

Professional paper

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VARIOUS AIKIDO AND REAL AIKIDO TECHNIQUES

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Abstract: This paper aims to point out the similarities and differences between the technical characteristics of various techniques in aikido i.e. its traditional form and the real aikido, a style developed from the traditional aikido, jiu jitsu and some other martial arts. The paper particularly focuses on techniques „iriminage“ and „irimitenkan kaiten“. The technique „iriminage“ (neck level throw) is used as a response to „shomenuchi“ (onward strike to top of head). In addition to the mentioned technique, which features certain differences in two previously mentioned martial arts, the paper also provides a detailed description of the movement technique „irimitenkan kaiten“ (step, turn, small turn). Minor differences in terms of technical characteristics in aikido and real aikido can also be found in the movement technique in „irimitenkan kaiten“. This, among other things, represents an irrefutable proof when it comes to the root beginnings of real aikido.

Keywords: *traditional aikido, real aikido, technique, movement, iriminage, irimitenkan, step, turn, small turn*

INTRODUCTION

Aikido is one of the modern Japanese martial arts classified into the group Gendai Budo skills (Gendai Budo – „new martial arts“). It is based on the old schools of ju jutsu and kenjutsu. The schools of martial arts which served as the foundation for aikido are the ones in which the founder of

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aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, acquired his fighting experience. These included the following schools: Daito ryu aiki ju jutsu (teacher: Sokaku Takeda), Kito ryu ju jutsu (teacher: Tokusaburo Tozava), Yagyu Shinkage ryu (teacher: Masakatsu Nakai), Judo (teacher: Kijoichi Takagi) (Stevens, 1985).

The common feature of all mentioned schools, except for judo, was a rather aggressive and partial realization of techniques. The so called „interrupting“ in techniques was one of the major characteristics of these traditional schools. This particular method of work impeded the dynamics of carrying out all techniques. Such method of work was characteristic and deep-rooted across Japan, and it had its foundation in the old principles of attack.

The ways of carrying out an attack changed over time, while schools that taught defensive techniques maintained the previously established method. Such method of work seemed rather impeding and useless to Ueshiba. Striving towards the realization dynamics, Ueshiba systematized and shaped previously acquired knowledge in order to start creating his own personal style initially called aikibudo, and later the name was changed into aikido. The basis of aikido was derived from the principles of the school of swordsmanship Yagyu ryu.

The name aikido was derived from three Japanese words:

- AI – harmony
- KI – energy
- DO – way

As a compound it means „the way of harmonizing energy“ (Milenković, 2007).

The exact date when aikido was founded remains unknown, although some authors mention 1920 as the year of its foundation (Milenković, 2007).

The first registered organization for the promotion of aikido was founded in 1932 in Tokio and was named Budo Senyokai. The main training hall was named Kobukan. This was followed by the reorganization and renaming into the Kobukai foundation in 1940, and soon after it was renamed again into the Aikikai foundation. This name remained in use until this very day. In 1976, the International Aikido Federation – IAF was founded in order to promote aikido on global level. It is estimated that today there are more than one million practitioners training aikido across the globe, and if we add other aikido styles and skills derived from aikido, the number will exceed a couple of millions (Raposa, 2003).

Real aikido represents a new branch, i.e. style of aikido established by Master Ljubomir Vračarević in the early 1990s.

In the beginning, real aikido used the terminology and nomenclature of the techniques from the original aikido, and later the terminology and

nomenclature were translated to the Serbian language and other local languages of the countries where practicing of real aikido was introduced.

The technical part of real aikido was at the beginning rather similar to Yoshinkan aikido school (Gozo Shioda aikido school). Also, in the early days, the training included the skills of the swordsmanship school, characteristic for aikido as its principles served as the foundation of aikido. Later on, as the time passed, the school of swordsmanship has been excluded from the program of real aikido, and the technical part has become more similar to the ju jutsu skill.

With time, the differences between the real aikido and aikido grew bigger, and in this way real aikido shifted from being a style to becoming a completely new branch i.e. a new martial art, recognizable by its realization of self-defensive techniques and new visual characteristics. "Real aikido has found its place in the special training process of military and police members, bodyguards, as well as recreational population regardless of their age." (Milosavljević et al., 2013, p. 31).

