

Professional paper

ELEMENTS OF AIKIDO APPLICABLE IN SELF-DEFENSE

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Srdan Milosavljević¹

College of Sports and Health, Belgrade, Serbia

Aleksandar Ivanovski

College of Sports and Health, Belgrade, Serbia

Predrag Lazarević

College of Sports and Health, Belgrade, Serbia

Lazar Živković

Vocational Sports Coach (Aikido)

College of Sports and Health, Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract: This paper points to the potential implementation of certain elements of aikido, especially levers, in self-defence. The specifics of certain elements of aikido enable their implementation in self-defence. Proper execution of aikido elements in technical terms is an important prerequisite for their effectiveness in self-defence. Good mastering when it comes to performing individual aikido elements, is necessary in order for them to be qualitatively connected into a meaningful whole, that is, a combination that will represent an adequate response in a particular problem situation. For that reason, insisting on the best possible execution of each individual element of aikido certainly leads to an increase in the chance for its efficient and purposeful implementation in self-defence.

Keywords: *aikido, self-defence, techniques, levers, attack, grab*

¹ ✉ srdjan.milosavljevic@vss.edu.rs

INTRODUCTION

Fighting dates back to the beginnings of the human kind. Throughout its history, man was existentially attached to fighting. Fighting initially came down to defence from animals, fight for life space and survival. First and foremost, due to self-preservation, man was forced to perfect their fighting skills. The earliest forms of fighting movements were: grabbing by the neck, biting, scratching, strikes with wide swings... Later on, the upward standing position and hand development are increasingly used for grabs and locks. Throughout centuries, in that fight man adapted their natural moves to their purpose, which is how various fighting techniques emerged: lever, throw, strike... In this way, the evolution of human experience brought about the creation of martial art forms. Precisely those martial art forms are marked by the environments in which they emerged, and they are passed on from generation to generation (Ćirković et al., 2010). As mentioned above, the environment in which a martial art concept was systematized is undoubtedly an influential factor, which can be seen in aikido. Traditional aikido belongs to younger martial arts, as it emerged between two World Wars, at a time of poverty, insecurity and death. As such, its path to this day was filled with obstacles and uncertainty. It was founded by Morihei Ueshiba. Its name is composed of three syllables: AI (harmony), KI (energy, spirit, mind) and DO (path). Aikido belongs to BUDO arts. In Japanese, “do” means path. It is not just about learning the technique, let alone about sports competition. Budo includes arts such as kendo, judo, aikido, and kyudo or archery, and yet ideogram “bu” means to stop fighting. In budo, the point is in finding peace and gaining full control over oneself (Deshimaru, 1999).

Aiki is not a fighting action or an enemy's defeat. It is a path of reconciliation of the world and turning humanity into one family. There are no enemies in aikido. It is wrong to think that budo implies having enemies or opponents, being strong or defeat them. In real budo, there are no opponents or enemies. The real budo means being united with the universe, i.e. being united with the centre of the universe. The secret of aikido lies in bringing ourselves in harmony with the movement of the universe and in creating an accord with it (Ueshiba, 2003). By training various martial arts, Morihei became an expert in the domain of fighting. There was too much violence and injuries in all the arts he trained. He thought that fighting, with a personal aim to injure or kill an opponent, should be banned. An opponent should be made to realize that using physical force is pointless (Stanojević, 1985). Aikido made the first contact with the rest of the world in 1925, the year that is considered to be the one in which traditional aikido emerged. But the first opportunity to present aikido was in 1927, when Morihei and his family moved to Tokyo. It

was then that he received a certificate as the founder of traditional aikido, and an invitation to present aikido to the wider public. At that point, aikido opened the door to the world, together with Morihei and his followers. First, aikido was demonstrated to the imperial guard, where Morihei receives a position as a teacher. After that, other martial arts masters become interested in aikido. In 1931, Morihei opened a dojo in the Wakamatsu district of Tokyo, which still exists today. In 1948, aikido suddenly globalized. The basis of this art is to direct and control the energy of the opponent, so that it does not inflict serious injuries to oneself or to the opponent. By executing the technique correctly, the opponent can be defeated regardless of their size or strength. That is why aikido is considered one of the most sophisticated Japanese martial arts (Blažević, 1998). After the rapid development of aikido, today it is practiced on almost all continents, attracting a wider mass and great attention of people who want to practice it. Today, aikido is more accessible for exercising, so it is not practised only by the upper class, but by the wider public, depending on geographical area. As aikido developed, more and more aikido associations emerged, both in Serbia and worldwide.

