Transmission, Inheritance, Emulation 6 by Peter Goldsbury

INTERLUDE

I: The General Impact of the Pacific War (World War II) on Aikido

Preliminaries

The previous column began discussion of the second major subject of this series: the handing on of his art by Morihei Ueshiba to his son Kisshomaru and the ways in which Kisshomaru handled this inheritance. Of course, Kisshomaru Ueshiba formally assumed the title of Doshu in 1969, the year his father died, but well before this he had been in effective control of the Aikikai. My own belief is that the handing over began as early as 1942, with O Sensei's retreat to Iwama, and was more or less completed by 1955, when Morihei Ueshiba had emerged from Iwama to visit Tokyo more frequently (where he held a major intensive training course for all his surviving deshi, of which more later). O Sensei had begun to enjoy his Guru status and had also begun to travel around Japan to visit *dojo* run by his older deshi.

Nevertheless, we should remember that the inheritance was initiated in the middle of World War II, when aikido also received its official name and also officially became a part of the Japanese war effort. Aikido is understood by many postwar practitioners as a martial art dedicated to world peace, but it was born in the midst of a major world conflict and the circumstances of the transition from Ueshiba Father to Ueshiba Son provide an opportunity to study the general effects of World War II on the early development of aikido. In Japan it is still considered somewhat taboo to investigate too closely the early development of a budo, a Martial Way steeped in a tradition that proclaims all the virtuous aspects of Japanese culture, but which was born in a period that illustrates all the darkest aspects of this same culture. So this column is something of a pioneering effort—and one that might ruffle a few feathers. The main focus will be on World War II as a watershed: an occasion for transition from the old order to a new order—with all the problems involved in such a transition. In this respect, aikido is a microcosm of Japan as a whole.

The reason for delicacy in discussing these questions will be apparent if we expand the preceding paragraph a little. It is an undisputed fact that Japan has had military governments for much of its later history: governments run by a military caste and according to a military culture that is regarded as unique. The accepted prewar term for this military culture is *Yamato-damashii*. The result was (1) a highly organized, vertically structured society, where everyone knew their place and followed an ideology centered on worship of the Emperor—and (2) another undisputed fact and a source of great national pride: that Japan was never invaded by a foreign power.

However, what happened in 1945 was actually rather worse than an invasion. With an invasion you are at least able to put up a fight, honest or otherwise, but in 1945 Japan had to surrender to the Allies and face an occupying army, basically benevolent, but exhibiting all the arrogant fervor of raw missionaries. Japan thus suffered a total repudiation of the very same cultural values that underpinned the martial arts. As one Japanese scholar put it, as late as 2002:

> *The Allied Occupation, despite its luster of reform and the sense of national renewal it instilled, remains a difficult period for many Japanese to come to grips with. It is the only time in our history when national sovereignty was compromised by another power. For eighty months following its surrender in 1945, Japan was at the mercy of an army of occupation, its people subject to foreign military control. Our external affairs were conducted by the American conqueror, not the Foreign Ministry. Japanese could not leave the country without special permission, which was extended only to the privileged few. Restrictions were imposed on internal migrations for the first three years, limiting freedom of movement and domicile. For four years American soldiers ran the nation's postal system, and in the early phase of the occupation, stringent information controls prohibited Japanese from communicating with the outside world via the mails, telephone and other media. Inside the country, too, personal letters, telecommunications, radio, press, films, photographs, song lyrics and phonograph records were monitored and censored systemically. Even news of events in the outside world was carefully filtered and managed. Criticism of Occupation policy was strictly forbidden. Moreover, Japanese were constrained, under threat of fine and imprisonment, to cooperate with their foreign overlords, when ordered to do so. This affront to national pride is difficult to forget and, for many, to forgive completely.* (Eiji Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, pp. xxv-xxvi.)

