mind, body, and *ki* of a human being must be unified, and that one must harmonize oneself with the functioning of the universe. According to the subtle functioning of *ki*, one’s mind and body can be harmonized, and one can also attain harmony with the universe.

The marvelous functioning of *ki* originates in the subtle variations of breath; this is the Generative Principle. It is the essential principle of love that manifests martial valor. Breath activates and links with the primordial *ki* of the universe, generating the life force, and then a harmonizing force that transforms the universe. The subtle variations of breath give birth to subtle variations in the *ki* of true emptiness. There is strong motion, there is weak motion, and they always alternate. How can we experience these subtle changes in our own body and mind? All physical forms of existence, when animated in mind and body, breathe in conjunction with the universe; that breath expands circularly, wider and wider, linking each and every individual to the cosmic breath of life. In this manner, if you grasp the subtle transformation of breath, you will sense a great spiritual power concentrated in your body, a power that will protect and nourish you. This is the subtle interaction of *aiki*, the first step along the Way.”

To summarize: The linking of one's individual breath-power *ki* to universal *ki* is the goal of Aikido training; in regular everyday practice we strive to be in tune with the order of the universe, and move circularly, in a sphere of perfect, unobstructed freedom. Be one with the universe, enter a selfless state, and reveal your spiritual nature—become a true human being. That is the way and heart of Aikido.



V. A WELL-ROUNDED AND FREE MIND

Aikido and the Transformation of Society

There are many examples of people of genius accomplishing great things. In Aikido we have the example of the Founder Morihei Ueshiba, a man blessed with profound insight and extraordinary, even miraculous ability, who was one of the legendary figures of the 20th century. It may not be true, as certain stories have suggested, that Morihei could catch bullets with his bare hands, but many of the other feats he could perform were nearly as amazing, and to be sure he was no ordinary human being.

Although not a large man, Morihei was physically very strong, able to uproot big trees with his bare hands. Such physical strength combined with a great sensitivity made him a very gifted individual. Morihei believed that he had a divine mission in life. However, his teachings on the true nature of Aikido were only understood in a fragmental and piecemeal fashion, and we are now attempting to join the threads and make Aikido a unified system again, a system with Ueshiba Morihei as the supreme inspiration. Aikido originated with Morihei's genius, his vision of the universe; it is the essence of his life and teachings.

My father Morihei suddenly entrusted me with the administrative side of the Aikido organization in 1941 when I was still only a high school student. My father was very unpredictable and often acted in an abrupt manner. He had no desires, and was not interested in the details of an organization, even his own. Morihei hid himself in Iwama, Ibaraki Prefecture, and did not show his face at the Tokyo dojo. I somehow managed to keep the dojo operating throughout the terrible war years. Following Japan's defeat in the war in August of 1945, society changed dramatically. It was the Age of Democracy, a time of free choice. Unlike Judo, which was well organized, Aikido had no real organizational structure. Morihei had many followers all over Japan, but everything was handled rather haphazardly, nothing like today, when the practice of Aikido can be carried out easily.

Conditions were awful after Japan's defeat, not just because there was a shortage of everything but also because the Japanese had lost their self-confidence, and

had lost their identity. At that junction in history, Morihei believed that Aikido could be a vehicle to lift the heavy burden of defeat from the shoulders of his fellow Japanese, as well as pave the way for a new and peaceful social order. If the fruits of a new discovery only benefit a few select people, it has little social value. A real treasure must be made available to the world at large. This was the beginning of the post-war expansion of Aikido.

The Essence of Budo is Not Fighting

How do people in general view Aikido? One outstanding feature is the large number of female Aikido practitioners. What is the reason for this? Few women care for the big, burly frame developed by many martial artists. Women in general want to remain slim and flexible, and they look for what is bright and self-fulfilling, not what is dark and dangerous.

Many people take up Aikido to promote their physical and mental health. For women, the notion of health includes outer and inner beauty. Aikido for the purpose of self-defense is not much of a factor in attracting new students—perhaps only one in ten. Originally, Budo training was based on these premises: forging one's character, improving one's mind, self-protection, and to maintain law and order in society. When society is in disarray, the primary purpose of Budo is self-protection. If civilization is not established, people need to protect themselves as a matter of course. People do not live in a vacuum, and social conditions greatly affect the way people act. It is no different with the martial arts—sometimes self-preservation is the greatest concern.

Although Budo may have originated in response to battlefield considerations, there are elements in Budo that transcend historical and cultural conditions. Budo was concerned with the critical matter of life and death, a matter crucial for every human being. Certain techniques and teachings that relate to the nature of human existence have universal validity, and are not limited in application to just one time and place. Any true philosophy, east or west, continually inspires each new generation of thinkers.

Considered alongside the long history of the Japanese martial tradition, Aikido is, to be sure, a modern Budo. Yet it is at the same time an ancient Budo. Morihei

incorporated the best elements of the traditional martial arts into Aikido, revitalizing them in new forms, and making them more adaptable to modern conditions. Such an approach accounts for Aikido's popularity with female practitioners. The graceful, soft, circular movements of Aikido also appeal to a woman's innate aesthetic sense.

However, it is serious mistake to characterize Aikido as a feminine martial art. The purpose of the martial arts is not to be defeated by an opponent, and Aikido is no exception. The true purpose of Budo is to win without fighting, or contending.

Freedom in Aikido

In regard to human nature, it is much harder to overcome the demons within, than defeat an opponent without. In a society where survival of the fittest is paramount, the martial arts are easy to practice. One trains to defeat an opponent by any means available, and the only criteria for defining a great warrior is one who emerges intact, battle after battle.

Human history, however, shows a preference for civilization. Civilization is the desire for order. Human beings will perish if there is constant warfare, so they long for peace and order. In August 1945, the old order in Japan crumbled. It was time for a new and better order. It was the dawning of the age of Aikido. It was now time to introduce the principles of Aikido to the world at large. In order to understand Aikido, one has to practice. We especially want young people to practice because young people are the future.

The Founder Morihei was an unrivalled master of the 20th century. He adhered faithfully to his principles, and in fact could not act contrary to them, since they were part of his being. Morihei treated everyone the same, as long as a person showed good manners. It did not matter if the person was a high ranking member of society, a business tycoon, or a famous general. Morihei showed no favoritism among his personal students either, even though he had a large number of disciples who were socially prominent or in senior positions in the military. That was Morihei's character. He would demonstrate the techniques to his students personally and show them how to make use of their partner's force. When he taught children,

he seemed to become a child himself to make the technique easier to understand. This is the way Aikido should be—direct, unforced, uncalculated. In a word, “free.”

Brightness and Flexibility

The Founder Morihei was extremely sensitive. His philosophy was practical yet profound. Morihei’s thoughts were not easy to follow; they had to be learned bit by bit. He never tried to explain everything all at once. He did not reject people because of their lack of understanding, nor force people to listen to him. All Morihei asked for was a real interest in Aikido. Such sincere people were welcomed with open arms.

Morihei frequently referred to Aikido as the “Dance of the Gods (*Amakagura*).” This dance, described in the *Kojiki*, was performed by Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto to lure the Sun Goddess out of her cave. It was a dance of liberation, brightness, and bliss. Like this, the goal of Aikido is to dispel all darkness.

I once heard this from the mother of an elementary school student studying Aikido: “Since my son began practicing Aikido he has a much brighter outlook and plays better with his friends.” Previously this child had few friends, and was rather sullen and gloomy. Of course, none of his Aikido instructors told him, “Get a better attitude and make more friends.” Little by little, the Aikido mind-set influenced the child, and his situation improved. This is how the inner elements of brightness and joy are brought to the surface in Aikido.

The reason one starts to practice is not important. It can be for health or beauty, for fellowship, whatever. Regardless of the reason, the essence of Aikido does not change. In Aikido, we welcome the participation of women. Women who practice Aikido make society stronger and healthier.

