

This is the translation of the second article in the series entitled “Daito-ryu Aiki-budo”<sup>1</sup> written by Hisa Takuma and published in Shin Budo magazine between November 1942 and March 1943. It was first translated and published by Stanley Pranin in Aiki News issue #86. Thanks to the help of fellow budo researcher Baptiste Tavernier, who went to look for the original in Japanese in the archives of the International Budo University (国際武道大学, Kokusai Budo Daigaku), I am able to present the text accompanied with notes and for the first time, the photos that originally illustrated the article. Remarkably, some were taken using X-rays in order to better show joint locks and even though the quality is not very high due to the printing technique used at the time, I feel that they bear great historical significance. Of perhaps even more historical significance is the fact that until then, the Daito-ryu tradition had been extremely cautious not to publicize technical material openly. Some schools and teachers did publish technical documents, but those were distributed within small circles of people. This is to my knowledge the first time Daito-ryu techniques were made available so openly to the public. Note that Takeda Sokaku was still alive at that point, and it is quite likely that he had knowledge of that publication. Taken into consideration with the fact that Hisa Takuma was the sole student to whom he gave the menkyo kaiden<sup>2</sup>, it gives a good indication of the importance of Hisa within the Daito-ryu tradition.

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Cover of the December 1942 issue of Shin Budo

## **Daito-ryu Aiki-budo – The basics of Daito-ryu Techniques**

by Hisa Takuma, menkyo kaiden, shihan<sup>3</sup>

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### **Characteristics and training methodologies**

#### **1. A practical martial art with deadly techniques which lead to certain victory.**

As I mentioned earlier<sup>4</sup>, this school is a practical martial art with deadly techniques, so neither randori<sup>5</sup> practice nor competition are possible. Therefore, when we practice with our partners we must train using the kata which have been recorded in the densho<sup>6</sup>. The kata I refer to here are different from those of Judo or Kendo. We practice using our power and ki while we train and thus skills that are effective in real combat can be cultivated.

#### **2. A martial art which anyone can practice.**

Unlike fighting arts such as Sumo, Judo and Kendo, since this is the art of aiki<sup>7</sup>, any-one, regardless of age or sex, can practice it even if they have no experience in other martial arts. One can master, to some extent, the truth of aiki through devoted practice.

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#### **3. A martial art which can be practiced anywhere.**

Unlike Judo, Kendo and Sumo, it is possible to practice this art anywhere; it is not limited to the dojo.

#### **4. An art which can be practiced without weapons.**

Since this is basic taijutsu<sup>8</sup> which is practiced empty-handed, it requires no weapons or armor.

#### **5. An art which can be practiced wearing any kind of clothing.**

It can be practiced in ordinary clothing without a keikogi, it can even be done while wearing a fundoshi<sup>9</sup>

#### **6. An art which can be practiced at anytime.**

As mentioned above, since one is free to practice anywhere in any clothing, one can practice anytime one has a little free time<sup>10</sup>.

#### **7. An art which can be practiced in a group or individually.**

Generally, martial arts techniques are taught on an individual basis. This art can be practiced in groups of 50 or even 100 as long as the proper method of instruction is used<sup>11</sup>.

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## Technical Explanations

Categorizing the techniques of this school, there are techniques which you use to actively attack an enemy, defensive techniques which you use against an enemy's attack, as well as gyaku waza<sup>12</sup>, aiki no kime<sup>13</sup>, aikinage<sup>14</sup>, irimi, irimi-tenkan and atemi<sup>15</sup>. Also, we can distinguish the techniques in terms of offense and defense.

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- Suwari waza: shomen uchi, yokomen uchi, tekubi dori, sode dori, ryote kubi dori, kubi jime
- Hanmi handachi: tekubi dori, tsuki, ushiro eri dori, ushiro kubi jime.
- Tachi waza: yokomen uchi, shomen uchi, tekubi dori, sode dori, tsuki, kata dori, ryokata dori, kubi jime.
- Ushiro waza: ushiro erikubi dori, ushiro kubi jime, ushiro tekubi dori, ushiro kata dori, ushiro daki jime.
- Tasu dori: ni nindori, san nin dori, tasu dori.