Real aikido is practiced in blue kimonos which have become the trademark of this new style. A detail worth mentioning in the realization of the combination of techniques in real aikido is the use of the strike technique. "In the case of real aikido, a strike is a means for inflicting acute pain immediately before realizing the lever technique" (Milosavljević et al., 2014a, p. 11). This strike aims at making the attacker temporarily unable to provide resistance while the next technique is implemented on him, which is most often the lever.

In view of technical characteristics, real aikido eliminates big movements from specific techniques and reduces techniques to shorter movements and as fast as possible neutralization with mandatory final control over the attacker at the end of each technique. In real aikido, the control over attacker is most often achieved by performing lever techniques so as to control the attacker by means of controlled acute pain" (Matavulj et al., 2014b, p. 40). Full final control over the attacker should be achieved upon the realization of each combination of techniques over the attacker, and lever is chosen as a means for achieving this goal precisely because it enables simple controlling of the intensity of pain inflicted upon the attacker.

In 1993, the World Center of Real Aikido was founded in Belgrade which aims at unifying and providing guidelines for the activities of clubs in the country and abroad.

One of the main directions and important characteristics of real aikido is also a clearly defined differentiation in view of the selection of taught techniques, whereas the age structure of the practitioners is taken as a criterion for classification. In view of the above, the program was set up under the name Gain Mastership Skills through Play. "In real aikido,

and particularly in the mentioned program Gain Mastership Skills through Play, games are an extremely important part of the process of training. Above all, they develop basic motor and functional abilities crucial for real aikido, but they also fortify social relations between the group members.” (Matavulj et al., 2014a, p. 20). In case of real aikido, it is important to underline the fact that a majority of practitioners are children of various age.

1. THE DESCRIPTION OF TECHNIQUE AND ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES IN CARRYING OUT “IRIMINAGE” TECHNIQUE AS A RESPONSE TO “SHOMENUCHI” ATTACK

The attack shomenuchi is a straight-line strike to the top of the head performed by the extended arm or an arm in semiflexion and edge of the open hand. This attack in aikido originated from the sword strike which is performed in the same manner in case when the attacker does not have a sword. It can be performed in forward lunge (tsugi ashi) or reverse lunge (fumi komi).

The technique iriminage (irimi= enter; nage=throw) is translated as an entering throw (Arus, 2012).

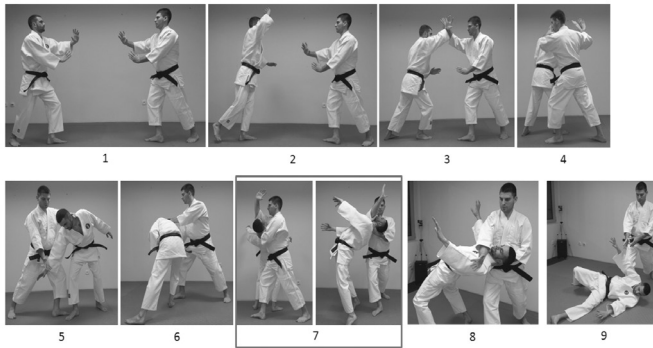
The key feature of this technique is not only entering, as suggested by the name, but in throwing the attacker off balance by applying „lever“ on the neck. This particular name has become the name of the iriminage technique in real aikido: neck lever and throw.

1.1 The description of the aikido technique

The person that performs technique (tori), i.e. the defender in this case, is standing in the starting position with the right leg forward (migi hanmi), and the attacker (uke) is standing in the left starting position (hidari hanmi).

The attack shomenuchi (hand strike from above) starts by the reverse lunge of the attacker, who is using his right leg in this case, and the right hand strike. Tori performs a rather small forward lunge (tsugi ashi) in order to shorten the distance between himself and the attacker and uses his forward arm to redirect the attack that was aimed directly at his head. The arm that is removing and redirecting the attack is positioned diagonally in the position of a sword held above the head. He then enters by the leg from the reverse lunge behind the partner and uses his back hand (left) to take the partner by the neck and place the head on the shoulder of the right arm. Picture 1 shows the complete Iriminage technique in phases.