Preserving Venerable Traditions in the Midst of Everyday Life

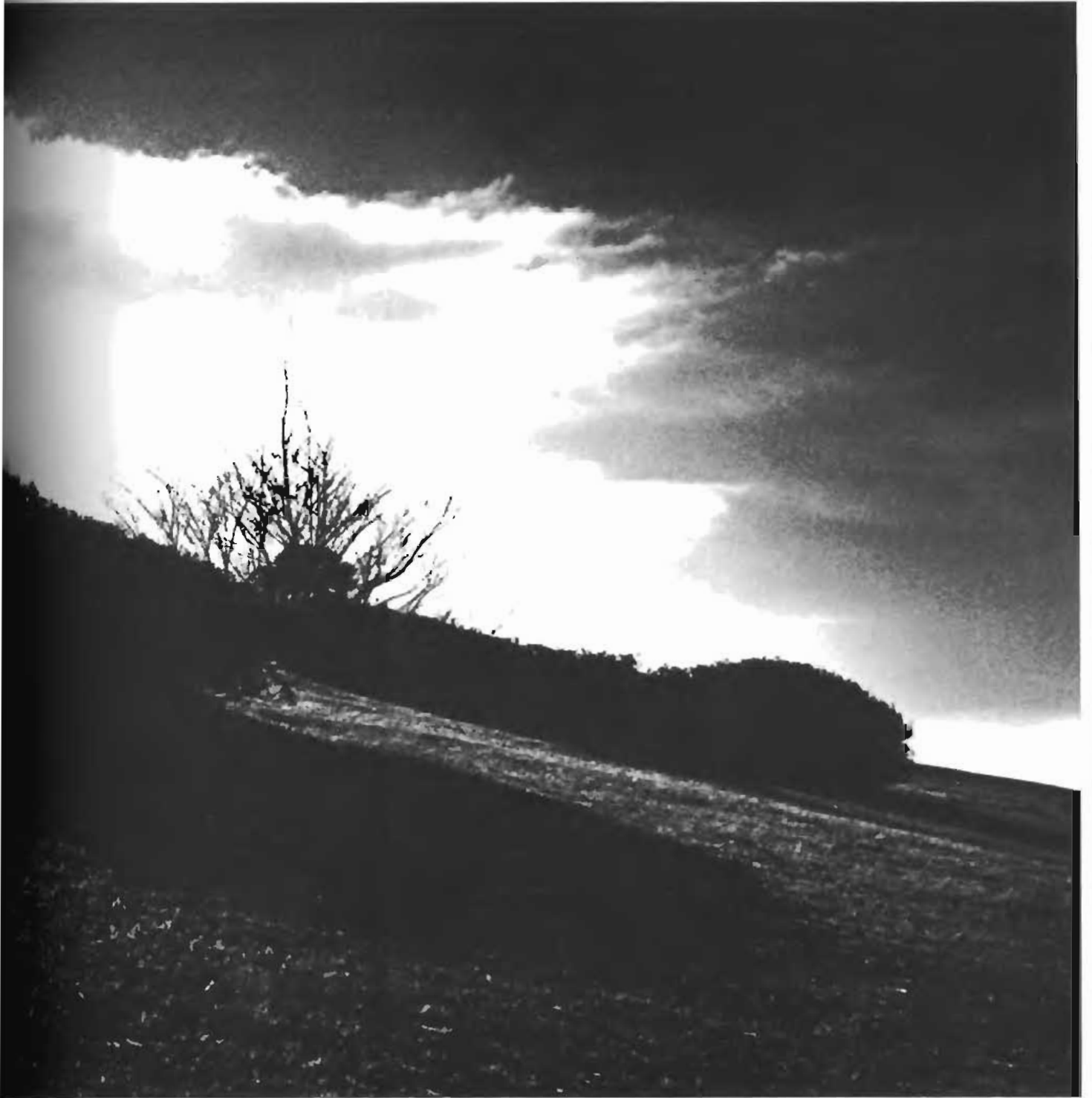
The maturing of a civilization creates certain conflicts, especially in the human heart. People can become consumed by a passion for material gain. Furthermore, goals become obscured, the nature of work changes, people’s outlooks shift, and society becomes less stable. All these things increase anxiety. It is important to have

goals that don't change, to have a sense of continuity. The fundamental movements of Aikido are circular, round, and flexible, reflecting the endless spinning of the universe. In Aikido, movement and mind are one, so even if the student is not conscious of the principle, it is still naturally absorbed through regular training. The key is constant repetition, learning true Aikido in gradual increments. For those who practice Aikido primarily to improve their health, they will obtain that goal (and many other things) by focusing on the flexible movements of Aikido. In Aikido, even among the highest ranking practitioners, we never see someone who is stiff and overly muscular. The essential quality of Aikido is flexibility. Aikido leads to beauty. Aikido leads to true dialogue. Morihei composed this song of the Way:

From ancient times,
Humanities and the martial arts
I have been the two wheels of the Way
Through the virtue of training
Attain enlightenment of body and mind.

Japan will always be Japan, and there are traditions that will never die. Aikido has its roots in the traditional Budo culture of Japan. However, we should not define Japanese tradition within the narrow confines of nationalism. Aikido is for the entire world, and is now practiced on every continent. Aikido is not something exotic; it is part of the emerging world culture. The genius of Morihei Ueshiba has now become known to the world at large. Pleasantly, powerfully, freely, flexibly—this is how Aikido should be manifested throughout our daily existence.





The background of the page is a dark, monochromatic abstract composition of thick, expressive brushstrokes. The strokes are in various shades of black and dark grey, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of traditional East Asian ink wash painting (sumi-e).

AIKIDO TECHNIQUE

I. ACQUIRING THE CORRECT POSTURE AND ATTITUDE FOR AIKIDO

The basic technical maneuver in Aikido is to enter and move. Rather than forcing the body and relying on physical strength to overcome an opponent, in Aikido we capture the opponent's spirit to bring him down. In order to accomplish that feat, one must train diligently to learn how to maintain a proper state of mind, to assume a correct stance, to move effectively and efficiently, and to follow the flow of *ki*.

A STANCE THAT ALLOWS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Unlike Judo or Kendo, Aikido has no paired competition under fixed rules, and no set patterns of movement. In Judo, the competitors try to grab each other in order to apply a technique, but in Aikido we avoid that kind of struggle, keeping a distance between oneself and the opponent, with the aim of responding immediately to any attack with free and unobstructed movement.

A correct posture is necessary to execute the circular and spherical movements of Aikido. If one's posture is broken, even for an instant, the center of balance is lost and the movement becomes dead—it is no longer an Aikido technique. In the traditional martial arts, the best stance was considered to be one that was the most natural and unaffected. This was called *shizen-tai*. From this posture, in Aikido, when we face an opponent, we take one step forward with either the left or right foot and assume a *hanmi* stance.

Hidari-gamae: Here, the left foot is forward. The body is turned obliquely toward the opponent, and the hips are kept low and centered. The entire body should be relaxed, not stiff, ready to respond to any contingency. The hands are held at mid-level, extending out toward the opponent, with the right hand positioned slightly lower. The fingers are widely splayed to facilitate the flow of *ki*. The use of the hand-swords in this manner is one of the distinctive characteristics of Aikido. This posture

is called the triangular stance. A triangular stance is the most stable posture. Rotated in four directions, this triangular stance would form a perfect sphere. The eyes are not fixed on any one particular point but rather take in the entire posture of the opponent, not overlooking the slightest thing. Look with your mind, not just your eyes.

Migi-gamae: Here the right foot is forward. In Aikido, most technical sequences begin in *hidari-gamae*, but the techniques are always practiced from both sides so *migi-gamae* is equally important. If a stance lacks spirit, if *ki* does not permeate one's body from the top of the head to the bottom of one's feet, it is dead, regardless how good it may appear. Thus, assume a stance, mentally and physically, that is ready to respond to any attack.

ASSUMING MA-AI

Regardless of the technique and the movement employed, if the proper distance between oneself and the opponent is not maintained, one's posture will be broken, the technique will be rendered ineffective, and the opponent will be able to counterattack. *Ma-ai* (combative distance) determines the viability or futility of a technique. Simply stated, a good *ma-ai* puts one in the best possible place—you can strike the opponent at will but he can find no openings in your defense. When *ma-ai* is properly grasped, proper distancing will not just be a physically calculated interval, but also involve the functioning of mind, *ki* flow, maneuvering, as well as your position in time and space—indeed, all aspects of a technique.