There are 2,884 different techniques and when we include the ura and omote techniques, they comprise quite a diversified group and it would be impossible to explain them all in this limited space. Therefore, I will choose the techniques which are the easiest to understand and explain them.

## Gyaku no kime

As I mentioned earlier<sup>16</sup>, this school began when Minamoto no Yoshimitsu<sup>17</sup> discovered the secret of gyaku kime for each of the joints of the body by studying the skeletons of dissected corpses brought back from battles. Therefore, in this school, one can control one's opponent completely and immobilize him the moment he makes contact by applying pressure to any joint of the body, for example the fingers, the wrist, the elbow, shoulder, neck, spine, hips, knees, feet, and so on.

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Why is attacking the joints so effective?

Explained in physiological terms, any joint can be freely bent to a certain extent to the front or back, right or left according to the physiological need. However, if a strong pressure such as gyaku kime is applied to the joint, they are bent forcibly, and are extended or turned beyond their natural physiological limit and thus cause abnormalities to the surface of the bones which make up the joints. As a result of this pressure, the particular capsule which surrounds the joints is torn, or the muscles and tendons around the joints are extended excessively, and the person who takes the ukemi feels acute pain.

In order to get free of this acute pain, there is nothing that can be done except to return the locked joint to its natural position by changing one's body position, thus escaping the excessive bending friction of the joint bones or relieving the degree of muscle or tendon extension.

Therefore, the person who takes ukemi bends his joint in the direction of the applied pressure, gradually alters the position of his body and then loses his balance to fall or to be led to a decisive position where he can no longer resist or move.

Here, I would like to explain the following three wrist joint reversal<sup>18</sup> techniques: 1. soto gyaku<sup>19</sup>, 2. uchi gyaku<sup>20</sup>, 3. fuka gyaku<sup>21</sup>. I hope that readers can understand the theory and mechanisms behind the techniques by referring to the photos as well as the X-rays.

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## Uchi gyaku

(1) When your enemy comes to strike or thrust at the front of your right hand and leg, either with his *tegatana* (手刀, lit.: hand-sword), his fist, a short knife, or a long sword, you should handle it in a quiet and calm manner, perceiving his intention before he even begins to move; you should take the initiative and lead him by opening your body immediately to the right, pivoting on your left foot. (When your enemy comes to thrust at the front of your left hand and leg with a spear or bayonet, you should open your body to the left, pivoting on your right foot.) (2) As you open your body to the right, you should grab the right wrist of the enemy with your left hand, palm down, and turn his wrist outwards, placing your right hand over it and execute *sotogawa no gyaku* on his wrist joint while moving your left foot to the rear to make him fall. (3) The moment the enemy falls, strike a vital point with your right hand or attack the vital point with your right foot. (4) The reverse position of the enemy's wrist can be clearly seen in the X-ray photo. As you can see in the photo, the right wrist joint of the enemy is bent excessively outward beyond its limit thus compelling the enemy to fall due to the unbearable pain.

## Soto gyaku

(5) When your enemy comes to grab your shoulder or sleeve with his right hand while striking with his left hand, you take the initiative and strike his face with your right hand to blind him (*metsubushi*, 目つぶし). (6) Raise your left hand high and grab his right wrist with your right hand turning his wrist inward and then grab it firmly with your left hand from the outside. Concentrating the *aiki* of your whole body against the enemy's body, execute the *gyaku* joint technique on his wrist, feeling as if you were cutting his arm, which you consider to be a sword, straight down from *jodan* (上段, lit.: upper level). If the enemy resists strongly, place your left arm onto his right arm and then apply pressure to his elbow joint as well. (7) As you can clearly see in the X-ray photo, at the time of this technique the joint is excessively bent beyond its limit and thus is completely controlled and the enemy cannot offer any resistance. (8) Push the enemy face down while continuing to apply pressure to his wrist and then advance your right knee to his left side to apply full pressure there. Then control (*kimeru*, 極める) his right arm in *gyaku*, while at the same time applying pressure to the joints of his wrists and shoulders.

