

Sports policy (Aikido)

The theme is the emergence of Hungarian and International Aikido Sport, its legal and financial background in Japan and the European Union. Nowadays sport is equal to competitive sport as well as an enormous amount of business opportunities through athletes and sports equipment as the environmental factors required for sports. Aikido is radically different from the above-mentioned stereotypes, as its adaptation and practice is far from the original 'sports business' approach. Most of all, Aikido is a self-defense sport, far from any kind of competition, its sole objective is to develop and maintain the spirit and the body. The translation of its name means: *AI*= harmony, *KI*= spirit, *DO*= way. When read together: the way of harmony and spirit. Its goal is to achieve victory by using the opponent's (and our personal) energy, by way of our spirit and body. I also find its emergence interesting, therefore, as introduction I will write about the rise of this sport starting from the Japanese middle ages, since the current situation is considerably determined by ancient traditionalist culture. In my opinion, it is important to learn this due to the spread of this sport in Japan and on other continents and its integration into European sports.

In Japan, after the middle ages the way of warriors belonged to culture, as feudal lords (*Shogunates*) operated private armies to maintain their power and position, but not the least for their inland conquests. The size of these was in direct proportion with their income and power. They spent a considerable part of their income on maintaining and training soldiers, they had numerous bodyguards, samurais, since Japan was isolated from other parts of the world, thus Japanese society developed, so to say, socialized differently.

The Japanese age of knights, 'Bushido', determined the sports of the period, as well as the habitual pursuance thereof. The greater powers (*Shogunates*) were always fighting, and the end of these fights was probably significantly influenced by the relationship with the West established in 1543. Its final result was that Tokugawa Ieyasu took over power in the early 1600s and it was followed by a relatively peaceful age called 'Edo' (1603-1868).

After *Tokugawa's* victory, Japan blocked its foreign relations in 1635 and reopened its gates only after 1853. In 1867 the 'Shogunates' collapsed, samurai rights were abolished in 1871 and Japan started off towards industrialization, but the achievement of the era, the respect towards the elderly, samurais (the athletes) and superiors remained deeply rooted in the lifestyle of Japanese people forever.

This historical background helps to understand the birth of Aikido. Around 1920 *Morihei Ueshiba*, the founder of the sport started to develop his own „Aikido” style from Daito ryu, Aiki Jujutsu, Judo and other early types of martial arts. However, he never really wanted this sport to be recognized as a competitive sport, he practiced it as Bushido, life-and-death struggle, and his aim was to defend his own life and to eliminate the opponent (entirely). The first public appearance occurred in 1925, after that, from 1926 he could maintain a dojo in Tokyo, and he only opened his second gym in 1931.

The founder's sports policy was then, and still is only directed towards sport and not competitive sport. It was not the founder but his son, *Kishomaru Ueshiba*, who made Aikido successful. He realized that it is a Budo sport that can be everyone's, regardless of age and gender. But the main reason was that it meant the livelihood for the family in the poor country of Japan.

This recognition was just escalated by the losses of the Second World War. Fortunately, the Japanese government recognized Aikido as an individual sport in 1940. Its major development started after 1948, after the release of *Japanese Budo* (softer than *Bushido*) sports. At that time, the total number of Aikido athletes in Tokyo was five, in Iwama it was 10-15, and the rest of the world did not know about the sport. As indicated, the founder's son, *Kishomaru* saw the great opportunity, and he established the Foundation for Aikido (Aikikai Hombu) in Tokyo in 1948, the task and purpose of which was to promote and spread aikido. The Hombu develops the rules, athletes' examination system, training of instructors, and the top instructors are sent all over the world from here. The Hombu is still the management center of Japanese and international Aikido, it helps the International Aikido Foundation (IAF) that is present in all regions of the world. Its operation is so to speak a franchise system.

In the second step, between 1948 and 1976 the sport changed significantly. It spread mainly because of its popularity, the number of athletes in the world increased exponentially, and as a result of that the International Aikido Federation (IAF) was established in 1976, the operation of which provides major international sports political advantages to Aikido as a sport.

The IAF enables aikido practitioners from around the world to meet and exercise with senior teachers selected for the task directly by Aikikai Hombu. It also provides a discussion forum between foreign Aikido organizations, instructors who joined and the Aikikai Hombu, in the form of a Congress held every four years. It operates an official channel of communication between Aikido organizations and the Aikikai Hombu through IAF congresses and other meetings.