In regular Aikido practice, the standard *ma-ai* is set when two partners face each other in a *hanmi* stance with their front hands almost touching. At that juncture it is essential not to remain static; one needs to have an inner perception of the flow of *ki* between oneself and one's partner. Regardless of whether the partner attacks you with a punch or a kick, move freely, and bring your partner into your sphere of control.

When both partners have the same foot forward, that mutual stance is called *ai-hanmi*, when they have different feet forward, the stance is called *gyaku-hanmi*. The *ma-ai* for both stances has to be adjusted accordingly, and it is important to maintain proper posture throughout. As for mental *ma-ai*, the relationship between

you and your partner is not simply a matter of physical distance; learn how to employ all the subtle variations of space. Just as the flow of air and the refraction of light always shifts, keep your mind active, even if the body is still. Move your mind, as well as your body, to and fro, as the situation demands.

In Aikido, the ideal initial posture is face-to-face with your partner. One can readily blend with an attack from this stance, and more easily employ the subtle variations of time and space, not in a calculated manner but in a natural, smooth fashion. To summarize: *ma-ai* means to naturally be in the right place.

MOVE IN THE CENTER

The best way to illustrate movement in Aikido is to use the example of a compass. The compass has a stable center around which a circle forms. The circle symbolizes the movements of Aikido, which embrace both oneself and one's partner. A circle is 360 degrees; in three dimensions it forms a sphere. A body that can move as smoothly and powerfully as a spinning ball is essential in Aikido. Movement includes movements of the hands, the feet, and body, but they have to function as one, not separate entities. Movement front and back, left and right, are the same. Movement that emerges from an Aikido stance pervades the entire body right to the end of the fingertips. That movement is circular. From one perspective, Aikido movements are as graceful as a dance, enveloping a partner when he (or she) attacks, and then spinning him down like a flying marble. That movement is proof of the efficacy of movement in the center. The techniques and movements of Aikido may seem soft and pliant on the outside but inside they possess a tremendous circular force.

THE FLOW OF *KI*

It is said that when a human being enters a state of "no-mind," it is possible to immediately discern an opponent's movements. This intuitive power is a special requirement of the martial arts. Our predecessors spoke of *sen* (anticipation) in the martial arts; this anticipation was not a calculated response, but was rather natural and intuitive. One must transcend notions of self and other, victory and defeat,

with a completely resolute mind; from that state of harmony a natural flow of *ki* emerges, and one responds appropriately, enveloping the opponent with smooth, seamless, subtle movements. In this way, the opponent can be unconsciously controlled by one's movement.

There is a famous saying attributed to the legendary swordsman Ki'ichi Hogen: "When your opponent comes, greet him; when he goes, send him on his way. When opposed, immediately harmonize. Five plus five is ten, two plus eight is ten, one plus nine is ten. Use that principle to harmonize with any force." This expresses the need to synchronize the flow of *ki* with body movement. It does not mean simply waiting for your opponent to come; rather you invite him to move forward and he cannot resist. Nor does it mean simply following him out the door; instead you direct him there and he has to follow.

It is easy to talk about the flow of *ki*, but it is not something that can be mastered in one or two attempts. Grounding in basic principles such as correct posture and *mai-ai* is essential, and there must be continuous training until *ki* flow emerges in a natural and unforced manner.

SEN

In the Japanese martial arts, the concept of *sen* (anticipation) is very important. In order to attain victory, one must demonstrate a powerful union of both mental strength and technical skill. It is said that *sen* is the key to anticipating and being able to control any situation.

"Anticipate and control" is the maxim here. If one has good *sen*, before an opponent can muster an attack, he is already completely under control. On the other hand, when facing an opponent, if one consciously plans to move to the left or the right at any given time, one will likely be beaten by the opponent. Filling one's head with complicated strategies does not work well; it impedes the movements of one's hands and feet, and makes it easier for an opponent to get the upper hand. The concept of *sen* is not just important for the martial arts; in many aspects of life, a good sense of anticipation is a valuable asset.

In the old days, anticipation was categorized on three levels: *sen*, *sensen no sen*, and *go no sen*. *Sen* means to anticipate and seize the initiative to overcome an

opponent; *sensen no sen* is to control your opponent's mind and use that opening to win; and *go no sen* is to respond to your opponent's attacks by reading them as they occur.

Here again, the essential point is to transcend notions of victory and defeat; that is to say, move freely according to your own dictates, never waver, and seize the initiative on your own terms. In the practice of Aikido, *sen* emerges from a mind that is unbound; one faces an opponent with no preconceived notions, or any sense of confrontation, and blends subtly with an attack. In Aikido, *sen* is about guiding one's opponent into one's sphere, leading him there in a content yet determined manner.

This kind of absolute *sen* works on every level of life, regardless of the situation. However, such mastery does not come easily—one must train as if one's life depended on it. A final important point to note: many people feel that Aikido techniques are based on *go no sen*; responding to an attack after it has actually been delivered. Such a view is very immature—the exact opposite is true—so one must train sincerely to learn the true dimensions of *sen*.

THE USE OF POWER

Quite often, a prospective Aikido student asks "I don't have a lot of physical strength. Can I still practice Aikido?" Or, "I have no martial arts experience. Can I still do Aikido?"

My reply: "It doesn't matter if you do not have any martial arts experience. It may sometimes be a plus to have some experience, but often this is not the case, because it is best to approach Aikido with a fresh, open mind. We emphasize *ki* power rather than physical power in Aikido, a power that involves both mind and body, so even women and children can train and become truly strong."

In fact, in Aikido the one thing we most avoid are training methods and techniques that focus exclusively on building muscular strength. If one does not understand the true meaning of "power" in Aikido, it makes no difference even if a person possesses the strength of a hundred men.

In order to foster Aikido power, one must first relax the neck, shoulders, and upper body and concentrate one's *ki* in the *seika tanden*. The fingers of one's hands

should be spread widely to facilitate the flow of *ki*. When *ki* power is extended through the fingertips like this, one's center of gravity naturally lowers, and the entire body becomes stable.

If one's strength settles on a specific area, it becomes like stagnant water, and disturbs the flow of movement. Thus, one should keep one's movements circular and free flowing to maintain vital strength. Aikido movement must be truly natural, agile, smooth, and pliable. In Aikido, we never force a technique, or try to overwhelm an opponent with pure physical strength. For example, in Aikido we raise and lower our hand-swords, projecting *ki* directly from our center, to generate power. This kind of power, emanating from the core of one's being, expands upwards and outwards. This links one with the universe, and lies at the very heart of Aikido. The power of the life force is what we foster in Aikido training.

TRAINING IN SEATED TECHNIQUES

Although Aikido does not have ground grappling techniques like Judo, we train in a wide variety of seated techniques. *Seiza*, sitting on one's knees and ankles with the back straight, is a distinctive custom of Asian people, especially the Japanese, who have built an entire culture around that kind of sitting. *Seiza* is believed by the Japanese to be the secret to developing strong legs and hips, but it is hard for Westerners to appreciate the benefits of that difficult and initially painful posture.

In Aikido, every standing technique has a corresponding seated technique. Solid training in seated techniques will make one's standing techniques stronger and more centered. In the 1930s, during the early days of Aikido, training was by invitation only, and newcomers practiced seated techniques exclusively for the first few months. That kind of harsh training removes the top layer of skin on one's feet, and caused many newcomers to abandon their training. Nonetheless, training in seated techniques is essential for Aikido; it makes one's hip turns very powerful and fosters the development of good breath-power.

Seated techniques begin in *seiza*, with the big toes of both feet lightly touching. In order to move from this position, the hands and feet need to function in unison.



There are many dedicated female practitioners of Aikido.

If the right leg moves so does the right hand, and vice-versa. It is important that when the movement is initiated, one knee must be brought forward (or backward, right or left, depending on the situation) while the other knee maintains the center of gravity. This kind of movement resembles the etiquette followed by a Shinto priest when he officiates before the shrine.

Nowadays, many Japanese follow a more westernized life-style and do not sit in *seiza* very much. For many young people, just ten minutes of *seiza* makes their legs go to sleep and they cannot stand unassisted. This is a shame, and is evidence that Japanese people do not train like they did in the past. However, seated techniques are an integral aspect of Aikido training, and that will never change.