Eiji Takemae's remarks need to be seen in context. (i) There was the same 'arrogant fervor of raw missionaries' displayed by the Japanese forces themselves in their advance through South Asia, though their intentions might well have been as benevolent as those of the US occupying forces. (ii) There were also severe constraints on personal freedom in wartime Japan. Thus Takemae's remarks perhaps unintentionally emphasize the fact that the Japanese had to submit to the writ of a benevolent **foreign** occupation, not a repressive **domestic** military government. I think that there is a certain rub here, as Hamlet might have put it.

I stated above that aikido is a microcosm of Japan as a whole and the more I have been living here, the more I have come to realize the truth of this. There is a readiness to renounce the old ways of the militarists, along with a certain hankering for the certainties offered by these old ways. I have seen at first hand the struggles of Japan to be counted as a postwar democracy like all the others, while still retaining its allegedly

(Continued on page 2)

Article available online at: http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13786

unique spiritual essence. Thus, there is great reluctance either to teach anything in schools about the descent into the *kurai tanima* (dark valley) of militarism from 1930 till 1945, or to admit that the militarism was anything more than a defensive response to forces set in train by the Meiji Restoration.

I have firsthand experience of the tensions involved here, since I have often given lectures in Hiroshima about foreign reactions to the atomic bombing. I have consistently argued that Japan cannot have it both ways: one cannot avoid war responsibility with the *kurai tanima* argument and still claim that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was a war crime. The generally sympathetic response from the student body and the general public has been quite different from that of the city government, which believes I am subverting the general message of 'The Spirit of Hiroshima'. This phrase is a kind of codeword for a certain ideological position, namely, that (1) the atomic bombing was a unique event and that (2) Hiroshima was a passive and blameless victim and that (3) dwelling on Japan's militaristic past should not be allowed to obtrude on the general momentum for world peace.

Similarly, I believe that the present Doshu wants to preserve his grandfather's legacy, while at the same time adapting this legacy to the needs of the postwar modern era. In other words, Doshu wants at the same time to retain the essential Japanese uniqueness of aikido—and Japanese control of the art, while making it a general postwar multifunctional activity, generally dedicated to world peace and easily able to stand comparison with other martial arts & Olympic sports. I think the issue for Doshu and the Aikikai is to work out what this actually means in practice.

I myself was born in 1944, so I have no memories of World War II. I can recall my parents discussing German air raids, but my only memories of the effects of the war in the UK are of rationing and the ration books we all had. On the other hand, my adopted home is Hiroshima, the scene of one of the greatest attacks in world history, where the scars of the atomic bomb still remain—in the form of the Atomic Bomb Dome & the institutions for the severely injured survivors—and also in the memories of those who survived more or less unharmed. Many of my Japanese friends and acquaintances are older than I am. They still vividly remember the closing years of the war—and especially the bitterness of Japan's defeat. In the UK we had rationing, but at least we had food to eat: the Japanese survivors had almost nothing. There was also a general weariness and distrust of authority. Returning soldiers, for example, were welcomed back by their families, but tended to be shunned by the general population.

The General Cultural Background

The biographies of Morihei Ueshiba and his deshi do not generally give much information on the contemporary social context. Only Gozo Shioda in *Aikido Jinsei* cheerfully recounts his exploits in Asia after he graduated from Takushoku University and left the Kobukan Dojo. Much of this book has been translated into English and published by *Aikido Journal*. It makes riveting and intriguing reading, as one tries to fill in the gaps and work out what Shioda was really doing in East Asia during the war.

Morihei Ueshiba opened the Kobukan Dojo in 1931, which is the year that Japan invaded China. Throughout the 1930s Japan was progressively placed on a war footing and became a repressive police state, patrolled by the Kempeitai (military police), the Special Higher Police (the civilian version of the Kempeitai, known as the Thought Police), in addition to the usual variety, all of which later operated in close association with the *tonarigumi* (neighborhood associations) in which participation was compulsory. As the war progressed—and became more disadvantageous for Japan, troops were sent back to the main islands and the entire population was mobilized to resist an Allied invasion, which was regarded as likely to occur in Kyushu.