Picture 1. *The realization of Iriminage technique (in phases)*



By the next turn (backwards) around the forward leg (tenkan), the left one in this case, Tori leads his partner to follow him walking in a circle and pushes him back downwards and sideways in order to upset Uke's balance. After the turn, Tori performs a „static“ turn on his feet (kaiten) not lifting the feet from the ground. In the course of performing this turn, the arm on whose shoulder is positioned Uke's head (right arm) is being positioned under the Uke's neck, and by raising it above his head Tori reaches the position similar to holding a sword (Jodan no kamae). The arm raising results in raising i.e. extension of Uke's head in atlanto-occipital joint, followed by destabilization and raised centre of gravity. The throw itself is performed by a forward lunge (tsugi ashi,) while ensuring that the arm which was outstretched reaches unextended position by a move similar to the sword cutting movement. As a consequence of the throw, Uke falls backwards (ushiro ukemi) and remains safe.

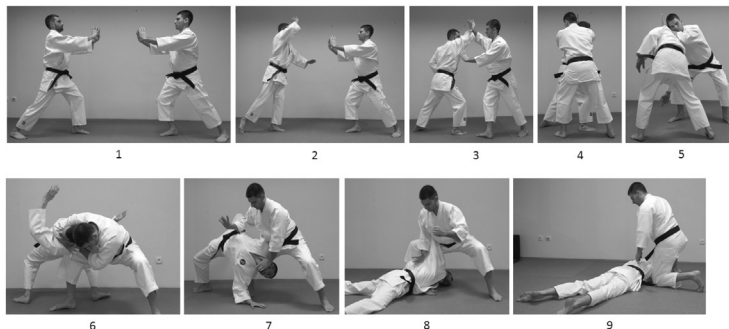
1.2 The description of the real aikido technique

The person that performs the technique (tori), i.e. the defender in this case, is standing in the starting position with the right leg forward (migi hanmi), and the attacker (uke) is standing in the left starting position (hidari hanmi).

The attack shomenuchi (hand strike from above) starts by the reverse lunge of the attacker, who is using his right leg in this case, and the right hand strike. Tori performs a rather small forward lunge (tsugi ashi) in order to shorten the distance between himself and the attacker and uses his forward arm to redirect the attack that was aimed directly at his head. The arm that is removing and redirecting the attack is positioned diagonally in the position of a sword held above the head. He then enters by the leg from the reverse lunge behind the partner and uses his back hand (left) to take the partner by the

neck and place the head on the shoulder of the right arm. Picture 2 shows the complete technique of Defence against a hand strike from above (in phases).

Picture 2. *The realization of the technique Defence against a hand strike from above (in phases)*



Tori places his left hand on the cheek and ear of the Uke, pressing his forearm against the Uke's back (alongside the spine), and using his right arm to hold the Uke's head in the position of flexion and „lock“ it. He then positions his head next to the Uke's head ensuring that he is protected from the possible head strike. By performing the next turn (backwards) around the forward leg (tenkan), the left one in this case, Tori leads his partner to follow him walking in circle and, by using the fixed forearm, pushes his spine downwards. After the turn, Tori performs a „static“ turn on his feet (kaiten) not lifting the feet from the ground. In the course of this turn, by performing the simultaneous pressing of Uke's spine by the forearm and the interior rotation of the right arm shoulder joint, Tori upset Uke's balance and forces him into a very awkward position in which Uke's line of gravity falls outside the surface of his support. Tori lowers his posture and positions Uke's shoulder blade onto his right lower leg, ensuring that his head is in the „locked“ position. In the course of throwing Uke, Tori continues with the interior rotation of his right arm shoulder joint, while using his left hand to throw Uke by pushing his head between his legs, facing down. In this throw, Uke's position changes from supine to prone and he is falling over Tori's upper leg. When Uke ends up on the floor, Tori performs kaiten and places the closer knee onto the Uke's shoulder in order to fix it.