BASIC PREPARATORY TECHNIQUES

Once the basic concepts of movement, the flow of *ki*, anticipation, and the use of power are understood, the next phase of training is basic preparatory techniques. People who live in distant places, and do not have access to a qualified instructor, often ask: "How can I practice Aikido under such conditions?" The answer: "*Ki* power, derived from linking oneself to the *ki* of heaven and earth, is necessary for the proper execution of Aikido techniques. Begin with the basic preparatory techniques."

Aikido is called the Budo of integration. When training by oneself, keep the image of a sphere firmly in mind as you move, harmoniously and beautifully, creating an irresistible force. Such an attitude can be applied to a dance, to a ballet, to a real fight, to self-defense—it creates just the right timing. Movement must always be smooth and well balanced, rhythmical and in harmony with one's breathing. Here are two good basic preparatory techniques:

- ***Ki no henka***

This is the basic body turn movement. Pivot on your front foot, to the right and left, and assume a new stance. It is important to not to let any slack occur in the hands or feet as you turn, and make sure your posture remains stable and unbroken throughout. *Ki no henka* is executed left and right twice, four times in all but it can be varied to include eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and even more turns.

• *Kyoku no Tenkan Ho*

This is the basic preparatory technique of *shihonage*. Starting from one point, the body moves in a circular direction with the added element of the arms rising and falling with a breath-power motion. It is a more complicated movement than the previous exercise, but very effective in developing good hand-sword movement coordinated with breath-power. Performed in *shihogin* fashion, it is important to let one's *ki* flow freely without hesitation while executing the cuts.

***Ukemi* (Breakfall)**

"Skill in *ukemi* (breakfall) makes your techniques better." "Concentrate on *ukemi* for three years." These are common sayings containing much truth. *Ukemi* is used when one has been thrown and is headed towards the ground. A good *ukemi* prevents one from being injured when making contact with the ground. Don't panic, and use the force of your partner's throw to roll lightly across the ground and then back up safely. One should be able to perform good *ukemi* in any direction—to the front, to the back, or to the side.

Aikido is a Budo with numerous techniques, and consequently demands various kinds of *ukemi*. Side *ukemi* from which one falls from the upper body are not much employed in Aikido; rather rolling *ukemi* to the front and back are preferred. *Ukemi* in Aikido also follow the principles of *ki* flow and spherical movement. In the case of a



To illustrate the principle of circularity and *ki* flow in Aikido, here is a strobe-light photograph of the technique *kaiten-nage*.



The top photo illustrates good *irimi*, and the coordination of movement and breath-power. The bottom two photos illustrate the use of the hand-sword and breath-power in applying the *irimi* principle

front *ukemi*, the fall follows the natural curve of the outstretched arm and the hand, which is turned in; the roll goes in order of elbow, shoulder, hips. In the case of a back *ukemi*, one leg is pulled in and the roll is executed backwards across the rear end, the hips, and back.

Regardless of the direction of the *ukemi*, it follows Aikido principles, and thus is not a fixed pattern but a natural flow. There is no need to break the fall with a hard slap of the arm as in Judo. Take *ukemi* in the Aikido manner, and there will be no fear of injury when being thrown; you will become more flexible physically and mentally.

During regular Aikido training there is no special time set aside for *ukemi* practice. *Ukemi* are learned naturally through the repeated experience of circular movement both when applying the technique, and when receiving one, being thrown or pinned. Once again, it is important to note that there are no forced techniques in Aikido—everything is done within the framework of good body movement, *ki* flow, and breath-power.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF UNIFYING MIND, TECHNIQUE, AND BODY

In Aikido techniques, *irimi*, the principle of entering, is paramount. If a human being can unify body, mind, and *ki*, then this becomes a source of tremendous power, a power that activates the techniques. That force is called breath-power in Aikido, and the hand-swords are employed to manifest breath-power in the techniques.



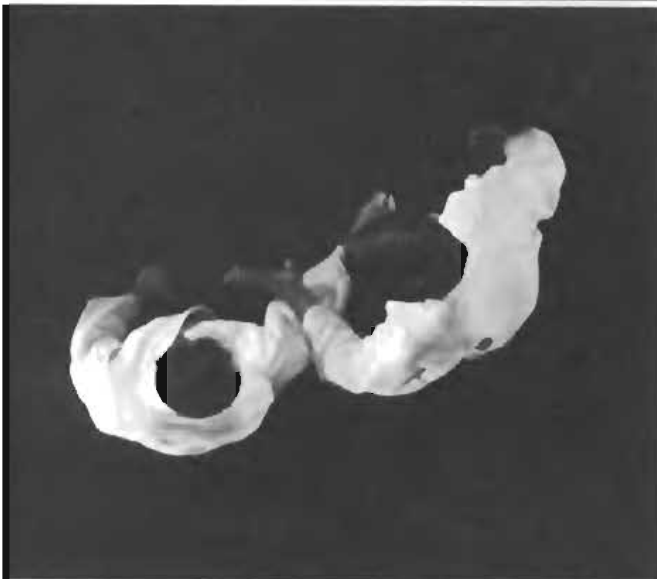
The primary *irimi* movement.
Against a thrusting punch, enter
to the outside and place yourself
in your opponent's dead angle

The Principle of *Irimi*

In Aikido, the principle of *irimi* is employed to avoid the attacking force and to position oneself to the opponent's dead angle. Thus, in the proper application of Aikido techniques, it is an iron clad rule to enter to an opponent's side.



1



2



3

The *irimi* movement against a thrust shown photographed from above



1



2



3

Against a sword attack.

When a direct blow is delivered, immediately enter to the opponent's dead angle. Photographed from above



1



2



3



4



5



6



1



2



3

The *inimi* relationship between a sword and *jo*.

Against a *jo* thrust, employ *inimi* to avoid the attack and immediately counterattack with a sword cut.

The relationship between *inimi*, *atemi*, and *jo* movement.

Against a *jo* thrust, enter, apply *atemi*, and throw the opponent.



1



2



3

The same technique photographed from above. Note the subtle *irimi* movement to avoid the *jo* attack



1



2



3



4



5



6

The technique of movement.

Subtly guide your opponent and down him with a *tENCHI-nAGE* throw.

The Relationship between Beauty and Movement

Aikido techniques are based on spherical movement. Harmonization of one's movement with universal movement is the essence of Aikido, and the display of that harmony can be extremely beautiful. *Irimi* coupled with clean, smooth movement lies at the core of Aikido techniques.



1



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8



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9



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7



10



4



11



12



14



16



13



15

The miracle of movement.

Kata-dori tenkan preparatory exercise photographed from above (1–16) In this technique, one partner initiates the attack by grabbing his partner's shoulder and wrist, and they alternate applying the technique.

(BELOW) The same technique photographed from above with a strobe light and depicted as a montage. Note the powerful swirl around the stable center.





1



2



3



4



1



2



3



1



2



3



5

Jo movement

Blend with your partner when he grabs the end of the jo, break his posture, and throw him in various ways.

How to use your hands when your partner grabs the end of the jo:

1. Raise the jo to the upper right and thrust.
2. Lower the jo to the lower left and thrust.
3. Raise the jo to the upper left and thrust.



1



2



3



6



4



7



5



1



2



3

When your partner attempts to grab both wrists: Keep your arms close to your body while raising both hands/swords up towards your partner's shoulders, break his posture, and down him with breath power.

The same technique shown from a different angle.

The Development of Breath-Power

In Aikido, *ki* is central. The flow of *ki* activates Aikido techniques and is called "breath-power" (*hokyu-ryoku*). In a seated position, lower your center of gravity, concentrate your *ki* in your *seika tanden*, root yourself to the earth, and assume a stable position. There are many variations of the seated breath-power exercise, but the one shown here is the most basic.



1



2



2



4

Seated breath-power exercise when held from above.



Standing breath-power technique when the right wrist is grabbed.



3

In contrast to the seated exercise, in standing breath-power exercises, your partner employs a two-hand grasp on one arm. The hand-swords, however, are employed in a similar fashion. Manifest breath-power that emanates from the unity of mind, *ki*, and body, and down your partner.



1



2



3



4



5

The same standing technique shown from a different angle. Note the full extension of the arms and hand-swords.