The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki prevented such an invasion, but the destruction wrought on these two cities paralleled the destruction wrought on most of Japan's other cities by conventional bombing, so much so that the occupying troops marveled at how Japan had been able to survive for so long. The bombing had been selective, however, and Japan's railway system was more or less intact. In addition, a military commission flew to Hiroshima a few days after the bombing in order to inspect the damage, and were able to land at an airfield about 4 km from the hypocenter.

The defeat of Japan set in place a total transformation of the country and even though the occupying forces had to rely on the Japanese to carry out the reforms through edict—and there were often obstructions and adaptations of these edicts, it is remarkable how completely these reforms took hold. In *Embracing Defeat*, John Dower tells the story more from the viewpoint of ordinary Japanese who accepted the reforms, whereas Eiji Takemae in *The Allied Occupation of Japan* tells it more from the viewpoint of the occupying forces who applied the reforms. It is as if the 'dark shadow' of militarism had suddenly been lifted from the country and this is how some Japanese like to regard the war and its aftermath. There is a danger, however, in allowing this way of thinking to obscure the undoubted fact that for the Japanese this was total war, in which everyone, soldiers and civilians alike, participated without exception—including Morihei Ueshiba and his students.

All traces of militarism and ultranationalism were ruthlessly swept away, including the apparatus of state Shinto; there was a purge of military, police, and educational figures; martial arts were no longer to be taught in schools; and organizations like the Dai Nippon Butokukai and its affiliates were proscribed. A land redistribution scheme was set in motion and the country was placed firmly on a democratic path with elections, including votes for women, trades unions and freedom of assembly. Dower and Takemae stress that the transformation, while uneven in some respects, was both dramatic and also lasting. Some people were left rather dazed that the old order had passed away so completely and it took some time for the effects to be felt.

The Wartime Activities of O Sensei and his Students

I think that the issues involving aikido here are (1) to what extent the martial arts were regarded as part of the war effort and (2) to what extent ordinary Japanese aikido practitioners supported the war.

(Continued on page 3)

Article available online at: http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13786

(1) The first question is answered easily enough. The political supporters of O Sensei at the Kobukan (which had become a legal foundation in 1940) wanted Aiki-budo to be under the umbrella of the Dai Nippon Butokukai and this was accepted in 1942, with the art being given the name *aikido*. There is no question but that aikido was fully part of the military culture of the time. Nor was there any conflict felt between the peace-loving New-Heaven-and-New-Earth message of Omoto and this military culture. Thomas Nadolski has shown that Omoto had far closer links with ultranationalism than the discourses of O Sensei might suggest.

(2) The second question can also be answered easily enough. One could not get anywhere near the Kobukan except by recommendation from two 'eminent persons' and so training there was seen as an elite activity. Later in the 1930s, Morihei Ueshiba taught at various military schools and so those of his students who were not *uchi-deshi* were soldiers, whose support for the war was not supposed to be in question. Thus there were no 'ordinary' Japanese practitioners and the martial art was not generally known. In any case it had a definite militaristic and right-wing flavor.

Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that accounts given by uchi-deshi differ. In Stanley Pranin's *Aikido Masters*, some deshi talk of the uchi-deshi teaching general members of the dojo—and being unable to do it very well, while Gozo Shioda in *Aikido Jinsei* alleges that the Kobukan did not need to accept general students. He is more concerned with the members of the military who trained at the dojo. However, it is clear that even the non-deshi could practice only by recommendation: the Kobukan was never open to all and sundry, like a typical postwar dojo.

Morihei Ueshiba joined the army in 1905 and went to Mongolia during the war with the Chinese. By 1930 he was 47 and opened the Kobukan one year later. He played no military role in the war at all and, until he retired to Iwama from 1942 onwards, his only direct contribution to the war was his instruction of aikido at various military schools.

