

Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries, which mislead theory into mysticism, find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

- *'Thesis Eight' from 'Theses on Feuerbach' by Karl Marx*

It is true, as Marx says, that history does not walk on its head, but it is also true that it does not think with its feet. Or one should say rather that it is neither its 'head' nor its 'feet' that we have to worry about, but its body.

- *'Phenomenology of Perception' by Maurice Merleau-Ponty*

University of Alberta

**Peaceful Warriors:
Bodies of Culture, History and Power in the Practice of Aikido in Canada**

by

Kevin Siah Yeow Tan ©

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2002-2005 among practitioners of the Japanese martial art of Aikido in Calgary, Alberta, this thesis argues that the role of the body is central for one's continued participation and membership within Aikido's pugilistic universe. The practice of a martial art is viewed as a body culture, where the learning of Aikido entails a highly practical and corporeal reality that cannot be reduced to mere abstraction or speech. One, therefore, cannot simply 'think Aikido', but must also 'do Aikido' in order to gradually embody and incorporate the various martial techniques, bodily dispositions and ideologies that constitute part of an Aikido *habitus*. At the same time, the practice of Aikido also transcends the learning of martial techniques, but also allows its regular practitioners to embody numerous aspects of Japanese culture as part of one's own identity.

Correspondingly, practitioners of Aikido are viewed as the collusive members in the ongoing construction and reification of their art's collective social memory. This is viewed as part of a larger historical process identified as the 'aestheticization of violence', where philosophical and religious thought has become a significant influence in interpreting Aikido practice. Finally, it is also argued that the practice of Aikido serves as a major embodied and contextual ground in the production of 'corporeal mythologies' and the differential relations of power between its members. The former is achieved through a belief in the practice of *ki* development, where practitioners seek to empower themselves with the cultivation of an invisible but allegedly tangible energy that emanates from the body. On the other hand, the latter is achieved through the exercise of symbolic violence and the subsequent misrecognition of its existence.

This thesis also serves as an important example of the growing potential of a highly reflexive and embodied approach in ethnographic fieldwork, where the ethnographer participates fully with one's body at stake within the research process. In doing so, it seeks to demonstrate the possibilities of apprenticeship in ethnographic fieldwork, thus locating a middle ground between mere observation and the potential pitfalls of 'going native' in the practice of ethnography.

For my right foot

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PROLOGUE: **Training Day**

The time for another class drew near. It was just past seven on the summer evening of a Wednesday, and on the whole, it looked as if it was turning out to be a pleasant evening. The day was the 2nd of June 2004, and for the past five weeks I had been working at Matsumoto *sensei*'s traditional Japanese acupuncture clinic since the start of my fieldwork. I referred to him as '*sensei*' because it was the typical Japanese honorific used to address either a teacher or person of seniority within an organization or a particular discipline. A major part of my reason for being there was because it was also located beside his Aikido *dojo*¹, the Clearwater *Aikikai*, which would be the main setting for my field observations and subsequent participation. Both places were contained within a large converted and renovated warehouse just southwest of Calgary's city centre. I had been working as Matsumoto *sensei*'s 'utility man' and odd-job worker during these past four weeks, and today had been another fairly busy day.

My responsibilities for Matsumoto *sensei* ranged from having to clear the trash, washing his car, cleaning his carpets, doing the dishes in the kitchen, repairing his exercise equipment, dealing with the laundry, folding and packing the sheets and towels that were used at the clinic, and even working as both receptionist and cashier for his *shiatsu* clients. At the same time, I was also tasked to assist in painting the floors and the walls of the Aikido *dojo*, and occasionally assisting Matsumoto *sensei* in moving furniture and all manner of items, mainly related to his *shiatsu* practice and Aikido, to

¹ Literally meaning 'Hall of the Way'. This is a common term in traditional Japanese martial arts, which refers to the room or hall where all practice took place.

and from the makeshift attic located above the *dojo*. During weekday evenings and afternoons, and on Saturday mornings, I had also been attending Aikido classes conducted at the *dojo* for up to six days a week. The arrangement seemed to be working fine so far, as this enabled me access into the lives of those who trained regularly at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Matsumoto *sensei*, on the other hand, would have an extra pair of hands at his clinic at no extra charge. Apparently, ethnographers can be an exploitable and useful source of cheap or free labour.

Anyway, I was already feeling a little restless after sitting at the front desk for the past hour, and the soft new age music being played on the dusty and beat up stereo in the hallway of the clinic was getting increasingly tedious and repetitive. It was already past six-thirty in the evening. Getting up, I decided to ask Matsumoto *sensei* to see if he still needed my assistance in any way. When he replied that he wouldn't need me anymore for the rest of the day, I proceeded to get ready for practice as I headed to the back of the clinic where the kitchen was, which also contained a passageway that actually led to the front of the *dojo*. Matsumoto *sensei* was still with the last client of the day, and if he were to turn up late to conduct tonight's class, he would assign a senior to start class first. I casually looked around the kitchen to make sure that I had not left any task uncompleted.

The clinic was already much quieter without the usual banter echoing from some waiting clients in the reception area, so all that one could hear was the low spinning hum coming from the dryer in the kitchen, with another ten minutes to go in its cycle. Sarah, Matsumoto *sensei*'s full-time assistant, had already headed home for the evening, and

apart from the sleep-inducing new age music in the air throughout the clinic I could still detect a soft but muffled conversation that was going on between Matsumoto *sensei* and his final client for the day in Treatment Room One. I sat down for a moment on one of the stools where the kitchen table was and quickly finished a glass of water. Although feeling a little hungry, I wasn't sure if I should take a quick snack before a class as I was already used to cooking and eating a late dinner when I got home. I finally decided not to. Giving myself a couple of minutes of solitude as I reflected on the day's events, I finally got up and headed towards the backdoor of the clinic, and entered the *dojo*.

The door at the back of the kitchen led to a short and narrow passage that emerged within an airy and spacious hall with a high ceiling that was part of a sort of metallic zinc-like roof structure, from where at least a dozen longer and larger than usual fluorescent tubes were hung by chains from the roofing supports, easily lighting up the whole place. A traditional Japanese cloth curtain that was divided in the middle was hung over the entrance from where I emerged, symbolizing the spatial and social transition that one was making from one place to another. This was the *dojo*; a large hall that contained a wide and spacious floor area that was mostly covered by an enormous white synthetic canvas-like sheet that was fastened tautly across the floor with the use of several dozen metallic pegs at its edges. It was approximately the size of a basketball court in terms of area space, but more squarish than rectangular in shape. Underneath the sheet were up to sixty blue coloured gym mats that formed the training area, which also provided safe cushioning from falls during our regular practice sessions.

The *dojo* occupied the southern portion of the warehouse facility in Blackburn Industrial Park, which housed both Matsumoto *sensei*'s *shiatsu* clinic and the head *dojo*, or the *hombu*², of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. As I had entered from the back of the clinic, I was now standing somewhere at the front of the *dojo*, which also had its own entrance at the opposite end from where I was standing. The entrance at that end would be where most students for the evening's adult class would be arriving from. The door had already been routinely unlocked by me over an hour and a half ago to allow students to enter and several were doing so, although the final ten minutes of the earlier children's class was still noisily in session. The instant transition from a Japanese acupuncture clinic to a traditional Japanese martial art training hall used to bring quiet chuckles from myself when I first arrived here over two years ago and saw the place. I recalled the time when I learnt that a number of Matsumoto *sensei*'s students were also his regular clients at his clinic as a result of injuries they sustained from Aikido practice. I supposed that was one way of generating revenue too.

The mat area, or the *tatami*³, on first appearance, might appear to some as being larger than it is due to a number of interlinked mirrors that were placed on the wall just to the right of the *dojo*. That is if one was standing at the back of the *dojo* from where most people emerged for classes. People also spoke softer in the *dojo* and whatever noise generated was often controlled. In addition, the mirrors had a tendency to enhance the already spacious and serene feel of the surroundings. They also reflected the numerous

² Meaning 'headquarters' in Japanese.

³ The term originally referred to traditional Japanese rice-straw mats that were used as flooring for homes, and are still being used in more traditional martial arts training halls, or *dojo*. In contemporary times, however, not all are necessarily made of rice-straw anymore, as many are also now made of sponge or similar material.

weapons that were hung and displayed on racks just across the mats, at the opposite wall of the *dojo* facing the mirrors. The weapons were mostly made of oak, and numbered almost three dozen in total, consisting of wooden swords, short wooden staffs and long wooden staffs; which were respectively known as *bokken*, *jo* and *bo*. There were also a few wooden replicas of *naginata*, or Japanese halberds, and a little black bag that contained wooden knives known as *tanto*⁴, along with some rubberized and sponged training clubs. In addition, the front (or *shomen*) of the *dojo*, just to the right from where I had emerged, was where the *kamiza*, or literally the ‘spirit seat’, was located. The *kamiza* of the Clearwater *Aikikai* was the centre, or the symbolic heart of the *dojo*, where a calligraphy scroll was hung just underneath a wooden altar-like structure that resembled a little roof over a platform placed on the floor. Accompanying the scroll was a tiny bronze statuette of Aikido’s founder, no more than twenty centimetres in height, which was placed beside a black *bokken*, and was supported by a weapon stand. Both were resting on a wooden platform that was slightly elevated from the ground. The final ornament on display there was perhaps the most eye-catching – it was a small wooden log bent in the shape of a curve with one end tapered away into the shape of a handle. From some distance away it had the appearance of a crude-looking club that used to be a large branch of a tree that was now all dried and warped.

Glancing around casually, I noticed that there were already a substantial number of people who had arrived, and the *dojo*, with its dominant colours of white, grey and brown that made up its physical surroundings, was already bustling with activity. I caught sight of the virtually expressionless and sometimes unpredictable Kouichi Nakajima, who

⁴ Literally ‘short blade’

had turned up over an hour ago. The moustachioed former chef in his mid-thirties from Japan was already dressed in his increasingly worn out *keikogi*⁵, resting comfortably upon the stained-looking and dusty sofa placed just outside the changing rooms along the parameter of the mats. He was reading a book on Aikido techniques that had been donated to the old bookcase that stood just by the stairs leading up to the attic. Kouichi usually headed straight to the *dojo* immediately after his current job at another warehouse, and ate a cup of instant noodles in the kitchen before getting changed. He had arrived earlier than usual today though, as he had been helping out with the children's class that was just about to end. Upon seeing me, he glanced at me and muttered a cursory 'Hi, how are you?' in his usual detached and emotionless fashion that also carried with it a faint hint of sarcasm in his thin and cynical smile. I mechanically returned his smile, replied that I was good, uttered the usual niceties and also enquired how he was doing, while continuing to observe what was going on in the rest of the *dojo*. Kouichi was also one of the few people at the *dojo* that I could seldom feel completely at ease with.

The children's class that ran from 6.15pm to 7.15pm on Wednesdays had just ended, but the mat area was still a lively place with the excited chattering and laughter of young children. John Hamilton, a first-degree black belt, was one of Matsumoto *sensei*'s most senior students and also virtually his right-hand man in running the *dojo* on many occasions and events, had led the class while being assisted by former Winter Olympian Terry Roussel and Kouichi. Tonight's class was relatively small with only a dozen or so young children turning up. I remember Matsumoto *sensei* mentioning that such low

⁵ *Keikogi* literally means 'training clothes', which is the often white cotton 'traditional' uniform that is easily identifiable among people who practiced Japanese martial arts.

turnouts were always expected during the summer. The children's ages ranged between five and twelve, and they had just been put through their paces during the hour-long class. Several were now assisting in sweeping the *tatami*, just before making way for the adults' class that would last from 7.30pm to 8.45pm. The wet mopping of the *tatami*, however, would be left to the adults as the mop was simply too heavy for children to use. The class had concluded with a game of 'Shikko⁶ Soccer', a game played like soccer on the mats, but where a person moved on his or her knees instead of feet. Their energy seemed endless as some of them could still find a way to inject fun as they dusted the mats while others, who were already done with their duties quickly approached their waiting parents, who had been watching attentively throughout the class while seated at back of the *dojo*. I caught sight of John at the back of the *dojo*, responding to the queries of some parents who had just come to enquire about classes for their children. 'Sergeant Terry', on the other hand, a name which some of us had conferred on Terry for his militant-like demeanour on such occasions, continued to supervise the remaining children in performing their cleaning duties, firmly barking out instructions on the proper manner for one to dust the mats and how to clean the dusters afterwards. Like a field commander in charge of a squad of midget soldiers, Sergeant Terry's stern voice and expression tolerated no nonsense or dissent from any of his pre-adolescent Aikido troopers.

The time was already past 7.15pm, but the golden sunlight of the newly arrived summer of 2004 was still out, and I could see still other regular members gradually arriving one by one, or in small groups, from the entrance at the back of the *dojo*. Not the

⁶ In the context of Aikido, *Shikko* refers to 'knee-walking', where practitioners learn to move on their knees instead of their feet, a common and significant aspect of practice known as *suwari waza*, seated techniques. For raw beginners and the uninitiated, it can prove to be quite a challenge.

easiest of places to find and located within a desolate warehouse district, the existence of a traditional Japanese martial art *dojo*, perhaps on first impression to some, may seem somewhat out of place compared with its generally industrialized surroundings. Over here, one often heard, more than anything else, the low rumble of manufacturing machinery, dull banging sounds coming from a workshop, or the roar of container trucks groaning at they came to a stop at a warehouse. It appeared as if the culture and tradition that was embodied by the *dojo*'s environment was gradually being encapsulated and consumed by such avatars of industrialization and capitalism. But I guess the rent was still comparatively cheaper than if Matsumoto *sensei* had decided to ply both his medical or martial professions in a suburban location. Nevertheless, the present *dojo* was still fairly accessible, either by one's own car or by public transport, as it only stood just beyond the outskirts of the city centre.

Not too many new faces tonight, I quietly told myself myself, after I had made a quick scan of the scene. Well in fact, maybe none at all, from the looks of it, as it was apparent that Aikido did not share the same level of exposure or popularity of ice-hockey in Canada, and the NHL play-offs *were* going on right now. I waved to Terry as he curtly nodded at me from the centre of the mat area, while taking to task a child who had become easily distracted from his cleaning duties. Most of the regulars, upon stepping in the *dojo*, called out '*Konban-wa*⁷!' and the rest of us responded likewise in unison. A number of faces that I had grown familiar with over the last couple of years appeared. I caught sight of Pedro Rodriguez, the tall and quiet Mexican, who had just walked in and was getting ready to perform a traditional kneeling bow, or *rei*, at the edge of the *tatami*

⁷ Typical Japanese expression for 'Good evening'

after taking off his footwear and the earphones he always has on while on the way to class. He arrived via the C-Train, Calgary's Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, the closest form of public transport that was a ten-minute walk away. The kneeling bow was the standard ritual that we all did if we needed to either take part in a class or to walk across the *tatami*. No footwear was ever allowed on the mats, and one had to leave them at the overcrowded shoe rack just next to the entrance after you walked in. Cleanliness and hygiene was something that was highly emphasized in the *dojo*, where the colour white seemed dominant on the walls, the mats and even the uniforms, or *keikogi*, that we were supposed to wear. This was coupled with a sense of quiet discipline that tended to envelope anyone who entered the *tatami*, where unnecessarily loud noise was discouraged, although this did not detract from the generally easy-going and relaxed atmosphere between the regulars who were familiar with each other. One's entry into the inner sanctum of the Clearwater *Aikikai* meant entry into a space that was run with a set of different social expectations from the outside.

After completing his bow while kneeling at the edge of the mats, Pedro greeted me with a familiar smile as he squinted with his bad eye which always made him look as if he was winking at me. Arriving just after Pedro was the pale, blond-haired and blue-eyed Jonathan Wagner, who paused for a moment as he seemed to strike a pose for the moment, after removing his expensive-looking sunglasses. He was carrying his weapons bag, as he did not seem to have the habit of leaving his weapons at the *dojo*. Jonathan was one of the first persons in the *dojo* that I got to know and interview after first arriving in Calgary. Word was going around that he would be travelling to Japan soon to teach

English. This came as no surprise as many of us were also aware of Jonathan's personal interest, or perhaps obsession, with all things and bodies that were Japanese, apart from an interest in music. I learnt that he was also extremely regular for classes and had been promoted to the rank of 2nd *kyu*, or brown-belt⁸, in a relatively short time. He was fast becoming a well-known senior of the club, although his reputation for being a little difficult and rough on his training partners was also quickly growing.

The next set of familiar faces that followed was the pretty Kazuko Nakamura and the hulking and frowning Dominic Bucher. The two were again careful about not being seen arriving together at exactly the same time. That did not escape me though, as I had been standing at the far end of the *dojo*, and had a good view of everyone who was arriving. The shy Frenchman-turned-Canadian saw me regarding him and Kazuko with a cheeky expression from where I was, greeted everyone around good evening and returned a knowing smile at me. I still recall just how suspicious Dominic had been of me when I first interviewed him at the McDonald's outlet just along McGovern Trail, the main road that our *dojo* was only several blocks away from. Never would I have known that the pair would turn out to be the closest two friends and confidants I would have at the *dojo*.

Well - *another day, another class* - I thought, as I casually pondered just how long my body would be able to keep up with training six days a week, for I also knew for certain I was not the most athletically gifted person by a long shot. Nonetheless, it was so far so good, and I took it as an opportunity to lose some weight. The Clearwater *Aikikai*

⁸ At the Clearwater *Aikikai*, brown belts were given to people holding either 1st or 2nd *kyu* ranks. These are ranks just below 1st degree black belt, known as *dan* ranks. *Kyu* ranks are part of a separate ranking system that forms a lower ranking division below *dan* ranks.

was where most of my fieldwork has been located, ever since I first made contact with Matsumoto *sensei* just over two years ago, in April 2002, when I first came to Calgary for a pilot study that lasted nearly three weeks. It hadn't seem too long ago though, when I sought to rediscover my own Aikido roots in Calgary, a martial art that I had abandoned for nearly three years before taking it up again as a research topic for my thesis. Roughly translated as the 'Way of Harmony', the Japanese martial art of Aikido had been a big part of my life since I was a freshman at my university back home in Singapore. A martial art that primarily emphasizes the use of joint locking and throwing techniques, Aikido in recent years has largely been on the forefront of the spread of the Japanese martial arts throughout the latter half of the twentieth century along with other arguably better known arts like Karate and Judo. These days, it would be hard to imagine the possibility of a major city in North America not possessing a single Aikido club or *dojo*. With its roots derived from classical Japanese martial systems like *Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu*, Aikido was official named as such in 1942 in the midst of the Second World War. In virtually all styles and schools of Aikido, save one, there is no competition, as competition is regarded as counterintuitive against its basic philosophy of harmony and non-violence. It is, therefore, regarded as a *budo*, or a 'martial way', where the practice of martial arts alleged also leads to the perfection of character and moral enlightenment. Hence, Aikido would appear to many as an interesting blend of martial ethos, a Japanese cultural worldview, and a religio-philosophical approach to its practice.

The men's changing room was already getting typically crowded by the time I walked in. Wednesday nights were usually more crowded, possibly because lessons

tended to be more technical than physically strenuous due to its relatively shorter class duration, seldom lasting more than an hour and a half. Another part of the reason was due to the fact that we had to accommodate the children's class just before it on Wednesdays. Still, this was really the exception rather than the norm, as most evening classes on weekdays lasted around two hours⁹, as no children's classes were conducted before them. I first heard this explanation regarding the relative popularity of Wednesday classes from Joey Lombardi, a teacher in his fifties and a relative newcomer to the *dojo*, who insightfully observed this in his usual style of self-deprecating humour, which sometimes got misunderstood as provocative cynicism by some of the more sensitive seniors. Starting out in Aikido relatively late in his life, Joey was finding some difficulty in keeping up with some of the movements and techniques that were taught, but his sense of humour was perhaps one of those things that kept his optimism up. Perhaps the older our bodies get, it becomes a lot harder to teach it new tricks. Joey also kept forgetting my name, and often called me by a different name other than my own each time he saw me.

As the *dojo*'s male population probably outnumbered the female population by at least five to one, space in our changing room was often more of a luxury than a privilege. Within the men's change area, there was really hardly any space to place one's belongings. A single clothes hanger on the wall was often overworked with several pieces of clothing at the same time and one might even end up wearing someone else's socks, or even worse, if you were not careful. And as each person walked in, the sound volume naturally grew into a cacophony of disparate voices, and that evening Dominic was again

⁹ Apparently, it seems that the length of all classes have been shortened to only an hour and half since late 2005. This was to cater to the increase in the number of classes at the *dojo*.

the target of jokes and the usual ribbing. The hulking but quiet Frenchman with a childish smile, whom so many, including myself, had initially and stereotypically mistook as Russian or Eastern European on account of his heavy accent and his protruding brow, was a popular and well-liked figure at the *dojo*, but sometimes for all the wrong reasons. According to Larry Petrovic, the young and hot-blooded carpenter who moved over from British Columbia a few years ago, Dominic had a certain endearing ‘oafish’ quality about him, an opinion that many of us found hard to disagree with. Furthermore, he was always welcome company for drinking sessions in the evenings, and his talent for absorbing large amounts of alcohol often rendered him even more unintentionally comical. Although at times no one really understood what Dominic was saying (or mumbling) by virtue of his heavy French accent, no one ever told him this for fear of offending him, but this still did not stop us from sporadically teasing him about his newfound so-called secret relationship with Kazuko. I also found out slightly later, to my surprise, that their getting together was partly a result of Matsumoto *sensei*’s encouragement.

Over all the mutual teasing and joking in the room, the grey-haired and middle-aged Gabriel LeTissier, a former Montrealer and Canadian Navy veteran, started asking Dominic a few questions about certain details regarding his current job. Both Gabriel and Dominic were millwrights¹⁰ by profession and occasionally discussed their work with each other. I had overheard Dominic mentioning that he might be looking for a new job elsewhere, which caught Gabriel’s attention. At another part of the changing room, there

¹⁰ The term ‘millwright’ was originally derived from the trade of carpentry, referring to a specialized carpenter who was trained as a carpenter as well having working knowledge of using construction machinery. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to simply call them carpenters too, as both Dominic and Gabriel referred to themselves as millwrights, and within the Canadian context, both of them work in the construction industry. They install, maintain, and repair stationary construction and industrial machinery and other mechanical equipment.

was also some discussion going on about the accommodation arrangements regarding next month's summer camp at the town of Canmore in the Rocky Mountains. This was an event that many of us were looking forward to, for Matsumoto *sensei*'s own teacher from Japan, a professional Aikido instructor who was close to seventy years old would also be turning up. At the same time, some of us were also quietly grumbling about the rising costs of these annual training camps as the years went by. Then all of sudden, our voices were drowned out by the flushing sounds of the only toilet bowl in the room, along with the powerful outpour of hot water from a hose that was directed into a large yellow pail on wheels that would be used to mop the mats. Sound did not escape easily from that small room that now contained more than fifteen men. The scent of bleach and detergent cleaning liquid lingered in the air, mixed along with the faint smell of human perspiration that was emitted from a number of unwashed *keikogi* that were being worn again for tonight's class. It was also getting a little difficult to manoeuvre yourself around as more bodies filed in. The floor, which was already a little damp from some water spilled by the hose, was beginning to get partially muddied by some dirty socks from the feet of several people as they marched into the changing room.

I had already donned my white Karate *keikogi*, which, to some of the old-timers at the *dojo* who could tell the difference, might come across as being symbolic of my liminal and transient status. Walking briskly, I tightened up my dirty white belt as I proceeded to step onto the mats. Most of the regulars wore a cotton *keikogi* that consisted of a white double woven cotton jacket and a much lighter pair of white cotton pants, more like the ones worn in Judo, as they generally possessed greater durability against

wear and tear from constant gripping of the jacket by a training partner. My Karate *gi*¹¹, on the other hand, was made of heavy-duty cotton duck and was less durable against gripping in the long run, but had a more ‘starchy’ feel that gave the *gi* a more contoured look. Such a *gi* was made, rather, to facilitate the creation of crisp snapping sounds from the material, resulting from the quick movements of punches and kicks by the wearer. Having also taken up Karate myself several years before, I had grown to be more accustomed to this kind of *gi*. Anyway, the functional differences between them, however, are quite arbitrary and even irrelevant for that matter. It also made more sense to continue wearing my old *gi* instead of investing more money on a new Aikido *gi*. But of course, this did not spare one from the regular duties of cleaning up in the *dojo* just before and after a class.

The children had already used the dusters to wipe the mats and the wet mop was to follow. By then, Kouichi had prepared the mobile water bucket that contained a combination of hot water, bleach and detergent and had rolled it, along with the mop that was placed in the pail, out to the edge of the mats from the men’s changing room. This was the usual practice just before any class began and once again after one ended and I noticed that throughout my time here, mopping seemed to be the unspoken sole responsibility of the men. Not that the fewer women practitioners ever complained. It was probably partly due to the weight of the wet mop, especially after the head had been soaked, and the peculiar method in the way we were supposed to mop the mats. One was supposed to mop in a swinging left to right motion as you walked backwards in a straight line from the top end of the mats to the bottom, often requiring some amount of upper

¹¹ *Gi* is *Keikogi* for short, and a much more commonly used term to refer to the same thing.

body strength. Once you reached the bottom you would pass the mop to another person that was waiting for the mop, who would repeat the same motion from the top. That person would then return the mop back to the pail to get it rinsed, and then proceed once more from a new point at the front of the *dojo* and continue mopping backwards. Once again, the mop would be subsequently handed to another person, until the entire mat area was cleaned. These were the subtle rules of social egalitarianism and communalism that one slowly picks up by merely watching and being there, for no one really explicitly voiced out such expectations to others. One often picked it up by watching, although a senior might occasionally inform a newcomer about certain specific expectations. Jerry Lim, the animated and gregarious former Malaysian Chinese from the state of Sarawak, who now oversees his own Aikido *dojo* at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), once explained and demonstrated the finer points of mopping the mats to me two years ago when I first turned up in Calgary. He explained that this was also ‘all part of Aikido training’, because it required us to *improve our centre and balance* in order to develop *the necessary thrusting power for our hips*. As he said this, he enthusiastically demonstrated it with a few vigorous thrusts of his hips.

By the time Matsumoto *sensei* emerged from the clinic, this time all dressed in his *keikogi* and *hakama*, we were already seated in *seiza*, a traditional Japanese seating posture where one rested on one’s knees and heels, in three neat rows facing the *kamiza*, about mid-way across the *tatami* from it. He was on time after all. As he casually walked unto the *tatami*, Matsumoto *sensei* certainly presented a different sight from his all-white nurse’s uniform during his day job at the *shiatsu* clinic. The flowy and baggy contours of

his black *hakama*, the traditional divided and pleated cotton pants that only *yudansha*¹² in Aikido were given the right to wear, made Matsumoto *sensei*'s chubby and thickset frame even larger, like a human pyramid, albeit a fairly mobile one. With his dark complexion, large ears, dark eyebrows and shaven pate, he looked more like an overweight Pacific Islander than a typical person of Japanese descent. *Sensei*¹³ then proceeded to take his place on the *tatami*, in *seiza*, about five to seven feet ahead of the class, facing us at a central position between the *kamiza* and us. Next, he closed his eyes and placed his hands on his knees, leading us in silent meditation.

The *dojo* fell almost silent, as the rest of us, numbering around thirty, followed suit in meditation and closed our eyes. I could still hear some muted voices and music coming from a solitary radio playing at the filter manufacturing plant located next to the *dojo*, and smelt the antiseptic scent of the freshly mopped canvas of the mat area, while I struggled to ignore the growing prickly numbness in my knees and ankles. I have been involved with the martial arts for more than ten years but I still could never be totally comfortable with sitting in this fashion, unlike others gifted with flexible limbs. The circulation to my feet was slowly getting constricted through such extended periods of *seiza*, and sustained injuries to my left knee and both ankles over the years did not appear to make things better. These were also the times when I wondered if I should have pursued a philosophy degree instead of one in anthropology. The evening sunlight that shone through the windows at the back of the *dojo* reflected off the factory dust from next

¹² Literally meaning 'person with *Dan* ranking'. A *Dan* ranking meant that one had a black belt. Correspondingly, the term *mudansha* are people who hold ranks that are not black belt level.

¹³ From here on, the term 'Sensei' will solely refer to Matsumoto *sensei* for the rest of this prologue.

door that often floated and hovered into our 'Hall of the Way'. It was becoming both surreal and potentially hazardous to our health at the same time. I muffled a cough.

My temporary indulgence with the plight of my feet and lungs during my self-imposed darkness was, however, suddenly shaken when we detected a soft creaking sound coming from the entrance to the *dojo*. The door at the back was being opened. Someone had arrived late, and before we began to wonder who it was, Thomas Bradley's familiar voice from behind us echoed out '*Konban-wa!*' and some of us responded likewise as we broke from our meditative silence. A few more of us also opened our eyes to turn back, just as I did, and quietly greeted the fifty-something bespectacled schoolteacher, and also former Winter Olympian, with a knowing smile, as he sheepishly hurried across the mats towards the changing room, probably like one of his own students from Terrace Park High School. *Sensei*, however, was expressionless, as his eyes, which were the only part of his bulky frame moving, were only half open and actively scanning the rest of us and the *dojo*'s surroundings, probably wondering if there would be anymore late-comers. It wasn't clear if he was annoyed or if he was just momentarily distracted, like some of us. He then closed his eyes once more and it looked as if he was restarting the meditative exercise from the start again. By then I could no longer feel my feet.

After what seemed to be a short eternity, our eyes opened again when *Sensei* clapped his hands twice after saying '*Hai! Hajimemasu*¹⁴...' Spinning almost gracefully on the spot to turn and face the *kamiza*, *Sensei* then led us in a kneeling bow to the *kamiza*. He almost immediately spun back to face us and we bowed to each other, saying

¹⁴ 'Yes! Let's Start...'

‘*Onegaishimasu!*¹⁵’, and although he often asked either a brown-belt or a *yudansha* to lead in warm-ups, he would occasionally lead the class instead on a technical exercise that also doubled up as warm-up, and it was the case that evening. We were made to do spinning exercises that were referred to as ‘*Kaiten*’ and ‘*Tenkan*’ at our Aikido *dojo*. These movements, which required our bodies to constantly turn while pivoting on our feet often required deft reflexes in order to be done quickly, could also make a person feel giddy if you were not used to it. The turning of one’s head slightly before the rest of your body followed was one of the subtle aspects of performing it without losing one’s balance and posture. They were also one of the key fundamentals in the body mechanics that a large portion of Aikido techniques were based on. This is because the most defining characteristic of Aikido is its emphasis on leading and circular movements that advocated evasion in the place of direct opposition to any force that was directed at you, be it in the form of a grab or a strike. That being said, it takes quite an extended period of consistent practice to learn how a person could blend the movements of one’s body with the movements of an attacker or opponent while trying to defend oneself. The *Kaiten* and *Tenkan* movements are one of the most important foundations of most Aikido movements and techniques, as both form the core of the basic footwork or overall ‘body-work’ of the art, where the concepts of flow, harmony and circularity are central in realizing its martial ideology of non-aggressive self-defence. Ideally then, in a self-defence situation, it was often claimed that an adept Aikido practitioner was supposedly able to re-direct or use the force or momentum from one’s attackers back against them.

¹⁵ Probably best translated, within this context, as ‘Please assist and bear with me’.

We started our exercise by standing at an oblique *kamae*, or stance, facing the front, with one foot in the front and the other behind. This posture is also correspondingly mirrored by one's hands, quite differently from the way one walked, where the hand and foot swung in opposite directions while in motion. In Aikido practice, like in most other Japanese martial arts, the arms and legs on the same side of your body usually moved together in the performance of techniques. To perform *kaiten*, one first took a step forward with the back foot from *kamae* and the moment the foot lands forward, one is supposed to continue pivoting a hundred and eighty degrees on that foot as the rest of the body and the other foot follows. Upon completion of this motion, one now faces the opposite direction. As for *tenkan*, one simply pivots on the front foot while in *kamae*, and turns a hundred and eighty degrees, in either a clockwise or an anti-clockwise direction, until one also eventually faces the opposite direction. These exercises are then repeated over and over again at gradually increasing speeds with various combinations of the two according to the alternating commands of *Sensei*, who apparently took a cheeky child-like delight in confusing and confounding some of the newer practitioners as they spun giddily on the mats like novice dervishes.

The class that evening was quite a typical one in the sense that a lot of basic techniques were constantly revised. On Wednesdays, *Sensei* frequently placed an emphasis on honing our understanding of the fundamental Aikido throws that also required the practice of *ukemi*, or breakfalls, which required us to either roll our bodies along the mats, or even do high breakfalls that resembled somersaults. Performing *ukemi*, it should be noted, was virtually the other half of all Aikido practice. This was so because

one of the first things one learns in the *dojo* was not to throw, lock or even strike, but rather, it was the need to safely and confidently break one's fall and get back on one's feet after being thrown. Basic *ukemi* involves the learning of how one is able to do a *mae ukemi*, or a forward roll, beginning from a standing position while ending back up on your feet again. Likewise, there is the *ushiro ukemi*, or backward roll, that is practised as one learns to fall backwards and then getting back on your feet again in a single rolling movement. The fundamental importance and relevance of such *ukemi* skills become even more significant when one begins to be thrown by a training partner as they execute techniques on you, literally 'borrowing' your body for practice. As one progresses in the practice of such throws and the taking of *ukemi*, practice of each technique often becomes much quicker and spontaneous. Each partner thus becomes highly accustomed to the necessary movements that gradually become instinctual, as they both learn to incorporate and perform the roles that are required of each other in either the execution or the reception of a particular technique.

That evening, one of the techniques we worked on was *irimi-nage*¹⁶, one of the most basic, well-known and characteristic throwing techniques in Aikido, which literally means 'entering throw'. This is where one actually performs the basic footwork originally found in the *kaiten-tenkan* exercise. The throw is performed with an additional step where the *Aikidoka*¹⁷ uses her or his arm closest to the attacker to imbalance their body's centre until they fall backwards resulting from a circular upward push to the head and neck. Now – if the reader is still not sure of what I am talking about – think of a

¹⁶ Read as 'Eee-Ree-Me-Nah-Gay.' This also applies to all terms spelled '*Nage*' that appear in the text.

¹⁷ A practitioner of Aikido

charging ‘clothesline’ that is commonly seen in professional wrestling matches. This Aikido technique may look similar, but instead of striking with impact upon the attacker’s throat with your arm, the throw is applied in a more circular and subtle manner, where your arm is used to push your partner’s head upwards first and then downwards, hence, hyper-extending the attacker’s neck and spine backwards, virtually forcing them to do a backfall in order to protect themselves, especially if it happened at top speed. Of course, this undoubtedly has a certain amount of danger involved, particularly for the person being thrown, but for the most part, everyone practiced at her or his level of pace, comfort and expertise in the technique, either as a thrower (*Nage*) or a ‘throwee’ (*Uke*)¹⁸. Nonetheless, having a partner who is *not* trying to use your body as a crash dummy or a rag doll, while trying to let off steam after a really bad day at work, also helps in extending one’s Aikido ‘shelf-life’, on top of any potential injuries if you were not careful in taking *ukemi* itself.

A turning point, however, with pun intended, during this somewhat typical class was the last fifteen minutes when *Sensei* decided to make us practice *koshi-nage*, which literally translates as ‘hip-throw.’ This was usually viewed as a potentially high impact and technically more difficult throw that required a greater level of sensitivity and ability in *ukemi* on the part of *uke* and good body control by *nage*. In many instances it required a more advanced way of doing *ukemi*, where one executes a high slamming breakfall in order to protect oneself from a potentially dangerous technique being executed on *uke*. Hence, such *ukemi* is different from the basic forward rolls or backward rolls as one is

¹⁸ In other Aikido styles, *dojo* or even publications, the term *tori* may be use in place of *nage*. I will, however, for the sake of consistency use the term *nage* throughout this thesis in order to avoid confusion. It was also the same term used at my field site, the Clearwater *Aikikai*.

literally ‘rolling in the air’ before landing on the mats. A basic way of performing *koshi-nage* was for *nage* to literally hoist *uke* across her or his lower back, using their hip for leverage. *Uke* then performs a near forward 360-degree flip (like a *mae ukemi* in the air) prior to landing on the mats on the other side of *nage*. Depending upon the degree of skill that the *uke* possesses in executing such high *ukemi*, the landing can range from a soft and controlled landing, to a heavy and loud crash-landing of one’s body weight unto the mats. Most beginners start off with the latter.

Proceeding with the practice after *Sensei*’s initial demonstration, I partnered up with Pedro for this drill. It had been a fairly light class so far and since the end of the class was approaching, I suppose *Sensei* wanted to work us a little more during the last fifteen minutes of class. So over the next few minutes, the *dojo* was increasingly filled with the varying sounds of bodies often falling hard, or awkwardly, on the mats, continuously resonating like an orchestra of human percussion instruments made of flesh and bone, going at it in mixed rhythms with occasional grunting sounds by either men or women as they landed with differing degrees of athleticism and aestheticism. One also had to be careful not to throw your partner against another person, or even the walls, for that matter¹⁹. I was a little nervous about this practice as this technique had always been my worst, in both execution as *nage* and taking *ukemi* for it. Both Pedro and I took it slowly from the start and gradually began to work up a steady pace as each of us were suppose to throw each other four times – twice on our right and then on our left – before

¹⁹ Nevertheless, it looked as if it had happened before. As a precautionary measure, additional mats were also lined up against the walls where the mirrors were hung.

switching roles, a ritualized rule that was practised by all in the *dojo*, and largely common in most other Aikido *dojo*.

I remembered a time just over two years ago during the winter of 2002 when Pedro and I first met. We did not know each other as well back then as I was still new to the *dojo* and were partnered up for practice during one of my initial visits. What followed during one class was an intense practice of high impact throws resulting from another technique known as *kote-gaeshi*, where *uke* had to do another near three hundred and sixty degree flip to avoid a potentially wrist-breaking technique. Reflecting with some amusement on the past, I remembered, back then, that it seemed as if he was trying to test the strange newcomer from Edmonton and his *ukemi* ability. Perhaps one of the most frightening things in the martial arts is the human ego, as we threw each other strongly at least twenty times only in a matter of minutes, as if trying to see who would tire first. In the end, Jerry Lim, who was assigned to teach the class that evening, called for the end of class although Pedro and I still felt like continuing, refusing to tire. I believe from that day onward, there developed a sense of mutual respect between Pedro and myself, without having exchanged a single word or having engaged in conversation at all. This particular night's *koshi-nage* practice under Matsumoto *sensei*, however, was performed with Pedro with that same sense of mutual respect. Our friendship had developed over the months and the resulting rapport between fieldworker and respondent²⁰ had certainly grown further since then. But unfortunately though, through no fault of Pedro's, misfortune was to strike that night. Such are the hazards of fieldwork, I suppose.

²⁰ I am aware that 'respondent' is not exactly the politically correct term these days in an age of ethnographic reflexivity, but at the same time I also find the term 'consultant' somewhat pretentious and unnecessarily patronizing.

As I was being hoisted halfway up in midair during one of the throws where I was *uke*, I saw Larry Petrovic being thrown and landing directly at the same spot where I was also going to impact. Apparently, Pedro had not seen this as he continued the pivoting motion of the throw as I was swung across his hips, and I realized that I would very likely be crashing my legs into Larry's face and neck within the next half-second. Instinctively, I attempted to alter the direction of my fall to hopefully land safely away from Larry. As I tried to break out of Pedro's pivoting motion in midair, I twisted my body awkwardly while trying to land upright on my feet on the mats to avoid Larry. But it was a poorly judged and weakly co-ordinated effort that demanded a level of athleticism and finesse that my body was not prepared for, nor talented enough, to efficiently execute.

I was successful in breaking out of Pedro's grip but not so with my landing. The full impact of my bodyweight landed solely on just the outer rim of my right foot, and by the time I hit the mat, I heard a sound reverberating within my lower right leg that sounded like a combination of crunching and snapping, originating from somewhere inside my right foot. Some tissue or bone had given way in the foot and I knew, for sure, something was seriously wrong when a sudden sharp pain accompanied it, causing me to grimace intensely and curse under my breath. All the strength in my right leg suddenly left me, as a numbing feeling immediately shot right through it. I partially collapsed on one knee unto the mats, and for a brief moment, all my senses were focused upon the fears of what might be a broken foot. I could still hear Pedro's stunned reaction as he tried to help me up. But I failed to comprehend anything that Pedro was saying to me and virtually forgot where I was. All that was left was my sense of the sheer disabling pain

that shot through my foot. For a brief moment, from the corner of my eye, I thought I saw Matsumoto *sensei* walking quickly towards us. Everything else at that point went numb as my vision blurred, and all I could hear was my own heavy breathing and an increasingly loud ringing sound in my ears.

Damn this body.

CHAPTER ONE

Aikido, Culture and an Anthropology of the Body

Laying the path

How does one become a martial artist? More specifically, what does it mean, and what does it require in order for a person to dedicate one's life to the practice of a martial art? What are the social and cultural backgrounds of the individuals who undertake this path? Furthermore, what is it about learning potentially violent and fatal techniques that may be attractive to them? And just how far would some be willing to go in their devotion and commitment to a martial art and its accompanying expectations and obligations? Finally, in the process of becoming a part of such a community, what is gained, and at the same time, what is also lost? These were some of the questions that I grappled with throughout the period of my ethnographic fieldwork within a martial arts community known as the Clearwater *Aikikai* within the city of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. The Clearwater *Aikikai* was an organization that instructed and practiced a Japanese martial art known as Aikido, which was founded in the first half of the twentieth century. While I would not claim the conceit of having complete answers to these questions, one, nonetheless, hopes that this study will provide a more critical and careful understanding of such a phenomenon, or at least also having played a role towards constructing an important analytical and scholarly platform for answering such questions.

This thesis, therefore, is essentially an ethnographic study of the modern Japanese martial art known as Aikido primarily from a sociological and anthropological perspective. The term Aikido, broadly translated as 'The Way of Harmony', is a Japanese

martial art that predominantly employs the use of throwing and joint-locking techniques which were inspired by classical Japanese martial systems that utilize a comprehensive array of weaponry and grappling techniques (Frederic 1991, p. 3-5, Long 2001, p. 12-15, Shioda 1997, p. 11-13). Particularly since the official inception of the name Aikido in 1942, it has been frequently referred to as a *budo*, or a 'martial way', as it also seeks to transcend the practice of mere martial technique, while serving as a medium that unifies the body and mind for the aim of ethical and spiritual perfection (Ueshiba 2002, p.10-13).

In addition, the most fundamental, well-known and identifiable characteristic of Aikido, by virtue of its name, is its claim to be a unique set of self-defence techniques that blend or harmonize with an attacker's force while protecting oneself *and* one's attacker. Consequently, its martial techniques are allegedly a metaphorical embodiment of certain philosophical and pacifist principles that its practitioners are supposed to incorporate and express through exemplary social conduct. The blending and yielding characteristics of Aikido techniques are, therefore, interpreted to embody the higher principles of interpersonal harmony and non-violence that form a crucial component of the Aikido practitioner's martial ethos and ideology. As a result of this, there are almost no competitions in the practice of Aikido in most of its existing sub-styles and different organizations¹. In other words, therefore, the ideal *Aikidoka* is an individual who is expected to be well-versed in potentially lethal martial techniques but is also likened, ironically at the same time, to be an active advocate and believer of non-violence, peace and social reconciliation.

¹ The most significant exception, however, would be the *Tomiki Ryu* Aikido, or its parent organization known as *Shodokan* Aikido, which possesses a substantial following in Japan and other countries

The pugilistic and moral ethos of an *Aikidoka* can, then, come across as being somewhat inconsistent or self-contradictory. For it encourages its practitioners in striving towards the creation of what may be known as a ‘peaceful warrior’, an ideal typical category of a modern day embodiment of benevolent heroism, where the capacity and potential for physical violence is restrained, but never entirely suppressed, while superseded by a set of pacifist moral values. A large part of the reason for this is due to the ideological and historical foundations of Aikido, which is closely linked to a set of syncretized philosophical and para-religious beliefs drawn from various aspects of Shintoism, Buddhism, and a Japanese religious movement that once gained significance during the early years of the twentieth century known as the *Omoto-kyo*, broadly translated as the ‘Teaching of the Great Origin’. Constant and dedicated practice in Aikido, as a result, is often believed among its adherents to gradually enable a practitioner to ultimately gain ‘personal enlightenment’ and ‘perfection of character’.

Accompanying such ideals, another defining but non-exclusive characteristic of Aikido is also its propagation (with varying levels of emphasis from organization to organization) of a belief in the notion of *ki* (Long 2001, p. 12-15, Ueshiba 1997, p. 19-31), which is usually understood by many of its practitioners as a form of ‘internal energy’ inherent within one’s body that can be developed and harnessed, in complementary fashion either to the application of martial techniques, or for maintaining and improving one’s health. The term *ki* here is highly similar to the term *qi* in Mandarin Chinese, and both refer to the same metaphysical and embodied essence that allegedly resides in every living human being. This so-called essence is, then, believed to be more

easily and effectively harnessed by an individual who has been regularly practising Aikido over an extended period of time, supposedly allowing one to perform remarkable feats of strength and power without resorting to raw physical strength, a quality that is not held in too high regard within the world of Aikido practice (Westbrook and Ratti 1970, Yuasa 1993).

On a further note, it has also been often asserted by a number of its practitioners that consistent and dedicated practice in Aikido may eventually enable one to perform a number of ‘supernatural’ or metaphysical feats that, often attributed to one’s *ki*, appear to transcend physical laws. Aikido’s corpus of techniques and skills is, then, often practiced with an emphasis on the neutralization of physical attacks without necessarily leading to injury or death to the attacker. Regarded as a *budo* (Ueshiba 2002, p. 14-19), or a ‘martial way’, Aikido is therefore understood to be a somatic, corporeal and embodied manifestation of a martial sub-culture that seeks to ambitiously cultivate both martial and ethical proficiency for its practitioners, especially among its most loyal and committed followers. As a result of several efforts to spread its practice, it has steadily evolved into a modern-day transnational martial sub-culture that has gained immense popularity on a global scale, particularly within the last thirty years. This was chiefly due to active efforts by senior practitioners, who have, since the latter half of the twentieth century, sought to propagate Aikido practice in also every major city in the world, far beyond the shores of Japan. Consequently, the fieldwork conducted for this thesis was partly, for this reason, conducted in the city of Calgary, in the province of Alberta, a place largely distinct from Aikido’s own historical origins in Japan.

Sensing Culture

The central analytical and theoretical focus of this thesis is an investigation into how corporeal and sensual practices of the *body*, located within the contextual grounds of a specific social-cultural and pugilistic universe, play a significant role in the creation and maintenance of a sub-cultural identity among members within a transnational and globalized pugilistic commune in Canada. In other words, this study fundamentally seeks to understand how and why one becomes and remains a practitioner of Aikido in the city Calgary in Canada. Hence, through careful ethnographic description and analysis of an Aikido community based in this city, the key theoretical premise of this thesis contends that the role of the body, in acts of embodied performance, experience and communication, is both vital and essential to the construction and also the re-construction of shared identities, cultural practices and social ideology – all which are seen to be integral towards the creation of an Aikido *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990, Mauss 2005, p. 73-81). Consequently, it is also argued that the making of such a habitus, inevitably entails the incorporation and embodiment of not just the history of one's own body, but also the broader history of a pugilistic ideology that stems from critical developments in the history of Japan, particularly since the nineteenth century.

At the same time, the broader arguments of my thesis further seek to advocate and contribute towards the rapidly increasing recognition of an *anthropology and sociology of the body* in the practice of ethnography, particularly in its continuing relevance and strength within sociological and anthropological theory and research. Numerous examples include John W. Burton's (2001) and David Howes's (2003) recognition of the

prospects of anthropologies of the body as a field of study in their own right; Helen Thomas's (2005) and Sally Ann Allen Ness's (1999, p. 125-144) reflections on the intimate connection between dance, culture and the body; Nancy Scheper-Hughes's (2002, p. 33-63) critical study of the trafficking of human organs; Margo DeMello's (2000) insights on the cultural significance of tattoos in modern society; Joanne Entwistle's (2001, p. 33-57) observations on the power and effect of dressing on bodies; Shigehisa Kuriyama's (1994, p. 23-41) study of the traditional Chinese notions of *Qi* and 'Wind' in the body; and finally, Andrew Kipnis's (1994, p. 201-223) analyses regarding the significance of the Chinese bodily ritual bow known as the *koutou*. Such growing awareness of the centrality of the body within social and cultural theory in recent years has certainly enjoyed an increasing acceptance and reflexive viability in expanding the theoretical depth and empirical width of the social sciences. Such a project, therefore, seeks to re-emphasize just how the notion of culture is also very much located within a sensory order, or what Kathryn-Linn Guerts (2002, p. 3-19, 227-250) refers to as a *sensorium*, which inevitably requires the body as medium for its continued existence and relevance in our everyday lives.

Correspondingly, this thesis further argues that an anthropology and sociology of the body would be particularly crucial in complementing our understanding of the various socio-cultural environments where embodied and sensory cultural practices are central to one's experience, participation and continued acceptance within them. Thus, this study seeks to broaden and corroborate our perspectives in relation to ongoing work by employing relevant theoretical frameworks and research that are focused on the world of

the martial arts, a social-cultural field in which Aikido is clearly situated in. The ethnographic spotlight of this thesis, therefore, centres upon the dynamics of a community's embodied and cultural involvement within the Japanese martial art of Aikido in the city of Calgary, where the body ultimately remains both the *canvas* and *cosmos* for the inscription, incorporation, socialization and subsequent 'civilizing' medium of the construction of any individual's Aikido *habitus*. It is, then, a *habitus* that comprises its own logic of practice, where an embodied history is constituted, constructed and maintained by a corporeal and ideological pedagogy correspondingly located in its own field of power. Additionally, participation within the practical logic of this community can only be forged through a cultural medium that does not merely encompass thought, concept or symbol, but must also include a sensory and embodied domain. This is because the practice of Aikido requires the use of not just the mind, but also a living and reactive vessel that contains the mind, such as that of a human body of flesh, blood, bones and nerves. Consequently, this study will also hopefully serve as a further demonstration of the limits of mere reliance upon pure abstraction and theorizing in attempts at understanding and analyzing cultural and social phenomena.

In other words, broadly defined concepts such as culture or social identity, or the more abstract notions of Selfhood and Otherness, are qualities that are, more than often, insufficiently and ill-defined whenever we employ the term 'social construction' to understand them, especially if one insists on an apprehension of social reality as being rooted merely in ideas, cognition, symbolism, beliefs, reflection or imagination. The Cartesian distinction of the body and mind is, therefore, challenged and rejected here

through the ethnographic means of this study. For what remains to be taken into further account is the dimension of the *senses* and *corporealities* (Foster 1995) that incorporate culture and identity. Hence, a deeper understanding of culture and identity requires us to render notions of Selfhood and Otherness as never being entirely *relativized* or *subjectivized* on the one hand, nor, on the other hand, should they ever be seen as entirely *essentialized* or *objectivized*. To do so, one must take into account the corporeal, organic and sensual practices of our flesh, nerves, emotions, bones and blood, which involves the use and experience of our bodies that are also inevitably in constant dialogue or even tension with other bodies. It follows, then, that in order to become an *Aikidoka* (a practitioner of Aikido) or to become anyone for that matter; it requires a clear but implicit *practical logic* that involves all of a person's senses and the body that incorporates them. Thus, to paraphrase a well-known line from Simone de Beauvoir (1989), *one is not born an Aikidoka, but rather becomes one*. For we learn with our bodies, with what is done to our bodies, and at the same time, with what the body does to itself and for itself. Correspondingly, if 'everything is social', as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has implied in his works (Wacquant and Calhoun 2002b, p. 5-10), the social then, must itself also be regarded as always being *embodied, sensual and corporeal*.

Anthropology and the Martial Arts

Apart from playing an important role in the growing recognition of the role of the body in the analysis of social-cultural phenomena, this study also hopes to effectively further outline and exemplify the growing potential of a critical and reflexive anthropology of the martial arts and other similar pugilistic sub-cultures. Hence, the

ethnographic context in which this thesis is grounded upon would serve as an important contribution to the growing awareness of the scholastic potential of anthropological studies in the field of the martial arts and pugilism. For in spite of a relatively small but increasing number of relevant works, substantial and critical scholarship on the institutionalized, historical and performative qualities of 'body cultures' (Brownell 1995), *specifically within* the martial arts, have largely been ignored and found lacking. A major reason for this is attributed towards the tendency for the martial arts to be unfairly trivialized as a potential field of research, although this has afflicted other related fields as well, such as the sociology and anthropology of sport, albeit to a lesser extent. Such unfounded marginality perhaps reveals that anthropology, or the rest of the social sciences for that matter, still retains, in certain circles, a number of parochial, intellectually conservative, and narrow-minded preconceptions and presumptions on what qualifies as 'proper' or 'appropriate' topics for field research.

From another standpoint, this may also be partially indicative of the corporeally protected and privileged scholarly cocoons in which some academics unfortunately remain encapsulated in – a victim of their own disembodied intellectualism – where their relative lack of personal exposure to alternate sensual worlds *where bodies do matter* may have prevented a greater perception and appreciation of their fundamental significance in ethnography and anthropology. To be more precise, the martial arts have remained a marginal field within ethnography largely because of the allegedly 'un-intellectual', low-brow, violent, populist, visceral and carnal aspects of such a research topic. This thesis, therefore, hopes to resolutely resist such potentially problematic and

elitist inhibitions, and seeks to unapologetically provide, through an ethnographic and embodied account of Aikido practice, an important addition and contribution towards situating a fresher context for ethnographic work.

I, therefore, hope to further demonstrate the scholastic viability and potential of further anthropological or sociological research into the martial arts while acknowledging and drawing inspiration from the contextual and analytical influences of major works or established fields of research in scholarly discourse. More specifically, these range from earlier philosophical, sociological or anthropological perspectives such as works by Victor Turner (1984, 1985) and Catherine Bell (1990, p. 299-313, 1997) on ritual processes and an anthropology of performance; critical and controversial perspectives on the 'invention of tradition' (i.e. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983); the reflective and insightful contributions of Bryan Turner on theorizing with the body (1984, 1991a, p. 116-124, 1991b, p. 1-35, Wainwright and Turner 1999, p. 98-120); the groundbreaking works of Thomas Csordas (1994, 2002) on the religious, somatic and existential body in culture and society; Mary Douglas's (1970, 1973) valuable views on the body as a metaphorical and carnal expression of an existing social order; the post-colonial critiques of cultural imperialism and Orientalism by Edward Said (1979, 1994); the potential plasticity of the body through cultural alterity and mimesis by Michael Taussig (1993); the relationship between embodiment and social memory by Paul Connerton (1989); the phenomenological and philosophical grounding provided by the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002, 2004 and Drew 1990, p. 209-219, Shusterman 2005, p. 151-180); the recent work of various scholars on new religious and social movements (Larana et. al.

1997); and last but certainly not the least, the broader implications of works by Jonathan Friedman (1994, 2004, p. 63-140), Ted Lewellen (2002), Ulf Hannerz (1998) and Arjun Appadurai (2000, 2003, p. 337-349), all who have examined the dialectics and dynamics surrounding cultural identity in the context of transnationalism and globalization. In addition, this thesis seeks to build upon the work that a growing number of scholars from within the social sciences, who have over the years, contributed to specific anthropological and sociological reflections on pugilism and the martial arts. Further discussion of this will take place in the following chapter.

As noted earlier, a key and central theoretical framework of this thesis will be grounded within the theoretical insights of Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. 1990, 1997), such as his conceptualization of terms such the *habitus* and *field*, drawn from his entire corpus of theoretical contributions best understood under the rubric of ‘practice theory’ and the advocacy of a *reflexive sociology* (or anthropology) that underlines Bourdieu’s commitment to never lose sight of the material and embodied realities of the social while consistently subjecting them to theoretical inspection. A prime characteristic of Bourdieu’s ideas also rest on the need to reject parochial and polemical approaches to critical research, never relying merely upon implosive subjectivism or naïve objectivism, but seeking a third reflexive space, one that combines the strengths of each in any social scientific endeavour. This is what he has also coined in the past as ‘fieldwork in philosophy’, in which reliance either only on pure theory or dogged empiricism is insufficient and self-defeating. It is felt that Bourdieu’s insights would be the conceptual and theoretical core of this thesis, largely because I will seek to demonstrate, as others

have also had, that his ideas prove to be extremely relevant to any penetrating or informative study of the martial arts and other related pugilistic *body cultures*. Bearing in mind Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) diction of 'learning by the body', one can, therefore, view the incorporation of an Aikido habitus as a disciplining discourse for both mind and body, interlaced by a heightened sense of one's own fleshly vulnerability and mortality, where notions of identity, culture and community are components of social life that are fundamentally *visceral, sensed and practiced*, and not simply 'imagined'² or 'socially constructed'. To Bourdieu, therefore, attempting to engage the field with such a perspective ultimately allows the ethnographer to

...abandon the cavalier point of view of the anthropologist who draws up plans, maps, diagrams and genealogies. That is all very well, and inevitable, as one moment, that of objectivism, in the anthropologist's procedures. But you shouldn't forget the other possible relation to the social world, that of agents really engaged in the market, for example – the level that I am interested in mapping out. One must thus draw up a theory of this non-theoretical, partial, somewhat down-to-earth relationship with the social world that is the relation of ordinary experience.
(Pierre Bourdieu, interviewed by Honneth et. al. 1990)

Martial arts practices such as Aikido are further compounded by a syncretic para-religious and para-philosophical ethos that also seeks to imbue the committed practitioner with a set of dispositions and strategies that ironically, also has a tendency to 'forget the body' *via* the body as a consequence of an esoteric outlook within its internal cosmology as part of its habitus, in order to have a 'feel' for the art and its corresponding lifeworld. This further underlines the importance of Bourdieu's ideas in any ethnographic study of the martial arts and pugilistic worlds. To some extent, at the same time, such analytical subtleties and obvious relevance of Bourdieu's ideas in this study have already been well-

² Such as the overly relied on and increasingly clichéd term 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991).

exemplified and documented by the recent contributions of Loic Wacquant, who may arguably be understood as the most significant intellectual successor to Bourdieu's scholarly legacy as revealed by the content of his theoretical influences (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 2002a, p. 549-556, 2004b, p. 387-414, 2006). An attempt at locating Bourdieu's ideas in this study must also take into the inroads already made by Wacquant.

Wacquant's own insightful and bold study of the sub-cultural dynamics and universe of the boxing world, revealed in several journal articles (Wacquant 1992, p. 221-254, 1995a, p. 489-535, 1995b, p. 65-93, 1998a, p. 325-352, 1998b, p. 1-42, 2001, p. 181-194) and the publication of his book entitled *Body and Soul: Ethnographic Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (Wacquant 2004a), was probably the first major ethnographic work that effectively showcased an attempt to rethink the possibilities and potential of ethnography through an active appreciation and blending of rigorous empirical work and critical theorizing into a world that few, if any, ethnographers have ever ventured into. The full limits of an ethnography where he or she is not only a participant observer but also an *objectified participant*, where one's body and senses are also subjected to the requirements and expectations of being one of them, while short of being a 'native', is an important point for reflection. Similarly, I hope that my observations *and* corporeal participation within the social-cultural confines of an Aikido commune will be able to further build upon these insights by drawing upon my reflections within a transnational social milieu that is diverse and embedded within a conjuncture of several cultures located within a single social environment.

An Ethnography Out of Place

Apart from the accumulated time frame of approximately eleven months that I spent in Calgary for my fieldwork, a total of forty-four semi-structured interviews with adult members of the Clearwater *Aikikai* were conducted and recorded, consisting of thirty-seven male and seven female participants, with each interview lasting an average of eighty minutes. To further complement this, over two hundred and fifty film-based pictures were taken together with a total of more than one and a half gigabytes worth of videos³ and digital pictures were collected. Another one hundred megabytes worth of videos that recorded various Aikido based weapons *kata*⁴ that I had learnt during my time spent at my field site were also digitally archived. A daily journal was also kept for each day that was spent during my time in Calgary and all this is further supplemented by the collection of an assortment of Aikido-related paraphernalia obtained at the Clearwater *Aikikai* throughout the period of my participation. An added 'quantitative' component to my study was a semi-structured survey that was conducted among parents who had sent their children to the Clearwater *Aikikai* for lessons in children's classes.

At this point, some additional but important reflections with regards to the manner in which this study was conducted are in order here. This is because, if taken quite literally, I would be the first to admit that the term 'fieldwork' would sound rather inappropriate or even misleading, considering the conditions in which my own ethnography was conducted. All of this may be seen as somewhat detracting from the

³ Due to budget constraints in obtaining a digital camera and recorder of higher quality, I was often working with one that only managed to collect videos and pictures up a 3.1 megapixel capacity. The film-based photographs stemmed from a time when I initially used an 'old school' film camera during the initial stages of my fieldwork when I first arrived in Calgary, Alberta.

⁴ *Kata* literally means 'form'. The term *kata* is often used in the martial arts to refer to pre-arranged and choreographed moves that allow the practice of various techniques and exercises.

more established and canonical features of the anthropological enterprise, partially due to the fact that this study was conducted far from any kind of 'classical' anthropological site, which in the past, were instances of pre-industrial or non-Western societies and cultures. In addition, it was not conducted in a third-world or non-English speaking environment where living conditions, commuting facilities and dietary conditions might have proven to be a challenge. Neither did I have to learn a new language that I was unfamiliar with, as I did not even leave Canada for fieldwork. The often frostbitten city of Calgary was also certainly more urban-like rather than resembling 'a field', a bush, a ghetto, a jungle, a war zone, a village, or even a so-called tropical paradise in the Pacific where Captain Cook may or may not have been mistakenly killed, to say the very least.

All this perhaps further de-exoticized the parameters of my ethnography as I conducted my interviews, obtained my observations and experienced my personal interactions with 'members of the field' in the Aikido *dojo*, shopping malls, buses, trains, suburban homes, apartments, restaurants, recreation centres and even local pubs. To add to this ethnographic confusion or subterfuge, the topic of my interest was a Japanese martial art, and I was certainly quite far away from Shinjuku, Tokyo, where the Aikido World Headquarters are located. None of what I was doing and where I was doing it appeared to possess clear national, geographical, social and political boundaries. Nonetheless, this proved to be neither an advantage or disadvantage as the usual difficulties that accompany any fieldworker into an unfamiliar environment were abound, most notably, the fact that the ethnographer still had the unchanging and challenging task

of learning about his 'field' from his respondents and adapting to an unknown environment for an extended period of time⁵.

In spite of all this, to those who may be more accustomed to more typically well-defined fields and their accompanying anecdotes - such as Balinese cockfights; Fierce People in the Amazon; parachuting into the Sudan; the sexual coming of age of Samoan girls; the political systems upon a Burmese highland; the Kula Ring of Trobrianders; or even dramatic shivering tales from the Canadian North - this study might, on initial appearance, probably appear to be *out of place*. Home for me was, after all, more than often, a rented room within a house that provided a hot shower and a roof over my head within the city limits, which possessed all the amenities of modernity, and not a shack in a rainforest jungle with poor sanitation and inquisitive mosquitoes. To more dogmatic and fundamentalist individuals, this might even appear to be wrong or erroneous when compared to more conventional or traditional views of the well-known anthropological rite of passage⁶ that all graduate students had to endure. Thus, if Malinowski and the other anthropological giants of our discipline had 'left the verandah' in their attempt at knowing their subjects on the ground, it may come across to others that I, on the other hand, never left it but instead walked right back into the house.

⁵ Perhaps one should add that the entire country of Canada was my 'field' and that my 'fieldwork' had already begun the moment I left Singapore.

⁶ I am reminded of an incident some years ago when I attended a graduate course conducted by an anthropology professor who bluntly told me that it was better to do fieldwork 'out there' such as 'the North', implying that ethnography in the city or urban centres did not qualify as 'real fieldwork'. Apparently he failed to take into consideration that I was already 'out there', having travelled halfway across the world to get to Canada from a tropical island in Southeast Asia.

I am certainly not naively or pompously claiming complete originality or exclusivity in the contextual nature of how my fieldwork was conducted. The conditions in which my fieldwork was conducted have also been increasingly encountered by innumerable graduate students and scholars in their ethnographic efforts over the years, and countless books and articles have also been written about this. As noted earlier, anthropologists such as Ulf Hannerz and Arjun Appadurai, to just name a few, have also contributed significantly to the notion of a growing sense of transnationalism and the idea of *ethnoscapes*, *world cities* and *global villages* that transcend geographical and national boundaries. Nonetheless, my methodological strategies and ethnographic experiences were also complicated by the fact that I am neither Japanese nor Canadian. The positionality of my role as an Asian and male ethnographer who could arguably be categorized as part of a cultural, economic and political minority in Canada presented a somewhat unique situation for me. I am a Singaporean by nationality and Chinese by ethnicity, and had undergone a bilingual education in English and Chinese but am most comfortable speaking a local *patois* known as Singlish (i.e. Singaporean English)⁷. In the course of my fieldwork, such a state of affairs, especially moving to Canada, brings along its own fair share of complications, obstacles, uncertainties, anxieties and the occasional less-than-pleasant cross-cultural encounter⁸. This was further framed within an increasingly multicultural social environment and transnational matrix which required me to interact extensively with individuals that were made up of a loosely banded sub-

⁷ A Singaporean linguistic creole that broadly incorporates the elements of English, Mandarin, Hokkien, Malay and Tamil in everyday conversation. Feel free to contact me for a free demonstration.

⁸ I would also distinguish my situation from the ethnographic experience of a white, Anglophone, well-funded and well-connected researcher who conducts her or his study in a third-world or impoverished environment in spite of being a cultural minority at the same time. The relations of power between those who are being studied and those who study them in different contexts are seldom similar in terms of access to economic, linguistic and cultural capital by the researcher, which is often influenced by larger geo-political relations and lingering colonial and 'racial' sentiments in different societies.

cultural community that did not live in one single location or district in the city of Calgary, but nonetheless gathered together regularly and identified with each other as members of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, to be more precise.

The Clearwater *Aikikai* was, therefore, a community that broadly stemmed from Japanese, Russian, French, American, Quebecois, Ukrainian, English, Austrian, Chinese, Malaysian, Taiwanese, Native Canadian, Mexican and East Indian cultural backgrounds. Not to mention the odd Singaporean ethnographer. For this reason, in many ways, this ethnography is also not simply about a Canadian community that practices the Japanese martial art of Aikido, but is also a study of how notions of culture, nationality and identity have themselves become ‘blurred genres’ (as Clifford Geertz has put it) or ‘travelling cultures’ (Clifford 1992, p. 96-116) as they further go about encountering, incorporating and maintaining a pugilistic socio-cultural universe that could be seen as ranging from the highly familiar to the mystically exotic. A large part of the reason stems from the fact that the practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, for all its corpus of martial techniques, was also very much a martial art that has sought to retain a clear link to its Japanese cultural origins.

To practice Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, to incorporate an Aikido *habitus*, one, therefore, had to also continually mediate and negotiate with, and possibly even re-invent oneself in light of a cultural logic that is both embodied and idealized in Aikido practice. Nonetheless, it further made me particularly self-conscious of the fact that the effects and subsequent responses to such processes were also never necessarily uniform

or similar among all my respondents, including myself. For each one of us brought into the *dojo* a variety of previously incorporated embodied histories that never necessarily interpreted the same experience in identical fashion. In other words, there was no singular and clear underlying reason why people join Aikido or remain in Aikido for the rest of their lives, but at the same time, there appeared to be a number of interesting continuities and parallels in the character of their motivations and meanings that each of them gave to their participation.

The ethnographic locus of this study, then, may be described as a *field out of the field*, but is concurrently a unique pugilistic and socio-cultural universe that possesses a vast range of peoples, spaces and places that have transcended the geographical boundaries of their origins. At the same time, this particular environment that I was immersed in for an extended period of time has inevitably rendered a number of invaluable insights, experiences and encounters that have also affected and influenced my interpretations and interactions in the course of own my research and writing⁹. In other words, a growing recognition of these obvious removals from older or more classical conceptions of what fieldwork has entailed clearly hints towards the changing and constantly evolving nature of ethnography for anthropological research. Thus, it seems increasingly challenging, counterintuitive or even counter-productive at times to speak literally or categorically of nations, cultures and societies as if they were mutually exclusive social-cultural islands, particularly in light of the ever increasing post-colonial, relativizing and reflexive challenges (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fisher

⁹ On a personal note, one must admit that it has also changed me, if we recognize the fact that ethnography not only has an inevitable effect on the communities it studies but also upon the researcher her or himself.

1999, p. 7-16) to the scholastic authority of anthropology and sociology as academic disciplines that no can longer take for granted, claims of a naïve and authoritarian objectivity in our work and observations.

Such a state of affairs has further called upon the anthropologist to critically reflect on his or her acquiescent role in colonizing, orientalizing and hegemonizing projects of the past, while presently seeking to adapt and reframe the practice of anthropology and ethnography to apprehending new levels of transnationalism and transculturalism that are encapsulating and enveloping the world that we live in. From another point of view, therefore, my research and the ‘field’ that I had chosen, was in many ways, both a symptom and a product of a far broader anthropological reflexivity that has been attempting to reassert and reconcile the practice of ethnography with the contradictions and complicities of the past along with the present conditions of our times, in a world where the term ‘culture’ has itself also become a highly charged, rhetorical, contested, politicized and strategic concept. The potential contribution of this study, then, not only directs anthropological inquiry into a newer ethnographic dimension; it also plays a significant role in analytical efforts pertaining to qualitative research methodology and the nature of ethnographic work.

An embodied and carnal language

In spite of the fact that I remained in Canada¹⁰, what I did have to firstly learn, or perhaps re-learn, in my case, was much more than a textual language, but was for me

¹⁰ It might interest some readers that I did finally make it to Japan in May 2006, a nine-day journey that was made for both personal and academic reasons. This resulted in an intended epilogue of this thesis, but will not be appearing, at this time, due to certain length constraints.

instead *an entirely new sensibility* altogether. A large proportion of my ‘participant observation’ was spent immersing myself, my own body and senses, within the regular and almost daily training regime of the Clearwater *Aikikai* that I partook in at Calgary. My own *bodily capital* was, therefore, also constantly at stake, and even at risk. For it also included the need to gradually adapt to the expectations of being ‘one of them’ as one went about perceiving and incorporating the necessary dispositions and strategies, *through the body*, that were required as an active practitioner of Aikido, a task which was perhaps only partially achieved as a consequence of my liminal or ‘friendly outsider’ status and the limited time I spent there.

This is, however, again not to naively say, of course, that it was the first time any ethnographic fieldwork had been conducted this way, for in many ways, all fieldwork is embodied and sensual. The distinction, however, should be made with regards to the degree of one’s corporeal or sensual embeddedness and necessary reflexivity within the social-cultural milieu of one’s field site, particularly so within body cultures where one’s corporeality and the senses take great precedence over highly textualized, symbolic and conceptualized forms of inter-personal discourse. The decidedly sensual and corporeal process in *becoming an Aikidoka* was, for that reason, a *fundamental* and *reflexive* element of my ethnographic undertaking, as the martial arts on the whole place a strong emphasis on the training and discipline of the body, along with the mind, which is ultimately an irreducible component of the former.

Re-expressing such an approach in sort of a Geertzian manner, I, therefore, needed to *penetrate as deeply as possible* and with as much *thickness* I could muster, minus the cockfights involving non-human subjects. Hence, a much more sensual and more intimate appreciation and understanding of the social-cultural universe that my respondents were a part of could only have been achieved by my own necessary embodied experience of their practices. There was no compromise to this as the limits of mere observation would be sorely felt here. Both my mental and physical faculties, along from my corporeal interactions and embodying experiences with other individuals, were clearly an inevitable component of this ethnography if it was ever to be possible.

One, for that reason, could not simply '*think Aikido*' or '*imagine Aikido*', as one also needed to also *do Aikido*. This perhaps follows a lead that was insightfully noted by Nick Crossley (1995, p. 43-63) with regards to the state of social theory and research surrounding the body – for it seemed that in spite of the growing awareness of the importance of the body in sociology, too much discussion has been directed towards *what is done to the body* as opposed to *what the body itself does* in concert together with other bodies. The latter, where we are concerned about what the body does, is distinguished by Crossley as pertaining closer to a *carnal sociology*, where greater emphasis is directed towards the praxeological components of social life involving the body. Drawing inspiration from Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002, Matthew 2006, p. 38-56), what is again proposed is the need to transcend the dualism between mind and body, and to recognize an 'intercarnal subjectivity' of bodies. This is where perception, behaviour and thought are not divorced from what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the *body-subject*, and that culture

is seen to be inseparable from practices of the body. The following passage probably best elucidates the basic ideas of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach.

Other human beings are never pure spirit for me: I only know them through their glances, their gestures, their speech – in other words, through their bodies. Of course another human being is certainly more than simply a body to me: rather, this other is a body animated by all manner of intentions, the origin of numerous actions and words. These I remember and they go to make up my sketch of their moral character. Yet I cannot detach someone from their silhouette, the tone of their voice and its accent. If I see them for even a moment, I can reconnect with them instantaneously and far more thoroughly than if I were to go through a list of everything or hearsay. Another person, for us, is a spirit which haunts a body and we seem to see a whole host of possibilities contained within this body when it appears before us; the body is the very presence of these possibilities. So the process of looking at human beings from the outside – that is, at other people – leads us to reassess a number of distinctions which once seemed to hold good such as that between mind and body. (Merleau-Ponty 2004, p. 82-83)

It was, therefore, completely necessary to self-consciously shed the thin and occasionally misleading or pretentious veil of a participant-observer who largely watches and 'participates' from a privileged position of corporeal exclusivity which, in some cases, might have been an advantage, but could also emerge as a stumbling obstacle that would prove fatal to further critical insights in the context of an anthropology of the body. This is especially so in the case of any research into the martial arts or any related body culture, where once again, mere visual, linguistic and symbolic discourse is insufficient to constitute the cultural ethos of being one of them – short of actually becoming a full convert or a so-called native of their social-cultural universe.

The context of my fieldwork, nonetheless, needed to recognize that the practice of any martial art takes into account the training and disciplining of the body and senses, as one gradually 'learnt the ropes' that enabled a person to be part of an apprenticeship towards becoming a modern day 'peaceful warrior' of a martial art that *paradoxically*

draws its inspiration from a pacifist ideology of non-violence. Hence, adopting an approach largely confined to observing from a safe distance, together with a dependence upon interviews, photographs, field notes, statistical or qualitative surveys and secondary sources of information or other related material paraphernalia would appear to simply miss the whole point of an embodied or sensual ethnography, or an *anthropology of the senses*, for that matter. This is, of course, not to say that such information gathered is in any way unimportant, but they would be insufficient if one were to effectively exclude the ethnographer's own experiences and embodied insights.

Subsequently, I am, however, also not advocating a kind of self-indulgent, implosive and narcissistic ethnographic self-narrative that can often become increasingly removed from the ethnographer's field environment and the other individuals who are located within his or her field. What is being proposed, then, is a self-conscious (but not self-absorbed) effort as directing our attention towards an ethnography that reclaims for itself the full range of cultural hexes that are fundamentally corporeal and embodied in nature, and are never polemically privileged either in terms of the audio, the visual, the linguistic or the purely theoretical. Drawing upon the philosophical perspectives of Merleau-Ponty (2002, Shusterman 2005, p. 151-180, Carman 2005, p. 50-73) in the phenomenology of embodiment, I am then, seeking to put into practice, through ethnography, the recognition of the *lived* and *situated* context in which all cultural phenomenon resides. For the body in any social-cultural environment is also a *dialogical* body and never a *monological* one, and to fail to adhere to this understanding while being encapsulated by mere neological and disembodied theoreticism or intellectualism only

does violence and a disservice to the continuing relevance of the anthropological enterprise through the practice of ethnography.