IAF helps on national and continental levels to sow the seeds of Aikido in new locations and to introduce it where member associations do not exist yet. Another main task of the federation is to keep contact with various officially recognized sports organizations such as The World Games and Sportaccord Combat Games, where sport arts are interpreted. The risk of confusion is being reduced here, as Aikido is not a competitive sport in the generally accepted sense of the word, since no competitions are held, and it doesn't participate in the Olympic movement and its organized competitions and pre-selections.

IAF members are organizations selected from each of the member nations, all of them having one vote in the democratically controlled federation. The IAF's status and participation in international associations provide particularly great help in getting the member associations recognized by the government bodies in their own countries as well. The first IAF Congress was in 1976, and since 1984 IAF has been a member of the former GAISF, currently called Sportaccord and IWGA, World Games organization. During such events, sports demonstrations are usually held too. IAF's anti-doping commitment has been approved by the general assembly's congruent decision in 2008, since then the federation has been cooperating with WADA representatives and anti-doping experts. The Recognition of Hombu is necessary to become an IAF member, but only one organization from each country can be a member. Currently 46 organizations are IAF members of the 100 organizations recognized by the Hombu.

Hungary has been trying to be admitted since 1998, even though Aikido clubs have existed since 1980, but has not yet managed to get the membership owing to the fact that domestic legislation prefers competitive sports, thus inland standardization has also faced many external and internal difficulties.

Every country's member organizations pay a membership fee to the IAF which serves pursuance of its own activities. The Hombu's operation - and in fact the founder's family - is supported by the annual membership fees of member organizations.

Other sources of income are the one or two training camps held annually by the different countries and the fees of Dan examinations taking place there. Actually, because of the lack of competitions, the international competition calendar adapts to the centrally issued times and places of shows, international camps and congresses: IAF Congresses every four years, World Combat Games every four years and camps held by Hombu instructors from Europe and other continents on an annual basis. In domestic relations there are several camps, and aikido clubs and associations invite foreign teachers in a prompt way. Planning therefore is not possible.

Thus international management of Aikido, as a sport is executed through the family-run Hombu Foundation. IAF that it established in 1975 theoretically supports it as well almost outgrowing it, but the president of its management is always a member of the Ueshiba family. IAF has outgrown the original idea and its separation from the Hombu has risen in principal several times, causing a problem, but the majority of existing Japanese masters delegated to the management have hindered this so far. The management of IAF consists of the President and 5 Vice Presidents as well as the Technical and Judge Council. There is not much information available about their specific operation, but the Technical Council fulfills technical supervision of the Sport and the Judge Council probably decides in differences of opinion between organizations and arising technical, financial and personnel matters.

On behalf of Hungary only one organization (association) has achieved Hombu membership, but due to its transformations, its headcount is low and there is no uniform position on who could represent Hungary because of opposing internal powers (financial and personal) and conflicts of interest. On behalf of the Hombu there is no appointed permanent representative/instructor in Hungary. The Hungarian Aikido-Culture Professional Association maintains an unofficial relationship with the Hombu and foreign organizations with IAF membership, thus, among others, with French, German, English, Austrian, Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish and American aikido clubs.

International cooperation is not regulated in a domestic context. The head of each association may keep contact with foreign instructors and organizations and examination is pursued by at least six foreign instructors on an international level in Hungary, on behalf of both the Hombu and the examiners of other foreign professional associations. By Hombu acknowledgement, two member organizations received Hombu membership in 2015, thus from now on there will be an opportunity for further development.

Act no. I. of 2004 of the Hungarian Legislation on sports worsened the situation because it wanted competitive sports to play an emphasized role. Legislators don't acknowledge sports in which there is no competition. In my opinion this is against European or international sport politics, where they do not consider competition but sport, preservation of health and recreation as the most important aims of the population. Based on this, further requirements hinder all attempts, if there is no Professional Association (National Sport Association) of the given sport, there cannot be trainer education either, if there is no trainer education, what shall be the basis of teaching by domestic Aikido trainers and their international degree does not worth anything at home.

It does not provide a chance for either education or further training, but it does not provide assistance in controlling education in the sport and instructors. The abilities of the instructors who are totally out of the scope of social and professional control can also be questioned, because people without sport professional or physiological knowledge instruct something that might also cause health damage.