Aikido arrived to former Yugoslavia in 1968. The pioneers of traditional aikido were Ljubomir Vračarević, Zoran Ristić Ciga, Milan Zagorac, Bratislav Stajić and Mirko Jovandić. At that time, the “BUDOPRESS” magazine was released, and it was the first magazine in the country that focused on martial arts. The first major seminar in Serbia was held in 1974, when Hiroshi Tada conducted both the seminar and the testing for dan belts. After this seminar, the relations between aikido from “outer” and our world became stronger and stronger. Ever since aikido came to this country, there was a great desire to form an aikido organization, which happened soon. The Aikido Federation of Yugoslavia was formed, but it did not last due to numerous flaws and disorganization. In the following period, the persistence and enthusiasm of aikidoka led to the formation of aikido association “Belgrade”, which became a full member of the IAF (IAF -International Aikido Federation). And because this association did not gather only Serbian clubs, but clubs from all over former Yugoslavia, the Aikido Association “Belgrade” becomes the Yugoslav Aikido Federation - Aikikai Yugoslavia in January 1994. Seven years later, Aikikai Yugoslavia is divided into two organizations: one of them initially kept the same name, but later on it changed the name into “Aikido Federation of Serbia and Montenegro”, and one of its halves is called Serbian Aikido Federation, while the other one was named Aikido Association of Serbia. There are also several organizations not connected with Hombu Dojo, but they act in line with this fact and their contacts with clubs and organizations that are linked to Hombu Dojo are reduced to minimum. This particularly refers to Serbia, where Real Aikido is quite popular, and apart from the mimicry in its name and the clothes worn, this martial art has absolutely no ideological, and only

some technical matters in common with traditional aikido, so it should be observed as an independent martial art, of Serbian and not Japanese origin, as its idea goes beyond traditional Japanese aikido. Since there is no competing in aikido, it did not develop into a sport, but rather maintained the title of a martial art, which is why it was not interesting to the state or to publicity whose influence could have contributed to the creation of a unique organization, such as a sports association. Today, Serbia has the Serbian Aikido Federation, the Aikido Association of Serbia, the Aikido-Budo Association of Serbia, Aikikai Serbia (the real aikido federation of Serbia), Tendoryu Aikido Serbia, and Vojvodina Association for World Aikido. Global aikido federations developed much faster than in Serbia. One of the best known ones is the IAF (International Aikido Federation).

METHOD

The bibliographic speculative method was used in this paper. Relevant bibliographic sources were collected by this method and interpreted in accordance with current issues.

1. SELF-DEFENSE

The term self-defence primarily implies defence using one's own abilities. This term presupposes the existence of attack as a condition for defence, the use of special knowledge - techniques (Arlov, 2006). If we start from the fact that self-defence is a system of self-protection, a way of positively solving a problem situation, then it is necessary to single out those fighting elements that can achieve that. Bearing in mind that a large number of problem situations, primarily in terms of different grips, are the starting point when learning a large number of individual elements of aikido (primarily levers), there is a sufficient reason to use this skill and its elements for self-defence. It is especially important to constantly insist that they are executed technically correctly in order to achieve better and more efficient response in a particular problem situation.

Traditional aikido is created to reflect the Japanese tradition and culture. However, all aikido techniques can be adapted to new situations and different types of attacks.

By combining the movements of the arms, legs and other parts of the body, an attack can be avoided, evaded or stopped when it is least risky. By further movement and application of basic aikido elements, the opponent will be disarmed and disabled. In addition to the basic aikido elements, atemi strikes are also used. Atemi strikes are strikes at vital points on the human

body. Strikes have the role of disorienting the attacker and providing enough time to perform the technique.

2. MOST FREQUENTLY USED AIKIDO TECHNIQUES IN SELF-DEFENSE (KANSETSU WAZA)

Lever techniques in the field of self-defence can be applied in almost all situations. In the mechanical sense, their efficiency depends on the precision of the support, the magnitude of the resistance and the applied force (Mudrić, 2005). Certainly, kanetsu waza belongs to the group of techniques where the main emphasis is on the execution of levers, while waza means the technique or the form of techniques. As with all techniques, adequate and precise movements of both the lower and upper extremities are used. Having in mind that the focus of this work is on lever techniques, it is necessary to point out that their application is primarily aimed at establishing control by inflicting pain by stretching the tissue in the area of the joint where the lever is applied (Blagojević et al., 2012). The levers that are used can be divided into 6 basic ones, which are: Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo, Gokyo, Kotegaeshi and Yonkyo.