1



3



2



4



5

If properly manifested through the hand-swords, it is possible to effectively employ breath-power against multiple attackers



6



When the opponent grabs your wrist, activate breath-power with your hand-sword, break his posture, and down him. Note the skilful use of the *irimi/ateru* principle.



Kokyu-nage (breath-power throw).

The above pictures illustrate how to employ breath-power when your partner attempts a two-handed grab on one arm.

The Relationship between Breath-Power and the Hand-Swords

In Aikido, employment of the hand-swords is primary. Based on the principle that the sword is an extension of the body, when a technique is applied the hand-swords move in unison with the body. In Aikido, breath-power manifested through the hand-swords is very important. Functioning as one, breath-power and hand-swords give life to all the Aikido techniques.



1



2



3

Note the coordination between breath-power and hand-swords in this technique--an attempted wrist grab



1



2



3

Breath-power throw employed against a two-handed wrist grab from behind.



1



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3

Breath-power throw against an attempted chest grab from behind.



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3

Breath-power throw against a two-handed elbow grab from the front.



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Breath-power throw against two opponents attacking both arms from the front. Use your hand-swords to summon forth your breath-power like this, and even two attackers can be repelled



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This *sumi-otashi* technique illustrates the unified employment of hand-swords, breath-power, and the distinctive soft, circular movements of Aikido. Note the smooth connection between *irimi*, movement, and breath-power.



Basic back *ukemi*: this is a standard *ukemi* in Aikido.



Full turn back *ukemi*: here, instead of rising right back up, a full, spherical turn is made.

The Principle of *Ukemi* (Breakfall)

The *ukemi* employed in Aikido follow the primary principles of circularity and spherical motion. Five kinds of *ukemi* are shown here, the ones most commonly employed in general training. The two most regularly used *ukemi* are basic back *ukemi* and front *ukemi*. Proficiency in *ukemi* is crucial in Aikido training.



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Front *ukemi*: the other standard Aikido *ukemi*, made with a full roll to the front. The fall must be light, circular, and unforced, exemplifying Aikido principles.



Side *ukemi*: this *ukemi* is often employed in hip throws, but in Aikido any kind of *ukemi* can be utilized; it depends on the circumstances—there are no hard-and-fast rules.

Direct *ukemi* to the front: this kind of *ukemi* is often employed in pinning techniques; in Aikido, an opponent is always pinned face down

II. ENTERING THE REALM OF TRUE TECHNIQUES

The techniques of Aikido are beautiful. They flow from an ideal harmony of body and mind, of entering and movement. Aikido techniques are generally divided into throwing techniques, pinning techniques, and throw-and-pin techniques. Within these groupings there are such forms as *irimi-nage*, *shiho-nage*, and the like—indeed, there are countless variations, all in accord with the natural principles of change and adaptability.

THE INVIGORATING THROWING TECHNIQUES OF AIKIDO

Aikido is now on the world's stage. It is practiced all over the globe, by all kinds of people, and is popular everywhere. There must be something in Aikido that transcends national borders to explain its universal appeal.

I once made a visit to Uruguay. After my demonstration, the Commanding Officer of the Uruguay National Military Academy said to me: "I was struck by the stability of the movements in Aikido. Although the movements seemed free-flowing, almost dance-like, there was never a loss of balance, and all the techniques were smoothly and seamlessly applied. It seems to me that the key point of Aikido is a stable center." The Commander hit the nail right on the head.

In Aikido throwing techniques, we follow natural principles when training, but it all reverts back to whether or not one has unified *ki*, mind, and body, and maintains a stable center. All the Aikido throwing techniques follow the flow of nature but *irimi-nage* is perhaps the most invigorating and meaningful: the same precision in entering as demanded of the classical life-and-death martial arts combined with the free-flowing motion of the sphere.



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Irimi-nage Tenkan Individual Training

This is a basic preparatory individual exercise to improve one's performance of *irimi-nage*, a fundamental Aikido technique. Even when it is not possible to train with a partner, you can—indeed, you must—practice on your own.

Execute a *shomen* strike with your front hand-sword, apply *atemi* with the fist of your other hand while entering with your front foot, pivot on that foot, remaining centered; and step in with a big sweep of the back hand-sword.



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Shomen-uchi irimi-nage, seated technique.

For training in *irimi* movement seated on the mat. The photograph at the lower left, taken with a strobe light from above, illustrates clearly the dynamic flow of this technique.

***Irimi-nage* Fundamental Technique**

As a basic technique, *irimi-nage* is first practiced against *shomen* attacks.



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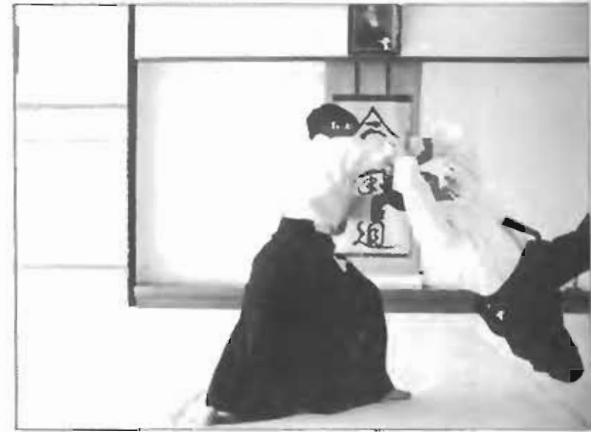
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8

Shomen-uchi irimi-nage, standing technique.

Control your partner's attacking hand-sword with your hand-sword to lead him around as you enter to his side and apply the technique.



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The same technique photographed from above



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10

Yakomen-uchi irimi-nage.

Employed when your partner attacks with a *yakomen* strike. Keep centered throughout all three turns to break your partner's balance and down him.

***Irimi-nage* Basic Techniques**

Here are three basic *irimi-nage* techniques:



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Ushiro ryotekubi-dori irimi-nage.

Your partner approaches from the front and then tries to grab your wrists from behind. Projecting breath-power through the hand-swords, raise both arms, guide your partner around, and employ *irimi-nage* to down him.



Kata-dori uchi-mawari irimi-nage.

When your partner grabs your shoulder and strikes with his hand-sword, use your own hand-sword to block the attack and guide him around as you pivot, and apply *irimi-nage* to bring him down. This photo, taken from above, illustrates clearly the beautiful flowing nature of this circular technique





Ushiro ryokata-dori irimi-nage

When your partner, attacking from the front, moves in and attempts to grab your shoulders from behind, make a big circular movement to guide him around, enter to his side, and use *irimi-nage* to down him.

***Irimi-nage* Applied Techniques**

Once the principle of *irimi* in Aikido is grasped, it is possible to apply it against all manner of attacks and situations. Here are three examples of *irimi* applied against attacks from the rear, with a sword, and with a *jo*:



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Irimi-nage against a sword attack.

As soon as your partner strikes from above, enter his side, apply *atemi*, and down him with *irimi-nage*



Irimi-nage against a *jo* attack

When you partner thrusts with a *jo*, enter deeply, and apply *inmi-nage* to down him



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6

Hand-sword cut.

From a *hanmi* stance, raise both hands in the manner of a sword while stepping out on the front foot. Pivot, and then cut down with both hands

***Shiho-nage Shiho-giri Tenkan* Exercise**

• ***Shiho-nage***

In order to unify mind, *ki*, and body within Aikido movement, it is vital to practice moving the body and sword as one. In *shiho-nage*, the relationship between the sword and body movement is clearly expressed. Here are two preparatory exercises for *shiho-nage*:



Four Direction Cut with a sword.

This is similar to the previous exercise with the added element of the sword; pivot in the center in four directions while cutting as illustrated. (It is also possible to cut in smaller sections — eight, sixteen, etc.) This will improve your understanding of the relationship between sword and body movement.



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8

Ryote-dori tenkan exercise.

As soon as your partner attempts to grab both wrists, guide him with your hand-swords, take a half-step in, and pivot. Stop the cut half-way, giving your partner's back a good stretch as a preliminary exercise.

The same technique executed with a sword.

When your partner attempts to grab both wrists, guide him around with a sweeping turn and employ the *shiho* sword movement to bring him down.



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4

Katate-don shiho-nage.
Used when your partner grabs your wrist with one hand. This is the fundamental *shiho-nage* form.