Hence, through a grounded and embodied approach, this dissertation ultimately seeks to demonstrate and complement the momentum and progress that has already been obtained towards recognizing the growing centrality of the body, while hoping to avoid the potential pitfalls of ethnographic work that appear to run counter to any anthropological and sociological endeavour. And just as the body is an organism of somatic reflexivity that thinks, feels, acts, reacts, remembers, communicates *in relation* to other similarly contextualized human bodies, the ethnographic core of this study will be, therefore, figuratively and literally, the flesh, blood and bones of this thesis.

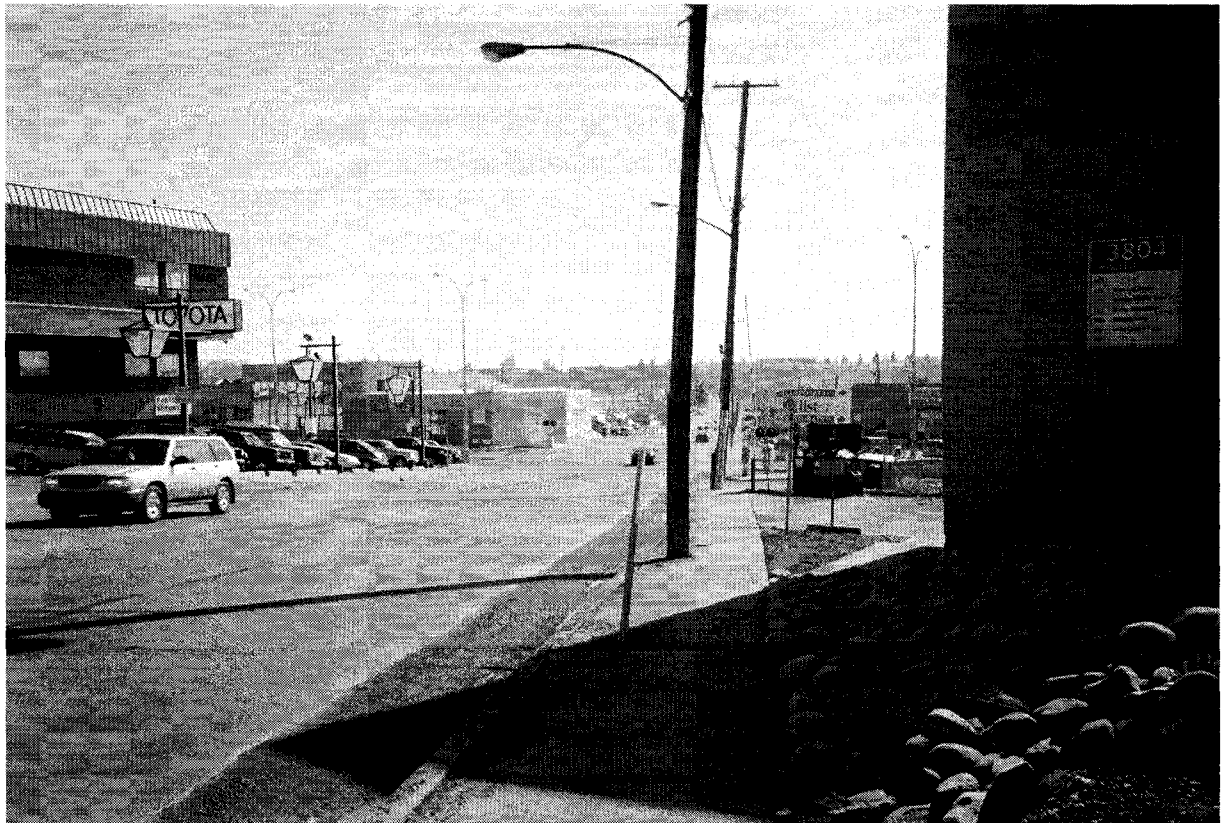


Plate 1. Street leading towards the warehouse district where the Clearwater *Aikikai* was located

CHAPTER TWO

A Growing Body: The Martial Arts in Academic Discourse

The journey so far

Over the years, scholarly or academic literature that surrounds the topic of the martial arts or Aikido, in particular, has been largely limited or even non-existent at times. Nevertheless, recent developments in the last few decades have seen steady but slow progress in terms of academic interest. One of the earliest names that often come to mind is that of Donn Frederick Draeger, who perhaps, provided the first and most significant attempts at analyzing and documenting the Asian martial arts from a scholarly point of view, laying the foundation for future efforts by several others. Beginning from the 1960s, and drawing from his own personal background as an ex-soldier and martial artist, Draeger's (1996) three-volume groundbreaking semi-archaeological and social-historical series, *The Martial Arts and Ways of Japan*, was the first of its kind in the English-speaking world that boldly attempted at systematically, categorically and critically apprehending Japan's centuries old martial culture and documenting its development until the twentieth century. Subsequent publications by Draeger in the form of books and papers presented at academic conferences are often regarded as important pioneering attempts at gaining scholastic legitimacy for such an area of study, by drawing relevancies to the martial arts as a cultural form and also being a vital component of a society's history and development (Draeger 1977, p. 69-82). In addition, a similar collaboration with Robert W. Smith (Draeger and Smith 1980), in *Asian Fighting Arts*¹, further underlined Draeger's authority and his profile as a leading commentator and

¹ Subsequently retitled in later editions as *Comprehensive Asian Fighting Arts* [Draeger and Smith (1980), USA: Kodansha International]

historian of Asian martial arts, where his scholastic lenses extended to locations beyond Japan and in locations such as China, Korea, India and Southeast Asia. This included a number of groundbreaking and rigorous efforts at documenting and recording both the technical and historical backgrounds of lesser known martial arts at the time, such as *Silat* from Malaysia and Indonesia, *Kalaripayattu* from Indian, and also *Kali* and *Escrima* from the Philippines.

Concurrently, another important early work at this time was Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook's (1973) *Secrets of the Samurai*, which also sought to similarly document, with the aid of vivid illustration, the martial systems of pre-modern Japan. By subjecting the classical warrior cultures of feudal Japan to careful critical and methodical scrutiny while framing them within the major events of Japanese history over a period of several hundred years, Draeger, together with Westbrook and Ratti, demonstrated the possibilities that the martial arts held in offering a unique window to scholastically understanding the close relationship between the emergence of militant sub-cultural disciplines of the body and the political and religious contexts of their times. This was particularly revealed in the historical events that preceded and followed the observed linkages between the martial arts and Zen Buddhism, now often viewed almost as a symbiotic relationship in popular perceptions of the Japanese martial arts in more contemporary times. In doing so, both Draeger (1996b, p. 22-40) and Ratti and Westbrook (1973, p. 451-459) suggested that the rich and dynamic social history of East Asian martial arts, or more specifically, the Japanese martial arts, had been largely and unfairly eclipsed from academic reflection until recent times. The main scholastic and

analytical contribution of their work thus rested on their success at bringing into attention, to a broader audience, the view that pugilism had always been an integral aspect of any society's ongoing socio-cultural and historical development. This is especially true in the case of Japan, which saw the influential emergence of the *samurai* class that accompanied the rise of the *bakufu*, or military government, in the year 1185. Such a development also coincided with the gradual diminishment of the political role of the emperor that was to last for a period of over 700 years, until the latter half of nineteenth century during the Meiji Restoration in 1868 (Beasley 2000, p. 188-229, Draeger 1996c, p. 17-35, Hane 1992, p. 84-109).

More specifically, Draeger's insights, were also particularly crucial in providing a more critically-informed, historically-based and sociologically-perceived understanding of how closely entwined martial systems were to the societies that created them, and the ways in which they also served as mediums of religious, ideological and political views. Carefully tracing the historical development and eventual systematization of the Japanese martial arts into their eventual evolution as 'martial ways' in the early years of the 20th century, he provided important insights on such linkages, especially in his third volume of *The Martial Arts and Ways of Japan* (Draeger 1996c), which integrated an important historical, sociological and anthropological examination of the creation of modern martial arts such as Kendo, Judo, Karate-do, including Aikido. These were subsequently known as *budo*, or martial ways, signalling a tendency for the martial arts to be increasingly re-invented as both martial *and* ideological systems, leading to a renaming and reinvention of many systems as martial ways. This was largely because the Japanese martial arts had

emerged to serve not just military and practical purposes, but had become an integral part of the ambitions of a post-Meiji Japanese imperialism in forging a politically-inspired agenda of an ultra-nationalist mysticism and cultural essentialism that re-invented and deified the emperor.

Nonetheless, in spite of his significant contributions, Draeger's works were neither free of problems nor potential limitations. The prime weakness of his works, was that it suffered from a tendency to essentialize and romanticize the *classical martial arts*, perhaps unknowing and unconsciously, revealing on numerous occasions, a simplistic, conservative and rather unilinear understanding of historical events. Draeger's implicit 'martial conservatism' and subtle elitism tended to prevent him from realizing that the martial arts themselves were also constantly changing and evolving, and were never easily located within a temporal or historical vacuum. Consequently, he was also not above providing his own personal evaluation of the effectiveness of various martial arts (or martial ways, if we are to speak of *budo*), which tended to rigidly and unfairly depict a number of twentieth century martial systems as merely superficial and non-dynamic systems. His occasionally polemic critiques and disdain of newer systems of martial arts, although certainly valid to some extent, tended to cloud a more nuanced approach at analyzing their practices. Consequently, it appeared as if the cultural and social legitimacy of martial arts that emerged from the turn of the twentieth century were to be downplayed and denied, as they were seen as extremely diluted versions of their classical forerunners. Although there were grounds for criticism with regards to the technical and practical aspects of such new inventions in the twentieth century, this tended to discount

the role of twentieth century *budo* in the creation of new social-cultural meanings and perceptions of the martial arts, which were also often a response to the various historical and political contingencies of their time.

While his observations laid their focus on the historical and technical depiction of the Japanese martial arts, the social and cultural elements of martial arts practice, either in the past or present, were often lightly discussed or ethnographically limited. This inevitably led to a lack of possibly deeper sociological or anthropological perspectives from his observations and recordings, a potential obstacle that consistently tends to haunt several insider commentators of the martial arts. His works also tended to suffer from a writing style that often had little regard for the need to provide necessary references to the many seemingly taken for granted factual generalizations that he provided. Thus, as a result, a number of his conclusions tended to lack any possibility for verification, inevitably raising certain issues of credibility. Furthermore, such shortcomings ultimately failed to connect his works to clearly broader sociological and anthropological issues that would have broadened his approach and deepened his range of analyses, particularly the links between culture and the martial arts. Nevertheless, it should also be said in fairness, that Draeger had never really attempted to align himself self-consciously as a *bona fide* scholar of either anthropology or sociology.

On the other hand, Draeger's efforts and influence is not to be underestimated, in spite of an untimely early death in 1982, which unfortunately led to a sudden halt to any further development and research. Although partially successful, it should be noted that

one of his greatest contributions to the field were his attempts at detailing and critiquing simplistic, mystical and Orientalizing portrayals of the term 'martial arts', and arguing for their necessary relevance to other disciplines such as anthropology, ethnology, sociology and archaeology. Yet, ironically, his personal privileging of the classical systems over the more recently invented martial ways revealed a deeper sense of auto-Orientalism that would also limit a more critical and theoretical approach. Then again, it is also to his credit that his efforts eventually culminated in the creation of a semi-academic discipline known as *hopology*², which is still in existence and presently supported and maintained by a limited number of amateur and professional researchers, largely stemming from the United States. Unfortunately, the discipline of hopology still remains relatively unknown and obscure, largely detached and alienated from ongoing research in the social sciences and humanities, which at present suffers from a reductionistic penchant to rely heavily on dated socio-biological models of analysis and argumentation³. The following quotation perhaps clearly sums up the ambitions Draeger had for hopology.

There is an undeniable relevance of the study of martial and combative culture to the overall anthropological aims in achieving a better understanding of man...Because combative cultures represent deep and significant human expressions, the study of such disciplines reveals certain depths of man, areas of emotion that are equally as significant to the understanding of man as are his arts and emotions of peace. The study of man's combative arts is not all to do with the "impassioned drama" – war – and its attendant acts of violence and bloodshed. Some of man's greatest peacetime achievements have derived from his spirit and techniques of combat. Martial culture has indelibly influenced language, graphic arts, literature, music and drama, as well as the philosophical and religious systems of thought in virtually every culture known to man. Hopological study is, moreover, a key to understanding the racial and ethnic identities of different peoples. (Draeger 1977, p. 70)

² Derived from the Greek word 'Hoplōs', the term meant 'weapon' or 'tool.' The 'Hoplites' of ancient Greece, heavily armed infantryman in the military of the ancient Greeks, also drew their name from 'Hoplōs.' The term 'hopology' was first used by Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) who was one of the first from the 19th century to take an academic interest in the study of varying martial systems.

³ See the official website of the International Hopology Society at <http://www.hopology.com>. For an interesting interview with the present Director of the Society, see Wiley 2000, p. 221-245

After Draeger

Following the death of Draeger, the later years of the 1980s till 1990 saw an overall dearth of any works pertaining to the martial arts that could come close to the range and significance of his contributions. Apart from a handful of academic journal articles that appeared during this period involving the martial arts or pugilism, most interest in the field remained clearly defined as topics that were dealt with more substantially by military historians of Japan or East Asia. If the martial arts were in any way mentioned and discussed during this period, a significant amount of it viewed the martial arts as a form of 'sport', providing a unique arena for social-psychological experiments that viewed and studied the effects of martial arts practice, often from a highly statistical, experimental or prescriptive point of view. The topic of the martial arts in academic works of such genre, therefore, tended to be divorced from their historical origins and cultural contexts. Some examples of the work that emerged within this research genre include lesser known articles such as T.A. Nosanchuk's (1981, p. 435-444) and Jorge Delva-Tauiiili's (1995, p. 297-298) statistical studies on the 'effects of traditional martial arts training on aggressiveness', and Michael E. Trulson's (1986, p. 1131-1140) study of martial arts training being a potential 'cure' for juvenile delinquency. Later examples of such investigations have continued till the 1990s, like the contributions of Frank C. Seitz et. al. (1990, p. 459-464), which postulated on the links between martial arts practice and mental health. This was similar to F. Boudreau et. al.'s (1992, p. 141-156) conclusions about how the martial arts, as 'Technologies of the Self', enable one to virtually reconstruct one's character through a combination of regular bodily discipline and philosophical reflection.

Even more recent examples include the contribution of Garry Chick et. al. (1997, p. 249-267) about an alleged correlation between warfare and the popularity of combative sports in societies, while Brian W. Lamarre and T.A. Nosanchuk (1999, p. 992-996) examined the possible correlations between Judo practice and aggression. While the value of such work is certainly worthwhile as part of an overall scholastic appreciation of the martial arts and pugilism as useful research contexts in the social sciences, one cannot help but notice the narrow scope of these studies, which tended to possess a fairly ahistorical, quantitative, positivistic and clinically-driven analysis of the martial arts. The view of the martial arts or pugilism, as a form of social-cultural phenomena, and its impact or its expression as part of a larger community or society, its role in history, and perhaps more importantly, the depth of meaning and symbolism that it holds for its practitioners and how they viewed and lived such meanings were largely ignored. Correspondingly, it appears that the deeper philosophical and theoretical perspectives that could have been drawn from a more qualitative approach have also been lacking.

On the other hand, a handful of articles that were able to move beyond the social-psychological, cognitive, motor-sensory, quantitative or statistical focus of earlier studies on the martial arts during this period are of notable mention. I will discuss the ones that have been the most significant. Firstly, perhaps one of the most extensive discussion of the Asian martial arts in earlier years that adopted a broader cultural-historical point of view was Dimitri Kostynick's (1988, p. 54-97) comparison of the Chinese and Japanese martial arts with regards to their technical and social development. A rare first of such published works on the topic at the time, a key point that Kostynick raises in his

discussion is the issue of embodiment, where he argues that the way a culture views the body may reflect to a great extent the 'personality' of its culture. Kostynick's use of the term embodiment was distinctly indicative of the growing awareness of the importance of the body in the social sciences and the humanities. Although it appears to rely upon an essentialist notion of culture that could be easily paralleled to the more dated and reductionistic 'Culture and Personality' paradigm popularized by Ruth Benedict (1989), Kostynick's point is well-taken on the close link between corporeal practices and the conduct of everyday social-cultural life.

Similarly, but drawn from a more specifically sociological perspective, Alan James and Richard Jones's earlier (1982, p. 337-354) study on the social world of Karate, another Japanese⁴ martial art, was one of the first journal articles that attempted to argue for the relevance of such a field for further theorizing. Their work's greatest contribution was their active recognition of the complex social practices that a martial art such as Karate had. This took into account many important ethnographic facets of 'Karate culture' such as the varieties and complexities of clothing, props, equipment and ritual in its practice. Perhaps even more salient was the recognition of the impact of its ideological characteristics and the effects it had over its practitioners, including its embedded relationship with the practical and disciplining practices of the body. In other words, this study of Karate culture, in many respects, serves as a useful critical reminder, along with a relevant example in the martial arts, of the redundancy at adopting a dualistic mind-body conception in the practice of everyday life, or culture, for that matter. Interestingly,

⁴ Some would argue that karate is actually an Okinawan martial art, although a discussion of this issue is beyond the parameters of this thesis. I have dealt with this issue elsewhere. One can refer to Tan (2004) for a more in depth discussion on this.

as we can see from the following quotation, while the main arguments by the authors were adopting an opposite approach, they were, nonetheless, advocating equally similar conclusions to the central theoretical assertions of my own thesis. James and Jones were, therefore, critiquing perceptions of Karate practice as a practice borne simply of the flesh and instinct, seeking to reclaim the role of the mind within an allegedly physical sport such as karate. In other words, any anthropological or sociological study of the martial arts, or *body cultures*, would be severely limited if it privileged *either only* the mental *or* corporeal aspects of their practices, for such divisions are seen to be ultimately arbitrary.

Whilst we have stressed that such control of the body is of particular importance in karate, would argue that to merely focus upon 'the body' is to ignore a factor of paramount significance, that of the dynamic interplay of 'mind and body' in all facets of karate. The main point is that, for the karateka, mind and body are not two separate entities but complementary features of a unified whole.
(James and Jones 1982, p. 349)

Other related and useful discussions of the sociological and anthropological aspects of the martial arts were also noted in John Goodger's (1982, p. 333-344) observations of Judo practice to possess characteristics similar to that of Gnosticism, broadly defined here as a form of early Christianity that emphasized asceticism and personal experience to obtain knowledge and self-awareness. Such a connection was made largely due to what was recognized as a highly corporeal and embodied nature of Judo practice, which was accompanied by the employment of Zen Buddhist philosophy as a guiding ideological resource to pattern the rituals and customs of *Judoka*⁵. At the same time, a related observation was also made by P. Baudry (1985, p. 511-521) when he note the highly ritualized component that many traditional Asian martial arts practiced,

⁵ A practitioner of Judo

which undoubtedly played a role in locating the individual within the collective. More interesting, however, was the recognition of a social class component that was also part of such practices, which Goodger also suggested as being essentially 'Western middle-class.' This acknowledgement of a social class component among the martial arts was also the topic of a much earlier article by Stephen Halbrook (1974, p.135-143), who argued that various forms of Asian martial arts that emphasized the use of empty-handed techniques saw their origins among the exploited classes of society as a mode of resistance. Interestingly, such similar class-based examinations may be drawn with regards to the practice of Aikido itself, as we will delve deeper into the ethnographic observations that were obtained during my fieldwork.

Halbrook's arguments, however, were also not necessarily unproblematic. He makes a number of sweeping conclusions that suffer from a number of glaring historical inaccuracies, particularly in his generalizing claim that the empty-handed martial arts emerged primarily as 'weapons of the weak'. A clear contradictory example lies in the case of *classical* Japanese martial systems⁶ that were often highly exclusive technologies not largely available and visible to the public. In such classical systems, which still exist today, there had existed a vast historical lineage of feudal elites where empty handed *jujutsu* techniques have been practised and kept exclusive only among members of the system related either by kin, class or caste. Nonetheless, Halbrook's argument manages to highlight an important connection between the use of the martial arts as *technologies of the body*, or as a form of bodily capital, that served as a means of physical, political and

⁶ I am referring here specifically to the case of the *Kouryu*, literally known as 'Old Styles' or composite martial systems that still exist among small, often exclusive and obscure martial communities in Japan. An example is that of *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu*, considered the oldest martial lineage in Japan.

social empowerment and transgression. While one cannot deny the relevance of the homologies that persist between certain practices of the body and the social-cultural backgrounds of various groups in society, we must be careful about overstating the case of 'class' in too simplistic and dogmatic terms. With this *caveat* in mind, one of the better examples provided by Halbrook, therefore, refers to the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) in China, where the formation of the *Yihe Quan*, literally meaning the 'Righteous and Harmonious Fists', was created as a means of resistance against foreign exploitation of Chinese resources and territory. The practice of the martial arts was believed to provide its members of the rebellion the ability to be impervious to gunfire and weapons. Such practices and beliefs in the martial arts are what I will describe as *corporeal mythologies*, a concept that I will develop in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Further academic discussions of the martial arts were also noted in works that dealt with the ideological resources of the Asian martial arts, particularly in some of its alleged and often taken for granted links to religion. The relevance of this area is certainly great with regards to the practice of Aikido, especially since Morihei Ueshiba, its founder, created Aikido partially as a result of the influence of the *Omoto-kyo* religion that emerged near the end of the nineteenth century⁷. In addition, several authors of books written about Aikido's history have also noted the close relationship that Ueshiba shared with this religious movement, together with his links to significant members of the Japanese Imperial Army. It thus seems fair to conclude at this point that religious ideology in practice is never necessarily diametrically opposed to militarism and martial systems, as it has been discussed elsewhere in works that have dealt with the triadic

⁷ A topic that will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter Five.

relationship between religious metaphor, interpersonal violence, and the historical development of the martial arts in locations such as the Shaolin Temple (e.g. Michael Maliszewski in Jones 2005, p. 5730-5733 and Meir Shahar in Jones 2005, p. 5733-5736 respectively). Similarly, more contemporary examples of groups synthesizing religious thought with militancy can easily be found in both Christian and Islamic fundamentalism, and these syntheses have led to significant impacts upon human societies that may even occasionally result in disastrous consequences. Hence, the practice of Aikido, or any body culture for that matter, could also very much be seen as the continued embodiment and re-interpretation of the numerous historical, political and ideological practices that have contributed to its creation. This has even led to some attempts at rethinking the practice of Aikido as a 'potential resource for liberal education', such as Donald N. Levine's (in Mike Featherstone et. al. 1990, p. 209-224) article, which even suggested that Aikido practice provided educators the capacity in bridging the gap between experiences of the body and the experiences of the mind.

Even so, debates have also arisen about the authenticity of the spiritual or semi-religious ethos that seems to accompany the façade of most Asian martial practice in recent history, which unfortunately, has the tendency to be greatly displaced and disembodied from the everyday social and cultural realities of martial arts practice. This, I would suggest, has come about as a result of the conflicts arising from an appeal to elitist, parochial, textualized and canonized approaches to the study of both religion and the martial arts. An interesting example arises from John P. Keenan's (Keenan 1989, p. 285-298) and Stewart McFarlane's (McFarlane 1989, p. 397-432) debate over the relevance of

Zen (or Chan) Buddhism's 'true links' to the practice of the martial arts. This was a debate that ultimately de-contextualized, de-historicized and disembodied itself from the everyday contemporary complexities *and* simplicities that surround the Asian martial arts. The resulting debate and diatribes on elitist philosophic canon and abstraction, unfortunately, ends up, perhaps, telling us more about what each scholar believes and hopes martial arts practice *should be* in an ideal-typical fashion, an example of scholastic fallacy (Bourdieu 1997, p. 9-32, 49-84, 1998, p. 127-140), rather than what everyday practitioners themselves do and feel. Thus, one should also be wary of what could be described as excessively over-intellectualized or contextually blind accounts of social-cultural phenomena that have a tendency to suffer from a *synoptic illusion* or a 'scholastic point of view' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 380-391, Shusterman 1999, p. 14-28) which, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, is to *mistake the things of logic for the logic of things* (Wacquant 2002a, p. 551). A reason for this rests on the argument that textual reality is often quite removed from practical reality, very much the same way where excessive reliance on social theory or textual discourse has a greater potential to misrepresent social reality in practice by ingenuously imposing the reality of the intellectual upon the reality of the everyday.

A further illustration of largely ideal-typical depictions of a martial ethos can also be noted in Razha Rashid's discussion of Silat and its relation to the constructions of the 'Malay superman' (Rashid 1990, p. 64-95). In a rare sociological paper about the Malay martial art of *Silat*, Rashid claims to be able to

interpret the emotive transition from self-control to violence through the ritual media of silat...Through the ritual media, the body and spatial checks put a rein on violence but they also require – on a higher level – a transcendence from the real to the supernatural

world, where man masters cosmos and becomes superhuman in both passions and physical weaknesses...

Although certainly insightful and valuable in its own way, Rashid nonetheless has only been able to provide a rather vague, highly idealized, overgeneralizing and empirically wanting discussion of the practice of *Silat*. Such discourses, although clearly possessing important theoretical value in intellectual meditations on the nature and ideals of its body culture, once more have a discursive tendency to ignore the everyday practical complexities and dynamic power relations among the individuals who partake in its practice. At the same time, it ultimately begs the question if his analysis of *Silat*'s continued existence and capacity at meaning and myth-making in the social-cultural lives of its practitioners appears to have only been interpreted through the eyes of cultural and political sophisticates of *Silat* like Rashid himself. In other words, we appear to only learn more about *Silat should be* as compared to what *Silat* practitioners *do* and *who Silat* practitioners are. Little is done to involve the multivocalities of the everyday *Silat* practitioner and their personal narratives and motivation for participation. As a result, one wonders if Rashid is actually writing about the discrete 'messy' social realities of being *Silat* practitioner, or rather, his own personal ideological underpinnings about what *Silat should mean to himself*.

In summary, therefore, it is felt that while there has been growing appreciation towards the viability of the martial arts as a field of scholarly research during the next decade after Donn Draeger, much of such work still remained either focused on statistical and quantitative inquiries of a highly clinically applied nature, or were often encased in highly textualized, dis-embodied and ungrounded readings of the martial arts and its

practitioners. One could also argue that most of such literature revolving around the practice of the martial arts has remained largely removed from the wider theoretical and intellectual fields that were more established within sociology and anthropology. Few have attempted a more conscious attempt at displaying its relevance to the major fields of enquiry such cultural identity, religion or political history. Many of the works that were discussed earlier, along with a number of others, have virtually faded into academic obscurity, partly due to their alleged irrelevance to a wider scholarly audience.

A Growing Body of Scholarship

The 1990s to the present, however, saw the emergence of substantial works that were gradually attempting to embark on a separate direction, as they sought to explicitly link studies involving pugilism and the martial arts within the wider circles of anthropological or sociological scholarship. These have included works surrounding the body, ritual, sport, popular culture, nationalism and politics. Perhaps one of the earliest and the most significant anthropological or sociological studies that emerged among the disciplines over the last sixteen years, to date, has been John J. Donohue's ethnographic doctoral thesis on Aikido, Judo and Kendo, entitled *The Forge of the Spirit: Structure, Motion and Meaning in the Japanese martial tradition* (Donohue 1991). This was also the first time, in over a span of two decades, any sort of extensive ethnographic fieldwork or major scholarly research had been conducted in the Japanese martial arts, inclusive of Aikido. In his study, Donohue adopted a structural-functionalist approach in analyzing all three martial arts, largely exploring the cultural and social meanings that centred on the ritual practices of each art. He thus attempted to transcend superficial depictions of the

martial arts as mere repositories of violent physical techniques of combat as he explored the symbolic dimensions of these *budo*, or 'martial ways', which are historically recent re-interpretations of the Japanese martial arts since the late nineteenth century. The creation of Aikido is, therefore, understood as a part of this chain of events. Such reinvention of the Japanese martial arts occurred in conjunction with the rapid modernization efforts set forth by the government since the immediate years after the Meiji Restoration. This is because leading up to the years preceding the Second World War, the martial arts, particularly the practice of Judo and Kendo, had become part of the education system of a Japan that was harbouring imperialist ambitions.

In addition, subsequent but equally important contributions by Donohue have dealt with what he referred to as the 'dimensions of discipleship' within *budo*, or modern Japanese martial ways (Donohue 1991, p. 19-38), and more specifically, with the 'ritual dimensions' of Karate-do⁸ (Donohue 1993, p. 105-124) when he highlights the importance of ritual in the construction of a Karate identity. Once more applying a combination of symbolic anthropology and structural-functionalist paradigms, Donohue (1990, p. 55-63) argues that the rituals which are embedded in karate practice or other *budo* such as Aikido, Judo and Kendo, serve as a dramaturgical and symbolic dimension that plays a large part in its attraction among practitioners in North America. Donohue further alleges that the unique cultural matrix in which such martial ways exist in, such as the Asian martial arts in the West, create a strong sense of belonging and identity among

⁸ Literally meaning 'The Way of the Empty Hand'. It should, however, be noted that the term 'Karate' itself has been re-invented. 'Kara-te' originally meant 'China Hand', but was subsequently reinterpreted as 'Empty Hand' as the distinct Chinese characters, or *kanji*, for either could be read the same way. See Henning 2001, p. 15-16 and Tan 2004, p. 169-192 for further details.

its members by re-creating a sense of communalism. Such assumed unique characteristics include formal organization, hierarchical corporatism, sophisticated ideologies, the economic and political dimension of running such organizations and finally, their inherent symbolic and structural aspects. It was also argued that another significant factor which contributed to the unique experience of participation in a martial art is the transcendental effect upon the mind-body unity that each practitioner develops over time. The ritual dimensions of participation for one in Karate were, then, argued to possess an important philosophical and spiritual function for its members. According to Donohue, therefore, such an experience is akin to an alleged psychodrama, where 'questions of mortality, purpose and control are enacted in a ritual cycle...' where '...The experience is an exhilarating one that satisfies a deep-seated need in human beings...' (Donohue 1993, p. 121) In other words, Donohue views Karate practice as a potential resource for symbolic meaning with regards to one's own existential questions. In this regard, Karate practice had become no longer simply a means of self-defence, but was now a means for mental and spiritual development, possessing a semi-religious aura.

Donohue's efforts were soon followed by the work of David E. Jones (2000), whose semi-populist and social-historical study of women warrior cultures was to become part of a small growing collection of alternative works that sought to uncover the practice and experience of warfare and violence in the history of women, where they were also participants as opposed to being mere victims of violence. More recently, Jones has also been responsible for the compilation and editing of a volume of academic papers written around the martial arts that was aptly titled *Combat, Ritual and Performance:*

Anthropology of the Martial Arts (Jones 2002), which also incorporated a paper by Donohue⁹. Inclusive of a substantial number of perspectives and martial arts, this collection sought to recognize and emphasize an approach towards the martial arts as a form of *performative culture*, which constantly requires the practice of the body as an organic and fleshly medium for the creation and expression of meaning in areas such as nationalism and religion. This was particularly revealed by several useful contributions by Deborah Klens-Bigman (Klens-Bigman 2002, p. 1-10) who viewed the martial arts as a form of ‘self-expressive’ performance akin to an embodied art form; Joseph S. Alter’s analysis of *Pehlwani*, or Indian Wrestling, as a manifestation of ‘somatic nationalism’ (Alter 2002, p. 81-97); and finally Charles Holcombe’s observation of the relationship between the Chinese martial arts, Chinese theatre and religion (Holcombe 2002, p. 153-173). What was recognized and advocated in these works, therefore, was the necessity of a highly sensual, embodied and physiological understanding of martial arts practices. The scholastic significance to these works rested upon their ability to link the martial arts as both a relevant and viable field of study for the social sciences and the humanities.

Upon closer inspection, however, I felt that these contributions, while certainly important and significant, still possessed certain limits with regard to theoretical depth that could lay the ground for further anthropological or sociological theorizing. More specifically, a sense of analytical superficiality exists in Donohue’s works and they have a tendency to view the martial arts through potentially reductionistic, formulaic and naively *functionalist* interpretations where the martial arts are portrayed as largely

⁹ John J. Donohue (2002) “Wave People: The Martial Arts and the American Imagination” in *Combat, Ritual and Performance: Anthropology of the Martial Arts*, p. 65-80, Connecticut and London: Praeger

unproblematic forms of socialization and symbolic repositories of culture, completely devoid of contestation, change, inventiveness, conflict and relational differences. In addition, Donohue also appears to adopt a largely ahistorical and apolitical understanding towards the practice of the martial arts that he observed, and also seemed to be to significantly removed from the major paradigmical trends in academia such as social and cultural theories surrounding the body, which unfortunately becomes his Achilles' heel in his overall analysis.

Hence, paradoxically, in spite of Donohue's sincere acknowledgement and efforts for the need to adopt a cultural relativist approach, his depiction of differing martial arts appear to suffer from an ironic and underlying sense of cultural essentialism that presumes each martial art as being almost radically distinct from each other, while alluding towards a sense of Otherness that caricaturizes and exoticizes the Asian martial arts, a phenomenon that he himself had identified in his own discussion within his book *Warrior Dreams: The Martial Arts and the American Imagination* (Donohue 1994). For this reason, the fact that *budo* are 'non-Western' appear to have been exoticized by the descriptions of Donohue, whose critical and scholastic lenses are often clouded through his personal indoctrination and romanticization of a so-called Asian mystique, which he failed to recognize in his own language. Likewise, if we were to re-direct our evaluation of Jones's analyses such as his work on 'women warriors', much of his observations appear rather entrenched in a fairly unreflexive romanticism of the past that it appears to hamper a broader attempt at analyzing the social-cultural dynamics that surrounded the

status of women in their societies, apart from providing a fairly broad descriptive account of their status as having been 'warriors' in history and culture.

Perhaps the greatest weakness for each of these scholars and their academic peers in their work has been a tendency to steer conveniently away from a more *critical*, *reflexive* and *de-constructive* approach to the practice of the martial arts. Thus, there was a tendency to avoid discussing more controversial issues such as highly politicized and unequal power dynamics involving topics surrounding gender relations, socio-economic differences, organizational schisms and even racism, all which are also inevitably embedded within pugilistic sub-cultures. Furthermore, what appears to be insufficiently addressed, in not just Jones's and Donohue's works, but also in the many articles that were compiled in the book *Combat, Ritual and Performance*, is the lack of a deeper and more penetrative engagement beyond detailed descriptions, both philosophically and theoretically, of the bodily and sensual domains of a pugilistic universe.

In summary, therefore, it appears that both Jones and Donohue have only partially succeeded in outlining and establishing a critical understanding of the martial arts as there still remains limited attempts to link their observations to a wider range of sociological or anthropological theoretical implications. Furthermore, the quality of their scholarship, unfortunately, also contains a number of factual inaccuracies and raw generalizations about the martial arts and their relationship with the societies in which they exist in. A clear example exists in Donohue's often Orientalizing and stereotypical references regarding the 'Asian-ness' or 'Japanese-ness' of Karate and Kendo, betraying

an ahistorical, acritical, diasporic and depoliticized understanding of both cultural identity and the martial arts that fail to take into critical account the often contested and arbitrary nature of such concepts.

Thus, upon closer examination, the works of Jones and Donohue appear to contain, albeit in a more subtle manner, a closet Orientalism that often reveals itself in their discussion of cultural practice and identities, where the text is often inclined to confirm cultural mystifications rather than to critically examine them. As senior martial arts practitioners themselves, one might suspect that each of them are now so taken by the *doxa* of the *game* of the martial arts, where each *misrecognizes* their own personal stakes in the topic, shrouded and euphemized at the same time by their claim to authority by virtue of their professional statuses as scholars or intellectuals. Nonetheless, in spite of such limitations, the value of their contributions is well taken, as they represent the beginning of a slowly emerging core of scholars who would lay the foundations for future attempts in this field. This because in subsequent years, a steady flow of works that have taken the lead provided by their efforts now signal a growing appreciation of the martial arts in historical sociological and anthropological discourse.

Additional useful examples of such growing significant contributions include Jian Xu's (1999, p. 961-991) analysis of the relationship between discourses of the body and the cultural politics surrounding the practice of Chinese *qigong*¹⁰ in China. *Qigong* is a form of exercise based on traditional Chinese medical principles and perspective on the

¹⁰ Literally meaning 'Qi Skill', where *Qi* refers to the belief in form of intrinsic and intangible life essence that is found within all living creatures. Note that *Qi* is also often spelled as *Chi* in other writings as I have also done so in this thesis. The term *ki*, which is also the second character within the name Aikido, is the Japanese rendition of the term.

body, and often has played a significant role in the practice and understanding of Chinese and Japanese martial arts. The notion of *qi*, is also similar to the term *ki* in Japanese. In his analysis, Xu examines how Chinese cultural ideologies of the body such as *qigong* have played a part as an agent and medium for social change or resistance. He argues that *qigong*'s growing popularity in recent years as a form of exercise, and its subsequent co-optation by religious groups such as *Falun Gong*¹¹, are revealing of a broader social history of the body in China and wider cultural worldviews regarding the notion of *qi*. The growing embodiment of its practices within the Chinese population is claimed to be an indication of its practitioners' desires for a change in the social and cultural life where it is situated within, where the body now becomes the somatized site of cultural and political expression against the social order. Similar observations had also been observed earlier by Thomas Ots (1994, p. 116-135) in the practice of 'spontaneous *qigong*'.

In other words, the varying ways in which the body is viewed in society and history is very much a symptom and reflection of the dynamic and ongoing discourses of the body, reminiscent of our earlier discussion of Kostynick's insights. In the case of Xu's study, *qigong* has been both rationalized and psychosomatized in China, as an alternative means of understanding how notions of health and illness are conceptualized. In doing so, Xu notes that the bodies of its practitioners are eventually politicized and subjectivized, serving as a mediating discourse for change and resistance. Another important example is David A. Palmer's (2006, p. 147-173, 2007) closely related studies of the growing popularity of *qigong* partly as a result of the emergence of *qigong* based

¹¹ Literally translated as the 'Practice of the Wheel of Law', *Falun Gong* is a Chinese religious movement or a 'cult' (in the sociological sense) that is been banned in China. Briefly, it teaches the practice of a set of medication exercises that allegedly can lead to enlightenment.

organizations such as *Falun Gong*. In his discussion, Palmer traces the initial rise in popularity of *qigong* from the late 1970s as a form of nationalistic ‘Chinese science’, heralding a new scientific revolution, until its current politically sensitive status as a result of the outlawing of *Falun Gong* in China. Ironically, as Palmer discusses in greater detail in his book *Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China* (Palmer 2007), the initial rise of *qigong*’s popularity was also a result of the support from several senior members of the Chinese Communist Party, but it eventually fell from grace because of the growing politicization of its practice, which was subsequently viewed as a threat to the central government. The practice of *qigong* becomes, consequently, not merely a means of practising the body, but it is also at the same time, a medium of both change and expression inevitably bounded by complex political and ideological contestations. On the other hand, it could also alternatively serve as a form of cultural reification via the body, as seen by Nancy N. Chen’s (2002, p. 315-329) study of how the construction of masculinity in China is also performed and reified by narratives of *qi*.

In all, the growing recognition of the martial arts and related topics as a viable site for academic discourse has seen the emergent collaboration of numerous scholars from a variety of disciplines working towards establishing a scholastic platform for their work. Subsequently, another important milestone has also been the successful collaboration and publication of a two-volume encyclopaedia of the martial arts edited by Thomas A. Green et. al. (2001), containing dozens of important details, commentary and analyses on the various kinds and aspects of the martial arts from various scholars, with the inclusion of entries on Aikido. This highly readable two-volume compilation, catered for either

popular reading or more academic interests, serves as a valuable and arguably comprehensive resource of the history and social-cultural world of the martial arts, signalling a growing recognition of its worth in both the social sciences and humanities.

Although the work of other scholars within Green's encyclopaedic collection have played a crucial role in emphasizing the martial arts as a key part of the various social history of different cultures and nationalities, they nonetheless lack a more focused and detailed *ethnographic* account of the particular lives and experiences of its martial arts practitioners. To be fair though, one does understand that such a criticism may not be particularly relevant as this was supposed to be an encyclopaedic collection, and not ethnography. All the same, this also further heightens the need for additional complementary forms of research and perspectives, for there has been very little attempt at relating the historical and structural contingencies of a particular era with a contemporary ethnography of the everyday. In other words, while the broader 'history' and 'culture' of the Asian martial arts suffers from no lack of efforts in recording their origins and practices, such as Green's (2003) even more recent compilation of works in the martial arts, what has been lacking is a much-needed ethnological empathy of specific pugilistic universes, and of what happens on the ground in the particular lives of the people involved.

As a result, in the case of a martial art like Aikido, the lack of such ethnographic perspectives can only serve to alienate the day-to-day embodied, emotional and lived experiences of an Aikido practitioner from any interested observer. For I will argue that

attempts to adopt a highly textualized apprehension of reality, such those constructed from a top-down, theoretically-dependent and exclusively scholastic view, are always never a sufficient reflection of the social and practical reality of things, particularly so in of the study of a body culture such as Aikido and other similar martial arts communities. What has been lacking are insights into a practical and embodied reality, in which only reflexive ethnographic fieldwork can provide in existing as a strong counterbalancing force to other scholarly works that only seek to take into account the broader, conceptual, epochal and structural trajectories of the martial arts in general.

All the same, the enlarging sphere of scholarly interest and awareness has also culminated in the successful establishment of the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* in 1992, which, to date, has been one of the more consistent and reliable journals of the martial arts, which publishes a wide range of both mainstream and academic articles for its readers. The works of scholars such as Donohue and Jones, both whom were discussed earlier, have also regularly contributed to the journal, as an attempt at creating an intellectual and public forum for the discussion and analysis of martial arts practice. Consequently, numerous articles that have appeared in recent years have sought to further the scholastic foundations established by Donn Draeger such Michael A. DeMarco's (2000, p. 9-17) advocacy for the relevance of the martial arts in the field of psychology, linguistics, anthropology and history, or C. Jeffrey Dykhuizen's (2000, p. 9-31) examination of how Aikido and the martial arts are perceived in the West. Other examples include one of Donohue's (2000, p. 9-21) contributions where he discusses the relation the relationship between the sensation of sound and its symbolic role as part of

ritualized practices in the martial arts or what he coined the ‘auditory elements in martial ritual’. Unfortunately and quite surprisingly, Donohue again fails to consciously relate this insight with the larger scale of works and theories in recent years, particularly within phenomenology and both the anthropology and sociology of body, thus failing to draw deeper theoretical or philosophical linkages and conclusions in his discussion. *The Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, therefore, is best seen as only being partially successful in defining a credible scholarly platform for the field, as the articles that have appeared do not appear to be always dependable or impeccable in terms of scholastic quality

Nonetheless, in spite of such limitations, more optimistic developments in this field have seen the emergence of works that have adopted a more socio-historical approach by martial historians, in the form of important books such as Karl Friday’s *Legacies of the Sword* (Friday 1997) and G. Cameron Hurst’s *Armed Martial Arts of Japan* (Hurst 1998). Firstly, with regards to Friday’s work, which focuses on the historical and cultural contingencies of the composite classical Japanese martial system known as *Kashima Shin Ryu*, it can be considered an important testament to the potential of research in this still vastly unexplored field of research in the social sciences and humanities. Apart from a well-documented account of the technical and historical lineage of the martial system, Friday’s effective and rigorous use of primary historical documents coupled with more recent ethnographic and oral historical accounts of present day practices of *Kashima Shin Ryu* provides a highly nuanced and sensitive insider’s account of the pugilistic lifeworlds that its surviving practitioners are bound within. Although never explicitly acknowledged, the central role that the body and the senses played in the

consolidation and reification of a self-contained physical, moral, spiritual and cultural universe was highly evident. For one of the most central components of life as a member of the *Kashima Shin Ryu* constantly requires the involvement and subjectification of one's bodily and mental faculties to the expectations of a martial tradition.

Hurst's study, on the other hand, which was also published around the same time as Friday's, takes a broader and holistic approach as it sought to provide an overview of how the classical armed martial practices of Japan have developed over time, with an emphasis on schools of swordsmanship and archery, in particular. A key focus of his work attempts to trace the historical development of both swordsmanship and archery as they gradually evolved from more composite systems of fighting that were derived from practical battlefield experiences to their present day state, as either sports or *budo*. This is where a bird's eye view is taken of the huge historical trajectory in Japan's martial legacy, beginning from the emergence of the *samurai* or the *bugei*, or the warrior class, during the twelfth century until the eventual collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1868. As a result of the ensuing developments during the Meiji Era, Japan embarked on its journey of modernization that would, unfortunately, also lead to a militant imperialism that is seen as one of the major factors that contributed to the dissolution of hundreds of classical martial systems. This was largely due to the fact that the classical systems too, were closely tied to the social, economic and political structures of the outgoing Shogunate, and were also symbolic and systemic representatives of a disappearing era.

One of the major conclusions of Hurst, then, was that such changes were also ultimately tied to Japan's unavoidable encounter with the gradually encroaching Western powers, whose gunfire and technology rendered Japanese classical martial practice with swords and arrows virtually obsolete. Eventually, the Japanese martial arts were reinvented as *budo*, or 'martial ways', as a combination of the efforts by intellectuals and social-cultural elites who sought to retain a key aspect of Japan's historical legacy; and at the same time exploited by political elites who saw the potential of an effective infusion of nationalistic ideology and the training of the body. The role of *budo*, in this aspect, was rendered as an important aspect of a political and military strategy to garner and harness both the minds and the bodies of its people in its steps towards an imperialist agenda. The practice of *budo* was, therefore, not simply incorporated and manifested among its practitioners as bodies of martial technique or violence, but they also became bodies of identity, history and culture.

Similar contributions that follow the same analytical theme include Shun Inoue's (1998, p. 163-173) critical analysis of the invention of modern Judo that traced its roots to its feudal and classical *jujutsu* origins and its former role in the broader ideological project of ultranationalism and militarism that the Japanese government pursued during its modernization efforts from the *Meiji* era. It is also important once more to recall at this point that the development and popularity of martial arts such as Judo, Kendo and Aikido were also closely linked to a number of large-scale Japanese historical and political events during those years leading right up to the Second World War and beyond. These insights are further developed by Yoshinobu Hamaguchi (2006, p. 7-18), who also traces

the subsequent innovation and re-representation of the Japanese *budo* within an increasingly globalized world, in which the martial arts were self-consciously reframed with an alleged philosophical and spiritual dimension, partly as an effort at re-energizing a defeated national psyche, but also as a means of cultural survival and a deliberate reinvention of tradition in order to retain a part of it. Such developments also played a part in the subsequent *sport-ification* of the martial arts, which eventually led to Judo and even Tae Kwon Do, a Korean martial art, to eventually be accepted as regular Olympic sports, in which the practice and display of martial form has largely overtaken martial function, and where rule-bound competition in an arena has replaced survival on the battlefield.

In addition, although based upon a study of a Chinese martial art, another useful work that must deserve further discussion here is Meir Shahar's (2001, p. 359-413) study of the historical trajectories and complexities that surround the practice and formulation of the Shaolin martial arts during the Ming Dynasty. In his paper, Shahar carefully and critically analyzes the deeper historical and social-cultural reasons behind the popularity and development of the Shaolin Temple and its mythological relationship with the Chinese martial arts. One of his interesting arguments pertained to the close semiotic and historical links between the Buddhist deity *Jinnaluo* and the practice and popularity of staff techniques in Shaolin. Hence, contrary to many of the more popular and mysticized versions of the Shaolin martial arts, Shahar provided a well-documented and carefully argued account of how more critical examination of the martial arts can reveal important insights into established research topics such as religion, history and politics

Writing about Aikido

Taking a moment to reflect upon the specific literature surrounding the past of Aikido in the English language, it seems that, in spite of numerous scholarly or populist works that have tried to document its origins and developments, nonetheless, there appear to have been few attempts altogether to provide a more critical and reflexive account of Aikido's origins. This is perhaps, revealing of the sheer marginality and low visibility that the martial arts exists as a topic of study among academics, even in anthropology or sociology. On the other hand, another prime reason could be due to the fact that the martial arts, in general, have become increasingly irrelevant and compartmentalized from everyday life in contemporary times, that it has largely escaped the reflexive consciousness of serious academic inquiry. Yet, another reason could be due to the fact that the martial arts have also been so subsumed by popular culture, cultural commoditization and the entertainment industry that it has largely often been unfairly trivialized as a 'light' or 'soft' topic for many scholars.

As a result, a vast majority of what had been written about Aikido's history, has largely relied upon popular and commercialized accounts, which often reveal more about the personal politics and ideologies of its writers and proponents rather than contributing towards a more critical scholarship of Aikido's martial history. Such works range from to technical manuals that provide excessively dramatic and propagandist accounts of its origins right to the self-promoting popular accounts of Aikido found in commercialized magazines, journals or websites on the internet (e.g. Atkinson 1983, Strozzi-Heckler *et. al.* 1985, Stevens 1995a, 1995b, 1997). With the earlier notable exception of Ratti and

Westbrook's (1970) more tempered and reflective approach, the majority of such writers and popular publications on Aikido, therefore, have repeatedly taken a highly simplistic and sensationalist approach in recounting the history of Aikido, often merely reproducing or paraphrasing previous accounts in earlier publications, wholesale and uncritically, where Aikido's history has become easily articulated into one single narrative that now appears to be the 'official version'.

To a significant extent, therefore, the history of Aikido within such texts is often best approached warily, for many tend to be ideologically driven and politically embedded in interests that seek to serve the purpose of playing up to the propagandist appeal of the 'martial mystique'. The recounting of Aikido's past, which often culminates in the near deification of Morihei Ueshiba, is rife with semi-hagiographical and folkloric recollections of his upbringing and alleged superhuman talents. Hence, often similar to the kind of political *doxa* that commonly fuel nationalist and ideological claims of 'grand origins' and 'golden ages' regarding various social or cultural events, much of what passes for the 'history of Aikido' must never be taken literally as inescapable 'truths' of a glorified past. Only after this is understood can a more balanced, careful and complex understanding of its origins and links to its ethnographic present can be made possible.

Admittedly, this is seen to be an extremely uphill task, as much of the history of Aikido, or any other martial art, has greatly been clouded by the excesses of popular imagination, often accepted unquestioning and uncritically. Most, if not all publications regarding the Aikido community in general have come from long-time and high-ranking practitioners, who often have a stake in what is being written and accepted as fact.

Although there are clear exceptions, much of the popular press on Aikido's history, however, actually fails to be analytically critical in their observations, often serving to maintain a certain façade of political correctness for its 'insiders' with a heavy reliance on rhetorical or sycophantic language. While the prevalence of such perceptions may be studied as a social phenomenon itself, it nonetheless makes the work of serious scholarship on Aikido's history difficult. The history of Aikido, consequently, is something that must require more careful and rigorous reflection if one seeks to understand its present status in contemporary times and possibly its future, for no ethnography exists within an economic, political and socio-historical vacuum.

On the other hand, in spite of such caveats, there have been a number of important advancements to date with regard to writings on Aikido's history. On a more positive note, perhaps one of the most reliable archive oral history and active documentation of Aikido's past have rested with the admirable efforts of Stanley Pranin, a long-time practitioner of Aikido himself, who is the founder and chief editor of the long running and well-regarded website known as the *Aikido Journal*¹². A person who had never sought to simply repeat the commonly held beliefs or opinions that sought to place Aikido on a pedestal just for its sake, Stanley Pranin currently lives and works in Japan, is fluent in Japanese has been a practitioner of a style of Aikido (*Iwama Ryu*) for over thirty years. The *Aikido Journal* was previously known as *Aiki News* and today, is a widely popular and reliable online resource of news and information about Aikido's past and present. While one must still retain a healthy scepticism about Pranin's sources and

¹² See <http://www.aikidojournal.com>

claims, they serve as a useful alternative to what has appeared in mainstream publications, serving as more careful and reflexive accounts of Aikido's past and present.

In recent years, Pranin has also taken other writers on Aikido's history to task for fostering a form of self-congratulatory and intellectually retrograde approach to writing Aikido's past. One example singled out by Pranin (1988) are the writings of John Stevens, which are surprisingly steeped in the one-dimensional ideological language that often portrays the history of Aikido using highly propagandizing language, while exploiting his status and position as an academic in Japan to indirectly legitimize his sycophancy of Aikido's public and commercialized image of its founder. Consequently, writers like Stevens have been accused for engaging in and encouraging uncritical and politically correct accounts that also run the danger of caricaturizing and Orientalizing Aikido's history. Pranin has criticized Stevens for being uncritical, stereotyping, ahistorical and even intellectually irresponsible for his publications and for contributing to an emerging martial mythology surrounding Aikido, while ingenuously championing the 'beauty and wonders of Aikido'. Nonetheless, it is felt that individuals within the Aikido universe who are open towards a more reflexive and self-critical approach to their understanding and documentation of the art remain, more than often, the exception rather than the norm. This is partly because it appears that a vast majority of Aikido practitioners, particularly within its leadership, more than often possess an important stake towards the continued mystification and popularization of the art. Such a perspective will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

The Martial Imagination as Cultural 'Hybrid' and Global Commodity

With the growing commoditization of culture in the form of artefacts, icons and souvenirs, the practice and general awareness of Asian martial arts has continued to flourish in varying degrees throughout different parts of the world. Thus, the martial arts are and have been part of a tide of transnational cultural flows, particular to North America, Europe and other parts of Asia. The origins of such a conjuncture of history and culture stem from the early post-war years, where American servicemen first occupied and encountered Japanese society. Although the martial arts had initially been banned¹³ for around five years by the Allied forces, they were finally reinstated in 1950, leading to a greater exposure of martial arts like Aikido and Judo to the rest of the world. These developments were also no doubt aided to some significant extent by the co-optation of the martial arts as part of the entertainment industry's attempts at the mythologization and Orientalization of Eastern cultures in the form of television programming, movies and animation in the Western media. The Asian martial arts, therefore, were not merely a body of techniques for self-defence, but also became synonymous to an entire cultural logic that was seen as represented as either 'alien' or 'exotic' to the societies of the West.

On the other hand, what has also emerged alongside such developments has been a growing re-interpretation and re-invention of the Asian martial arts the moment it takes roots in lands far from its historical and cultural origins. This has also been observed by Gary J. Krug (2001, p. 395-410), who contends that the practice and representation of Karate in the United States and Australia has developed to a point where its original

¹³ Interestingly, karate was never banned, as it was considered by the occupying American forces as a sort of 'cultural dance'.

Japanese or Okinawan roots have become less relevant. This is in light of the emergence of new second and third generation instructors and practitioners who now interpret Karate from a point of view that has been thoroughly mediated or ‘hybridized’ by local cultures and worldviews. Hence, Krug suggests that current practices of Karate are now seen to be more as “a set of historical and semiscientific practices” (Krug 2001, p. 403-408) as opposed to earlier perceptions of the martial arts as a marker of Asian-ness or a discourse that reinforces an Orientalizing “myth of origins” (Krug 2001, p. 398-403)

One, however, remains considerably skeptical and wary about Krug’s claims, especially if this observation is extended towards other Asian martial arts. One reason rests on Krug’s apparent overgeneralizing claims, for even in the world of Karate, it would be difficult to generalize that the perceptions and representations of its practice have moved towards a more ‘rationalistic’ view – a view that is only more reflective of ‘martial elites’ or perhaps *scholars* of the martial arts such as Krug himself. Furthermore, the practice of Karate itself is also vastly divided into innumerable sub-styles, political bodies and even interlaced with varying levels of cultural ‘hybridization’ within what Krug calls ‘Anglo-American Culture’. While one admits that the term ‘Karate’ may have even become an empty signifier of sorts in the mainstream world, one also cannot perceive the practice of Karate within a political, cultural and ideological vacuum, where contestation and mythologization continues to remain a significant factor in the commoditization and popularization of its practice.

At the same time, it should also be useful at this juncture to recall that Aikido's own public profile was significantly raised with the growing popularity of the Hollywood movies of Steven Seagal, who is a highly-ranked *Aikidoka* himself, and first shot to fame in 1987 with the movie 'Above the Law'. Seagal still possesses a cult-following, partially through his reliance on the hyped-up and dramatized aura of his 'Aikido master' status. The impact of popular and mass culture on the spread and portrayal of the martial arts is certainly not to be ignored. Similarly, much of Aikido's emerging popularity during the 1980s, which was still a relatively recent past, may be partly attributed to the correlation of its practice to the glorification of positive Japanese, Asian or 'Oriental' stereotypes, where a sense of 'Otherness' was re-invented as a desirable persona as opposed to an 'Otherness' that was to be resisted or colonized. In this regard, the martial arts may be understood to have been reconstructed as a commodity of the popular culture industry, a commercialized and global discourse that has continually fuelled further mystifications and misconceptions of the Asian martial arts in general, with Aikido included.

At the same time, it would be important to note that such developments of the *martial imagination* were already pre-dated by a much earlier popular fascination with martial arts in both Western and Eastern media such as the film and comics industry in Hong Kong and the United States (Kei 1980, p. 27-38, Skidmore 1991, p. 129-148 and Teo 1997, p. 87-134), largely fuelled by the increasing rapid globalization of various kinds of entertainment media over the last fifty years. It has also been suggested elsewhere that a phenomenon like *kung fu* as a form of cultural imaginary in cinema may also possess a close link with narratives on modernity and nationalism, often mirroring a

society's growing anxiety towards their sense of identity vis-à-vis modernity (Li 2001, p. 515-542). On the other hand, it would also be important to recall that the continued portrayal of 'Oriental' martial arts practice is not only a resource for the construction and mystification of cultural identity, but also a popular exploitation of the belief in how committed martial arts practice is able to produce individuals with outstanding near-supernatural bodily abilities. The martial imagination is, therefore, very much a creation of the popular culture and entertainment industry, where martial skill has been reinvented into a form of *hyperrealism* that ultimately blurs the distinction between fact and fiction.

Consequently, there appears to have been a growing tendency for the efforts to aestheticize and romanticize the raw acts of violence that often accompanies the visual portrayal of martial arts on screens, televisions and even video games. Nevertheless, while the term 'Orientalism' has often been employed by me and other scholars in describing such processes of stereotyping and constructions of 'Otherness', it would also be important to note that such representations are hardly unidirectional. More than often, in a globalized and transnationalized environment, it is often the case where both Orientalizing and *Auto-Orientalizing* narratives occur in conjunction and contestation. This has also been observed and criticized in Stephen Chan's (2000, p. 69-74) brief but insightful discussion on how the practice and popular perception of the Japanese martial arts have also been as much a phenomenon of Japanese discourses on cultural *self-invention* as much as they are alleged to be Western narratives of cultural colonization.

But who, then, is colonizing whom? Untold numbers of occidental youths, for instance, tried to make their bodies look like Bruce Lee's. Will readers seek to hold their bodies and faces in one way or another? Or is there a syncretic face to the world that, still waves the sword of Chinese magic? ...The article is chiefly directed, therefore, as an injunction

against the Japanese cultural authorities who, albeit having come to believe in it deeply, purvey a construction, an artefact, as a culture – for the exemplary reason, however, of colonizing the West (even if the cost is first colonizing themselves) and as an alternative view for the hundreds of thousands...who practice the Japanese martial arts and believe that these arts have antique and spiritual values beyond what passes for history and traditional value in the constructions of their own cultures. These days you choose your own myths. If you are lucky, you can be an editor of mythologies.
(Chan 2000, p. 70-71)

Reclaiming the body

Studies and analyses surrounding the martial arts, stemming from the early 1980s to the late 1990s were, interestingly, initially preceded by a rapidly growing interest and appreciation within the social sciences towards the field of sports. One example is Henning Eichberg's (1998, p. 111-127) advocacy of how the notion of a 'body culture' could form an important paradigm in the Danish sociology of sport, largely as a result of Denmark's own historical links between sport and physiology, where the body is seen not merely a biological object but also a cultural one. This was certainly an indication of the greater attention was being given towards works that dealt with the body in social and critical theory, and the humanities, where the rising profile of sports, gender studies, subaltern studies, recreation studies and cultural studies each reflected to some degree a so-called post-modern surge among scholars. Some of the more prominent examples closely linked to theoretical works on the body were seen with the growing popularity in the English-speaking world towards the ideas of Michel Foucault (1979) on historical discourses on discipline and power; and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (1990) that incorporated and popularized the notions of *habitus* and *field*.

Although certainly not the first who recognized the theoretical significance of the body¹⁴, their work probably managed to successfully demonstrate the body's importance within the broad scope of their respective theoretical frameworks. Such increasing awareness and subsequent reactions concerning the body as an often neglected aspect of scholarly reflection were reflected via growing discourses that centred upon the body as a cumulative site of discipline, ideology and inscriptive practices. Particularly so since the 1980s, this has led to a re-evaluation and re-making of past and current work in both sociology and anthropology since the 1980s. In *Discipline and Punish*, for example, Foucault (1979) emphasized the concepts of power and knowledge as being closely entwined within historical trajectories of how societies have viewed and practiced the body. Bourdieu, on the other hand, attempted to locate his ideas within an even broader and more nuanced theoretical perspective, towards how the body itself was always at the forefront of the construction of identity, culture and Selfhood, which is ultimately rooted in the notion of *practice*.

Whereas the notion of agency or the individual was often seen to be neglected or even negated in the works of Foucault, who tended to interpret discursive practices and the exercise of power from a highly structural and monolithic point of view, the practices of the body as *embodied history*, or the habitus of an individual within a 'field of power' from Bourdieu's perspective, was never necessarily deterministic nor necessarily trapped by history. In other words, while Bourdieu clearly recognized the constraints of objective structures in society and culture, he did not go as far to diminish the role of agency as

¹⁴ This included scholars such as Marcel Mauss, Mary Douglas, Erving Goffman and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who, just to name a few among others, actively recognized the central role of the body in the study of social phenomena.

Foucault appears to allude to at times. The term habitus was thus popularized by Bourdieu in attempting to define that overlapping middle ground that many in the past had tended to polemically sway towards either radical subjectivist relativism or naïve objectivist positivism (Wacquant 2006, Free 1996, p. 395-403). Therefore, while Foucault's body was one of 'constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions' (Foucault 1979, p. 11), habituses are more dynamically defined as 'systems of durable, *transposable* dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as *structuring* structures' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 52-65), where our experience of objectivity and subjectivity are not merely polar opposites along a simplistic continuum of knowledge, but rather, symbiotic elements on an existential plane where both abstraction and figuration are never easily dualized. Concurrently, a *field of power* is, then, an ontological and existential site where its participants are closely entwined within, giving rise to a *practical* reason of dispositional characteristics and the various strategies, which are employed to negotiate within a field that is often layered by unequal access to economic, symbolic, social, cultural, or *bodily* capital.

Bourdieu's notion of the *logic of practice*, therefore, sought out a nuanced and contested space between both agency and structure. While recognizing the limits of simplistic claims towards the existence of 'free will' or 'choice', the individual was nonetheless, one who possessed a ranged, albeit limited, sense of 'the game', where the strategies and dispositions of each person come into play in construction, maintenance and re-construction of one's habitus and a sense of *illusio* of being part of a culture or society. To Bourdieu (1973, p. 53-80, 1990), the body was eventually *the* fundamental

medium in bridging the false dichotomy between structure and agency, individual and society, objectivism and subjectivism; and also the division between Levi-Straussian objectivist-structuralism (e.g. Levi-Strauss 1968) and Sartrean subjectivist-existentialism (e.g. Sartre 2003). Deriving from this perspective, it would also be apparent that the so-called distinction between mind and body is an arbitrary and redundant one, and simply a gross simplification of what is understood as a *practical sense* that possesses its own logic of practice comprised of strategies and dispositions as opposed to social rules and raw egotism (Bourdieu 1990, p. 66-97, 1997, p. 128-163). One, therefore, needed to acknowledge the existence of *praxeological knowledge*, which is concerned with the dialectical relationships between objective structures and structured dispositions, which are eventually inscribed through the corporeality of the body and bodily *hexis*, or how the body is socially inculcated in the way it moves, acts and reacts. Central to all this, all the same, remains the senses within flesh, blood and bone; for the construction and continued maintenance of one's embeddedness within a social or cultural environment largely rests upon the bodily practices that we engage in, such as the consistent practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai*.

In addition, within the field of feminism and gender studies, scholars such as Judith Butler, for example, have also made significant inroads into the academic mainstream by establishing the connections between gender, sex and the body. With the publication of her works 'Gender Trouble' (Butler 1999) and 'Bodies that Matter' (Butler 1993), of which have gained considerable notice, Butler has sought to challenge fixed and dogmatic notions of the ideas of gendered identities and sexualities, where the

definition of gendered or sexed identities may appear to be more nuanced and arbitrary than they seem. Although also controversial among feminists and subject to significant criticism (Hekman 1998, p. 61-70), Butler apparently also rejects the notion that biological sex as a category in itself is valid, seeing it also as a product of gender. I am, nonetheless, cautious and skeptical about this, as such an approach appears to hover dangerously towards a 'stylish nihilism' that might ironically serve to forget the *fleshly materiality* of the body, reducing, and simplifying too conveniently, everything as a *disembodied* 'cultural text', often neglecting the role in which the senses themselves play in the somatization and incorporation of gender (Bourdieu 2001, p. 5-53). Consequently, perhaps a less radical and more embodied view would be Iris Young's (1990, p. 141-159) insights on female *motility*, *comportment* and *spatiality* in the simple act of 'throwing like a girl'. Drawing inspiration from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Young de-essentializes the notion of how a 'normal' woman's body should behave, by revealing the broad extent in which our bodies are habituated and not 'in-born', where alleged biological traits are really revealed more to be highly practical and social ones. In addition, a more recent study by Laura Spielvogel (2003) on the culture of 'working out' in Tokyo fitness clubs for women also continues support such a view, where it reveals the female body as a site of continuous contestation, negotiation and discipline, thus retaining a greater appreciation of how the body, as subject and object, still plays a role in our construction of gendered selves.

In addition, a lesser known contribution has been an interesting study by Richard Light and David Kirk (2000, p. 163-176), which noted the connection between how sports like rugby in Australia have played an important role in the construction of a

hegemonic masculinity that is, nevertheless, being threatened by changing perceptions of gender roles and expectations. These developments have also come in the wake of similar efforts within more established fields of study such as religion and culture, such as the work of Bryan Turner (1991b, p. 1-35), who has contributed significantly with regards to the importance of the body within the sociology and anthropology of religion. Turner had also been instrumental to the founding of the academic journal entitled *Body and Society*, which has emerged as major academic journal in the social sciences and humanities for the publication of articles and papers surrounding the body. Nonetheless, in spite of such encouraging developments in recent years, there still remains a dearth of critical studies that have attempted to connect theoretical perspectives on the body within an ethnographic landscape *specifically involving the martial arts or pugilism*.

Taking the lead from such major paradigm shifts towards a greater appreciation of the body in social theory, this has been accompanied by a growing number of works by several scholars working in the field of the martial arts and pugilism. An interesting example would be the relatively obscure and semi-academic publication by Peter Payne (1994) on the 'spiritual dimensions' of the martial arts, which was probably one of the earliest works that attempted to explicitly highlight the importance of developing a deeper and broader understanding of the body's role in martial arts practice. In his analysis, Payne similarly noted that the mind-body dualism, often taken from granted in Western societies, was something that was relatively alien to a more holistic and universal perception of one's body and mind in East Asia. The practice of the Asian martial arts, as a result, was argued to be a continuation of the latter cultural worldview,

for one could never uncritically accept notions of a mind-body dualism in a practice that obviously blurs such a distinction.

Another interesting contribution has also been efforts analyzing certain ideological belief systems that often accompanied the practice of martial arts such as Aikido, where varying levels of emphasis on the notion of *ki* is taught. *Ki*, or its Chinese counterpart, *qi*, is both a metaphorical and mystical concept, which refers to a certain non-tangible energy and 'life-force' that is believed to flow and exists in the bodies of all living creatures. According to many practitioners, both Aikido and several other forms of 'internal' Chinese martial arts such as *Taijiquan* are believed to be able to harness and develop this energy and use it for recuperative and even martial purposes. The concept of *ki* was also carefully dealt with by Yasuo Yuasa (1993), which sought to critically deal with an Asian, or more specifically in this case, a Japanese understanding (Horne 2000, p. 73-86) of the relationship between *ki* and the body, once again critiquing simplistic Cartesian dualisms between mind and body. Although not touching directly upon the martial arts or even Aikido in a more specific way, his discussion has paved the way for a greater recognition of alternative discourses that are closely linked to classical views of the body and the practice of the martial arts within Chinese or Japanese societies.

From Yuasa's point of view, an understanding of *ki* is crucial to the successful practice of a number of martial arts that ultimately saw *ki* as an indispensable part of uniting the body and the mind of a martial artist. *Ki*, in this respect, is either understood as a metaphoric term as a unifying medium for body and mind, or as a discrete form of

energy that is unique to the living body with both psychological and physical characteristics. Nonetheless, a key conclusion by Yuasa advocates that the nature of knowledge in classical Chinese or Japanese thought, whether medical or philosophical, cannot be seen as divorced from *an experiential or practical* origin. This was also argued to be in accordance to the phenomenological ideas of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'lived body' or the 'habituated body', where a Cartesian dualism of the mind-body distinction is again irrelevant and even redundant. While 'true' or complete knowledge of phenomena may never be possible, it is nonetheless experience and given meaning by the bodies that inhabit spaces and through their knowledge of other bodies.

Sports, Martial Arts and the Body

In recent years, a number of international seminars and conferences have been organized in relation to the martial arts and related disciplines. Of special mention is a key event that led to the joint publication of a number of papers resulting from the 1996 United States-Japan Conference on the 'Japanese Martial Arts and American Sports', which was organized by the Research Institute of Educational Systems of Nihon University (Kiyota and Sawamura 1998). Papers that were presented included the works of several historians, sociologists, anthropologists and other scholars who, for the first time, provided a transnational and transcultural reflection of the highly entwined developmental matrix that the American sports and Japanese martial arts were situated within. Contributions ranged from a comparative study of the philosophical differences between the practice of *Kendo*¹⁵ and Western fencing (Kiyota and Sawamura 1998, p. 25-

¹⁵ Literally meaning 'The Way of the Sword', Kendo is a popular martial art that was another early 20th century cultural invention that was a part of significant changes within the Japanese education curriculum as part of the growing

34); the historical development of classical to modern Kendo (Kiyota and Sawamura 1998, p. 69-85); the commercialization of the martial arts (Kiyota and Sawamura 1998, p. 97-110); to an alleged relationship between Zen Buddhism and the Japanese martial arts (Kiyota and Sawamura 1998, p. 113-126). Each of these contributions further laid the path in highlighting the importance of the martial arts but unfortunately, none of the papers published gave any insight towards the role of the body in theorizing.

In the field of sports, what firstly comes to mind is an important study by Susan Brownell (1995) on the link between sport and nationalism in China, who first significantly employed the term 'body culture' in academic discourse in her research. The notion of a 'body culture' thus involved the training of the body for sports and served as a somatic narrative, or as techniques of the body, for the enculturation and dissemination of national identity and patriotism. Additional relevant examples also stem from the field of boxing, a sport that is probably more pugilistic in nature than most, by virtue of a high level of physical contact (or more specifically – raw and high impact violence between two bodies) and the greater potential risks of serious injury resulting from it. An interesting and informative work by John Sugden (1996) on boxing attempted to provide a transnational comparative study of the boxing sub-cultures between three distinct places in the world – Cuba, the United States and Northern Ireland. Each served as a vital sociological and ethnographical study that was able to draw important linkages between what is often stereotypically perceived as merely a brutal and violent sport among those

influence of right-wing ultranationalism. Today, Japanese students are still required to either choose *Kendo* or *Judo* as part of their high school physical education programme.

of lower social-economic and cultural backgrounds with the broader social-cultural, economic and political stakes that participation for a person entailed.

In summary, Sugden managed to provide a deeper insight into the symbolic and existential meanings that boxing held for those who were immersed in its sub-cultural environment, effectively redefining its practice as not merely a form of mindless violence and spectacle within its various communities in different parts of the world, but rather as a meaningful, politicizing and even emotional activity that reflects the social and political climates of the varying societies and communities where it is practiced. It was also argued that earlier presumptions about boxing being the sole domain of the working-class or even poverty stricken sectors of modern industrialized society are highly mistaken, as the individuals and communities that partake in the world of boxing are far more complex than previously thought (Sugden 1996, p. 179-196). This is often supported by the fact that most of the spectators and financial backing of boxing events stem from the middle and upper classes, although the boxers themselves are more than likely members from marginal and economically inferior backgrounds. In other words, boxing itself is a highly differentiated and classed sub-culture, and requires the participation of more than just the working-classes to exist. Nonetheless, the popularity of boxing as a medium of social class and cultural resistance, or even as an alternative means of social mobility via the use of *bodily capital* appears to carry some weight. Another important observation made by Sugden also pertains to a claim that boxing in many societies still remains the preserve of older patriarchal male sentiments and values, which are now gradually eroding in light of the forces of modernity and the impact of feminism.

More specific studies into Aikido, in recent years, include studies by Tamara Kohn (2001, p. 163-178, 2003, p. 139-155), which aptly reflects on the practical and embodied universe in being an *Aikidoka*, a theme that undeniably shares a great number of similarities to the interests of this thesis. Kohn's papers certainly echo much of the need to view the martial arts from a more embodied and praxeological perspective, employing an important insight into the highly sensual and corporeal world that often encapsulates its practice. In spite of this, some reservations that I feel towards her conclusions are similar to those I had echoed earlier on about the works of Donohue and Jones. Although certainly timely and important as a scholarly contribution in light of its analytical potential, Kohn also appears to be writing from a populist perspective that appears to find neither contradictions nor discursive contestations about Aikido's pugilistic universe and its alleged homogenous and ethical allure, an unreflexive position which is ultimately problematic. Her eager appropriation of the ideological language and practices in her Aikido *dojo*, where it is simply interpreted as a means for 'self-discovery' and an 'expression of group identity', betrays a naïve and wide-eyed form of 'cultural relativism' (at times a thinly disguised form of 'cultural tourism') and a closet Orientalizing gaze, which fails to further her analysis beyond the daily euphemisms, contradictions and symbolic violence that occur in Aikido's embodied but hierarchical universe, but instead displays, in her writing, her own personal uncritical subscription and affiliation with the martial art's inner rhetoric and ideology.

Consequently, a certain pollyannish and wide-eyed ethnographic fascination, where *the ethnographer becomes embedded tourist as opposed to critical observer*, is occasionally sensed in the tone of Kohn's undisguised taken-for-granted and unreflexive personal reverence for *her* art and its participants. Although one does admit that *going native* may have its obvious advantages, its disadvantages can also be fatal towards maintaining a healthy level of critical skepticism, while fostering unnecessarily obsequious and self-serving 'scholarly language' to legitimize one's own personal stakes in the field. In other words – the contradictions, ironies, politics and imperfections within the practice of Aikido or its social-cultural dialectics are seldom recognized as such, and are often subjected to a kind of academic *self-censorship* that serves to further mythologize a one-dimensional apprehension of Aikido's past and present. This is particularly so if one takes the view that the Asian martial arts appear to be one of the few remaining bastions of the kind of Orientalizing narratives that Edward Said (1979, 1994) and similar scholars have critically engaged with. This study, on the other hand, hopes to avoid such potential pitfalls that other scholars appear to have made when writing about the martial arts, Aikido in particular.