2.1. IKKYO

The *Ikkyo* lever is one of the levers executed on upper extremities, i.e. an extended arm. It is used to defend against all types of upper extremity attacks. The lever is one of the easiest ones to execute and the basis for further more complex ones, which is why it is the first one to be instructed during the training. It is executed as follows. By reacting in a timely manner and depending on the attack, an appropriate movement should be executed to disturb the balance of the uke and bring them into the appropriate position for the ikkyo lever. Control of the uke is performed through their hand with which the tori has constant contact. In that sense, proper guard is very important. The guard, in addition to being a body position, is a type of body language between an aikidoka and their opponent. If an aikidoka is in such a position that they find themselves facing the opponent, then, depending on the relationship and the opponent's body, they are in the guard, i.e. a defensive position, which protects themselves or others from a potential attack (Vračarević, 2007). When performing this technique, the position of the tori's arms during the movements should be in front of the body and in the next position, the hand closer to the uke is on the elbow joint, on the outside and putting pressure on it, while the other hand should be on the wrist root joint, as shown in Picture 1². By further movement under the pressure of the lever, the uke is lowered to the ground with the abdomen turned downwards. The tori then places the opponent's hand on the

² Demonstrators on all photographs: Lazar Živković and Nemanja Živković

ground, still outstretched, at a 90° angle to their body. The elbow of the uke's arm must be turned so that it can be bent upwards. In order for the lever to be successful, one must master both their balance and the opponent's. The uke is brought to the stage of imbalance and painful lever. Levers are made thanks to the anatomical features of the joints. Most joints are movable in one direction. In addition, rotational movements in most joints are limited. Dislocation occurs when the joint is taken out of the natural position exceeding its limit. If a fixation has been performed and the control over the uke has been gained, we can say that the lever has been performed correctly. Every technique, even this one with the ikkyo lever, can be performed in several ways and different variations, which depends on the uke's reaction to the initial technique. Techniques can be executed in two ways: *ura* (outer side) and *omote* (inner side). The *omote* mode is executed by intercepting the uke's attack, while the *ura* mode starts by evading or catching (absorbing) the attack, i.e. the uke's limb.

Picture 1. *Ikkyo lever by stages*



2.2. NIKYO

Nikyo - In Japanese, NI means two, that is, *nikyo* is another form of fixation. The movements are performed very similarly to *ikkyo* and belong to the next level of complexity of aikido levers. All conditions for executing this lever must be the same as for the *ikkyo* lever, but the position of the arms is different from the position for *ikkyo* fixation. During the movements, the execution of the technique and reaching the position suitable for performing the *nikyo* lever, the initial position of the hands must be as follows: the hand closer to the uke goes to the elbow joint while the other hand goes to the fist. The finishing segment is performed with the lower or upper fixation of *nikyo*, as presented in Picture 2.

Nikyo fixation – Lower nikyo fixation falls into the category of fixations performed in seiza. After reaching an adequate position where the uke is on their stomach, facing ground, it is time to move on to nikyo fixation. The procedure is as follows: tori is sitting in seiza perpendicular to the uke, using the legs to press and fix the shoulder of one arm (not the arm used to gain control and cause imbalance). After reaching that position, the tori grabs uke's arm and puts it into the position where its palm is turned to the biceps, while tori's other hand bends the uke's elbow joint, as presented in Picture 3. The tori should perform controlled rotation of uke's arm toward the head and away from uke's back.

Picture 2. *Nikyo lever by stages*



Picture 3. *Lower Nikyo position*



2.3. SANKYO

Sankyo - San in Japanese means number three and thus sankyo fixation belongs to the third form of fixation. Sankyo unlike ikkyo and nikyo fixation

is more complex but not less effective. This fixation is used on almost all types of attacks, including attacks of the lower extremities or legs.

The first steps, on any attack, are intercepted (if the omote variant is selected) or the strike is evaded (in case of the ura variant).

By intercepting the attack, the tori provides a better position to continue the technique, as the uke is already in some sort of imbalance. With the appropriate movement, depending on the attack in question, the uke must come to a position where they can perform an interception for sankyo fixation. This position is usually accompanied by ikkyo fixation, i.e. applying pressure to the elbow joint. After a sankyo grip, which looks like the tori and the uke are shaking hands, they move into a position where the uke's arm is bent 90° at the elbow joint and where the tori has complete control over the uke, which can be seen in Picture 4. This position provides two possibilities, which are: to bring the uke, with controlled and appropriate movements, into a yoko ukemi fall or to bring them into a position for lower sankyo fixation. The lower sankyo fixation shown in Picture 5 is derived from a position similar to lower nikyo fixation. After arriving in the appropriate position where the uke is lying on the ground on the stomach, we can move on to the procedure of switching to sankyo fixation. The procedure is as follows: the tori sits in seiza perpendicular to the uke, where he squeezes and fixes the shoulder of one arm with his legs (the arm which controls and creates imbalance). After reaching that position, the tori grabs the uke's hand and puts it in the position with the palm facing the biceps together with his other hand. The tori should perform a controlled rotation of the uke's hand towards the head and away from the uke's back.