***Shiho-nage* Fundamental Technique**



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5

Hanmi-hantachi katate-dori shiho-nage.
The principles explained on the previous page applied from a seated position



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4

Against a *yokomen* attack.
Make a big sweeping motion, use your partner's arm as if it was a sword, and apply *shiho-nage*.

***Shiho-nage* Basic Techniques**

Here are some variations of *shiho-nage*. It is essential that such variations be based on experience derived from training. They should not be forced or unnatural.



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13

Ushiro ryotekubi-don shiho-nage.

When held from behind by the wrists, raise both hand-swords, turn, and apply *shihonage* to your partner's arm



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Ushiro ryokata-dori shiho-nage.
The movement and the application of *shiho-nage* follow the same basic pattern as that of *ushiro ryotekubi-dori*.

***Shiho-nage* Applied Techniques**

Once you have ability in the basic *shiho-nage* techniques, you can apply *shiho-nage* in countless ways whenever you catch hold of your partner's arm.



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11

Shiho-nage against a *yokomen* sword attack

When your partner attacks with a *yokomen* sword strike, follow the same pattern as in *yokomen-uchi shiho-nage*, down him, and take away the sword.



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7

Katate-don shiho-nage with a jo

Regardless of the attack—empty-handed, with a sword, jo, or knife-- it is possible to apply *shihu-nage*



Circular Turn and High Throws

In Aikido we have countless throws—*irimi-nage*, *shiho-nage*, and many other kinds. Here, we present two kinds of flowing throws: circular turn techniques and high throws. In circular turn techniques, the *ukemi* must be soft and circular. In high throws, the *ukemi* is much more direct, head over heels—that is to say, representing the two extremes of the *ukemi* spectrum. In circular turn techniques, the basic front *ukemi* is employed most fully.



Katate-dori kaiten-nage

When your partner grabs your wrist with his hand, step out on your front foot, apply *atemi* with your fist, pivot on the front foot, and step to the rear while cutting down with your hand-sword, bringing your partner down low. Press your hand-sword on your partner's neck, grab his wrist, step forward with a large circular motion, and throw him to the front. The sequence photographed from the top shows the technique in its flowing form:



Here is the technique photographed from the side.





Ushiro ryotekubi-dori katten-nage.

When grabbed from behind by both wrists, raise both hand-swords, slide behind your partner, and apply *kaiten-nage* to throw him. The sequence is shown here photographed from above, and there is a montage of the technique at the center.



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Ryote-dori Koshi-nage.

When your partner attempts to grab both wrists, use your hand-swords to position your partner, step in with the front foot, place him across your hips, and throw him. In this case, the partner relies on a side *ukemi*.

High Throws

In Aikido, we have a number of high throw techniques that employ the hips or arm locks applied from an upper position. It is important that the *ukemi* be timed in unison with the throw. Illustrated here is one form of *koshi-nage* (hip throw) that has many applications.



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11

Dai-ikkyo ude-osae preparatory exercise.

When a *dai-ikkyo* pin is attempted, make a big sweeping turn and lead your partner. The partners alternate performing the exercise on both sides.

BASIC PINNING TECHNIQUES

In addition to throwing techniques, Aikido training emphasizes pinning techniques. Pinning techniques strengthen one's joints, and in general improve the performance of all the other techniques as well.

Pinning Technique Turning Exercise

To be true Aikido techniques, pins need to be executed with flexibility, a smooth flow, and speed.



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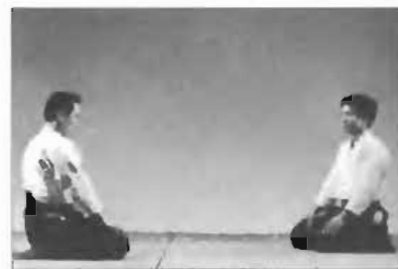
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6

Shomen-uchi dai-ikkyn suwari-waza (nmote).

Seated technique. When your partner delivers a *shomen* strike, control the elbow and wrist of the attacking arm, move forward on the knees, cut down with your hands, and pin him.



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6

Shomen-uchi dai-ikkyo suwari-waza (ura).

Seated technique. When your partner delivers a *shomen* strike, control the elbow and wrist of the attacking arm, and make a big sweeping turn to the rear to pin him.

Fundamental Pinning Techniques

In Aikido, pins to break your partner's posture and control his joints are very important. To illustrate these two points, here we present an arm pin (called *dai-ikkyo*) against a *shomen* attack. The sequence to the right shows *dai-ikkyo omote* (basic pin to the front); the sequence to the left shows *dai-ikkyo ura* (basic pin to the back with a turn). Almost every Aikido technique has an *omote* and *ura* dimension. Training in pins from a seated position facilitates the learning of pins in a standing position.



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Marote-dori dai-ikkyo ura.

When your partner attempts a two-handed grab of your arm, immediately activate your hand-swords, make two big sweeping turns, and control your partner's arm with your hand-swords to pin him. The big turns employed here make this an *ura* technique.

Basic Pinning Techniques

The basic pinning technique is *dai-ikkyo*, which trains you how to break a partner's posture, make adjustments, and control his joints. Here we will present a *dai-ikkyo* variation, a *dai-nikyo* wrist turn pin, a *dai-sankyo* wrist twist pin, a *dai-yonkyo* pressure-point pin, and a *dai-gokyo* knife take-away technique. However, all five pins are essentially variations of *dai-ikkyo*.



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11

Kata-dori dai-nikyo suwari-waza ura

Seated technique. When your partner attempts to grab your shoulder with one hand, apply *atemi* to his face with your fist, and then use your hand-sword to control his arm while you turn in. Step in to his side while controlling his elbow and wrist with a *dai-nikyo* lock, and then pin him face down to the mat



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8

Tsuki dai-sankyo tachi-waza ura.

When your partner punches with his fist, enter to his side, while controlling the attacking arm with your front hand-sword. Sweep down with your hand-sword, control his arm with a *dai-sankyo* lock, and pin him face down.



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11

Ushiro ryotekubi-dori dai-yonkya omote.

When your partner attacks from the front and moves around to grab your wrists from behind, raise your hand-swords, slide behind him, and control him with a *dai-ikkyo* movement, then apply the *dai-yonkya* lock to his wrist, as illustrated in photos 10 and 11



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11

Shomen-uchi tanto-dori dai-gokyo suwari-waza.

From a seated position, your partner attacks with a *shomen* knife strike. Immediately enter and turn, control his elbow and wrist with the *dai-gokyo* lock, and pin him face down. Take the knife as illustrated in photos 7-11.



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8

Dai-ikkyo ura against a frontal sword attack

When your partner delivers a *shamen* sword strike, enter immediately while applying *atemi*, control his front arm with the *dai-ikkyo* lock, make a sweeping turn, then pin and disarm him. Photo 6 is a close-up of the entering movement with *atemi*. This is *dai-ikkyo* applied in a realistic situation.

Pinning Technique Applications

It is characteristic of Aikido to apply the same essential principles from the most fundamental techniques to the most advanced. Here we present more variations, but all the variations shown in this book represent only a fraction of the possibilities.



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8

Dai-nikyo against a knife attack.

When your partner attacks with a knife thrust, immediately enter to his side, apply a *dai-nikyo* lock to his elbow, and disarm him.



Kasa-dori dai-nikyo ura

when your partner attempts to make a crossover grab of your wrist, immediately control his wrist with the *dai-nikyo* lock applied with a wrapping motion. After bringing him to the ground, make a big turn and apply the *dai-nikyo* pin. Photo 9 shows a close-up of the pin.



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8

Dai-sankyo against a knife attack.

When your partner attacks with a knife thrust, immediately enter and turn while controlling the attacking arm with both your hands. Take hold of his arm with your front hand, step in as shown while applying the *dai-sankyo* lock, bring him down, and take away the knife



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9

Ushiro ryokata-dori dai-ikkyo.

When your partner attempts to grab your shoulders from behind, raise both hand-swords, step behind to his side, and apply the *dai-ikkyo* lock.



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9

Yokomen-uchi dai-gokyo tanto-dori.