Nevertheless, other significant and important examples dealing similar topics include the work of J. Lowell Lewis (2000, p. 539-557) on what he perceived as the dramaturgical aspects of the Brazilian martial art of Capoeira, which also reflected the violence of everyday life through its embodied practice. This was similarly followed by Neil Stephens and Sara Delamont's (2006, p. 109-121) view that Capoeira, although possessing a dramaturgical element, also reified Arthur W. Frank's (1991, p. 36-102)

ideal type of the *disciplined* body. Further examples include Stewart McFarlane's (2002) recognition of the essential need for bodily awareness in the practice of Wing Chun¹⁶; and also Ashley Carruthers's (1998, p. 45-57) study of how Overseas Vietnamese employ the practice of *Vovinam*¹⁷ as a means for creating a shared and *protective* cultural identity in order to maintain a sense of community while in a foreign land.

Even more recently has been the work of Greg Downey, who has provided excellent observations and insights regarding the fast growing popularity, particularly in North America and Japan, of what originally began as 'no-holds-barred' fighting (Downey 2007, p. 201-226). Such events have evolved within a period of just over ten years into what are now known as professional 'Mixed Martial Arts' tournaments that have attempted to break into the arena of mainstream spectator sports. This follows another earlier insightful article on the 'corporeality of sound' in the practice of Capoeira (Downey 2002, p. 487-509), in which he notes how the perception of music, which is a crucial component of Capoeira practice, is gradually habituated meaningfully as part of a practitioner's distinctive somatic mode of attention via the body. The music employed in Capoeira, therefore, is argued to encompass and contribute towards a unique corporeal sensibility that can only be obtained after one successfully combines one's 'feel' for it together with a physical response by the body. This article eventually formed part of a larger work that Downey (2005) later published as an ethnographic study of Capoeira, which also provides significant mention of the role of the body as a crucial medium for

¹⁶ A Southern Chinese martial art - The term 'Wing Chun' is a Cantonese rendition meaning 'Eternal Spring', and is a martial art known for its close-quarter hand techniques.

¹⁷ A Vietnamese martial art that was believed to have been officially created in 1938, as a result of a fusion of various traditional fighting techniques during colonial Vietnam.

the Capoeira's visceral and sensual universe, thus producing another important and valuable ethnographic landmark in the field of the martial arts.

Additionally, from a feminist perspective, Kristine De Welde's (2003, p. 247-278) contribution seeks to analyze how conventional and potentially disempowering narratives of femininity can be challenged by the reframing, liberating and enabling of the female body in the practice of self-defence as a result of corporeal empowerment. De Welde's critically-informed work comes in the wake of other important contributions on highly overlapping issues by Jennifer Hargreaves (1997, p. 33-49) and Martha McCaughy (1997), who engaged both the limitation of feminist theories that either emphasized an overly textualized understanding of the female gender and identity, or the essentializing efforts of other feminists who construe the female body as presocial and naturally sexed.

In McCaughy's ethnographic study of the self-defence movement among women, she advocates the need for a *corporeal feminism* that understands the body as part of "agency, consciousness, reflections – notions typically construed as solely interior...in a way that does not reduce to essentialism or biologism" (McCaughy 1997, p. xii). Similarly, Hargreaves manages to uncover a largely hidden and obscure history of women's boxing that can be traced back to as far as the eighteenth century. At the same time, it was also argued that the continued presence and practice of women's boxing as a prominent sub-cultural sport possesses the potential to either deconstruct the subjugated images of the female body in modern society, or on the other hand, play a complicit role in further disempowering corporeal femininity. These works once more echoes calls the

need to recognize a sociology and anthropology that does not succumb to or necessarily spirals downwards into an implosive form of conceptual fetishism, as the social is not merely made of disembodied ideas devoid of corporeality and the senses. The future, therefore, looks promising in terms of such a growing corpus of works among scholars in both sociology and anthropology.

Pugilistic Bodies: Boxing, Shorinji Kempo and Kalarippayattu

In recent years, perhaps the three most significant and well-known major works on pugilism and the martial arts that have been published from a sociological or anthropological perspective dealing closely with the topic of *pugilistic cultures and the body* are Phillip Zarilli's (1998) *When the Body Becomes All Eyes*; Rupert Cox's (2003) *Zen Arts: An Anthropological Study of the Culture of Aesthetic Form in Japan*; and Loic Wacquant's (2004) *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. Each of these works represents both unique and important landmarks within an emerging ethnographic appreciation of anthropological or sociological studies in pugilism and the body, and each were also drawn from vastly differing socio-cultural and political contexts such as India, Japan and the United States respectively. At the same time, these works also reveal the ethnographic and theoretical possibilities in taking a serious and scholarly approach to the martial arts that remains highly grounded in each of the communities that their studies originated from. Admittedly, this present dissertation has also been partly influenced in varying degrees by each of these works.

Beginning with Zarilli's work on *Kalarippayattu*, which has probably received a lot less attention than it truly deserves in mainstream academia, his work may also be seen as the first and comprehensive ethnographically-based study about the martial arts since Donohue's *Forge of the Spirit* (1991), and it is certainly the first of its kind, in dealing substantively with a relatively obscure South Indian martial art to those generally unfamiliar with the martial arts. At the same time, Zarilli's contribution is seen to approach the topic with a strong and critical grounding in linking and balancing empirical work with theoretical analysis. This certainly includes a kind of ethnographic detail and rigour that greatly supersedes any previous works on the martial arts in social-cultural anthropology. Zarilli's work makes an important acknowledgement towards the fact that the body cannot be viewed as a mere vessel of flesh and blood in which culture or identity impacts upon, but is also a vital part of the entire phenomenological make-up of a human being that not only thinks, but also breathes, feels, touches and emotes.

Describing his work as an "ethnography of the body in practice" (Zarilli 1999, p. 5), Zarilli conducted his study in the relatively obscure South Indian martial tradition known as *Kalarippayattu*, where he spent seven months of fieldwork in Kerala, India, personally participating and training in its martial culture. This study, in many ways, thus echoes the theoretical interests that my own study has taken, partly due to its focus on a traditional martial subculture and also partly due to Zarilli's insights into how both the body and pugilism are never removed from the historical and cultural contexts in which they are practiced. Viewing the practice of *Kalarippayattu* as a powerful mode of cultural praxis through which bodies, knowledge, powers, agency and identities have been

constructed and are incorporated through bodily practices, his work serves as a clear reminder and fine example of the growing recognition of body cultures like the martial arts that offer fresh empirical ground for sociological and anthropological theorizing.

What interests me most about this phenomenon is the dynamic and shifting relationship between the body, bodily practice[s], knowledge, power, agency and the practitioner's 'self' or identity, as well as the discourses and images if the body and practice created to represent this shifting relationship...Practices are those modes of embodied doing through which everyday as well as extra-daily experiences, realities and meanings are shaped and negotiated...Because practices are not things, but an active, embodied doing, they are intersections where personal, social and cosmological experiences and realities are negotiated. (Zarilli 1998, p. 4-5)

Zarilli's own fieldwork and insights, drawn from his own immersion into the embodied and corporeal universe of *Kalarippayattu*, sought to demonstrate a need to reject the arbitrariness and superficiality of the mind-body dualism, in which the mind has largely been given unwarranted preference over the carnal and fleshly aspects of the social and the cultural. The crux of his thesis importantly asserts that the practice *Kalarippayattu* serves as a distinct "Technology of the Self" that allows the negotiation, repositioning and representation of identity, history and culture, where the "body is all eyes". His own personal involvement, as an apprentice, in the practice of the art also provides a good example of the necessity of an embodied and reflexive ethnography, particularly in the conduct of any anthropological or sociological study of the martial arts.

Nevertheless, any limitations that Zarilli's study revealed, however, was largely the fact that a large portion of his study work appears to locate the practice of *Kalarippayattu* and its pugilistic universe within an encapsulated and culturally exclusive context. For it is only in his final chapter that Zarilli explicitly discusses a gradually

growing international awareness of the practice and dissemination of *Kalarippayattu* beyond the communal boundaries of Kerala, such as in countries like Malaysia and its growing juxtaposition and hybridization with differing martial subcultures (Zarilli 1998, p. 215-42). What becomes obvious near the end of this study is that it seems to assume that *Kalarippayattu* is a body culture that is largely encased in a political and cross-cultural vacuum, where contestation and power do not seem to be significant issues.

In other words, the notions of change, re-invention and re-imagination do not appear to be as well acknowledged as they could have been. Hence, it would have been even more interesting and informative, if Zarilli had further explored *Kalarippayattu*'s practice more effectively beyond its social-cultural origins, although admittedly, it should also be acknowledged that it certainly does not share the same extent of global popularity as the Japanese martial arts. Interestingly, this also further raises the question of the potential survivability of *Kalarippayattu* in a society, or *martio-scape*, which is experiencing the growing impact of modern industrial capitalism. An awareness of the globalizing and transcultural impacts upon martial practice is something that perhaps my own study hopes to consciously reflect on, as my ethnography on Aikido was largely based upon the practice of a pugilistic universe that has already attempted to re-position and even re-invent itself in much more culturally heterogeneous and contested environments. This was also one of the reasons behind the conduct my fieldwork on Aikido outside of Japan. Furthermore, unlike Zarilli's rather literal usage of the terms 'East Indian' and 'Asian', it would seem impossible to similarly use such definitions in

my own work, where a naïve or categorically rigid definitions of either Japanese or Canadian identity would be impractical and even problematically naive.

Rupert Cox's (2003) contribution on what he calls the 'Culture of Aesthetic Form in Japan' perhaps mirrors the specific subject matter of my own study most closely. In his study, he draws ethnographic inspiration from not one, but two forms of Japanese culture – the practice of *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado*. The former is a martial art based in Japan but draws its technical and historical roots from the Shaolin martial arts¹⁸ in China; while the latter can be translated as the 'Way of Tea', a ritualized ceremony for the preparation and consumption of tea. Both have been selected as part of Cox's study because they each claim an overt ideological and practical link to Zen Buddhism. Although the subject matter may deserve greater discussion, one may at this moment understand *Shorinji Kempo* as a form of *budo* that has established its identity as a *Japanese* martial art that is interestingly and ironically also registered as a religious organization in Japan.

Similar to Zarilli's approach in a number ways, Cox seeks to study these two forms of cultural practices as embodiments of the historical, cultural and everyday practical realities of the aesthetic ideal within Japanese society. This is because both of them, according to Cox, require the long-time dedication of not simply the mind, but also of the body, and both also possess a highly performative nature that involves the disciplining of the body. Viewing them as expressions and representations of Zen philosophy, he argues that the authority of such descriptions and explanations rests

¹⁸ It would be important to note that the term *Shorinji Kempo* can literally translated from Japanese as 'Shaolin Temple Fist Art'. While this may not be the place to further expand on the topic. It would be useful to note that *Shorinji Kempo* has had a controversial history in terms of its legitimate links to the Shaolin Temple.

largely upon the “evocation and reproduction of an aesthetic ideal along with a major focus on a sense of authenticity” (Cox 2003, p. 4). The practice of Zen, in other words, is thus understood to possess a highly corporeal dimension, which is embodied and experienced in the sensory and tactile practices of *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado*, where both discourse and practice are never necessary divorced from each other (Cox 2003, p. 70-102). At the same time, it is through such a corporeal dimension where the aesthetic is located as it is also expressed as a manifestation of the “authenticity of thought” that is expressed through the bodies of its practitioners. In other words, Cox appears to arguing that the notion and experience of aestheticism is close linked to various forms of corporeal embodiment, as it is revealed through the practice and discipline of bodies in both *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado*.

To his credit, Cox (2003, p. 14-47) is careful to not fall unreflexively into adopting mystical and Orientalizing narratives when he also notes that such an understanding of Zen is part of a Japanese aesthetic ideal that can potentially lead to the construction of essentializing discourses surrounding ‘Japanese-ness’. On a further note, the concept of *mimesis* (i.e. Taussig 1993) advocated by Cox (2003, p. 103-138) plays a critical role in the aesthetic ideal, as practitioners of both *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado* are required to learn and copy specific bodily dispositions and practices that serve as ideal typical corporeal forms or *kata*. An interesting argument that follows is that he, nonetheless, proposes that authenticity is still possible and achievable by both set of practitioners in spite of continued *mimesis*, as their involvement in either do not necessary serve to deny or restrict the expression of creativity or agency. From Cox’s

perspective, the practice of both *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado* are, therefore, very much part of a *ritualizing* process that where creativity emerges from an understanding of culture as an aesthetic ideal closely tied to the self-conscious body of each practitioner. Hence, it is argued that it is through the seemingly ironic connection with form and repetition, where originality or authenticity of experience and expression is forged.

While one certainly appreciates the attempts by Cox at analyzing the practice of culture as being manifested as an aesthetic ideal through the Zen arts such as *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado*, one cannot help but notice the vagueness of how he employs certain concepts such as *Zen*, *culture* and *aesthetics* in a rather overly abstract and non-practical but contextually alienating manner. The arguments and train of thought in his work presented lacked a clear focus, with his text often bordering on convoluted vagueness and obscurantism, as his study appeared to only casually touch upon issues such as Orientalism, ritual, mimesis, cultural authenticity and aestheticism in seemingly mutually exclusive chapters. Although it must be conceded that the topics he touched on were not simple ones, his analysis and discussion, ironically, also tends to increasingly detract from a more grounded, sensual and embodied understanding of his aesthetic idealism as a result of his highly conceptualized and philosophical approach. Unfortunately, in spite of his recognition of the link between discourse and practice, and the corresponding acknowledged links between abstraction and embodiment, his own discourse has a tendency to veer increasingly and unfortunately towards the former.

It is further surprising because although Cox refers to his work as *anthropological* and *ethnographic*, there are few or hardly any direct references to the individuals and the *bodily* and *material* socio-cultural environment where he conducted his fieldwork. The multi-vocalities of the individuals from both *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado* seem to be restricted to the elites within their field. Thus, one cannot but help detect a sense of scholastic *elitism* in the way Cox approaches the topic, and would feel that his study tends to be substantially removed from a whole range of other practitioners of both *Shorinji Kempo* and *Chado* who have no interest in the aesthetics of culture apart from perhaps, to say the least, only the more mundane and grounded issues of the everyday world, just self-defence or sheer cultural tourism. His work is severely limited in the same way where one may learn about a culture, but ironically never about the individuals and personalities that inhabit its world. In summing up, while it certainly must be acknowledged that Cox's contribution has, nonetheless, been substantial and fruitful to some degree, the sheer abstracted and rather vague nature of his approach in dealing with the term *culture* remains rather narrow and too poorly outlined. This is, therefore, an approach one hopes to move beyond in this current thesis.

The third major work that I would like to discuss is Loic Wacquant's *Body and Soul* (Wacquant 2004a), which was an ethnographic study of the pugilistic world that surrounded a Chicago Southside boxing gym known as the Woodlawn Boys Club. Over the short time since this study has been published, first in French (Wacquant 2000), and then in English a few years later in 2004, it has already been regarded in some circles as a seminal contribution in theorizing about the body with the use of Bourdieu's theoretical

influence, and its links to the construction of a ‘pugilistic habitus’, where one is immediately drawn into a highly corporeal and sensual social-cultural universe that ultimately forms the existential ground of all social life. Wacquant’s fieldwork was conducted over a period of close to three years, where he personally participated in regular training as a boxing apprentice under the watchful eyes of his trainer, DeeDee Armour. His work stands as both an excellent and insightful piece of sociological and ethnographic scholarship, while at the same time remaining a moving personal narrative of a single person’s gradual induction into the world of boxing.

Additionally, this ethnographic piece could also be understood as Wacquant’s own personal testimony and tribute to Bourdieu’s axiom of ‘fieldwork in philosophy’, and the necessity to recognize the body as a prime locus towards the creation of a ‘pugilistic habitus’ where we ‘learn by the body’, thus applying such perspectives within contexts that Bourdieu himself had not ventured into previously. Hence, Wacquant’s account of his observations and own experiences, mental and corporeal, in learning the ‘sweet science of bruising’, or the ‘Manly Art’, serves as a strong exemplar to the potential for a combination of deep theoretical reflection and rigorous empirical study. By recounting his gradual initiation into a ‘bodily craft’, or body culture, such as boxing, Wacquant sought to “demonstrate in action the fruitfulness of an approach that takes seriously, at the theoretical, methodological, and rhetorical levels, the fact that the social agent is before anything else a being of flesh, nerves, and senses” (Wacquant 2004a, p. vii). Consequently, the world of boxing in which he was incorporated into was thus effectively encountered as a triad of corporeal, material and symbolic universes.

According to Wacquant's admission (2004, p. 9), his own participation into the world of boxing was more coincidental rather than intended. He was originally seeking what he has referred to as a 'window into the ghetto' in order to observe the 'social strategies' of the young men in the neighbourhood not far from where his own residence was located. Nonetheless, it eventually led to the writing of an ethnographic piece that proved groundbreaking in terms of elucidating a reflexive sociology. The importance of Wacquant's contribution, however, does not stop here. It also provides an alternative and important insight into the world of underprivileged and working class individuals and also indirectly explores and acknowledges the impact of ethnic and 'race' relations between different cultures within the neighbourhood where the gym was located.

Yet another key topic that Wacquant's study certainly touches upon is the fact that it also serves as an important ethnographic documentation of institutionally-sanctioned violence in modern society. For it seems reasonable to claim that boxing, whether professional or amateur, is a gruelling and potentially fatal sport that is certainly unlike *Chado* in terms of any blatantly inherent potential for physical danger. From a more methodological point of view, the fieldwork conducted by Wacquant (2004, p. 7) has largely supported and inspired an understanding of the need to move beyond the ethnographic 'gaze from afar'. This is because 'making sense' of the cultural and bodily logic inherent in either 'the sweet science' of boxing, or Aikido, implies the need to necessarily include one's own corporeal participation. This work is also a prime example of how a contextually grounded sociology and anthropology can still remain relevant and

intellectually fruitful, other than reductionistic reliance on grand theories and sweeping paradigms that often tends to forgo empirical and qualitative rigour for overgeneralization and verbose proclamations.

As noted earlier, the theoretical perspective that Wacquant adopted was, of course, highly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu, who had been both his mentor and later on, a fellow collaborator in a number of co-written works. While Bourdieu's writings have certainly not been the easiest to decipher at times, Wacquant's prose is highly readable and accessible to both academics and non-academics. Therefore, an added strength of Wacquant's work here is the highly approachable manner in which he has presented his observations and analyses, which is low on unnecessary neologistic jargon and pretentious obscurantism without sacrificing complexity of thought. This is further complemented by highly engaging, detailed, and poignant narrative possessing a prose that was perhaps only possible from a highly embodied and reflexive ethnographer was completely immersed within his field. In other words, the sheer reflexive sincerity of the writer's text in its attempt to communicate and to understand via ethnography spoke of a deeper and well-founded sense of humble intellectualism that often mirrors both clarity of expression and complexity of thought.

Wacquant's ethnographic volume contains only three chapters, each possessing a differing focus on a discrete aspect of Wacquant's observations. The first chapter opens with an overall attempt at linking the realities of the street and the boxing ring to the theories of Bourdieu. Viewing the boxing gym as the embodiment of a combination

between 'symbiosis and opposition', one partakes in its world while also viewing it as a potential escape from it (Wacquant 2004a, p. 17). Within its empirical detail, we are thus grounded on the everyday material and embodied realities of life in the ghetto and its potential symbolic violences and habituses, where the gym is also understood as the site of a protected sociality (Wacquant 2004a, p. 26) for its members. Becoming a boxer, a neophyte seeks to incorporate a pugilistic habitus that requires one to effectively manage and develop one's bodily capital through both a sense of implicit and collective pedagogy, along with sacrifice and discipline. Likewise in Aikido, one does not become a boxer by *thinking* boxing, but rather, by *doing* boxing. The second chapter, then, further expands beyond the habitus of the boxer in the gym by drawing us into the field of power through which the world of boxing plays itself out in the boxing ring, where fighters of different rings meet one another at a location known as Studio 104, a tavern and night club where amateur fights are held. It is also here where one is given a closer *sense* of the stakes, through the *collusio* of the various individuals partaking their own personal stakes in their interactions in and out of the ring.

The reader, therefore, is gradually introduced to the *dispositions* and *strategies* adopted by both boxers and trainers in their relationships; the varying categories of boxers; the internal vernaculars of the boxing habitus; and most importantly, the voices of the 'players' of the 'game' of the sweet science, ranging from the various individuals that Wacquant had grown acquainted to and the ones he encounters at Studio 104. As a result of Wacquant's close reading and personal encounters with several of the boxers and trainers, we begin to gain a much more intimate and emotive understanding of what the

pugilistic world of boxing can be, far beyond the usual superficial portrayals of the sport as either a brutal spectacle of violence of flesh upon flesh, or a euphemized and glorified image of a stereotypical practice of raw masculinity. And finally, although the third chapter (Wacquant 2004a, p. 235-255) of the work is the shortest section, it contains a personal account of Wacquant's own personal embodied participation in the Golden Gloves tournament itself, which interestingly, provided one of the most penetrating, though fleeting, perspectives in being a boxer, for it spoke directly from experience, an experience not derived mainly from observation but also from the senses, in the ring.

Body and Soul can thus read on two separate levels: Firstly, as a personal account of an academic who attempted to penetrate and be accepted within a world that was obviously removed from his own in more ways than one; or secondly, as a important ethnographic encounter where the theoretical foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's 'practice theory' is put to the test by one of his most well-known disciples. On both levels, one is inclined to agree that it largely succeeds, although a few of reservations arise. In spite of Wacquant's undoubted efforts at providing a closer insight into the world of boxing and the social and sensual world in which it exists in, one cannot but help to sense a certain sense of stoicized romanticism that he himself has constructed for the world of boxing. For it appears as if the pugilistic world of the 'sweet science' has been taken almost literally and on face value by Wacquant, where there was still a tendency to valorize the elements and factors that are a part of the creation of a sport that is, ultimately, built upon the premise of one human body seeking the destruction of another in a brutal and often cruel exercise in pain and suffering for two bodies. Perhaps it was due to Wacquant's

already invested personal stakes in the game of boxing itself, as he had first joined it with no intentions of writing about in the first place.

Hence, while one can certainly appreciate the need to understand the cultural logic of any society or worldview from within, it is also important to realize that the ethnographer need not necessarily become an uncritical and even unwitting advocate for the subjects that he or she studies. In spite of the clear acknowledgement by Wacquant that no quarter was given in his training and the fights he participated in, the fact that the individuals in his immediate environment also knew him not simply as 'Busy Louie', but also a white Gallic 'Professor of Sociology', who was holding a position at the University of Chicago at the time of his fieldwork, may have certainly tempered, to some extent, his own experience and their reactions to him, even if his academic background had been initially downplayed. Wacquant's ethnography may also been compromised on the account of his own cultural, symbolic and economic capital, leading to his own potential misrecognitions of the symbolic violences that can occur in the sweet science of bruising.

Furthermore, it is also surprising that none of the individuals he had met in at the gym were ever overtly hostile to him, or were there any accounts of the various symbolic violences that his own mentor so famously recognized in the study of other institutions such as education, culture or taste. This is especially if we were to understand boxing itself as a field of power where it is not simply a game of domination of others in a raw contest of flesh and blood, but also one that is inclusive of the potential abuses of authority by trainers and others of authority, or the mutual rivalry and social differences

that existed among boxers themselves. Several of the characters at his gym we grow accustomed to in his account seem to belong to a homogenous community of individuals with very similar values and objectives. In other words, boxing appeared to be portrayed as a kind of semi-religious calling and para-agnostic sect of the body, where the ethnographer's eventual indoctrination and incorporation of the sport's internal logic – wholesale – became a point for self-glorification and academic spectacle (Franck 2001, p. 19-20). Wacquant's fight at the end of the book, at times, amounted to almost like an act of *religious conversion*. As I re-read the final paragraph of Wacquant's text, one cannot help but grow increasingly ambivalent towards its various implications.

But all this hurting vanishes upon my triumphant return to the gym. I feel like a soldier going back to base camp after having been at the front lines, I'm so bombarded with high-fives, smiles, winks, pats on the shoulder, compliments, and commentary on the refereeing. "You done got robbed, Louie!" I surprised everyone at the gym – starting with myself. From now on, I am fully one of them: "*Yep, Louie's a soul brother!*" Ashante is eagerly inquiring about my next fight when DeeDee shuts the party down: "There ain't gonna be no next time. You had yo' fight. You got enough to write your damn book now. *You don't need to get into d'ring.*" (Wacquant 2004a, p. 255)

I am subtly suggesting, therefore, that perhaps Wacquant's perspective on the 'sweet science' of boxing might have differed if he had actually made the decision to become a professional as he had mentioned towards the end of his ethnographic account. But of course, this does not necessary detract from the sheer rigour and commitment dedicated by Wacquant towards this study that obviously held the risk of serious bodily harm to himself. Hence, it should also be noted that such data or insights were made possible only because of Wacquant's personal physical constitution, or bodily capital, which made it possible for him to endure the hardships of the daily gruelling training regime in the gym. It should useful to note that not all ethnographers may be as

corporeally talented and this could be revealing of the limitations of such kinds of fieldwork, an observation that I also personally experienced for myself, particularly in the face of severe injury.

Few academics would have even possessed the same amount of bodily capital, personal time and personal funding to have enabled this study to be even possible, while subjecting his or her experiences to an analytical fervour that so effectively employed the legacy of Wacquant's mentor. Nevertheless, it is from this viewpoint that Wacquant's should be best judged and appreciated. His work thus remains an important *pioneering* and *brilliant* piece of embodied and reflexive ethnography where its potential limitations are far outweighed by its strengths. It has also probably set an example in the field of ethnography work in the body cultures and pugilism that may be a hard act to follow, not necessarily theoretically, but perhaps also methodologically, empirically and *bodily*.

CHAPTER THREE

Bodies of Culture: People, Places and ‘Races’

Being there

I first made contact with the Clearwater *Aikikai*¹ on 15th April for a pilot study during the late winter of the year 2002, where I spent almost three weeks in the city of Calgary, Alberta. I had first located them through the Aikiweb², and learnt that they were the largest and most established Aikido organization within the province, and subsequently wrote to them via email regarding my research intentions. After making my way there from Edmonton by means of a three hour ride in a Greyhound bus, I joined in for their classes on a daily basis³ and also participated as much as possible during social events, while interacting and socializing with its members. As the initial stages of my contact with them proved to be successful, I eventually selected the Clearwater *Aikikai* as a regular field site for any future ethnographic work for the topic of my research. Following my first trip, I made two more short-term trips the following year, in 2003, where I resumed contact with Clearwater’s members, firstly attending a weapons seminar in January 2003 and appearing again for a spell of nearly three weeks in April of that same year.

My first full-scale and intensive period of fieldwork in Calgary, however, did not begin until the summer of 2004, after the completion of my candidacy examination.

¹ Literally meaning ‘Aiki Society’ or ‘Aiki Organization’. The name *Aikikai* is also the specific name of the first official Aikido organization that was officially established in 1947 in Tokyo, Japan.

² <http://www.aikiweb.com>

³ Training was conducted on all days of the week except on Sundays, where no classes were conducted. Matsumoto *sensei*, I subsequently discovered, was a born-again Christian, along with the rest of his family, who are devout Christian evangelicals. His eldest son was undergoing training to become a missionary during the time of my fieldwork.

During this next stage, I lived in Calgary on a more permanent basis for more than three months from May to August during the summer. Apart from training regularly up to six days a week at the *dojo* and taking part regularly in social events, I also doubled up on weekdays as a non-salaried worker at Matsumoto *sensei*'s own professional practice as a *shiatsu* healer, which will be discussed in greater detail in a later section of this chapter. Being the utility man, my duties ranged from being a cashier, a receptionist, cleaning the toilets, painting the *dojo* facilities, doing the laundry and even washing Matsumoto *sensei*'s car. In the final weeks of my stay at this stage, I also managed to gain permission to live and train for over a month at the *dojo*, from July to early August 2004, arguably as a sort of live-in student⁴.

Following this, the second major period where I returned to spend time at the Clearwater *Aikikai* occurred again at the end of that same year, in 2004, between the months of October to December. I also briefly returned to Calgary for a ten-day stay in October, in part for a conference and to refresh my contacts with the community at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. This was followed by a longer stay of nearly two months during the winter months of November and December 2004. During this period, I no longer put up at the *dojo*, but instead rented a room in a house owned by a Canadian-Chinese couple located in the northeast of Calgary, which was, according to some from the Clearwater *Aikikai*, a 'troublesome and ethnic' part of the city, due to the relatively higher crime rate

⁴ Nonetheless, it should be clarified from the start that this was not the same as that of what is commonly known as being an *uchi-deshi*, although it also entails being a live-in student. The term *uchi-deshi* has further connotations, such as being a student who is considered a close and personal student of the *sensei*, who may even be his personal assistant or designated successor. This is quite removed from the actual situation I was in.

compared to the rest of Calgary⁵. The next year in 2005 once more saw me returning to Calgary in January for a weapons seminar for two nights. The third and final intensive period of fieldwork occurred that same year from the months of May to August, where I once more put up in the 'troublesome' northeast. In total, the amount of time I spent in the field occurred over an accumulated period of approximately eleven months, which stretched over a time frame between April 2002 to August 2005.

Reasons for Staying

My decision to embark on ethnographic fieldwork⁶ at Clearwater *Aikikai* and the total amount of time I spent there was originally based on what I saw to be the fulfilment of three broad criteria along with the inherent limitations that potentially accompanied them. These were, although not necessarily in order of importance, firstly, the financial and logistical sustainability of my daily expenses throughout the period of my research; secondly, a Canadian city that possessed a substantial amount of multicultural and transnational diversity in its social-cultural environment that my field site would be a part of; and finally, an Aikido organization that possessed considerable organizational and historical linkages to its origins in Japan. In view of all these considerations, the Clearwater *Aikikai* was felt to have largely fulfilled these requirements.

The first factor regarding funding was, of course, a crucial, if not, at times, the most vital ingredient to the success of my fieldwork. It goes without saying, therefore,

⁵ In addition, the fact that the northeast seemed to contain a greater concentration of low income and non-white Canadian communities appeared for some to be an alleged explanation for its higher crime rates. But I had never felt more at home there than any other part of Calgary.

⁶ Official informed consent from Clearwater *Aikikai* for the conduct of my observations, interviews, photo-taking and video-recordings was, of course, obtained. On top this, the 44 individuals that I had interviewed, were fully informed of the objectives of my research and agreed to mutually signing a consent form for confidentiality purposes

that funding was a major factor that ultimately decided the ethnographic fate of my anthropological ambitions. For as much as one should harbour the hope of writing the most ideal and most provocative ethnography at the most ethnologically rich site for one's research, it was the need to compromise, coupled with a significant dose of adaptability in making decisions that often superseded such hopes. This is especially so in cases where the availability of funding for the conduct of my fieldwork had always been limited⁷. More than often, as in situations similar to mine; it would appear as if it was the field site had selected the ethnographer rather than the other way around.

I would, therefore, be the first to acknowledge, then, that a combination of serendipity, ambiguity and luck – as opposed to naïve methodological inhibivism, stubborn and idealized dogmatism in research strategy, and the even most well-laid plans⁸ – have been important factors that affected the outcome of my fieldwork more than anything else. The eventual selection of Calgary was, then, a careful combination of economic pragmatism and ethnographic flexibility that did not compromise the scholastic requirements of my research topic. More candidly, I simply could not afford to go live in Tokyo and practice Aikido at the *Aikikai*, but instead looked for it in Calgary, and luckily I did find it. An even more affordable and pragmatic option was, of course, to remain in Edmonton, the self-proclaimed 'City of Champions', but after some consideration, I

⁷ In spite of funding limitations, I am will always be extremely grateful for the support that I had received for three years from the Anthropology Department's Graduate Research Fund and also the Graduate Student Association's Professional Development Grant. All this provided substantial relief for my research expenses, which would have been a lot harder to accomplish if otherwise.

⁸ A much older and idealistic ethnographic strategy formerly outlined ambitious plans to conduct 'multi-sited' ethnography in the cities of Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver within Canada and even proposed a six month stay in Tokyo, Japan. Over time I grew weary of well-meaning but contextually naïve questions among my peers or university faculty who kept asking: 'Why Alberta?' or 'Why Calgary?' or 'Why didn't you go to Vancouver or Toronto if you wanted transnationalized spaces?' Well, it just wasn't economically or logistically possible, given the situation I was in. The potential for *long-term* ethnographic fieldwork 'out there' is perhaps more than often only more possible for a certain privileged class in academia.

decided that Calgary was a more appropriate choice, particularly due to both the second and third field criteria that I was seeking to fulfil.

Calgary, Culture and Clearwater

Overlapping closely with the constraints outline by the first factor, the second factor equated to a need to locate and conduct ethnographic fieldwork within an Albertan city that would serve as a relevant case study for a corresponding focus on transnationalism and globalization, another recurring theme in my research. In this regard, Calgary was the obvious choice, as it was the fastest growing city in the province along with a society that was also the most culturally diverse in the region. The population of Calgary, at the time of writing, stood at approximately 991,759, according to the 2006 Canadian Census⁹, although it would not be surprising that its present population has already surpassed this. The most populated city in the province, Calgary accounts for virtually a third of Alberta's official total population, which stands at 3, 242, 824, according to the same Census¹⁰. A further examination of the statistics also reveals that Calgary had grown by nearly thirty percent in just a span of ten years from 1996¹¹ to 2006. The difference is starker when compared to its economic and cultural rival from the north, Edmonton, which only grew by just over thirteen percent over the same period. In spite of Edmonton being the designated and official capital of Alberta, Calgary has always had the lead in economic, transnational and multi-cultural development in recent decades. According to additional records, the city of Calgary also possesses the highest proportion of what the 2001 Census has defined as so-called visible minorities in all of

⁹ <http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/BU/cityclerks/city.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/images/2006pop.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/ms/pdf/1996pop.pdf>

Alberta, a total which amounts to over 17 percent¹², and it is a population that looks sets to grow further in the future in both diversity and size.

I was, therefore, quite fortunate to have been able to locate an Aikido *dojo* such as the Clearwater *Aikikai* within Calgary, which was arguably the only one of its kind in the city, if not, the province. The ethnographic potential of this site was further heightened by the fact that Calgary has always been part of an ongoing and highly self-conscious social, cultural and political narrative on institutionalizing a national ideology of a multicultural and multiracial Canada since the 1970s. As an integral part of Western Canada's history, particularly in the province of Alberta, it was first incorporated as a city in 1894 within the prairies of a land that had been firstly and predominantly colonized by immigrants of British stock since the 1800s. A significant part of its early growth had stemmed from the establishment of a fort along the Bow River, which still flows through the city today. It is also worthy of mention that its old name of Fort Calgary was based on a mistaken translation of a Gaelic term that supposedly meant 'Clear Running Water'. The word 'Calgary' in Gaelic, however, more accurately refers to either 'bay farm' or 'preserved pasture at the harbour' (Sanders 2003, p. 68-70).

After a period of more than a hundred years, the Calgary of today is now a bustling, complex and constantly diversifying society within a nation which possesses one of the highest rates of international migration apart from Australia. It would, therefore, not be an understatement to say that Calgary remains the most cosmopolitan,

¹² <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/demo53e.htm> (Data for 2006 in this category was not available)

transnationalized and globalized city in all of Alberta¹³. Located in the flat prairie lands of Western Canada virtually next to the Canadian Rockies, and less than an hour's drive away from the major tourist and resort towns of Banff and Canmore, the city now serves as an important destination for travellers passing through the heartlands of Canada and for immigrants seeking to carve a new life beyond more popular migrant destinations in Canada such as Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto. In addition, the somewhat ironic fact that the Conservative Party enjoys strong support in Calgary also situates my fieldwork within an interesting social-political matrix that interlaces the city's overall political and White Anglophone Christian conservatism alongside a rapidly growing atmosphere of cultural and religious diversity. Once more, at the time of writing, it is also interesting to note that the Conservative Party has now recently come into power at the national level, forming a minority government within Canada since January 2006, ending twelve years of government under the outgoing Liberal Party.

Accordingly, this self-conscious sense of multiculturalism in the city of Calgary emerged as the social-cultural backdrop in which my fieldwork was ultimately situated in. Hence, if one were to look beyond typically well-known Canadian examples of multicultural diversity such as Vancouver and Toronto, or even Montreal, the case of Calgary would have been a viable alternative. This point is raised as it was important to frame my fieldwork beyond a narrow focus on isolated everyday observations at the confines of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. For if one were to write an ethnography of the Aikido community at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, one also could not avoid participating, relating, and

¹³ Although some voices of disagreement might be heard from more partisan inhabitants of Edmonton, its alleged 'rival' from the north.

reflecting, at least to some considerable extent, on the broader political and cultural climate that it was inevitably encased in. Claims for Canada being a homogenous 'Western' society or a nation simply divided along Anglophone, Francophone and First Nations distinctions fail to capture far greater complexities. Apparently, it would be quite unlike the days of early colonial contact with indigenous cultures, for one is now hard pressed to locate so-called 'islands of culture' anymore, where few communities and societies are culturally exclusive or homogenous, devoid of a 'structure of the conjuncture' (Sahlins 1987, p. xiv, 1996, p. 152-154).

On the other hand, one is intent on avoiding a naïve and increasingly euphemized and politically correct understanding of the terms 'multiculturalism' (Esses and Gardner 1996, p. 1-14), 'transculturalism' (Coccioletta 2002, p. 1-11) or 'transnationalism' as if the social relations between various cultural groups in society were always harmonious or completely devoid of ambiguity, tension, conflict or prejudice (See Li 1999, p. 148-177, Mackey 2002). Samples of scholarly literature on the growing 'hybridity' of Canada's cultural landscape have observed the inter-cultural impact among communities like earlier the Japanese and Chinese who converted to Christianity (Knowles 1995, p. 59-810); the labour market experience of Ghanaian women (Wong 2000, p. 45-87); and the maintenance of Italian regional identity in Toronto (Harney 2002, p. 43-73). Hence, in many cases, the hyphenated Canadian identity (e.g. Chinese-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian, or French-Canadian) has always been, and still is, an increasing phenomenon, as the continuing influx of migrants from differing cultures and identities often tenaciously hold on to perceived social and communal links to their former lands of

origin while claiming, at the same time, a stake in Canadian society. Perhaps increasingly rare, anthropologists who insist on looking for presumably autochthonous and culturally pure communities that exhibit unique practices and remain untainted by the politics and economics of globalization and transculturalism would probably be sorely disappointed, and obviously mistaken to a large degree. The Trobrianders play cricket, the Chinese run sushi restaurants, Aikido is now in North America, and Chinese-Singaporeans (who have never lived in China, yet) conduct ethnographic fieldwork in Canadian cities in Alberta. We are all now diffused subjects living in a world of entangled objects. Examples of such diversity can be found in the personal narratives of some of my respondents below:

Interviewer: How long has your family been in Calgary, or Canada?

Jonathan: As far back as I can get... it's just two generations back in the early 1900s...when my family moved over to Canada...from Austria to Russian and then Canada... my father's parents actually speak Russian and Ukrainian...I'm third generation...they were in Manitoba...my parents moved to Lloydminster...and we moved to Regina...and then moved to Calgary...that was ten years ago...

Mitch: Well uh...um...my father's Japanese...my mother's a visible Caucasian I guess...Hungarian-Russian her background...I'm one-quarter Hungarian, one-quarter Russian, half-Japanese...umm...the Japanese side...I am third generation... born in this country...in essence I'm probably more Canadian...my grandfather, was in the war for Canada...story is...if D-Day didn't go through...they were the next line to go...the next line of troops...the next wave...if D-Day wasn't successful...as luck holds out, he didn't go...and I'm here...my dad was an oil guy...I born in Fort McMurray in Alberta...I graduated from the University of Calgary, and have two degrees.

Interviewer: What do regard yourself as?... Japanese or Canadian? If a person were to ask you now...

Mitch: I would say half-Japanese...Canadian...yeah but I'm a visible minority Canadian...I don't know...I guess here you kind of uh...grow into it...I mean growing up it was a little bit hard...some are...I would say racist...that's a harsh word...there's a little bit discrimination... a little bit...growing up...but as you get older...it's funny to see that the Asian culture is very trendy now...more accepting now...because of the way I look...no one knows what I am...I've been called Hispanic, Mexican...Native American...Indian...Hawaiian, Polynesian-looking...I just have that...that look...just a different look...a huge mixture of uh...we look very different...a lot of people can't quite put their finger to what it is...

Craig: ...when I was between five and seven... we moved to Toronto...I took up soccer then...then I came back to Calgary and then I took up hockey again...for five years... as a goalie...and then in grade nine I took up soccer again...then this year summer...I took up Aikido...then I'm hoping...I'd like to go for the rest of my life...until I'm...incapable of it...

Interviewer: What about your own cultural background?

Craig: My dad's side of the family...his mum came from... Scotland actually...and his dad had English background...and so...they were Canadian by that point...there wasn't much...ethnic background there... (just) British background there...and my mum... (her) dad's American, (her) mum's British...it's still pretty much been a typical Canadian influence...

The third factor that influenced my choice of site, however, was based upon the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s organizational and historical characteristics. More specifically, it was the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s apparently close political and cultural ties to the Aikido World Headquarters¹⁴ in Japan, together with its broader global network of *Aikikai* affiliated *dojo* that first drew me to them. A quick search through classified directories and the Internet would reveal that the Clearwater *Aikikai* remains the most prominent and influential Aikido organization in the province of Alberta with an established presence of over twenty-five years. This once more ties in with what one would regard as Clearwater's relative social embeddedness in its host community, where it exists as a transnational Aikido *dojo* well grounded and accepted within Calgary's multicultural society. Such factors were important as I intended on conducting ethnographic work within a pugilistic and cultural ethos that combined, at least in its broadest sense, clearly identifiable technical, organizational and historical continuities with both the martial and ideological legacy of Aikido's founder, Morihei Ueshiba, and Calgary's own cultural mosaic. This was deemed to be a vital factor in my selection because of the increasingly diverse, politicized and fragmented nature of Aikido organizations throughout both North

¹⁴ The website of the Aikido World Headquarters is at <http://www.aikikai.or.jp>. According to its website, Clearwater represents one of the earliest inroads made by the Aikikai into Alberta. Calgary is also one of four Canadian cities (the other three being Scarborough, Victoria and Vancouver) where the Aikikai World Headquarters has formally established *dojo* run by high-ranking instructors

America and the rest of the world¹⁵, which has led to the rise in a number of organizations that appear to have ambiguous technical and organizational histories.

In both Canada and the rest of the world, a variety of Aikido organizations now range along a broad spectrum, stretching from highly transient independent or 'mixed martial arts' *dojo* that claim to be instructing Aikido in one manner or another; to recent schisms within major Aikido factions today¹⁶; and to those that still maintain close technical, cultural and political ties to the Ueshiba family that founded the *Aikikai*. Each style, or school, is again further subdivided into various discrete organizations that are headed by different *sensei*. The organizational and political complexity among the various Aikido styles is exacerbated by the fact that the practitioners of the same style or school may not fall under the same political leadership. The Clearwater *Aikikai*'s position in this martial web of intrigue, therefore, is best understood as being an organization that practises the *Aikikai* style, and is linked to the *Aikikai* in Japan via another Aikido organization known as the Yamaguchi Aikido Schools, which is also based in Japan. The Yamaguchi Aikido Schools are led by Yoshimasa Yamaguchi, its founder, who was once an *uchi-deshi*, or live-in student of Aikido's creator and founder, Morihei Ueshiba. Kenji Matsumoto *sensei* of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, the site of my fieldwork in Calgary, on the other hand, is the direct student of Yoshimasa Yamaguchi.

¹⁵ This is a growing phenomenon that has affected most martial arts that were created and popularized internationally since the second half of the 20th century after the Second World War. Although divisions and political splits in any kind of organization are nothing new, such divisions are seen to be increasingly linked to commercial and political interests as opposed to technical differences.

¹⁶ Examples include the *Aikikai*; the *Ki no Kenyukai*; *Tomiki-ryu (Shodokan)*; the *Yoshinkan*; the *Seidokan*; *Iwama-ryu*; *Tendo-ryu*, the *Kokikai* and a whole range of newly emerging sub-styles and new political and ideological networks that emerge and also occasionally disappear into obscurity from time to time.

At the initial stages prior to the start of my pilot study in 2002, I had been seeking an Aikido *dojo* that could be defined along what others would be inclined to label as ‘traditional’ or ‘mainstream’ Aikido, and also what many practitioners in the international Aikido community would regard as *Aikikai* Aikido.¹⁷ Consequently, the need to fulfil such parameters ultimately led me to the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where its current chief instructor and founder, Matsumoto *sensei*, was the closest link that Alberta possessed to the Aikido World Headquarters, or the *Aikikai Hombu*¹⁸, in Japan. He is also the only officially recognized and listed Aikido instructor in the province of Alberta on the *Hombu*’s official website. Consequently, the Clearwater *Aikikai* became the Canadian Aikido community that would eventually come to be the central focus of my ethnographic work for this thesis.

Welcome to Clearwater

At the time of writing¹⁹, Clearwater *Aikikai* was still located within a warehouse district just southeast within the outskirts Calgary’s downtown area, close to the busy MacKenzie Trail, a main highway that stretches from the city’s downtown area right to the outlying southern areas of the city. Occupying a refurbished warehouse unit since 1994 along 63rd Ave SE²⁰, the Clearwater *Aikikai* was an Aikido *dojo* with the floor space

¹⁷ This of course in no way delegitimizes the other forms of organizations as candidates for ethnographic work. Neither am I claiming or implying that they are, in any way, ethnographically ‘less authentic’.

¹⁸ In Japanese, *Hombu* literally means ‘headquarters’.

¹⁹ Since July 2004, Matsumoto *sensei* had been planning on relocating to different location but a move that was initially scheduled to occur in later in the same year fell through. Nonetheless, to date, the *dojo* still remains at the same site where I conducted my fieldwork.

²⁰ ‘SE’ refers to ‘Southeast’. Calgary’s streets are divided into four sectors: Northwest, Southwest, Northeast and Southeast, where each sector has its own discrete numbering of streets and avenues.

of approximately fifty *tatami*²¹ covered in white canvas, and has been made up in the image of a typical or so-called traditional Japanese martial arts *dojo*. During the course of my fieldwork, the Clearwater *Aikikai* boasted an estimated combined total of two hundred members on its membership roster, inclusive of members from affiliated *dojo* at four locations in the city and slightly beyond it. The first three are located at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology; Southland Leisure Centre; and in Carstairs High School, in the town of Carstairs, approximately fifty kilometres north of the city. They are currently run by the direct students of Matsumoto *sensei* who had been formally granted the authority by him to instruct in his place and personally supervise the running of each affiliated *dojo*. The fourth and most recent acquisition was formerly an independent Aikido martial arts organization that recently came under the administrative umbrella of the Clearwater *Aikikai* in 2004. Perhaps the best analogy to understand the relationship between the Clearwater *Aikikai* and its affiliated *dojo* is to view it as being a form of *organizational suzerainty*. In addition, since 1985, the Clearwater *Aikikai* has also maintained links to the City of Calgary's Parks and Recreation programme²² and the Calgary Board of Education's Chinook Learning Services. Over the years, this has led to the running of introductory Aikido classes at high schools and other similar collaborations between Clearwater and Board of Education, further expanding the public awareness of the art in Calgary's community.

²¹ A traditional Japanese mat used that is approximately six feet by three feet, or approximately two metres by one metre in its dimensions. The mats used by Clearwater however, were gym mats originally donated by the Calgary Parks and Recreation Board.

²² At the time of writing, the overseeing of Aikido classes under this programme is now directly under the supervision of Clearwater's affiliates at Southland Recreational Centre.

The Clearwater *Aikikai* has been entrenched within the fabric of Calgary's society for more than twenty-five years, and has also been a big part of a growing and emerging community of Aikido practitioners throughout the province of Alberta. Hence, it would also not be exaggerating to say that the Clearwater *Aikikai* can be considered the most major and influential *Aikikai* organization within the province. While there are currently no clearly authoritative and fully reliable official records of the overall number of Aikido organizations in Canada, a search through the online database at the time of writing at the *Aikiweb*²³ lists an approximate number of ten discrete organizations in the province of Alberta alone, with six of them being located in Calgary itself. Canada on the whole, has a total of one hundred and twenty-six *dojo* listed in this database, also at the time of writing, with the greatest number of representatives stemming from the major factions of the *Aikikai*, the *Ki no Kenkyukai* and the *Yoshinkan*, of which the Clearwater *Aikikai* serves as one of the most major and longstanding Western Canadian representatives of the *Aikikai Hombu* based in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

As noted earlier, while the Clearwater *Aikikai* today possesses an estimated number of two hundred members on its register, up to nearly a third of them comprise of committed members who regularly train at the *dojo*. Such members are ones who turn up for classes at least two or more times in a week and participate heavily in many of Clearwater's other social events. Out of these, many of its senior and core members, known as *yudansha*, or black-belt practitioners, also assist in teaching classes, the

²³ The Aikiweb is at www.aikiweb.com. The database is of course not entirely reliable because it is dependent upon information provided by respective *dojo* that wish to be listed. A fully comprehensive listing is, of course, quite hard to sustain, once more due to the politically fragmented nature of Aikido. Nonetheless this provides some insight, albeit an estimated one, into the presence of the art in Canada.

organizing of social events, and even contribute to the conduct of everyday administrative affairs at the *dojo*. In the case of Western Canada, Calgary is often considered to be an important major venue of Aikido practice and dissemination, apart from Vancouver. It was also one of only four Canadian cities (the other three being Scarborough, Victoria and Vancouver) where the *Aikikai* World Headquarters²⁴ has formally established and recognized *dojo*, which in recent years, are run by high-ranking *shihan* who were formerly from Japan. *Shihan*²⁵ is an honorific title awarded to high-ranking Aikido practitioners who hold the rank of 6th degree black belt and above. This title was also conferred on Matsumoto *sensei* upon being awarded his 6th degree black belt, making him the sole *Aikikai shihan* to be located in all of Alberta throughout the time of my fieldwork. Although it was once a part of the Canadian Aikido Federation before the start of my fieldwork, the Clearwater *Aikikai* has resigned its membership, largely a result of certain technical, organizational and political differences.

Martial Bodies, Healing Bodies

Another interesting fact is that on top of running the *dojo*, the chief instructor of the *dojo*, Matsumoto *sensei*, is a Japanese national and a Canadian Permanent Resident, who also concurrently oversees a *shiatsu* clinic. *Shiatsu* is a form of alternative therapeutic healing that professes links with traditional Eastern medical practices in the use of massage techniques that stimulate the pressure points in one's body. Both *dojo* and clinic are located side by side, allowing Matsumoto *sensei* to conveniently shuttle back and forth between his medical and martial professions, between healing someone and

²⁴ <http://www.aikikai.or.jp>

²⁵ Broadly meaning translated as 'Senior Instructor' or 'Master Instructor'. Such a title is often the highest appointment a person outside of the Ueshiba family can receive, apart from one's *dan*, or black belt rank.

overseeing a class at lunchtime that teaches potentially deadly Aikido techniques. The apparent irony of this situation is probably not lost on the reader if one notes that technologies of both physical violence and healing appear to be practiced side by side somewhat nonchalantly without any felt tension or contradiction. Thus, it is also perhaps no surprise again if a significant portion of Matsumoto *sensei*'s Aikido students have also been his *Shiatsu* clients. Similarly, I also had the opportunity to personally experience, on a few occasions, Matsumoto *sensei*'s medical skills, when he treated a recurring and irritating sinus condition²⁶. Concurrently, a significant portion of my non-training time was also spent at the *Shiatsu* clinic on weekdays where I assisted Matsumoto *sensei* in the running of the clinic. This also enabled me to gain important insights into another side of life to Clearwater *Aikikai*'s chief instructor, and it also enabled me to create an important rapport with both Matsumoto *sensei* and the numerous personalities and individuals whose lives were intertwined by both the clinic and the *dojo*.

Throughout the course of my fieldwork from 2002-2005, regular classes were conducted at the *dojo* for six days a week with a break on Sundays²⁷, together with lunchtime classes (12pm-1pm on Wednesdays and Fridays) followed by evening classes on weekdays (usually 6.30pm-8.30pm), although such schedules were sometimes subject to change. Unless advanced notice was given, classes on Saturdays, on the other hand, consisted of a children's class during the first half of the morning followed by an adults' class, often leading into the early hours of the afternoon (usually from 9am-12.30pm).

²⁶ This involved the pasting of a thumbtack-like pin with a miniature needle on the area between the bridge of my nose and my forehead. The miniature needle slightly pierced the flesh and was fastened into my face by surgical tape.

²⁷ This schedule however, is not the same as other classes during the week conducted by its affiliated *dojo*, as they also run their own training schedules independently of Clearwater *Aikikai*.

Children's classes were also held on Wednesday evenings just before an adult's class. Each adult class on average lasted for two hours with a short break in between and usually consisted of training in empty-handed techniques, occasionally followed by weapons training. There are two standard weapons that are widely regarded as part of Aikido's weapon repertoire. The first is known as the *bokken*, which is a wooden replica of a Japanese sword (or *katana*), and the second is the *jo*, a wooden short staff²⁸. 'Live' blades, on the other hand, are not a specific or required aspect of Aikido training in general, although a large portion of its martial repertoire was derived from weapon techniques that employed the sword, the staff and the spear. It should also be interesting to note that on top of Aikido practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, a separate martial system was practised on Thursday evenings, known by its full name as *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu*²⁹, which I will refer to from now on, for short, as *Katori Shinto-ryu*, for the rest of this thesis.

Additional background on *Katori Shinto-ryu* deserves to be mentioned here. It is a *kouryu bujutsu*, or literally known as an 'old school martial art', that allegedly traces its lineage to the fifteenth century in Japan (Amdur 2002, p. 21-45). In summary, it is best understood as a composite martial system that originated from the 15th century in Japan, whose founder was Iizasa Choisai Ienao; a samurai retainer who became *ronin*³⁰ after his lord was deposed. The system of *Katori Shinto-ryu* was eventually formulated after Ienao

²⁸ The emphasis on the practice of the *bokken* and the *jo* varies within various schools of Aikido, and even within the *Aikikai* itself. In recent years, however, it appears that weapons practice has been greatly de-emphasized in many *Aikikai dojo* in Asia and in Japan itself. This is less the case in other locations such as North America and Europe.

²⁹ It is again interesting to note that an increasing and significant number of Aikido practitioners have a close association with the art, particularly in North America and Europe. Its popularity was attributed partly to the writing of Donn Draeger, who was the first non-Japanese to have ever practiced the system

³⁰ Literally meaning 'wave person', referring to a samurai who no longer has a *daimyo*, or a lord, to serve.

allegedly spent a thousand days practising and meditating at the *Katori* Shrine, until the *kami* or deity of the shrine, known as *Futsukoshi no Mikoto*, appeared before him, subsequently revealing to him the secrets of martial strategy and technique. Presently, the martial system is still officially headed by the twentieth generation descendent of Ienao, while its chief instructor and organizational representative resides in Narita City in Chiba Prefecture. In spite of a potentially controversial lineage pertaining to its links to Narita and its official representative in North America, the practice of *Katori Shinto-ryu* at the Clearwater *Aikikai* possessed a relatively small but loyal number of practitioners, similarly headed by Matsumoto *sensei*. An additional interesting observation is that the Aikido practice of weaponry at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was also greatly influenced by its connection to the *Katori Shinto-ryu*, often resulting in a weapons curriculum that was quite distinct from other Aikido *dojo*.

Spaces of Culture

The organizational structure and complexity of the Clearwater *Aikikai* during the period of my fieldwork may be considered to be that of a fairly large martial arts organization in comparison with the relative size and setup of other martial arts *dojo* in the province of Alberta. Yet, in spite of this, it is also important note that Clearwater is not a *dojo* that was created for the purpose of economic profit, although regular monthly fees are charged to offset its daily operating costs. In addition, further revenue is also obtained through the conduct of occasional public seminars or training camps led by

Matsumoto *sensei* along with other visiting *sensei* like Matsumoto *sensei*'s own teacher³¹, Yamaguchi *sensei*. Perhaps what is most striking and at the same time a privileged characteristic about the Clearwater *Aikikai*, is that it is also one of the few martial arts *dojo* in the city that possesses a well-defined pugilistic space or a martial arena that has been effectively furnished and designated permanently as a martial arts *dojo*. In the context of Calgary, this is more often the exception rather than the norm because most martial arts organizations or clubs in urban locales tend to utilize spaces that are shared and rented in publicly available locations such as school gymnasiums, church auditoriums and even dance studios at community or recreational centres. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to successfully locate many martial arts organizations in Alberta that possess their own permanent *dojo* space, and the Clearwater *Aikikai* was one of the successful few that do. The cost of maintaining the *dojo* was once estimated by Matsumoto *sensei* as being approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000 Canadian dollars a month. According to his own estimates during a personal communication, one could barely break even each time by relying on fees paid for lessons and seminars. Hence, profits from Matsumoto *sensei*'s own *shiatsu* clinic were often used to offset such deficits along with the occasional financial donations and assistance from some of his senior students.

Furthermore, because of the fact that the *dojo* was neither a transient nor temporary space that is borrowed for a fixed period of time, it also existed as a self-sufficient *dojo* that had its own shower and change areas for men and women; seating areas for observers and visitors; weapon racks along the walls where more than two

³¹ As I was considered a student, I paid reduced monthly fees of C\$60 and C\$15 for Aikido and Katori lessons respectively. Public seminars ranged from C\$50 to C\$80, and summer training camps at Canmore ranged from C\$170 (in 2004) to C\$160 (in 2005) for a four day period

dozen wooden weapons were hung; detailed name-lists of its regular members displayed along the wall and organized by rank; and even a neatly constructed semi-religious *kamiza*, or deity altar, at the farthest end of the *dojo*. The *kamiza* was a wooden house-like structure supported with beams and a partial wooden roof protruding outwards from the wall that defines a sacralized space where objects of symbolic importance to Aikido and the Clearwater *Aikikai* are placed. Most prominently displayed is a scroll of calligraphy hanging on the wall that may be translated as “True Victory is to Never Aspire for Victory”. To its right hangs a black and white photograph of Aikido’s Founder, Morihei Ueshiba. Placed beneath them in a wooden platform are a bronze statuette of Ueshiba and a thick but warped branch of wood that resembles a large and curved club, about two-thirds the length of a baseball bat. To the left of that wooden platform stands a black *bokken*, leaning on a stand, completing the visual markers and overall signification of the *dojo*’s most sacred space.

The spatial surroundings of this supposed warehouse had apparently been reconstructed to become representative of a wider pugilistic, historical and cultural universe, which may, on first impression, stand out quite uniquely within an industrial and warehouse district in Alberta. At times, a certain self-consciousness of cultural otherness emanated from various individuals during classes, all adorned in their *keikogi* and *hakama* as we came into contact within such a space that inevitably exerted its influence upon our senses. It was, then, *a space out of place*, which contained a practical and cultural logic quite distinct from the everyday lives that each member of the Clearwater *Aikikai* stemmed from. One, therefore, became a part of the Clearwater

Aikikai as a means of a temporal existential disjuncture from the rules of everyday life in the city of Calgary. This is because the moment one puts on one's *keikogi*, takes a kneeling bow, moves on her or his knees unto the centre of the mats and sits patiently in *seiza* alongside several others, one's entire social sensibility is transformed, or at least significantly altered, throughout the duration of a class. Thus, whenever Matsumoto *sensei* immediately shifts from the use of English to Japanese in announcing the start of a class after a resounding clap from his hands, whatever and wherever each of us came from in our lives outside of the *dojo* would be momentarily put on hold.

A Sensual Ethnography

Having been no stranger to Aikido myself, even prior to my fieldwork at Calgary³², my full participation at the Clearwater *Aikikai* allowed myself to return to an art that I had initially abandoned, for more than three years, prior to my arrival in Canada. Hence, my field experience was both a mixture of the new and the old, as what was both familiar and strange greeted me the moment I first walked through the entrance of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. In spite of my return to an increasingly globalized or transnational martial sub-culture that I had left for some years before my re-association to it via the ethnographic gaze, nothing still completely prepared me for my initiation into the pugilistic and multicultural community of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. This is attributed to the fact that while most Aikido communities possess many striking similarities because they are irrevocably linked by the practice of the same martial art, such similarities are

³² I have personally been practising Aikido since 1993 during my days as an undergraduate in Singapore, but halted my involvement with it in 1999 due to a variety of reasons, which includes injury and work commitments. I took it up again, of course, when I joined the Clearwater *Aikikai* in 2002.

nonetheless, also constantly re-interpreted or even re-imagined in the various social-cultural milieus where the art situates itself.

Upon entering the *dojo* during my very first visit, the stark contrast between the cultural and pugilistic ethos of Clearwater's *dojo* and the external surroundings of its industrial park locale would not be lost on most initiates to its community. I can clearly recall, just prior to meeting the members of Clearwater, how for an anxious moment when I thought I had arrived at the wrong place and was lost. I had wandered on foot into Blackburn Industrial Park, just southeast of the city centre, on a dark flurry-filled wintry evening in April 2002, cursing at how the street map I had brought along seemed inaccurate and lacked detail. Located right in the heart of the somewhat desolate and uninviting Blackburn Industrial Park, where its most exciting and intricate architectural wonders were warehouses, factories and automobile workshops, the presence of an identifiably traditional martial arts *dojo* within the same vicinity certainly seemed quite out of script and contributed to a strong sense of spatial irony. The sense of *mise en scène* certainly did not adhere itself well with the oft-overused Orientalizing and exoticizing narratives and ambiances that Asian martial arts have often been framed in popular media. The Clearwater *Aikikai's dojo* and its pugilistic universe was thus a space of culture that was surrounded within and juxtaposed with an unlikely wider environment, which exhibited some of the most archetypal features and characteristics of modern capitalism, industrialization and urbanization. It was certainly hardly the romantic stuff made of blue waters, palm trees, tropical islands and exotic customs that comprised of naively friendly non-English-speaking half-naked 'natives'.

Back to that inaugural April evening in 2002, when I had finally located the *dojo* with some effort, the first person I met at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was John Hamilton, a soft-spoken middle-aged Anglophone gentleman wearing a brown belt³³, who apparently possessed some vested authority in dealing with newcomers to the *dojo*. I was immediately directed to him when I introduced myself to the members already on the mats. Stocky but powerfully built like an aging heavyweight boxer with greying hair, John initially exuded an unassuming and approachable quality about him. Apparently, from his puzzled expression, he hadn't been aware of my impending arrival, but routinely handed me an application form to be filled up for every new member to the *dojo*. The requirement for membership, apparently, was not too stringent. The form had three parts: Firstly, it required me to fill in my personal details; and secondly, to answer a few questions with regards to why I wanted to practice Aikido; and thirdly, to sign an indemnity statement that would absolve the Clearwater *Aikikai* of any responsibility should I sustain any injuries (or accidentally lose my life) throughout the course of training. A poor and nervous attempt at humour with regards to the need to sign the indemnity statement was met with a certain air of nonchalance and a bored polite chuckle. John he gave me another momentary questioning look, which he quickly hid.

Subsequently, I was, then, casually directed to the men's changing room that was located just behind the kamiza, which stood beside the smaller women's changing room. I caught sight of Matsumoto *sensei* as I recognized him from photos on Clearwater's website and I quickly went over to introduce myself. Having only corresponded with his

³³ A brown belt at Clearwater *Aikikai* signifies the rank of either 1st or 2nd *Kyu*, ranks just preceding a black belt. *Kyu* grade holders are known collectively as *mudansha* ('people without *dan* grades'), while those with *Dan* grades holders are known as *yudansha* ('people with *dan* grades')

diminutive assistant of Russian descent, Nina Comaroff, while trying to gain official permission to conduct my pilot study, this was really my first time meeting him. Matsumoto *sensei*'s initial response had been a mixture of formal politeness and a sense of uncertainty and suspicion on his part. A large heavysset man whose tanned complexion and strong, dark features made him look more like a Pacific Islander from Samoa than Japanese, Matsumoto *sensei*'s face was often impassive and severe until he broke out into shy laughter or a cheeky grin. Whenever he spoke, others would stop to listen. It became obvious almost instantly that he was the person who held the reins of power at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, and who also commanded the attention and reverence of some of the *dojo*'s most loyal and committed members. Coincidentally, during one of our conversations, I also learned later that he once aspired to become an anthropologist.

Matsumoto sensei: Well...when I was eh...an elementary kid...I wanna be an anthropologist...then...junior high...I wanna be medical doctor...in high school, I wanna be engineer, so then...everything go reversed. I started from chemical engineering for a career then...medicine...now...I'm planning after I finish...after I retire...I'm going to learn anthropology...that's my dream... (but) because anthropologists they don't make good living, that's why I wanna set up money now to enjoy before I study...I like chemistry since I was a kid, I done a lot of experiment...they call me since I was a kid – 'mad scientist'.

Interviewer: So in your family, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

Matsumoto sensei: I have four brothers. No sister, I'm the youngest one... (in) Osaka...when I was eighteen I moved to Yokohama...I didn't go to university but at high school I took chemical engineering cause in Japan we different kinds of high school and then...I went into the chemical engineering faculty in high school...before I finish high school, my teachers all told me to go to university because my mark was one of the highest in the school...but I didn't want my parents to support me to finish university...so that's why I decided to work...but when I was grade twelve or eleven...I already had a dream for five years for living in Canada. So then I applied immigration at that time...and then they rejected me because I'm a student, I was told. So I worked in the best company at work to get the best technology and skills and the language... and that company has ninety percent jobs overseas...I had to learn English...

Interviewer: So you worked in this company and from then on you moved to Canada?

Matsumoto sensei: Yeah. I worked there for nine years.

Interviewer: What is it about Canada that you like?

Matsumoto sensei: Well I like eh...when I was in junior high I saw the magazine...beautiful girls...beautiful scenery...that's kinda attractive to me (chuckle)...

It was my very first day at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, and a deluge of sights, sounds and scents overwhelmed my senses. What had once been familiar was perhaps now exoticized by an initial surrealism that combined both familiarity and strangeness. The fact that I hadn't practised Aikido for some years also made me feel like a beginner once more. And when my first class began, I did not have the privilege to literally *sit back*, just *observe* and to play the role of the *bemused ethnographer*. For the next hour and a half that Wednesday evening, my body was forced to re-member and reclaim the Aikido that I thought I had buried in the recesses of my own corporeality and consciousness. The first few weeks were perhaps the hardest for me as it had been a few years since I had even attempted to take *ukemi*³⁴. The scent of various human bodies dressed in *keikogi* drenched in sweat, and stained with wear and tear, at times inches from my own; the sound of the heavy panting of various bodies and that of my own in an enclosed space; the thumping of bodies landing hard on the mats; the touch and feel of different wrists, fingers, shoulders, arms and necks; and the blurring sights of bodies being thrown dressed in colours of white, brown and black enveloped my senses. Through the sound of my own heavy breathing, I could taste my own perspiration as I instinctively licked my gradually dehydrating lips in the cool and dry Albertan air. There was also the sudden dull pain of a mistimed breakfall, not to mention the testing of one's threshold of pain that came from the application of a joint lock on a shoulder or a wrist, igniting a whole range of memories and emotions. It was the body, my body, that was remembering, and it all came thundering back, in the flesh, to my unprepared mind.

³⁴ The term for breakfalls – a basic and major component of all Aikido practice as practice involves the use of throws. The person being thrown must learn how to break her or his fall in order to fall safely.

Culture, Community and Identity

Located in a former warehouse that had been refurnished and renovated into the likeness of a traditional Japanese martial arts *dojo*, the Clearwater *Aikikai* can be perceived as a highly interesting ‘structure of the conjuncture³⁵’, where various inhabitants of Calgary and its surrounding communities have ample opportunity to encounter and interact with one another, within the Clearwater *Aikikai*’s highly communitarian environment. Consequently, the resulting social and cultural matrix came across as an interesting and often complex site for cross-cultural diaspora, dialogue and negotiation. It was a transcultural dialogue that transpired between a diffused and hybridized Japanese cultural logic, together with the various cultural and linguistic backgrounds that each member of the *dojo* stemmed from. Members ranged from a variety of backgrounds, and certainly comprised of more than just Canadian-born White Anglophone Canadians. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Clearwater *Aikikai* included members who stemmed from transnational or transcultural backgrounds that ranged from France, Russia, Mexico, India, Malaysia, First Nations Peoples, the Philippines, the United States, Vietnam, Germany, Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Quebec, the United Kingdom and the Ukraine.

Not surprisingly, there were also several Japanese members who were either permanent residents or holding working or student visas in Canada - not to mention the presence of an increasingly intrusive and peculiar student from Singapore who recently turned up, conducting his doctoral fieldwork in anthropology. Even so, the number of Asian faces there was certainly in the minority in the practice of this Asian martial art.

³⁵ A term coined by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins. See Sahlins (1981, 1985)

The socio-cultural profile of the Clearwater *Aikikai* was thus, arguably largely reflective of a larger *ethnoscape* of increasingly de-territorialized and intercultural spaces, while serving at the same time as both an outpost of transnationalized Japanese-ness. The Aikido *dojo* existed, therefore, as a space of culture that was at the same time *both* relativizing and essentializing, where it sought to retain various aspects of a highly idealized portrayal of Japanese identity and practices, often framed within a larger and multivariate society in Calgary, where it still remains a cultural minority as part of a society still largely dominated politically, economically and culturally by white Anglophone Canadians. It also served as a haven for a cultural identity that had become increasingly self-conscious of itself upon departing Japan, for the practice of Aikido was often perceived by some as a social and cultural activity that retained, at its core, a cultural aura that was still unmistakably Japanese.

Interviewer: You know sensei, uh...I notice that you always speak to your family in Japanese...but you never speak to them in English...why is that?

Matsumoto sensei: Because it is better to keep them Japanese speaking...so many reasons...they can communicate with their cousins and other family members in Japan...grandparents...but also they can take advantage of that...because they do better than Canadian people because they already ahead...so that's why language is really important...

Interviewer: So, if someone were to ask them to identify the culture that they or yourself are from, would you say you are Canadian or Japanese? Why do you stay a Japanese citizen after having been in Canada for so long?

Matsumoto sensei: I am Japanese. I just don't want Canadian citizenship...I don't want to give up Japanese citizenship...I feel...if I were to give up my Japanese citizenship...I lose something of myself...I would lose my identity...so that means I would be giving up everything Japanese about me...I'm Japanese, and I grew up in Japan... so that's why...my knowledge and my everything came from Japan.

Interviewer: So do you think that training Aikido and teaching Aikido is connected and important to your Japanese identity?

Matsumoto sensei: Yes, that's really important...I feel like I teach...it is real Aikido...it is not like uh...like you know in other dojo...pure Aikido.

Interviewer: Pure Aikido? But can there but such a thing as pure Aikido?

Matsumoto sensei: There are many different kinds...Like Tomiki...they want competition...they go against O-Sensei...so I don't know what it is...Aikido techniques is Japanese...Aikido has to have 'communication'

because it is part of the culture...Aikido is not only technique...technique is only part of the culture so that's why...that's not...well I complained once to Y's dojo...when they teaching kids class they don't wear hakama...I said they have to wear hakama...and they argue because the kids don't see the feet...But still I don't really accept their explanation I just walk away...Aikido is Aikido...I have to teach the whole portion.

The practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was, subsequently, often the site of the consumption and production of cultural practices through the body, which at the same time provided a praxeological platform and resource for either the invention or reclamation of cultural identity among many of its members. The process of becoming and being an *Aikidoka* allowed the possibilities of cultural mimesis or reification, even if for a transient moment, among its least committed members. Two interesting and opposite case examples were that of the blonde-haired and blue-eyed Jonathan Wagner of Austrian descent, and the poker-faced Kouichi Nakajima, a former chef from Japan. With regards to the former, Jonathan was nicknamed *Tamago* by *Matsumoto sensei* because despite of his obviously non-Asian countenance, he was regarded by many to possess a deep obsession, or some might even claim a 'cultural fetish', for all manner and characteristics of things commonly considered Japanese. Hence, the term *tamago*, which in Japanese meant 'egg', implying that although Jonathan was 'white' on the outside, he was 'yellow' inside, alluding to an 'Asian quality' about him. It was a label that Jonathan appeared to wear rather proudly, although he was also aware of the fact that *Matsumoto sensei* regarded this label more as a joke, often setting Jonathan up as an object of ridicule towards his fascination and mimetic tendencies for 'Japanese-ness'. Jonathan was perhaps the exception rather than the norm when it came to such strong interest in Japanese culture, but the impact of Aikido's 'Japanizing' potential was not restricted to only a few members. A less extreme example could also be seen in the words of Craig

Jackson, who had joined Aikido for just half a year, but had begun to notice certain dispositional changes within him.

Interviewer: After doing this for sixth months...Do you think something about you has become a little more... 'Japanese'?

Craig: I think so...and sometimes I find...someone comes to me and asks me and I just like "Hai!"...yeah I do....so you kinda get a little involved in it...it becomes second nature...like this 'Hai'..."How are you doing? Domo Arigato...Konnichiwa..."...the language...you kinda get wrapped up in it...it just becomes second nature...especially 'Hai'...I noticed that a lot...the Canadian sense of nationality isn't terribly strong anyway...Canadians aren't terribly nationalistic...I think I take pride being Canadian but I don't sing "O Canada" every morning or anything like that (chuckle)...I'm Canadian...I don't feel like I've lost anything ...I think I've only gained a new outlook that is...you know...Japanese...

Apparently then, one of the main attractions of Aikido was not only its exercise or self-defence qualities, but also its close association to its perceived cultural capital. Having only been with the Clearwater *Aikikai* for a few months when I first met him, Jonathan was an extremely regular practitioner at the *dojo*, who once turned up almost everyday day for classes, including taking part in *Katori-Shinto Ryu* classes. He quickly rose in rank, and was a 2nd *kyu Aikidoka*, a brown belt, in less than two years, a time frame considered relatively fast for one to be promoted to such a rank. Speaking to him about his experiences in Aikido, I also learnt that Jonathan has had at least three different Japanese girlfriends in a span of two years, which he interestingly explained as a result of the fact that white women were simply not interested in a male person of his smaller physical stature, and subsequently many felt that he was not 'masculine' or 'manly' enough. Ironically, however, he also admits that it was also largely because of the sheer *exoticism* of his whiteness - his blonde hair and blue eyes that also attracted Japanese woman. Jonathan appeared to only listen to Japanese pop music, was taking lessons in the Japanese language and also an avid fan of Japanese *anime*³⁶ and movies.

³⁶The common term for Japanese animation

Interviewer: So...after doing Aikido, your appreciation of Japanese culture and Japan has become deeper?

Jonathan: I think it makes more sense...I mean, most people might tend to look at another culture... it's really superficial...the girls are cute and the food is cute and that's about as far as it goes?... yeah, in that sense...I mean if it was only that, I probably won't be interested in learning the language, I probably wouldn't have been interested in the food...or interested in any of the more cultural things...

Interviewer: So Aikido has made a lot of difference for you?

Jonathan: I think it has made me understand myself a lot better in that sense, because certain parts of who I was didn't seem to fit where I came from and how I grew up, or how I was raised...but at the same time if I showed up at any dojo that had a traditional Japanese sense around and a Japanese teacher... those mannerisms built in... teaching in a different style, it would have been the same way...

Interviewer: Do you think you've become more Japanese?

Jonathan: ...in a sense, being Japanese or not...people look at skin colour, hair colour and how you act, which of course is a valid definition...but at the same time I've had Japanese people tell me that I am more Japanese than they are...so in that sense, culturally I tend to pick up certain things and certain mannerisms really naturally and automatically better than they do...while they try and tend to change that...to me it fits really well...so I mean...in that sense I am already Japanese, but whether or not I can be Japanese according to other people isn't something that I can answer anyway...but as long as you are not defining it by the idea of citizenship... ideas or...

Interviewer: Appearance?

Jonathan: Yeah, so internally you know whoever you are, so if it happens to be more like this and that, so that's just the way it is...