1.3 The analysis of differences in carrying out technique „iriminare“ as a response to „shomenuchi“ attack

As shown in the previous chapter and the above pictures, the first phases in realization of technique iriminage (aikido; former name in the program for obtaining ranks in real aikido until 1993) i.e. neck lever throw (real aikido;

nomenclature in the new program for obtaining ranks in real aikido from 2007) are very similar. The first difference in realization of the technique is when Uke is held by the neck (in aikido) vs. by the cheek and ear (in real aikido). Movements in the process of leading Uke are the same (tenkan), as well as the movements in the course of technique (irimitenkan) and kaiten (tenkai). The only difference in movement is that at the end of the technique in aikido, there is a small forward lunge (tsugi ashi). Also, the closing of the techniques differs. In aikido, the technique finishes by a throw, whereas in real aikido, there is a final control, characteristic for all real aikido techniques.

2. THE DESCRIPTION OF TECHNIQUE AND ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES IN THE REALIZATION OF MOVEMENT “IRIMITENKAN KAITEN” (STEP, TURN, SMALL TURN)

Acknowledging the differences in view of technical details in the realization of previously described techniques, it must be taken into account that the founder of the real aikido style has taken over a number of techniques from „traditional“ aikido, hence it is inevitable to notice identical features (with minor differences) in some techniques' realization. One of the examples is the movement technique “irimitenkan kaiten” called “step, turn, small turn” in real aikido.

The exerciser is in the basic left posture. The exerciser makes a semi-circular move forward by 180 degrees with his right leg, setting it in front of his left leg, which represents the step. Then, he makes a semi-circular move with his left leg by drawing the leg toward his back by 180 degrees, which corresponds to the part of the movement called turn. In the end, he rotates around his axis by 180 degrees, whereby the rotation axis is on the exerciser's heel, which corresponds to the movement part called small turn. Previously described technique of realizing the movement „step, turn, small turn“ in real aikido is rather similar to the realization of the technique „irimitenkan kaiten” in aikido. Comparing the described technique of realizing the movement in real aikido with the one in traditional aikido, it can be noted that it is realized in almost identical manner, with the difference that at the beginning of the movement, the exerciser does not use a semi-circle forward 180 degrees but a direct step forward by the leg that was previously behind, also the final rotation in aikido is performed on toes and in real aikido it is performed on heels. There are movement structures featuring minimal differences in traditional and real aikido. A good example of this is jiu waza. „Avoiding attack by more than one attackers or jiu waza is one of the most complex movement structures taught in real aikido“ (Milosavljević et al., 2014b, p. 61).

CONCLUSION

Today, 96 years after the establishment of aikido and 23 years after the foundation of the World Centre of Real Aikido, we can perceive the differentiating tendency between the new style and the old school of aikido. In addition to the technical parts which are becoming increasingly different followed by the nomenclature and systematization of techniques, the new branch is characterised also by different exercising equipment and blue kimono. From technical aspects, the differences are apparent as these two branches i.e. these two skills are now based on different principles.

Aikido, as a skill developed from the swordsmanship school principle, maintained the method of work based on using the sword in the technique *iriminage* against the attack *shomenuchi*. The technique *iriminage* in its traditional form may be realized successfully only if performed faster and provided that Uke carried out the attack in a decisive manner. Should the attack be slower, and the technique realized with a slight delay there is a possibility that Uke performs a counterattack.

The technique realized in this manner is very fast and efficient, and especially in conditions when Tori is exposed to an attack of more than one attacker (*Jiu Waza*). Another advantage of this technique is less energy expenditure, i.e. economic movements as there are no changes of the centre of gravity. The only drawback of this technique is the lack of final control over the attacker.

In real aikido, after eliminating the swordsmanship principles, the technique has been further modified. The attention was brought to the issue of a possible head attack if Uke's head is not adequately fixed. Also, it was considered whether Uke, in case of slower movements, may rest on his lower arm and prevent the technique realization. For this reason, placing the arm along Uke's back by using the forearm assists in the technique realization by pressing the elbow to the middle of the spine thus forcing Uke to continue moving forward. As the body moves forward, the arm under the head makes counter pressure by internal rotation of shoulder joint. At the end, as in all other real aikido techniques, final control has been introduced based on the assumption that should Uke remain free, he may get a new chance to attack.

The technique realized as described above is rather efficient if the attack is not too fast, if Uke's attack is premeditated and if there are no other attackers. The drawback of this technique is the lack of efficiency if Tori is exposed to more than one attacker (*Jiu Waza*) and large energy expenditure in realization.