## Fuka gyaku

(9) When an enemy comes to strike the front of your head with his *tegatana* (or short knife, long sword or other weapon), you should perceive his intention before he begins to move to strike and receive his attack with your left hand by rapidly entering, while striking his face with your right fist to blind him or applying an *atemi* to his solar plexus. (10) At the moment that the enemy is about to strike down, lead his sword (*tegatana*) and with your right hand, grab the back of his *tegatana* from above. (11) Twist his *tegatana* outward and grab the now reversed *tegatana*, this time with your left hand along its back side. Then place your right hand on the palm of the *tegatana* and using the *aiki* of your entire body, apply pressure as if you were lifting it up as high as his shoulder level while twisting it. After completing this movement, you can control him with your left hand only. (12) In this technique, the position of his wrist joint cannot be seen clearly since the bones of the person who executes the technique and those of the person who takes *ukemi* overlap. The right wrist of the person who takes *ukemi* is bent in the direction completely opposite to the natural direction and therefore, even a small amount of additional pressure can cause him unbearable pain and he is forced to move as you wish.

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1. You can read [the first article in the series here](#).

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2. The *menkyo kaiden* (免許皆伝) is the highest certificate of proficiency awarded in many traditional Japanese martial art systems.

3. This suggests that the *shihan dairi* (師範代理, deputy teacher) was a formal title given by Takeda, which is unusual since it is a relatively recent title compared to the traditional system. Though some people have mentioned *shihan dairi* through the years, I was not able to find references to such title in the parts of the *shareiroku* and *eimeroku* registers that we have at our disposal.

4. In the first part of this article series, which was published in the *Shinbudo* of November 1942 and [available here](#).

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5. *Randori* (乱取り) is a type of free-style practice.

6. *Densho* (伝書, secret transmission scroll).

7. Although the rest of the article describes basic Jujutsu techniques, here, Hisa refers specifically to aiki no jutsu (合気の術). In the mainstream Daito-ryu teaching methodology, it represents the higher level of application of Jujutsu techniques while putting aiki into action, hence no longer requiring much physical strength.

8. Taijutsu (体術, lit.: "body techniques").

9. A fundoshi (褌), which consists in a cotton cloth, was the traditional underwear that adult males commonly wore at the time. Interestingly, during my Daito-ryu training, I have been taught several variations of techniques so that they could be performed if attacked in a bath house (i.e. naked). Those involved modified grabs, chokes and restrains, compared to the kata forms, in order to make up for the lack of clothing and slippery skin of the opponents.

10. This again is very interesting and can be surprising to someone coming from Aikido. Daito-ryu classes are often less formal than that of Aikido and I have learned in a number of different places outside of the dojo, whenever a teacher felt like sharing. My teacher, [Chiba Tsugutaka Sensei](#), could grab someone to demonstrate at any time and in any place. As another example, recently, I was fortunate enough to have [Roy Goldberg Sensei](#) spend some time showing me some techniques in a park in Tokyo, after what should have only been a lunchtime encounter.

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11. In that, Daito-ryu differs greatly from other koryu, where classes usually involve very small numbers of students. Based on the study of Takeda Sokaku's ledger, he seems to have been teaching extensively through seminars.

12. Gyaku waza (逆技, lit.: inversion techniques) represents the techniques of joint restraints and dislocation.

13. Aiki no kime (合気の極め, lit.: decisive aiki techniques).

14. Aiki nage (合気投げ, lit.: projection with aiki).

15. Atemi (當身) generally refers to the strikes to the body, although the locations, effects and purposes for which they are placed within the technique may vary.

16. In the first part of this article series, which was published in the Shinbudo of November 1942 and [available here](#).

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17. Minamoto no Yoshimitsu (源 義光, 1045 - 1127), also known as Shinra Saburo (新羅 三郎), is often credited as the creator of Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu, but as with several other historical claims of Daito-ryu, the evidence available to support it is scarce.

18. Gyaku (逆).

19. Soto gyaku (外逆, lit. : outwards reversal).

20. Uchi gyaku (内逆, lit. : inner reversal).

21. Fuka gyaku (深逆, lit. : deep reversal).