

Aikidosphere

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Weapons Training in Aikido

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I would like to express my views on weapons training in Aikido in terms of its relationship to the body art. I believe that weapons training in Aikido is closely related to body arts training. When I analyze the body movements, I see a lot of common movements between the body art and weapons movements. I am convinced that the Aikido movements are derived from the sword movements. First of all, when we hold a sword (or bokken), we tighten our little fingers, bring our elbows close to the body so that the under-arms contact the body, and keep our elbows and shoulders relaxed. When we open our hands after holding the sword position, the hand immediately becomes shuto (open-hand sword).

This use of the hand is important in Aikido. The tips of the fingers can be considered to be the tip of a sword. The tip must be alive (not dull). In contrast when we grab our partner in body art, we must grab them as we would hold the sword, that is, by using the little fingers. We are often told to extend our ki through our fingertips. The same can be said with bokken or jyo. The ki must flow through the tip of weapons. Finger tips and the tips of weapons are the gateway of the power.

In Japan, especially when we train in martial arts, we are told to cut with the hip, hold with the hip, and walk with the hip. The hip is the center of the body. The abdomen has to be expanded and the hip bone must be kept straight. When holding the sword in chudan kamae, you hold the sword with your hands; however, the weight of the sword must be transferred to and felt by the abdomen and hip bone. The sword must be connected to your hip. Knees must be relaxed (unlocked), and you must move your feet in suriashi (sliding/gliding) fashion. Suriashi can best be embodied by working with weapons. Although it is easy to forget the footwork during body art training, weapons training reminds us of the importance of suriashi.

In some ways, weapons training transfers directly to the body art training. A vertical cut with the sword transfers directly to shomenuchi with empty hand. The kesa cut becomes yokomenuchi. The body movements and footwork of bokken and jyo are the same as those of the body art. The vigorousness of the training can also be understood by the weapons training. I am still studying weapons. I train myself so that I can extend my power (which is concentrated within my body), and express the power at the tip of my weapon. I believe that when we have the feeling that bokken or jyo becomes part of our body, then we can use our hands as bokken or jyo.