However, Ueshiba's male uchi-deshi were progressively enlisted into the Japanese armed forces and they fought in the war. Presumably, they put what they had been taught in the dojo, as evidenced by the 1933 *Budo Renshu* and the 1938 *Budo* manuals, to practical use. The same tensions presented themselves here as had presented themselves to the earlier samurai; they had been trained at the Kobukan to kill people and were taught by their military training to have no qualms about doing so.

I think there are some personal horror stories here that have never been told. Rinjiro Shirata, for example, fought in Burma and when he was repatriated, took a job and looked after his family. He appears to have abandoned aikido training for nearly 20 years, until he was persuaded to come out of 'retirement' by Morihei and Kisshomaru Ueshiba and some aikido practitioners in the Tohoku region. There is a poignant story recorded by Meik Skoss of Shirata Sensei having a sword permanently mounted, so that it would never (again?) have to be used.

Kenji Tomiki and Shigenobu Okumura were interned by the Soviets and spent some years in POW camps before being repatriated. I have heard from Okumura Sensei directly about the struggle to survive in those camps—and the people who never came back.

O Sensei as a War Criminal

The principal evidence for this from the world of aikido is to be found in *Aikido Jinsei* by Gozo Shioda. The statement appears on p. 166, in a section recounting his meeting with O Sensei in Iwama in Showa 21 (1946). For those who can read Japanese, here is the text:

> *Sensei wa touji Ibaragi-ken no Iwama ni insei shi, moppara noukou ni shitashinde oraremashita. Senji-chuu Sensei wa Kyoto no Butokukai no koumon wo sarete ita kankei ue,* ***MacArthur no jirei ni yori G-go wo tekiyou sarete****, koushoku tsuihou ni nari, Zaidan Houjin Aikikai mo kaisan no ukime atte oraremashita. Sono tame Aiki-en to iu namae no nouen wo hiraite mainichi noukou wo sareru katawara, doukou no mono wo atsume aikidou wo shidou sarete imashita.*

A similar statement can be found in an interview with Gozo Shioda conducted by Stanley Pranin. The latest version of this interview can be found on pp. 185-186 of Vol I of *Morihei Ueshiba to Aikido*, published in 2006. Here is an English translation:

> Pranin: *After the war O Sensei also had a very difficult time.*
>
> Shioda: *The fact that Ueshiba Sensei was an adviser to the Butokukai in Kyoto was not good.* ***Sensei was implicated in Class G war crimes / as a Class G war criminal****. Ueshiba Sensei's foundation was cancelled and his activities were forbidden. Thus Sensei confined himself in Iwama and since he could no longer practice budo, he created the Aiki-Farm and engaged in farming. It was a precarious existence.*

There has been some discussion on the Internet about such war crimes and questions raised about the truth of Shioda's statements. First, a description of Class G 'war crimes' is in order.

The source is SCAPIN (Supreme Commander Allied Powers Index) 550, of January 4, 1946, which ordered the removal and exclusion from public office of Japan's wartime leaders. Broad categories delineated those who were to be purged. (A) Indicted war criminals; (B) All career military officers; (C) Leaders of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association and affiliated organizations; (D) Leaders and influential members of ultranationalist, secret and terrorist organizations; (E) Executives of companies involved in Japanese expansion; (F) Governors of occupied territories; (G) Initially broadly based and unspecified "additional militarists and ultranationalists".

(Continued on page 4)

Article available online at: http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13786

The above classification can be found in Hans Baerwald's "The Occupation of Japan as an Exercise in 'Regime Change': Reflections after Fifty Years by a Participant", *JPRI* (Japan Policy Research Institute) *Occasional Papers* 29, p. 3. Baerwold adds the rueful comment that:

> *Moreover, all SCAP staff sections had to rely on their counterparts in the Japanese bureaucracy for basic data and assistance in drafting reforms. This necessity allowed the Japanese officials to protect themselves and promote their own agenda by influencing SCAP officials. It was an early variant of using* gaiatsu *(foreign pressure) to their own advantage. I was an unwitting participant in the game while drafting purge criteria involving members of the Dai Nippon Butokukai, the Great Japan Military Virtue Society.*

It is interesting that Baerwold was involved in drafting purge criteria for the Dai Nippon Butokukai, which included aikido from 1942 onwards. The categories listed in SCAPIN 550 need to be read in conjunction with SCAPIN 548, which added the Dai Nippon Butokukai, with all its affiliated organizations, to the list of organizations proscribed by SCAP.

