

Featured Dojocho, July 2018



Björn Peters

Aikido-in-Kiel, Kiel, Germany
Division 3

My aikido journey began 1997 when a friend from college talked me and another friend into joining a class. It turned out the other friend didn't show up, so I was the only newbie on the mat. Today, twenty years later I am still training.

So far there have been five stages in my aikido life. First: being a beginner, I could never tell before a class how I would experience a training. It could totally change my mood. From the negative to the positive or vice versa. Sometimes I felt mad or sad after class not knowing how I got there. I was in this stage for the first 3 years or so. I attended one class per week and I could not imagine myself training more than that. Looking at this stage from today's perspective I don't know why I continued training. At some point – I don't remember when or how, I entered the second stage where I never had a bad training ever again, up till today. That doesn't mean that I enjoy every single class the same way, but I have never had my mood being pushed down from aikido training.

The third stage can be called the 'pre Iwama' stage. With my best friends in the aikido group who both had been to Iwama as Uchi Deshi Saito Morihiro Sensei before, I was constantly talking about aikido and the Uchi Deshi life in Iwama. Needless to say, that I also wanted to get my personal Iwama venture

Unfortunately, I didn't get the chance to go to Japan or to meet Saito Sensei in person before he passed away in 2002, but two years later I met Nemoto Hiroki Sensei on a seminar in Germany in 2004 and I knew instantly that I wanted to train with him. He had just started his Uchi Deshi program in Iwama, so when I asked him with the help of a translator he

warmly invited me to Japan. Six weeks later I was Uchi Deshi in Iwama for the summer. That was the beginning of the third stage: 'post Iwama'.

As for many students before me the life in Iwama had a huge impact on many levels. Of course technically – I've had more trainings in 3 months than usually in an entire year – and it also changed my self-image.

But the biggest change was yet to come. For about 10 years I had been training Iwama Style aikido, which meant 99% kihon training – step by step. This gave me a solid foundation which I appreciate, but I felt more and more that there was something missing. I'm not saying that Iwama Style aikido (or Takemusu) is always and only kihon training, but in the Dojo where I trained and on the seminars I attended this was the case.

I began more and more to search for deeper levels and the links to philosophical and spiritual aspects of aikido when I stumbled across an announcement for a seminar with Miles Kessler Sensei. I knew that name from the many stories my friends used to tell me when I was a beginner. The seminar blew me away. His approach to aikido was different from what I knew before. Having been a direct student of Saito Sensei for many years, Miles offered (for me) new point of views to aikido and filled the missing link.

With this new perspective I decided to start my own Dojo and become a teacher – the fifth stage. Now I was able to study the newly encountered aspects.

I am grateful for every part of my aikido journey and for every lesson I was given the chance to learn from the teachers I have met.

Aikido in Kiel

www.aikido-in-kiel.de

info@aikido-in-kiel.de