The constructed aura of Jonathan's gradually developed affinity for many things that were defined as 'Japanese', apparently allowed him to completely adopt an alternate persona from his Austrian-Canadian roots, which also fulfilled a certain strategic purpose in gaining symbolic, social and cultural capital among his peers. His effective combination of 'whiteness' in appearance and 'Japanese-ness' in practice also provided a useful cultural and interpersonal strategy that allowed him much greater success with Japanese women who were attracted to his 'whiteness', while at the same time, it served to exoticize his own sense of Self among his Canadian peers for being 'Japanese on the inside', as a result of his identity as an *Aikidoka*. It appears, therefore, that the apparent correlations between Jonathan's preferences for Japanese cultural symbols and products, Aikido and Japanese women have not exactly been coincidental. Nonetheless, it would

appear too convenient, polemicizing, or too easy to simply label Jonathan as a perpetrator of an Orientalizing gaze and persona, for it should also be important to realize that such relationships are often formed together as part of a *mutual* exchange of *post*-colonial desire between both the ‘Orientalist’ and the ‘Orientalized’, such as in the case of Jonathan’s own preferred attraction and success with Japanese women.

In May 2003, Jonathan had also accompanied Matsumoto *sensei* together with a dozen or so regulars on training visit to Japan at Yamaguchi *sensei*’s *dojo*, where it was learnt that his self-alleged authority on Japanese-ness proved to a little too overbearing for some of the other members of the group. Although tolerated, it appeared that Jonathan was becoming increasingly disliked and avoided by a number of his Aikido peers, not to mention a number of incidents in which he appeared to have caused injury to others in class, including Matsumoto *sensei* himself. Thus, Jonathan became increasingly less frequent mid-way through the period of my fieldwork and virtually disappeared for a period of time. Nevertheless, I later learned that he would be departing Canada once more for Japan at the end of 2004. Jonathan had signed up for the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) programme where he was to teach English in Japan for up to a year.

In comparison, the other case of Kouichi Nakajima appears to be similar and different at the same time. He first arrived in Canada as a landed immigrant from Japan, where he had been a chef in a restaurant, some six years before I arrived in Calgary. According to him, the main reason for moving to Canada was largely because he had married a white Canadian woman, and it was a decision made together by the two of

them as they felt that they would gain greater acceptance as an ethnically-mixed couple in Canada as opposed to Japan. Nonetheless, the sacrifice made by Kouichi to relocate because of their marriage has been fraught with some difficulties and challenges, both social and occupational. Firstly, he and his wife faced resistance and rejection from his wife's family on the grounds of his different cultural background. This led to strained relations between his wife and her family, as a result of her marrying a man who was non-white and consequently perceived as foreign or alien. At the same time, according to him, Kouichi also once cited an incident when he and his wife were refused to be served when they stopped over a restaurant at a smaller town in Alberta, an incident that greatly unsettled both of them.

Seeking employment in Alberta had not been an easy matter for Kouichi either, who decided not to continue his career as a chef but instead found a blue-collar job at a warehouse where he claimed to have been discriminated against and humiliated on the basis of his initially less than fluent command of English and his 'un-Canadian' appearance. He was harassed by colleagues at work and at times also threatened verbally, although never subjected to direct physical abuse. Just over a year before I began my fieldwork at Clearwater, Koichi joined the *dojo*. He had been looking for something that would, in his own words, 'make him stronger', and also, at the same time, allow him to *reassert* and *regain* his own Japanese cultural identity. Part of the reason behind this move was his frustration and disappointment, that in spite his efforts, he concluded that he would never ever be totally accepted as a Canadian, or as part of a society that he views as still being fundamentally racist and dominated by what he described as 'white

people'. At the same time, Kouichi also put off any interest in ever becoming a full Canadian citizen until the day his parents pass on, as he realized that they would be severely disappointed in him for rejecting his Japanese citizenship.

Kouichi: There was a time when economy was bad in Japan...she (his wife) asked me to move to Canada...she said – Canada – Calgary...has lots of jobs...so I took this case to move to Canada to get job...working in a warehouse...I got the job five days after I arrived in Canada (chuckle)...very fast...in Japan, economy was so bad it wouldn't happen...in Japan I only have uh...Grade Nine skill...Junior high...after junior high I went to become a cook, chef... and I worked for five years...and after five years I got a certificate of a professional cook...and then I quit...I like cooking but it's a night job...I wanted to work daytime...all my friends work daytime...(so) I have no friends...I didn't have any friend when I'm cooking...I went to United States for eight months and Europe for six months...I like backpacking and was about to go Southeast Asia but luckily...I met my wife and all that changed (chuckle)...if I hadn't met my wife...I wouldn't have had this job, I wouldn't have had this house...I wouldn't be doing Aikido...life would be really different.

Interviewer: How has your experience in Canada been like?

Kouichi: Always have problems. Difficult in some ways...umm...that's part of the reason I started Aikido...I was becoming Canadian...trying to be a Canadian...live like a Canadian...but every morning when I look in the mirror I see myself as being Japanese...first of all you deny...I wanna be Canadian...but you cannot deny what you are...and wake in the morning – I am Japanese...so better do something Japanese...so Aikido is Japanese...that's one of the reasons why I do Aikido...so living in Canada as a foreigner or immigrant is very difficult...white people treat me like Asian...yellow monkey...I try to be normal people...struggle all the time...that's the hardest thing...but I have to keep my identity...to stand up...I am Japanese – so what?...that's why I have to...stand up, otherwise when I turn my back around...(say) sorry I'm Japanese...(I'm) not like that anymore...

Interviewer: You mean you were like that in the beginning?

Kouichi: Before I started Aikido...when I started Aikido I realized I am Japanese...I have to be...I am Japanese – so what? ... I need to get my identity back...I should be Japanese...so I thought I should do something Japanese...I cannot deny who I am.

Interviewer: Do you find it hard to fit in?

Kouichi: Canada... still white people's country...I can only say that much ok? But this is still white people's country...so try to fit in...try to pretend to be white people...it doesn't work...I now understand why Chinese people have Chinatown...Chinese people come to Canada try to become Canadian...they didn't get accepted...so what they do is get together because they are Chinese...that makes sense...I used to think why Chinese people have Chinatown in America but now I understand....In Vancouver before World War Two, there were Japanese towns, but in World War Two, white people took everything from Japanese people...these people are prisoner-of-war, enemy people...put them in camps.

Interviewer: Do you think there'll come a time when you'll be able to fit in?

Kouichi: Not my generation...

Interviewer: What creates the difference?

Kouichi: Japan and China have history and tradition...the way it is supposed to be done...but here...no tradition...something works better do that way...that makes the difference... (but) some people are

nice...other way around... some foreigner who goes to Japan may feel same thing, or more...Japanese is... oh... racist people...no matter what...they are very racist...ah yes my work...some white men, tall white men... try to bully all that...but now I have Aikido...I have confidence...cause I started Aikido...

The initial years that Kouichi spent in Alberta was certainly, then, not an easy one, and he relates that after discovering and taking up Aikido, he noticed that he was no longer intimidated as much as he had before, as he had become 'stronger'. It appears, then, that the practice of Aikido and his assuming of the persona of an *Aikidoka* had made a difference in his physical courage, or at least, his moral courage and personal self-esteem. Kouichi had begun taking classes from Matsumoto *sensei* in early 2001 and made it a point to practice up to three times a week, becoming a regular face among the members of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. During the times when I worked at the *shiatsu* clinic on weekdays, Kouichi often turned up at least an hour before classes in the evenings to assist Matsumoto *sensei* in performing a number of odd-jobs, establishing a close rapport with him, where it appeared that the spaces of the *dojo* and clinic also provided a refuge for an identity he wanted to reclaim and reassert. In spite of his apparent growing responsibilities and duties entrusted to him, Kouichi nonetheless cites Matsumoto *sensei* as the prime influence on his decision to remain at the Clearwater *Aikikai*.

Kouichi: Sensei came to talk to me... (If) that didn't happen, I wouldn't be here...Everybody was practising and there was nobody for me to ask questions...I was just watching...all of a sudden, sensei just came and talked to me...I felt comfortable with sensei...it's very important to (have) connection with the people all the time...and if you feel uncomfortable with anybody you don't want to do anything with them ...sensei was nice...although sensei speaks Japanese...that helps me feel comfortable too but sensei is nice to me...

Interviewer: Why Aikido?

Kouichi: Yeah...I also...I was here in Canada for four and a half years at the time...I was becoming a white man...who was watching TV and gaining weight...watching football hockey game all the time...just gaining weight...I decided to do something ... (I'm now a) lazy white man...just joking (chuckle)...I thought of Judo, Karate, swimming, Yoga, Taiji or whatever there are...I was thinking what I wanted to do I don't know but I wanted something...there was the best ten martial arts documentary on TLC...and Aikido was ranked number four...that's where I decide to go yellow pages...to see Aikido...to exercise.

Interviewer: Any other reason for doing Aikido?

Koichi: Self-confidence. I want to have more self-confidence...and some self-defence techniques...I talk to people (with) more confidence...last time I feel small and shy...maybe some people try to hurt me I couldn't do nothing...but now I could talk to them confidently...especially tall big white guy(s)...I don't scare with them anymore...and black people too...big people...personality become more calm...

Within a span of just under three years, Kouichi rose to the rank of 2nd kyu by the end of my fieldwork in August 2005. It was also interesting to note that as he rose in rank, his social visibility and status at the Clearwater Aikikai became ever greater, and eventually began to be informally recognized as Matsumoto *sensei*'s right-hand man, apart from John Hamilton. With his growing involvement at Clearwater, Kouichi eventually left his job at the warehouse and became a full-time apprentice of Matsumoto *sensei* at his *shiatsu* clinic by late 2004. Becoming an integral and important part of the Clearwater Aikikai for Kouichi had, according to him, a clear and indelible mark on the quality of his life and his transnational experience in Canada, which has ironically made him a lot more self-aware of his own cultural background as compared to his earlier experiences of growing up in Japan.

Interviewer: So after five years or more, how do you see yourself now? Are you less Japanese?

Kouichi: (I am) More Japanese... than I was living in Japan...that's because I was not living in Japan...I call this phenomenon... 'Awakening into Japanese (ness)'...to become Japanese...all of sudden they wake up...realize they Japanese...when you live in Japan, there is (are) only Japanese...because of culture and education...Japanese education try to eliminate identity...you are one of them...all of them...not you are special one...that's how they teach...not an individual...no idea to have identity...also if they say – "I am Japanese!" – Oh ...they look like right-wing politician...people scared of those people...one day I ask my mum – "I want to carry Japanese flag in my backpack" – because I am Japanese...my mum said – "What? You turn into right-wing person?" – She couldn't believe what I said...I said – "I am Japanese. If I go other country, nobody knows I am Japanese. I want to show that I am Japanese..." People should be proud of their country...but Japanese (are) not...I am Japanese, no matter where I go...

Bodies of Culture

While Jonathan's deep infatuation with the Japanese-ness of Aikido provided an interesting spatial and discursive platform for the construction and maintenance of a neo-Orientalized persona, Kouichi's own journey within Aikido's ethos appeared to be one of

re-Orientalization, or even cultural *re-essentialization*. Both cases, then, appear to stem from different sides of the same coin. As regular members of the Clearwater *Aikikai* and committed practitioners of Aikido, their cases were perhaps highly exemplary of a number of similar reasons provided by other members at the *dojo*. In this regard, one again can see that the practice of Aikido was clearly something much more complex than the training of martial techniques, but it also reflected greatly, a certain cultural, social or even political stake that each regular *Aikidoka* possessed. Hence, becoming ‘one of them’ also denoted the need to construct, or reconstruct, a sense of the Self that also largely enhanced the meanings, both symbolic and material, of their wider everyday lives. At the same time, however, it would also be misleading and simplistic to assume that such a sense is achieved merely through abstracted thought or belief. For it had to be practiced by one’s body, together with other bodies, within a space that itself was contextualized to affect an inscriptive role upon the experience of all that were dedicated to its continued existence. One, therefore, had to continue being there, in a visceral and corporeal sense, in order to maintain, in the long run, a belief and identity that had to be continuously inscribed upon the practice of their bodies.

Similar compelling examples that were similar to Jonathan or Kouichi were also easily identifiable. The practice of Aikido as a means for reinventing one’s sense of the Self through the self-conscious acculturation of an alternate but not transient persona was also evident in the cases of Jose Rezal, a Canadian of Filipino descent; and Garth Weathers, an Anglophone Canadian of Scottish descent. Both Jose and Garth saw in Aikido, the potential in providing a set of spiritual and ethical principles for conducting

themselves within a broader social environment. While Jonathan appeared to privilege the 'Japanese-ness' of Aikido's cultural baggage as part of his *Aikidoka* persona, Jose and Garth took the practice of Aikido not merely as an alternative means for cultural and symbolic capital, but also as a means for the construction of an entire personal *moral* universe. Coincidentally, both José and Garth had been fervent practitioners of another Japanese martial art known as *Ninpo*³⁷, or *Ninjutsu*³⁸, the art that is practised by what are commonly known as 'Ninja', a cultural and historical icon that has also been subjected to gross exaggeration and caricaturization in popular culture (i.e. Lee 1999). Another interesting case is that of Nina Comaroff, Matsumoto *sensei*'s personal assistant at the *shiatsu* clinic, who was one of the most senior female practitioners at the Clearwater *Aikikai*.³⁹ Apart from the reason that Aikido was something that allowed her to 'get in there with the boys', she claimed that she always had a personal affinity, or a 'connection' with all things Japanese, mirroring similar views with those of Jonathan's. Her continued association with Aikido, therefore, was also in many ways seen to be an expression of her personal belief and identification with the cultural logic of an alleged sense of Japanese-ness.

Nina: I've always... had a connection for the Japanese...always...

Interviewer: Even before Aikido?

Nina: Oh yeah...it's just something...even the thought of acupuncture...Japanese style...is so much more relaxing and a comfort to me than the Chinese style...it's just irritating...ooh...it's like their language...it's sharp to me...so I've always had a pulling towards Japan...I'd go to Japan in a heartbeat...I was using chopsticks at a young age...

³⁷ *Ninpo* literally means 'Skills of Endurance', but usually refers to the martial skills of Ninja, a class of semi-mystical elite warrior that gained notoriety during the 1500s in Japan, allegedly for their expertise in espionage and assassination.

³⁸ An alternate term to *ninpo*, where the term *jutsu* is often translated as 'technique'.

³⁹ Nina eventually left the clinic to start her own business at the start of 2005.

To a significant extent, the continuing participation of Nina, Garth and José at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was largely viewed by each of them as the culmination of their individual martial or spiritual journey, or a metaphysical pilgrimage of sorts, in their personal development as human beings. Much attention, therefore, was given to their commitment towards a highly stereotyped and culturally essentialized image of what a Japanese (or Asian) martial artist was supposed to be. The practice of Aikido was also a cultural and social resource for them to re-imagine and construct a self-fulfilling personal narrative and biography, which itself becomes real in its consequences. Much of what Aikido and the Asian martial arts, on the whole, was to them, often perceived in diametric opposition to what 'Western-ness' was, often portrayed as an increasingly decadent culture. In cases such as Craig Jackson's, the linkage between Aikido as a martial art and its Japanese roots were also seen as inseparable and even highly dependent upon each other. Thus, the potential loss of its cultural veneer was seen as unthinkable, or even crippling to the nature of Aikido practice itself. In addition, Tim Ferguson, who had moved from the United Kingdom to Canada twenty-four years ago, also viewed such 'cultural baggage' as serving an important function in creating *a sense of order*, although he did not view that doing so necessarily made him 'more Japanese', or 'less English' *per se*.

Interviewer: If I were to take away all this... 'Japanese-ness'...would you still continue Aikido? Do you think Aikido can be practised without all this 'baggage'?

Craig: I think so...but I think it adds a lot to it...it adds a lot of character to it...well typical American and Canadian culture...we're sitting in MacDonald's...we aren't exactly basking in culture...but yeah... I think that...what the Japanese background adds to it (Aikido) is very valuable...the traditions...the ceremonies...I think they add a lot to the experience...and also a lot more flexibility in the knees...it took me a couple of months to get used to it...sitting in eh...seiza...

Interviewer: So you're saying that this cultural and traditional aspect cannot be separated from what you are doing?

Craig: No, I don't think so...I don't think it would be Aikido...it would be a martial art...but I don't think it would be Aikido...the traditions and the cultures inherent in Aikido are part of what that binds us...

Interviewer: Let's say if Mastsumoto sensei one day was to say "We're going Canadian!"...but the techniques remain...but we're not gonna use Japanese language and anything related to Japanese culture and tradition ...How would you feel about it?

Craig: I'll probably...I'll go talk to him...and like..."What are you doing???"... that kind of thing...cause really...it's what that really defines it...Canadian and American culture are fine but they're not the most advanced or sophisticated...and when you look at Japan or when you look at France or Spain or Italy, they have a lot more culture than what we have...I think they have a lot more to offer...a lot more wisdom...

Tim Ferguson: ...in my opinion, the reason that we have these...uh...these structures in the dojo...they have to learn to get along with each other...there's a very practical reason behind why we bow and stuff...it's not just trying to be polite, it's actually trying to keep order...that's where this stuff comes from...it's a society...it's Japanese society...or any society where you have a lot to people in a small space...I think you absolutely have to have that...so that it won't result in absolute anarchy...

Interviewer: ...Do you think you've become a little more Japanese?

Tim Ferguson: No...no...because I think that the principles that I was talking about...showing respect, consideration for other people...they are not exclusive to any one culture...you do need some structure in your life if not there's just anarchy...but within that structure you need freedom to improvise and to think for yourself...you need a structure...but it doesn't have to be planned to every single detail...

The fact that Clearwater's head instructor was himself a person of Japanese descent also played a crucial part in many of its members' perceptions of its martial and cultural legitimacy. Hence, Matsumoto *sensei*'s 'cultural pureness' as a native Japanese person played a significant role in his undeniable charisma for many. This was again viewed as a sort of affirmation of its authenticity, particularly in events where the cultural exoticism of Asian martial arts is strategically employed to gain attention and exposure. One example of this was during a combined martial arts seminar held on a weekend from 23-24th May 2004, where Matsumoto *sensei*, together with other allegedly established and reputable martial arts instructors in Canada, conducted several public seminars in their respective martial arts. Labelled the 'Camp of Combat Arts', and organized by the Alberta *Jiu-Jitsu*⁴⁰ Association, it served as an event where the mystique and relevance of

⁴⁰ An alternative to the more commonly accepted transliteration of *jujutsu*

Asian martial arts was highlighted and exploited, along with an obvious attempt at gaining some monetary benefits at the expense of an impressionable teenage and school-going population. Participation within its martial ethos thus provided one with the social, symbolic and cultural capital to transgress what was perceived to be the failings or weaknesses of their immediate social-cultural milieu.

Upon further reflection, Kouchi's own motivations in his commitment towards Aikido have also been largely echoed by a number of Japanese and Asian *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Perhaps most significantly has been the case of Matsumoto *sensei* himself, who clearly saw his own cultural identity as a Japanese person intimately tied to his practice and teaching of Aikido. Now at the age of fifty-four at the time of writing, a large part of what and how Matsumoto *sensei* gives meaning to his life stems largely from both his *Shiatsu* practice and his role as a high ranking Aikido instructor, which reveals a certain deeply embedded cultural essentialism that may come across as dogmatic and uncompromising. This is once more reiterated in his firm declaration that he would never ever seek to become a citizen of Canada, as noted earlier, in spite of having lived in Calgary for more than twenty years. Neither would he, at the same time, have entertained the idea of ever practising a martial art that was clearly non-Japanese in origin. Although one of his personal reasons for seeking a new life in Canada was due to the pressures of everyday life in Japan, he has, however, never regarded himself any less or removed from being Japanese in terms of his cultural and national identity. Aikido was obviously a clear *existential* anchor for him, where his highly regarded status and reputation among his peers, students and patients have also been largely derived and

constructed from his identity as an Aikido *shihan*. Matsumoto *sensei*, therefore, did not have to return to Japan to be Japanese, for he re-incorporated it, in his own way, for himself, at the Clearwater *Aikikai*.

Matsumoto sensei: ...because Aikido is a Japanese martial art...if they forget about Japanese culture, they cannot learn proper Aikido.

Interviewer: So...a person cannot do Aikido without Japanese culture?

Matsumoto sensei: Probably not...because that is difficult...because if many Caucasian people do that...and they teach Aikido...they go the wrong direction...

Interviewer: So when you are running your own dojo and teaching Aikido, does a part of you expect your instructors to be as Japanese as you are?

Matsumoto sensei: Yeah. That's the way I would expect...I don't want to say who...but X, he follows my direction properly and on the other hand, Y, still does not...

Interviewer: So if a person finds it hard to accept Japanese values...?

Matsumoto sensei: Probably they don't think that it's Japanese, they think that it's me. Why? They don't really understand those points...because I grew in Japan that's why...my teachers ask me to do this I do and that is the general way for us...but Caucasian people think that I'm the one who wants it...

Interviewer: But what about yourself? Your experience in Canada for the last twenty-four years? Have your experiences in Canada affected your Japanese identity?

Matsumoto sensei: Well...Japanese people... we don't have to say it in words and we know what is going to happen. But for Canadian people, I have to explain what I want, otherwise it will never happen. So that means that uh...I have to forget my Japanese identity a little bit...I have to change a little bit...from the traditional Japanese way, otherwise I cannot run the business...

Another useful, but at the same time a unique example, has also been the case of Mitch Urahara, a thirty-five year old man of mixed cultural background comprising of a Japanese and English heritage. In spite of the fact that he had been raised in Canada all his life, Mitch describes himself as Japanese, as a result of his experiences during his youth for being regarded as 'different'. Interestingly, such an alleged 'difference' was something that was based on his physical appearance, which alluded to facial features that could be identified as being Asian or Native American. This factor had been a crucial part of his personal recollection of his formative years in areas such as school life, dating

and even at work. In addition, Mitch also recalled, as part of his personal heritage and familial oral history, the fact that his grandfather, who was Japanese, had been unfairly treated and interned during the Second World War in Canada. Hence, his narrative appears to allude to a sense of historical and cultural continuity that has clearly contributed to his own perceived and defined sense of 'difference' in terms of his identity. His own continuing participation in not just Aikido, but also *Katori Shinto-ryu* underlines his self-avowed claim that this was simply his way of 'getting back in touch with his roots'. Mitch's example is, then, a good example of how physical appearances may play a part in the framing a person's own conception of the Self. His participation at the Clearwater *Aikikai* may be seen as form of identity construction or modification through the practice of his body, which served to mediate the tension he has constantly felt all his life for being 'different'. This is in spite of the fact that Mitch hardly speaks Japanese; much prefers a game of NHL⁴¹ ice hockey to *sumo*, holds a master's degree in Engineering from the University of Calgary, is married to a white Canadian woman, and speaks flawless and articulate standard English as fluently as any typical Anglophone Canadian. Yet, he requires Aikido and *Katori Shinto-ryu*, on the other hand, to make him 'the same' as others.

Mitch: ...I guess at the end of the day too...with me...being half-Japanese...I wanted to at least maintain...some of the uh...the tradition, the heritage, the culture...given that I've lacked it (chuckle)...

Interviewer: So Aikido is more of a way of being Japanese for you?

Mitch: To some degree...yeah, sure...it has become part of me ok...I like it...it allows me to clear my mind...you know...as with regards to the martial aspect of it...that had no influence on me selecting the art...to participate in it...Aikido...you know, now I know what it is now...it's become more important...the harmony and all that... but I think some people are there for the...'romantic' side of the martial arts...but...some people want to 'be Japanese' so bad...you know? (chuckle)...I mean you probably know who I am talking about...

⁴¹ National Hockey League – The professional ice hockey league that comprises of both Canadian and American teams is extremely popular in Canada.

Interviewer: Has training in Aikido for the past three years affected the way you see Japanese culture?

Mitch: It has hasn't changed my view about the culture, but I want to learn more about the culture itself... umm... uhh...given that I'm third generation...and my dad can't speak the language...I can't speak the language...so much of the culture has been lost...it's this one thing that I'm trying to hang on to...on a personal level...I guess a lot of what I'm doing too is...because my upbringing was...there was really no traditions...uhh...none of that...maybe I lacked it and I wasn't taught it and I went looking for it...you also gotta remember too...I'm also very familiar to what happened to my grandfather during the war...being Japanese wasn't a good thing...you suppressed it...and it's pretty reflected in my father...you suppressed it...you know...you just try to blend into the environment...be a good citizen...be a good Canadian...don't wave the Japanese flag...cause they're gonna shoot it, right? (chuckle)...in that time... dad grew up... he got beat up badly because he's Japanese...so my upbringing was...you are a Canadian...younger you feel the discrimination, cause you look different...the girls aren't quite sure of you...you know...but now you're this exotic thing, right? (chuckle)...now they pay attention...

At the same time, it should also be noted that the few Japanese women who did take part in Aikido practice regularly at the Clearwater *Aikikai* revealed a markedly different agenda from the men, who often saw a link between their immutable 'Japanese-ness' and Aikido practice. In contrast, the three Japanese women that I got to know in the course of my fieldwork placed much more emphasis on the practical and exercise benefits of Aikido more than any culturally or symbolically related interests. The first two were relative younger women – Kazuko and Mariko – and had been students enrolled at the Alberta College of Art and Design and the University of Calgary respectively, and each viewed their involvement in more practical terms. Aikido was either a means of socialization and 'having something to do' (for Kazuko), or a form of exercise and the learning of a skill 'to become stronger' (for Mariko), with far less cultural overtones. The eldest of the three, Kaoru, was married to a Japanese person, and viewed Aikido as means of 'taking a break' from her own personal life at home and work as a mother and wife. Taking this into consideration, such a distinction in personal reasons between the participation of men and women at the Clearwater *Aikikai* reveals an important insight: *the notion that male perceptions and constructions of cultural identity appear to possess a greater stake among those who relocate themselves transnationally.* Aikido, therefore, may appear to possess a more utilitarian purpose to the Japanese women at Clearwater's

dojo, while the embodiment of both martial and cultural ethos takes on a greater symbolic and even emotional dimension among its men. It might also be interesting note that all three women, at the time of writing, were engaged in successful relationships, and two of them have been intimately involved with non-Japanese men⁴², and never mentioned it as a source of potential tension in terms of their identity or culture while living in Canada.

The *dojo* also consisted of quite a balanced mix of children and adults. Up to more than half of its total members appear to be drawn from Anglophone Canadian families, resulting in English remaining the *lingua franca* for one's daily interaction with other members. At the same time, however, some basic knowledge of Japanese expressions were necessary for the more ritualistic and formal interactions during classes. Furthermore, the names of various techniques taught in class were required to be learnt in Japanese. Nevertheless, it was obvious that the community of Aikido practitioners at the Clearwater *Aikikai* stemmed from a wide range of ethnic and national identities, where one may often overhear conversations that were conducted not only in English, but also in Japanese, Ukrainian, Russian, French, Cantonese or even Mandarin. At the same time, it appears that a much greater proportion of men, compared to women, regularly take part in classes at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, and one is often hard-pressed to locate a female practitioner who holds a black belt. This perhaps appears to be an interesting paradox when one takes into account Aikido's often publicly touted image as a martial art that places less reliance on muscular strength and power, a trait often associated to conventional definitions of masculinity. Consequently, the practical reality of its pugilistic universe did not always comply with its ideological one. In response to such an

⁴² As noted, while Kaoru was married to a Japanese man, Kazuko had been living with Dominic Bucher, a French immigrant to Canada, for over a year. Just after the end of my fieldwork, I also learnt that Mariko had just begun a relationship with Nguyen, another regular member of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, who was Vietnamese.

observation, Nina once suggested that a major reason for this rested on the fact that Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was still very much a 'man's world'.

Interviewer: So you preferred Aikido to Taiji? Why?

Nina: Well, Taiji was more relaxing, Aikido is more physical...I grew up a tomboy so...it's like...yeah...this is good, I wanna get in there with the boys and show 'em how to do it (chuckle)...yeah, I've always preferred to hang out with the boys versus the girls...growing up, I've always hung out with my male cousins...it felt more comfortable?...That's why people don't see me in dresses and skirts that often...

Interviewer: Why do you think there are so few women in sensei's dojo?

Nina: Well the reason why they join is for self-defence, and for some women it's to keep themselves more physically fit...and the reasons why so many people have quit over the years...like I could have quit over the years but I didn't...I myself was injured...I sprained one ankle... one black belt, because he forced me to do a breakfall when I was not ready...and I sprained my other ankle the same way...so it is a man's art...it is very male-oriented...because of their stature and their strength they rely on their physical strength...I tend to practice with guys bigger than me because...it pisses 'em off because they can't move me sometimes...because I use my centre...I want them to teach me how to use my centre, and at the same time I'm trying to teach them how to use their centre and not their strength.

It, then, comes as no surprise, till present times, that the leadership and organizational authority at the Clearwater *Aikikai* lies among its men, largely as a result of numerical superiority and also partly due to the often unspoken authoritarianism and powers of final judgement vested in the hands of Mastumoto *sensei*, all which could also partly be symptomatic of Aikido's own broader hierarchical structure, which still stems from it being a highly patriarchalized Asian martial art, placing greater emphasis and reliance on the leadership, participation and representation of its male membership. Interestingly, this could also partly, but certainly not entirely, explain the *dojo*'s uneven gender ratio, a self-perpetuating organizational characteristic where women who are anti-authoritarian or non-conforming often do not remain long. On the other hand, among those who remain, it appears that such female members may also subscribe to the same essentializing gendered discourse that underlies the perception of the martial arts as being a male-centred activity. Ironically then, such women may also fail to perceive Aikido as a

true or efficient martial art that teaches self-defence, partly because of its seemingly feminizing discourses on harmony, softness and blending with an attacker's movements.

Interviewer: We don't really have too many women in the dojo...and it's interesting when they say that Aikido is the 'way of harmony' and you don't need to use brute force or whatever...so intuitively you might think...women, who generally have less muscle mass, might be more attracted...so why do you think we see less women?

Craig: Well...I think martial arts are still viewed largely as a man's thing...you think of martial arts and you think of a man and a gi...fighting each other...mortal combat...you don't think of... women...in a hakama and a gi...fighting each other...I think there's a social aspect...we're still fairly...yeah...patriarchal in way...but eh... once women start to get involved...like today...the two new women I noticed eh...yeah one of them was here before...she came to bring the second one...once they get introduced to the environment...it's something that they can do...it's not something that matters for muscle mass...and hey like I'm a skinny guy...there's very little muscle...

Jonathan: ...yeah like it's the same thing when you look at all of those self defence courses...it's always a lot of women in there...

Interviewer: Yeah, but why not Aikido?

Jonathan: Well, I think the part of it is...they tend to think of self-defence as you have to be hitting somebody or kicking somebody...you watch a movie or you watch men fighting in a bar...it's always really...you gotta hit someone...so you want to be stronger than the other person...and Aikido in that sense doesn't promote it...it's not about strength and not being stronger than the other person...it may mean that women may be more interested in this but they tend to...wanna try and be more powerful...so it's like they get extra strength in being able to hit somebody really hard...

Even so, it is also interesting to note that implicit forms of patriarchy and hierarchy did not transfer to all aspects of life at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. What was observed, at the same time, was a greater sense of egalitarianism among its members *beyond* the physical boundaries of the *dojo* and outside of practice times. Another interesting early observation is a visible number of parent-child participants, a result of either one of them taking classes first with the other following suit. Such was the case of George and Jeremy Summers, where George, the father of Jeremy, eventually decided to personally participate in classes after his interest in Aikido gradually grew while watching Jeremy's classes. Viewed from this perspective, the sense of community at the

Clearwater *Aikikai* is often further heightened by such an emerging networks of interconnected and overlapping familial and social ties between various members.

Apart from the annual training camps that are held over the summers, of which I took part in two during my fieldwork, regular weapons seminars conducted by Matsumoto *sensei*, and the occasional seminar resulting from visits to Calgary by other Aikido *shihan* were additional training and interactive events that were the norm all year round. In addition, several social events, not entirely related to training, were also organized over the year that further assisted in solidifying as sense of community. These included the conduct of large-scale communal barbeques coinciding with the Annual Calgary Stampede, a popular yearly outdoor fair using a Western theme that is organized by the city, and annual children's Halloween parties and sleepovers at the *dojo*. A New Year's Eve class, known as *Estunengeiko*, is also conducted an hour prior to midnight to welcome the coming year. This once more echoes and amplifies the importance of Japanese cultural traditions to the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where participation in both Western and Japanese social events co-exist comfortably. In addition, social get-togethers are also organized often on Wednesday evenings together with Matsumoto *sensei*, where a tea drinking session would follow after the final class of the day. These events serve to encourage strong rapport between students and Matsumoto *sensei*, whose seemingly likable sense of humour and social skills also played a crucial part in garnering a group of deeply committed and loyal 'hard-core' *Aikidoka*.

On several occasions, then, it was also not uncommon for members to head off together from the *dojo* after an evening class for drinks and a late dinner at a nearby restaurant or pub. Such social occasions occurred fairly often, although they were also dependent upon the state of each and everyone's overall level of desire for post-training drinking sessions and of course, the presence of Matsumoto *sensei*. Hence, it did not exactly come as a surprise when on a few occasions, relationships between the men and women who practice at Clearwater develop beyond the merely platonic. At least three romantic relationships among members that developed during the tenure of my fieldwork were allegedly a result of the direct influence and involvement of Matsumoto *sensei* himself. These characteristics of the social environment at Clearwater, which practices a combination of martiality and *communitas* among its members was a crucial factor in the continued loyalty of several of its members. Over time, those who have remained close to Matsumoto *sensei* over the years now form an inner cadre of trusted and reliable individuals who mostly play a part in supervising the teaching of Aikido and the organization and publicity of both social and Aikido-based events such as classes, seminars and even public demonstrations. Such individuals were often rewarded with greater responsibilities but were also noted to advance more quickly than others in terms of rank, partly as a result of their conspicuously high level of commitment.

Life at the Clearwater *Aikikai's dojo* was, therefore, the site of a highly transnationalized, transculturalized and communal environment where a continuous flow of reflexive and interpersonal cultural dialogue occurred, and also not to mention cross-cultural romantic relationships. But it was certainly not without its internal contradictions

and tensions. For at the same time, it was also a community bounded together by similarity and difference, hierarchy and egalitarianism, contrast and continuity, and finally, also a social-cultural ethos that was ironically essentializing and relativizing at the same time. The Clearwater *Aikikai* was a *dojo* and ‘a space out of place’ that displayed a marked sense of identity, ownership, time and boundary from the broader physical surroundings that surrounded it. In many ways, then, being a regular and dedicated member of the Clearwater *Aikikai* also often meant being in a constant state of identity and cultural flux whenever one appeared at the *dojo* for the roughly one and a half to two hour session of practice each time. One, then, leaves Calgary, if only for a moment, into an anti-structural liminal or liminoidal space (Turner 1987) that is betwixt and between the life-worlds of Canada and Japan. As one steps through the main entrance into the *dojo* each time, one’s body and speech virtually re-orientates itself towards the cultural *game* of Aikido, as the spaces within its four walls now serves as an avenue for *alterity* and *mimesis* (Taussig 1993). Becoming an *Aikidoka* is, therefore, more than mere thought or talk, for has to be firstly performed and believed by the body.

Embodied Rites of Passage: Becoming an Aikidoka

While the Clearwater *Aikikai* still consciously locates its cultural and organizational roots to Japan, it, nevertheless, has to continually seek to re-define and re-invent its influences and identity in relation to many of its members, who largely remain hyphenated Canadians from many walks of life. Existing as both a consequence and medium of a sense of transculturalism and transnationalism that has become increasingly pervasive in the last century, the cultural logic of Aikido that was taught has also has

been re-constructed, both by those who would have transplanted its practice beyond Japan, and those who seek to incorporate it into their various societies. In other words, the practice of 'Japanese-ness', although perpetuated as a necessary but not always a sufficient part of being an *Aikidoka*, was often propagated via bodies that were 'un-Japanese' in origin. At the same time, the practice of Aikido also contained, through its practices, an implicit re-culturalizing and re-nationalizing narrative for persons from Japan within a *global ecumene* (Foster 1991, p. 235-260, Hannerz 1992, p. 217-267). Nonetheless, such experiences of a transnational or transcultural Aikido universe could only have been by possible via the involvement of one's own corporeal self. Hence, transnationalism is not something that is possible only via the imagination (i.e. Hitchcock 2003), which fatally neglects the vital role that the senses play in the social construction of reality. Becoming a regular *Aikidoka* at Clearwater *Aikikai* was also largely the incorporation of loosely defined dispositions and strategies of 'Japanese-ness' and to tacitly recognize the possibilities of less than opaque boundaries of cultures. It also became apparent that no single Aikido *dojo* was ever alike in its sub-cultural practices, rituals and regulations, being part of a larger process of an ongoing creolization of cultural lifeworlds. Most strikingly is the variety of reasons of why people take up Aikido, which on first appearance may seem to be different, but reveal certain continuities upon closer scrutiny. A major observation here is that this can be perceived with regards to the intimate relation between the practice and use of one's body and the role it plays in the creation of one's sense of identity and place.

Such observations are further heightened particularly with regard to Aikido's less than subtle connection to an often stereotyped and essentialized notion of Japanese-ness. In addition, the continuing participation of one in the Aikido community broadly appears to be linked to the construction of a *liminoidal* space that allows for both the re-invention or the re-iteration of one's sense of the Self. The practice of Aikido, therefore, within a broader community of similar individuals, through the use of dress, language, narrative, and most importantly, the continued incorporation of bodily disciplines and perceptions, become part of a comprehensive *pugilistic and cultural habitus*. The 'rules' or strategies that one gradually picks up along the way in becoming an *Aikidoka* was the gradual incorporation of a *doxa* of a transient and alternate identity that was manifested through the expression of speech and bodily acts, which often imitate highly stylized and stereotypical dispositions of Japanese-ness. At the same time, such practices are also reiterated within 'pure Japanese' bodies – people of Japanese cultural origins – that are, nonetheless, encapsulated within a larger transcultural socio-cultural framework that often lead to a relativization of intersecting lifeworlds.

There exists, therefore, an ongoing dialectic of *negotiation* and *tension* that constantly existed between the everyday identities of Clearwater's hyphenated Canadian members and its own Japanese members; while being framed within the alternating practical logics of being an *Aikidoka* and a Canadian of various ethnic or national sensibilities. The rites towards becoming an *Aikidoka*, or in other words, in becoming 'one of them', is thus closely tied in with two major ritualizing processes where one's bodily practices become a site for either alterity or the affirmation of one's cultural

identity. The latter employs the practice of Aikido as a medium for the reification of a sense of cultural essentialism, while the former ironically also allows the practitioner to continually construct, experiment or invent an alternate sense of the Self. Hence, the moment one's body is dressed in *keikogi* and *hakama*, one is no longer necessarily in Calgary, or even Canada or Japan, for that matter. Yet at the same time, all are similarly subjected to the sensual and corporeal disciplining confines of the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s pugilistic cocoon.

To practice Aikido and to become an *Aikidoka* is, therefore, not to simply engage in the continuous practice of martial techniques, but it also requires the mimetic incorporation of an entire set of bodily dispositions, dress, rituals, speech-acts and even at times, attitudes and beliefs. One is, therefore, disciplined in body and mind, although this does not necessarily translate into bodies that are compliant, docile or non-reflexive in more extreme interpretations of Foucauldian sentiments where agency appears to be completely erased. One learns the strategies and develops a stake in the game of Aikido, more akin to a *Bourdieu-ian* understanding of a doxic perspective of one's place in the *dojo*. Like any conversion or indoctrination into any religious ideology, consequent belief and faith is never psychologized or idealized within a non-corporeal dimension. Subsequently, although not everyone will eventually remain as true believers, nor retain the level of conviction and commitment to the art, the journey for those who remain and eventually become 'one of them' often entails a combination of both martial practice and the gradual inscription of Aikido's martial philosophy of 'non-violence', along with its various 'Japan-izing' practices. Aikido practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai* during training

sessions often involves constantly incorporating and embodying practices of being both 'Japanese' and 'martialized' in its most ideal-typical and often stereotypical aspects. All of us who practiced in the *dojo*, from the moment we entered its spatial surroundings, entered not simply a place of physical labour and discipline, but also entered into a space where the social rules, or a lack of them, within a broader Canadian society, were no longer necessary applicable nor relevant.

Therefore, one of the first things I noticed was that the various inscriptive and embodying rituals each person was required to learn often included a range of Japanese expressions and terminology in order to gradually become an insider. This becomes increasingly evident right from the start as one enters the *dojo*, when instead of the typical Anglo-Canadian greeting of 'How are ya?', one instead is expected had to greet everyone in Japanese with exclamations of '*Ohaiyou Gozaimasu*⁴³', '*Konnichi-wa*⁴⁴' or '*Konban-wa*⁴⁵' depending on the time of day one arrived. Speech and bodily acts are transformed the moment one enters the confines of the *dojo*. A similar expression such as '*Sayounara*' (meaning 'farewell' or 'goodbye') is once more practiced whenever anyone left the *dojo*. On top of the various everyday greetings and salutations in Japanese, it also included the requirement to memorize the Japanese terms of techniques, dress and equipment. To enter the *dojo* also required a clear recalibration of one's entire bodily carriage, social skills and spoken lexicon.

⁴³ Good Morning

⁴⁴ Good Afternoon

⁴⁵ Good Evening

These acts formed part of an entire range of boundary construction, identification and reification, which sought to actively recognize and announce one's entry into a cultural space that was distinct from another beyond the walls of the *dojo*. Hence, to speak these words loudly and clearly was, therefore, not simply a matter of polite address, but also the sign (or initial acknowledgement) of one's gradual incorporation into the pugilistic and cultural habitus of Clearwater's martial community. Additional 'pedagogies of the body', or corporeal ritualizations, such as the removal of one's footwear; the performing of a kneeling bow at the edge of the mats before entering it; and subsequent standing bows before entering or leaving the mats all became vital practices that served as inscriptive acts of slowly honing one's senses to the requirement of becoming a member of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. A person often spoke more quietly upon entry, became more self-aware of how one walked, how one sat, and even how one conducted her or himself in relation to others. The sense of the Self is, then, often de-territorialized and de-subjectivized in the face of a heightened sense of Otherness, particularly within such a community where egotistical individualism and the disciplining of emotion and the repression of any overt reaction to physical pain or emotional outburst is constantly self-regulated and even repressed. One, then, could always come to the *dojo*, for at least nearly two hours at a time, to re-live and re-create another version of oneself, which would temporarily replace the other identity that existed beyond it in everyday life.

Over time, the Aikido initiate develops an increasing 'feel' for the 'game of Aikido', where the overt and more subtle expectations of being a part of its pugilistic universe imposes itself upon the behaviours and thoughts of an *Aikidoka* who grows to

possess a stake in the order of things. Thus, the order of things also often extended beyond the spatial confines of the *dojo*, ‘naturalizing’ themselves in seemingly trivial acts such as opening the door for Matsumoto *sensei* while entering a building or vehicle with him; allowing a higher-ranking practitioner to begin the practice of a technique; never publicly disagreeing with a Matsumoto *sensei* or a senior-rank; taking the initiative to bowing first to senior practitioners; the use of Japanese terminology in speaking to each other when referring to various techniques; and even attempts at performing and assisting Matsumoto *sensei* in various forms of physical labour, bespoke of a set of norms and dispositions that each practitioner gradually incorporates into her or his martial schema. At the same time, the practice of Aikido at Clearwater was also not simply a binary practice of martiality and culture, the sacred and the profane, or the raw and the cooked, but it also exists as a field for the construction of habituses that allude to a sense of the past, a certain feudal martiality that at times may be seen as anachronistic to both the Japanese and non-Japanese.

The Clearwater *Aikikai* can, also be understood as both a transgressive and transient space that differed sharply from the spatial scripts that lay beyond the *dojo*’s immediate locality. It was a *chronotopical* spatial arena, where an intrinsic connectedness between time and space, the temporal and the spatial, and the past and present, is expressed through the body. Such an understanding is derived from the notion of the ‘chronotope’, first employed by Mikhail Bakhtin, which alludes to the interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships (Bakhtin 1981, p. 84-258). This observation, therefore, is suggestive that the notion of culture and identity may not be as easily defined

or indicated via the use of mere physiological traits, or the reductionistic and idealized reliance on conceptions of an 'imagined community'.

Similarly, the cultural boundaries between what may be construed to be Japanese or non-Japanese certainly appears to rest largely greatly upon the continued embodied collusion and corporeal practices among the members of the Clearwater *Aikikai* as opposed to being based entirely upon either the 'colour' or 'race' of one's physical body. Nor does it entirely rely upon mere symbolic interpretation that results in the 'social construction' of an imagined or believed identity. In other words, the acculturated or essentialized notions of what *actually is* a Japanese person, a Canadian person, an 'Asian' person or even a 'Western' person become arbitrary when one begins to understand that a culture has to be, first of all, embodied. In doing so, we may, then, only see dark, fair, large, small, strong, heavy, light, soft or hard bodies - admittedly different bodies - but never *different races*.

The regular disciplining and practice of one's body and mind thus represents an ongoing and unending embodied rite of passage that unceasingly scripts, sculpts and sacralizes unto the Self, the dispositions of being an *Aikidoka*, through the body and with the body. As *bodies of culture*, the practice and eventual mastery of an Aikido habitus reveals to us that culture or identity cannot exist without the inscriptive role that one's body and senses must commit themselves too. This is because the notion of culture is ultimately tied with one's habitus (Brightman 1995, p. 535-539); hence implying that culture must also necessarily possess a corporeal and embodied characteristic that is not

entirely imagined. Culture must be felt, heard, smelt, tasted, seen, remembered and emoted. The construction of one's Aikido habitus, for that matter then, is the gradual practice and embodiment of both history and culture, not merely of my own body, but also the history and culture of other bodies.



Plate 2. Clearwater Aikikai's kamiza



Plate 3. Blackburn Industrial Park



Plate 4. The rear of the warehouse facility, where the entrance to the *dojo* was

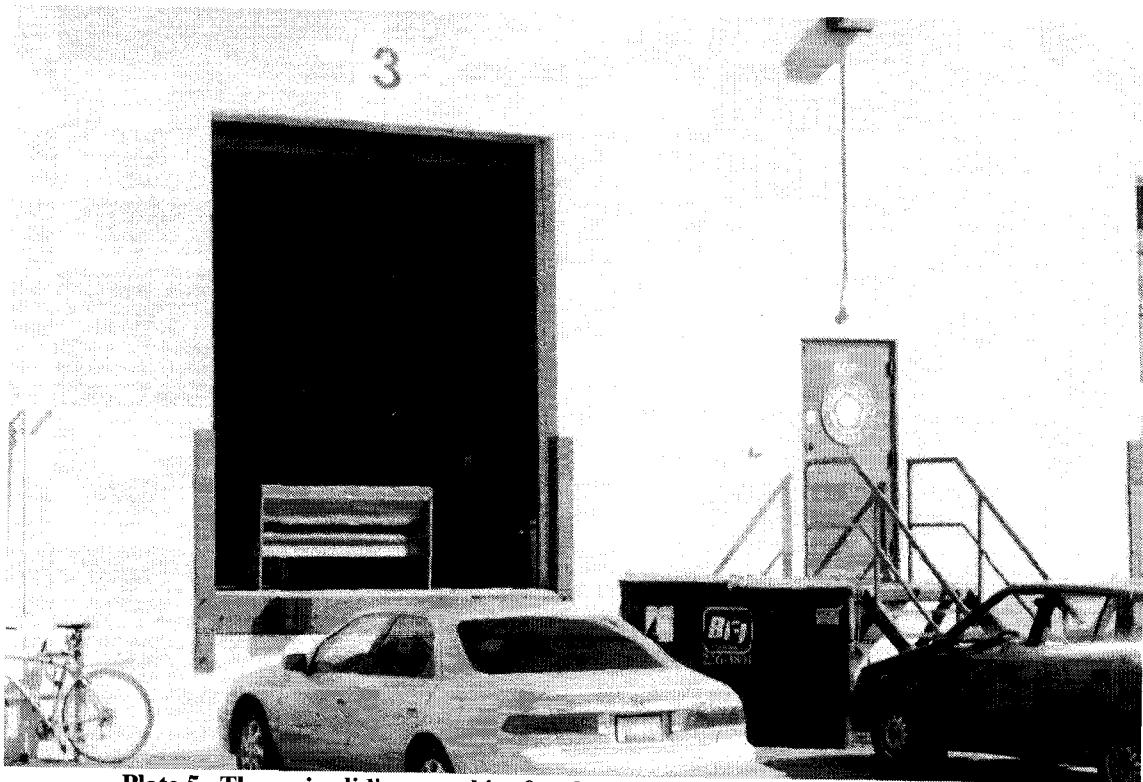


Plate 5. The main sliding panel is often kept open during classes in the summer

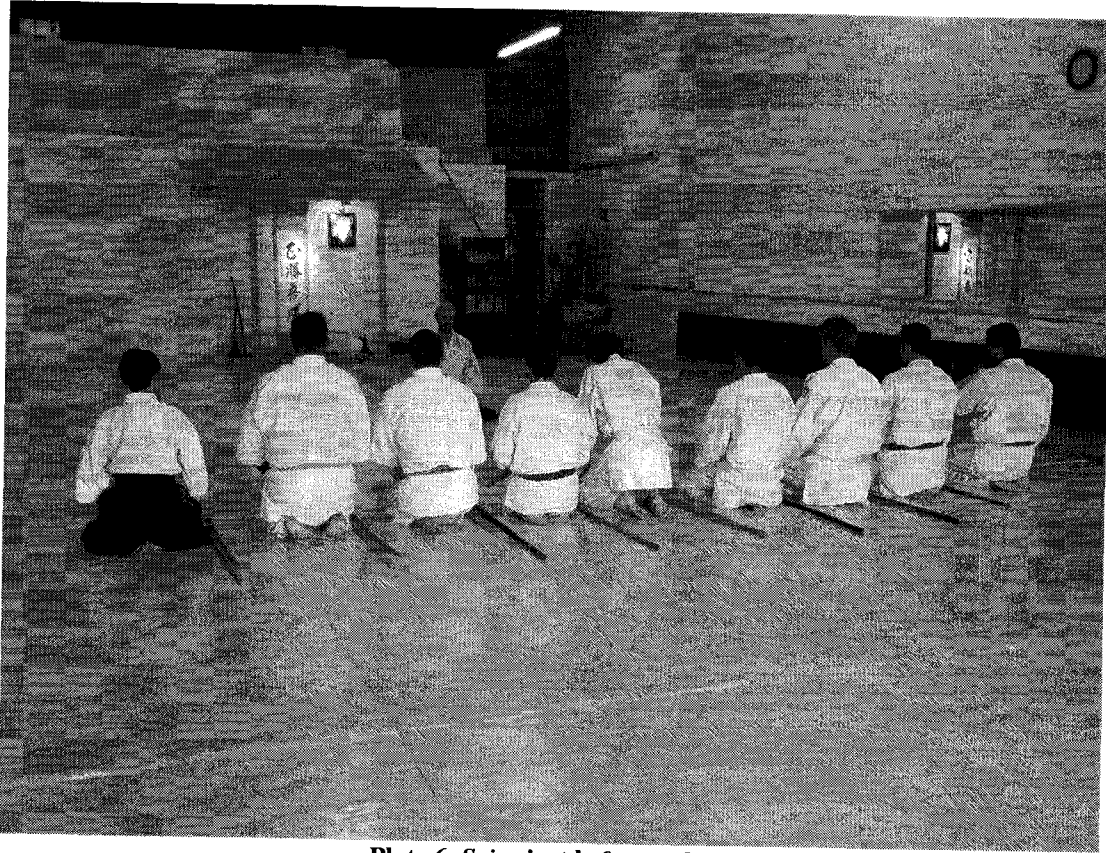


Plate 6. *Seiza* just before a class

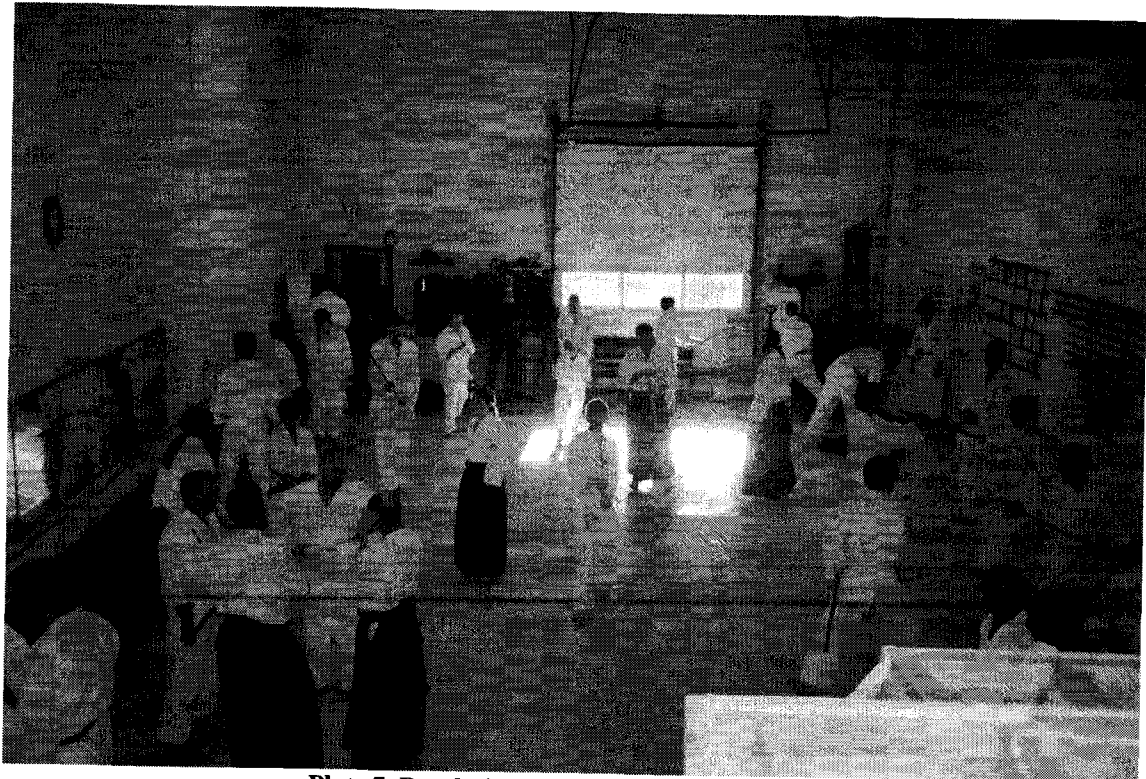


Plate 7. Break time during a weapons seminar



Plate 8. Two yudansha revising a jo kata at a weapons seminar



Plate 9. Children's Class

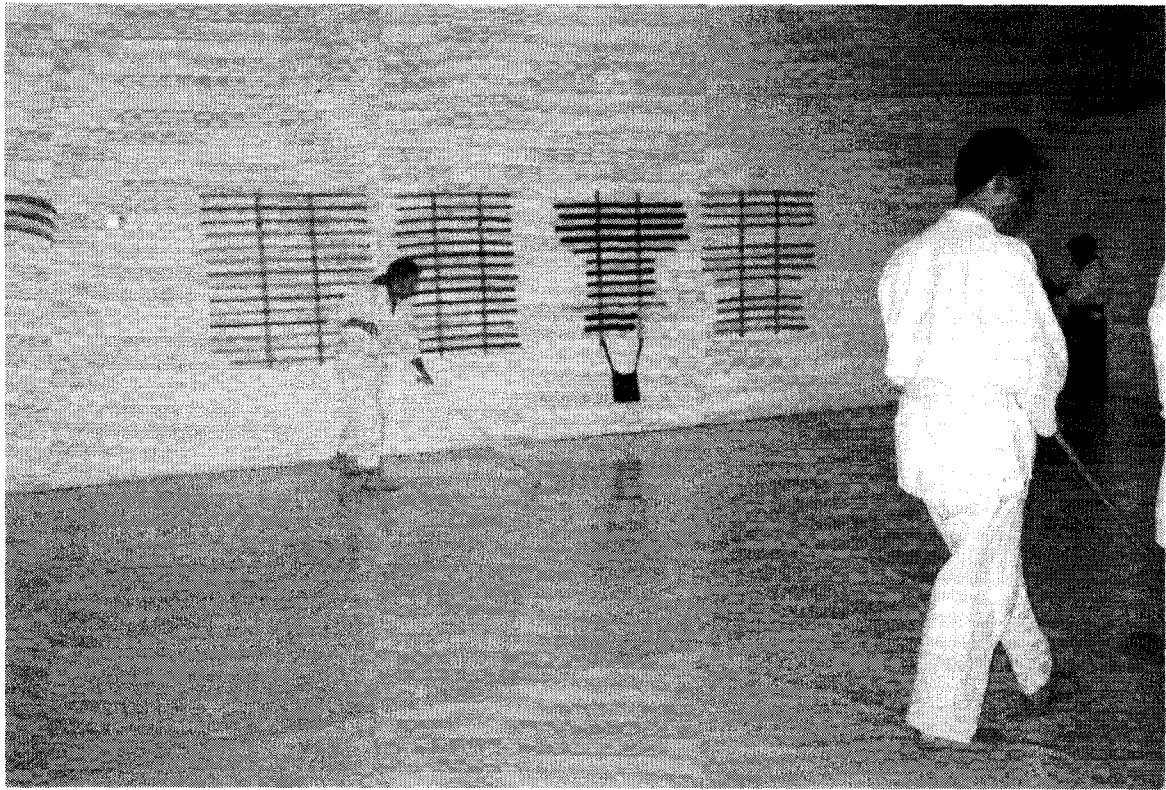


Plate 10. Cleaning the mats after class, with the weapons rack on the wall in the background

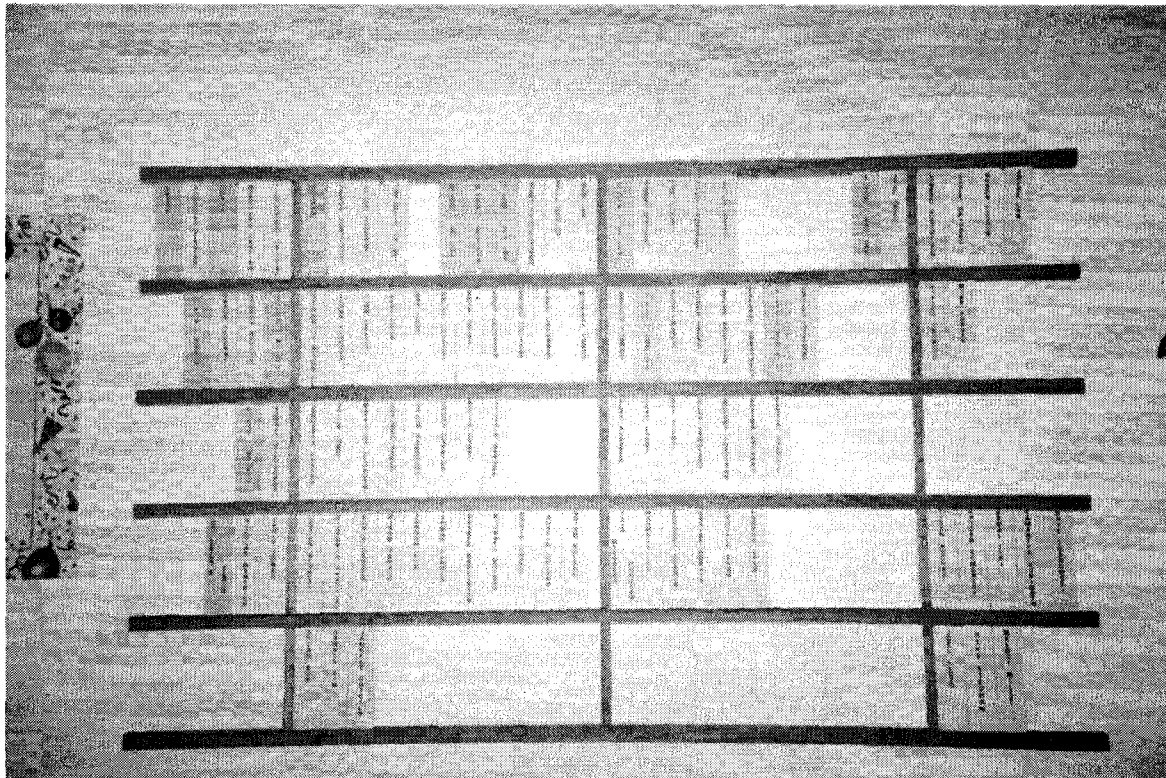


Plate 11. A ranking display where names of regular members are placed according to their ranks

CHAPTER FOUR

Genesis: The Making of a Martial Art

The history of a martial art is often a difficult and complex topic, even when one seeks to recount events that have occurred just over a hundred years ago. As noted before in Chapter Two, because of the relative lack of scholarly and formal historical documentation regarding Aikido's history, much of what the Aikido world remembers of its origins have largely been drawn from oral narratives propagated by sources such as its political leadership, senior Aikido practitioners, popular and encyclopaedic publications, and continued 'word-of-mouth' recollections by certain important individuals who were significantly associated with its eventual creation. Nevertheless, in the end, it must also be conceded that what we can recollect about Aikido's origins has to be, at least, partially drawn from such sources, for a portion of what had gone on before will perhaps always be irrecoverable through the passing of time. Not to mention the fact that what we do know of Aikido's history, is also very much a product of the silence of some, just as much it is based on the memory of others. I, therefore, have no pretensions regarding my own account here as being 'more accurate' or 'correct', as this too, will inevitably remain 'a history of Aikido', and never 'The history of Aikido'. This short excerpt of the main events and major characters surrounding a history of Aikido mirrors, to a large extent, much that has already been documented by others. The following account is, therefore, not so much a claim towards any ownership of authoritative knowledge, but rather, a careful attempt towards adopting a more critical and reflexive posture in our recollection of Aikido's beginnings.

The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, was born on December 14th 1883 in the Motomachi district in the city of Tanabe within Wakayama Prefecture in Japan¹. The only son and the fourth child of five children to Yoroku and Yuki Ueshiba, Morihei grew up within a farming and rural community. At the time, Morihei's father, Yoroku, was also one of the community leaders of their village, and by all accounts, had been a respected individual, having already served for twenty years in the village's council.

¹ The house is reportedly still standing today, as noted by Kisshomaru Ueshiba in an interview in the Aikido Journal, first published in Aiki News, May 1979. According to the town register in Wakayama-ken, it is listed as 441 Nishontani-mura, Nishimuo-gun. Kisshomaru noted that the house was rebuilt in 1910.

Morihei's mother, Yuki, who came from the landowning family of the Itogawa clan, was regarded among her peers as a fine calligrapher and was by all accounts, a highly literate and well-educated woman. In addition, it was also reputed that Yoroku's grandfather, Kichiemon, had been a man of superior strength, and had won several contests of strength in the past within the community, possibly playing a role in enhancing their family's reputation among their peers (Pranin 1996, Ueshiba 1991, p. 8, Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). One could say, then, that Morihei did not clearly stem from any martial or noble pedigree, and never distinctly possessed a warrior's background. This is because his family originated from a traditional agricultural landowning class which, nonetheless, still commanded a significant amount of social distinction and respectability.

The historical context in which Morihei born in was situated during a time when Japanese society was undergoing major changes, and this certainly played a significant part in influencing Morihei's early experiences. Following the chain of events that first precipitated the eventual changes that led to the Meiji Restoration in 1868, this was also a time when the influence and power held by the samurai class and feudalism were becoming increasingly irrelevant and diminished, as Japan embarked on her first steps towards modernization as a nation (Beasley 2000, p. 210-229). By the time Morihei had been born, the Tokugawa Shogunate had already collapsed more than fifteen years earlier, and the success of several social reforms was now rendering the samurai class, a far older martial and social-cultural ethos, one which had extended its grip upon society for nearly eight hundred years (Ikegami 1995, p. 47-75), increasingly redundant – virtually in all areas politically, socially and economically. Thus, Morihei's Japan at the

time of his birth, was already taking rapid strides towards industrializing, modernizing, and developing a new societal infrastructure that was opening up to the rest of the world. The closing decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century would see Japan eventually establishing itself as a significant, if not the most significant, industrial and military power among the nations of East Asia. Morihei Ueshiba was, then, very much the child of a transitional and turbulent historical era, a period in Japan's past that would play a crucial role in his personal experiences, eventually leading to the creation of Aikido.

Early Years

Most popular and other more carefully documented accounts of Morihei's early life depict his formative years as having undergone fairly intensive and extensive exposure to both the martial arts² and religion. In a rare comment regarding Morihei's youth by his son, Kisshomaru Ueshiba³, it was recalled from family accounts that by the age of seven, Morihei had once been sent by his parents to the *Jizodera*, a Buddhist temple to study Confucian classics and Buddhist scriptures. This was also where it was said that he had been enthralled by the teachings and tales of *Kobo Daishi*, or *Kukai*, a well-known historical religious figure and founder of the *Shingon*⁴ Buddhist Sect (Prinin 1996, Ueshiba 1991, p. 8, Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). At the same time, it was increasingly apparent from an early age that the young Morihei had begun to display a personal affinity for books and reading. In addition, it is also interesting to note

² *Sumo*, in particular, has been mentioned in several popular accounts

³ The sole surviving son of Morihei and later official heir to his martial legacy. Kisshomaru later became the Second *Doshu* of Aikido. The term *Doshu* is translated literally as the 'Leader of Way'.

⁴ A major school within Japanese Buddhism, considered to be one of two major schools of Vajrayana Buddhism, the other being Tibetan Buddhism.

that there had been a time when Morihei's parents considered sending him off to be apprenticed as a priest, as recognition of his religious and scholarly predispositions. In Kisshomaru Ueshiba's biographic account of his late father, he further cited one of his aunts (Kiku, Morihei's younger sister) who recalled that:

He (Morihei) would always shut himself up in his room and avidly read his stacks of books. He liked reviews of the (nine) Chinese classics and stories of heroes, but he liked physics and mathematics more – he would read and think, think and make things, and absorb himself in experiments... My older brother was different from other children; he really liked reading books. (Pranin 1980)

Further reports of Morihei's early life also noted that he had been particularly keen and talented in the field of Mathematics, which led to him joining the Yoshida Abacus Institute without finishing his studies in middle school. Upon receiving his diploma from the Institute, Morihei quickly found employment with the Tanabe Tax Office, but this was to be short-lived, for he eventually resigned partly in protest against the Tax Office and its local authorities for the implementation of unfair legislation upon local fishermen. In most detailed accounts of his life, this incident was also known as the 'Sulfur Affair', and occurred when local fishermen in the area protested against a new and strict Fishing Industry Law that led to the blocking of fishing licenses for poorer fishermen by wealthier competitors (Pranin 1996, Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). This was an ill-fated protest movement that failed miserably, and subsequently led to a conflict of interests and strained relations between Morihei and his father, as Yoroku had been working for the government as a city council member.

One interesting observation is that several well-known examinations of the various accounts surrounding Morihei's personal trajectory in the martial arts have

revealed that, in spite of some early exposure as mentioned or claimed by biographers (e.g. Stevens 1985, 1995a), Morihei did not earnestly begin training in any form martial art until he arrived in Tokyo in 1902 during his late teens. This had been just after he quit his job at the Tanabe Tax Office, when he departed his hometown to begin his life anew in Tokyo's commercial sector, which might probably have also been an attempt to rejuvenate his career at a different location far from his hometown. Initially, he first worked as a live-in employee within the commercial sector of Nihombashi but this seemingly did not go very well. Subsequently, he started his own business, establishing Ueshiba Trading, which began as a stationary and school supplies company (Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991).

Morihei's stay in Tokyo was also the time when he began to regularly train in a classical martial system or *kouryu*. More specifically, he practiced the *Tenjin Shinyo-ryu*⁵ under a certain Takisaburo Tobari⁶. This was a school of *jujutsu* that had once been taught as one of the official martial arts to members of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and has been regarded to be one of the major *jujutsu* precursors to the popular martial art and Olympic sport known today as Judo, which was founded by Jigoro Kano sometime near the end of the nineteenth century. Another *kouryu* that Morihei was alleged to have trained in was the *Kito-ryu jujutsu* school, although such a claim has been disputed by the findings of a number of more careful recent investigations into his martial background (Ueshiba 1978-1986). At the same time, however, the length and depth of Morihei's

⁵ A number of references note this as 'Kito-ryu jujutsu', but according to a correction made during an interview by the Aikido Journal by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Morihei's son, this is an inaccurate reference.

⁶ There also seems to be some dispute here with regard to Morihei's Shinyo-ryu instructor. It was reported that he used to recall the name of Tokusaburo Tozawa. Kisshomaru Ueshiba was unable to trace anyone of that name teaching in Tokyo at that time, except for Takisaburo Tobari.

association with either one of these two *kouryu* remains unclear, for no official records of him being awarded any certification in either of these arts were noted. Further questions surrounding the actual range and depth of Morihei's training here are raised when, after no more than two years of his stay in Tokyo, he contracted beriberi, and was forced to return to Tanabe to nurse his health⁷. Subsequently, Morihei was never known to formally return to regular practice with either one of these classical styles (Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991)

Back to Home and Away to War

Morihei's return to Tanabe, however, was again short-lived. For the Russo-Japanese war, which would last from 1904-05, was just at the brink of breaking out. At that time, Japan had adopted conscription as part of its militarization policies and all young men who were eligible for service were drafted. By most accounts, it appeared that Morihei had been very keen in volunteering for active service, although he qualified to be exempted from the draft, by virtue of his status as the eldest son (Harries 1991, p. 23). Nonetheless, Morihei still faced a significant obstacle in being selected, as his height, at barely five feet, was considered to be too short by military standards for one to be a combat soldier. Despite being offered an alternative position as a driver of a military ration supply vehicle, this did not prove to be acceptable to him and he rejected it. Interestingly, according to some accounts, Morihei had tried to become taller by hanging from a tree branch daily. Strangely, even though few details are mentioned pertaining to

⁷ When returned home, his sister Kiku, remembered him saying: *I went up to Tokyo with only one kimono and I have returned...with only one kimono...*(Sudanomori 1986-1991)

its sudden turnaround, he was finally accepted as combat soldier (Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991).

When he was finally conscripted by the end of 1903, Morihei became a part of the 37th Regiment of the Osaka 4th Division, a reserve unit that was more commonly known as the *Kishu* Regiment, where many of its troops, along with Morihei, consisted of conscripts from Kishu, which was the old name of Wakayama Prefecture. During the time of his service, it was also claimed that Morihei managed to build for himself a fairly significant reputation for his proficiency with the bayonet, and even earned the nickname of *Kami-sama*, which often translates as ‘King of Soldiers’, among his peers⁸. At the same time, it was noted that Morihei still managed to continue his training under a Masakatsu Nakai of the *Goto-ha Yagyū-Shinkage ryū* and was supposed to have earned a *Menkyo Kaiden*⁹ in the art, although certain questions are raised as to how this was possible while being conscripted and sent to the battlefield. Consequently, in return for his allegedly outstanding performance in the military, Morihei was promoted to the rank of sergeant. Like many hagiographical narratives of apotheosized individuals, further reports have also asserted that he possessed such enormous physical strength that he could carry the backpacks of his fellow soldiers, on top of his own, whenever they were too exhausted by fatigue (Ueshiba 8-23, Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991).

⁸ Nonetheless, it should also be noted that since Morihei was conscripted into a reserve unit and thus probably saw a lot less action than frontline units, this also begs the question as to just how he managed to build up a reputation for being well-skilled in the use of the bayonet.

⁹ A certificate of full proficiency in a Japanese martial art, usually awarded to an advanced student deemed more suited to carry on the tradition of the art. Such certificates predated the use of the belt system, which was implemented by the Founder of Judo, Jigoro Kano.

Once more, for reasons not entirely discussed or ever documented, Morihei's military career eventually ended in 1907, and he resumed his former life in Tanabe for a period, continuing his father's work as a prominent member of the local community. At the age of twenty-four, Morihei was also elected as the leader of his community's local Young Men's Association. It was also during this period when his father, Yoroku, hired the services of a local Judo instructor, a man named Kiyochi Takagi, to further Morihei's martial arts practice. This is also regarded as the first time that Morihei first experienced official instruction in the *Kodokan* style of Judo, although as mentioned earlier, he had already been exposed to at least one other *jujutsu* system since his relatively short stint in Tokyo (Ueshiba 8-23, Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991).

Major Influences: Sokaku Takeda and Onisaburo Deguchi

Morihei remained in Tanabe for the next three years, but as the historical, political and social developments at the turn of 20th century Japan would have it, further changes and challenges to his life's journey were to come. In 1910, in the face of a new government policy that advocated the northern colonization of Hokkaido by pioneers and settlers, Morihei decided to embark on a long and arduous journey to take up the challenge in creating a settlement in the north, and set about organizing a local group of similarly interested families from Tanabe (Ueshiba 1991, p. 9). He apparently became the *de facto* leader of this expedition since he was still serving as leader of the Young Men's Association in Tanabe, and the pioneers eventually took off in March 1912, with Morihei leading a total of fifty-four families. After a grueling journey, they arrived at their destination in the desolate wilderness of Shirataki two months later, near the village of

Yobetsu, where as pioneers of Kishu, they went about building for themselves a new life. Morihei would never see Tanabe again for another seven years.

During those years in Hokkaido and away from home, Morihei would be greatly influenced by his chance encounter with two men. The first would be a man known as Sokaku Takeda, the leader of the martial style known as *Daito-ryu Aiki-Jujutsu*¹⁰, which is presently seen as the prime influence on the techniques found in modern Aikido (Pranin 1986, 1995); and secondly, the charismatic Onisaburo Deguchi, the co-leader and founder of the *Omoto-kyo*¹¹, broadly translated as ‘Teaching of the Great Origin’ (Pranin 2005). These were two men who could not have been more different from each other in terms of lifestyle, character and influence (Pranin 1993). While Sokaku was a hardened warrior who still adhered to the martial values of a rapidly disappearing social class, Onisaburo represented the elements of Japanese society that sought dramatic social changes via a new religious ideology. While further explication of the details of *Omoto-kyo*’s religious teachings and cosmology would require an essay in its own right, it would suffice to elaborate here that the *Omoto-kyo* is best described as a new religious movement that reached its peak during the early decades of the twentieth century, and is characterized by a syncretic and messianic religious ideology which seeks to incorporate a combination of Shintoistic, Buddhist and Christian cosmologies into their beliefs (Clarke 1999, p. 187-193, Hardacre 1990, p. 48-49, Kitagawa 1966, p. 222-224, Offner

¹⁰ Accounts of *Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu*’s origins have claimed a link to the once powerful Takeda clan of Kai that existed during the *Sengoku*, or the warring states period of Japan in the 16th century, just prior to its unification under the Tokugawa Shogunate that eventually lasted for over 250 years. Allegedly, it is a body of techniques that were discreetly transmitted among family members of the *Aizu* Clan, situated in the modern-day prefecture of Fukushima. The *Aizu* Clan was historically the appointed bodyguards of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which still resisted supporters of the Meiji Reformation in the aftermath of the Boshin War in spite of the fall of the Shogunate in 1868.

¹¹ In older texts it is spelled and referred to as ‘Oomoto’

and Straelen 1963, p. 63-82, Sakurai 1960, Thomsen 1963, p. 128-141). It first emerged in 1892 through the religious revelations and teachings of a peasant woman known as Nao Deguchi, to whom Onisaburo eventually became a son-in-law¹².