Shioda's allegations are strongly denied by Kisshomaru Ueshiba on pp. 83-84 of *Aikido Ichiro*. Kisshomaru also quotes the relevant passage from *Aikido Jinsei* (quoted in Japanese above) and rebuts the allegations one by one. Thus, O Sensei was not an adviser to the Butokukai during the war; he was not subject to any banning order from SCAP; and the Aikikai was never proscribed.

I have not found any evidence outside aikido to support Gozo Shioda's statements, but it is possible that Ueshiba is listed somewhere in the SCAP archives. However, the SCAP order issued in January 1946 initiated a search process that took a year to complete and the actual purge orders were not issued until 1947, when Shioda had already visited O Sensei in Iwama (in July 1946: see the interview, above). Nevertheless, given the influential people he knew, including a number of ultranationalist military officers who also trained at the Kobukan Dojo in the 1930s, it is possible that Shioda had such information and that O Sensei also knew he was under suspicion. However, even if he had come to the attention of SCAP, the only content of O Sensei's 'criminal' activity is that he practiced a Japanese martial art. This might explain why he kept quiet in Iwama at least until around 1950, when the purge orders were lifted. SCAP had already turned its attention to the Korean War and liberated all the war criminals. Moreover, it was as early as 1948 that the Zaidan Houjin Aikikai, with its headquarters in Iwama, was approved by the Japanese education ministry as the postwar version of the Zaidan Houjin Kobukai. This appears to have been done by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, with the support of people like Kinya Fujita and Katsuzo Nishi, but appears to have been done very quietly, to avoid annoying SCAP.
(NOTE. I have benefited very much by a recent discussion about Class G war criminals on the *Aikido Journal* website and from private correspondence with some of the participants in this discussion.)

Beginnings of A New Beginning

That the defeat left Japan devastated is an understatement. Kisshomaru Ueshiba begins *Aikido Ichiro* by discussing the Emperor's surrender broadcast on August 15, 1945. After hearing the broadcast he went with a friend to the Imperial Palace and saw people sitting in seiza and weeping. Later in the same chapter (pp. 22-23), he writes about the recreated aikido he intended to promote. The discussion reads like a manifesto and is worth paraphrasing at some length.

The exercise of military power based on militarism & nationalism has been shown to be a mistake, as is evidenced by our present situation. Certainly there is much of Japanese culture that we can be proud of, but now the war has ended, the estimation of this has fallen to zero.

However, there is one part of this culture to which I myself am directly connected: the aikido that my own father has created. Even though I have not progressed so far in aikido, I believed that aikido was an excellent part of this culture: not merely the waza, but especially the spiritual aspects of this budo. I wanted some day to take this aikido to America and Europe and say: "Look! There is something good here, even from Japan. It is a budo without fighting and with a positive philosophy towards the opponent. If you are interested, I will teach you. If not, please teach me what you have that is good."

I thought that defeated Japan had something valuable to offer the nations that had won the war and that emphasizing what was valuable would help to achieve Japan's reconstruction and rebirth. Especially now, in the present circumstances, aikido has a role to play in Japan's reconstruction. In fact, it is because of its spiritual aspects that aikido should play such a role.

In particular, I want to introduce & spread aikido as a central part of daily living to the new generation who will play a role in Japan's reconstruction. If there were no such emphasis on the spirit, concepts and waza of aikido as eschewing fighting and seeking peace, then I would not want to teach it.