When your partner attacks with a *yokomen* knife strike, neutralize the blow with a simultaneous hand-sword *atemi* to his face and a hand-sword block to his wrist, and then control him with the *dai-gokyo* lock and knife take away



THROW-AND-PIN TECHNIQUES: *KOTE-GAESHI*

Following throwing techniques, there are pinning techniques; in Aikido, there are also throws that are made from a joint lock, and finish with the partner being pinned face down. Such distinctive techniques are an extension of the throwing dimension. The most representative of such techniques is *kote-gaeshi*. Here we will present both basic and applied forms of *kote-gaeshi*.

Kote-gaeshi Basic Technique

Here is the basic *kote-gaeshi* technique:



Tsuki kote-gaeshi

When your partner attacks with a punch, immediately enter to his side and turn while controlling the attacking arm with your front hand; break his posture, and apply the *kote-gaeshi* lock to throw him. Pin him face down as shown. The technique is shown both photographed from the side and from above



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9

*Ushiro ryotekubi-dori
kote-gaeshi*

When your partner moves around from the front to grab your wrists from behind, raise your hand-eyes, and then bring them down in a position where the *kote-gaeshi* hold can be applied to your partner's arm; turn to the side of your partner, spin, and apply *kote-gaeshi* to throw and pin him.

***Kote-gaeshi* Applied Techniques**

Variations of *kote-gaeshi* can be applied front and back, right and left, and against armed attacks—*kote-gaeshi* can be used in all manner of situations. Here are two applied forms of *kote-gaeshi*:



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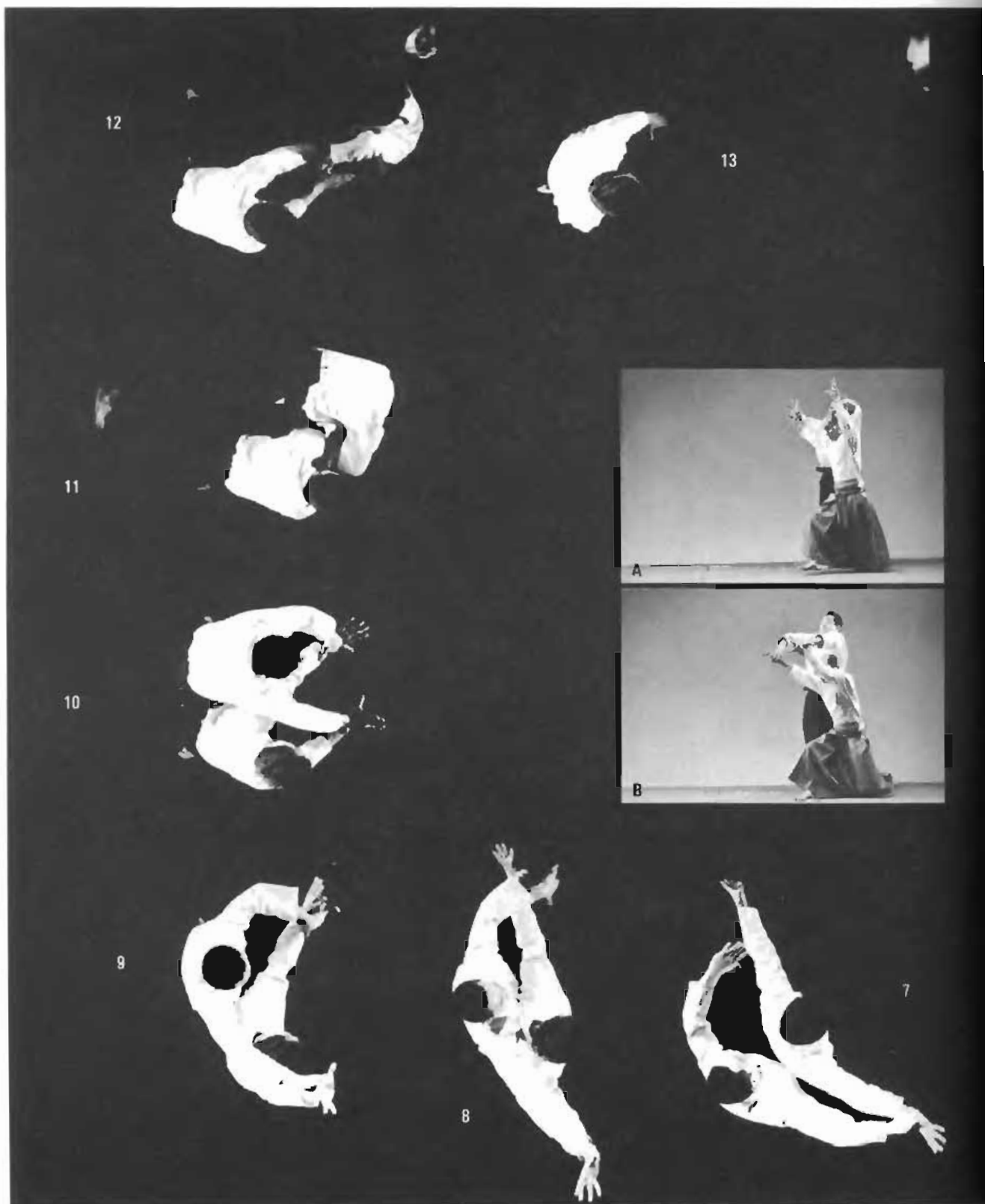
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12

Tanto-dori tsuki kote-gaeshi.

The movement here is the same as the basic *tsuki kote-gaeshi* technique; the only difference is the added element of a knife to the thrust. After applying *kote-gaeshi*, take the knife away. Photos 7-9 illustrate how to control the knife attack and prepare for the take away.



ADVANCED THROWING TECHNIQUES

Kokyu-nage is the ultimate Aikido technique, manifesting the perfect unity of body movement and breath-power. Here we present some of the great manifestations of breath-power in *aiki* throws:



Ushiro ryotekubi-dori kokyu-nage.

As soon as your partner attempts to grab both wrists from behind, raise both your hand-swords in conjunction with the attacking force and throw your partner to the front, as illustrated in the four photographs in the center. The outside section shows the entire sequence photographed from above.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Kokyu-nage.

When your partner attempts a two-handed grab of your arm, enter and pivot while using your hand-sword to guide him up and then down with breath-power, and throw him to the front. Movements 1-5 are shown from a different angle on the opposite page.



1



1



2



2



3



3



4



4



5



5



6

Kokyu-nage employing a big turn prior to throwing to the front with breath-power.



Hanmi-hantachi uchi-kaiten kokyū-nage.

As depicted in the photographs, when your partner attempts to grab your wrist, raise your hand-sword, slide into your partner's side, cut down with your hand-sword, and use his momentum to throw him to the front.



1



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6

Futari-kake kokyu-nage.

When held on both arms by two attackers, use your hand-swords to make a big circular motion from below, and then extend them out to throw your attackers to the front with breath-power.



1



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5

When facing multiple attackers.

Utilize the principles of entering and body turns to avoid the attacks of your partners. Note the subtle movements involved here



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4



5

Futari-kake tenkan kokyu-nage

When held on both arms by two attackers, raise your hands swords, and employ a *shiho-nage* movement to throw them simultaneously.



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2



3



4

Jo mawashi kokyu-nage

When your partner grabs the end of the *jo*, turn the *jo* in a circular motion and throw him as shown in the photographs.



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6

Katate-dori dai-ikkyo with a jo.

When your partner grabs the end of the *jo*, raise the *jo* up with a big turning motion, take one or two steps forward, and pin him.

ADVANCED APPLIED TECHNIQUES AGAINST ARMED ATTACKS

In Aikido, the basic principles remain the same against both unarmed and armed attacks. If one is centered, *irimi*, body movement, and *atemi* will spring forth spontaneously.



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5

Shiho-nage with a jo.

When your partner holds the end of the *jo*, raise the *jo* as shown in the photographs, make a *shiho-nage* turn, and throw him.



1



2



3



4



5

Katate-dori dai-nikyo with a jo.

When your partner grabs the end of the *jo*, turn the *jo* to the outside of his wrist and use it to apply the *dai-nikyo* lock, bring him down and apply the *dai-nikyo* pin with the *jo*.



1



4



2



5



3

Irimi-nage against a *jo* thrust.