With regards to the former encounter with Sokaku, Morihei's meeting and subsequent relationship with him remains shrouded largely by conflicting accounts, where some have claimed that they met under highly amiable conditions, while others have alluded otherwise. One of the most popularly accepted narratives recounted their meeting as a result of a challenge match that Morihei convincingly lost, thus motivating him to seek instruction from Sokaku, the man who bested him. Hence, from then on, Morihei became a full-fledged disciple of *Daito-ryu Aiki-Jujutsu*, which would arguably be the one single martial system that he practiced the most. On the other hand, the circumstances that led to Morihei's meeting with Onisaburo began sometime in mid-November 1919, as a result of a sudden turn of events that would also be equally life-altering for Morihei's direction and perspective in life (Pranin 1986, 1993, 1995).

Morihei's meeting with Onisaburo was precipitated by another event near the final months of 1919, where after having been away for nearly seven years, Morihei suddenly received word from Tanabe that Yoroku, his father, was dying. At this point, although Morihei subsequently set forth for Tanabe in order to see his father immediately, there appeared to have been a sudden change of plans. This is because

¹² In terms of its religious doctrine, Omoto-kyo is a pacifist, millenarian and inclusive spiritual movement that preaches the unity of all religions and the connection between mankind, nature and God. Currently still in existence with an estimated membership of over 180,000. It also uses the constructed language of Esperanto in its teachings. The Omoto-kyo's current website is at <http://www.oomoto.or.jp/>

enroute to Tanabe, Morihei apparently decided to stop over at Ayabe, because he had learnt that a charismatic and powerful religious teacher was living in the vicinity, and decided to seek him out for advice and possible assistance for his father's ailment. From most accounts, Morihei's encounter with Onisaburo left an indelible impression upon him¹³. Yet, it is also mysteriously noted that Morihei *continued* to remain in Ayabe with Onisaburo for a substantial period of time, until 28th December 1919, nearly a month or more since he left Shirataki, when he first received word of his father's impending death. As a result of this strange and unexplained delay, by the time Morihei arrived home the following year, Yoroku had already passed away.

More changes were to follow after Morihei returned to Tanabe, for within a year he sought to move his family, together with his wife and children¹⁴, to Ayabe and became a full-fledged member of the *Omoto-kyo*. It was also in Ayabe when Morihei, under the encouragement of Onisaburo, began to officially instruct in the martial arts (Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). It may be said, then, that several members of the *Omoto-kyo* were probably the first martial arts students of Morihei. The years from 1920-1928 were a time when Morihei's martial and spiritual development were perhaps, the most intense. Interestingly, however, while pursuing his own spiritual development, Morihei continued to invite Sokaku Takeda to Ayabe for further instruction in *Daito-ryu Aiki-Jujutsu*. In spite of their disciple's ardent interest in both their worlds, it was also believed that both Onisaburo and Sokaku detested each other's presence, with each

¹³ Popular accounts of this encounter between the two men notes that Onisaburo, upon finally granting a private audience with Morihei, only spoke the words "Your father is fine where he is" when pressed by Morihei to pray for the dying Yoroku.

¹⁴ An account by Kisshomaru Ueshiba (Ueshiba 1978-1986) actually recalls that the rest of the family never really had too much of a choice. It was believed that Hastu, Morihei's wife, was initially against such a hasty move.

advocating clearly opposite and antithetical philosophies to life. Sokaku was often depicted as an egotistical and violent man who had actually killed others in fights, while Onisaburo was a deeply religious idealist and pacifist that probably saw Sokaku as a rival to Morihei's loyalty to him. Nonetheless, Onisaburo continued to support Morihei's teaching of the martial arts to members of the *Omoto-kyo*, which in itself served a utilitarian, empowering and even militant purpose for the growth of his religious movement (Pranin 1986, 1993, 1995).

Morihei's new home in Ayabe, with the blessings of Onisaburo, was reportedly converted into an eighteen-*tatami* *dojo*, and his reputation and fame as a martial arts instructor gradually spread, certainly due to no small effort in the form of material support from the *Omoto-kyo*. In addition, he also was given a nine hundred *tsubo*¹⁵ plot of Tennodaira farming land (Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). The organizational and monetary support of the *Omoto-kyo* and the personal endorsement of Morihei's martial arts ambitions by Onisaburo, who, by all accounts, possessed a strong emotional and ideological influence over Morihei, are thus seen to have been initially crucial to Morihei's fame. It was also obviously a shrewd move on the part of Onisaburo, who possessed a penchant for co-opting members who exhibited certain exploitable talents or influences that could further promote the interests of his religious movement.

Interestingly then, although one might initially surmise that the early foundations of Aikido were the result of a tense fusion between two vastly differing and contradicting worlds – one religious and the other martial – the political contingencies of the times,

¹⁵ One *tsubo* is roughly equivalent to 3.3 square metres.

nonetheless, appear to contain mutually similar characteristics and corresponding interests for the two. For example, the growing stature of Morihei's reputation as a respected martial arts instructor certainly served to be a useful source of social, cultural and symbolic capital to Onisaburo's interests. It, therefore, probably goes without mention that Morihei's personal association to the reputable Sokaku Takeda and his status as a qualified practitioner and teacher of *Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu* certainly qualified him for this role. Eventually establishing the *Ueshiba Academy*, which taught the newly named *Ueshiba-ryu Aiki-Bujutsu*¹⁶, Morihei became a trusted member of Onisaburo's inner cadre of loyal supporters.

The height of Morihei's association with the *Omoto-kyo* and Onisaburo Deguchi was probably in 1924, when he accompanied Onisaburo on an ill-fated and somewhat naïve mission to Manchuria and Mongolia, seeking to create a utopian society. Morihei, at this time, also adopted the use of a Chinese name known as Wang Shou Kao, likely as a means to conceal his true identity. Upon arrival, they were initially welcomed by Lu Chan Kuei, a powerful Chinese warlord, who was leading the Northwest Autonomous Army, but after an extended period of undergoing trying and tough conditions in their journey, Morihei, Onisaburo and four other companions were captured by soldiers of a rival Chinese warlord known as Zhang Zuo Ling at Bai An Da Lai. Thought to be headed for certain death in front of a firing squad, Morihei and his companions were fortunately saved by the intervention of the local Japanese consulate (Ueshiba 8-23, Ueshiba 1978-

¹⁶ It would be useful to further note that the prefix 'Aiki' did not appear in Morihei's martial lexicon until it was impressed upon on him by Onisaburo himself. Hence, contrary to more popular references to Sokaku Takeda as being a practitioner of *Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu*, the word 'Aiki' was added only after Onisaburo's urging. It may be suggested that this was possibly one of the reasons behind the quiet animosity that Sokaku and Onisaburo had for each other, as Sokaku probably disliked the religious interference with Morihei's training.

1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). Although Morihei eventually returned to Japan unharmed together with Onisaburo, most Aikido commentators have alleged that this incident had a profound impact upon him, as it seemed to foreshadow a significant event in the Aikido's popular history, which will be discussed in the following section.

Forging a Way of Harmony

A key narrative of Morihei's eventual 'martial enlightenment' occurred in 1925, just after his return from Manchuria. This is the often quoted and readily believed event where he was alleged to have been challenged by a master of *kendo* one early morning. During the contest, it was said that Morihei managed to anticipate and avoid all the blows that were directed to him by the *kendo* master, who used a *shinai*, a bamboo sword used by *kendo* practitioners. As a result, the *kendo* master subsequently lost his will to fight and abandoned the match. Subsequently, this event is said to have had an important influence on Morihei's own spiritual enlightenment and personal realization of the 'true nature' of the martial arts, which was known as *budo*¹⁷. It has also been implied that Morihei's earlier narrow brush with death in Manchuria had somehow changed him. The following years, therefore, saw fundamental changes in Morihei's interpretation of the martial arts, when he renamed his school 'Ueshiba-ryu Aiki-*budo*', a martial style that increasingly emphasized the spiritual, moral and ethical interpretation aspects of martial training. Yet, in spite of this, these developments ironically also coincided with the period that saw Morihei's increasing association with right-wing and nationalist groups within the Japanese government and other significant figures from the Japanese Imperial Army.

¹⁷ *Budo* literally refers to 'The Way of the Martial Arts', or more commonly translated as 'The Way of the Warrior'

It should be noted that Morihei's reinterpretation of his martial arts practice was not alone nor unique. In the face of the eventual disappearance of a feudal era and the now-obsolete samurai class (Beasley 2000, p. 188-229), this had created a corresponding loss of social relevance and cultural status of the martial arts. Hence such developments where martial arts were gradually reformulated as *budo* were part of growing attempts by former traditional martial elites to reinvent their relevance for the twentieth century. Partly rationalized by many of its adherents as an attempt to preserve the martial heritage of Japan, it nevertheless played a fundamental role towards a growing phenomenon that saw the martial arts being reconstructed as part of an emerging discourse that supported Japanese ultra-nationalism and militarism (Beasley 2000, p. 230-250, Hane 1992, p. 204-309). Furthermore, Japan had, after two successive military victories over China and Russia, emerged as a military superpower by the turn of the twentieth century. In 1895, the beginnings of such a turnaround saw the creation of a centralized martial arts organization, known as the *Dai Nippon Butokukai* (Greater Japan Martial Virtue Society), which was formed in an attempt at revitalizing and utilizing the martial arts as part of a nationalizing and militarizing agenda (Guttmann and Thompson 2001, p. 106).

Hence, the political and cultural implications of the reinvention of the martial arts, as something perceived to be beneficial for the minds and bodies of its practitioners, was also often a thinly veiled embodied medium and disciplining tool for imperialist ambitions and nationalist propaganda. Attributed in part to the influence of educators and

social elites such as Inazo Nitobe (1998), the ‘*do*-ification¹⁸’, or the increasingly ideologized notion of *budo*, had become an important concept in several re-invented martial arts that self-consciously employed the suffix ‘*do*’ in referring to themselves. This ultimately led to an increasing amount of aestheticization and ethicalization in their practices that initially served to promote ultra-nationalist interests via the training and discipline of the body for the promotion of a specific worldview. Such similar approaches where body cultures are exploited by nationalist political contingency have also been observed in the case of China, where martial arts (*wushu*) have eventually been re-invented as ‘national skills’ (*guoshu*) (Morris 2004, p. 185-229). By re-imagining the practice of the martial arts as amounting to far more than merely fighting techniques of a disappearing and obsolete warrior sub-culture, this has ensured their continued survival and relevance into the twentieth century and beyond. Common or well-known Japanese examples include Judo and Kendo, which were incorporated into the national education curriculum prior to the Second World War and still remain so today.

Morihei’s political proclivities during the pre-war years are somewhat unclear and almost deliberately vague, but Admiral Isamu Takeshita, one of his loyal students who was, at the same time, also a prominent personality in the increasingly powerful and successful Japanese military (Harries and Harries 1991, p. 3-50), was instrumental in allowing Morihei privileged access to state politicians, military official and certain even members of the imperial family (Pranin, Undated). Through the influence of Isamu, Morihei was also given the opportunity to perform his martial art in front of former Prime

¹⁸ Meaning the replacement of the suffix *jutsu* for *do*, where *jutsu* referred to ‘technique’, while *do* meant ‘way’, evoking a more ideologically driven practice of the martial arts as compared to a more practical and utilitarian approach.

Minister Gombei Yamamoto and even allegedly spent twenty-one days demonstrating and teaching *Aiki-budo* at the Crown Prince's Palace during the fall of 1925. Morihei would continue for a few more times to demonstrate and teach in 1926. Nevertheless, such a development was also ironic and contradictory, as Morihei was still a member of the *Omoto-kyo* at the time, the millenarian religious movement that the government had already sought to initially suppress during the First *Omoto* Incident just some years earlier in 1921 (Pranin 2005, Stevens 1997, p.33-37, Ueshiba 1996, p. 11).

By 1927, Morihei made a more permanent move from Ayabe to Tokyo upon the invitation of Admiral Isamu Takeshita, in order to conduct more classes of his *Aiki-Budo* to the members of the military and other significant figures in government and politics. However, it was not until 1930, when Morihei finally purchased a plot of land in Ushigome, Wakamatsu-cho, that the foundations of a new *dojo* were established. This subsequently became the site of the *Aikikai* World Headquarters that still stands today at the very same location. By April 1931, when an eighty *tatami dojo* was eventually completed, the site at Wakamastu-cho was initially inaugurated as the *Kobukan* or the 'House of Martial Training' by Morihei. Several commentators and historians of Aikido have regarded this period, from 1930 to just before the onset of the Second World War, as the alleged golden age of Aikido's earliest years in Tokyo, where several students who were taught directly by Morihei also later became outstanding martial artists in their own right. A lesser known fact, however, was Onisaburo's monetary and moral support for Morihei to be made the head of the 'Society for the Promotion of Japanese Martial Arts', or the *Nihon Kobudo Senyokai*, which was officially formed in 1932. Morihei's

increasing prominence as a well-known and influential martial artist along with his growing links to the government and military, was a fact that was probably not lost on Onisaburo. (Pranin 2005, Sudanomori 1986-91, Ueshiba 1978-86)

Morihei's connections to politicians, bureaucrats and the military continued as he taught at police stations in the wider Osaka area. Once more, this was largely due to his close association to Kenji Tomita, another student of Morihei, who was the chief of the Osaka Prefectural Police, and who later subsequently ascended to the post of Governor of Nagano Prefecture and chief cabinet secretary. Morihei's close connections to Tomita would eventually play a crucial role in possibly saving him from the severe consequences of what is commonly referred to as the Second *Omoto* Incident in 1935 (Pranin 2005, Stevens 1997, p. 57-59), when the state authorities decided to once more clamp down on the activities of the *Omoto-kyo*. It is also paradoxical to recall that all this occurred while Morihei was still the president of the *Nihon Kobudo Senyokai*. All this certainly complicates our understanding of Morihei's motives for maintaining his link to both the *Omoto-kyo* and other influential members of the Japanese military and police elite.

After the Second *Omoto* Incident, it also seemed that Morihei's public connections to Onisaburo Deguchi began to significantly waver, as he became much more closely linked to the right-wing nationalist members of the growing Japanese imperial war machine, which would soon become a part of the Axis Powers in the Second World War. As the martial arts were gradually co-opted as part of Japan's growing imperialist ambitions during this time, perhaps Morihei's own elevated social status and

reputation ensured that he could no longer be living in the shadows of either Onisaburo Deguchi or Sokaku Takeda. In September 1939, Morihei was even reportedly invited back to Manchuria as part of a Japanese exhibition of the martial arts¹⁹ and was believed to have demonstrated his skills in front of Pu-Yi, the last emperor of China, who became the Japanese-appointed ruler of the puppet regime known as *Manchukuo* (Stevens 1997, p. 63-64, Ueshiba 178-1986, 1996, p.17).

Japan at War

It was also at this time when the Second World War broke out, and several members of Morihei's *Kobukan* dojo were sent to the battlefield, inevitably transforming the *dojo* into a much quieter and somber place than it had been before. These were the years that Morihei had the greatest difficulty in maintaining the *dojo*, falling into debt. With greatly diminished support from the *Omoto-kyo*, Morihei's martial lifestyle depended upon the support of figures like Isamu Takeshita and Kenji Tomita. The name Aikido, however, did not really begin to be formally and commonly used until sometime between 1941 and 1942, with a precise date not being exactly possible²⁰ as the change had been a gradual one rather than a sudden one. In a lesser known account (Pranin 1994), it was documented that Minoru Hirai, one of Morihei's most trusted and senior students in those years, who had been given full administrative control over the *Kobukan*'s affairs, had been instrumental in encouraging Morihei to drop the term '*bu*' altogether, which meant 'martial', eventually leading to the used of the name 'Aikido'.

¹⁹ This was also the time when reports of how Morihei managed to 'pin a *sumo* wrestler with just one finger' originated. The *sumo* wrestler in question, however, whose name was Tenryu, in his own account simply mentioned that he decided to take instruction from Morihei after he was impressed by the 'strength' of Morihei upon grabbing his hands. This account was certainly quite distinct from one being pinned down by a single finger.

²⁰ Although most accounts record the first official use of the name 'Aikido' in the year 1942.

On the other hand, the years during the Second World War leading right into his final years also marked another major transformation in Morihei's life direction and personal philosophy. It is believed that the present pacifist and reconciliatory ethos of Aikido practice was largely refined during this period, as Morihei could be seen as gradually distancing himself once more from the militant and political connections that he had once associated with. This culminated in a decision to once more depart from Tokyo, while leaving the care of the *Kobukan* in the hands of his only surviving son, Kisshomaru, and Minoru Hirai. Morihei subsequently travelled to the rural town of Iwama in Ibaraki Prefecture, and began the construction of an 'Aiki Shrine' there while devoting all his time to practicing and honing his recently renamed martial art known as Aikido. The headquarters of Aikido was thus re-established there, where Morihei continued to syncretize his own religious beliefs and martial skills, injecting into the art its arguably unique non-violent and peace-loving martial ideology.

There are many commentators, historians and practitioners of Aikido who have tried to account for Morihei's change of heart. Most have linked this with the potential and gradual disillusionment that Morihei may have experienced with the outcome of the Second World War and the suffering it brought (Stevens 1985, 1995a, 1997, Ueshiba 1996, p.17). Furthermore, a significant number of his pre-war students who had been drafted into the military did not return from the battlefield, placing the future of the *dojo* in question temporarily. The direction that the war was taking by the early 1940s also saw the tide of the Pacific War gradually turning against Japan after the United States joined the war as a result of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941.

Ongoing news of the war appeared to disturb Morihei, although one also recalls his close association to the very same elements that were supportive of Japan's military expansionism. Nevertheless, whatever the reasons were, Morihei remained in Iwama for the remainder of the war years and continued to do so after forces from the United States had occupied Japan after her surrender. Morihei's own connection and presence to the Tokyo *dojo* would also never be the same as before as he had grown more attached to his life in Iwama²¹. By 1948, however, the Tokyo *dojo* was granted permission by the Ministry of Education to be re-established as the *Aikikai*, or literally, 'the Aiki Society.'

Aikido as Budo

Hence, it came to pass that a 'martial way', or *budo*, was created largely due to the efforts of Morihei Ueshiba, with the assistance and influence of other significant figures in his life and the historical contingencies of his time. The next few decades saw, for the first time since the 1950s, the growth and spread of Aikido into the West, more specifically within the United States, where an exodus of several top ranking *Aikidoka* from Japan arrived and settled. Paradoxically, the aftermath of the Second World War may have played an important part in the growing awareness of Japan's martial traditions and sub-cultures, where American servicemen who had been posted in occupied Japan were often exposed to them. The United States Air Force was also one of the first non-Japanese organizations after the war where the teaching of Japanese martial arts occurred, and many of such early connections sowed the seeds of a transnationalization and

²¹ Too little credit is often given to the fundamental role that Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Morihei's son, played during the war years and even over the next two decades. While most chroniclers of Aikido's history tend to rightfully credit Morihei as the 'Founder of Aikido', Kisshomaru was one of the central figures that organized the *Aikikai* and orchestrated the dissemination of the art beyond Japan and for systematizing the teaching of Aikido techniques.

globalization of the Japanese martial arts. For many service personnel subsequently returned home while possessing, at the same time, some degree of familiarity or even proficiency in the practice of Karate, Judo, Kendo, and of course, Aikido.

Accordingly, one could argue that the present magnitude of the global presence and popularity of the Japanese martial arts are largely traceable to the initial events of the early post-war years. In no small part due to the increasing global currents, or *mediascapes*, which flowed within and beyond Japan (Hendry 2003, p. 20-22), this was also where the seeds of a martial imagination would consequently develop, often amid the complementary employment of Orientalizing and auto-Orientalizing narratives that exoticized and sensationalized cultural otherness. In addition, such discourses were also supported by the increasing consumerist and objectifying effects of tourism, the mass media and rapid economic development, not to mention the growing reputation and commercial potential of Japanese popular cultural icons (e.g. Godzilla, Pokemon, Power Rangers or Ultraman) within the entertainment industry, right until contemporary times. Upon hindsight, the martial arts were perhaps one of the earliest forms of cultural commoditization from Asia to the West in the early post-war years.

Consequently, the 'missionization' of Aikido has, over time, quickly spread to Europe, several parts of Southeast Asia, Oceania, North America and South America, where large bases of *Aikidoka*, numbering in the thousands, can now be found. Much of the establishment of Aikido beyond Japan by these early pioneers played a significant role in making Aikido the global martial art it is today. Many had been students of

Morihei and Kisshomaru Ueshiba who, especially with the support and encouragement of the latter, established new organizations and *dojo* globally that popularized the name of Aikido. The Clearwater *Aikikai* in Calgary was, therefore, a direct result of such ambitions. In addition, by 1954, the headquarters of the *Aikikai* was officially relocated at Shinjuku's Wakamatsu-cho, which subsequently also became the Aikido World Headquarters, where it still remains today.

During the final years of his life, Morihei gradually became less and less involved in organization affairs, leaving the charge of things to Kisshomaru, while living a life arguably like a free spirit, as he shuttled occasionally from place to place, visiting different *dojo* and friends, while occasionally teaching and demonstrating Aikido, although such appearances were becoming increasingly rare. Under Kisshomaru's administration of the *Aikikai*'s affairs, Aikido's public profile was also given another boost in Japan when it held its first public demonstration since the end of the war in 1956 at the rooftop of the Takashimaya department store in Nihon-bashi, Tokyo (Ueshiba 8-23, Ueshiba 1978-1986, Sudanomori 1986-1991). It was believed that Morihei was initially against this but was finally persuaded by Kisshomaru, who argued that it was vital to do so in order to enable 'Aikido's message' to be heard²².

The site of the *Aikikai* would also undergo another phase of redevelopment much later on in 1968, and Morihei gave his final public demonstration of Aikido later that

²² More was to follow in a series of public demonstrations in front of live audiences and television documentaries, and in 1960 Morihei was awarded the *Shijuhosho* Award by Emperor Hirohito. In 1961, Morihei Ueshiba made his first and only visit to the United States in Hawaii, accompanied by Koichi Tohei, who by that time was also the Chief Instructor of the *Aikikai*. Koichi Tohei would go on to create and found his own style of Aikido in the years to come, known as the *Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido*

same year in honour of the newly completed three-storey building. Virtually revered as a living saint at this time by his most ardent followers, Morihei's health was however, gradually failing, likely made worse by a recurring liver condition that was attributed to the permanent effects of engaging in a grueling 'salt-water drinking contest' that he took part in during his youth. Although he still appeared to be good health, Morihei Ueshiba's condition deteriorated severely by the early months of 1969 and was eventually bed-ridden. He passed away on 26th April at the age of 86 and his remains were placed at three separate but equally important locations. His ashes were buried in the cemetery at the Ueshiba family temple in Tanabe, and strands of his hair were enshrined at both the Aiki Shrine in Iwama and the Ueshiba family cemetery in Ayabe, located beside the Kumano Grand Shrine (Ueshiba 1991, p. 23). Reportedly, Morihei Ueshiba's final words to his son, Kisshomaru, were, "I will leave everything in your hands, all right?" (Ueshiba 1978-1986) Just over a year later, Kisshomaru Ueshiba was officially appointed as the official successor to his father, and became known as the 'Second Aikido *Doshu*' (literally meaning 'Leader of the Way') on 14th June 1970²³. Morihei Ueshiba, on the other hand, would forever be remembered by all practitioners of Aikido as 'O-Sensei' – the 'Great Teacher'.

²³ Following the death of Kisshomaru in 1999, the Aikido World Headquarters is currently headed by Morihei Ueshiba's grandson, Moriteru Ueshiba, now the third *Doshu*.

CHAPTER FIVE
Bodies of History:
'Peaceful Warriors' and the Aestheticization of Violence

Ethnography and History

Every story has its beginnings, or at least a beginning. For just as each person possesses a biography that is linked to their present; each ethnography must also correspondingly possess its own history, where its past and present are but different points in a complex and continuous narrative through the expanse of time. We, therefore, could perhaps argue at this juncture, that the work of ethnography should be understood as a focused attempt at capturing and documenting a temporal, yet detailed and intimate snapshot of a social-cultural world that may be seemingly constant, but is nonetheless, also a world that is simultaneously changing and reacting to the context of its times. For this reason, then, the history of the martial art of Aikido, from what we have seen, does not simply rest upon a highly linear understanding of its technical genealogies, but is also very much the result of an ongoing conjunction of various political, historical and social-cultural trajectories, which have propelled it towards its present character in being an arguably distinct Japanese martial way.

At its most fundamental and technical level, Aikido may be described as a discrete set of physical self-defence techniques that mainly employ the use of throwing and joint-locking skills, along with the practice of two major forms of weapons – the wooden sword and the short staff – commonly referred to among *Aikidoka* respectively as the *bokken* and the *jo*. But if apprehended from a broader historical point of view, we must understand that Aikido's martial repertoire did not simply emerge as a discrete

martial art on its own. Its martial techniques have been greatly largely derived from a range of sources that stem from classical *jujutsu*¹, spear and sword arts that are often collectively referred to as *kouryu*², which we now know, is broadly translated as the ‘old ways’ or the ‘old styles’. Of all these influences, one of Aikido’s central and most influential technical sources is the classical *jujutsu* style known as *Daito-ryu Aiki-Jujutsu* (Omiya 1998, Pranin 1986, 1993), although other sources of Aikido’s techniques are also claimed. In light of this, the partial influences of other *kouryu* such as *Tenjin Shinyo-ryu Jujutsu*, *Goto-ha Yagyū Shinkage-ryu Jujutsu*, *Kashima Shinto-ryu*, *Hozoin-ryu Soujutsu*, and even other contemporary *budo* such as *Kodokan Judo*³ are also acknowledged, as outlined in the previous chapter, during our brief recollection of the founder of Aikido’s biography. Therefore, from this vantage point, the technical origins of Aikido may also be considered to be deeply rooted in the martial cultures of Japan that began several hundreds of years ago, far earlier than the Meiji era.

On the other hand, it is also important to realize that Aikido, despite existing as an arguably discrete system of martial practice currently being instructed by various discrete Aikido organizations and sub-styles, is also very much an invention and product of events particularly ranging from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. From this vantage point, it should also be asserted that Aikido is *both* a martial and cultural phenomenon

¹ The term *jujutsu*, can be translated to literally mean ‘soft arts’ although it can be rather misleading in practice and application, but briefly, it refers to martial techniques that are used to gain the upper hand in any physical conflict by blending one’s movements together with the movements of an assailant’s.

² *Kouryu* are seldom heard of or practised outside of Japan, although the Clearwater *Aikikai* was one of those places where it managed to take root, with the practice of *Katori Shinto Ryu*. They were the precursors of the *budo*, and much more emphasis was placed upon the practicability of martial techniques, rather than the view of the martial arts as being a source for spiritual and moral enlightenment.

³ It would be useful to note that the creation of Judo predated Aikido slightly and that the founders of each style were aware of each other’s presence. While both martial arts stemmed from similar backgrounds, each nonetheless possessed distinctive characteristics from each other in practice. A clear distinction is the fact that Judo is a competitive art, while Aikido is largely not.

that has successfully incorporated and re-interpreted the numerous aspects of various older martial systems that long pre-date its present form today, while framing, at the same time, such practices within an ideological framework. It is this ideological framework, with its explicit doctrine of harmony and peace, that has become one of its most defining and foundational characteristics in present times. Much of such a character, as we have seen so far, may be largely traced to the life and times of its founder, Morihei Ueshiba, whose own life spanned the specific period in question.

Hence, in this regard, Aikido's origins can be understood as both a historically recent political and ideological construction stemming predominantly from the early decades of the twentieth century, *or something far older* – if its origins are alternatively perceived to be descended from the various *kouryu* that have systematically existed in feudal Japan since the centuries that even pre-dated the rise of the Tokugawa Shogunate at the beginning of the seventeenth century. For even today, specifically in the case of the *Aikikai* that was founded by Morihei Ueshiba, the patriarchal and nepotic practice of the Japanese *iemoto*⁴ system still lies strongly embedded as part of its organizational social structure. Nevertheless, whether one views Aikido as a historically recent or dated phenomenon, such a distinction is perhaps, seen to be no more than an arbitrary or conceptual one, especially if one were to accept the view that warfare and techniques of human combat has largely been an endemic and regular feature of all human societies, ancient or contemporary. What, therefore, perhaps remains arguably unchanged is that

⁴ The term itself means 'founder' and the social system that is derived from it often places emphasis on hierarchy and generational familial inheritance. The leadership of the *Aikikai* still operates within such a system, where leadership is handed down from father to son. The current leader, or the *Doshu*, of the *Aikikai* is Moriteru Ueshiba, the grandson of Morihei Ueshiba.

the overall body of martial techniques present in Aikido practice fundamentally still possesses the potential to harm or kill.

On the other hand, the practice of Aikido today is considered to be more than just the incorporation of martial skills, a fact that we had noted earlier with regards to its professed ideology of peace and harmony, which is often embodied by the very practitioners who practice the art. Hence, such practitioners, or *Aikidoka*, often exist to strive towards an ideal-typical martial persona, one that I would label as a *peaceful warrior* - a martial artist who abhors violence even though he or she still, at the same time, seeks to perfect their martial skills. Exhorted by some of its most senior and dedicated practitioners as the ultimate aim of Aikido, this is where consistent and committed practice, through exertion, sweat and even physical suffering in the *dojo* is translated into the cultivation of an enlightened being that embodies the values of social harmony, gentleness and non-violence. The proclaimed moral universe and ethos that the committed *Aikidoka* inhabits and propagates, with its emphasis on introspection and enlightened personal knowledge, therefore, views martial arts practice *as a means to an end*, rather than an end in itself, which is supposedly far more admirable than the objective of mere martial proficiency. Correspondingly, the ideal *Aikidoka* seeks to downplay, and even reject entirely, the need for interpersonal competition or the domination and abuse of others socially, physically or psychologically.

But when and how does a martial art become an advocate for peace? How such a view, then, has been maintained in the world of Aikido, where expertise in martial

adeptness is correlated with non-violence, is argued to have only been possible via a gradual *civilizing process* (i.e. Elias 1982), often as a result of an elective affinity of historical events, together with attempts at cultural re-invention and the impact of political and religious ideologies. This is what I would refer to as the *aestheticization of violence*, an ongoing process where the militant, religious and political antecedents of Aikido's past, alongside a number of its martial contemporaries like Judo, Kendo and Karate, have gradually detached themselves from the way it is viewed today. Aikido's own trajectory towards being recognized as a *budo*, therefore, shares a number of similarities with the way how other martial arts had become reinvented in the twentieth century, but its path also possesses a number of unique characteristics. Quite paradoxically, then, it is proposed that the *substantive* roots of Aikido's historical underpinnings are still largely retained in its practice today, but it is never performed or practiced in explicit recognition of such a past. Such characteristics and origins have been, then, gradually euphemized and re-invented, over a relatively short period of less than a hundred years, into its contemporary self-conscious portrayal of a new politically correct consciousness via the image of a martial way or a *budo*, and if we were to take a more careful and critical view of Aikido's origins, it will appear that much of what is commonly recalled about it is a recollection that is, more than often, highly *selective*.

The 'Omoto Ethic' and the Spirit of Aikido

The foundations of Aikido's eventual evolution into a 'Way of Harmony' were already set in motion in the events that preceded the beginning of the twentieth century, for its links to earlier historical trends cannot be overemphasized. Facing the official

collapse of a feudal system embodied and implemented by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1868 after the Meiji Restoration, a political and social system that had existed for over two hundred years, much of what once stood to be vital and influential, such as the martial arts, gradually eroded. This ultimately set in motion what would eventually lead to the already growing irrelevance of a warrior class, the *samurai*, who were often associated, in varying degrees, within the social spaces between the political and bureaucratic powers of the Shogunate and the rest of the general populace (Beasley 2000, p. 210-229 and Ikegami 1995, p. 47-75).

After a period of over two hundred and fifty years of relative social and political stability, the *samurai* had progressively found that their central roles as specialists of war and combat increasingly diminished and irrelevant, and their martial sub-culture eventually gave rise to a more introspective and disciplined-based approach to their practice of martial arts. This was the time when an alleged connection between the martial arts, Zen Buddhism and philosophy was gradually constructed (Guttmann and Thompson 2001, p. 61-64). But with the events following the Meiji Restoration, their own invested bodily and symbolic capital in the martial arts soon became rapidly democratized and obsolete with the increasing influx of modern firearms and the abolition of a feudal system, which had earlier largely shielded them from change. Directly bearing the brunt of an increasingly mechanized, industrialized and technologically-dominated world, the warrior ethos of face-to-face close quarter combat with blade, spear and armour, in the name of *honour* or one's clan, became less practical and meaningful on modernizing battlefields, where technological prowess often

superseded the need for martial skill and physical prowess. Henceforth, Japan's efforts at modernization and military imperialism, particularly since the second half of the nineteenth century, virtually placed an entire formerly privileged social class under the threat of extinction, along with the practice of the martial arts, and with it, the so-called old ways of social organization and cultural hierarchy.

Nonetheless, during the last decades of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, in the wake of Japan's growing imperialist ambitions, what later occurred were a number of attempts to revive or preserve the practice of the martial arts, thus leading to the invention and popularization of Japanese *budo*, as opposed to them being merely labelled as *bujutsu*, which literally meant 'martial arts', an older term that by then lacked the symbolic and moral import of the former (Maliszewski 2005, p. 5732). With the support of martial and conservative elites, this became a part of the then Japanese government's imperialist agenda that sought to re-imagine the practice of martial arts as a vehicle for embodying and reifying a sense of *somatic nationalism*, an ideological and practical strategy which was often employed by those in power to reconstruct so-called '*samurai* of the twentieth century' (Winston 1993, p. 194-230). With the creation of organizations such as the *Dai Nippon Butokukai* in 1895, just after Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War, this further contributed to the politicizing and co-optation of indigenous sports and the martial arts in the education system as an incorporative medium for cultural propaganda (Guttman and Thompson 2001, p. 96-116).

It was during these years that the young Morihei Ueshiba grew up, as we have seen in the previous section recounting Aikido's history, and his own eventual personal affiliation with the martial arts also mirrored the political and social climate of the times, where the martial arts were gradually becoming viewed more as corporeal techniques for the inculcation of nationalist dogmas rather than existing as the privileged knowledge of a warrior class. At the same time, we should recall that Morihei Ueshiba was not merely a close practitioner of *Daito-ryu Aiki Jujutsu* and a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War; he was also a pioneering individual who led the creation of a new community in Hokkaido, and also a person with strong religious inclinations, culminating in his eventual association with Onisaburo Deguchi of the *Omoto-kyo*. Hence, during the years prior to the Second World War, it was already noted that Morihei often straddled the dual worlds and identities of a deeply world-rejecting religious self and that of a personal inclination to political leadership, social activism and nationalistic militarism.

Furthermore, as we carefully observe Morihei's life trajectory, it appears that, as the years went on, he was increasingly drawn to closely associating with significant members of the military and the police, in spite of his initial loyalty to Deguchi's *Omoto-kyo*. A possible interpretation of such a gradual shift may be grounded in what may be a growing personal dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the *Omoto-kyo* movement. For one of the most significant incidents it seems, appear to have been the doomed and almost fatal mission together with Onisaburo Deguchi to create what they had hoped would be a utopian society in Manchuria in 1924. Not to mention that fact that the Japanese government at that time had also become increasingly intolerant of Deguchi's

growing popularity and prominence, which in all likelihood possibly threatened Morihei's own subsequent nationalist ties and interests with other individuals such as Admiral Isamu Takeshita of the Imperial Japanese Navy and Kenji Tomita, chief of the Osaka Prefectural Police. Thus, I am suggesting, that in the years prior to the Second World War, Morihei decided to relocate his personal loyalties and priorities on the side of his nationalist and militant associates, as opposed to siding with the religious and idealistic interests of Onisaburo Deguchi, for it was where he realized that it was with the former that his own personal stake and future as an increasingly prominent martial artist lay. Contrary to often inflated depictions of his alleged spiritually enlightened character, the Morihei Ueshiba *in the years before the height of the Second World War* was, therefore, likely an individual who also supported, if not openly but at least tacitly, Japan's imperialist campaigns into Asia and the Pacific.

This, however, would not remain the case for too long. Subsequently, I am also proposing that Morihei's initial support of Japan's role in the war once more gradually changed over time. It is also interesting to note that the name Aikido was officially used sometime around 1942, a time when the tide of the war began to significantly turn against the Japanese⁵. With the loss of several students and mounting financial difficulties, it appears that Morihei once more had a change of heart, as he retired to Iwama during the midst of the war, disillusioned with war and his own martial ambitions. Following Japan's eventual defeat and humiliation at the end of the Second World War and the

⁵ While an in-depth discussion of the major events surrounding the Pacific War during the Second World War is beyond the scope of this thesis, a useful example to note is that it was in 1942 when the Americans scored a decisive victory over the Japanese at the Battle of Midway, permanently weakening Japan's naval capabilities. This battle, among others, was crucial in turning the tide of the war.

corresponding occupation by the United States, the practice of Kendo and Judo were initially banned by American forces due to their conspicuous links to Japan's former militarism. Subsequently, at this juncture, it was here that the ideological rhetoric of *budo*, which was once employed as a tool for nationalist mystification and propaganda was compelled to distance itself from its former militaristic character, thus focusing and remaking itself as a cultural practice that, perhaps purposely, *misrecognized* its violent origins while highlighting its alleged *spiritual qualities*. The ban, once more, heightened a sense of their potential vulnerability and impending extinction, thus setting in motion a new direction for change and re-invention of the Japanese martial arts.

As a result, by the time the ban was lifted in 1950, several Japanese martial arts, Aikido included, had already adopted highly self-conscious approaches at re-interpreting and downplaying the potential physical violence and previous militarism that inherently laid in the study of a martial art, by alternatively seeking to associate themselves with the more artistic, moralistic, philosophical and even therapeutic interpretations of their practice. The martial arts, in this regard then, began a process of *aestheticization* in the face of a need to *re-valuate* their relevance to a post-war and defeated Japan, and to remove themselves from now unpopular associations to a former sense of Japanese imperialist ultranationalism and militarism. Hence, Morihei Ueshiba, and most likely together with the support of personalities such as Kisshomaru, his son; and Koichi Tohei, the Chief Instructor at the time, took upon the task of constructing and popularizing a *neo-warrior ethos* that also sought to self-consciously recognize the futility of violence for violence's sake, infusing their martial practice with a veneer of philosophical

sophistication and morality. They, therefore, likely saw the need to *make sense* of a martial legacy whose survival now depended upon the relevance of its practice to a post-war generation.

I, for this reason, argue that Morihei and his recently founded Aikido, with its politically-correct rejection of violence, once more drew inspiration from his own earlier associations with the *Omoto-kyo*, which by that time was also no longer the same influential religious movement it had been more than fifteen years earlier. Hence, it is suggested that while Morihei's own proclivities to religion continued to affect his personal interpretation of his martial practice, he, nonetheless, could not longer explicitly return under the wings of the *Omoto-kyo*, as he had once abandoned it before. It is also interesting to note that after the war, Morihei hardly, if ever, publicly acknowledged his former connections with Onisaburo Deguchi, a fact that most contemporary neophytes to Aikido will also seldom hear of unless they specifically seek out such information. Hence, what we may refer to as the 'Spirit of Aikido', or its body of values and beliefs that should guide an ideal *Aikidoka's* conduct, may be understood as direct result and continuation of Morihei Ueshiba's own *strategically shifting allegiance* from his own militarism to a return to his *Omoto-kyo* associations. What is interesting though is that much of the roots of the ideological language of peace and harmony in the practice of Aikido in contemporary times has all but been completely forgotten and has largely and gradually been *secularized, alienated* and *disenfranchised* from its links to *Omoto-kyo* beliefs and their accompanying historical and political complexities.

In order to remain consistent to its necessary and continued portrayal as an ethical and morally superior pugilistic sub-culture, it appears that the popular history of Aikido, from recent decades of the twentieth century till today, has become a highly *selective* one, largely as a result of a corresponding selectiveness in terms of the social memory of its leadership and its most influential members, who have each played a crucial part in constructing Aikido's current martial aura to the general public and any new recruits to its 'Way'. Analogical in several ways to the noted historical relationship between the Protestant ethic and the 'spirit of capitalism' as argued by Max Weber (2005) nearly a hundred years ago, an interesting parallel can be seen in Aikido's eventual rise as a martial way and the gradual onset of a partial *forgetting* and *marginalization* of its former political, militant and religious complicities during its formative years, despite retaining the *substantive* nature of its ideological and religious roots.

Being a 'peaceful warrior' at the Clearwater Aikikai

The community at the Clearwater *Aikikai* where I conducted my study is thus seen as an important culturally and historically embodied example and continuation of the above-mentioned 'civilizing process' in the practice of Aikido, of which the ideological and social aims of *Omoto-kyo* are retained in spirit but no longer in form. My own personal engagement in the practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, then, along with its others members, may be understood as being actively participating in the ongoing collusion and reification of an even larger historical, social-cultural, religious and philosophically *evolving* narrative within the Japanese martial arts since the nineteenth century. To participate with my own body in the practice of Aikido then, was firstly, to

become a collusive part of an ongoing historical, pedagogical and ideological narrative where martial techniques are gradually objectified, rationalized, intellectualized, idealized and eventually *aestheticized*. Secondly, the community's memory of Aikido's history, or the lack of memory in some ways, also reveals a number of discursive continuities and discontinuities, which are seen to be best expressed and reinforced via *the medium of the bodies of each Aikidoka*. This is where each member now becomes an effective embodiment and corporeal archive of a past that is constantly being re-interpreted and re-imagined through the body in light of its contextual constraints. In other words, what was being practiced in the *dojo* not only served to reify what an *Aikidoka's* understanding of what Aikido is today, but it also sought to misplace and discipline, at the same time, what Aikido *had been* or *could have become*.

At the end of the day, it was also through the body that such an *evolving* narrative sought to *domesticate*, *pacify* and *gentrify* the practice of Aikido's martial techniques, training each of us into *docile bodies* that embodied and perpetuated a sense of auto-surveillance on the Self (Foucault 1979, p. 135-169, Markula and Pringle 2006, p. 72-91), which, via its propounded beliefs of harmony, non-violence and reconciliation, largely presented itself as a *non-religious* set of self-empowering values for many of the members at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Correspondingly, Aikido practice also occasionally served as a site for self-transformation and the construction of self-fulfilling personal narratives that were, nevertheless, *not unlike* the personal testimonies given by converts to a new religion in the process of biographical reconstruction. I partly attribute this to Aikido's largely forgotten and partial influences from the *Omoto-kyo* religion. Some

remarks made by Craig and Nina, appear to echo such sentiments about the practical relevance of Aikido training in the various the aspects of their lives.

Interviewer: Do you then see Aikido as something almost like a religion? What do you think?

Craig: Well, I'm not religious. I don't believe in God, you know? I tend to focus more on...I like philosophy...focusing on knowledge...I really like the ideas behind...eh Aikido...yeah...and a lot of the things I believe in are...shown through Aikido...I focus on it and I express it...they way we achieve it...I would say that that's how it expresses how I feel...

Interviewer: So after half a year... do you think Aikido has in anyway changed your life? Has it affected your life, has it affected who you are in anyway? ... If it has, of course...

Craig: Well I've gained a lot more friends...as in you know...quite a variety of people...since I come fairly often...like three times a week...I've been exposed to people such as T and A...and B...who I got to know a lot...(chuckle)...he's odd...(chuckle)...yeah...I think I've learned a lot...Personally I think I've evolved with it...because of my experience I have had with other people...and also ah...physically...my flexibility has increased two-fold...I used to be as limber as a stick...right now it's a lot more easier and eh...yeah I'm toughening up a bit...although there's bruises on my shoulder from practicing mae ukemi (forward rolls)...but yeah...I haven't met a single person I don't like there...

Nina: it's the one thing that's helped me with my Shiatsu...very much...because we have to use our centre, our hara? Same like in Aikido...to push out from stomach, our centre...you have to have a very quiet mind...thinking love thoughts...It's shown me how to uh...how to not argue...I used to be very argumentative all the time...and now, instead of reacting...I'm listening more and then responding...that's the same type of thing as Aikido...it's like someone's attacking you...then ok...take in what they're doing...and then accept them...and then throw it away...

Further examples were noted in the responses of Kouichi Nakajima, Terry Roussel and Jonathan Wagner. Apart from drawing on Aikido practice to rediscover and reaffirm his own sense of 'Japanese-ness', Kouichi Nakajima had begun to view his regular participation as a means for the self-improvement of his character in his dealings with what he described as 'difficult people', thus imbuing his Aikido practice with an existential sense of purpose beyond his original reasons for communal belonging. On the other hand, Terry, who had been a former Winter Olympian, was looking for something that no longer required him to simply compete, and Aikido's philosophy of practice suited his needs. This was shared by Jonathan, who also appeared to see beyond Aikido's inherent symbolic and cultural capital that complemented his personal fascination for

'Japanese things'. The practice of Aikido, then, was not merely a practice of the physical techniques of self-defence, but also seen to embody and enable the subscription to a *para-religious* or philosophical ethos that is believed to facilitate a greater sense of self-awareness and positive spirituality (as some have described it). In addition, it also appeared to serve as an alternative sub-habitus of respite for the body, far removed from a former highly demanding corporeal lifestyle that subjected the body to even greater risks.

Interviewer: What do you do when you practice with un-cooperative or difficult partners?

Kouichi: (It's the) same thing...you...not watching your opponent but yourself...practising with yourself...sometimes you feel this person doesn't feel connected...doesn't move right...I don't feel that's... other person's fault...I feel that's my copy...I'm standing there...that's my bad habit...like I'm practising with myself...I have to...work hard to get it...I think same as boxing...boxing is not fighting with enemy...but fighting himself...enemy inside of you...

Terry: But I just didn't eh...I got to the point where...I really...I liked Aikido because it was eh...it was graceful and it had lot of the same elements as skating...where you had a lot of techniques that you had to figure out?...you know and there's some speed and there's some dynamics...and eh...I like the spiritual side of it...and eh...there's no competitions...I'm tired of it, I don't want it...I've been there done that...umm I'm still very very competitive, not against people per se...you know...that uh...you know that stuff eh 'true victory is self victory?'...that's umm...that's very important. So I started doing that because...there wasn't a lot of heavy contact too so...less chance of injury...umm I'm interested in doing something for a very very long time? And I feel that...Aikido...is something that I can do for a very very long time and not get hurt. There's going to be a lot of minor injuries but there's not a lot of jumping and kicking and yelling...

Interviewer: What is it about the philosophy that draws you?

Jonathan: I think a lot of it is its lack of competition...I mean there still is like when you get some people who want to get their rank faster than someone else...but it's not so much that it's like 'I'm gonna beat the 'tard' out of the other person...whereas in a lot of the karate dojo that I visited had a lot of that in it...they were there to train to beat up the other person...and I've done a lot of sports when I was younger...I didn't feel like doing some of them anymore...I played pretty much everything...hockey, baseball, soccer, track and field...

Interviewer: Are you tired of competition?

Jonathan: ...a little bit...I don't mind if it's something that I enjoy doing...not that I do it to win anymore...I do it 'cause I like it and not to beat the other person anymore...So I mean that goes back to the non-competitive part of it... (But) if you show up in a karate dojo and the other guy hears that you can't talk properly, you probably gonna be made fun of, you're probably gonna get hit more often...but then again that's all dependent on who the sensei is, what kind of atmosphere here sets off in the dojo...which is...why any martial art could be considered religious...if they set up that proper atmosphere, then it's probably about improving yourself as opposed to (just) getting better at something...

Similar reasons were again noted in the responses of the ethnically mixed Mitch Urahara and Craig Jackson, a high school senior at the time of writing, who saw the practice of Aikido as a doorway to discovering an *inner spirituality* that was not viewed to be offensive or aggressive in any way but rather a source for self-reflection. In both their cases, therefore, the attraction of Aikido centred not so much upon it fulfilling a mere need for physical protection but rather upon the utility of it being a source of introspection. To these individuals, Aikido was also now a means towards a more transformative, transcendental and ethical objective. In other words, whether or not one's techniques were necessarily effective had become less important compared to what they were purported to symbolize, project and to engender. Aikido thus serves as a medium for potential transformation through *cultural praxis*⁶ via the body, as part of an ongoing social movement that alleges a collective moral and cultural history. The deeper philosophical import of Aikido, from this perspective, therefore, may be better understood as the result of an increasing humility and an awareness of one's existential limitations, moral imperfections and impending mortality. This is because although one *learns* with the body, one also realizes that one is constrained by the limits of the body, and will also eventually *die* with the body.

Interviewer: So the question is...why Aikido...?

Craig: Well...I looked up...I decided I was gonna do a martial art...so I did this bunch of research into eh...Karate...Judo...and Aikido...I asked around sometimes...I thought...I'd really like to be...you know something that wasn't like offensive (but still) kind of martial...that could help me focus on spirituality...over...over the physical aspects...it still covered everything I was looking for you know?...exercise...and I really liked the philosophy...

Interviewer: What is it about the philosophy that made it interesting?

⁶ By cultural praxis I am referring to 'aesthetic extension of what has been called the cognitive praxis of social movements' (Ewing 1999, p. 118). Hence, by constantly practicing Aikido, one also constantly practices the values that it teaches, incorporating and expressing it with one's body.

Craig: Well I really liked...the way that O-Sensei talked about harmony...you're not fighting against someone...but you're using their ki or their own force against them...it's not such an offensive style like Karate and Tae Kwon Do...yeah I really like that...

Interviewer: Do you see it as some form of self-enlightenment?

Craig: I do actually...I feel that it's a way of exercise and self-defence and also...at many times...as we're on the mats...it's like a form of self-reflection...when you're starting off...it's really more of the technique and you're getting used to them...unlike Karate and Tae Kwon Do...where at first... you learn how to punch and kick, which can be effective most of the time...Aikido seems to be far more into the technique...so it take a lot more time to master...I'm sure eh...sensei can defend himself fairly well...

Mitch Urahara: ...I'm probably...calmer...umm...learning the limitations of the body...understanding the limitations of your mind as well...I mean there's lots of literature and talk about mind and body...it's an opportunity to learn something new everyday...it's an opportunity to try and perfect something that's unattainable...actual pure perfection does not exist...you know that...Aikido's like Golf...you can never achieve a perfect swing...it's impossible...there's always some flaw...something that your body and mind aren't in tune or something...and you practice and you practice...it's a defensive type of art...it's not fighting...it's a martial art but it's defensive in nature...at the end of the day...it sounds corny...but I think Aikido chooses you, you don't choose it...

Fascinatingly, the biographies and personalities of some of the most committed or more regular practitioners of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* occasionally paralleled, to some extent, the popularly dramatized hagiography of Morihei Ueshiba, in terms of their personal interests in spirituality, religion, humanitarianism and the need for self-transformation and transcendence beyond just the material interests of the world we live in. Likewise, Matsumoto *sensei* claims to be a devout evangelical Christian who first converted to evangelical Christianity the same year he began his career as an Aikido *sensei* in Calgary so many years ago. On a more secular level, George Summers was also initially drawn to Aikido partly because it seemed to coincide with his personal prescription to humanitarianism values and ideals.

Interviewer: So what is it about Aikido that has changed you?

Mastumoto sensei: Oh...probably...I learned more about life's difficulties...when I was young...in a lower rank...I think I was right...but as I go more level higher up...I see that eh...I not right...so that means I gotta be humble...and then I can see my future...If once you think you already know...(that) you are correct...then you don't grow much...that's my philosophy...so that's why it's lesson to all people...

Interviewer: You mentioned to me that you are an evangelical Christian?

Matsumoto sensei: umm...1981...

Interviewer: That was the year that you first came to Canada?

Matsumoto sensei: Yeah a year later...Back to Japan...I went to immigration centre in Japan...not like the immigration centre in Canada...we go...we stay one month...(or) two...learning English...training...so then... about thirty people in my class...and I was chief of that group...I met X...He was a pastor...He was supposed to come to Calgary to replace an older pastor...that was the first time I met him...He was Japanese...only Japanese people go to that immigration centre...and then...he didn't push me to become a Christian at that time...when I came to Calgary at the airport...there was this pastor and his whole community waiting for me...so I then stayed at his house...with nothing to do cause I need to get a job...so he helped me...and then...so he took me to the church so then I started...He was from Guam...

Interviewer: What about the philosophy? There's talk about that it's not just a martial art and that it's also something that you can apply as a principle for life?

George: Maybe part of the attraction for me... is that it lines up with my beliefs about not hurting people...being kind and helping people...maybe that's why it's such a natural fit for the Summers family...it lines up with my life's philosophy as well...about not hurting people and being helpful...and certainly sensei umm...lives that example...

The above accounts and reasons provided by some of the members of Clearwater may then be understood as 'vocabularies of motive'⁷ (Mills 1940, p. 904-913) that appear to be employed in affirming a pugilistic *and* moral ethos that often encapsulates and motivates its 'true believers' over time. Hence, during my observations and participation, it was interesting to note how a number of *Aikidoka*, including *Matsumoto sensei* himself, tended to adopt a polemically negative view, or at best a patronizing tone, towards martial arts such as Karate or *Muay Thai*⁸, which he and others regard as allegedly 'hard' or 'violent' styles. These unsophisticated or 'brutal practices', it had been said, simply detracts from the 'true aim' of *budo*, where it is only after one understands the fragility of life would one learn to treasure it. Such arts, therefore, stand in contrast with the *Aikikai's* advocacy of non-violence, where fighting and competition is to be abhorred and avoided (Ueshiba 2002, p. 10-13). Accordingly, other martial arts were often viewed as 'morally

⁷ The term 'vocabularies of motive' was first sociologically employed by C.W. Mills to refer to particular ways of speaking and accounting for the reasons behind one's actions, often framed within the social contexts in which such narratives are constructed.

⁸ The Thai rendition of 'Thai Boxing'

and technically inferior' among several members of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, and any continued association with them were viewed to be an impediment to the learning of Aikido, which was often portrayed as a unique martial art that had no equal, suspending any kind of appeal to analogical reasoning. This is once more another paradoxical view, if taken from a more historically informed understanding of Aikido's origins, as one of the major technical influences of Aikido had been *Daito-Ryu Aiki-Jujutsu*, a *kouryu* that emphasizes the practice of attacking and destroying the bodily joints of one's enemy.

Nina: There is a great social aspect as well...people get together and...we get around in the mat when we practice...but after that we socialize...and then people...start getting people into the idea of volunteering...that's one of the big things that I am pushing...children's classes...teaching when sensei is not available or...organizing functions...like the painting that was done over the weekends...I mean people come and go...but those that make Aikido part of their life...it's a lifetime art for them...it's part of their lifestyle...I think they're unique...from other martial arts or styles...a lot of other martial arts...they are negative about how hard it is on their joints...how hard the instructors are...some of them walk around with sticks...and bash them anywhere on the body...some of the teachers charge too much for the classes...some of these teaches roll up in limousines and live in these huge houses... for the guys, lately, these last five years...a lot of guys are calling and they want to get more into the spiritual aspect of Aikido....we used to have ki classes and I'm trying to get sensei to bring 'em back...

Jerry Koh: Karate...to me...it's just like...you build yourself to be as tough as a sledgehammer and then you just go and smash things and when something comes in your way you stay there and just have to fight it you know...but eh...you do stay there but you redirect the energy...ok instead of blocking with brute force we just move a little bit and we redirect the force and in that case...the evil force or strong force suddenly misses you and in the process of missing you, you can do a technique to immobilize it...you can put it down and you can stop it from harming you...or harming itself...whereas Karate is not like that...in Karate if you smash me with your fist... I will have to block with my arm...and in so doing I can break your arm or I can break my own arm...we can both get broken arms...I tell you honestly, when I train Karate I find myself, my body...getting weaker and weaker in many ways...because as I get older, I cannot break bricks anymore I cannot smash boards without hurting myself and I cannot spar with people...and if I get kicked I take longer to heal...a younger person may take a week to heal but I may take two weeks...so if you go into Aikido, it's an art for you until you die...Karate is not (like this)...

Bodies of History: Remembrance and Forgetfulness

While it may be true the members of the Clearwater *Aikikai* were not necessarily always in agreement regarding their understanding of Aikido practice, some very similar continuities appear to exist. As we have seen so far in some of the interviews with several members of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, it appears then, that one of the main reasons for

Aikido's attraction has been, for the most part, its explicit appeal to a sense of philosophical elitism, or a moral high ground that also fails to see, or occasionally denies, the possibility of any practical tension in the continuing practice of potentially life-threatening martial techniques with an alleged appeal for non-violence. Nevertheless, it seems that the feudal and undeniably violent roots of Aikido's martial predecessors have been, then, largely re-framed and re-interpreted in light of historical and contemporary contingencies, where the practice of martial *form* itself has indeed superseded martial *function*, resulting in an overall *aestheticization of violence*. This is reflected by how the practice and meaning of its martial techniques have been transformed from *technologies of violence* into *aesthetic technologies of the Self* (Markula and Pringle 2006 137-153) that are now allegedly a corporeal expression of a greater spiritual and moral ethos, and a means for self-reflection and transformation.

At the same time, it is also apparent that the aestheticization of violence is only possible if they are transmitted, practiced and remembered as an ensemble of *techniques of the body* (Mauss 2005, p. 73-81), where one is expected conduct oneself, at least in the social environment of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, according to the dictates of a moral universe in manners of speech, deportment and dress that incorporate the values of self-discipline, tolerance, social harmony and mutual respect between the various members of the *dojo*. One major reason for this is that Aikido practice is now closely entwined with a set of beliefs or values that uniquely, or awkwardly, hovers between the two extremes of a sycophantic worship of a demi-god like founding figure of a globalized martial way that possesses its own internal doctrinal and para-religious cosmology (e.g. Stevens 1993,

1995b), and the humanitarian and socially progressive ideals of a secular civil religion. Similar developments in the ways in which Aikido practice has transcended its earlier martial function can also be seen within the content of a number of contemporary Aikido-related published works, which have evolved into a mini industry of popular philosophy or 'Aiki-therapy' narratives (e.g. Atkinson 1983, Strozzi-Heckler *et. al.* 1985) that advocate the application its martial philosophy in non-martial settings.

Tim Ferguson: I have an interest in the things that are spiritual and that includes religion...it's a much wider subject than religion...umm...I have a very good curiosity as to why things are...and I am very sceptical about explanations that are given to us by the media and the establishment...it's usually...my experience that they are not giving us the full version of what actually happened...so to go on with that...I have a great interest in religion and spiritual beliefs and the like...and I had always been looking for something that could combine those with the real world...meaning something tangible, a lot like a martial art...yeah...and I heard uh...Aikido being described as action- philosophy...whereas something like karate is seen as high on the action, but low on the philosophy (chuckles)... I mean the self-defence part of it... to be honest...just how many times are we likely to get in a fight?...quite unlikely...where it is useful...is in eh...you're having a meeting with people and it's an awkward subject that could lead to potential verbal conflict...I find that the Aikido techniques we learnt...are actually very useful for dealing with it...on a verbal level...extremely useful...

Jose Rezal: Honestly, had I not started martial arts training, I think I would have been a very different person now...Um I don't think I would have been as patient, I wouldn't have been able to have taken the risks I have in life, I wouldn't be as confident in doing the things that I do...I (probably) couldn't complete many things that I choose to do...you know... I was partying all the time...now...martial arts is an everyday thing...even when I am not training...umm it's so much a part of my personality...that all my friends that know me...understand that...my personality centres around Aikido...Aikido is so much a part of me on a daily basis...that uh...when I'm gone I'm still training... (pointing at his heart and his head) it's still here, it's still here...that's why I could be gone for a year...and I could come back and you would think that I had never left...people that see me come and go... and then all of a sudden hey...you know I'm still doing the breakfalls...there are people who go there three or four times a week and they never take the breakfalls that I did...it's such an individual thing and I apply it in every aspect of my life...whether it's business, how I deal with people, my relationships umm...though I find that I tend to be...I do not take excuses from anybody because of it...I...I expect people to take responsibility for their lives and the decisions they made... I look back...I've been training for fifteen years...I always come back...

The continued existence of Aikido and its corresponding ideology of non-violence, right into the present are, then, seen to be the product of a series of interconnecting historical events and consequences that are eventually selectively invested within the embodied and social memories of its practitioners. Such a view greatly parallels what Green (2003, p. 1-11) has suggested about the role of the martial

arts as being a form of embodied ‘folk history’, which enables an intricate connection between the past and present of a society, often serving as a practical and ritualized recollection of a community’s social memory, which I might add, also serves as *a medium of its forgetfulness*, for histories are not simply products of memory but are also about forgetting and re-invention. In other words, to practice a martial art like Aikido, one needs to constantly re-live the values and codes that it appears to stand for, but at the same time one may fail to recall the full weight of its historical burden in the name of a more convenient ideology of peace, which is based on a set of narratives that serve to valorize rather than to criticize. Hence, it could also be argued that the understanding of Aikido’s history or origins among my respondents was really based more upon on the *future* it promised, as opposed to the *past* that it actually stemmed from. Garth Weathers, a member who also had a significant ‘*Ninpo*’⁹ background before practicing Aikido intensively for almost every day for three months at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, also noted these values were one of the main reasons for his continued dedication.

Garth: And then you see a guy who’s been in an art like Aikido or Ninpo...a Japanese art where is there is no attitude...everybody is so generous with knowledge and information...and patience...patience is a big thing...you know in a lot of arts...the sensei will just beat the crap out of his uke to show that he knows what’s going and how it’s done but it’s not like that in Aikido...they smile at you and they make you smile while they show you the fine points...and by doing that it integrates that attitude...that positive attitude that you have to have...you have to retain everything that you learn in a positive way so that you can pass it on...cause you don’t advance in these arts unless you can teach somebody who doesn’t know as much as you... unless you can teach...somebody...a beginner... as much as you know...then you’ll never advance...I love that about Aikido....it teaches leadership skills...it starts as a hobby and it ends as a lifestyle...

I would, then, like to suggest that the body and its senses may not simply be seen as a vessel of memory as other scholars have already observed, but it is also potentially an *instrument of forgetting*. For although it is only through the body that Aikido’s origins

⁹ The alternative term for *ninjutsu*, which stands for the martial art practiced by *ninja*. *Ninpo* and *ninjutsu* broadly mean ‘Endurance Skills’.

are best remembered and manifested, it is also through the body that its former links to a millenarian religious sect, a history of martial violence, and the elements of ultranationalist imperialism (Goldsbury 1999) have often at least euphemized, or at worst denied, in most contemporary portrayals of Aikido, leading to a popular history of Aikido that is potentially simplified, ahistorical and unreflexive. At the same time, it follows that culture, history, ideology *and memory* are, therefore, not merely mental constructs that are reconstituted over time through thin air, but must also be inscribed and expressed through flesh, bone, blood and the senses (Connerton 1989). The body of the *Aikidoka* is, then ultimately, not only a lived body, but is also a situated, contextualized and politicized body that serves as a *discerning* sensual and corporeal repository of Aikido's collective past, often caught up with its sense of *illusio* and its corresponding complicity within the *game* of Aikido.

Being an *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, therefore, was in many ways, akin to being a *body of history*, a person who also sought to embody the ongoing and shifting narratives of Morihei Ueshiba's own biography in negotiating and syncretizing the dissonances between his own martial training and religious participation. The figure of Morihei Ueshiba was seldom viewed by many of the *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai* as a flawed although talented human, but rather, has often been apotheosized as a purposeful superhuman personality that created Aikido as a consequent of his perfection of character, and not as a result of historical or political contingency. In fact, one often found it hard at times to express doubts about Morihei Ueshiba's alleged invincibility in front of a number of true believers, or even Aikido's supposed martial effectiveness, as it

was often perceived to be a sensitive topic, felt through the short uncomfortable silences one occasionally received upon raising it in conversation. By investing a personal stake and interest to be part of the community at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, each one of its members were actively colluding and constantly re-constructing such a view of Aikido's past, regarding it as a *budo*, or martial way, where Morihei Ueshiba was seen as an exemplary model for striving towards such ideals.

Gabriel: ... the whole of my ten years in the navy, at all the places I went to, I never had to fight...I was naturally big, so people think twice before they come and bug me (chuckle)...I like the fact too that O-Sensei was an early uh...environmentalist... I know in Japanese society you can't really go against the emperor or what not and come up and say something...but he (O-Sensei) protested in his own way by not teaching the military and retreated to farming...When it comes to fighting, there's not a whole lot of glamour in fighting...

Interviewer: A lot of that is in Aikido's philosophy...not to start a fight... You think... that's important to you? Is that important to you, that way of thinking?

Gabriel: Yeah I think uh...maybe in a lot of ways, not all the times but sometimes I've had that way of thinking you know...when somebody tries to pick a fight?...nah I'm sorry I'm not gonna bother...then he'd dunno what to do with himself...

In other words, the construction of an Aikido habitus at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, entailed not just the incorporation of a single person's discrete experiences, but was also the gradual embodiment of a social and emotional memory of an entire pugilistic community. At the same time, such an embodied history has become increasingly viewed to possess a *teleological* character which, has more than often, been *highly selective* of what it seeks to recall of its past. This was similar to what Victor Turner has described as a 'performative genre' that re-enacts the social drama of a past in 'flow', where action and awareness are unified (Turner 1984, p. 19-41) and where practices of the body hold centrestage in the recollection of history. At the same time, it is also a past that is constantly being relived, remade and negotiated with a broader history of Japan and Aikido's origins if one views Aikido practice as constantly embodying an 'image of anti-

temporality' (Turner 1985, p. 227-246), where the past and present are no longer necessarily distinct. Hence, Aikido's current popularity and its continuing spread throughout the rest of the world still inevitably relies on the human body for being the central repository and platform for Aikido's history and techniques. It is, therefore, an embodied recollection that contains technical, political, philosophical and religious pasts that are also always *never perfectly recalled*. For the past is always something that is recalled in the light of the present, and where history is often the result of a *selective inscription* upon active bodies and minds, which act as the fleshly and sensual archives of both Aikido's 'true' history and origins.

Consequently, quite similar to the supposed conditions that led to the 'Spirit of Capitalism' as coined by Max Weber, the 'Spirit of Aikido' no longer appears to give *active* credence to the historical elements that first laid the complex foundations of its alleged uniqueness as a martial way. Nonetheless, such a world is being constantly re-constructed, re-imagined and even negotiated by all of its members in the practice of Aikido, where the past is continuously re-made and re-lived in the present. The practice of Aikido in the twentieth century and beyond could, then, appear to be a form of corporeal and *Protestant-ized* reformation of Morihei Ueshiba's own involvement with the *Omoto-kyo* religion. Perhaps some may even seek to refer to this as the reinvention of history or tradition (i.e. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), but such reinvention certainly possesses very real consequences for its practitioners, for it is not merely a history that is solely confined to the personal memories and experiences of various *Aikidoka*, but is also a history that resonates among the numerous interpretations, practices, beliefs and

experiences of past *Aikidoka* across the expanse of time. All the same, perhaps neophytes or even some senior practitioners in Aikido's fold in present times might be surprised to learn that this particular *budo*, which had been so engaging and attractive in providing an allegedly secular but philosophical approach to life, was largely borne from the combined impact of a now relatively obscure religious 'cult'¹⁰, had largely drawn its technical influences from a classical martial style that sought victory over others as the ultimate goal, and had also willingly flirted with certain ultranationalist elements of an imperialist war machine.

Interviewer: So sensei...how did you get started in Aikido?

Matsumoto sensei: Well first of all... (back then) I was never sure what Aikido was...and it's not like punching and kicking...my mother...she doesn't like the idea of me punching...because my brother...he was a professional boxer...every time he comes home...he gets the blue-blacks on his face...I took Judo in high school for three years...I was exposed to many martial arts...After I took Aikido...I took Shorinji Kempo¹¹ for one year, just eh...just enough for the black belt...well everybody gets a black belt in a year...so...I didn't take a test...but they recognized my level...but that time I also done Aikido already for one, two year...and that (Shorinji Kempo) affected my Aikido...I disappointed one Shorinji Kempo instructor...but I didn't like his attitude...

Interviewer: What is it about Aikido that you like?

Matsumoto sensei: You know eh...that who is stronger and who is weaker? (I) Still enjoy (training)...and then (because) training doesn't show...who is the winner and who is the loser...and that is the nice things about Aikido...I never had anyone upset in my dojo since I started...all my students...even if I got an injury from my sensei...I never get upset at him...That's the way training is...I wasn't really mad...

¹⁰ I would prefer to place the term 'cult' in quotation marks as I wish to recognize that the use of such a term can be extremely politicized and loaded. The mainstream definition of the term is often controversial and possesses a highly negative connotation that often simplifies the issues surrounding religious deviance.