Doshu adds that he was 25 at this point, the year the war ended. What is remarkable is that Kisshomaru spent the rest of his life in carrying out this manifesto, almost to the letter, and we should ponder deeply on the revolution in aikido that he achieved by this, both the positive aspects and the negative aspects (for there were these, also). I think this is the one major effect of the World War II on aikido: a popularization and democratization of the art that is a complete change from its prewar situation. I intend to explore the implications of this change in future columns.

Further Reading

The effects of the war are graphically described in the autobiography of Kisshomaru Ueshiba, entitled *Aikido Ichiro*, but Kisshomaru's early activities need to be supplemented by the evidence of his father's wartime activities, especially his trips to Mongolia, his instruction at various military schools and his activities in Manchuria. More importantly,

(Continued on page 5)

Article available online at: http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13786

the development of aikido needs to be seen in a more general cultural context. For this general cultural context, several works written in English are indispensable. First, there is a collection of primary sources entitled *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. The second edition is preferable to the first and comes in two volumes. *Volume One* covers 'the earliest times' till 1600 and the vastly expanded *Volume Two* continues until 2000. Chapters 46, 47 and 48 are most immediately relevant to the period under discussion in this column, but study of the entire second volume (of nearly 1,400 pages) will provide a very clear general cultural context to the rise of prewar budo and Japan's wartime endeavors. (Details: *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Second Edition, Volume Two*, Compiled by Wm. Theodore de Barry, Carol Gluck and Arthur E Tiedemann, Columbia University Press, 2005.)

There are many secondary works in English and a good one to start with would be a collection of essays entitled, *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, edited by Carol Gluck and Stephen R Graubard. A larger work dealing with the US Occupation directly has been written by a Japanese author named Eiji Takemae. The Japanese original was written in 1983, but an English translation was published in 2002, with the title, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*. This has a preface by John Dower, who himself has written many books about the Pacific War and its aftermath. In chronological order these are: *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience 1878-1954* (1978), *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986), *Japan in War and Peace* (1993), *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (1999). Stanley Pranin's two articles about the Kobukan Dojo are also indispensable, as are his interviews with people like Rinjiro Shirata and Gozo Shioda. Shioda wrote a biography, *Aikido Jinsei*, which can profitably be compared with Kisshomaru Ueshiba's mentioned above (both, unfortunately, in Japanese). While at the Kobukan Dojo, Morihei Ueshiba also taught at the Nakano spy school and other military schools and Stephen C Mercado has written a history of this school. *Shadow Warriors of Nakano: A History of the Imperial Japanese Army's Elite Intelligence School* (2002) provides some general background, though Ueshiba is not mentioned at all. Ueshiba is also mentioned only once in Thomas Nadolski's doctoral thesis, *The Socio-Political Background of the 1921 and 1935 Omoto Suppressions in Japan*, which discusses the political leanings of Omoto-kyo. This can be supplemented by the source materials given in Chapter 48 of *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, *Volume Two*, cited above.

Peter Goldsbury (b. 28 April 1944). Aikido 6th dan Aikikai, Professor at Hiroshima University, teaching philosophy and comparative culture. B. in UK. Began aikido as a student and practiced at various dojo. Became a student of Mitsunari Kanai at the New England Aikikai in 1973. After moving back to the UK in 1975, trained in the Ryushinkan Dojo under Minoru Kanetsuka. Also trained with K Chiba on his frequent visits to the UK. Moved to Hiroshima, Japan, in 1980 and continued training with the resident Shihan, Mazakazu Kitahira, 7th dan Also trained regularly with Seigo Yamaguchi, Hiroshi Tada, Sadateru Arikawa and Masatake Fujita, both in Hiroshima and at the Aikikai Hombu. Was elected Chairman of the IAF in 1998. With two German colleagues, opened a small dojo in Higashi-Hiroshima City in 2001. Instructed at Aiki Expo 2002 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Article available online at: http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13786