As soon as your partner attacks with a thrust, enter to his side and throw him



1



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4



5



6

Against multiple armed attackers with swords and *jos*

When attacked from all sides, remain centered and deal with one attacker at a time, employing the *irimi* principle



The relationship between body and sword movement (including the yin/yang principle and timing/distance continuum).

(top) sword against *jo*; (bottom) sword against *jo*



The technique of yin/yang.

Within the structure of Aikido techniques, the hand-sword is yang, the *atemi* fist is yin



1



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5



The principle of Aikido swordplay.
Enter diagonally and turn to control your partner

Against a *jo* thrust.
Drop your body to the ground and make your partner fall over you. This technique demands perfect timing and distancing.



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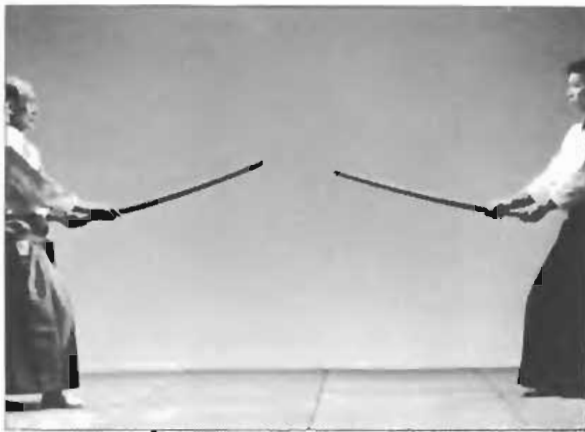


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The relationship between the body and the sword.
Against an armed attack the body moves the same, regardless of whether one wields a sword or not.



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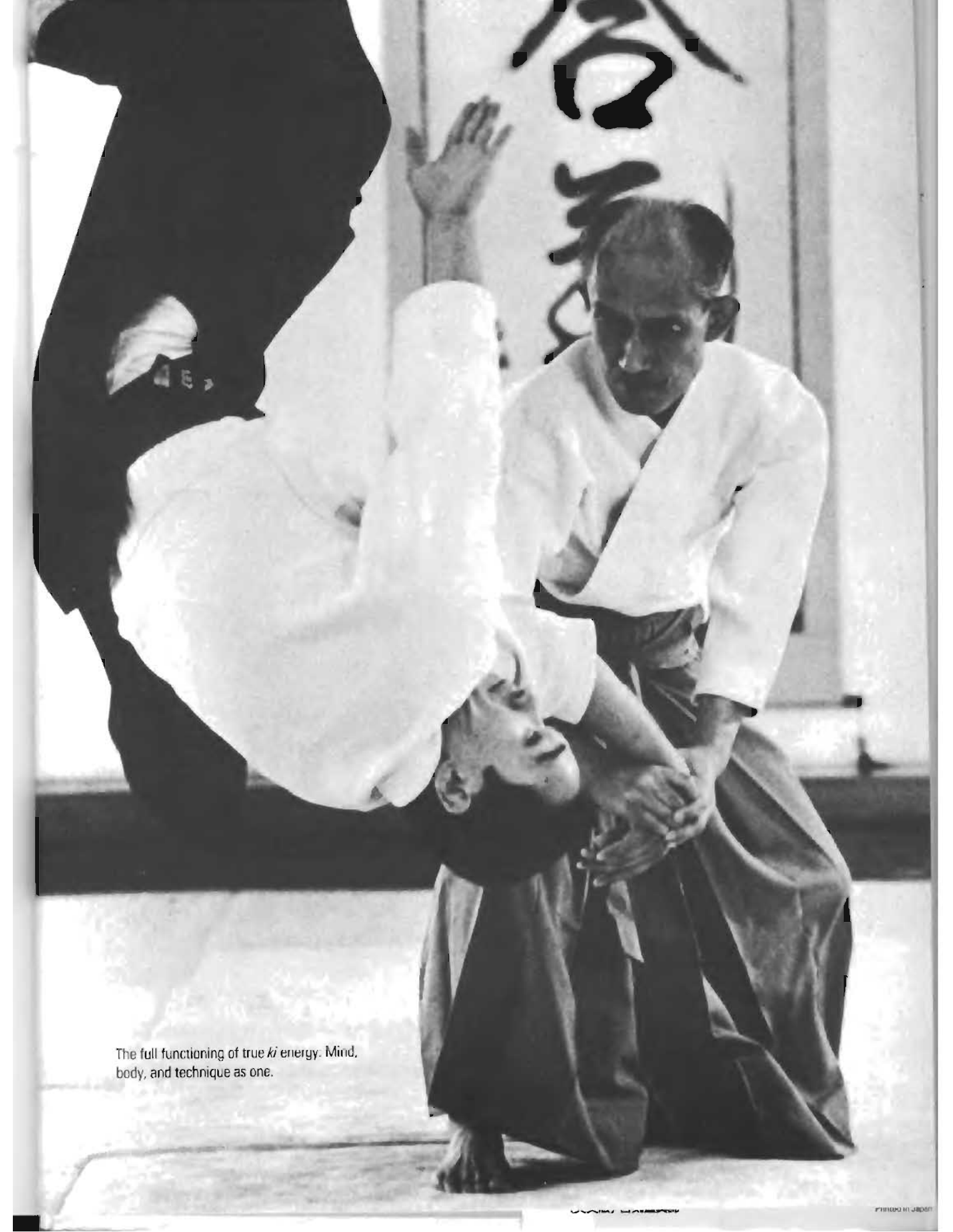
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8

Aikido swordplay.

In Aikido swordplay we rely on entering, body movement, and the flow of *ki* in the same manner as in the unarmed techniques. Above all, the sword must extend from, and move in harmony with, the body.



The full functioning of true *ki* energy. Mind, body, and technique as one.



Every April 29th, the date of the Founder Morihei Ueshiba's passing, a memorial ceremony and Aikido demonstration are held at the Aiki Shrine in Iwama. Here Kisshomaru Doshu is shown performing a technique during one such demonstration.



Kisshomaru Doshu practicing *ki* development exercises in the early morning light among the tall cedars on the grounds of the Aiki Shrine.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba was the second Aikido Doshu. He was born in 1921, the third son of Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido. He graduated from Waseda University in 1946, became master of the Aikido World Headquarters in 1948, and in 1967 was named chairman of the Aikikai Foundation, the principal Aikido organization in Japan and overseas.

His formal appointment as successor to his father occurred in 1969. He held several important posts related to the martial arts and was a trustee of the Nippon Budokan, the "hall of martial arts" located in central Tokyo. He was the author of the popular book *THE SPIRIT OF AIKIDO*, and the co-author of *BEST AIKIDO: The Fundamentals*. He died in 1999.

OTHER KODANSHA INTERNATIONAL BOOKS ON THE MARTIAL ARTS INCLUDE:

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Kisshomaru Ueshiba

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DEEP INSIGHT INTO BOTH THE SPIRITUAL AND TECHNICAL DIMENSIONS OF AIKIDO

Aikido is a modern Budo founded by Morihei Ueshiba after he had mastered many traditional Japanese martial arts and engaged in profound spiritual training. Morihei maintained, "In true Budo, there is no enemy. True Budo is the function of love. A martial art solely concerned with winning and losing is not true Budo. Victory is to thoroughly rid the mind of contention and conflict within ourselves."

This book was composed by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Morihei's son and successor as the Second Aikido Doshu (the person who embodies the spirit of Aikido as inherited from the founder and is its living symbol). Morihei himself taught Aikido in archaic, esoteric language, and limited his instruction to a select few. In order to introduce Aikido to the rest of the world, his son simplified its philosophy and arranged the techniques so that it would be possible for any serious trainee to practice this martial art. Aikido is now practiced in eighty-five foreign countries—a testament to Kisshomaru's achievement. The Aikido ideal of "refining one's mind and body to foster a spirit of harmony" has obviously struck a common chord among the peoples of the world.

This book is a compilation of Kisshomaru's writings on Aikido. It will provide the reader with deep insight into both the spiritual and technical dimensions of Aikido, and explain its central features—*ki* energy, breathing methods, posture, among others. The book is detailed with many dynamic photos, depicting the author, and his son Moriteru (present Doshu, and the author of *THE AIKIDO MASTER COURSE*), carrying out the techniques. It is a work that all Aikido practitioners, from beginner to master, will want to acquire.



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