¹¹ *Shorinji Kempo*, as mentioned in Chapter Two, is a Japanese martial art that claims to have originated from China's Shaolin Temple. In fact, the name *Shorinji Kempo* is a direct Japanese rendition of 'Shaolin Temple Fist Skills'

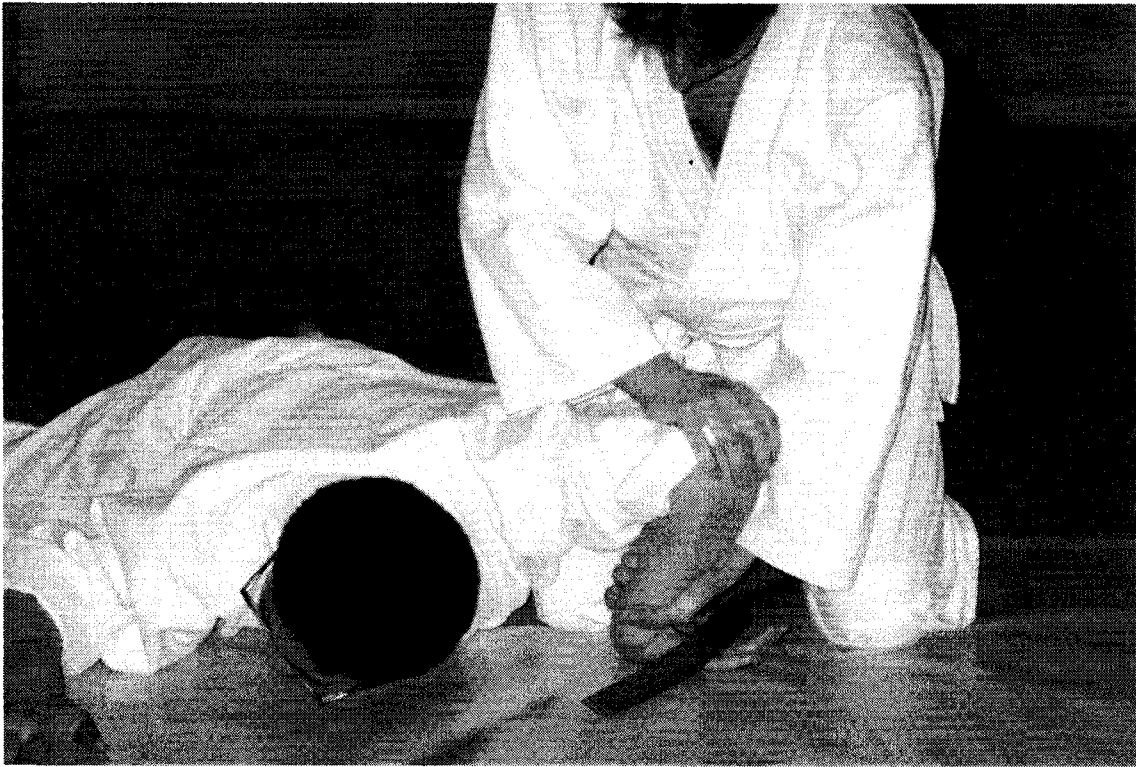


Plate 12. Practice of *Gokyo*, a wrist lock also used for disarming an attacker

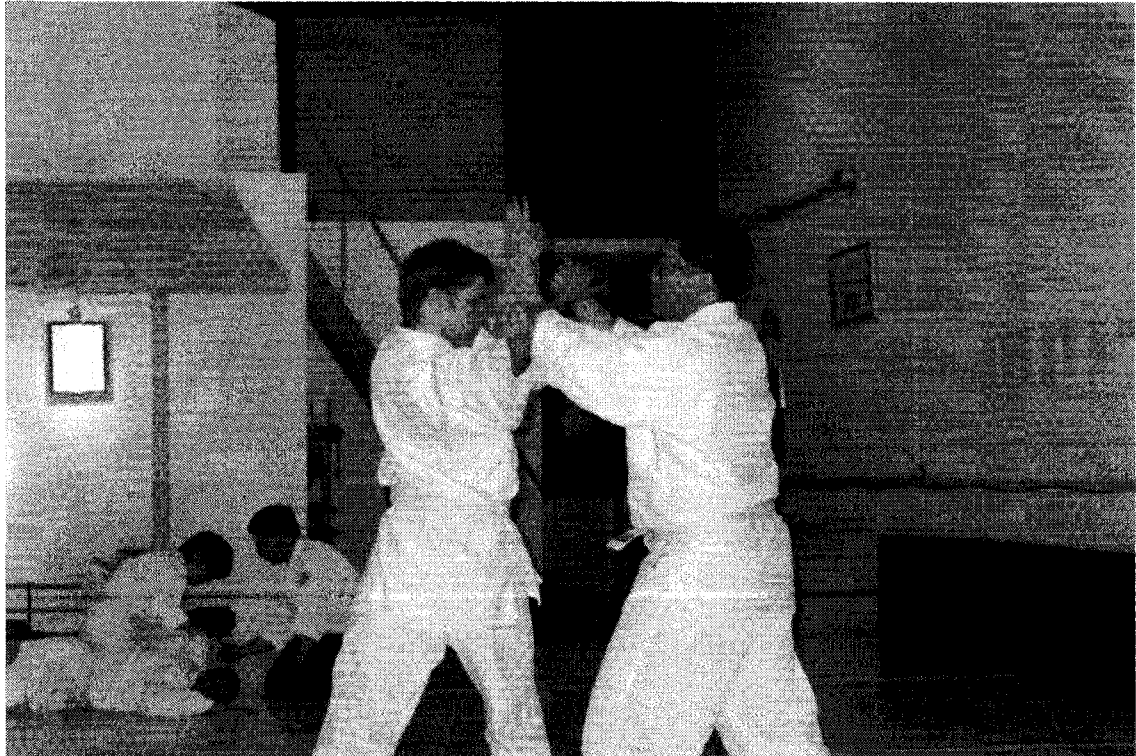


Plate 13. Learning to disarm an attacker with a knife



Plate 14. Learning to escape a hold from the back

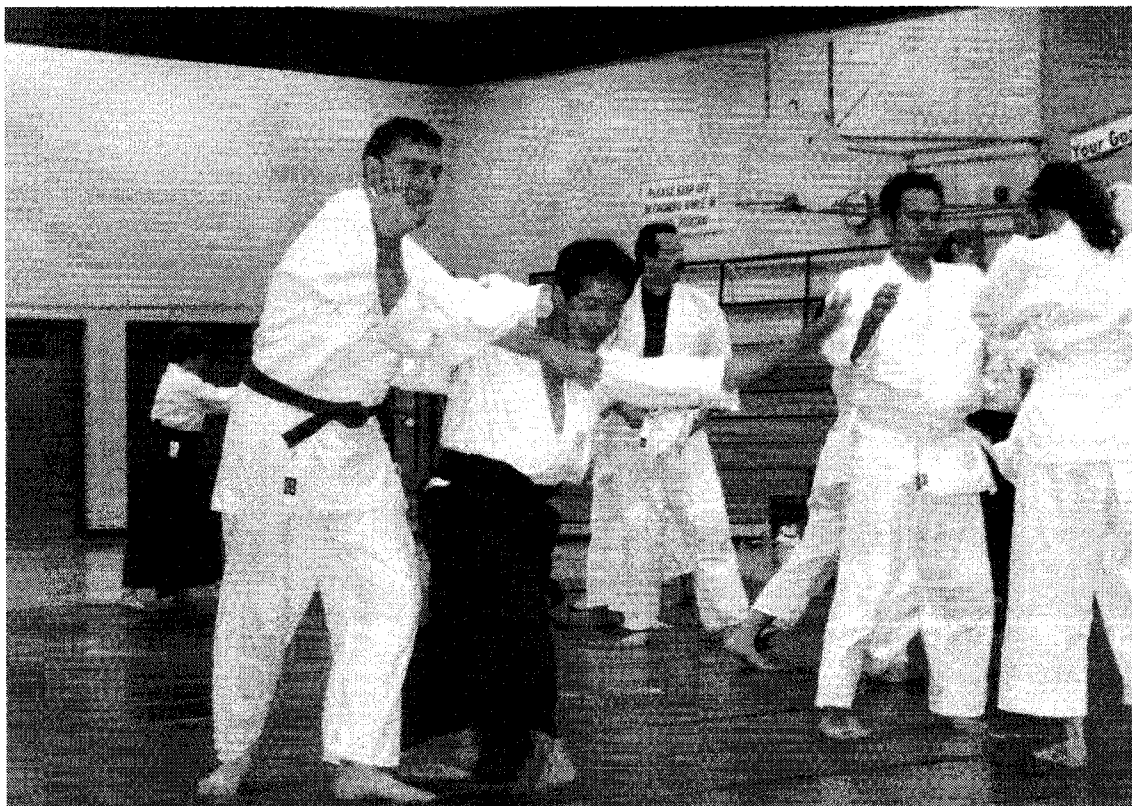


Plate 15. Two senior practitioners practising a throw during a training camp

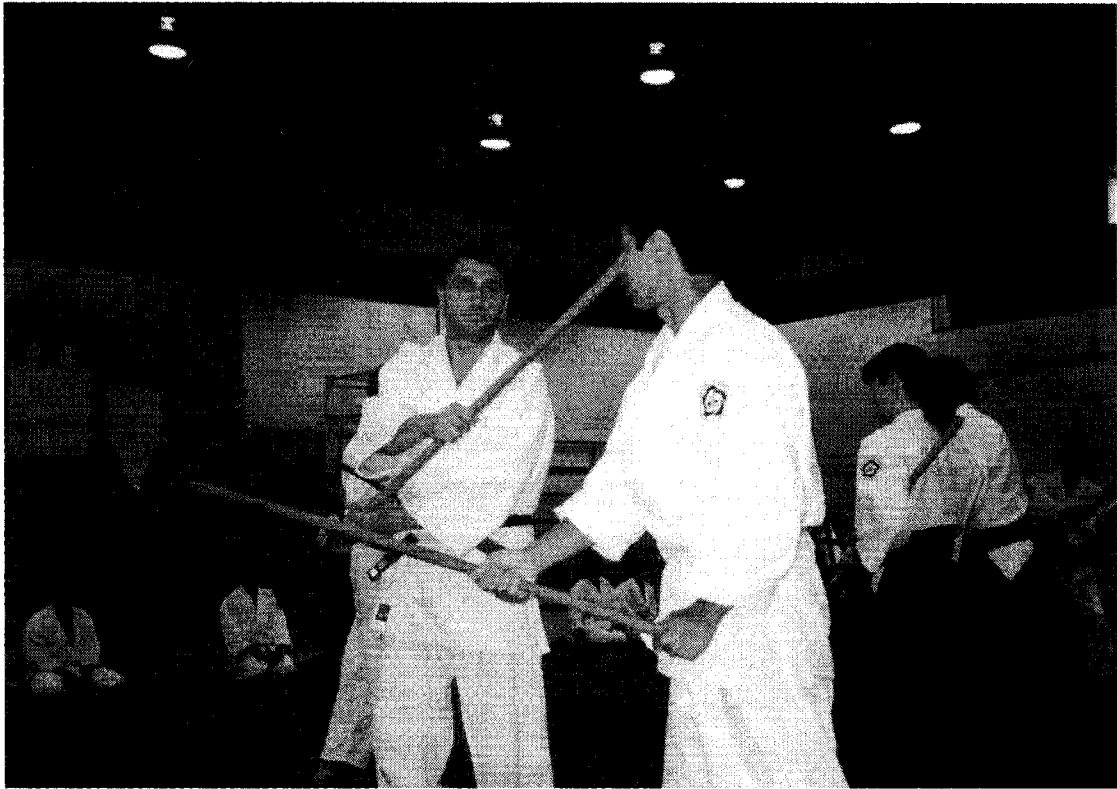


Plate 16. Practice with the *jo*



Plate 17. Outdoors training in the Rockies

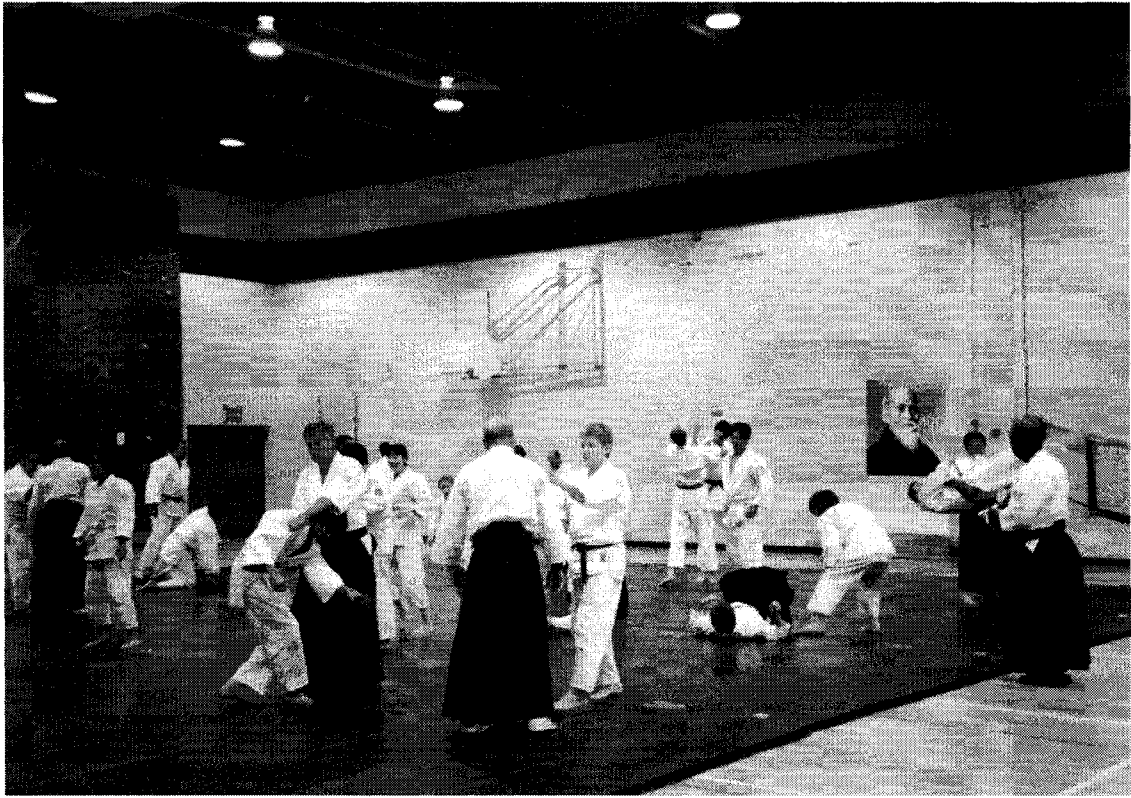


Plate 18. An indoors seminar at a training camp



Plate 19. Going with the flow - using an attacker's momentum against him

CHAPTER SIX
Bodies of Power:
Corporeal Mythologies and the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s Field of Power

Two paths, one direction

This chapter seeks to examine the embodied and pugilistic universe of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* in two major areas. Both lines of analysis, however, rest upon a similar theme of how Aikido plays a crucial mediating role in the construction of *bodies of power* among its members. I should, however, firstly clarify that my rendering of this term is distinct from Jean Comaroff's¹ (1983) similar usage in an earlier work, as I draw greater theoretical inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, with a far deeper emphasis on the phenomenological and practical aspects of the corporeal and sensual domain. This is where the body is not merely a passive medium which society acts upon or exists simply as a representation of social collectivity, but is also one that plays an active and highly performative role in the construction of one's habitus in any social-cultural setting. Consequently, the present-day practice of Aikido is, then, seen to be a vital contributor to what I term as *corporeal mythologies*, which are defined as *social-cultural discourses of the body that seek to enhance the corporeal capacities of one's body, by paradoxically seeking to forget the corporeality of one's body in the process*. This often results in the commonly propagated belief in many schools of Aikido, including the Clearwater *Aikikai*, which claims that physical size, raw strength and power are never important or essential factors in the execution of sound or effective Aikido technique. The practice of Aikido is, therefore, a martial art that appears to possess a somewhat arcane character, where one's corporeal limitations have a tendency to become

¹ Jean Comaroff (1983) *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*, Chicago: Chicago University Press

increasingly irrelevant as one rises in ability and rank within its pugilistic hierarchy. A high-ranking Aikido practitioner is often, then, perceived as a *powerful* corporeal vessel of martial ability. At the same time, such a perception is also invariably linked to a belief among many, that constant training in Aikido will also have an undeniably positive effect on one's health and everyday general well-being. It was also suggested that certain high-ranking *Aikidoka* may even possess the power to heal through the use of one's *ki*, an intangible and invisible force that is often acknowledged to exist in the bodies of practitioners and non-practitioners alike.

Secondly, the other analytical focus of this chapter hopes to carefully re-examine the dynamics surrounding the *power relationships* between its members and its leadership. In other words, it will be argued that the world of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, an attempted institutionalized manifestation of Morihei Ueshiba's 'Way of Harmony' within a seemingly congenial and communitarian social environment, is also seldom beyond the existence of the practices of *symbolic violence*, often linked with practices of social domination, exploitation and collusion. Such a line of inquiry is seen to be imperative in order to move beyond the *doxa* of an idealized and caricaturized social-cultural universe and if we are to better understand the structures of domination and control that frequently exist alongside politically correct portrayals and naively relativistic perceptions of an Aikido community.

Too often, mere description and collusive accounts of the martial arts on an ethnographic level by some writers has a tendency to paint an incomplete and simplistic

collage of the relational and political aspects among its members in such pugilistic communities. Such tendencies have also indirectly or unreflexively sought to valorize and stereotype the complex realities of the power relations that exist within them. Subsequently, a lot of such alternate perspectives have gone misrecognized and often (sub)consciously self-censored from scholarly reflection, partly as result of an ethnographer's complicity. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, although I had endeavored to uphold the well-meaning but *increasingly clichéd* anthropological maxim of cultural relativism, the conduct of my fieldwork was also at times wrought with several observations and experiences that were, nonetheless, potentially controversial as one sought to uncover and exist within the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s 'field of power', a term first derived by Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. 1990, 1992).

At this point, however, let us firstly return to the topic of corporeal mythologies. By tacitly rejecting the limits and boundaries of one's physical abilities, corporeal mythologies are constructed by an often unquestioning belief in the possibilities of alleged superhuman or supernatural abilities, which are ultimately seen as *realistically* attainable through continued practice and discipline of the body. Correspondingly, hard and rigorous physical training of the corporeal body is often viewed, particularly in some schools, to be secondary to Aikido practice, or even frowned upon for being unnecessary and seemingly missing the point. A corporeal mythology, therefore, is a belief and practice of the body that also ironically forgets the body, and temporarily suspends any knowledge of the body as a thing of flesh, blood, bones and nerves, but is transformed into a vessel or medium that is abstracted and removed from the confines of biological,

physical and physiological laws. Thus, in doing so, the use of the body is believed to transcend and further expand upon the limits of its organic corporeality.

As a result, a central and highly characteristic feature of Aikido's practical ideology for many of its committed members or its 'true believers', so to speak, has been the practice and belief in the notion of *ki*, or *qi* (in Mandarin Chinese), that can be derived from and cultivated within one's body, especially in the martial arts (Holt 2001, p. 260-262, Murphy 451-453, Ueshiba 1997, p. 19-31, Ueshiba 2005, p. 15-16). While the concept of *ki* may be understood or practiced differently among varying schools of thought in Aikido and individual instructors, an identifiable and arguably common trait about the notion of *ki* among many committed *Aikidoka* is the fact that it is a discrete and invisible but embodied essence that can be harnessed and even developed during one's regular practice of Aikido, while at the same time enhancing one's quality of life and martial abilities. For this reason, an advanced Aikido practitioner with strong *ki* is akin to a kind of martial-like superhuman guided by a set of moral ethics who, simultaneously, may possess the potential for incredible feats of power and healing, often defying our organic limits of flesh, blood, nerves and bones or even challenging the laws of physics².

Numerous examples of such supercorporeal abilities of *ki* have often been seen in the demonstrations of seemingly remarkable feats of strength and balance that transcend the limitations of, or the need for, one's corporeal and physical abilities. These include the ability to effortlessly throw another person without the apparent use of any strength

² Such claims are, of course, not particularly unique to Aikido, as similar beliefs have been found within the Chinese martial arts, particularly the so-called 'internal martial arts', which consist of the martial trinity of *Taiji Quan*, *Bagua Zhang* and *Xingyi Quan*, of which *Taiji Quan* has become the most popular internationally since the 20th century.

with minimal physical contact, or at times - even totally without the need for any physical contact. Other claims employing similar spectacles include the ability for one to remain physically immovable at one spot, in spite of the efforts of several others trying to dislodge the person, or even the ability to easily pin a person down on the ground with one finger as the recipient of such a feat looks on helplessly. In the pugilistic universe of Aikido, such feats are subsequently attributed by many of its practitioners to *ki*, as a result of one's long-term training and a highly evolved level of martial skill.

'Ki' at the Clearwater Aikikai

Placed within a more specific context, the experiences from my fieldwork at the Clearwater *Aikikai* were also highly reflective of such approaches and beliefs. For one of the main concepts and features within the practice of Aikido had been the notion of *ki*, a term which refers to the alleged existence of an ethereal and invisible energy that is supposed to naturally reside and emanate from all living creatures. This is the same *ki* that is found in the term Aikido, where 'Aiki' literally alludes to the harmonization (*ai*) of the varying flows of *ki*. It would also be useful to note that the idea of *ki* has been a core concept in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine, a body of knowledge that predates the development and practice of Western medicine. In both Japanese and Chinese definitions of the term, *ki*, is believed to be the source of life, energy and power in all endeavours of our everyday life. At the same time, due to its often abstract and mystical quality, *ki* and its application of it is believed to transcend mere physical power, where the distinction between the two of them may even parallel conceptions of the sacred and the profane. It is also seen to be in contrast to the sort of power that is

commonly derived from the use a physical body's muscles in the performance of various movements or feats of strength.

The notion of *ki* among many *Aikidoka* may, then, be apprehended and practiced along a broad continuum. On one hand, it may basically be understood as a potentially destructive or therapeutic force that is latent but allegedly accessible and employable by all human beings. At the other end, it could also be used as a *metaphorical* and loosely defined expression for a very high level of martial skill that is only made possible as a result of one possessing extraordinarily enhanced physical sensitivity, awareness and neuro-muscular abilities. From my observations during the course of my fieldwork, however, it appeared that the understanding of *ki* at the Clearwater *Aikikai* among many of my respondents was certainly more akin to the former approach. Correspondingly, this formed a crucial component of the prevalence of corporeal mythologies that appear to stress a highly literal and equally mystical understanding of the notion of *ki*. Hence, in this case, to seriously speak of someone having great *ki* in the Aikido world would imply that this individual has a capacity to generate and harness a magical or supernatural form of power that may even defy the laws of physics and the limits of physiology.

Additionally, at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, it was believed that the idea of *ki* was something that possessed a close and intimate correlation to the level of one's Aikido development. The higher one's personal development in the practice and understanding of Aikido, the greater was one's ability in using or 'extending' *ki*, depicting it as an undeniable but invisible force that allegedly flowed continuously from the centre of one's

body and out through one's fingertips. This implied that although *ki* could not be seen, it could be felt. The view of the body in such respects may be analogous to a natural and self-generating source of energy, or a self-powering battery, and closely correlated to the personality and health of a person. Such a view, of course, varies, often dependent upon the amount of emphasis placed among different styles, schools, and even the specific idiosyncrasies of the *sensei* of each *dojo*. Admittedly, while there are some schools where *ki* is seldom mentioned, there are, conversely, many other schools where *ki* remains highly central to Aikido practice, such as Matsumoto *sensei's* *dojo*. Subsequently, the practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, as taught by Matsumoto *sensei*, encouraged the view that a person who is highly proficient in Aikido is also presumed to often possess the potential to call upon a vast amount of *ki* to perform incredible feats.

The origins of such corporeal mythologies may also be traced to the way in which the notion of *ki* has been portrayed and imagined in the context of Aikido practice. One of the prime sources of such belief in the transcendental possibilities of using *ki* can undoubtedly be traced to martial myths that have circulated among *Aikidoka* surrounding allegedly incredible displays of *ki* power performed by both Morihei Ueshiba and some of his senior students. A number of pre-war and post-war filmed recordings of Morihei Ueshiba often show him in *seiza*³, a traditional Japanese sitting posture, where several of his students appear to be pushing, with all their might, against his body and head from various angles and directions. In spite of all this, Morihei appears to be calm and unperturbed and is able to, on the other hand, with the slight flick of his head, disrupt the

³ To be more specific, in *seiza* one is bending his or her knees, while sitting with both feet crossed behind, where the weight of your body is resting on your knees and ankles.

balance of all his students, causing them to fall in a heap. Narratives of Morihei's other exploits of also recounted how he managed to pin, with just one finger, a former *sumo* wrestler during a demonstration of his formidable martial abilities during his time in Manchuria at the start of the Second World War. All this was supposed to be *ki* in action, which also played a strong role in the eventual apotheosization of Morihei Ueshiba.

Interviewer: Why the Clearwater Aikikai?

Gabriel: Because the uh...I had read the biography of O-sensei before coming into Aikido. I like the idea that he had weapons training...nice diversification...more interesting though...the way I look at it, I get more bang for my dollar...I get to learn three separate martial arts...the jo, bokken and then Aikido...and uh Matsumoto sensei's biography was interesting too....the fact that he was uh...the fact that he was involved in uh...shiatsu...and eastern medicine...he sounded like he was a well rounded individual...

Along the same lines, a further example of the more commonly cited folklorish narratives that seemingly recall Morihei Ueshiba's alleged superhuman abilities as a result of his martial training, relate an incident when he once asked several students to attack him all at once during a class. The instant he was pounced upon by his students, he apparently disappeared and appeared at another end of the *dojo*, at the top of a flight of steps, giving the impression that he had teleported (Stevens 1984, p. 11). Once more, such mythological recollections certainly played an influential role in the hagiographical construction of Morihei's god-like status among many *Aikidoka*, which has served as a powerful unifying symbol for the international Aikido community⁴. As a result, and as previously described in Chapter Three, a picture of Morihei is often an essential and preferred feature that serves to 'sanctify' the spaces used for practice, whether it is in within a traditional *dojo*, a warehouse, a gym or a field. Usually placed at the front facing

⁴ An interesting parallel may also be noted between the Aikido community and Order of the Jedi Knights in the Star Wars science fiction movies. There have been some claims, although unverified, that the original inspiration for the Jedi Knights was partly inspired by Aikido and its Founder, apart from it obvious references to Japanese samurai culture. For those of us who are familiar with or can still recall the Star Wars movies and its storyline, just simply replace the figure of Morihei Ueshiba with the character Yoda and the notion of *ki* with the 'The Force'.

the class, each *sensei* would lead the class in paying respects to Morihei's picture, performing a kneeling bow prior to the beginning and end of each class.

Such examples of '*ki* in action' are not simply confined to narratives surrounding Morihei Ueshiba. Another well-known example of the corporal mythologies that exist in the world of Aikido is the demonstration of what has often been referred to as the 'unbendable hand'. This was made popular by one of Morihei Ueshiba's most senior disciples, Koichi Tohei⁵. In this demonstration, the Aikido practitioner stretches out his or her arm and usually invites a physically very strong and powerful person, for obvious demonstrative purposes, to bend the outstretched arm at the elbows. More than often, this would be an impossible task as it will be claimed that the *Aikidoka* has very 'strong *ki*' emanating from the centre, or *tanden*, of his or her body, right out through the fingertips, thus creating an unbreakable line of energy that cannot be bent. Additionally, a third and more contemporary example of such feats of *ki* have also been seen in what are called 'no touch' throws, performed by a well-known high-ranking instructor known as Nobuhiko Watanabe from the *Aikikai* World Headquarters in Tokyo. In several demonstrations performed by him, in his later years, he is seen *stopping* his demonstration partners *before* they even reach him. He then continues to throw them with just a flick of either his head or his hand. All the while, such throws are conducted with no physical contact at all.

Although the practice of 'no touch' throws had not been explicitly practiced at the Clearwater *Aikikai* by the time of my departure from Calgary, the practice of Aikido as

⁵ Koichi Tohei eventually left the *Aikikai* a few years after the death of Morihei, although he was holding on the appointment of Chief Instructor at the time. He subsequently founded the *Ki no Kenkyukai*, or literally the *Ki* Research Society, which also teaches Aikido but places greater emphasis, compared to the *Aikikai*, on the development *ki*.

directed by Matsumoto *sensei* appears to similarly draw inspiration from such feats of *ki*, for the development of one's *ki* was certainly a fundamental aspect in one's progress and understanding of our Aikido development. It is, therefore, no complete surprise to recall that Matsumoto *sensei* is also a professional Japanese *shiatsu* practitioner, a fact that suggests an obvious correlation between the content of his medical and martial practice. The professional and martial occupations of Matsumoto *sensei* were, thus, closely entwined, as a large portion of *shiatsu* knowledge is also believed to be drawn from the same cosmological worldview that incorporates the concept of *ki*. These two worlds have always been highly interpenetrable as Aikido classes by him were often laced with an unquestioned belief in the use of *ki* that had evidently been influenced by *shiatsu*⁶. Hence, as a result of Matsumoto *sensei*'s influences and his authoritative status as a *shiatsu* professional, many members have subsequently incorporated such views of *ki* within their own Aikido practice. This has often led to a highly literal and tacit belief in the existence of *ki* in the *dojo*, which further legitimized Matsumoto *sensei*'s authority.

Hidden Ki, Crouching Ethnography

On one occasion during a seminar in the summer of 2004, Matsumoto *sensei* conducted a lesson that sought to explain how *ki* flowed in men's and women's bodies, which supposedly differed from each other greatly. According to him, *ki* flowed in a vertical circular arc around and through a person's body, travelling from a point at the lower back of one's body to another point at the front of body just a couple of centimetres below the navel, known as the *tanden*. The difference between men and women lay in the

⁶ Although they were initially discontinued for a while just before I began my fieldwork in Calgary, half-hour *ki* classes have actually been re-introduced at the Clearwater *Aikikai* since November 2005.

direction in which *ki* flowed. It was claimed that *ki* on men's bodies were believed to flow from back to front, while it flowed in the opposite direction on women's bodies. Matsumoto *sensei*, then, sought to demonstrate this fact by showing how one could weaken or strengthen the *ki* flow of a person. To do so, another person only had to move his or her open palm across another's body along the path of *ki*, in the opposite direction of how a person's normal direction of *ki* flows. Hence, if one wanted to weaken the *ki* of a male person, one would move one's palm from that person's back to the *tanden* at the front. Correspondingly, if one were to move one's hand in the normal direction of the *ki* flow on a person's body, we would actually strengthen it. Providing a demonstration, Matsumoto *sensei* performed a '*ki* disruption' exercise on Dewey McKinnon, a lanky six-foot tall teenager who had been training regularly with the Clearwater *Aikikai* for nearly two years, and subsequently asked another student to attempt to push Dewey back by pushing against his *tanden*. Upon being pushed, Dewey, whose normal *ki* flow had seemingly been disrupted, was easily pushed backwards. Following this, Matsumoto *sensei* performed the '*ki* strengthening' technique on Dewey, and got the same person to try push again. This time, however, it came across as being much harder to do.

Everyone who attended the seminar was then asked to perform this exercise with various partners in the *dojo* and I decided to put this to the test for myself. I was paired with a young Japanese lady of slight build who first attempted the '*disruption of ki*' technique on me, and then proceeded to try pushing me back. I, then, told myself to consciously resist as I wanted to see for myself if my *ki* could really be disrupted. Unfortunately, my partner was unable to budge me. So after several failed attempts, my

partner finally sought the advice of Matsumoto *sensei*, who was quick to point out that she was performing the ‘disruption technique’ *incorrectly* as the position of her open palm was angled the ‘wrong way’. Matsumoto *sensei*, then, demonstrated the right way to do so and asked her to try pushing me backwards again. Once more, I decided to resist with all my strength and she still could not move me. In spite of this, Matsumoto *sensei* observed that my stance was ‘increasingly weakening’. This was because, I must confess now, that after several unsuccessful attempts by my determined partner to push me back, I finally relented a little and *self-consciously* allowed her to slightly push me back. As time wore on, a part of me was in a dilemma as to whether or not I should continue to resist, thus openly challenging what was expected, or to relent at the cost of my own integrity. I eventually chose the latter. For it was becoming increasingly difficult to be different, especially when my training partner was also appearing to be increasingly frustrated and embarrassed at being unable to do what was expected, particularly when Matsumoto *sensei* was giving her personal instruction on the spot.

An interesting fact that evening was that, in spite of the general lack of success I achieved with my partner in this *ki*-related exercise, several other members that evening claimed that the exercise had worked for them to a significant extent. On the other hand, there were also other instances where the validity of such an exercise was challenged, similar to my own experience. Even so, there were no attempts at open disagreement with what was being taught or a direct challenge to such claims made by Matsumoto *sensei*. A few carefully disguised wry smiles were observed, but this was mixed in with a number of enthusiastic nods in agreement to what was being shown and taught. Such lessons

were often incorporated as part of the *ki* beliefs of several members as it proved to be fairly influential on other aspects of their everyday lives.

Such faith in *ki* was best exemplified by the claims of Thomas Bradley, the senior high school teacher in his 50s, who was holding the rank of 1st *kyu*, a rank just preceding the *shodan*, or first degree black belt. During a summer training camp held that same year in the town of Canmore in the Canadian Rockies, we shared our accommodation at a hostel, and over dinner, Thomas confided in me that such *ki* exercises seemed to be effective. His personal verification and testimony regarding this occurred on one occasion when he was accompanying his daughter while she participated in a soccer match. As she had complained to him at half-time about feeling exhausted after a rigorous first-half, Thomas proceeded to use the 'ki strengthening' technique on this daughter. Following the use of his *ki* treatment, Thomas claimed quite confidently that his daughter appeared to be able to run much faster, and was no longer exhausted, allegedly as a result of her 'ki boost'. Nonetheless, although Thomas was not alone in his beliefs, the notion of *ki* also came across as still being rather ambiguous and vague among others, where one senses an underlying tension between one's need to believe in it and the need to actually find irrefutable proof of its existence. Jonathan Wagner's remarks below appear to hint to this.

Interviewer: Won't you just say that it's a martial art then?

Jonathan: Uhh...usually you'll say that it's like a martial art...that it's a traditional Japanese martial art, but it's not quite the answer that people are looking...they can get that at another dojo and studio...that it's a martial art...usually I'll try to explain that there's a predominance in teaching ki...

Interviewer: Do you believe in ki? Have you felt ki? What's ki?

Jonathan: Umm...usually I find...when you feel ki...is when you're not paying attention to it...you're not trying to focus...you're not trying to be really heavy with it...and when you're trying to blend with things it becomes really natural...I mean usually if you're trying to get a basic definition for something, you can say that it's like the 'Force' in Star Wars...like that universal power that surrounds everything and it's

there...and usually people get the idea because that's so ingrained in Western culture...there's no example in Western culture that explains it...

At the same time, it is also important to note just how the notion of *ki* has often been re-imagined as possessing a more rational and scientific basis in reality. On a separate occasion during a class on a Wednesday evening, Matsumoto *sensei* introduced the concept of what he called 'Alpha' and 'Beta' waves to understand *ki*. These were terms, although not explicitly specified, that appear to have been drawn or borrowed from the practice of *electro-encephalography*, the neurophysiologic measurement of brain wave activity. Fusing this with his belief in *ki*, Matsumoto *sensei* explained that every human person possessed and emanated either 'Alpha' or 'Beta' waves, which have been 'proven' to exist through scientific experiments. The difference between these two kinds of waves, as he explained, was that the former is more positive, calm and harmonious while the latter is negative as it often reflected an unstable emotional state that comprised of emotions like anger, aggression and hatred. Aikido practice, therefore, was the kind of martial art (or martial way) that sought to develop the 'Alpha' waves in a person, and thus sought to eradicate the 'Beta' waves that are believed to make one's immediate environment and other persons around uncomfortable and fearful. Intuitively then, the *ki* that one was supposed to cultivate in the practice of Aikido was closely similar to, if not, equated to 'Alpha' waves, and that 'bad *ki*' on the other hand, were 'Beta' waves.

Matsumoto *sensei*, then, proceeded to narrate to us an old Japanese folk parable, where the Japanese Shogun Iemitsu Tokugawa (1604-1651) once supposedly received a tiger as a gift. For his own entertainment, Iemitsu decided to see whether a warrior or a monk was better at subduing such an animal. He then ordered Taji-no-kami Yagyu, a

master swordsman of the *Yagyū Shinkage-ryū*⁷, and Takuan Soho⁸, a Buddhist monk, to enter the cage one after another, in order to see who would be more capable. Upon first entering the cage with the tiger, Taji-no-kami's strong presence and aggressive warrior spirit kept the tiger at bay, and it gradually backed away in fear. When it was Takuan's turn, however, the opposite occurred. Instead of either backing away in fear or savagely attacking Takuan, the tiger became friendly and tame, and regarded Takuan with affection while it purred like a pet next to him. Nevertheless, while both Taji-no-kami and Takuan were safe from harm, it was asserted by Matsumoto *sensei* that although the methods that each used were highly distinct, Takuan's approach was rendered to be superior, as it did not encourage fear or anger, but instead, kindness and compassion.

Using the parable as an example to what he was alluding to, it was, therefore, further clarified by Matsumoto *sensei* that Taji-no-kami was the kind of martial artist that practiced a martial way which cultivated Beta waves, and although potentially effective and overpowering when emanated, often required a great amount of strength, energy and focus to generate, thus easily exhausting the practitioner, especially if he or she were weak or old. Alpha waves, on the other hand, were a reconciling and calming energy that made allies of one's potential enemies, thus avoiding unnecessary bloodshed and violence. It was also suggested that the *ki* which was emanating from Takuan in the parable was the ultimate aim of what Aikido practitioners should strive for, as this was true power. Hence, in this regard, Aikido can be understood to not only lead to the creation of bodies of *culture* and *history*, but also bodies of a kind of *power* that not only

⁷ The *Yagyū Shinkage Ryū* is also a *kouryū* that was one of two schools of swordsmanship that were officially adopted by the Tokugawa Shogunate as instructors to the Shogun and his heirs. The other school was *Ona-ha Itto Ryū*.

⁸ Takuan Soho (1573-1645) was a Buddhist priest and a major figure of the *Rinzai* Sect in Japan.

heals and reconciliates, but also protects at the same time. This was also one of the prime reasons that initially drew Garth, a young man in his early twenties to *Ninpo*, and subsequently, to Aikido.

Garth: In life...in general...absolutely every single dealing in life... if you can keep that... way of harmony, like go with the flow and staying in the moment...it works...it works with absolutely everything...you can apply it to anything...it doesn't matter if its academics, whether its sports, whether it's social interaction, absolutely anything like if you consistently keep that mindset...in general it's like being a good person, you know what I mean?... The way of harmony...is like...you could say it's the path of least resistance...

Interviewer: So it's definitely sounding a lot more than just self-defence...

Garth: Yeah...definitely a lot more than self-defence...when I first got into it...I grew up in a...I grew up in an abusive home...my dad was a real alcoholic and he was really the kind of guy that threw everybody around and it was a bad situation...I think that gave me the attitude where...they say a lot of people grow up to complete the cycle...and a lot of people who grow up in abusive homes will grow up to be an abusive person...but to me it had the opposite effect...complete opposite...what it did to me was that...it showed me what I could never ever do to somebody else...or allow it to happen to somebody...one day I was in grade seven...this guy comes up to me, he runs up behind me and jump kicks in the back and tries to shove my face into this dog crap...he doesn't even know me...I was really upset of about it and I couldn't do anything about it...and I would never be the guy that would get picked on...I would never be the small guy...I always had a thing for protecting people too you know...I never want to see a woman get hit or child get hit and not do something about it because I don't think that's right...In general...anybody who cannot defend themselves should have somebody too who can defend them...so that's how I came into the martial arts...

The Power to Heal

As discussed earlier, another benefit of Aikido practice, together with its corresponding emphasis on *ki* has been the belief that one's health improves. This is often attributed to the claim that as one's *ki* develops, there will be a corresponding therapeutic and recuperative effect on the body. In particular, such a view has been taken extremely seriously at a separate contemporary Aikido organization known as the *Ki No Kenkyukai*⁹, or more commonly known as the 'Ki Society'. Founded by Koichi Tohei, the *Ki Society* practices their version of Aikido known as *Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido*¹⁰, which emphasizes the centrality of *ki* for Aikido practice. The Society even conducts *ki* classes

⁹ A more direct translation would be the 'Society for Ki Research'. This was the first major organization that resulted from a major schism within the *Aikikai* just after the death of Morihei Ueshiba.

¹⁰ Literally meaning 'Aikido with Body and Mind unified'

that are entirely independent of any direct reference to Aikido. This has also resulted in the teaching of what has been referred to as *ki-atsu*¹¹, where a practitioner seeks to employ one's *ki* to heal or soothe physical ailments and injuries to the human body.

Terry: Ok I don't...I mean I'm not very religious about it...you know eh...religious as an obsessive word? But I do...I do take some things from there...uh...I'm actually very interested in the ki...the energy flow...

Interviewer: You believe in ki? Have you felt ki?

Terry: Yeah...I think it's one of those things that you have to eh...harness...but eh...I don't think I'm at a level yet where I can just make it happen...but it's there...you have to learn it and work at it...I think...like I said it's there and I think you just have to become aware of it...it's like uh meditation and stuff like that...I just don't... well if I'm ever going to get up that level...you don't know you can do something until you feel it...and you know you're feeling it.

In general, however, although the *Aikikai* as an Aikido organization places less explicit focus on such alleged healing uses of *ki*, there have always been various discrepancies in levels of interest, often dependant upon the individual preferences of each instructor. Matsumoto *sensei*, therefore, may be understood as one such *sensei* within the *Aikikai*'s pedagogical framework who has increasingly, over the years, actively introduced the concept of *ki* into his Aikido classes, apparently influenced by his own *shiatsu* background. His advocacy of certain claims regarding the way *ki* allegedly flows in male and females bodies, or even the need to consciously emanate 'Alpha' waves from one's body are clear examples of this. Correspondingly, it would also be important to recall that a significant number of members from the Clearwater *Aikikai* were also his *shiatsu* clients. To be a part of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, then, one also had to constantly negotiate with or even self-consciously incorporate such beliefs and practices if one was to continue her or his association with either Matsumoto *sensei* or maintain one's loyalty to the wider Aikido universe. Hence, even if a member may not be entirely

¹¹ The use of finger pressure point therapy akin to *shiatsu*, but with a much greater emphasis on the use of 'ki extension' into the human body in order to heal injuries, sicknesses or even minor disabilities.

convinced that *ki* actually exists, this is never openly voiced, for there has never been any open opposition to *ki* being taught, or any direct resistance to the belief that Aikido can ever play such a significant role in the care and maintenance of one's body. To some extent, a parallel can be drawn with the clients that Matsumoto *sensei* received at the clinic, where Sarah, who was Matsumoto *sensei*'s assistant, noted that the people who turned up at the clinic had to be largely open-minded about such alternative medical treatments.

Interviewer: How has working here changed your life?

Sarah: Well, I've been more aware of my body...and maybe thinking more about taking care of it better...and those around me...Ever since I started working here I have relatives with health issues coming up...sensei's knowledge has been helpful...

Interviewer: Do you see yourself taking up Aikido, since you've been working beside the dojo everyday?

Sarah: There's about a ten percent chance (laughs)...

Interviewer: What do you think are the kinds of people who come to the clinic?

Sarah: What kinds of people come? Open-minded people...You have to be someone with an open-mind to believe in acupuncture and shiatsu...umm... mostly women...the women who come here...they do make taking care of themselves a priority...their health...maybe how they dress sometimes too...their attitude...about life and themselves...women who put themselves first...but realize that they need to take care of themselves too...

The Corporeal Limits of Belief

Interestingly, if such beliefs are to be juxtaposed with a number of observations and facts, a certain sort of indirect dissonance may also be felt. This is because throughout the time spent during my fieldwork, I could not help but come across a number of incidents where Aikido practice has resulted in injuries among its members that may take a long time to heal (Pranin 1983). While it may be conceded that accidents do happen in spite of the best intentions by virtue of it being martial arts practice, it nonetheless begs the question, for one cannot deny the fact that if a person *had not*

undertaken Aikido practice, an alleged art of peace that seeming protects and strengthens the body, one would never had sustained such injuries. Such realities push the popular limits of the *doxic* belief of how Aikido, or a martial art, may be good for one's overall physical well-being after years of involvement. It is also quite undeniable that a number of joint and mobility problems have also been attributed to the extended practice of certain exercises such as *shikko* (knee-walking), *ukemi* (breakfalls) and *katame waza* (joint locking techniques). In a relatively obscure but interesting study conducted by Shishida¹² (1989) it was noted that the practice of Aikido in a number of *dojo* in Japan over the years has had its fair share of serious injuries, and even fatalities as a result of brain contusions and cases of internal hemorrhaging of the cranium, acute subdural hematoma and subarachnoid hemorrhage, all directly or indirectly resulting from practicing Aikido¹³. Although such sobering accounts have never, fortunately, been replicated at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, these accounts and my observations potentially raise a clear challenge to the alleged therapeutic effects of Aikido practice, with or without any direct claims of *ki* development.

Long-standing and permanent knee injuries that often become recurring injuries or even result in partial disability are numerous among some *Aikidoka* who have, over the years, put their bodies on the line for the 'Way of Harmony'. Knee problems appear to top the list where several members have always had difficulties in maintaining the traditional *seiza* sitting posture that is often expected of members throughout the conduct

¹² From an excerpt found in the Aikido Journal entitled 'Aikido and Injuries: Special Report, at <http://www.aikidojournal.com/article.php?articleID=8&highlight=aikido+injuries>, but originally published in *Nihon Budo Gakkai Gakujutsushi* (Scientific Journal of Japanese Martial Arts Studies Vol.21 No. 1).

¹³ In addition to such statistics, it might be informative to the reader that prior to embarking on fieldwork in Calgary, I had initially given up Aikido practice since 1999 in Singapore. A major part of the reason was because after six years of consistent practice, I was suffering from an unstable left knee that resulted in mobility problems.

of a class, such as in situations when the instructor is demonstrating a technique or addressing the class. The underlying and unspoken dictum here appears to be ‘No Pain, No Gain’, yet at times, one is hard-pressed to locate the gains after all the pain. This is particularly true of a few members at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where the practice of *seiza* was never something that came naturally to them, having lived in Calgary and not Japan, for most, if not, all their lives. Grimacing in pain while attempting to focus on what Matsumoto *sensei* was saying in class as one sat in *seiza* for several minutes was a common observation among several older or middle-aged members, and even in my own experience. Additionally, although some have claimed otherwise, the practice of *shikko*, where one literally moves on the mats with the use of one’s knees in place of feet, has also contributed to the number swollen and weakened knees among members, who find such postures and corporeal hexes highly challenging for bodies that are used to sitting on chairs and not on their knees. Nevertheless, *shikko* is still performed when members practice *suwari waza*, techniques which are initiated when one is sitting in *seiza*.

The practice of *ukemi*, or breakfalls, particularly the high ones, where one attempts to perform a partial or full somersault-like body flip to land on the mats, have also led to contusions, swollen feet and knees, and even bruised ribs if one were not to perform them carefully. Accidents are also not entirely unavoidable among senior practitioners. Although such high risk breakfalls are only expected to be performed by members who have gained a reasonable and substantial amount of skill and experience in taking breakfalls, the risk of a mistimed fall, during occasions when one’s body is literally ‘off-form’, can lead to potentially serious injuries. Coupled with the fact that

Aikido teaches techniques that primarily deal with throws and joint locks, the risk of such injuries occurring become even greater as *ukemi* is undeniably a central component of all Aikido practice. Moreover, there further remains the possibility that one's partner may make mistakes while throwing or locking one's partner, applying more than necessarily force or control that might seriously injure the bones or soft tissue of a person's arms at the wrists, elbows and shoulders, or even one's back, hips and neck. The following responses by John Hamilton appear to reflect these observations.

Interviewer: What do you think would prevent you from training again?

John: Ahhh...well possibly if I had a change in job...well if I had any old injury come back to haunt me... knee injuries...bicep injury...hip injuries...

Interviewer: Have you ever been hurt?

John: Yeah...over the past few years I tore my bicep... (showing his injury)...

Interviewer: What happened...?

John: Tenbi Nage¹⁴... at the elbow... and I tore my... I ripped the muscle that comes down to your abs...down to your hip...I ripped that off along with a chunk of the bone...

Interviewer: Who did that do you?

John: No. I did it...jumping over and then landing a little bit wrongly with my hips.

Interviewer: Don't these things make you think twice?

John: Ahhh...well the...the...you know that... my arm still bothers me...I may still have to get that operated on...but umm...my hip is alright...I was back in training after like...a week.

Interviewer: Looks like a lot of people actually carry a lot of old injuries...from training...

John: Yeah but that's (Aikido training) really helped my knees...I got a couple of prior knee injuries from motorcycle accidents...eh...squash...playing squash...they seem a lot better...I don't seem have any more problems with my lower back...really...not anymore...with all the conditioning.

For this reason, in spite of the language and rhetoric of harmony and peace that is expounded in Aikido, one should also recall that the original *aiki-jujutsu* techniques that

¹⁴ A technique where *nage* hyperextends *uke*'s elbow by stretching out the arm, forcing *uke* off balance in order to throw him or her. Alternatively, if performed with more vicious intent, the throw can be easily substituted for the deliberate snapping of a person's elbow (See Appendix 1b).

Morihei Ueshiba first learnt and adapted for Aikido were meant to kill or injure, and a thin line often exists between mere self-defence and outright aggression towards another human body with intent to maim while using such techniques. Another useful example at this stage would be a basic technique known as *shiho-nage* (See Appendix 1a), which literally means ‘four-directions throw’, implying that *nage*, or the thrower, has the option to throw *uke*, the person being thrown, in four possible directions or ways. Performed with the intent to just break a person’s balance and subsequently throw them without causing undue harm, the technique’s intent can change drastically with just a slight twist in the angle of the throw. In this second method, if the thrower seeks to throw his or her partner in a less perpendicular motion, the *intent* changes, as it is meant to effectively snap the wrist and elbow, and also possibly dislocate the hip in one single motion. In order to fall safely in such an instance, the person being thrown must perform a high *ukemi* and have fast reflexes to react in case the thrower is moving very quickly.

Interviewer: Has Aikido injured your body in anyway then?

Terry: Yeah....I hurt my shoulder...and uh...right now I'm not sure if it's Aikido related but I'm sure it's something to do with it...but I have uh...both my elbows are really sore? This one was dislocated right here...but uh I don't remember the time when it happened...I think it started like six to eight weeks before my second kyu test...and I just looked at my hours and I (thought) ok if I worked really hard...I'll be able to test and get my hours...so I did that and I think during that period I missed one or two classes that I probably could have...and I raised the level of intensity...it's good I learnt a lot and got ready for the test but at the same time this happened...it got to the point where at the end of class I could barely lift my arm...but by that time it had also come really close to testing? So I didn't want to...you know my theory was eh 'you can rest after the test'...so...the Thursday before the test I saw sensei and he helped put my elbow back in...he manipulated it and hit it with a mallet and put it back in...it felt great...but then I was walking the dog and the dog pulled it out again...so I just sucked it up and took the test...and it continued maybe till last month when I got it put back again...it's still sort of dislocated...

It is also interesting to note that during the course of my fieldwork at the Clearwater Aikikai, even Matsumoto *sensei* once suffered a fractured toe while demonstrating a technique during a class. This had been a due to an overenthusiastic Jonathan Wagner, who charged in a little too quickly and too strongly, when Matsumoto

sensei asked him to attack while attempting to demonstrate a technique against such an attack. Jonathan was apparently attacking the ‘wrong way’ and accidentally rammed his foot at an awkward angle against Matsumoto *sensei*’s right big toe, fracturing it in front of the entire class. Jonathan was also, unfortunately, guilty once more on two separate occasions. In the first instance, he accidentally (according to him) fractured Pedro’s wrist while performing a technique known as *kote gaeshi* (See Appendix 1c), which required *nage* to twist *uke*’s wrist over and downwards at an angle of approximately a hundred and eighty degrees, while using *uke*’s wrist as a pivoting point for a throw.

Jonathan’s final stage towards establishing a reputation for being a living anti-thesis against Aikido’s ideals towards bodily and spiritual harmony was also largely sealed when he reportedly gave a brand new member, a petite middle-aged woman who was a former employee of Matsumoto *sensei* at his clinic, a concussion during her very first lesson. Jonathan had been paired off with her and they began practicing *irimi-nage*, the ‘entering throw’ that was described right at the beginning of this thesis, and although I did not personally witness this, from all accounts, he apparently threw her while misjudging the amount of speed and impact he was exerting. The new member, Michelle, fell awkwardly flat on her back and also hit the back of her head on the mats. Unfortunately, she did not return for a second class at the *dojo*, and Jonathan’s next promotion was put on probation by an unhappy Matsumoto *sensei*, who charged Jonathan for being guilty of placing other students, and even his own reputation as an Aikido teacher and *shihan*, at risk.

The Power to Fight (or Not to Fight)

Aikido, however, in spite of its claims in being a ‘Way of Harmony’, has also never shirked away from the advocacy of itself being an efficient martial art. While the *Aikidoka* may see violence as a last resort to everything else, they have never ruled out the possibility of resorting to it. By placing physical aggression at the bottom of their priorities for training, Aikido techniques have often been portrayed to the public over the years as being defensive and non-violent in nature, where any application of them ultimately seek to ensure the least amount of harm to one’s attacker. Apart from one style of Aikido known as the *Tomiki Ryu* or *Shodokan* Aikido, most Aikido organizations openly eschew competition among its members with the reason that it encourages a ‘win-lose’ mentality and unnecessary aggressive behaviour. This was certainly also the same rationale applied at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where tournaments between members do not occur, and where the well-worn and rather ironic adage of ‘training to fight so that one need not fight’ is often propagated.

Consequently, the ethically didactic stature of such a discourse to martial training undoubtedly seeks to place Aikido upon the upper echelons of a politically-correct morality, where one supposedly trains the body, not explicitly for violence but as a means of self-improvement and discipline that seeks to nullify the ego (Ueshiba 1997, p. 14-18, Ueshiba 2005, p. 12-14). Despite such claims, the right to use Aikido for self-defence is also reserved by its members at the same time (Ueshiba 1997, p. 39-42). Physical violence for *Aikidoka*, therefore, if ever unleashed on others, is consistently rationalized as only a final measure, in view of a preferred attempt at avoiding it as far as possible. At

the same time, it also appears to preserve for itself an aura of physical and moral invincibility. In other words, fighting may be seen as crude and vulgar, but if an *Aikidoka* had to 'get his or her hands dirty', they would supposedly be a potent force.

Interviewer: You mentioned earlier on that eh...that some people just tend to do Aikido for themselves?

Gabriel: Well, they don't seem to eh...hang around or socialize so much...they don't want to show up early or to help with the mats and all that...

Interviewer: Of all the people that you met in the dojo so far, are there people who have different reasons for doing Aikido and what do you think their reasons are?

Gabriel: Well eh... there's a couple of guys who are really into the martial arts. Jerry was telling me about how he got into it...You know eh...he was doing Karate and he was sparring with somebody...yeah...with an Aikido black belt...he just didn't, he couldn't do anything...he was so impressed by the defence technique of it...that he began to look into Aikido...you know Larry?... He liked Aikido so much better because...the moves were so much more fluid...like the fact that he could get the moves faster than if he did Tae Kwon Do?

Interviewer: So these are the guys who just want to like to learn how to fight?

Gabriel: well I don't think so...I don't eh...a lot of guys might not back down from a fight...martial arts gives them confidence...when it comes to fighting...there's not a whole lot of glamour in fighting...

Correspondingly, by virtue of the certain homologies that appear to exist between the various kinds of personalities and values that it promotes, it also comes as no large surprise that such an aestheticized view of martial arts practice would also be deemed as unattractive to other people who seek martial training for more practical and utilitarian aims. People with such alternative or pragmatic needs were either often asked to leave by Matsumoto *sensei*, or eventually left on their own accord in bitter disappointment with the way physical self-defence was taught. It became obvious that with its explicit emphasis on non-violence, gentleness and harmony, this has also led to an unavoidable effect on the very nature of Aikido practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where mental and physical aggression or an emphasis on the practical application of technique is often actively curtailed and greatly discouraged. On the other hand, at the same time, what is

also surprisingly maintained among some its most loyal practitioners has been the claim that, in spite of its alignment with non-violence, Aikido *is still* an effective martial art if it were required to be on occasion. The following responses by Matsumoto *sensei* probably sums up the way in which Aikido's philosophy takes precedence over any expression of direct and overt physical violence.

Interviewer: Sensei, so if I was a new person who knew nothing about Aikido and walked into the dojo and asked you, "What is Aikido?" - What would you tell me?

Matsumoto sensei: What is Aikido? Self-defence. Nobody lose. Nobody wins.

Interviewer: So what do you think makes a good Aikidoka?

Matsumoto sensei: Ok...First of all...dedication...in training...also they really care about their partner...training partner...and they don't force their power on their partner to make techniques work...and then loyal to sensei...that's very important to keep good relationship with student and sensei...and then good personality and be humble.

Interviewer: So what kind of people shouldn't do Aikido?

Matsumoto sensei: Umm...aggressive people...those who fight all the time...those shouldn't do Aikido...because they totally lose the Aikido philosophy...

Nonetheless, the question remains. How does one actually train one's body to become a 'peaceful warrior' where ambitious moral and spiritual standards are coupled together with a potentially uncanny ability to effectively fight if ever required? Such a question often came to mind whenever one reflects upon the daily and regular training regime I underwent at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Apart from the use of *ki* exercises like those mentioned earlier, the practice of Aikido techniques at the Clearwater *Aikikai* can be broadly divided into two areas. Firstly, the practice of weapons either individually or in the form of paired exercises, and secondly, the practice of paired empty-handed grappling exercises consisting of pre-determined or choreographed movements.

The practice of weaponry had always been a significant part of Aikido training at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Similar to many other Aikido *dojo* all over the world, weapons practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai* consisted mainly of the use of the *bokken* (wooden sword) and the *jo* (wooden short staff), which are largely viewed as the main representative weapons of the art. The practice of these two weapons revolve around a core set of exercises, often referred to as the *Aiki-ken* and the *Aiki-jo*, which were supposedly formulated during the Second World War and the immediate years after it by Morihei Ueshiba. They were subsequently refined and systematically organized by Morihiro Saito¹⁵, a close and loyal student of Morihei, who had faithfully accompanied him during his stay at Iwama prefecture after leaving Tokyo.

Although the *bokken* and *jo* are still considered to be part of Aikido practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, it has, over the years, been increasingly de-emphasized as part of Aikido practice in many other *dojo* that currently fall under the jurisdiction of the *Aikikai*¹⁶. Nonetheless, it was observed that this was certainly not the case during the course of my fieldwork, where almost every regular member possessed his or her personal *bokken* and *jo*. Thus, this was a relatively important difference in Aikido practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai* as significant emphasis on weapons practice is given. A large part of this reason is attributed to the fact that Matsumoto *sensei*'s own Aikido teacher, Yamaguchi *sensei*, had been a close student of Morihiro Saito, resulting in the survival of such weapon practices.

¹⁵ Morihiro Saito, is the founder of the *Iwama-ryu* school of Aikido, of which Stanley Pranin, the editor and founder of the Aikido Journal, is a part of. *Iwama-ryu* used to be affiliated with the *Aikikai* but has recently, since 2005, officially separated from the *Aikikai*.

¹⁶ This is particularly so in many parts of Asia, to a point where the practice of *Aikiken* and *Aiki-jo* were disavowed, or at least ignored, as a crucial part of the Aikido training curriculum.

Interestingly, a hint of *animism* may also be detected towards the overall perception, use and ownership of weapons the Clearwater *Aikikai*. One standing rule in the *dojo* was that they must never be trodden upon, intentionally damaged, mistreated, indiscriminately placed on the floor or carelessly discarded, thus leading a person to become highly self-conscious of one's bodily conduct while handling *bokken* and *jo*. A part of the reason was because weapons were also seen as the material embodiment of Aikido practice. More specifically, they were also perceived as symbolic representations (or even *avatars*) of their respective owners, where each weapon contained the unique and individualized persona of each of their respective owner's corporeal subjectivity¹⁷.

During the period of my fieldwork, classes devoted to weapons practice were conducted at least once a week on Friday evenings. Apart from the obvious objective of learning how to use them effectively, practice with weapons was also believed to contribute greatly to the one's understanding of empty-handed techniques, as the technical fundamentals of Aikido were largely, in part, derived from them. Consequently, the core learning curriculum of weapons practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai* required one to be familiar with the numerous standing and wielding postures of both weapons, together with the learning of at least two dozen different ways of striking with the *jo*. The practice of the *jo* required one to learn and memorize at least five distinct forms, or *kata*, which varied in the number movements in each form. These were the 'six movement';

¹⁷ All members at the Clearwater *Aikikai* were strongly encouraged to purchase and own their own set of *bokken* and *jo*. One of the main reasons was the belief that each personal weapon each weapon always felt 'different' from one another. One, therefore, had to grow accustomed to the 'feel' of his or her personal weapon in order to practice more effectively. In addition, personal weapons were also often viewed to be very intimate objects to each *Aikidoka*, and that use of another person's weapon without permission, was considered impolite and disrespectful.

the 'eight movement'; the 'thirteen movement'; the 'twenty-two movement'; and the 'thirty-one movement' *jo* forms.

Both *bokken* (or *ken* for short) and *jo* were also practiced in pairs, consisting of exercises known as *jo* and *ken awase*, or *kumitachi* and *kumijo*, where one practiced pre-arranged movements with a partner, simulating the necessary footwork, dodging and striking movements in a simulated and idealized weapons conflict between two people. All weapons practice, however, consisted of pre-arranged forms and never consisted of free and unchoreographed sparring, as sudden, unpredictable and fast movements increased the chances of unwanted injury. It was also interesting that weapons practice at the *dojo* was greatly influenced by the organization's affiliation to the *Katori Shinto Ryu*, the *kouryu* in which a significant minority of the community also practiced, including Matsumoto *sensei*. Many of the subtleties and technical preferences in the wielding of the *ken* and *jo* were often a hybrid of both Aikido and *Katori Shinto Ryu* influences and references, where technical knowledge stemming from the latter, were seen to be a better authority on weaponry by virtue of its classical status as a technical forerunner to many subsequently emerging styles of martial arts in Japan.

Moving on to the practice of empty-handed techniques, it was noted they remain the core of what many claim to be the essence of Aikido's martial and technical habitus, as they formed the main curriculum of daily practice at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. At the most basic level, one person would play the role of an attacker (*uke* or *tori*) while the other would play the role of defender (*nage*). Typically, *uke* will execute a particular pre-

arranged attack, often a single blow or attempt to hold the defender with either one or two hands. Such attacks are also usually fixed and highly stylized, thus commonly betraying a decidedly scripted nature to the way an attacker should move or how a defender, or *nage*, should 'correctly' react. In practice, therefore, *nage* correspondingly reacts with a limited range of what are defined as *bona fide* Aikido techniques, which seek to neutralize the particular attack that is being executed. At the same time, there also appears to be little, if any emphasis on the practice of kicking, either as *uke* or *nage* at many Aikido *dojo*, and the Clearwater *Aikikai* also remained within such parameters. In addition, most of such paired practices often end off with *uke* being thrown or being pinned to the ground. And as practiced in many *dojo*, with the Clearwater *Aikikai* being no different, *uke* is supposed to attack a total of four times, alternating the attack with either the left or the right. After this, the roles are switched and the four attack cycle begins once more and continues until the instructor stops the class and teaches a new technique.

The number of empty-handed techniques practiced in Aikido, if one were to make a conscious count of the basic discrete techniques taught, interestingly, does not amount to a landslide in terms of quantity. Largely inspired from the grappling and throwing techniques of *jujutsu* and techniques of the sword and spear, the technical core of Aikido ranges from the practice of five major joint locks¹⁸ and either six or seven, depending on one's definition or interpretation, major throwing techniques¹⁹ and the multiple sub-variations that have been derived from them. Nevertheless, although the practice of such

¹⁸ Respectively known as *Ikkyo*, *Nikkyo*, *Sankyo*, *Yonkyo* and *Gokyo*. Literally meaning 'First Teaching', 'Second Teaching', 'Third Teaching'etc.

¹⁹ The major throwing techniques practiced in *Aikikai* Aikido are *Shiho Nage* (four-directions throw), *Irimi Nage* (entering throw), *Kote Gaeshi* (wrist counter attack), *Kaiten Nage* (rotation throw), *Kokyu Nage* (breath throw), *Koshi Nage* (hip throw) and *Tenchi Nage* (Heaven and Earth throw)

textbook techniques are put forth as canonical manifestations of Aikido's avowed principles of harmony and non-resistance, such a listing is not viewed as entirely exhaustive because of ongoing invention and re-invention by practitioners. Another reason for Aikido's seemingly limited repertoire is also partly due to the fact that the practice of striking, such as punching or kicking, is virtually ruled out in the way Aikido is taught, at least at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Although it has also been explicitly acknowledged that the use of *atemi* are also part of Aikido, which are striking techniques that serve to distract one's attacker, such techniques were hardly, if ever, taught or practiced in detail at the Clearwater *Aikikai*.

The popular rationale behind such aversion to outright *atemi* practice, it seems, according to many at the *dojo* and the Clearwater *Aikikai*, is that any attempt to learn or practice striking, be it punching or kicking, would detract from the core of Aikido's technical ideology, which is to 'flow' with the attacker without the use of any opposing force from one's body. Hence, any attempt to strike a person would also be deemed as anathema to Aikido's practice and ideals. Such a view was certainly adhered to a significant degree at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where Matsumoto *sensei* and his other instructional lieutenants, largely felt that any striking moves, such as those from Karate, may 'harden' or 'stiffen' the movements of a practitioner. The ideal Aikido body was, therefore, seen to be a *soft body*, alluding to a *pliant* and *non-resistant* body, which did not necessarily rely too much on the raw physical strength from the muscles that can be generated from a *hard body*.

In Aikido, a 'soft body' is, then, often deemed as 'superior' to a 'stiff or hard body', whose power and strength was finite, while a 'soft body', on the other hand, drew its strength from the force of one's attacker and one's own *ki*. Thus, the practice of striking was, seen to be contradicting the deeply engrained martial ideology of non-violence, where the strict reliance of a profane viscerality was deemed to be too crude and even 'immoral'. Ironically though, Aikido's *jujutsu* emphasis on the use of throwing and joint locking techniques was not viewed as problematic, which, if applied without sufficient control has led to *more serious* internal injuries to tendons, ligaments, muscles and bones as compared to flesh bruises from strikes like punches and kicks.

Subsequently, the notion of 'softness' was also an important factor in such paired exercises of stylized techniques where *uke* had to learn to 'follow', while *nage* had to learn how to 'lead' in a certain choreographed and prescribed fashion. *Uke's* responsibility, on the other hand, was to provide a specific attack, which upon being received by *nage*, would attempt to redirect *uke's* movements according to the dictates of whichever technique that was meant to be executed. Consequently, *uke* would *follow* the re-direction given by *nage*, without any self-conscious attempt to resist *nage's* lead. In other words, such exercises of technique were never meant to be both unpredictable and spontaneous at the same time, where the overall structure of such a technique is already pre-empted by both *uke* and *nage*. Nonetheless, the execution of every technique with varying combinations of 'other bodies' seldom necessarily 'feels' the same. The practice of Aikido in such paired exercises, therefore, always contained a *bodily narrative*, or a *sensual script*, that can only be re-enacted by two or more bodies. Such co-ordinated

movement between two people required the *work of time* (Bourdieu 1990, p. 98-111), where each practitioner, or *Aikidoka*, gradually learns through his or her body, the necessary and required dispositions that would contribute to the successful display of ‘good strong technique’.

At this point, it becomes necessary to note that such bodily performances of technical and martial harmony between two *Aikidoka* have never always been as successful as they were hoped to be. On the contrary, it has, paradoxically, on numerous occasions led to physical contests of raw strength between members. One major and understandable reason for this, rested upon the fact that new members who initially joined classes often mistake such paired exercises, or choreographed forms, as actual contests and often struggle and refuse to follow as *uke*. On the other hand, many initially fail to effectively lead as *nage*, and resort to raw force while misreading the collusive *corporeal scripts* that they were supposed to learn and follow for each technique. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that such contests have even occurred among more intermediate or advanced practitioners, which obviously begs the question with regard to their understanding or interpretation of such practices. Additionally, it was also interesting to observe that the scripted nature of such paired exercises at the Clearwater *Aikikai* were seldom explicitly relayed or explained to students, new or advanced, as being mere forms, or ideal typical examples of a textualized reality, which upon actual application in practical reality or a ‘street fight’, would hardly appear to be as aesthetic or stylized in the first place.

Hence, demonstrations by Matsumoto *sensei* and other assistant instructors while conducting classes largely omitted any admittance of the highly relational and dramaturgical nature of such displays of *martial prowess*. In other words, although it was constantly perceived by me that many of such feats of martial prowess were highly dependent upon the *corporeal obedience* and *reflexive acquiescence* of one's *uke*, more than often, the credit and *distinction* of the performance often went to the *sensei* or the ranking senior who was demonstrating. Many practitioners, particularly the junior ranks, appeared to be under the impression that such forms are a reflection of the actual application of technique in practical reality, or a 'street fight'. Although such paired forms have long existed in other martial arts and are commonly understood to be *kata*, or forms, such a description was never explicitly used to refer to Aikido practice. This was, partly, an attempt to maintain a conceptual distinction between Aikido and other arts that also employ *kata* in training, thus maintaining Aikido's allegedly unique and rather untested nature. Consequently, many beginners and even fairly advanced *Aikidoka*, came to view such paired exercises as realistic reflections of their application in a true physical altercation beyond the harmonious walls of the *dojo*.

Such incidents of *misrecognition* and ongoing mystification of martial practice in the *dojo* appear to have contributed greatly to the continued corporeal mythologies that surround the practice of Aikido. This is because the pre-assigned roles of *nage* and *uke* in practice are often *not explicitly recognized as pre-assigned roles as such*, but rather, have presented themselves on many occasions, as opportunities for the tacit contestation of strength (and ego) between two people, and the exercise of bodily and mental domination

on others, often by a much higher ranking practitioner over a much more junior one. Such tacit contests often led to occasional accusations from either *uke* or *nage* towards one's partner, where *nage* may be perceived to be doing the 'wrong technique' when it is *uke* who refuses to follow, or when *uke* is seen as being 'stiff' when it is *nage* who may be unfamiliar with the *required choreography* of a certain technique. Although it appeared that senior practitioners like Matsumoto *sensei* and other *yudansha* seemed to realize this, there was still little attempt at explicitly clarifying this in class, apart from exhortations that '*uke* should always be following, blending and must never resist', which once more tends to misdirect one's attention away from recognizing the highly contrived and caricatured manner in which martial reality is being portrayed in the *dojo*.

Recognizing a Field of Power

It should be evident then, or at least increasingly suggestive by this point, that in spite of its claims to being a 'Way of Harmony', the global Aikido community is neither a clearly unified body of practitioners, bounded by a common sense of identity and mission. In this respect, the geo-political and transnational climate of Aikido's existence should be understood as one that is also rife with organizational and ideological schism, internal political disputes and struggles, distinct differences in training pedagogy from *dojo* to *dojo*, and even cases of sexual harassment and abuse of students by Aikido *sensei* in the past²⁰. For since the passing of Morihei Ueshiba in 1969, the fact remains that the *Aikikai* has seen numerous organizational splits and ideological splinterings, which have

²⁰ At least two well-publicized incidents of sexual abuse and harassment have been noted in the Aikido community. The first was Bruce Klickstein (5th *dan*) of the Aikido Institute from Oakland, California. Some mention of this can be seen at http://www.aikidoinstitute.org/kiai/kiai_vi_1_30_year.pdf. The second was John Lamont (5th *dan*), who was formerly with the Aikido Association of America (<http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=181>)

clearly reduced its role and overall authority as an international body that oversees the dissemination and teaching of Aikido.

Some examples of such schisms have already been mentioned and discussed to some point. These include the *Ki no Kenkyukai* of Koichi Tohei and the *Iwama Ryu* of Morihiro Saito, where their respective founders had been important figures in Aikido's early history. Nevertheless, such fractures within the language of harmony have, however, relatively been well-managed and adapted to by the *Aikikai*, which still remains the largest Aikido organization in the world today, of which the Clearwater *Aikikai* is a loyal part of. While some newly formed Aikido organizations still retain a sense of cordiality and camaraderie with the *Aikikai* (which is now headed by Morihei's grandson, Moriteru²¹), relations with others, on the other hand, such as the *Ki no Kenkyukai*, have been cool, at best, over the years. All these facts, therefore, strikingly hint to us what the inner realities of being an *Aikidoka* could be like, apart from the usual popular and euphemized portrayals of a peaceful and politically disinterested martial way, or a *budo*, that solely exists as a source for the betterment of the Self.

My observations and experiences at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, for reasons noted above, enabled one an important ethnographic window into such a world, offering a more grounded and ideographical sense of a pugilistic universe that would have never been gained from mere disembodied observation. Additionally, the various relations and social structures that defined the nature of everyday life at the *dojo* may also be framed and

²¹ The leadership of the *Aikikai* is one that is still run on the basis of patriarchal nepotism, where only the male members of the Ueshiba family are allowed to rise to the rank of *Doshu*, literally meaning 'leader of the way'.

analyzed with the use of Bourdieu's concept of the *field*, in which the social position of each member at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was inevitably related to others in the context of a social-cultural hierarchy encased within the exercise and contest of power and resources. To become an *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, then, required one to enter and gain acceptance, and as Wacquant (2004a, p. x) would say, to 'learn the ropes' within such a *field of power*. Furthermore, to become a part of the Clearwater *Aikikai* also implied the surrendering of a certain amount of individuality and freedom to choose or express one's thoughts or emotions, particularly in the face of a senior ranking person. Hence, while the social structure at the Clearwater *Aikikai* certainly did not exist as a strict dictatorship, neither would one easily describe it as a democracy, largely as result of the partially de-individualizing effects on its members. At the same time, interestingly, neither was such an environment devoid of personality clashes that occasionally raised levels of social tension between members.

Terry: I would say that there is one person who takes it too far...and he does...he just becomes 'Japanese'...you know what I mean? (chuckle)...and he is correcting people who are Japanese...I've seen him correcting sensei a couple of times...He's a pretty anal-retentive person...and he takes it to the limit...

Interviewer: He corrects sensei's Japanese?

Terry: Sometimes...not so much anymore...it's too much...in my opinion it's too much...it's to the point where I would eh...I would sort of work myself around the dojo where I wouldn't have to train with him...because it was getting to the point where I didn't want to come and it was like that for a few other people too...I uh...I just didn't like the politics of it... at the time...I don't think sensei saw it...and he was like sensei's boy...and uh...could do no wrong...and everybody was really frustrated with him and...it got to a point where I didn't want to come to Aikido and I love Aikido (chuckle)...yeah...I almost sat down with sensei because it was bothering me so much and then I heard recently that a couple of other people had recently sat down and talked to him so that made me feel good that it wasn't just me being an idiot and it was really more like him...and there's sort of like three different persons that he's injured...

Induction into life as a member thus often required a neophyte to be subsumed and subjected, to a significant extent, the dictates and practice of certain social-cultural expectations that often possessed the potential to place its various members in direct or

indirect contestation or conflict with others. Frequently, the gradual embodiment of an Aikido *habitus* may also result in one being occasionally subjected to instances of *symbolic violence*, which are often selectively denied through the careful use of euphemisms and the normalizing rhetoric of ‘culture’ that often displaces responsibility for the actions and words of a person with greater power in a relationship. The occurrences of symbolic violence at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, therefore, emerge through the exercise and consequence of an unequal relation of power, which is frequently *misrecognized* as a cultural arbitrary. At the same time, such exercises of power and the social relationships that are affected by it are often embodied, inscribed and eventually expressed among the corporeal practices of the *dojo*’s members.

An interesting case would be that of Kouichi Nakajima, who had also been rising relatively fast up the hierarchy of the *dojo* due to his regular attendance. After receiving his 2nd *kyu* in August 2004, he began to wear a brown belt and was also accepted by Matsumoto *sensei* as his apprentice in *shiatsu*. After his last promotion on one occasion, I was partnered with him for a class, and I realized that he had become increasingly resistant to me as an *uke*, seeking to actively challenge my role as *nage* whenever it was my turn to execute a technique. While it was my turn, however, my attempt at performing my role as *uke* was met with open displeasure from him this time, and on one occasion, he attempted to slap my face in public during a class, in a show of hierarchical authority by trying to physically humiliate me. When I asked him why, he claimed that I was ‘not serious’ while I was performing my role as *uke* as I allowed him to execute his techniques *too easily* without due *resistance*. This both frustrated and angered me, as I recalled that I

had always conducted myself in the *exact same manner* whenever I practiced with him *before* his promotion. I had also been his *uke* in the same way while he was undergoing his grading examination to obtain his brown belt. It appeared, then, that one's dynamically changing position within the power structure of the Clearwater *Aikikai* could also be seen to possess a mediating influence on how one related to others.

In addition, then, it would be important to once more recall, at this point, the deeply hierarchical and arguably patriarchal structure of the social milieu at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. At least three times a year, ranking or grading exercises are held, where various members, including those from affiliated *dojo*, are tested for promotion. Ranking subtly affects the very attire that one wears, such as the colour of one's *obi* (belt), the *keikogi* and *hakama*, which serve as corporeal signifiers that symbolize the social position that each member is situated at in the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s field of power. In order to rise in the social hierarchy of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, one had to take such tests periodically, where one displays the various techniques that are required for the rank they are seeking to attain under the watchful eyes of Matsumoto *sensei*, with the help of other members who serve as *uke*. At the end of such tests, if the person is deemed to be worthy of promotion, they are officially conferred a higher rank in the hierarchy.

Interviewer: What do you think some of the reasons are for other people taking up the art?

George Summers: I think some people take up a martial art to prove to someone, either themselves or others that they can get a black belt...I believe there some people in the dojo whose goal in life is to get a black belt...I think most people in Clearwater Aikikai are doing it to learn a skill...for the exercise...for the camaraderie, for socialness...but I think there are a few who do it to strictly eh...climb the rungs up the wall...but I will be content to stay fifth kyu forever...I don't have any aspirations to reach shihan (chuckles)...

The practice of such periodic ranking exercises may, then, be understood to possess a strong ritualistic character, symbolizing a *rite of passage*, which legitimizes, through the authority of Matsumoto *sensei*, one's personal journey into greater acceptance and social recognition in the community for her or his greater technical ability and corresponding quality of character. Hence, one of the initial aims of a new member may often be focused on the achievement of a black belt, where a person's induction into this grade distinguishes one into a different martial class from those who do not have one. With the earning of a black belt, one also earns the equal right to wear a *hakama*, which in the Aikido universe, is often viewed as a symbol of authority and status, particularly to those who do not possess black belts. Occasionally, those who earn the right to wear it are given the authority to instruct a class, a superior status position that is indicative of one having some level of mastery over Aikido techniques. Like how one earns his or her chevrons in the military, or tattoos and bodily markings as part of a tribe, the colour of the *obi* (belt) and *hakama*, once only the part of an everyday mode of traditional dress in Japan, has become reinvented as a signifier for power and status, a *mark* of one's invested stake in the world of Aikido. It was also observed that many *yudansha*, holders of *dan* ranks or black belts often embroidered their names – either in *Katakana*, *Hiragana* or *Kanji*²², dependent on one's cultural identity – onto their black belt and the rear of their *hakama*. Such conspicuous consumption served to also display their symbolic and cultural capital that they possess, as 'players of the *game* of Aikido' who were now obviously closer to the seat of power than those did not possess belt blacks.

²² *Katakana* and *Hiragana* are the two main writing systems in place today in Japan. The former is often used for foreign terms, while the later, Japanese terms. *Kanji* refers to the common use of Chinese ideographic characters in place of *Hiragana* in the Japanese language.

In addition, it should also be recalled that the practice of ranking clearly plays a big part in the practice of Aikido techniques, which often played out as games of contested corporeality between two or more bodies. Hence, much higher ranking persons can seldom, or never be shown up to be wrong in his or her application of a particular technique by a more junior ranking person, which would amount to a challenge to their authority, or at least a humiliating loss of face. As one rises in ranks where one's personal stakes and investment in the 'game of Aikido' grow increasingly important, this often positively corresponds with the need to reproduce the various corporeal mythologies that are inherent in Aikido's field of power. Consequently, it is no surprise then, that some of the most fantastic and outlandish demonstrations of *ki* or powerful martial ability by high-ranking *Aikidoka* are usually almost performed most successfully with their most senior and dedicated students.

Consequently, what often mediated between, or resolves certain contests of embodied egos on the mats were often the highly self-conscious recognition and acceptance of hierarchy among members, where the more senior *Aikidoka* between the two persons during practice was usually given the benefit of the doubt whenever something seems to be 'done wrong'. It was also noted, with great distinction, that as the higher one's rank went, the harder it was to be easily thrown by others of a lower rank, nor to make any mistakes. Thus, increasing infallibility often coincided with one's rising rank and the subsequent symbolic and physical domination of others during practice. Interestingly, some parallels may be drawn here from Bourdieu's (2001) own views on 'masculine domination', where *domination itself is somatized*. One gradually learns the

'right way' to behave as a junior rank in the face of a senior rank and to be a 'good *Aikidoka*'. Hence, any junior rank who tried to resist the techniques of a senior rank would be told that he was 'stiff' and was exhibiting 'bad Aikido'. Alternatively if such a situation were to be reversed and if it was the senior who was resisting the technique, it was often explained that the junior rank was 'doing it wrongly'. Hence, it also appeared that any open admittance of weakness, mistakes or technical imperfection by a senior rank to a junior rank appeared to be an unspoken taboo among many members.

For this reason, unrestrained and public criticism within the community against any *sensei* never occurred. Similarly, it is also noted *sensei* who were instructing in a class also hardly played the role of *uke* in an Aikido class, an unstated implication that the taking of *ukemi*, or the breakfalls, was more than often the role of junior rank. As one climbed higher up the social ladder of the Clearwater *Aikkai*, one's rank seem to bestow upon the *Aikidoka* greater privilege in being 'correct' more often than a person of lower rank, where even the practice of *ukemi* became uncommon, especially if one were to be instructing a class. Hence, *ukemi* in Aikido was often the embodiment of a dominated body, where few very high ranking instructors would be caught performing it, particularly those who held the appointment of *shihan*, such as Matsumoto *sensei*. One's body, then, became less of an object under scrutiny and an object of domination as one gradually ascended the higher echelons of a privileged martial class, where one tended to throw much more often than be thrown by others.