Neither MOB, nor EMMI acting on behalf of the Hungarian State does not take into consideration the common practice in European sport policy or in the countries of other continents, according to which public health is not related to competitive sport and recreation, wellness and fitness movements do not only serve competition. It is interesting that the American Aikido Association (USAF) was formed and became a member of IFA, it quit in 2005 and it applied for membership again in 2007. The Canadian Association also left IAF after many years. All these tendencies and the competitive spirit strongly affect the management of Aikido, as competition is almost synonymous with money and "abundance". An industry could not be built around Aikido, because its clothes are the same as those of Judo and Karate, it uses mainly the same tools as judo and the *tatami* (the arena) is the same as in judo. Its specifically used weapons are shoddies, sticks, knives, wooden swords, for which no significant amount can be asked on the market, they are not fast consumables and their amortization can be 10-15 years. The aim of the withdrawal of the US organization was also to become a competitive sport, but it was realized there also that there is no competition in this, since the nature of the sport does not allow „clean” attacks without endangering the attacker’s own physical safety. Of course, this was the goal of the Founder and he also declared that it is not allowed to organize competitions of this sport.

In international sport politics Aikido as a sport developed an interesting, but not unified way. In many countries, such as Spain, France and the US it works under the aegis and next to the Judo association. And in countries where sports can be freely practiced like in England, Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, Turkey or Greece, the sport lives an independent life. There are no obligatory regulations related to Aikido as a sport, such as the number of members or membership conditions. The only obligatory elements of the organizations are centralized and controlled management, the education and qualification of instructors and observation of taxes and standards! Their requirements do not include that it is a must to be a member of Aikido Hombu or one of its international associations (IAF). Commercially organized Aikido clubs live an independent life; they cover their costs from their own income. We can certainly see exceptions outside of developed countries, since Chile as well as the Dominican Republic support the sport in such a way that event centers are maintained by the state and anyone may use them for the purpose of sports. There are subsidies in competitive sports only, because score obtaining slots are necessary due to identity as the results of athletes achieved at international competitions play a central role in national pride everywhere.

Overall, it can be concluded that Aikido is a sport organized on a family basis, which organizes the education of Aikido as a financial business. The management of the family Hombu is organized on a business basis: it is an enterprise, the support of which is also an IAF goal. On a state (Japan) or international level it does not receive any other financial support; in most of the countries it gets moral assistance (as in Chile where, after acknowledgement by the state in 2001 it enjoyed the support of the Olympic Committee in 2003).

Management is ensured by the Hombu in IAF through its instructors, since masters can only be trained and nominated by the Hombu. This ensures that Aikido Dan grades can only be given by the Hombu registration and examination system, its ambassadors in the regions can only be Japanese instructors and persons. Based on registrations approximately 1.5 million people do Aikido all over the world. Due to this, Hombu does not recognize non-Aikikai Dan grades, but at the same time it is aware that there is an increasing number of people independently practicing Aikido in the world who are outside of them and IAF. They are always open to adopt them (because of membership fees), but it is bad manners to talk about them or about the trends they represent. The managing Technical Council and the Council of Seniors set the requirements for the grades, the waiting periods and the exam times.

It is interesting that the trends which arose after the death of the founder are always represented at the annual meeting in Iwama, at the anniversary of the death of the Doshu and they traditionally award the grades from the 5th Dan up. (Thus there are international exams up to the 4th Dan and after that they award activities pursued for Aikido with the grades /a non-Japanese person has maximum reached the 7th Dan/.) Moreover, by following traditions, the Founder also granted the right to teach Aikido to the Japanese Imperial Family and to the Tokugawa clan and the thus established International Martial Arts Federation (IMAF) is an independent association that is in no way related to IAF or Aikikai Hombu either. This right was granted to IMAF by the son of the Founder. This currently means a significant loss for the Ueshiba family, however, both organizations recognize the activities of the other as a sign of respect of tradition, but we are not aware of any official connection between them!

Many people, mainly younger Aikido practitioners would like to put aside the religious myth and they want to turn it into a competition, since it could also be a profitable source of income as Karate. The old generation that learned from the Founder does not want to discuss this. The hardness of trainings has also been a topic at the conferences in many cases, because it is possible to train "fight-like" hard, and it is also possible to train softly and artistically. There has been no agreement on this, although violence and training as well as being trained are close to each other as there is no sport without stamina. Legal steps have always been left to the official agencies of the given country in these matters (except for doping).

I consider the successful appearance of Aikido at the World Games in Saint-Petersburg a significant step forward. The audience and the organizing committee were interested in a sport where there is no competition. This is an "Aikido religion", nobody does it for the competition but because they love to do it. Development is steady, as nowadays there are more Aikido dojos outside the Hombu, than the members and this suggests that this sport might separate from its founding organization sooner or later, start an independent life and the self-esteem of Aikido practitioners will not be determined by the received Dan grades, but the awareness of doing something right.

It can be stated that the Founder created a sport in the twenties which is modern and also advanced by today's standards, focuses on the development and maintenance of the body and the mind, and in modern terms, concentrates on "Wellness".

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