Picture 4. *Sankyo lever by stages*



Picture 5. *Lower sankyo fixation*

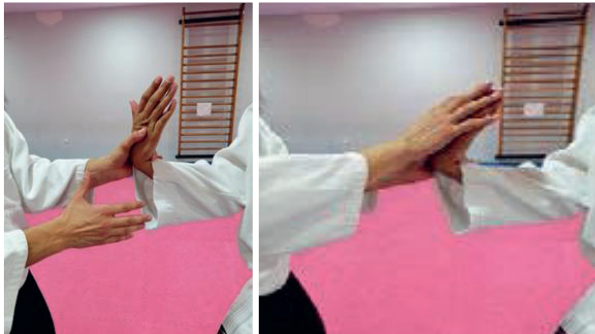


2.4. KOTEGAESHI

The *Kotegaeshi* lever can be applied to all attacks of upper extremities. Thanks to its specific execution, the efficiency of this lever is very high.

After occupying the appropriate position for performing the lever, a grip is performed with the hand (opposite to the uke's) with the thumb in the position between the little and ring finger. The other hand covers the uke's entire fist with fingers. The lever is performed by extending the wrist joint towards the uke and to the side (towards the back) as shown in Picture 6.

Picture 6. *Kotegaeshi lever by stages*



2.5. GOKYO

Gokyo - The procedure for performing the fixation is similar to that for ikkyo fixation, but with a grip and the lever performed on the elbow joint as seen in Picture 7.

Picture 7. *Gokyo fixation*



2.6. YONKYO

Yonkyo fixation is a fixation that comes after *ikkyo* fixation, i.e. its basis is *ikkyo* fixation. The grip from *ikkyo* to *yonkyo* is as follows: both hands grab the uke's forearm, which is at 90° from the upper arm. With the extension of the arm, the lever is made on the shoulder joint, which can be seen in Picture 8.

It is particularly important to emphasize that all the techniques listed here need to be practiced with a larger number of partners in order to have the opportunity to get acquainted with the different mobility of the same joints in different people. Mobility (flexibility) is the ability to perform movements with optimal (maximum) amplitude (Stojiljković et al., 2012). It is the mobility of the joint, i.e. its anatomical limitation in terms of the maximum amplitude of performing a certain movement that represents the foundation on which the feeling of pain in the one over whom the lever is performed is based.

Picture 8. *Yonkyo fixation*



CONCLUSION

Aikido is a complex and technically demanding martial art that, despite time and without major changes in its execution, survives to this day. Aikido is one of the martial arts that is primarily a skill of love and a kind of path. In addition to the art of self-defence, aikido is also a philosophy of living. Ueshiba himself pointed out that aiki is not a fight or defeat of the enemy, but a path of reconciliation and turning humanity into one family. He especially emphasized that there are no enemies in aikido. Aikido techniques are designed so that the opponent is defeated but not injured, which makes Aikido a unique martial art. Bearing in mind that Ueshiba himself was dissatisfied with the use of aikido for military and police purposes, and pointed out that it is the Art of Peace that can disarm the enemy, no matter how well armed he is (Ueshiba, 2008). From all the above, it can be clearly concluded that it was Ueshiba who gave aikido the final ethical stamp in terms of not injuring the opponent.

This paper presents only a small part of the applicability of aikido elements in self-defence. The implementation of aikido primarily depends on the practice, dexterity and speed of an aikidoka, as well as the situation, i.e. the aikidoka's response. In addition to the above, efficiency is affected by other factors such as the physical preparedness of the person who should use aikido technique(s) for self-defence, the psychological preparedness and determination of the person who should successfully defend themselves and overcome the attacker. Only good coordination in terms of technical readiness on the one hand and fitness on the other will be good preconditions for an efficiently performed combination of individual martial arts techniques. Technical preparation of athletes is the most rational way of moving or performing certain moves and movements, in order to more efficiently solve the performed movement structures within the training. As the goal of every sports technique is the harmonization of movements and moving in space, time and by strength, that is, compliance with the requirements of a certain motor task, it can be underlined that the basis of every technical preparation is adequate development of coordination ability. What determines different types of sports is their specific motor structure, i.e. technique (Vasović, 2016).

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