Similarly, in typical classes, Matsumoto *sensei* and other instructors tended to reveal certain preferences for particular individuals to be their *uke* whenever they are demonstrating a technique. This was so because for many who do eventually endeavour to rise in the rank must necessarily incorporate the correct bodily rules, dispositions and strategies that enable one to perform successfully in Aikido's field of embodied power, and in turn, serve to discipline new members in the very same bodily pedagogies, reproducing the exact same embodied narratives and sensory cultural texts that they themselves had become disciplined by and have formed as part of their martial habitus. A good *Aikidoka* was often seen to be a highly compliant and de-subjectivized body in the face of a higher rank, and also possessing a high level of *corporeal* plasticity and its inherent capacity for change and transformation according to the correspondingly structuring rules of the game (Sassatelli 2000, p. 396-411, Maclachlan 2004, p. 1-23).

All at once, it is on the mats when one realizes just how alienated or distant, at times, is the notion of harmony from practice when faced with another body that is larger, stronger, more experienced, more senior in rank but is also potentially abusive, egotistical and sadistic at the same time. Yet more than often, whenever this occurs, an *uke* who has been subjected to a moment of intense pain after an overenthusiastic joint lock gets up and tries to smile it off, and attempts to re-imagine or euphemize it as a *learning experience* for one's *own good*. On the other hand, the notion and practice of ranks, however, is not necessary always a transparent or a clearly defined one. This is because such distinctions have a tendency to become blurred once extended *beyond* the confines of the *dojo*, which can be attributed to certain compromises and negotiation that members

of the Clearwater *Aikikai* must make, while seeking to adapt to a less hierarchically-minded and more individualistic society like Canada. There was, then, a general sense of informality with regards to the way members related to one 'on the outside'.

Nonetheless, the most salient reflection of how of status and authority affects interpersonal relations rests in the manner in which all members conduct themselves in the presence of Matsumoto *sensei*. This because although he has actively attempted to develop close and easygoing relationships with his students, Matsumoto *sensei* has also never entirely relented on occasionally reminding us of his ultimate authoritative position as chief instructor. These ranged from the need to carry his luggage during public events together with him; opening the doors of a car to allow him to enter first; allowing him to consume food or drink first before everyone else during a group dinner; to take the initiative to shelter him from rain if it was required; to fold his *hakama* neatly for him after the end of every class; and to even be obligated to accede to requests for assistance in performing several chores at the *dojo*, or even beyond it. Acceptance and obedience towards such expectations were thus necessary for any member to rise in the social hierarchy of the *dojo*, particularly if one also needed the blessings of Matsumoto *sensei* in granting the person the status of instructor.

It is, therefore, a fact that no active member of the Clearwater *Aikikai* has ever addressed Matsumoto *sensei* simply by his name without conferring to him the honourific of '*sensei*' while in the *dojo* or beyond it. This is because it would have been deemed as highly disrespectful or an outright challenge to his authority and identity as a *sensei*. For

once a person becomes and remains a member of the *dojo*, one's relationship and conduct towards him would always be dictated by unequal terms, where certain deferential expectations and conduct are imposed. To a large extent, then, the only way to transcend such requirements was to leave the organization or to dissociate oneself from Aikido. Furthermore, it would also be useful to mention that Matsumoto *sensei* also often took, on more than one occasion, more than a general interest in the personal lives of a number of members, such as Jonathan Wagner, Dominic Bucher and Kazuko Nakamura.

When knowledge of Jonathan's personal preference and success with Japanese women became increasingly evident, and appeared to be on the verge of transferring his affections from one Japanese lady to another, Matsumoto *sensei* personally registered his own strong dislike and objection to Jonathan's behaviour. On one occasion, he even attempted to speak to Jonathan to persuade him from continuing his 'fickle ways' with women. Jonathan, however, was 'unrepentant' and this contributed to his growing marginalization from Matsumoto *sensei*'s inner sphere of support and power. On the other hand, it was also worthy of note that the eventual pairing of Dominic and Kazuko was partly a result of the persuasive 'invisible hand' of Matsumoto *sensei*. Learning that the shy Dominic was becoming increasingly attracted to the cheerful Kazuko, who came to Calgary as a foreign student at the Alberta College of Art and Design, Matsumoto *sensei* devised all sorts of scenarios in order to allow them to get to know each other. This matchmaking project, as it turned out, appeared to be very successful.

One could argue, then, that everyday life at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was largely, for lack of a better word, a *martioocratic* sub-cultural community that also possessed an underlying power structure that was highly *centralized*, *semi-patriarchal* and culturally *essentialized* to a significant degree along the lines of a broadly defined Orientalizing discourse, as noted in previous chapters. These characteristics are often identifiable in many other alleged traditional martial arts systems, even in contemporary times. Furthermore, an additional point to note is that despite being mediated by the external confines of a Western society that possesses an arguably different cultural logic present from Japanese society, the leadership of the Clearwater *Aikikai* and its affiliated *dojo* ultimately rests in the hands of its *men*, with only one female instructor out of a total of eight instructors, inclusive of Matsumoto *sensei*.

Although a part of the reason rests upon the larger proportion of male members compared to female members, it is also quite inconceivable that a female instructor would ever claim the mantle of chief instructor from Matsumoto *sensei* even when he retires, or is unable to continue teaching for any reason. Furthermore, leadership and technical advice was still virtually entirely based from sources from a male-dominated Japan, such as in the case of Matsumoto *sensei*'s own teacher, Yamaguchi *sensei* and another of Matsumoto *sensei*'s seniors, Yoshida *sensei*, who also instructed in *Katori Shinto Ryu*. Such gender imbalances also appeared to mirror some fairly generalizable characteristics of Asian martial body cultures, and it seems that the Clearwater *Aikikai* is also representative of the phenomenon of *masculine domination* (i.e. Bourdieu 2001), but upon closer examination, the situation seems more complex, because it appears to stem

mainly from two concurrent and possibly contradicting obstacles. Firstly, as observed in Chapter Three, it was interesting to note from some responses that women who were actually seeking lessons in self-defence did not seem to perceive Aikido as a 'true martial art' as it *seemed too feminine and too soft to be an effective fighting system*, indirectly revealing an implicit presumption of an alleged link between femininity and physical ineffectiveness. On the other hand, women who continue to remain and participate in Aikido's pugilistic universe are still inevitably excluded from being part of Aikido's higher echelons of power and authority precisely because they *are women*, betraying a systemic prejudice against women for leadership in spite of how they are also 'treated like one of the men'.

Interviewer: Why do you think there are so few women in the dojo?

Matsumoto sensei: Maybe it's because I treat women just like I treat the men...and then...I don't really have 'passion' for women...Just like the same...But I never know exactly why...I never after having more women members...yeah but happy...happy if there is an increase in the women that's all...

Interviewer: You have some women instructors in the dojo...Krista and Tomoko?

Matsumoto sensei: Krista... I never recognize her as instructor...You see black belt doesn't mean you automatically become instructor...That's the way it works...Tomoko...I recognize her...but not Krista...not yet...well first of all skill wise...not good enough...Her shodan test in Japan...I was one of her examiners...in Japan...it was my sensei's 20th anniversary at the dojo...that's why she passed the test...but eh...But it was obvious she fail...but Aikido it's not only technique...it's also other things...that's why she passed...One thing she has to understand about attitude towards sensei...if I ask something...she says 'No' but well she should say different things...being student...but she act as if she is the same level...not showing respect...she do good things for the dojo...but I don't think she is ready for instructor level...

Interviewer: Why do you think there are so few women shihan in Aikido today?

Matsumoto sensei: Probably the other martial arts the same too...not too many women shihan today in the world...and Aikido...to me that's uh...at the hombu...some women shihan teach at the hombu too...so compared to other martial arts...I think Aikido is more than other martial arts...but it's uh...in North America several teachers but not shihan level...

Interviewer: Do you think that it is harder for a woman to be promoted than a man in Aikido?

Matsumoto sensei: Depend on how you do it uh...probably...one woman three years (ago) join and (let's) say (she has) three year(s) (of) training...(but this) is very different from Karate...(she) starts with grabbing (in Aikido)...and if guy grabs very strongly...so the woman cannot move easily...it is a training lesson and not a fighting lesson...so if instructor doesn't know the difference then very difficult to teach...

Loyalty

Power and authority at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was, then, something that largely emanated from a single source, and that was Matsumoto *sensei* himself, and access to varying amounts of that power was largely granted only through officially declared affiliation and organizational subservience to him. One also recalls a time when Matsumoto *sensei* printed several T-shirts for a number of regulars and seniors that contained the *kanji* 'Matsumoto-gumi', referring to the fact that one was a part of 'Matsumoto's gang'. At the same time, the maintenance and exercise of such power and association was often situated in the rhetoric vernacular of culture and tradition, which often misrecognized the practical realities of unequal and potentially exploitative power relations, resulting in the symbolic violence that is often directed between members who are already deeply enmeshed in the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s field of power. In other words, for one to remain and subsequently rise within the hierarchy of *Aikikai*'s power structure, or to become an instructor and possess the moral authority to personally operate a *dojo* under its auspices, one needed to closely ally him or herself to Matsumoto *sensei*, and to constantly work to reaffirm his continued trust and support. This was, though, often a challenging and risky task, as Tim Ferguson, a loyal practitioner of five years, notes:

Tim Ferguson: So what is he? He is the owner of the (Clearwater) Aikikai right? So he has to create this environment for people to come and speak to him frankly...and... he thinks he's got that but he doesn't.

Interviewer: So, you are telling me that there are some people who find it hard to be frank with him?

Tim Ferguson: A lot of people...well, the biggest issue that I see is that he keeps changing his mind...about anything...and so people just don't know what to expect of him...and the simple thing is...when people take the tests...he'll tell you one thing and then ten minutes later he'll later tell you something completely different...and he doesn't realize that he's contradicting himself...so he then goes looking to see which of the instructors has been giving the wrong information...

Interviewer: And blames them for it?

Tim Ferguson: Yeah, but he doesn't get it...cause it's him...but you see, no one is going to tell him that.

Interviewer: Cause he's the boss.

Tim Ferguson: Exactly, you've got it...

Nevertheless, meeting such expectations were, at times, a task that was easier said than done, as being under the protective wing and legitimizing presence of Matsumoto *sensei* required a careful understanding of the needs and temperament of what he defined as 'loyalty'. If one were to be running an affiliated Aikido *dojo*, the conditions involved allowing Matsumoto *sensei* to be the sole authority to test and grant ranks and to also provide him, when the occasion demanded it, with a token monetary contribution for his continued patronage and support. As Matsumoto *sensei* was the only individual in the entire province of Alberta who possessed a clear and undisputed link to the Aikido World Headquarters by virtue of his connection to Yamaguchi *sensei*, the roots of one's martial lineage and technical legitimacy stemmed from him. One might again suggest, as noted earlier about the Clearwater *Aikikai*, that the larger *Aikikai* community could also be understood as an extra-familial and transnationalized para-kinship network, which possesses its own internal organizational rules and expectations. This is because individuals who devote their lives to the practice of Aikido as part of the *Aikikai* community eventually become recognized as part of a community that is bonded in the practice and mutual belief of the art's founding principles and ideology. This was the broader globalized network that the Clearwater *Aikikai* was clearly a part of, with distinct links to high-ranking *sensei* in Europe, Hawaii and Japan²³.

²³ Apart from his identity as a disciple of Yamaguchi *sensei* in Japan, Matsumoto *sensei* also claims to possess direct links to the German *Aikikai* and the Hawaiian *Aikikai*. During the period of my fieldwork, he and several others had also made a trip to Germany in conjunction with the World Games in 2005. In addition, representatives from the Hawaiian *Aikikai* also joined us at our annual training camp, held in the Canadian Rockies at Canmore, Alberta.

In any case, if Matsumoto *sensei* were to suspect that one's quality of character or social conduct was not up to mark, that person's 'loyalty' would then be consequently called into question. This often ran the risk of causing one, particularly a senior who may have harboured ambitions of running his or her own *dojo*, to be disassociated, or 'excommunicated' from the Clearwater *Aikikai*, along with the removal of several networking and political advantages. During my tenure in Calgary, I learnt of such incidents that occurred on three separate occasions among three different instructors of Matsumoto *sensei*. In each scenario, the meaning and practice of loyalty often became a highly equivocal term that befitted varying and subjective interpretations. One such scenario was the case of a long-time practitioner who had been with Clearwater for nearly two decades, whose charisma and unorthodox methods of teaching often conflicted with Matsumoto *sensei*'s more traditional style of instruction that often quietly discouraged open questioning or innovation. What appeared to further contribute to the tension was the fact that this senior practitioner was also older in age than Matsumoto *sensei* but still seemed to be in better physical condition, and also possessed a strong reputation for technical flair. From my observations, on a number of occasions, this particular senior instructor seemed to have been deliberately put on the spot and verbally humiliated in public seminars by being told that he was often wrong in his techniques.

Secondly, one also learnt that the first person whom Matsumoto *sensei* awarded a black belt to in Calgary, who is now also an Aikido instructor in his own right, had resigned some years ago from the auspices of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. But this occurred only after he gained the patronage of Fujimoto *sensei*, an even more senior ranking

Aikidoka from Vancouver. The separation had occurred when Matsumoto *sensei* had strong misgivings about the way this senior practitioner, a young and enthusiastic teacher, taught his students, along with his own increasing association with Fujimoto *sensei*, who was also perceived as a rival in authority and influence. As a result, this instructor's 'loyalty' was put into question. This incident also appeared to contribute to Matsumoto *sensei*'s decision to distance himself from the Canadian Aikido Federation, which was being headed by the same Fujimoto *sensei* from Vancouver, and his relationship to Matsumoto *sensei* had, at best, been strategically cordial and occasionally controversial. Such differences may have been linked to a growing internal tension pertaining to the parameters of each of their respective 'Canadian turfs'. I learnt that this included an incident where there was reportedly strong tension when certain students from Vancouver were actively discouraged from attending Aikido seminars at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, citing, as an obvious affront, that Matsumoto *sensei*'s technical qualifications in Aikido were in question.

The third case, involved another senior instructor who was a contemporary of the other instructor who had recently resigned as a member. At the time of my fieldwork, this particular instructor was already heading an affiliated *dojo* at a location in the south of Calgary, and as they were still good friends, this senior instructor continued to maintain inter-*dojo* relations with his friend's own *dojo* even after his resignation, often facilitating combined classes and seminars involving students from their respective *dojo*. However, when Matsumoto *sensei* learned about this, this instructor's loyalty was again placed under doubt. By opening inviting a former Clearwater instructor and his students for

regular combined training sessions, he had transgressed an unspoken rule of not officially fraternizing with individuals who had left the Clearwater *Aikikai* under less than amiable conditions. This was viewed to be undermining Matsumoto sensei's ultimate authority as organizational and symbolic head of all who were considered part of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Hence, being in the same *dojo*, or the same space, and training with each other, therefore, harboured the implication of a person acting in betrayal and disrespect towards one's expected loyalty and allegiance to the Clearwater *Aikikai*, especially to Matsumoto *sensei* himself.

The notion of loyalty here, therefore, appears to stem not only from a professed abstract declaration of one's emotional allegiance to Matsumoto *sensei*, but rather also from the need to discipline one's embodied and corporeal allegiances to the dictates of his personal control. Thus, one's body could not only practice Aikido in the presence of hierarchy, but one also needed to learn how to practice Aikido in the *right* place, the *right* network among the *right* people, say the *right* words and to act the *right* way – encompassing an entire range of *impression management* techniques, where the *dojo* virtually became, to paraphrase a famous title, the stage for the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Aikido* (i.e. Goffman 1958), and learning the *strategies* of affiliation and accommodation in the presence of rank and hierarchy. Nonetheless, the relations between the various individuals and Matsumoto *sensei* in such a field of power need not always be defined in such an asymmetrical manner. As a result of his years living in Calgary, Matsumoto *sensei* has also been observed to make certain compromises with regards to

tradition or custom in Aikido practice, although the ultimate reins of power among ‘the flock’ still remain in his hands.

Senior instructor X: ...at the very beginning when I was training under him, he was very very traditional...and it got to a point where if we do something out of the ordinary, he gets upset...we have to get conformed to his standards...but as time goes on...he grew up in this society...we grew up together in this society...I'm one of his oldest students and I have never left him...I have seen him change...he has to change...if you go up to a cold country you cannot say that you still want to wear thin clothes...you got to wear something thicker...you cannot help it and you have to conform...and he has done very well to conform with society and the group situation...although I know that he always calls back and talks with Japan...with his peer(s) to get directions...because I have seen him do exactly the traditional way... and I know exactly because I am very close to him...he taught me as a student...I have seen him change with time, with the people, with the group, with the situation, for the better...

It should, then, become increasingly apparent at this point then, that the practice of Aikido is not one that exists within a social and political vacuum. This is revealed in how the social dynamics at the Clearwater *Aikikai* plays itself out, as a medium for the creation of ‘*bodies of power*’ through *rhetorical narratives of transformation* (Csordas 2002, p. 11-57) that incorporate notions of *ki*, healing, ritual, martial ability and social and cultural capital. Hence, the resultant construction and reification of corporeal mythologies in the making of an *Aikidoka*’s habitus do not always necessarily fall strictly or naively within an apolitical or socially homogenous social order in spite of their art’s professed ideals. For in order for one to become an ‘insider’ also entails subjecting oneself within a highly influential field of power that exerts its presence unto the spaces and practices of what it means for any who decide to dedicate themselves to cultivating the ‘Way of Harmony’.

At the same time, the Aikido of today is also very much a ‘Way’ that continually constructs and re-invents itself, while working towards an ever increasingly globalized and transnational presence, where the martial arts, popular culture and corporeal

mythologies unite into a curiously embodied discursive framework for the continuance of both Orientalizing and auto-Orientalizing discourses, of which its very 'Asian-ness' serves as a resource for cultural and symbolic power and capital. In light of all this, therefore, the practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* should also be recognized as the site of contestation, conflict and rivalry, all of which have often been misrecognized through the use of euphemistic language and the collusion of some of its 'most loyal' members who possess stakes in the game of Aikido. Of course, not all of its members are entirely willing to commit themselves to such demands, but it would also be likely at the detriment of one's future Aikido career at the Clearwater *Aikikai*.

Interviewer: ...Have any of you had negative experiences training there?

George Summers: I had a nikkyo done to me the hard way and it cost me six months of practice because I pulled something in my elbow...I couldn't practice for six months because of it...see my brace?...that was three years ago... as long as I wear my brace I'm ok...I'm very inflexible so if someone does a hard pin to me it hurts...I guess I'm at the point in my life where um if it's not fun and enjoyable I'd just walk away...I have no loyalty...Sensei is a very nice man and I'll do what I can to help him but if I didn't do this I'd probably ride my bike more...I do it because it's a fun place to be...a healthy environment...

Becoming an *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was, then, not only becoming a body of culture or a body of history, but also a *body of power*, which not only served as a vessel of power as invested into it within a discrete location in a field of power, but also as a body in which power enacted upon and concurrently reacting to such power in response. At the same time, being an *Aikidoka* also often drew oneself into a field of power that inevitably subjects one's identity, status and relationships within a pugilistic universe that had a tendency to discipline and politicize one's place within subtle exercises and contests of power. Unlike Loic Wacquant's (2004a) own journey, as discussed in Chapter Two, as an apprentice into the 'sweet science' of boxing where the gym may have served as a protective or even liberating universe that distinguished itself

from the ghetto, the habitus of an *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai* often alternatively served as a striking example of the pervasive tenacity of a *symbolic violence* where symbolism or meaning are imposed upon an individual or a community, in such a way where they are seen as legitimate, normal and meaningful, while the unequal power relations that result in such impositions are effectively obscured, euphemized and misrecognized.

Such ongoing impositions of pedagogic authority are even more pronounced when one juxtaposes these observations with the fact that Aikido is, more than often, portrayed and constructed to the general public as 'aesthetic and beautiful' or innocently likened to 'Zen in Motion', a pugilistic universe world inspired by the unique hybrid of religious belief and martial violence. And as one begins to reflexively seek to unveil and choose to recognize and observe an ethnographic field beyond the *doxic beliefs* of an entire community at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, the way of harmony is seen to be fraught with a number of inherent contradictions and challenges that grow increasingly unavoidable. It seems then, that harmony and peace too, has its price.

Interviewer: So...and here we are, we got a martial art that's like...literally called the 'Way of Harmony'...do you think there's a bit of an irony there? I mean you get people getting hurt and all that and this whole thing is about making you a better person...

Terry: Umm...yeah...I think there is a bit of irony there...but I think no matter what you're gonna do you're gonna get...those kinds of people...and to defend Aikido...it is a contact sport and it is very combative...so there's a good chance that eventually...you're going to get injured...but umm...I think that's not the focus of the training right? It's just sort of part of the course...I think you're blind if you think you're going go in and not get injured, right?

Interviewer: But do you think in the long run...do you think regular training in Aikido can make a...better person?

Terry: Yes

Interviewer: And it rings true for everyone?

Terry: Umm I would like to think so, but I don't think for everybody...some people are just the way they are...it would be kinda nice to say that there's this 'Way of Harmony' that will fix everything and all that...I don't think it's gonna happen...I think for a young guy...maybe like for every martial art it can teach you something...if you take it the right way and it can teach you some very good life lessons...but you have to see those and find them out for yourself...

Interviewer: Do you think the techniques that you practice in the dojo...do you think they will work on the street?

Terry: Umm...I think in some form...yeah they will...maybe not as flamboyant as we do them in class...you know, perfectly...but I think you have to train in a certain way...like I said before you can see...in certain situations...yeah I think a lot of times it would work.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any chance to use it to defend yourself?

Terry: No, but I think that's part of it too...knowing how to get around a situation where you don't have to use it...

Interviewer: So that's Aikido then?

Terry: Yup...That's very much Aikido (chuckle)...

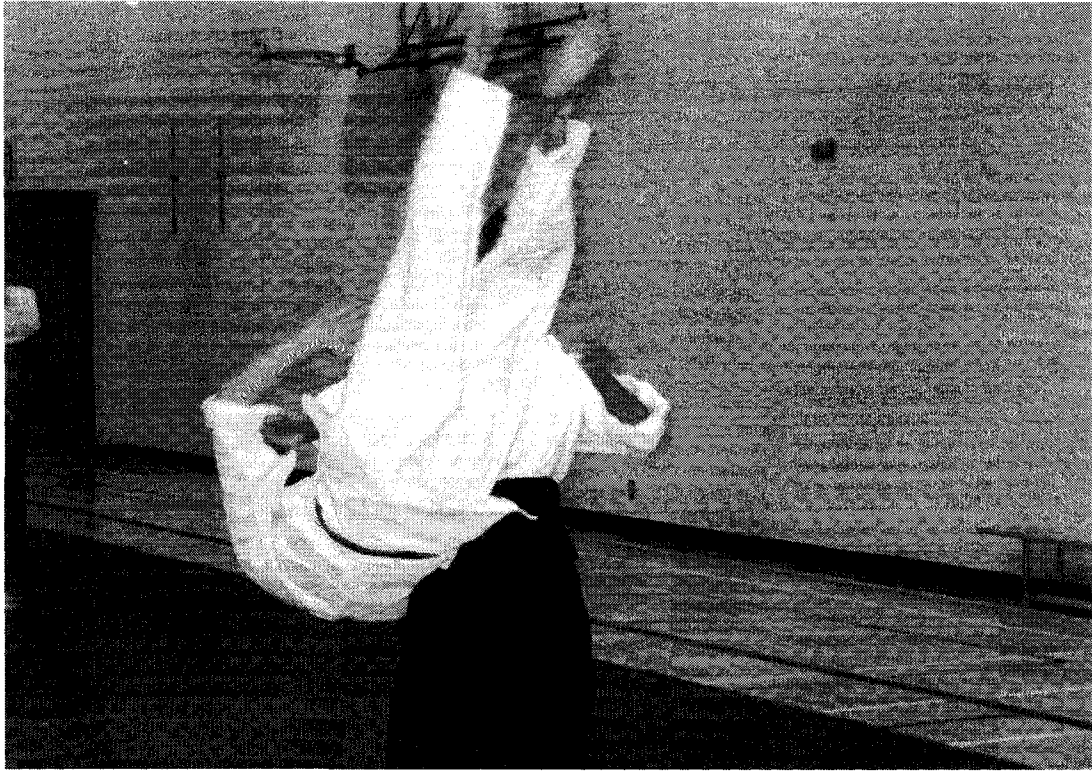


Plate 20. One senior executing an *otoshi* throw, or 'drop throw', on another senior



Plate 21. Matsumoto *sensei* leading students in *jo kata* practice

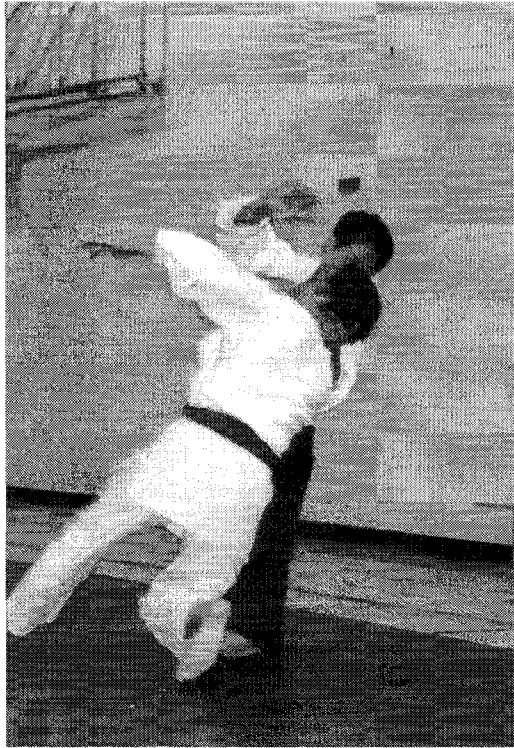


Plate 22. *Irimi Nage*, the 'entering throw'



Plate 23. *Bokken* practice at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology



Plate 24. Post-training drinking session

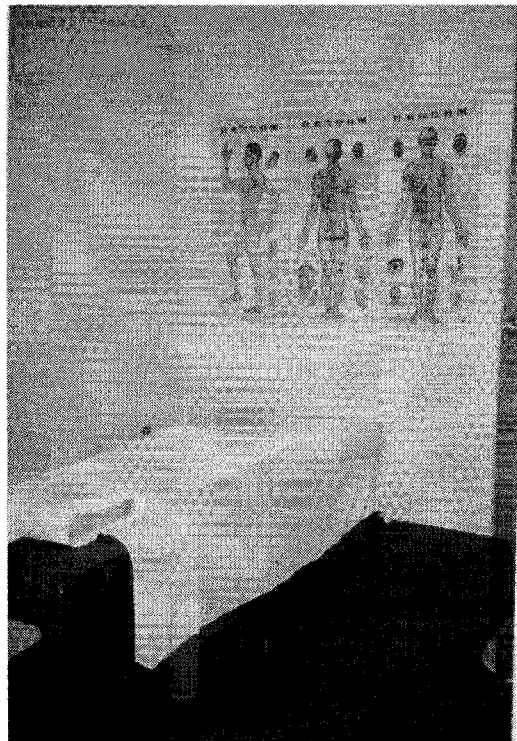


Plate 25. One of the treatment rooms at Matsumoto *sensei's* shiatsu clinic

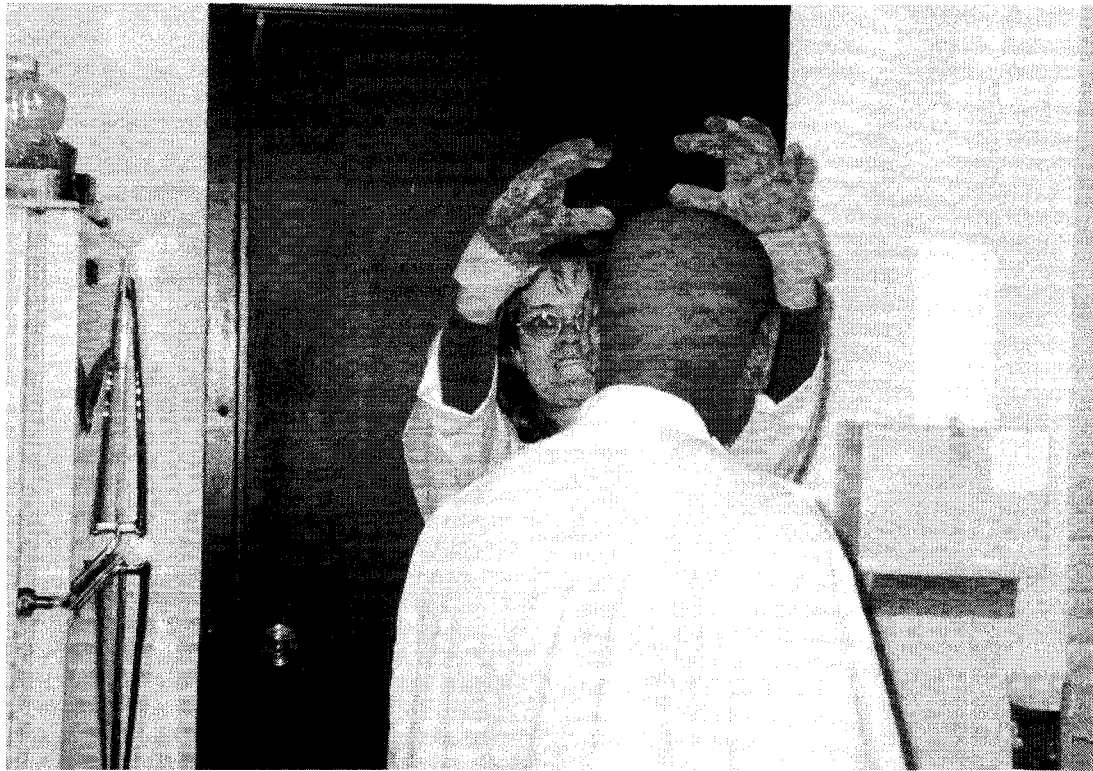


Plate 26. A lighter moment at the clinic



Plate 27. A senior practitioner in *Katori Shinto Ryu* attire

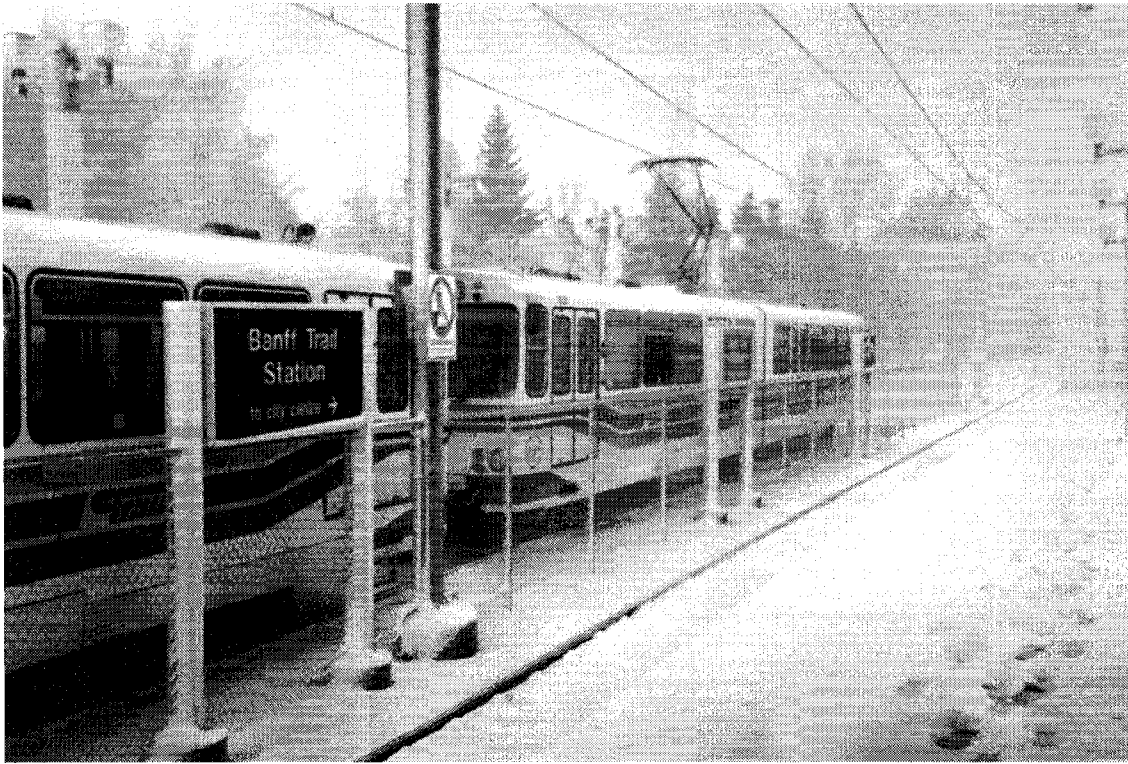


Plate 28. A Calgarian Winter in April 2003

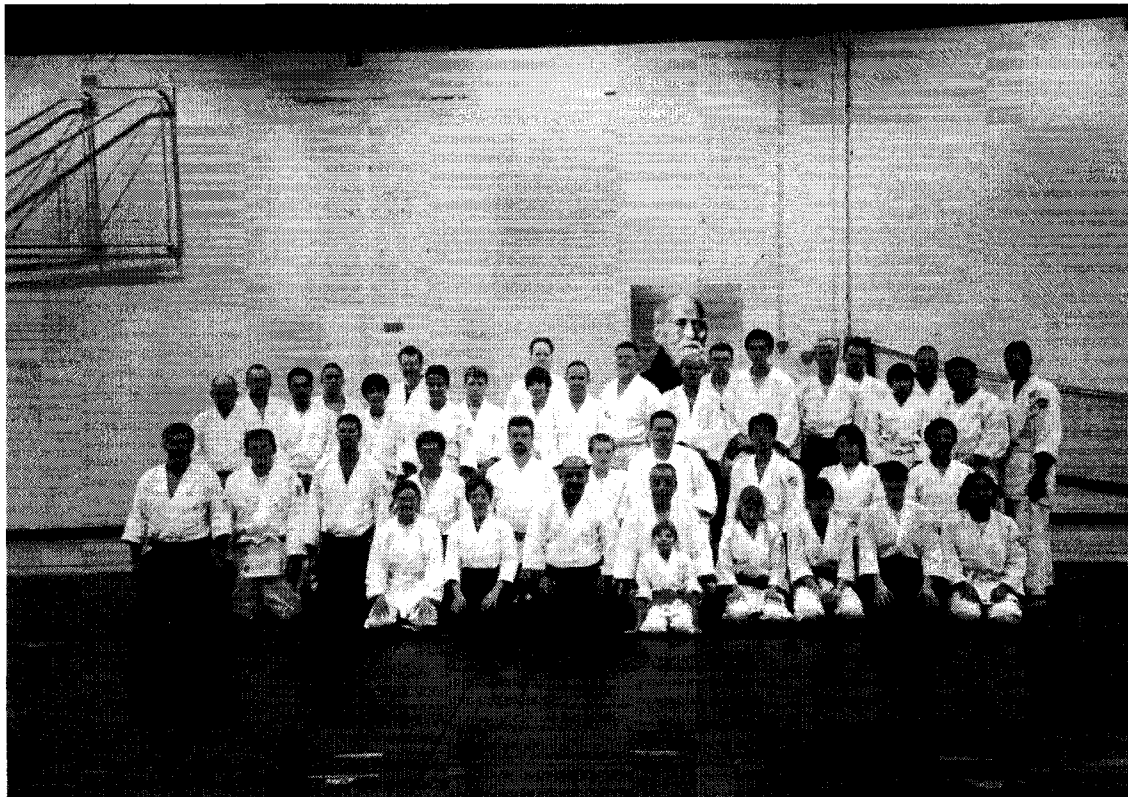


Plate 29. A training camp in 2004 with a large picture of Morihei Ueshiba in the background

EXCURSUS:
Belief and the Body

At the end of day, perhaps one may be curious about how an Aikido practitioner from the Clearwater Aikikai will 'stack up' against a genuinely unrelenting attacker, or when placed within in a more realistic and truly threatening situation. Such a question often arises, because apart from the lack of any competition or tournament where members may actively pit their skills against each other, the martial training that one receives at the Clearwater Aikikai comprised mostly, if not all, of the practice of paired kata, or forms. In spite of this, there existed during my fieldwork, among many members of the Clearwater Aikikai, a deep-rooted belief in the efficiency and applicability of the techniques that are taught and practiced. One became well versed in martial choreography but was seldom, if ever, placed in a situation where one had to rely on spontaneous reflexes against an attacker that was 'un-co-operative'.

Often consumed by an overarching martial ideology that explicitly rejects rivalry or competition, there has never been the practice of 'free sparring', where members learn to execute or put their skills to the test with a simulated attack that is never pre-determined or predictable. Although there was an aspect of practice in the dojo called randori or jiyu waza, which broadly meant 'free exercise', I could not help but notice, once more, the inherently scripted or conveniently predictable nature of the attacks and defences that were taught and employed in training. Consequently, the definition of randori did not appear to sit very well with the way it was actually practiced. As time went on, I soon realized that there were only certain fixed and 'correct' ways of attacking

that an uke and nage should perform in what is allegedly 'free exercise'. Hence, this seemed to be a contradiction in terms of what jiyu waza was suppose to imply.

To be more specific, the 'attacks' that myself and many others practiced against at the Clearwater Aikkai largely comprised of only singular 'knife-hand' strikes to the front and the side of nage's head (shomen-uchi and yokomen-uchi); a single punch to the abdomen (chudan tsuki or mune tsuki); and an assortment of holds performed by uke on nage, which only focused on the wrists, the shoulder or the occasional attempted choke on uke (kubishime). The practice of defenses against kicks, varying punch combinations, or the employment of a 'smart attacker'¹, who would have also tried to actively anticipate and counterattack were hardly, if ever, practiced. In all practices against attacks, the emphasis rested on exhibiting the stylized 'correct form' in the case of either uke or nage, which admittedly, enhanced the safety of such practice, but appeared to compromise a more practically based understanding, or 'feel', for actual physical conflict.

Such a rigid, clearly defined and dogmatic curriculum of martial training, therefore, raises some serious questions to their actual practical applicability in the long run of what was being learned at the Clearwater Aikikai, or even similar martial arts, for that matter. This is because the practice of martial training at the Clearwater Aikikai may be seen to possess a more theatrical and performative character rather than a practical one where spontaneity, unpredictability and a pre-reflexive corporeal

¹ There were, however, the occasional practice of what are known as *kaeshi waza* and *henka waza* at the Clearwater Aikikai. The former refers to how *uke* may try to counter the defenses of *nage*, while the latter referred to how *nage* would attempt to change his technique halfway while executing it in anticipation of a counterattack. Nonetheless, the irony of such practices were also highly scripted in nature, where both partners often already know that such changes were going to occur during practice.

awareness are required in physical confrontations. Nonetheless, as the same time, such performative practices play a part in continuing one's belief in the validity of Aikido's practicality, as one conforms to the illusio of being an Aikidoka via the collusio of one's body and perception together with that of others. Summarily, it seems reasonable for one to raise doubts about the actual efficiency of the martial ability of many of the regular members at the Clearwater Aikikai, including those who may have practiced such forms for years and possess a significant level of rank, but lack no embodied competitive experience in the use of their skills. Despite this, it was also evident that none of the members at the Clearwater Aikikai had ever explicitly voiced such a question, which also made the posing of such a question at times hard, if awkward, for fear of being offensive unintentionally, particularly when speaking to a high-ranking member who had become greatly entrenched in Aikido's cultural and pugilistic universe.

Terry: I've always been a pretty confident person...you know in my abilities...being able to achieve things...but like eh...being in a situation where I would uh...have to protect myself or...someone like Christina...I don't know how confident I would be...I would probably just have to rely on uh...strength and blind rage (chuckle)...

Interviewer: But that sometimes works, you know? (Both of us chuckle together)

Terry: Yeah yeah...but now uh...I can see things differently...and I can see opportunities...spots and...openings...you know eh...it's sort of like the way I look at the world now as if I'm a painter...different from the average person...you know the light and the shade and composition...that's how I look at positions and...as far as that...

On a number of occasions, I was told that becoming proficient in Aikido 'takes a long time' - a reason and justification that often possesses a certain slippery slope character, as this argument can be equally applied to those who may have trained in its techniques for several years. Coupled with an exclusive and self-validating martial ideology of 'non-violence' and 'harmony', such questions of martial functionality are seldom truly put to the test between members, nor even against others who practice other

kinds of martial arts. A main reason for this lies in Aikido's martial rhetoric of 'non-violence' and 'harmony' that appears to conveniently shield and absolve its strongest true believers and members, and even its leadership, from having to ever need to prove their martial ability. Much like the self-affirming ritualized language found in a religion, Aikido's martial vernaculars and its vocabulary of motives (Csordas 1987, p. 445-469, 1999 p. 3-23; Mills 1940 p. 904-913) also function as both an ideological and politicizing barrier that keeps it free and untouchable from external critique and challenge, while keeping a strong grip upon the corporeal and reflexive discipline and identity of its members. Thus, new members, who from the start, are not seen as potential candidates for the cultivation of an Aikido habitus are often asked to leave, or gradually lose interest and backslide the moment they seek to ask questions about the practical applicability of Aikido. To prevent this and to remain within the fold of the 'Way of Harmony', a new member often needed to discipline one's critique or curiosity, and to replace it with a certain unquestioning faith in the sensei and his seniors.

Interviewer: What are some the reasons for people joining Aikido?

Matsumoto sensei: To me eh...Aikido is really unique...compared to other martial art...and then...less power controls people...That's probably why...people like Aikido...and then Aikido is not an aggressive martial art...That's why...most people don't like fighting...but they want to defend themselves...that the idea of martial arts...That's why people come here...they not really aggressive people at all...in my dojo...

Interviewer: But have any aggressive people ever come to your dojo?

Matsumoto sensei: They do...they come in very stupid ways...like being aggressive to beginners and women...those people think they can take advantage... come and give other people a hard time...but they don't last very long...they quit... (or) I kick them out...

Eventually, the continuance of one's unquestioned belief in one's martial ability or Aikido's martial pedigree appears to be highly dependent upon a communal and collusive imagination, often framed together with the acceptance of the therapeutic and

magical language of ki and its resultant corporeal mythologies. It was, therefore, also noticed that whenever such questions are raised, many members' answers would often defend the pedagogy of their martial practice with tautologous responses, claiming to the extent that 'Aikido is much more than that - it is a way of life', or 'Aikido is not just about fighting and therefore not about winning or losing', or 'If you want to learn how to fight, then don't do Aikido' (Ueshiba 2002, p. 10-19). Such rhetorical defences often seemed to exert a chilling effect upon individuals who were genuinely concerned about Aikido's actual martial proficiency, by conversely placing the moral character of the enquirer under scrutiny and suspicion.

Even so, I could not, at the same time, ignore the fact that such defenses appear to possess a certain sense of bad faith among its most loyal practitioners. Furthermore, such discourses were often neatly framed within accepted corporeal mythologies surrounding the superhuman feats of Morihei Ueshiba, or the martial exploits of other famous icons within the Aikido pantheon of charismatic personalities in its history, each forming an authoritative and often unquestioned narrative surrounding Aikido's alleged prowess. They are, then, continually reiterated, practiced and incorporated through the bodies of each member at the dojo from day to day. This includes the ongoing embodiment of a rooted belief in the existence and applicability of ki, and finally, popular portrayals about how Aikido is also a martial art that can be 'very effective' for self-defence and the healthy well-being of its practitioners 'of all ages'. All these ultimately constituted a part of the practical logic of becoming, and being an Aikidoka at the Clearwater Aikikai.

Correspondingly, such martial and magical narratives in the world of the Clearwater Aikikai, as a result, contribute to another ongoing discourse of Aikido's alleged super-corporeal advantages that one may gain as both a martial art and even something more – as a means of possibly achieving a level of bodily, social, symbolic and cultural capital, all of which, ironically, may offer a means of transcending one's corporeal and culturally profane limits, while being shielded from the burden of proof, by virtue of the very pervasive and exclusive nature of its martial doxa. In some cases, the practice of Aikido may even additionally contribute to the social construction of a martial and personal fable that can never be entirely verified nor disproved within its protective ideological cocoon. High-ranking and well-respected Aikidoka such as Matsumoto sensei at the Clearwater Aikikai are, then, seen and respected as model martial artists and cultural supermen or superwomen², provided they are continually perceived as such and supported by the daily self-censorship and resistance towards any open or direct challenge to their authority. Ironically, Jose Rezal, who had been training periodically with the dojo over a span of fifteen years at the time of writing, notes the following:

Jose Rezal: People forget...that it is a martial art...people look and see Aikido being done slowly and oh...it's like a dance...a lot of us would say because it's being done slowly (then) it's like a dance because of the movements...I'm finding that a lot of new students are coming into Aikido...thinking that way...and I find that dangerous...in a sense that it is a martial art...you could hurt people, you could break bones...you could do all these things...it's something that's got to be practical...otherwise it wouldn't have been made...you don't just do something cause..."Oh I...I like circular movement"...O-Sensei didn't develop that way, he came from a background of jujutsu and...a very hard martial art...so he developed a certain way...

Interviewer: So if a new guy were to come in...

Jose Rezal: I have to remind them that it's a martial art...

² This is rare though. The Asian martial arts remain a highly patriarchal site of masculine domination even till today.

At the same time, the act of belief, as one's personal stakes and social embeddedness grows in the game of Aikido over time, is constantly reified and reproduced by the very corporeal and sensual bodies that contribute and collude to the illusio of their martial universe. This often leads to the maintenance of a corporeal and ideological pedagogy which often leads to a necessary misrecognition of the collusive characteristics of their claims, such as beliefs regarding the existence of ki and the alleged martial effectiveness of Aikido – in a modern age where the use of a handgun by an untrained person may easily overwhelm, or easily kill, even the most adept swordsman or the highest ranking Aikidoka who possesses tremendous ki in a matter of seconds.

Thus, continuing the same line of argument, my observations appear to suggest that the practice of ki and one's belief in its existence and effects also possess an essential social-cultural and relational aspect, where the perceived rank and authority of its advocates are also powerful factors that contributed to the corporeal mythologies of Aikido's martial mystique. One can only become a better Aikidoka by willingly locating and committing one's body and mind within Aikido's internal hierarchical framework of knowledge and morality that is defined by one's sensei. For example, in demonstrations of Aikido technique by Matsumoto sensei or others, it was usually the uke, often the more junior ranking practitioner, who bore the responsibility of making a technique 'look right', and if any mistakes or injuries were to occur, they were also to be blamed for being unable to 'follow' or 'sense' the technique properly. Consequently, the body of the junior rank was often the first object of reproach and responsibility whenever something

goes wrong, while the body of a high-ranking senior or a sensei was deemed to be far less vulnerable to such judgments.

Partially combined with a corresponding disciplining of the mental and physical beliefs of others, one then develops 'strong ki' or becomes a 'powerful martial artist' over time in Aikido. This, then, becomes particularly evident when such beliefs and practices are located within a social environment that is highly hierarchical in nature where power relations are often greatly emphasized, recognized and valorized. Many successful demonstrations of ki therefore, often take for granted a pre-disposed belief in it by its demonstrators, much akin to a case where one continually preaches to the converted. This is because ki is not something that can be demonstrated or manifested individually, but it must also be constantly performed, viewed, confirmed and even reaffirmed by the corroborating beliefs and interpreted experiences of others. Demonstrations of ki or the demonstration of a powerful and effective technique are, then, highly scripted, premeditated and symbolically interactive events, where every performer requires at least one other corresponding collaborator and believer. Consequently, it was only within the spatial, ideological and collusive confines of the Clearwater Aikikai that a person could become explicitly strong and powerful in the use of ki, or be adept at the use of Aikido techniques, resulting in impressive displays, as each regular member gradually incorporates the implicit dispositions and strategies of what to do and what not to do, inheriting an entire bodily logic through practice and habituation. From this, we may infer that the notion of belief is, therefore, not merely an abstraction or a solely imagined state; for it also possesses a highly social and visceral dimension, where it has

to be incorporated, felt, sensed and enacted, as much as any cultural form, as part of one's habitus and field at the Clearwater Aikikai.

On a final and cautionary note, however, I would like stress that the reader should not assume that I am attempting a sweeping or condescending dismissal of the social-cultural realities of such beliefs and their corresponding effects. One is not attempting to categorically label such beliefs as irrevocably 'false' or 'wrong' in any dogmatically empirical or positivistic sense, for it also cannot be denied that they are certainly very real in their consequences for every member who seeks to place his or her commitment and body to being an Aikidoka. But on the other hand, it is felt that ethnography should also never be polemically 'native' or fashionably relativizing for its own sake, while self-censoring, in the name of naïve and tourist-like apprehensions of the dictates of a convenient and fashionable 'cultural relativism', where subjectivity and introspection implodes upon itself, neglecting a more critically informed and reflexive appraisal of any observed phenomenon, whatever the stakes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Loose Ends: Ethnographic Reflections of a Failed *Aikidoka*

Sacrifice

The experience of extreme physical pain is often a humbling one. For pain often has the capacity to remind us of the fact that at the final outcome, our bodies are nothing more than organic, imperfect and highly fragile things. Regardless of our day-to-day forgetfulness of such irrevocable impermanence and our egotistical pretensions, our sense of mortality is, then, most often overpoweringly felt during such moments. If encountered in its most extreme way, pain has the capacity to take firm control of our daily lives, in all the decisions, emotions and interpretations of our actions. For this reason, such pain can effectively penetrate and incapacitate the very core of our very existence, and always remain as a startling and humbling reflection of the mortality and corporeal limitations of our embodied worlds, which neither abstraction nor intellectualism has the capacity to effectively overcome or shroud forever. At the same time, the experience of such extreme physical pain is also a harsh reminder of the highly inscriptive characteristics of how our bodily senses play a crucial part in the construction of one's world, as we seek to reflect closely upon a sociology or an anthropology of the body, via the corporeal and fleshly dimensions in which our consciousness is encased within the social universes that we all inhabit. Pain, therefore, is the body's way of protesting any assertions of how the mind can ever claim to be removed from its corporeal shell of nerves, blood, bone and emotion.

It was during that month of June, during the summer of 2004, where I tore the major ligaments in my right foot. As Pedro threw me with *koshi-nage* (hip throw), my

attempt at trying to avoid Larry while landing had not gone well at all. The full weight of my body had landed at an awkward angle on my right foot, and although the mats may have prevented a fracture, it was the soft tissue in my foot that appeared to bear the brunt of the fall. To make matters worse, it further complicated a latent gout condition, which, as a result of the trauma that the foot was subjected too, would continue to haunt me throughout the rest of my fieldwork. Finally, to add to the frustration, my gout condition was not fully diagnosed or treated until more than a year later in August 2005 after I completed my fieldwork, and had returned to Singapore to continue my writing. Initially, I thought it had simply been a ‘bad sprain’ and did not seek immediate medical treatment. The week it happened I even tried to ‘walk it off’, which turned out to be a huge mistake.

That same evening after my accident, I hobbled together along with Matsumoto *sensei* and a few other members for some drinks and snacks as part of the weekly ritual of mid-week post-training get-togethers. By then, the foot had already been fairly swollen while I sought to interview George and Jeremy Summers. On the following day, I was unable to turn up for work at the clinic as I was reduced to limping because of the continuing pain. In spite of this, I was still quite mobile if I planted most of my weight on my left foot as I walked. Hence, I stubbornly did not rest for too long at home, but went ahead with some of my daily chores such as going to the supermarket, and even proceeded back to the *dojo* that same evening to pay my monthly fees of \$60 before hobbling back home. Ignoring the growing stiffness and swelling in my foot, I even accompanied several members at Matsumoto *sensei*’s home to watch a ‘live’ hockey match in the evening. That night, the Calgary Flames were defeated in their playoff

game, and when Dewey dropped me off for the night, I was still hobbling around like a wounded animal on one and a half legs, hoping that the pain would eventually go away. Unfortunately, it did not.

By the time I got into bed and tried to fall asleep, I noticed that the pain had gotten even worse and the swelling around the ankle had gotten a lot larger, and by now, even touching the foot was painful. I tried icing the foot, but the sharp throbbing pain embedded somewhere deep within the foot deteriorated further. I could no longer sleep, and by around two in the morning that same night, the pain had already increased to a point where I could no longer place any weight on the foot without suffering excruciating pain. Even ice could no longer help and I grew increasingly worried and frustrated. I tried to distract myself from the pain by playing a computer game and surfing the internet for the next few hours, but by six in the morning, I was finally convinced that something was seriously wrong. Fighting the pain, I struggled through my field notes and called the first number I could get hold of among my contacts at the *dojo*. After learning about my plight, Terry Roussel arrived in a half an hour with a pair of crutches, which incidentally, had once been used by his wife only a short while ago when she broke a leg. I was immediately sent to Forest Hills Hospital, which was located near the Kensington area, where I was living at the time.

After an agonizing four hour wait, I was finally given an x-ray where the doctors said they could not find any evidence of a fracture in the foot, although the pain was still severe. I was told, then, that it might have been a torn Achilles tendon, as the swelling

seemed serious enough to suspect so. My right foot now looked twice the size of my left. With the diagnosis still inconclusive, they placed my foot in a splint and I was sent home with the help of Terry, having been given an appointment to see an orthopedic specialist two days later. The next three days were difficult. I was unable to turn for up work at the clinic, unable to effectively cook any meals for myself, and unable to turn up for neither training nor I was in any condition to read or write. At that point, my fieldwork looked as if it were on the brink of disaster, as I had only begun my work just over a month earlier. I subsequently relied on painkillers that I had asked a reluctant housemate to purchase for me, as none were prescribed after my visit to Forest Hills. After more questions and a more thorough examination of my foot, the grumpy specialist whom I saw eventually concluded that I was suffering from severely torn ligaments, and not a torn Achilles tendon. The news brought some relief to me but there was still the continuing concern if I was able carry on with my regular participation at the *dojo*. Mobility was awkward and I did not return to work at the clinic nor trained in any classes for another week, until the swelling eventually subsided. I took the initiative of placing myself on a regular dose of up to four pills of Ibuprofen every four to six hours, a painkiller which allowed me to sleep periodically and ultimately saved my sanity. But twelve days after my accident, I decided to return to training, with a heavily bandaged foot.

Interestingly, when I did try to return for training after a period of absence, word had obviously gotten around at the *dojo* about my accident. At one point, upon returning one evening to watch a class, it appeared that the injury I had sustained had become a useful talking point for easily gaining entry into conversations with people, who politely

enquired about my condition when they saw me. Upon reflection, it was probably at this juncture when one began to gain a growing sense of belonging and acceptance, and was gradually being viewed as one of them. Perhaps many began to see me as someone who had paid his dues for being a part of their pugilistic universe. The fact that I returned to training in less than two weeks after my injury had earned me some unexpected attention, whether it was reflected in a general concern for my well-being or as a source of humour about the situation that led to my accident. Even at that point, Larry himself had not known that he had been part of the reason behind my accident. This event also probably foreshadowed my later reputation for being injury-prone in training, although the only other significant event was being accidentally struck by a *bokken* in the eye during a seminar six months later. Nonetheless, the initial label of being the '*Ph.D. guy from Edmonton who is writing about Aikido*' had gradually been subsumed by a heightened communal awareness of who I was as an *Aikidoka*, and hastened a better recollection of my actual name by several regulars. Conceivably, although certainly having been a source of great discomfort to myself, my injury had a humanizing, humbling and self-effacing effect on the way I was perceived by several other members in the *dojo*.

One came to sense that in order to become accepted and respected as one of the regulars, it was a status that had to be constantly earned, but it was not simply done so by the mere donning of the *keikogi* and one's occasional presence at the *dojo* whenever one want to live out his or her martial fantasies. The dedication, commitment and loyalty of one's time *and body*, or what Loic Wacquant (2004a), in his own ethnographic study of boxers, has referred to as 'sacrifice', seemed to be a crucial factor. Although one didn't

realize it at the time, it appeared that my perceived enthusiasm to get back into training, despite a serious injury, may have played a role in forging an identity as someone who was a regular. By once more willing to place my body under the threat of further injury, and willing to risk pain once again only after a relatively short period of rest, this was perhaps met with a mixture of incredulity, respect and sympathy, but *never* with ridicule, contempt or dislike. Yet one could not escape the apparent irony of the situation, as the true reasons for my desperate return were far less heroic, and really based on the relatively short period of time I possessed to conduct my fieldwork each summer, which only amounted to just merely over three months. It was also before I would significantly run out of personal funds for sustenance as I could not seek employment outside of Edmonton, being on a student visa. There were, therefore, no true 'gatekeepers' at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, if one were to use that commonly used concept in the practice of ethnography. The requirements into being eventually accepted was something that had to be constantly earned, with my body, through time and sacrifice.

Interviewer: ...After training Aikido for eight and a half years, uh...what would you say if I were to ask you...what kind of impact that Aikido has had on you?...like your personality or even your work schedule...What would you say it is?

John: Well...the Aikido has been uh...been good for me because it has helped me gain a little confidence...uh...better relaxation...uh...(but)...you know it has been kinda demanding on my family...because you know especially when I was training really heavy... sometimes it was like four or five classes a week, you know there uh...the other end of it where I don't see my kids at night...because I come straight from work right to class...so I'm not home for supper...so that's some of the down side in a way... you know my training gave me lots of experience but just...don't wanna get so bound (chuckle)...and that's one of the reasons why I don't want to live in Calgary...you know I wish there'd be more time I can commit to my family...

Interviewer: So there have been some costs to it?

John: Yeah there have been some costs...but you know like I've stayed in pretty good physical shape... you know for a... I'm now forty-six years old...

Interviewer: So how long do you see yourself going on in Aikido?

John: You know...I don't really see an end in sight...you know sometimes I think right now that I'm too old for this at forty-six....but after last week having that seminar with Yamaguchi sensei being sixty-eight years

old and he's still flying around...and then...I don't think there's an end in sight really...but you know it makes me feel good...getting good conditioning...getting your mind to work...gaining you know, self-confidence.

'P.H.D.'

Additionally, my time spent working at the clinic also initially managed to build and foster a close rapport with Matsumoto *sensei*, who was, at least on the outset, appreciative of my presence as I eventually became the non-salaried auxiliary worker that managed to relieve some of the duties that his assistant, Sarah, had to perform, such as janitorial and cashiering duties, the manning of the reception counter, and not to mention the cleaning of Matsumoto *sensei*'s car and fish tank at the reception area. Over that first summer of 2004, I gradually became a familiar personality at the clinic and even became recognizable to most of Matsumoto *sensei*'s regular clients. During those early months, a friendly rapport and warm working relationship gradually developed between Matsumoto *sensei*, Sarah and me. Admittedly, although life at the clinic could not be entirely viewed as being representative of the everyday social interactions that occurred at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, it undeniably formed an integral part of my further understanding of the various factors and complexities that went into the running and maintenance of the *dojo*. It also gave an ethnographer direct access to the life of one of the most central figures at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, who was Matsumoto *sensei*, and whose presence first made it all possible. Hence, although these two social spaces, that of the *shiatsu* clinic and the Aikido *dojo* were considered separate spatial entities with distinct functions, they were inevitably linked together in practice by members of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Furthermore, it was be noted that the fate of its continued existence greatly relied upon the success and

survival of Matsumoto *sensei*'s *shiatsu* practice, as profits from the clinic played a major role in funding the continued existence of the *dojo*.

The clinic and the *dojo*, therefore, could be said to possess a symbiotic relationship with each other, where their continuing success mutually benefited the other. As noted before, a significant number of people who either took classes at the Aikido *dojo*, or were Matsumoto *sensei*'s *shiatsu* clients, were also often indirectly exposed to the practice of the other, which often led to them engaging his services in his alternate field. Consequently, *shiatsu* patients have sent their children for Aikido lessons, and Aikido students have sent themselves or their friends and relatives for *shiatsu* treatment. Many students who were *shiatsu* clients had been impressed by Matsumoto *sensei* as an Aikido teacher, while some *shiatsu* clients were also encouraged to give Aikido a try after experiencing successful treatment. The proximity of the two spaces, literally under the same roof, enabled a more efficient way to supervise the running of each at the same time. Hence, on several occasions, classes would have already begun at the *dojo*, with inner circle *yudansha* like John Hamilton teaching the first half hour, while Matsumoto *sensei* emerged from the clinic to take over the class after tending to a late client.

One, of course, cannot also not deny the possibility that the gradual acceptance of my presence and rapport with the rest of the regulars at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was also partly due to my increasingly visible and close relationship with Matsumoto *sensei*, whose friendship clearly served as a source of social and cultural capital for any member at the *dojo* or one's 'Aikido career'. In other words, Matsumoto *sensei* was a *powerful*

friend to have if you were to be part of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, for in many ways, *he was* the Clearwater *Aikikai*. On the other hand, on rare occasions, one also sensed an underlying mood of suspicion, puzzlement and quiet resentment, emanating from certain *yudansha* level seniors who were never particularly warm towards my friendship with Matsumoto *sensei*. For this reason, it must be stressed that throughout the time I spent in the field, senior members like John Hamilton, Erik Ballack and Rick James; *Aikidoka* who were ranking *yudansha* and instructors, were some of the individuals that I found to be the hardest to build an effective field rapport with. They probably did not view my presence at the *dojo*, and my friendship with Matsumoto *sensei* as one that only gradually emerged as a result of the elective affinities of my daily employment as non-salaried help at the clinic. Nor was I easily viewed as a typical regular member of the Clearwater *Aikikai* who sought to involve himself with various affiliated *dojo*. For being an ethnographer was largely struggling betwixt and between the positions of being one of them and a complete outsider, and the range of responses from different members often varied. It seems, then, that my friendship with Matsumoto *sensei* was unavoidably politicized in the eyes of some.

Perhaps the very positional status which I occupied during my fieldwork was perceived by others as an unjustifiable privilege for being close to the Clearwater *Aikikai*'s central seat of power and authority. Hence, this did not prevent me from being subjected to thinly-veiled verbal attacks from certain individuals that were meant to humiliate or at least indirectly offend. One significant event occurred in June 2005, just before the conduct of an advanced class for brown and black belt holders. Although I

never wore anything other than a white belt, I had sought permission from Matsumoto *sensei* to participate in this advanced class as the last rank I personally held in Aikido qualified me. Even so, I never presumed that I would be allowed to join in each time, and always explicitly asked Matsumoto *sensei* each subsequent time if I would be able to attend a class like this. On that occasion, I once more asked him for permission, while in view of a number of *yudansha*. Although permission was again granted, this time, a third-degree *yudansha*, the balding chief instructor of another affiliated *dojo* from the south of Calgary, and also one of Matsumoto *sensei*'s most senior students, decided to chip in by saying, "Oh, so you got that rank? Where did you buy that from? In Singapore?"

Almost immediately, there was a sudden hush over the rest of the half dozen people standing there, including Matsumoto *sensei*, who for an instant, sought to quickly react to the intended equivocal nature of such words. The underlying insinuation¹ though, was apparent enough, although in most cases, the need to misrecognize the implication of such words for 'humour' often overtook any recourse for direct confrontation, in view of the potential consequences towards maintaining the cordiality of social relationships. I paused for a short moment, before I calmly responded to him by saying that I had bought my rank off the Internet at a special offer price for only \$2.99, while forcing an artificial smile. I, however, further suggested to that particular *yudansha* that he might want to take a look at the website too as he might find something he liked. Matsumoto *sensei*, sensing his opportunity, quickly added by claiming that he himself had seen the website too, and

¹ In case the reader may fail to entirely grasp the implications of such words, perhaps an analogy might be useful here. Try transposing such a question in the context of a group conversation between different academics at a social gathering. Imagine if you were speaking to another person and told him or her that you had recently obtained your degree from a certain university, and suddenly a virtual stranger interjects with a straight face by saying "Are you sure you passed? Did you pay off your thesis committee and examiners at your university?"

that it did provide good offers on Aikido ranks if people wanted them. His comment eventually allowed everyone to break out in controlled and cautious laughter, for Matsumoto *sensei* had, by engaging in the very same conversational thread, effectively managed to reclaim and reframe the situation through obvious exaggeration, simply by virtue of the fact that he was the most senior person on the scene. What might have ended up as an awkward and tense standoff between a *yudansha* and I was eventually, and fortunately, diffused. Nonetheless, I remained, throughout the tenure of my fieldwork at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, what Jerry Lim labelled as a *mukyu*, a term he created for me as one ‘who held no grade’, who was a part and also *apart* at the same time.

It was also during my time spent at the clinic where I was given the curious nickname – ‘*P.H.D.*’ – an obvious satirical reference to my candidacy in my doctoral programme. Such a title was used often by Matsumoto *sensei* and Sarah in their daily references to me, which also revealed a certain sense of insecurity and bewilderment at how something like Aikido practice could be deemed to be an appropriate academic research topic². By overtly stating and emphasizing my status as a graduate student, along with a mixture of good-natured humour, this established a ‘joking relationship’ that was apparently asymmetrical in view of the fact that I also could not do the same to Matsumoto *sensei*. Perhaps it was a way of their attempt at coming to terms with such an unusual scenario of having someone among them who was also ‘studying them’. Calling me ‘*P.H.D.*’ served to deconstruct and subvert all the usual connotations that came with the implication of what the title entailed – that of someone who possessed a high level of education and supposedly very learned. The student ethnographer, as *academic*

² Then again, such sentiments have also been similarly expressed by some academics.

objectifier, thus became objectified himself. I became a spectacle and a social anomaly, who had joined the Clearwater *Aikikai* for one of the most unlikely and idiosyncratic reasons – an ethnographic thesis that could somehow result in a ‘P.H.D.’ in anthropology. Consequently, on several occasions, Matsumoto *sensei* would appear to revel in the fact that I was still unaware or ignorant about numerous aspects of either Japanese culture or Aikido practice. He, then, often demanded, in a half-serious tone, that he should also be awarded a Ph.D. in anthropology by my professors at the University of Alberta, as he claimed to possess a vast knowledge of archeology and paleontology. This was an assertion that often required me to placate him, on several occasions, by agreeing to inform my thesis committee about this.

Living in harmony

By the start of my third month of fieldwork in July 2004, my foot appeared to have healed substantially, although it seemed to have lost up to at least a third of its former flexibility, making it extremely difficult to sit in *seiza* anymore, or to execute quick and sudden movements with the same foot. Furthermore, it was also at this time when certain unforeseeable events occurred that led to my move to the *dojo itself*, for during the last two weeks in June that same year, my relationships with my housemates, three white Anglophone Canadians, had worsened tremendously. Two were female undergraduates at the University of Calgary while the other was a male electrician by occupation, all who, to make a long story brief, had grown increasingly disgruntled with my presence. Among other more creative reasons, I was falsely accused for the theft of *toilet paper* and for not ‘helping out’ with household chores, inclusive of the time when I incurred my injury.

This was in view of the fact that I had been performing cleaning duties daily in spite of my mobility problems, but because I had not been keeping to a mysteriously conjured cleaning roster that I had never been informed of in any way since I arrived, I was deemed guilty. I was also charged for deliberately increasing the monthly utility fees for raising the thermostat on unusually cold nights because I was staying in the basement. Finally, the last straw came when I was told that there was a host of other mystifying offences I had committed over the last two months, and that the three of them would want to have it out with me one afternoon. I then waited for over two hours, on a Sunday afternoon for them to assemble and verbally lynch me. My patience ran out, however, when two of them failed to turn up. Remembering that he had once offered to let me stay at the *dojo*, I made a call to Matsumoto *sensei* on the phone and informed him about my predicament. He was surprisingly sympathetic and understanding, and offered me a chance to stay at the *dojo*, which I gratefully accepted.

My stay at the *dojo* of the Clearwater *Aikikai* was a memorable one. Although I had been hoping to do this sometime later in the course of my fieldwork, my move had come far earlier and under conditions that had been unpredictable. I first started sleeping, on an old and dusty metallic bed, on the artificial attic located above the reinforced plastered ceilings above the changing rooms and the clinic, in a space that also functioned as a storage area for all kinds of *shiatsu* and Aikido related equipment. As it would be pitch dark in the nights if one turned off the lights in the *dojo*, an old lamp was given to me by Kouichi, during the time before he got promoted. However, with the increasing temperatures of July, I soon graduated to sleeping on the mats in the nights, right in front

of the *kamiza*, under the watchful eyes of Morihei Ueshiba, with a *bokken* by my side, just in case³. The *dojo* and the clinic was, after all, originally a warehouse, located in a relatively isolated location on the outskirts of the city centre, where the nights were quiet and the nearest form of public transport was an LRT (Light Rapid Transit) train station at least a ten-minute walk away. My increasing immersion into the Aikido community as a result of being allowed to stay at the *dojo* of the Clearwater *Aikikai* took my role as participant observer and objectified participant to a new depth where I too, had developed a keen sense of the game of Aikido. Matsumoto *sensei* and several of the regulars, including Jerry Lim, Larry Petrovic, Dominic Bucher and Kazuko Nakamura had become close friends, particular the last two, who emerged as my closest fellow *Aikidoka* and confidants throughout the course of my fieldwork. That converted warehouse became both my home and ‘office’, and I was also Matsumoto *sensei*’s night watchman.

By the end of July 2004, I had comfortably adapted to the requirements of my everyday life at the Clearwater *Aikikai*. My body had also become disciplined to the rigours and strains of life at the *dojo*. This consisted of a regular training regime that averaged at least two hours each day for six days a week except Sundays⁴, on top of my daily janitorial, cashiering and receptionist duties, while struggling against sleep to update my field notes late in the nights in the kitchen after sorting out the laundry. I also took the opportunity to practice on my own in the nights in my own privacy, sometimes in near complete darkness, for a lark. Subsequently, after the first ten weeks since I began

³ Upon my return later in October 2004, I began sleeping on the floor in the adjoining kitchen and laundry area, which was the space that connected the *dojo* and the clinic. As the temperatures in the nights were dropping, the kitchen was the warmest place.

⁴ Sunday classes were not scheduled as this was against Matsumoto *sensei*’s religious beliefs.

my fieldwork, I realized that even my own body had changed. I had lost more than four kilogrammes of my body weight, betraying a leaner and fitter body, though not one that was neither excessively wiry nor muscle-bound. For the nature of Aikido training at the Clearwater *Aikikai* presented a relatively less demanding approach compared to other martial arts, thus making it suitable for older and injured bodies that often require a more tempered and gradual approach to the development of flexibility, speed and power. Nevertheless, despite being a martial art that appears to downplay the need for ostensibly raw and rigorous physical training, its effects were probably still noticeable, particular through more intensive participation.

Interviewer: If you want to do something for fitness...there's lots of... different kinds of stuff that you can do other than martial arts...you can run...you go to the gym and all other stuff like that, but why Aikido?

George Summers: I can't run because I have bad knees. I ride my bike to work...so I do that as exercise...I hate gym...so this is something where you get some social interaction, meet some people and learn something a little more mentally challenging at well...

Jeremy Summers: ...(for) enjoyment but exercise too...I don't enjoy going to... pumping iron...you actually don't get any flexibility too...it's just arm strength...social interaction really...you meet all these people...cause I would never have met you...or anyone there...

Interviewer:...If I were to ask you...to name at least one thing that Aikido has changed about yourselves...in your everyday routine...what do you think it would be?

George Summers: I touched my toes for the first time in twenty-five years...the stretching and the warm-ups and the flexibility...it's accomplished what I wanted to accomplished and I've learned some skills...I've never been in a fight in my life...I'm at the age of forty-four...I can't see me using it to defend myself...I just don't put myself in positions that need it...it's the exercise, the flexibility, the camaraderie that I get out of it...

The Aikido body was, then, one that was probably very different from 'martial arts' images in popular culture, lacking the excessively powerful frame or ballet-like kicking ability and jumping flexibility that one often associated with 'fighting' in action movies. On the contrary, the Aikido body was lean and not hard or large, and one became quicker and suppler, although one could not help but notice several high-ranking

practitioners in Aikido who were excessively obese or at least significantly overweight. Nonetheless, if one had subjected one's body to the daily rigours of Aikido training, the resultant body was more akin to that of a middle or long-distance runner, rather than that of a hundred metres sprinter – a body progressively (re)constructed from the daily practice of countless *ukemi* and aerobic activity, becoming one built more for limberness, endurance and stamina, rather than one based on bulk, power and speed. My corporeal instincts, after having been inactive in Aikido for nearly three years and being subjected to an entirely different set of bodily hexes in Karate, were also now increasingly 'hybridized'. Numerous reprimands and corrections from Matsumoto *sensei* and other seniors such as Jerry, John and Nguyen had made whatever bodily habits I had inscribed from my Karate practice being increasingly *recognized* as *faults* of the body to be corrected and disciplined.

Along with this, the act of bowing constantly like a stereotypical Japanese person had become a common corporeal expression, as almost every instinct and reaction that I incorporated were centred on the practice of everyday life at the *dojo*. How I moved, how I acted and how I reacted were gradually in flux as I strove to become an *Aikidoka*, again. Hence, I was rediscovering and re-incorporating the necessarily bodily discourses and pedagogical tasks that came along within the habitus of an *Aikidoka*. I also began re-inscribing unto my speech and behaviour the necessary Japanese expressions and bodily dispositions that came as part of the practical logic of a martial art that was highly self-conscious of its cultural and historical baggage. The typical Japanese bow, in which one non-verbally acknowledged or greeted the presence and communications of others, had

become a highly habituated mode of bodily expression that grew to be an integral part of my daily corporeal interactions with Matsumoto *sensei*.

Furthermore, most of my responses to Matsumoto *sensei* were now instinctively punctuated with Japanese expressions such as ‘*Hai*’ (Yes!), ‘*Ohayou Gozaimasu*’ (Good morning), ‘*Konnichi-wa*’ (Good day or Good Afternoon), ‘*Konban-wa*’ (Good evening), ‘*Oyasumi Nasai*’ (Good Night), and even ‘*Sayounara*’ (Goodbye) as some of the most common forms of salutations or responses at the *dojo*. Furthermore, because I had virtually become a resident *within* the *dojo* itself, Matsumoto *sensei* insisted that I was required to exclaim the expression ‘*Itte-kimasu*’ to him and Sarah whenever I left the premises of the *dojo*, denoting that I would be *leaving my home*⁵ for a moment. Upon returning to the *dojo*, I was again required to say ‘*Tada-ima*’, announcing my return. By the end of my first three months at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, I had become, in body at least, a martial and cultural ‘hybrid’⁶, or a liminoidal and transient figure at the *dojo*, the result of the work of time on my body and habitus, which was neither entirely comfortable with my surroundings nor entirely out of place.

Irreconcilable Harmony

Unfortunately, my stay as a literal ‘live-in student’, or full-time ‘apprenticeship’ at the Clearwater *Aikikai* did not last as long as I had hoped. I left Calgary in August 2004 after the completion of my first three months of fieldwork at the *dojo*, and had

⁵ Such expressions are used more commonly within households between family members or at least, between people who are familiar or intimate with each other.

⁶ I am employing the term here with some caution, hence the quotation marks. This is because certain applications of the term ‘hybridity’ also seem to imply the presence of an underlying sense of purity with regards to the parts that result in a ‘hybrid’. I do not wish to allude to such assumptions.

originally planned on doing the same at the end of that year in November and December, along with the summer of 2005. Unfortunately, certain unexpected developments would dramatically alter the nature of my friendship with Matsumoto *sensei*, and even till this day, the final conclusions to the true reasons behind their occurrence remain unclear. Nonetheless, it could be understood as an event that was also revealing of the potential obstacles and limits of fieldwork. At the same time, what seems clear enough though, are that these potential reasons did not originate from my time spent in training, but from certain events that happened at the *dojo*'s other spatial cousin, the *shiatsu* clinic.

Between my return for the second phase of extended fieldwork at the *dojo* at the end of the year, I returned to Calgary for a short stay of ten days in October 2004 to present a paper for a conference organized by the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, which was organized and held in downtown Calgary. I, then, once again sought the permission of Matsumoto *sensei* to live at the *dojo*, something which I had become quite accustomed to from the previous summer. He readily agreed and I subsequently arrived at the appointed time. The situation at the clinic, however, had significantly changed as compared to the previous summer. This was because Matsumoto *sensei* began to engage a full-time apprentice at the clinic, who turned out to be Kouichi Nakajima, the former chef from Japan who married a white Canadian woman. He had been under Matsumoto *sensei*'s tutelage for the last three months after quitting his previous job at a warehouse. One of the unused consultation rooms had also been rented out to another physiotherapist, who shared with Matsumoto *sensei* the use of the kitchen, the reception area and other amenities. I also learnt that Sarah, Matsumoto *sensei*'s assistant and

apprentice whom I had worked with, was still around, but there appeared to be some underlying tension between the two.

One evening later in the week, Sarah, a single mother, informed me that she would be leaving the clinic early as she needed to spend time with her daughter. However, as she would have a few hours to herself before seeing her daughter, she suggested that I could also join her for an early dinner after she got off work. As I was still committed to my duties at the clinic, she approached Matsumoto *sensei* to obtain permission for me to leave slightly earlier to join her. Upon hearing this, Matsumoto *sensei* allowed me to leave earlier but sternly warned me to not to consume any alcohol, if I intended to return for class later that evening. I found this a fair expectation and willingly agreed. After a quick non-alcoholic meal, Sarah sent me back to the *dojo*, where I reported to Kouichi, who appeared to have been informed by Matsumoto *sensei* to ensure that I was not to walk into a class with the scent of alcohol. Class that evening was conducted as normal, with one of the other senior instructors in charge, as Matsumoto *sensei* had a separate appointment elsewhere.

What was surprising and also disappointing the following day was when Matsumoto *sensei* summoned me for a private conversation in the men's changing room, and told me that I would no longer be able to put up at the *dojo* anymore. He continued to say that I was most welcome, of course, to turn up for classes regularly and to go on with my interviews and observations as I had done so in the past, but explained that my presence at the *dojo* was becoming a 'hindrance' and 'distraction' to people like Sarah

and Kouichi. In spite of the fact that I had been working at the clinic for free, he also did not seem to think that I had been contributing enough to the needs of the clinic since I arrived. Stunned, I asked if there were any additional reasons to my dismissal, as this revelation came without any warning, for I had always been under the impression that my assistance and commitment at the *dojo* and clinic had always been welcome since the previous summer. *Sensei* offered none. Ultimately, then, one was hard-pressed to *make sense* of the apparent contradiction between the reasons given to me – the first, for having been a hindrance while helping out; and the second, for not being helpful enough. Following my expulsion, I also learnt that Matsumoto *sensei* had privately summoned Sarah into his office and reprimanded her after the incident, apparently questioning her ‘loyalty’ and ‘commitment’ to the clinic. Anyway, Sarah eventually left the clinic a few months after the completion of my fieldwork in August 2005. A part of the reason appeared to stem from the growing tension between her and Matsumoto *sensei* as a result of a salary dispute, and certain private personality issues which unfortunately, proved to be the end of the line for Sarah.

After that unfortunate event, I returned to Calgary once more in November 2004 until the end of the year, but I had relocated myself for the remainder of my fieldwork in a relatively new townhouse, owned by a young Canadian-born Chinese couple in the ‘ethnic’ and ‘problematic’ northeast of Calgary. This again marked a turning point for my experiences at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where I began to gradually withdraw from life at the clinic and the central *dojo*, while in turn extending and expanding my visits, observations and interviews to members of two other affiliated *dojo*. The first was located

at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) and run by Jerry Lim, the Malaysian-born naturalized Canadian; and the other was located at the Southland Recreation Centre, headed by Rick James. In particular, my increased association with Jerry's *dojo* and the students who practiced there provided me a useful alternative perspective on being a part of the Clearwater *Aikikai* from a different vantage point for my fieldwork, and gradually emerged to become my second most important site for my interviews and *participant objectification*. Concurrently, another reason for this growing attachment may be attributed to the fact that Jerry also seemed to recognize a certain sense of 'transcultural kinship' with me, as he saw me as someone who also came from a part of the world that he grew up in, and was eager to confide and share some of his more personal thoughts to me. Jerry was an extremely athletic and vibrant man on the verge of turning sixty years old, and his personal success as a wealthy businessman and relatively older age compared to Matsumoto *sensei* was sometimes a source of comparison.

Over time, upon sharing my confusion regarding the conditions of my dismissal as a 'live-in' student at the *hombu dojo*, a few senior practitioners I grew to know better also expressed an understated and mutual understanding for what had happened, as some appeared to have also once struggled with Matsumoto *sensei*'s idiosyncrasies, occasionally inconsistent standards and past doubts over their 'loyalty'. One long-serving senior member also noted that if any senior *Aikidoka* at the Clearwater *Aikikai* possessed a strong, charismatic and individualistic personality, coupled with obvious talent in her or his ability in Aikido, this in most cases, would lead to certain tensions arising between such a practitioner and Matsumoto *sensei*. Thus, the deliberately public but polite rebuke

and humiliation of a senior practitioner, often through a thinly euphemized veil that presented itself under the rhetoric of 'training' or 'joking', was one of the ways for disciplining any ambitious person back in line, or least served as a *gentle and peaceful warning* for many. Although my removal from being a periodic live-in student was clearly not due such reasons, one perhaps might see certain parallels from other events that occurred just before and after my dismissal.

In the following year of 2005, apart from a brief visit during the winter in February for a seminar where I stayed in the northeast again for two days, I began the final stages of my fieldwork in the summer when I returned to Calgary once more for another extended period of more than three months. I continued, as I had the previous year, to attend the Clearwater *Aikikai's* annual training camp that was again held at the town of Canmore in the Rocky Mountains. Interestingly, I also managed to contact and interview a senior practitioner and instructor who had resigned from the Clearwater *Aikikai* a few years earlier, as a result of controversy pertaining to his loyalty. As noted earlier, this had been partly due to his growing ambitions in the Aikido world and for being increasingly close to a rival of Matsumoto *sensei*. At the same time, my relationship with Matsumoto *sensei* remained mutually cordial and respectful at best, but it never quite recovered from the earlier tension and my surprise over the dubious reasons for my departure from the *dojo*. To complicate matters, another attack of gout, in early July that same year, once more incapacitated me for a week, which was again initially interpreted by me as a 'sprain'.

Nevertheless, the final weeks of my fieldwork saw me further interacting, interviewing and associating with members from a wider pool of individuals who did not necessarily always trained at the main *dojo* where the clinic was. My already liminal status as a practitioner inevitably grew stronger as I was often hopping from *dojo* to *dojo*, now no longer having a clearly defined base for my field participant and observations. Upon reflection, particularly in my final month in Calgary, I realize that this may have even amounted to an indirect and gradual period for my disengagement from the field altogether, as Matsumoto *sensei* and the clinic increasingly featured less and less in my daily undertakings, while my presence at SAIT became more regular. I also could not deny the growing sense of awkwardness which remained between me and Matsumoto *sensei*, although I bought him a fairly expensive bottle of Japanese *sake* as a farewell gift, which he received rather nonchalantly. On August 7th 2005, I packed my bags in my second-floor room at the townhouse on Rundleson Road in northeast Calgary, and after bidding my farewells to Matsumoto *sensei* and several others whom I had come to know over the last few years, I headed for the airport with the help of Dominic and Kazuko. I would not return to Calgary again until more than two years later.

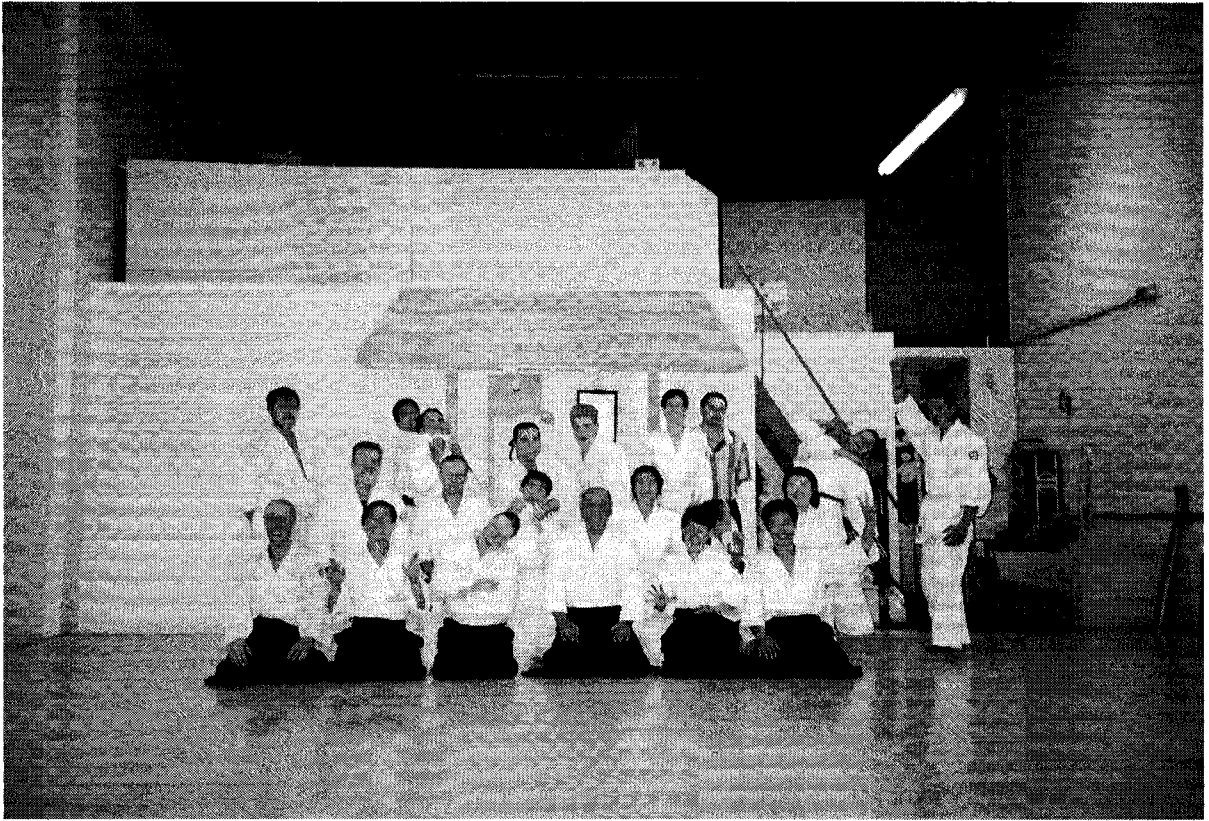


Plate 30. Happier times - a show of humour during a group picture

CHAPTER EIGHT

Making Sense: The Body as Canvas and Cosmos¹

Bodies of Culture, History and Power

In summing up the essential arguments of this thesis, the practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* may be understood as a significant phenomenological and social-cultural exercise in the inscription and embodiment of particular narratives of *culture*, *history* and *power* – *by means of the body*. In other words, it is through a person's regular and dedicated participation, with the corporeal investment of one's body, which ultimately plays an essential role in constructing an emerging identity that culminates into becoming a member of the Clearwater *Aikikai* - an *Aikidoka*. A *good Aikidoka*, therefore, is one who has successfully incorporated and integrated, through bodily practice, the various cultural, historical and relational discourses² embedded in Aikido's pugilistic universe. The body, then, is seen to serve as a major and fundamental conduit in facilitating the creation of an 'Aikido habitus', where mere abstraction, thought, or 'pure reason' has no epistemological or cosmological monopoly, particularly within body cultures such as the martial arts or sports. In addition, like every other habitus, although an Aikido habitus is socially constructed, it is also at the same time, a highly visceral, carnal and corporeal universe of *durable dispositions and structuring structures*. And once embodied and incorporated, this inevitably raises the stakes in one's sense of place and identity, because all knowledge, it seems, is ultimately learned¹ through the medium of our bodies, in which the mind is an undeniable and inseparable part of.

¹ The subtitle of this chapter, 'The Body as Cosmos and Canvas', was inspired from a workshop I attended and presented a related paper in November 2005, organized by the Asia Research Institute in Singapore.

² The term discourse is understood in the Foucauldian sense, referring to a particular system of thought consisting of beliefs, actions, attitudes and practices.

In addition, situated on a more contextually specific level, this ethnographic study of an Aikido community sustains the argument of how the practice of body cultures such as the martial arts, dance and sports rely heavily upon the senses as the heart of its corporeal universe of meaning, identity and ritual. Consequently, this also suggests a number of broader implications regarding our understanding of the constituents of culture, history and power in all other sociological and anthropological phenomena. Adopting Csordas's (1994, p.1-26) view that the body is the "Existential Ground of Culture and the Self", it thus follows that *what our bodies do*, and *not just what is done* to our bodies, is very much both the *cosmos* and *canvas* of our practical everyday sensibilities of identity, belief, morality and society. This is because the body is not merely an *object*, but is also a thinking, feeling and breathing *subject* that serves as an essential medium in which our daily existence and the various meanings and emotions inscribed upon its practices are *made sense* of. By adopting such a view, the notion of *embodiment* may then be seen as a fundamental paradigm in all anthropological and sociological study, thus serving as the *modus operandi* of how meaning is created by the body in everyday life (Csordas 1990, p. 5-47, 2002, p. 58-87).

Consequently, with the body as an intersubjective sensorimotor *being-in-the-world*, our notions of Self and Culture do not exist as forms of pure and abstracted consciousness but are always embodied in flesh, blood and bones that are inevitably consequences and expressions of *intentionality*, *pragmatism* and *perception* (Drew 1990, p. 209-219, Merleau-Ponty 2002). Our bodies are, then, the *cosmos* of how notions of culture, history and power are felt and experienced and are, at the same time, the *canvas*

in which such notions are made into social reality through the performative and inscriptive processes upon our bodies, the sole and irreplaceable carnal vessels of our Selfhood. Hence, on top of *what our bodies do*, it is also *what our bodies do in conjunction and relation with other bodies*, which further constitutes a vital role in becoming or transforming us into who we are.

Framed within the context of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, embodied narratives of culture, history and power are thus acquired, habituated and incorporated in a variety of degrees and qualities, by virtue of the differentiated social-economic, educational and political backgrounds of every one of its members, particularly among the most committed ones. Therefore, the construction of identity, knowledge and meaning does not rest upon more simpler notions of an irrevocable dichotomy between structural objectivism or existential subjectivism, but more accurately, possesses a *praxeological* dimension, a dialectical and relational aspect which can only be revealed if one were to re-claim our reflexive consciousness pertaining to our bodies - the vessels of flesh, blood, bone and senses with which all culture, history and power is constructed, remembered and executed. This is because it was only through ongoing interactive and relational events between my body and other bodies that culture, history and power in the practice of Aikido is given its *sense* of embodied meaning and phenomenological anchor, and neither one of them could have been successfully achieved without an appeal to the continuing ritualization, contextualization and discipline of our senses and bodies (Bell 1990, p. 299-313, 1997).

Correspondingly, neither are culture, history and power merely ‘social facts’, ‘interpretations’, ‘subjective ideals’, or ‘things’, but rather are, eventually, an order of consciousness that needs to be felt and experienced within a carnal corporeality. For this reason then, becoming an *Aikidoka*, or to be a regular practitioner well-embedded in its pugilistic and social-cultural matrix, was not possible merely through the maintenance of one’s nominal membership at the organization. One had to *do* Aikido and not just think Aikido, for the practice of Aikido entails a highly visceral dimension that can be described as ‘body work’, where the world in which we live in and the social-cultural universes in which we inhabit are firstly grasped via the senses and the conditions of our social being, as one seeks to renegotiate identity via the transformation how one uses or perceives one’s body (Gimlin 2002, p. 1-15). What is being advocated here, then, is a way of understanding the nature and roots of any social-cultural universe, which are seldom, if ever, grounded polemically within a highly cognitive and abstracted manner, for in the final equation, notions of body and mind are seen to be arbitrary distinctions in the construction of meaning in one’s everyday life.

Interviewer: Do you think that there’s anything about yourself, about your life, after six months of Aikido that has changed? Has it affected anything about you?

Gabriel: Well eh...if I don’t go for classes eh...I don’t feel the same...I definitely feel like something tensing the next day. I definitely feel more relaxed after a class. Sometimes I find that...it makes up for eh...a fast pace during the week...I get off work and do a few things around the house then supper and off to Aikido...well I get up early for work, so when I get home from Aikido, I take a shower and then it’s off to bed...one of the other reasons eh... for doing this kind of physical activity...it’s for general fitness. In fact I’m like forty-six and I’ve had back injuries...if I were to just try to get up everyday in the morning and do stretching it’s never gonna happen...but if I go to Aikido...then I...it’s part of my Aikido training so...getting back stretches, stretching my muscles, limbering my joints.

The body work in Aikido’s universe, therefore, requires one to also envelope, dress and situate our bodies within our *keikogi*, *hakama* and *obi*, and to discipline our

bodies through the inculcation of various bodily dispositions in the practice of sitting, kneeling, bowing, standing, walking, and looking – all of which are combined within a sensual domain where sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste become further heightened through the continued ritualization and habituation of one's body and its senses. Simultaneously, it is also a pedagogical and agonistic exercise in a highly sensual universe of an organic *communitas* of flesh and blood, sight and sound, sweat and smell, fear and stoicism, frustration and anger, and even, at times, adrenaline, fear and physical pain. Hence, in order to become an *Aikidoka*, it was not enough to talk or think about it, but one had to continually perform with the body. A person's body in the cultural and pugilistic world of Aikido is both social-cultural cosmos and canvas, where any claim to a clear division of the sacred and the profane are arbitrary and often redundant, because both purity and danger are also never necessarily opposites in the construction of the *habitus* of a 'peaceful warrior' in the universe of Aikido.

Interviewer: So you've never had any negative experiences training in the dojo..?

Craig: Nope...I think...I think it attracts the same type of personalities...people with the same interests in life...so I think that people naturally tend to get along a bit better...due to the fact that I think it is something that all people are interested in...

Interviewer: So as for the reasons for why people are doing Aikido ...are you saying that their reasons are all very similar to yours?

Craig: I think so... I think they may be a bit different...for someone like say X...he may be interested but (only) in the physical aspects of it...he may eh...want to know how to defend himself...and someone like N...I know eh he's really interested in the spiritual aspects...even though the main reasons are different...I know that C is still interested in the spiritual aspects eh...ki and the idea behind it...and I know that N also takes an interest in the physical aspects of it...the physical training that's there...

Interviewer: So if I were to ask you to describe the kinds of qualities of the people in Aikido. What would they be?

Craig: Well...everyone seems very sociable...you never see anyone hiding in the corner...everyone's very talkative...they may be shy persons...but they open up once they see the friendship...they see how people interact...and they're just sucked into it...and there seems to be a lot of different eh...a lot of different characteristics that people have...with different occupations...they all seem to interact really well...I know L and K are both teachers...L's a fun guy (chuckle)...and eh...people like B and N...it attracts a lot of people from different backgrounds...and different occupations...but they all seem to be similar in

character...how sociable they are...their interests...how they welcome people in the group...I noticed that...whenever there's a new person coming in...there's always people offering to help them...and they're always accepting...

While the practice of Aikido in Tokyo, Calgary and Singapore may certainly share a number of similarities, they are also distinguished by a number of discrete and unique characteristics, greatly dependant upon the unique sum of the combination of varying sources, in constant flux with the local social-cultural environments that they have grounded themselves in. The context in which my study was done thus highlights this point clearly as it was also an ethnography of a socio-cultural and pugilistic universe that is no longer necessarily bounded by its original geographical national boundaries, nor the cultural logic from where it first took root in. For this project is also as much of an ethnography of an urban *localized* Canadian community, just as it is an ethnography of a *transnational* Aikido community, where cultural and geographical boundaries are increasingly blurred. The practice of Aikido has also become a part of what Marshall Sahlins (1995, p. 152-154) has coined as a *structure of the conjuncture*, which he carefully defined as the 'situational sociology of cultural categories', a situation where varying worldviews or cultural logics are no longer exclusive in their own right, and they inevitably encounter other worldviews and negotiate their own practices with others within the same interactive environment. Consequently, the familiar in turn, may become the exotic, and the exotic, the familiar.

Additionally, the practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* was also a practice in the highly stylized and even stereotypically defined cultural praxis of 'Japanese-ness' that, interestingly, consisted of simultaneously relativizing and essentializing discourses

of culture along the lines of a loosely defined ‘warrior ethos’, existing often as a transient yet significant cultural ideology in varying degrees and qualities among different people within the *dojo*. Hence, the relationship between Aikido and its Japanese cultural origins have always been a self-conscious component of its practice. This is attributed to the observation that whenever one is *doing Aikido*, one is also simultaneously *doing Japanese-ness*, in varying degrees depending on its emphasis within one’s immediate surroundings. For it appeared that the committed practice of Aikido or other similar Asian martial arts could also be seen as an attempt at recollecting, reclaiming, reconstructing and even mystifying essentialized notions of ‘Asian-ness’, or more specifically in this case, the notion of ‘Japanese-ness’. Framed within the backdrop of a society that is probably only behind Vancouver in terms of being one of the fastest growing metropolitan, multicultural and transnational cities within Western Canada, the Clearwater *Aikikai* provided a *chronotopical* space, or even an ‘alternative economy of status’ (Bramadat 2001, p. 78-99) within Canada’s multicultural ideology, which permitted one to reinvent or reassert one’s identity via the means of Aikido’s inherent cultural resources as a result of its Japanese origins.

Furthermore, the Clearwater *Aikikai* may be understood as a globalized cultural and spatial *outpost* (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003, p. 25-30), which may operate as a site of transient but embodied cultural tourism for its non-Japanese practitioners and as a source of linguistic, cultural and symbolic capital that provides an alleged authenticity of experience, often self-consciously juxtaposed alongside an industrialized and allegedly declining Western culture. The incorporation of Aikido’s body culture is also in some

ways, at least in the case of its Japanese foundations, a useful medium for active involvement within a broader and encapsulating cultural universe. Such participation eventually serves as a potentially effective disseminator and reifier of specific Japanese cultural practices and identities within a rapidly globalizing and transnational *ethnoscape*. Apart from mere technique and its philosophical baggage, the practice of Aikido is also the continuing reification of a caricaturized sense of 'Asian-ness' or 'Japanese-ness' through the body. It also provided an opportunity for one to negotiate and mediate with, and to escape from, the possible everyday tensions of being, as the *dojo* may be perceived as a space out of place, that often gave access to a temporal and corporeal liminality, which defined itself in a distinct and separate manner from the cultural logic of the wider societal norms and expectations within Calgary, a society still largely removed from a distinctly Japanese or East Asian environment.

Likewise, being part of the Clearwater *Aikikai* also sought to define for its various members, an underlying *inter-corporeal communitarianism* that could only be achieved through the embodied practice of Aikido, building together a community bound not by space and geography, but by the corporeal inscription of the bodily hexes required for being a practitioner of Aikido. This included not simply the martial techniques that were taught in classes for six days a week, but also the many bodily dispositions of being part of a pugilistic and cultural universe that were arguably located within a generally identified Japanese cultural logic. Consequently, as observed by Hendry (2002, p. 179-200), this implied that being a martial artist such as an *Aikidoka* also gave the opportunity for one to temporarily 'be Japanese' through the *mimetic* incorporation of the various

bodily and linguistic expressions that are broadly typecast as Japanese. Hence, it is in this sense where members of the Clearwater *Aikikai* became bodies of culture, where one's corporeality became temporal embodiments of 'Japanese-ness', while also ironically challenging the notion of what 'pure Japanese-ness' should be like, by virtue of the fact that the phenotypical features of most members at the Clearwater *Aikikai* were non-Japanese or non-Asian.

On the other hand, this did not mean that one necessarily and easily became Japanese *per se*, or became *more* Japanese, while easily losing sense of one's own initial social-cultural habituses prior to becoming a member of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. To claim otherwise would be naïve and simplistic. Although the site of the *dojo* existed, instead, as a space for *cultural alterity*, it was really more a liminoidal space in which the acquired rules and dispositions of one's ascribed cultural identity outside the confines of the *dojo* were convoluted, contested and hybridized, but were never necessarily erased, nor entirely transformed. Thus, it should be important to note that the construction of an Aikido habitus for every regular member *did not* simply entail the removal of any single pre-existing cultural logic located within the habitus of a person, but is often a complex transaction and re-interpretation of one's past identity in light of the present context. In other words, while no single *Aikidoka* are the same, the differences between them were often more subtle and less salient in the spaces of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, where similarity and conformity are valued above individuality.

At the same time, nevertheless, it should be noted that numerous regulars at the *dojo* also tended to stem particularly from working or middle-class backgrounds where the use of the body in their lives beyond the *dojo* often paralleled their personal dispositions and emotional affinities towards Aikido. Membership thus significantly involved, for example, former career sportspersons (Terry Roussel and Thomas Bradley), blue-collared workers (Larry Petrovic, Dominic Bucher and Gabriel LeTissier), performing artists such a dancer and an avid *taiko* enthusiast (Iris Larter and Jerry Lim) and bodycare professionals (Jose Rezal, Nina Comaroff and Matsumoto *sensei*). Hence, there appeared to contain certain reproductive and pedagogic *homologies* (Bourdieu 1978, p. 819-840, 1993, p. 339-356) between a person's pre-existing bodily capital and their subsequent participation in the pugilistic world of Aikido.

Identity and culture, therefore, *is never necessarily a zero-sum game*, in which the memories and emotions of any individuals are easily replaced and renewed, but on the other hand, are deeply layered and cumulative experiences and embodied practices of dispositions, tactics and strategies (Bourdieu 1990, De Certeau 1988), which are often a result of constant negotiation and reinvention between a person's notions of Selfhood, Otherness and the broader social-cultural environment, which may inevitably be either restrictive or liberating at the same time, or both. What each new member brings into the community of the Clearwater *Aikikai* is often colluded, negotiated and reinterpreted in light of one's permitted level of *sacrifice* and *loyalty* to the *doxa* of its pugilistic universe. One's cultural logic, therefore, may be occasionally subject to shifting discursive identities dependent on context (Ewing 2004, p. 117-140), where a single person can

inhabit more than one identity, provided these overlapping worlds do not radically contradict each other.

Although never specifically identified by Anne Allison (2006, p. 1-34), one may even identify the rapid spread of the Japanese martial arts on an international scale as an ‘enchanted commodity’, a cultural product that possesses both affective and market value which has largely been shaped by the “global/millennial/capitalist imagination” (Allison 2006, p. 34). Such enchantment comes in the wake of a popular global imagination of Japanese popular cultural icons along with the highly successful reception of other various products such as Japanese toys, computer games and *anime*³. What is perhaps equal interesting, however, is the fact that such practices are also inadvertently influenced and modified according to the new spaces they attempt to take root in. Similarly, therefore, as a space of alterity, being an *Aikidoka* served as a useful form of cultural experimentation and reification, which ranged from examples of being a re-discovered Japanese person; an invented neo-Asian persona that possessed social and cultural capital often employed for socially strategic purposes; a modern-day ‘peaceful warrior’ who is a role model for pacifism but nonetheless retains the capacity for ethical violence; or finally, as one who occasionally seeks both cultural and spatial refuge from the tensions of contestation and individualism in modern everyday life.

John: I'd done some boxing...when I was in high school...and that was about it...well the boxing was fun...great conditioning but I just found some other interest at the time...You know...I wasn't looking for something that was really...kinda of like a high contact, high impact, type of an art and that kind of thing you know...I was...I was...thirty-eight years old when I started...so eh...yeah...(chuckle)... so I'm an old man now...yeah...

Interviewer: But what was it about Aikido? Is it because you were mainly just looking for some kind of physical exercise? Or self defense skills or...?

³ Common name given to Japanese animation

John: Well...I always wanted to learn more about self-defense and that kind of thing...I've been in some kind of fights in my life...and eh...you know...but I got to fare eh...pretty good...I didn't really like the thought of all the sparring and stuff all the time...and Aikido...you just get eh...you get some training and...you know...practice...some kind of sparring with people you know...it's a good physical workout and eh...plus it's a great workout... it's a great stress relief for me...because you know...my job is really high stress at work...and I can come in here...by the time I bow down at the mat right until the time I leave, I do not have to think about another thing outside of what's right here...until I walk back right into the change room and then there's three messages on my cellphone...

In addition, the community at the Clearwater *Aikikai* could also be seen to exist as an inter-cultural crossroad of an emerging 'martio-scape' within a world of ethnoscaapes, as part of the increasing globalized 'post-national geography' of an alleged transnational and translocal citizenship (Appadurai 2003, p. 337-349). One might, however, agree to this observation to some extent, but would also suggest a corresponding need to recognize that this may not be necessarily a universal experience for all. Nonetheless, the Clearwater *Aikikai* has arguably become an important site for a number of transnational Japanese and non-Japanese individuals to establish potential networks with other members of their community, serving as a location for *simultaneous discourses of cultural difference and similarity*. Hence, in such cases, a person's regular affiliation to the Clearwater *Aikikai* often stemmed from the need to *maintain*, and not necessarily to *recover*, a sense of familiarity and belonging with a pre-existing cultural logic already long embedded in the person. Ironically, the Clearwater *Aikikai* also served to interlace a more familiar cultural world together with the various individuals who come from *markedly distinct* cultural backgrounds. This was noted in the few cases of the few Japanese women who regularly took part in classes, which eventually played a role in rooting themselves to Canadian society rather than as a conscious attempt to re-assert their 'Japanese-ness'.

Interestingly, following the footsteps of other Japanese martial arts such as Karate⁴, Judo and Kendo, the development of the Clearwater *Aikikai* is an example of how the Asian martial arts, in general, have strategically appropriated and reconstructed Orientalist, or auto-Orientalist narratives as a source for both cultural commoditization and objectification as embodied products for consumption (Baudrillard 1998, Veblen 1953, p. 60-80), be it conspicuous or otherwise. This was implied to a significant degree and appeared to be one of the major reasons in its attraction to some, such as Jonathan or Garth, who viewed Aikido's cultural framework as a means of re-inventing and re-framing their identities. Moreover, it should also be noted that such narratives form part of a *valourizing ethic* of the art, for more often than not, it was this very sense of Otherness, its ostensibly identifiable *non-Canadian-ness* that is revered and seen as something that is *valuable* and to be *desired* as a form of symbolic and cultural capital.

Hence, the practice of the 'traditional' Asian martial arts, particularly among many organizations and styles, including Aikido, appear to remain as sites for the reification of *positive* Asian cultural stereotypes, *which are stereotypes, nonetheless*. At the same time they may be viewed as a result of collusive acts that involve both non-Asian and Asian individuals, who now seek to re-capitalize or re-invent the public perception and the cultural images of Asian-ness (or Japanese-ness) through caricaturization and mystification in mass media and popular culture. Such processes have been referred to by scholars such as Iwabuchi (1994, p. 237) as a form of 'global localization', as part a growing indigenization of modernity among various cultures

⁴ A historically broader perspective might assert that Karate is also Okinawan and Chinese, as I have argued elsewhere (Tan 2004, p. 169-192). But I will remain with the mainstream definition of Karate for now, for the sake of bringing to attention its Japanese influences.

amidst a world of continuous change and tradition within modernity (Clammer 2000, p. 147-167, Sahlins 1994, p.377-395, 1999, p. 1-23).

It should also be recalled once more that the practice of Aikido possesses stakes in an area far beyond its professed role as a system of fighting or as a potential repository of 'Japanese-ness'. For Aikido's eventual creation was also very much a result of a series of historical events, which, in conjunction with the various individual acts and contributions of influential people, have resulted in its present incarnation. However, it also appears that the history of Aikido, in the eyes of many contemporary practitioners, is a highly *selective* one that seeks to only further its political and ideological agenda as a martial way that seeks reconciliation over conflict. This is because it appears that the broader roots of its creation, such as its political, militant and religious antecedents are now seldom consciously recalled or examined. On the other hand, a broader appreciation of the historical trajectory of Aikido's cultural development would acknowledge a distinct political dimension, particularly with regard to the events stemming from the latter half of the nineteenth century in Japan. Such events were undeniably linked to efforts at incorporating the use of the martial arts to foster the development of a muscular and ascetic sense of ultra-nationalism, often as a consequence of the elective affinities between history, politics and culture. Hence, it could be argued that more popular and easily accepted beliefs pertaining to how the 'Spirit of Aikido' has been constructed have very much been part of an *ideological history of invention and forgetting*. Like the conclusions proposed by that well-known Weberian thesis, although the substantive character of Aikido's ideology of peace has been retained, much of the aura of its former

Omoto-kyo influences has been carefully *re-historicized* beyond easy recognition or present day consciousness.

Aikido is, therefore, very much a historical, communal and ideological embodiment and product of a symbiotic tension that will always exist between martial violence and its seemingly paradoxical links to religious thought, which in the context of Aikido, were Morihei Ueshiba's twin influences of Sokaku Takeda and Onisaburo Deguchi. In many ways then, the practice of Aikido, arguably self-contained within a body of philosophical and practical doctrines, did resemble a quasi-religious movement, or that of a transnational and transcultural *Gnostic* sect, in which the body features greatly as a medium of empowering, transcendental and mythologizing narratives. This was, and still is, a vital component for achieving the highest goals within their perceived *ways of life* and practical ideologies that also retained a continuous and self-conscious awareness of one's mortality. The proliferation of what I have termed 'corporeal mythologies' are, therefore, highly reflective once more of the extremely embodied and carnally grounded world of a martial art such as Aikido.

It is, then, no accident that the Japanese martial arts, in general, have over the centuries, identified and claimed a relation to the more esoteric, this-worldly experientialism of Zen Buddhism, which privileges the senses over the logic of pure reason or rationality. One reason for this is because the martial arts and certain religions such as Zen Buddhism are both intimately linked together by the very fact that both place strong emphases on the ascetic disciplining of the body and mind, while often exuding a

form of anti-intellectualism that challenged the primacy of mere rational thought in pursuit of self knowledge. For members like Craig and Jerry, therefore, Aikido presented that effective middle ground that presented for each of them not just a means of physical self-defence, but also a means of spirituality, character-building and self-improvement.

Interviewer: How long do you think you'll be in Aikido?

Craig: I'd love to be in it...for...as long as I think I can be in it...it would be an excellent thing to do throughout my life...it's something that you can do throughout your older age...it's something that I can do effortlessly...It's not hockey or soccer of something tough which...you wear out after a while...it's far more spiritual and not just physical...I'd like to do it as long as I can imagine...

Interviewer ...So...if a newbie were to ask you now...“What's this you're doing called Aikido?”... What are you gonna tell him or her?

Craig: Oooooohh...Hmmm...well instead of telling him 'martial art'...you know...and describe how the focus is on defense over raw offence...meeting the opponent...meeting their weaknesses to better your position...and then go on...how it's not just a martial art...it's also...spiritual focus... with a large focus on ki...depending on the one (the style of Aikido) you're going into...like my brother...he's in eh...Aikido Shin Shin Toitsu...and he says...it's a lot more spiritual...

Interviewer: So why didn't you try out Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido?

Craig: Well, first because this is Aikikai...and this was the first (the original organization by the Founder)...I didn't want the hard version uh...I forget what it's called uh...Aiki...

Interviewer: Aiki-jujutsu?

Craig: Aiki-jujutsu...I didn't want something that hard...and I didn't something that soft like what my brother did...I wanted a middle ground...something that also focused on the physical aspects so I could get a workout...to improve my strength and my flexibility...also something that focused on the spiritual and mental aspects...

Interviewer: So after like seventeen years now, do you think Aikido has had any effect on you?

Jerry: Definitely it has...it molds me into a better person I think...it gives me confidence and it gives me stability...it gives me foresight and a lot of happiness...contentment yeah...because I learn to be tranquil, I learn to go with the flow of the universe...I learn to understand myself... I learn to understand others...and I learn to understand all the environmental factors around me...it doesn't necessarily have to be Aikido...Aikido is not meant for everybody...but for me it is...Aikido is a forever thing...it stays inside your mind...it is a blending art and it keeps you flexible for the rest of your life...if you can hang on to it and if you can make it a tool for your life...to live in harmony...

Within the specific context of Aikido, the events of the late nineteenth century in Japan leading to the present have greatly contributed to an elective affinity that enabled Morihei Ueshiba and his proponents to forge an alleged ontological relevance between

the nature of Aikido and its professed values of peace, harmony and reconciliation. For this reason, Aikido is also very much another product of the *work of time* (Bourdieu 1990, p. 98-111) via bodily hexes, and a culturalized and institutionalized memory of how the trajectories of two seemingly disparate discourses which involve the body, that of violence and religion, have successfully merged time and again. Hence, to practice Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, one's body inevitably endeavours to embed one's existential and phenomenological stakes within such beliefs, where Aikido's own technical origins from arts of warfare and violence are now *aestheticized* as corporeal expressions of a way of harmony, and where the body is now a mediated vessel of the memory and tradition of Morihei's own beliefs and his subsequent predecessors. Therefore, although serving as bodies of history, modern *Aikidoka* are also very much the corporeal instruments of both *memory and forgetting*. In this regard, one thus realizes just how our uses, enactments and interpretations of social meaning (Rapaport 1999, p. 104-138) are closely linked to the various ways of ritualization and performance in which the body can be employed, for we not only learn by the body, but we also *remember* (or forget) by the body (Connerton 1989, Duncan 2000, p. 60-68).

Returning to the notion of corporeal mythologies, then, it is important to recognize that the committed practice of Aikido, apart from the practice of martial technique, is also the practice and incorporation of a entire *logic of practice* that places the *Aikidoka* within a highly embodied and sensual environment where the performance and display of the agonistic dramaturgies of the body is not only central, but also incorporative of the mind as well. Thus, such dramaturgies essentially play an important

role in the instruction and inscription of the corporeal mythologies surrounding concepts such as *ki* and the belief in Aikido's alleged martial efficiency, even in the spaces far beyond the culturally scripted and martially choreographed *dojo* of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. Deeply rooted in such narratives is the development and exercise of power, in its super-corporeal sense and best exemplified by attempts at 'ki cultivation'. Therefore, other than expounding the values of peace and harmony, a person's committed practice of Aikido was viewed as a viable path towards the empowerment of the body and a person's identification with a sense of moral obligation.

At the same time, interestingly, such empowerment appears to be possible and revealed only as one gradually learns to ironically *neglect* and *forget* the body's corporeality, while creating a soft, pliable and even *feminized* body, which often goes against more 'Western' or androcentric definitions of a 'strong and hard body', which is often described as being large, heavy, strong and containing highly developed musculature. Correspondingly, in order to become strong in Aikido techniques, a person had to, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, become 'soft'. On the other hand, the *raw, hard and insensitive physicality* in the use of one's body, often connoted with the bearings of a *masculine character*, is now *disciplined against* in the learning of Aikido technique.

Consequently, according to what was often taught at the Clearwater *Aikikai* and other similar Aikido *dojo*, the 'good' Aikido body is one that is able to express and retain a high level of bodily plasticity, by drawing upon and training the body's capacity for fluidity in the expression of bodily responses to the potential physical attacks of an

opponent. This is because Aikido's true power allegedly stems from the exploitation of the raw physical power provided by another person. Ideally, one is supposed to 'blend' or 'flow' with the movements of one's attacker and to re-direct such force back towards one's attacker. Recalling Frank's (1991, p. 36-102) typology of bodily usage, the Aikido body appears to feature prominently in each practical bodily category of *discipline*, *mirroring*, *domination* and *communication*, for being an *Aikidoka* correspondingly involves *control*, *consumption*, *power* and *culture*. The Aikido body, then, is never necessarily an active body, but a *reactive* one, which once more is argued to be an expression of its self-proclaimed moral high-ground of non-violence.

Concurrently, the notion of *ki* was also a significant corporeal narrative, or mythology, which once more served to amplify the deliberate forgetting of the material corporeality of being one of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, by asserting the existence of an invisible but allegedly tangible force, that can not only destroy and hurt, but be used to also heal and to reinvigorate, not unlike practices of religious healing that incorporate a highly emotive, experiential and sensual approach to belief, exemplified by practices within the Charismatic Movement in Christianity (Csordas 1994), Navajo spirit healing (Csordas 1994, p. 269-290) or New Religious Movements in Japan (Hardacre 1982, p. 305-320). Such images once more invokes Aikido's own linkages to a semi-religious and philosophical past, whose seeds were sown from the time when Morihei Ueshiba gradually but effectively blended the *charisma* of his religious beliefs with the *corporeality* of his own martial practices.

I would, however, again also note that such discourses of power are only substantiated, and can only probably be reproduced, within the confines of the *dojo* with other *Aikidoka*. In other words, the martial efficiency of Aikido and the existence of *ki* appear to be best revealed or verified only among those who are already trained in Aikido techniques and are already predisposed to believe in the existence of *ki*. And as one increasingly becomes well-embedded within the cultural logic of Aikido practice, together with one's rise in hierarchy, influence and power; the greater are the stakes, and potential contradictory observations may be easily compartmentalized or denied. In other words, based upon my ethnographic observations and participation discussed throughout this thesis, I find it difficult, dishonest and patronizing to the reader to deny what I felt to be the potential complicity of various *Aikidoka* in so-called demonstrations of *ki*. Although such observations should not be taken in light of an attempt at actively debunking or deriding certain beliefs within the pugilistic universe of the Clearwater *Aikikai*, it is, nonetheless, important to recognize the potential sociological and anthropological components that may factor within the practice of such beliefs. Perhaps then, this reveals to us in most starking detail the raw power of belief and charisma, particularly if this includes one's deep investment and 'entrepreneurship' of *emotional, martial and bodily capital* (Wacquant 1995b, p. 65-93), where the body becomes the locus of one's personal capital to be developed and improved, thus appearing to be deeply bound by the *doxa* of one's embodied participation in the *game* of Aikido. At the same time, such conclusions are not entirely dissimilar to Wacquant's (2001, p. 181-194) own observations of how the language of exploitation and accommodation was exercised

in the world of boxing, which inevitably led to the self-censoring and selective recognition of potentially damaging information about the so-called *Manly Art* of boxing.

It should also be recognized that the Aikido habitus is also located within its own *field of power*, as defined and used by Pierre Bourdieu, which was also at the same time, an often misrecognized and euphemized field in which the exercise of institutional and physical power was exerted between members. Social hierarchy at the Clearwater *Aikikai* is best manifested in the use of *dan* and *kyu* ranks, which were first introduced by Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo, in 1883. Combined with the dictates of a re-imagined ‘Japanese-ness’ and the advocacy of what are regarded as ‘cultural norms’, the reins of power at the Clearwater *Aikikai* largely lay in the hands of Matsumoto *sensei* and the small cadre of instructors he appointed to teach various classes. Simultaneously, such social norms also appeared to be partially influenced by an underlying and tacit acceptance of *masculine domination* (Bourdieu 2001) within Clearwater’s overall social and power structure, which was particularly revealed in the way *regular membership* and *leadership* among women appeared to be largely limited and muted. This was particularly so at the central *dojo* where Matsumoto *sensei* held sway, which also happened to be the ‘most Japanese’ of all the *dojo* in comparison with its affiliates. Interestingly, then, what was observed is an apparent inverse correlation between Aikido’s ‘feminized’ martial techniques of softness and blending, and the reins of political and symbolic power that ultimately remained in the hands of *male bodies*.

Such a state of affairs is indicative of what Bourdieu (2001) had noted regarding the relative resilience of such sexual structures and schemes in modern everyday life, in spite of the claims that the position of women in society have greatly changed. This is what Bourdieu (2001, p. 1-4) has described as the 'paradox of *doxa*' in which structures of division between the sexes, although transformed over the years, still stoutly retain themselves in various forms of social and cultural organization, a clear example being the practice of a Japanese martial art like Aikido, in spite of its transposed identity into a different society quite apart from its cultural origins. Similar to what I had noted earlier regarding the selective memory of Aikido's history, the constancy of such dualistic and asymmetrical sexual structures also appears to be a result of an ongoing historical process that serves to ironically *dehistoricize* and even *eternalize* a field of power that legitimizes social domination, *by naturalizing social construction with a biological nature* (Bourdieu 2001, p. 22-33, 82-88). Ultimately, this does not simply reinforce the rigid binary mindset pertaining to gender identity or sexuality, for it also serves as a form of epistemic and existential entrapment not only for women, but also for men, who are equally bounded by the dictates of similarly rigid social definitions, stresses and expectations of masculinity in one's relations towards women and other men (Bourdieu 2001, p. 49-53).

In addition, the explicit subscription among many members to the symbolically compulsive values of 'respect', 'commitment' and 'loyalty' was often felt as a subtle yet pervasive force that implicitly affected and even subjugated the perspectives, decisions and actions of many of its members. Hence, it should also be noted that such discourses of culture and tradition exerted a very strong disciplinary effect upon any one who may

have intentionally or unintentionally transgressed them. The community at the Clearwater *Aikikai* may be further understood as an arguably accessible but loosely *stratified* sub-culture and *para-patriarchal* network located within a larger society such as Calgary, often directed among some of its ‘most loyal’ members in a tacit struggle for *distinction* in an economy of symbolic goods (Bourdieu 1984, p. 260-317, 1998, p. 127-140). An appeal to ‘respect’ and ‘obedience’, correspondingly, was also often the practice of symbolic and social domination that rank offered, as a result of the exercise of *symbolic violence*, often directed towards lower ranked members. Hence, Bourdieu remarks that:

Symbolic violence is a form of power that is exerted on bodies, directly and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but this magic works only on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body. If it can act like the release of a spring, that is, with a very weak expenditure of energy, this is because it does no more than trigger the dispositions that the work of inculcation and embodiment has deposited in those who are thereby primed for it (Bourdieu 2001, p. 38)

Subsequently, the higher one climbed in the social hierarchy of the Clearwater *Aikikai* or the Aikido world for that matter, one could get away with much more, as rank served as a protective layer of institutional and traditional power, through misrecognition and a *doxic* feel for the game. A particularly high-ranked *yudansha* is seldom told that he or she could be wrong or mistaken in class, under the veneer and protection of ‘seniority’ that Aikido’s field of power provided. Such practices again were often not just translated and transposed within the social relations and interactions between members in and out of the *dojo*, but also within the actual practice of Aikido techniques via the body. For it was upon the mats where such narratives of power are felt the strongest, as a result of their highly corporeal and visceral nature. This is because the practice of Aikido is, at the end of the day, the embodiment of the *praxeological* knowledge of a bodily craft (Wacquant

2005a, p. 451-465, 2005b, p. 441-447) that constantly needs to reaffirm itself through constant bodily experiences, performances and practices. The dialectics of the power relations located within the Clearwater *Aikikai* were, therefore, best expressed and incorporated in a cultural logic that is corporeally relational and dialogical - thus not simply between minds, but also between bodies. Subsequently, through the execution of a lock or a throw by *nage*, the *uke* must also correspondingly 'follow' and to necessarily accept being 'led', particularly if *nage* is more senior. On the other hand, refusal to do is a privilege only justified by seniors, and beginners who refuse to be led are construed as being disrespectful and 'wrong' and liable for rebuke. Hence, true believers in the 'power of Aikido', whether in its institutional or corporeal form are not born, but must be gradually embodied via the body.

Fieldwork in Philosophy

My fieldwork at the Clearwater *Aikikai*, therefore, attempted to achieve two major objectives with regards to its ethnographical approach. Firstly, it was meant as a substantive contribution to a growing field of research that had largely been marginalized within mainstream anthropology and sociology. For as we had seen earlier in Chapter Two, the number of ethnographic or scholarly works located in the field of the martial arts are still relatively new and few. In fact, in recent years, since the start of the new millennium, only four significant scholarly works specifically related to pugilism have appeared⁵. Out of these four, only three, the works of Wacquant, Cox and Zarilli, have placed the notion of the body as being highly central in their study by adopting a more

⁵ Namely, Wacquant's (2004) 'Body and Soul', Rupert Cox's (2003) 'The Zen Arts', Greg Downey's (2005) 'Learning Capoeira', and Zarilli's (1998) 'When the Body becomes all Eyes'.

conspicuous attempt at theorizing. In spite of this, there has been an emerging recognition of the ethnographically rich and theoretical possibilities of what the martial arts can offer for further anthropological or sociological work with regard to the myriad of ways of how the body can be used, articulated and interpreted in culture and society (Ahmed 1999, p. 283-200). A main reason for this is because the martial arts, whether defined as traditional or modern, often exist as unique social phenomena that effectively combine the elements of culture, history, identity, sport and violence, all which are framed within a highly reflexive, significant and undeniable recognition of the central role of the body in meaning-making in both traditional and modern societies. Likewise, just how the body *changes* or *ages*, and how this is negotiated and practiced also exerts a significant influence on our identities and our habituses (e.g. Wainwright and Turner's study of dancers in 1999, p. 98-120). A study of the martial arts or pugilism, therefore, exists as another potentially vital and grounded *epistemological and existential window* into the recent inroads made by scholars within the social sciences with regards to the importance of the body in society and culture.

The practice of Aikido at the Clearwater *Aikikai* and the broader implications of Aikido's spread on a global scale is, then, a case study of such importance towards taking the path that has been set by other scholars that have contributed in similar areas. Hence, by locating our methodological sensitivities towards recognizing the highly sensual, corporeal and embodied dimensions of social life, ethnographic research into the martial arts may also be considered to be a crucial aspect of the number of emergent ethnographies that seek to answer what Florence Weber (2002, p. 475-499) has labelled

as 'multi-integrative ethnography', where one seeks to lay greater emphasis upon not merely the objective-structures (integrative ethnography) or subjective-agencies (narrative ethnography) located in a social setting, but also upon the relations that are embedded within it. In similar vein, this methodological rift has been described by Van Mannen (1988, p. 45-100) much earlier as the differences between 'realist' and 'confessionist' styles of ethnography, where the former is seen to place excessive faith in the *objectivity* of ethnographic depictions, while the latter tends to spiral downwards into a fashionably self-absorbed relativism, or an *implosive* reflexivity that may actually hide more than it reveals (Shore 1999, p. 25-48). In other words, perhaps one way of transcending such an arbitrary division is through the explicit recognition of the role in which the body plays for both the ethnographer and the social-cultural context one studies. For the body is, then, simultaneously *object* and *subject* all at the same time. Accordingly, the body is, at the end of the day, not simply a thing of flesh, blood and bone distinct from the mind and the ways we perceive our worlds, but also a corporeal vessel of an existential consciousness that is *more than the sum of its parts*.

Consequently, the second methodological objective of this ethnography, then, was an attempt to think against conceptually fetishized ethnographies or 'cultural studies' that serve to theorize, interpret and locate social and cultural realities within a highly *disembodied* medium of discourse, ultimately subjecting critical scholarship to a potentially ivory-towered pseudo-intellectualism that relies too confidently on the convenient reproduction of textual worlds, pretentious prose, alienating convolution, conceptual neologism and scholastic fallacies (or fantasies). This has been what I wish to

write against. What is indirectly critiqued and challenged in this thesis is the abuse of a radical and reductionistic social constructivism and fashionable relativism that has too conveniently neglected the phenomenological, existential and material foundations towards understanding the human condition within the social sciences and humanities. It is felt that an overreliance on highly textualized and theoretically overladen perspectives on society and culture are unfortunately self-defeating enterprises that largely thrive on unnecessary obscurantism and linguistic elitism.

An anthropological study based on mere theoretical abstraction and conceptual verbiage can certainly come across as too cavalier and epistemologically self-conceited in its claims. By broadly adopting a critical and careful use of the works and ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and a range of other prominent sources drawn from anthropology, sociology and philosophy, this study, therefore, seeks to consciously avoid *redundant binary oppositions* between mere theoretical fetishism or naive empirical inhibition (Mills 1977), by re-membering the body through a more embodied, praxeological and relational analysis of social-cultural phenomena. Through this ethnographic study of a martial arts community, I, therefore, sought to go beyond 'reading' or 'writing' about culture, as one contends that it is also about *sensing* culture. As one enters the realm of Aikido's pugilistic and cultural universe, and the wider transcultural and transnational matrix that it is ultimately encapsulated by, the body is, in the final instance, never simply a text to be read or 'deconstructed', but is also a dynamic living, breathing and reflexive subject that senses, emotes, feels, reacts and responds.

Therefore, by re-centering the role of the body in ethnographic work, we would seek to recognize the phenomenological and experiential aspects of social life, which is always carefully tempered by highly relational practices and inter-subjectivities that are encased between bodies, which are also bounded as corporealities of flesh. This is especially important in the martial arts, or Aikido for the matter, as taking part in it constantly requires us to actively view the body as its central medium of expression, meaning and acculturation within its social-cultural ethos. By seeking to *ground both* the ethnographer her or himself, and our understanding in terms of a world that is corporeal and sensual, one would be able to move towards an ethnography that comprises of a Bourdieu-ian reflexivity, coupled with the embodied and existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty⁶. Such an approach consequently seeks to provide a more tempered and balanced understanding to often exaggerated claims towards convenient and clichéd ‘multi-sited’ or ‘global’ ethnography, which often tends to hastily celebrate the growing ideological cosmopolitanism or ‘cultural hybridity’ of a privileged transnational *elite*, which speaks more about the growing and dominant representation and interests of *career* academics, business professionals, media elites, politicians, bureaucrats, diplomats and other members of a global *bourgeoisie* (Friedman 1999, p. 230-256, 2004, p. 63-88). This often results in a corresponding neglect and *disembodied* ignorance for the fact that the experience of globalization or transnationalism is, at the same time, a highly uneven, fragmented and hardly homogeneous process (Burawoy 2002, p. 337-350, 2001, p. 147-159, Friedman 1994, p. 117-145), where cultural and religious identity is politicized, and while all bodies may be equal, *some bodies are more equal than others*.

⁶ Although it has been documented that Bourdieu has criticized phenomenology and has also been taken to task for certain generalizations about it (e.g. Throop and Murphey 2002, p. 185-207), it should be important to note that phenomenology itself is not a consistent and homogenous philosophical school of thought.

Eventually, there can never be ethnographies or an anthropology or sociology without bodies, short of any extremely dramatic change to the nature in which our species are formed. To fail to recognize this may subject one to the suspicion that the anthropologist has largely mistaken the epistemological and existential comforts of an enclosed scholastic environment, for the harsher corporeal and material realities that may exist far beyond it, making one guilty of a reflexive insensitivity that is fatal for all critical scholarship. Deliberately placing my ethnographic study in a martial art such as Aikido had been to some extent, part of an objective to re-invoke and re-member the body in any critically-informed ethnographic endeavour. I would be hard-pressed to locate or provide a more meaningful and insightful understanding in being a part of the Clearwater *Aikikai* if I had relied on mere observation and interviews, particularly if the reader recalls the differences that my sacrifice made as a result of my accident. For the ethnographer had to constantly place her or his body at stake within the game of Aikido in order to obtain more subtle and nuanced perceptions of its field of power and the habituses of each member that was located within it. In order to better understand my fieldwork, my body also had to become part of it, in order for a *feel* for the game. Thus, it is not surprising that, to several of its regular members and even Matsumoto *sensei*, Aikido is something that is more than just a form of recreation. It had become life itself, where one's Aikido would cease only if one's body ceased.

Interviewer: Could anything ever happen to make you give up Aikido? Like giving it up for your clinic?

Matsumoto sensei: Well...if I quit...well likely I give up clinic rather than give up Aikido...unless it is my health...but otherwise...if I am around, I will teach...

Interviewer: Are you experiencing any obstacles in your health these days?

Matsumoto sensei: Not really...no...

Interviewer: Actually uh...Nina mentioned that when you were younger that you had uh...

Matsumoto sensei: Oh that was heart surgery...I had a hole in the heart...repaired...that's not a problem...but only thing...is since I got accident... my heart skipped a beat...car accident...three years ago... definitely I got a problem in the heart...but I don't have a problem to teach...so it's not really a major concern...I will teach until I die.

We, then, need to constantly recognize the primary role that the body plays, my own included, in the social construction of meaning, practice, place and identity, for what we are and what we become and remain, is sensed, experienced and even habituated in practice. Once this is acknowledged, the role in which ethnographic fieldwork would appear to become even further heightened in this emerging somatic turn towards the body in both anthropology and sociology (Monaghan 2006, p. 225-239). In doing so, one inevitably learns to recognize the plasticity and the limits of the body, *and the corresponding limits of any disembodied and abstract theoretical treatise on social phenomena*. This would be suggestive of Pierre Bourdieu's advocacy for 'fieldwork in philosophy' (Bourdieu 1990-3-33), for an effective collaboration between empirical rigour and critical theorizing, where any critical reflexivity within the scholarly enterprise itself subsequently requires us to consciously reflect upon not just the environment in which we are located within, but also upon what the environment can do to us, and the actions that we as individuals exert as inhabitants of the habituses that each of us dwell in. Such *participant objectification* would, then, enable an *epistemic reflexivity* that equally acknowledges both the embeddedness and liminal subjectivity of the ethnographer (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 2-46, Wacquant 2004, p. 387-414).

Put across more bluntly, one now recalls Simpson's (2006, p. 125-136) claim that '*You don't do fieldwork, Fieldwork does You*', where the ethnographer must be an agent

that must consistently seek to negotiate and re-negotiate his or her terms of observations, experiences, interpretation, insight and meaning within the structural and material constraints of the field. Perhaps admitted less often than it has been, the experience and conduct of ethnographic fieldwork occurs under innumerable contexts and situations where the ethnographer has little control over, no matter how ‘thick or thin’ we wish to stick to it. This was certainly apparent on a number of occasions during my fieldwork, such as my sudden expulsion from living at the *dojo* for dubious reasons, the hostility and suspicion that was encountered by me on different occasions, and my subsequent foot and eye injuries, all which also played a part in how the field and myself affected each other. If one were to regard the body as the site of an emergent method of social research as some scholars have (Hesse-Biber and Leavy et. al. 2006, p. xix-xxiv; 183-211; 213-233), it should also be noted, therefore, that fieldwork in such highly embodied settings was also, at times, an exercise in the ‘management of danger’ (Hannerz 1981, p. 19-46), possessing a heightened exposure to personal injury or violence, such as in the case of boxing or even security work as a ‘bouncer’ for ethnographers like Wacquant (2004a) or Monaghan (2002, p. 403-429) respectively.

On Apprenticeship

At the same time, in recent related literature in the martial arts, the term ‘apprenticeship’ has become an increasingly popular, or even fashionable, label in the vernacular of ethnographic work for one to engage in the poetics and politics of ethnography (Wacquant 2005a, p. 465-472). To be clear on the outset, I feel that apprenticeship must be distinguished from an older and different label known as ‘going

native' in the work of ethnography. While 'going native' denotes the position where an ethnographer has become completely subsumed by the practical and cultural logic of his or her field environment, the notion of apprenticeship seeks to assume no such privilege. It is, instead, viewed as a form of field research where the ethnographer is no longer content at being a mere *participant*, but also one who seeks to immerse her or his existential stakes in the very social universe the ethnographer seeks to study.

Similarly, this does not require, or blindly accept, the surrender of one's own reflexive recognition of the ethnographer as an objectifiable subject, nor does it necessarily entail the use of what has been described as 'auto-ethnography', which has a tendency to deviate and spiral itself towards a monologue of grandiloquent confession-making and self-indulgence in the politics of emotion. I, too, share Wacquant's (2004, 2005a, p. 465-474) advocacy with regards to participant objectification and his reservations and cynicism towards 'auto-ethnography' (e.g. Reed-Danahay 1997) as a form of 'narcissistic irrationalism', which need not be the case even if one actively acknowledges the need for a critically reflexive approach to ethnography. This is best exemplified in Wacquant's reflections on his own sojourn into the 'sweet science' of boxing, where he sought to define apprenticeship as *both the object and the means of inquiry*. It was within this pugilistic universe where he documented how he gradually managed to sculpt for himself his own emerging habitus of a boxer, from being an inquisitive French professor of sociology, into 'Busy Louie', a regular of the gym who eventually becomes naturalized and accepted in a world that is of the ghetto but at the same time, never necessarily a part of it. For the presence of the ethnographer, in this

case, did not serve to overshadow the social environment that is being observed and interacted with, nor did it drown the embodied voices and opinions of its various interested participants.

At the same time, it should also be noted that the pugilistic universes of boxing and Aikido share interesting similarities, particularly in how each of our lived worlds also incorporate the experience of what Wacquant (1998, p. 325-352) has described as ‘corporeal instrumentality’, ‘aesthetics’ and ‘ethics’. On the other hand, there were some very clear methodological distinctions between Wacquant’s ethnography and mine (apart from the fact that I consider his work far more superior), in that the conditions which led each of us to our respective field sites - him to a Southside Chicago Boxing gym and myself to a Japanese Aikido *dojo* on the Canadian Prairies - were substantially different. Wacquant (2005a, p. 446-451) had first joined his boxing gym with the hope of learning the rudiments of the ‘*Manly Art*’ and not as an objectifying sociologist or an ethnographer. My own research, on the other hand, was motivated by an explicit attempt at conducting ethnographic fieldwork for my doctoral thesis. Another important point that must not go unrecognized is that my own personal association with Aikido had already begun nine years prior to the conduct of my fieldwork. I had quit Aikido three years preceding the first time I stepped into the Clearwater *Aikikai*, and was also in many ways, a *returning apostate*, who definitely saw *and sensed* the world of the *Way of Harmony* with a *very different* set of ethnographic lenses compared to Wacquant’s own *fresh conversion* to his sweet ‘*Manly Art*’, which contained an unbroken trajectory of personal participation. In contrast, my own institutional and experiential memory of Aikido had

stretched much further, having been tempered not only by my contact with the Clearwater *Aikikai*, but also with other Aikido organizations in the past.

As noted in Chapter Two, Wacquant (2004a, p. 9, 2005a, p. 449) did not reveal his own professional status as a sociologist until a year after he had trained at the gym and this probably played a vital role in him obtaining easy acceptance to conduct his fieldwork, as he had already become an insider and apprentice in more ways than one, particularly noticeable in his fondness for DeeDee, his trainer whom he appeared to revere quite explicitly, like a father figure. As it is obvious by now, my own experience was soaked with less sentimentality than Wacquant's with regards to my relationship with Matsumoto *sensei*. Quite conversely, my own fieldwork, however, began at the very moment I stepped into the world of the Clearwater *Aikikai* as a fresh outsider, without the initial privileges of a taken-for-granted acceptance and pre-reflexive knowledge of its social and political environment. At the same time, I also wonder just how much the term 'apprenticeship' would have been an appropriate to describe my relationship with the Clearwater *Aikikai*, as I realize that the terms of my membership and appear to be a lot of more transient and liminal, for the conditions surrounding my entry was entirely based upon the fact I did not first begin as a privileged raw beginner as Wacquant had.

In light of these differences, one, then, could interpret them as a potential strength or weakness of my ethnographic work, where my past experiences may have caused me to view Aikido with a less wide-eyed fascination or have caused me to write an ethnography with less melodramatic prose than Wacquant may have occasionally had

with regards his oft-moving rendition and poeticization of the *sweet science* of boxing. Nevertheless, perhaps it is through such differences that best reveals the extent in which the *positionality* of the ethnographer plays in determining the factors that can often decide on the outcome and interpretations of one's fieldwork. One wonders, then, the potential results of *participant objectification* if the Southside Boxing Gym had encountered an overweight and asthmatic Chinese Singaporean as a potential amateur boxer, or alternatively, a successful White French professor of sociology of *Bourdieu-ian pedigree*, who, at the Clearwater *Aikikai* had to perform 'Unmanly' janitorial duties and be occasionally questioned about his 'loyalty'.

As a result, although fieldwork in 'body cultures' such as boxing or Aikido may serve as strong cases in illustrating the importance and growing recognition of the centrality of the body in recent scholarly work, it also, paradoxically, seems to further highlight for us the potential limits of ethnographic knowledge in contributing within a field of research. Nonetheless, although such epistemological considerations are certainly not new pertaining to reflections about limits of qualitative research methods, an increased awareness of the body also seems to foreshadow two critical insights and potential issues about the nature of the data or observations we collect. Firstly, such recognition of the highly embodied nature of all ethnographic work appears to reveal and confirm the possibilities and richness of research in a growing range of fields such as the martial arts, sports and other similar forms of corporeal social-cultural phenomena. But, on the other hand, because of the highly sensual and visceral nature of such ethnographic experiences and observations, it also suggests to us that in the end, there remains a certain

dimension of knowledge that appears to be inarticulable, particularly in the textual representation of any social-cultural phenomenon. For even today, apart from the fact that my ethnographic prose is far from exceptionally lucid and rich, it must be conceded that words simply cannot describe the nature of the psychological and emotional trauma one endured at the combined hands of severely torn ligaments and a disabling gout attack that one hopes never to relive again. The experience of physical pain is perhaps, then, in Scarry's (1985) view, something that not only resists language but also actively destroys it. Such is the *bittersweet* science of ethnography that can sometimes take away much more than give anything in return.

At the same time, apart from the very positionality of the ethnographer in relation to the field that he or she has immersed themselves in, the very demands of the field may prove to be a crucial delimiting factor in the attempts developing either carnal sociology, or even a sensual ethnography. This is because of the very limits of the corporeality in which each ethnographer possesses. Fieldwork in the sociology or anthropology of the body, where one is expected to directly submit one's body within the field quite in the same manner that Wacquant did, or any other scholar, can only be possible if the ethnographer already possesses the *right amount of bodily capital*, so to speak. In other words, it would seem quite unlikely, if someone twenty years older than Wacquant could have performed what he did with the same amount of corporeal *diligence* and *stamina*. Such a question could also be similarly directed towards the corporeal dimensions of my own fieldwork. It appears then, that the potential for such ethnography is also very much

a matter of timing and highly contingent upon the *embodied talent* of ethnographers who possess the *right* kind of bodies.

In closing, what comes to mind for me, then, is not a dense theoretical or philosophical treatise on the irrevocable link between practices of the body and the various social-cultural phenomena one reflects upon in our claim to scholastic authority. Neither does one seek to recall poignantly and ostentatiously, some of the most rigorous or complex ethnographic accounts, which may have gained the status of a memorable classic to be used as an exemplary case study for introductory courses on fieldwork. One is, instead, reminded of a scene in an early chapter of the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, where Scout, the narrator of the novel, complains to her father about her first day in school (Lee 1997, p. 32-33). It seemed that her teacher had reprimanded her unfairly for having learnt to read at home long before attending school, and she was loath to understand why it happened. In response, her father, Atticus, explains to Scout that she might be able to understand a person far better only after she attempts to “climb into his skin and walk around in it”. For in doing so, one perhaps might be able to see clearer the way that any particular person saw the world.

Having also taken up Atticus Finch’s advice, I have attempted to do likewise in the course of this study, where the practice of ethnographic fieldwork is truly a valuable opportunity to ‘walk around in other people’s skins’ in the world of the Clearwater *Aikikai*. But admittedly though, one need not, and should not, feel obliged to like them and ‘go native’, if one were to seriously consider the need for a defamiliarizing view of

anthropology and ethnography as cultural critique (Marcus and Fisher 1999). Perhaps then, in the final instance, the most challenging and important insight that one has gained from this study is that it serves to complicate the often taken for granted concepts of culture, history and power, which has been revealed to reside greatly in the corporeal and practical realities of the body, rather than to be simply located within the ideational realms of *pure* theory, *pure* abstraction and *pure* reason, resulting in the *pure intellectual* – the epitome of all ivory-towered scholarship – itself consumed by the *doxa* of its own *illusio* in the game for *scientific* capital (Bourdieu 2004, p. 55-62). Admittedly, therefore, although the ethnographic enterprise also possesses its epistemological limits, further scholarship and research within social-cultural phenomena can no longer afford the luxury, or the privilege, to marginalize or neglect a more reflexive approach towards the role of the body. For although philosophers may have interpreted the world, and Marxists have sought to change it – the point, however, may be to firstly, *sense* it.

Interviewer: What about the future then? What happens when it come to a time when you may not be able to teach anymore?

Matsumoto sensei: Well...that's probably still... we don't know...who's gonna take over my dojo...my family...or my students...I don't know yet...

Interviewer: I guess it's not an easy question to answer...

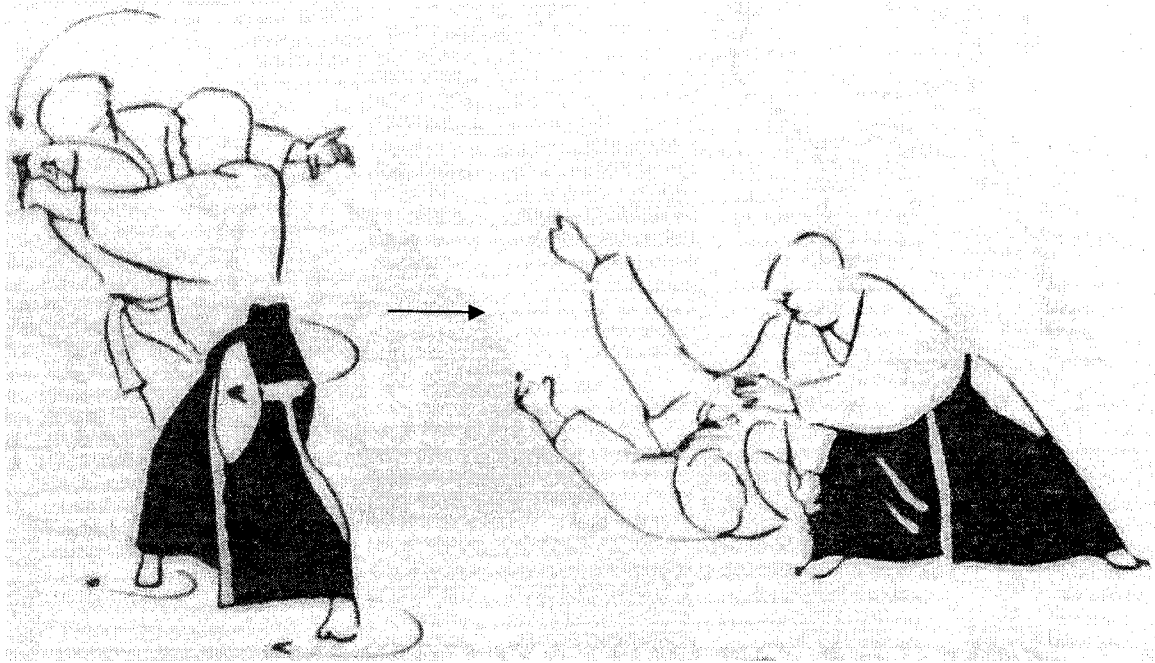
Matsumoto sensei: Yeah...so if I die suddenly...in that case...then probably umm...

(At this point, Matsumoto sensei signals to me to stop the recording.)

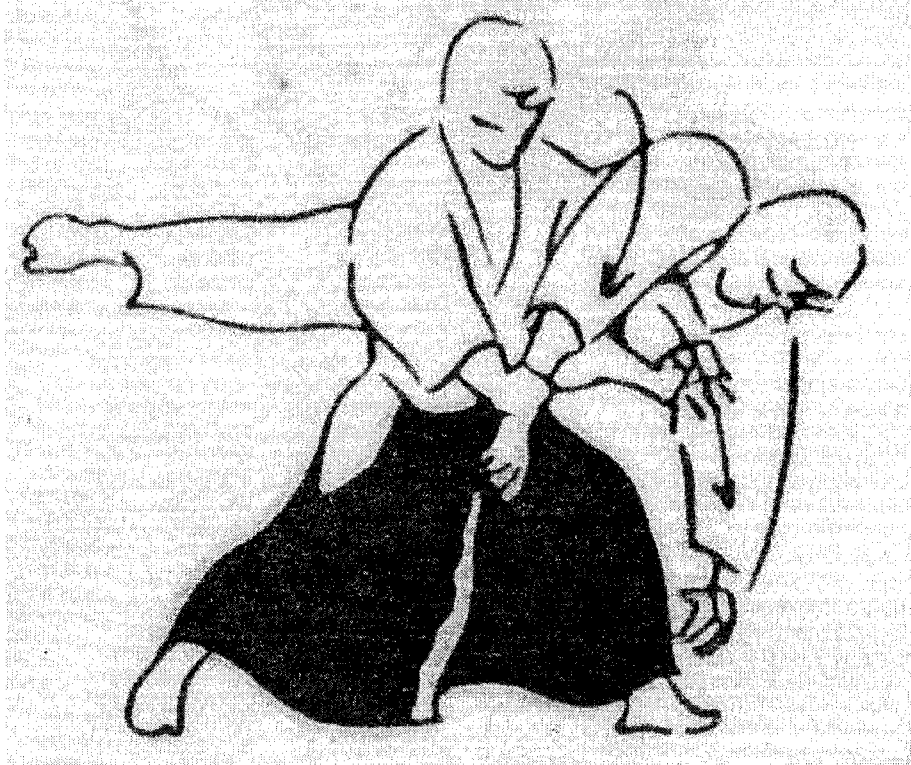


Plate 31. My right foot in June 2004

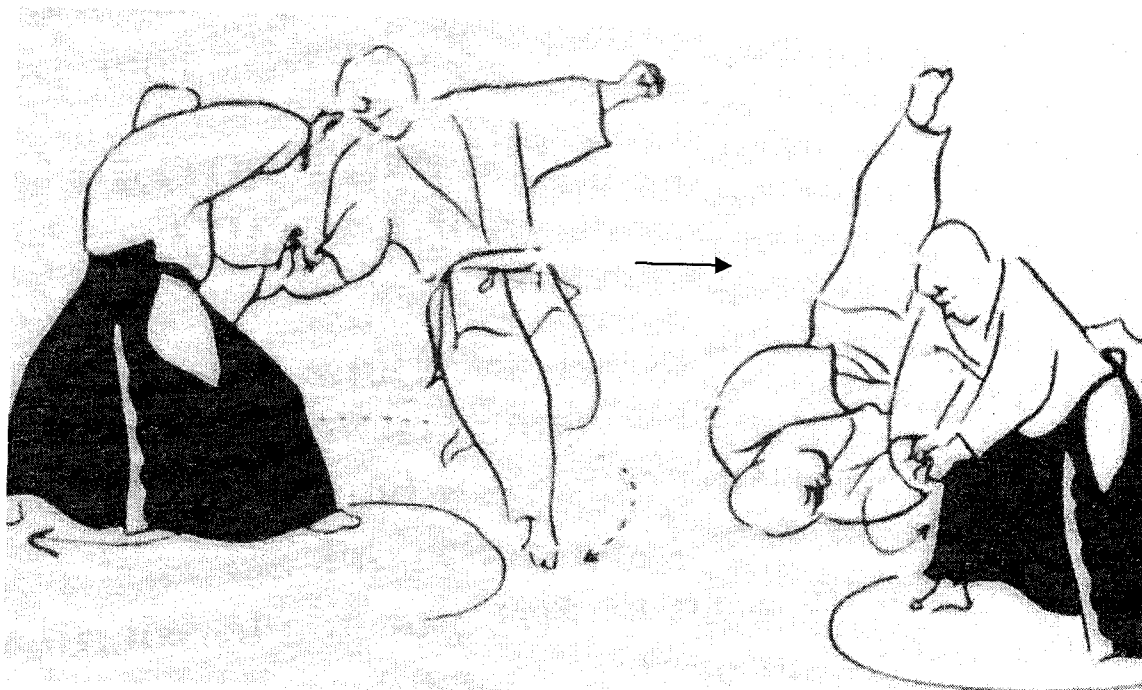
Appendix 1a – *Shiho Nage* [extracted from Ratti and Westbrook (1970, p. 207)]



Appendix 1b – *Tenbi Nage* [extracted from Ratti and Westbrook (1970, p. 281)]



Appendix 1c – *Kote Gaeshi* [extracted from Ratti and Westbrook (1970, p. 222)]



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