

## Technical Aikido

### Seiza

Aikido's seated posture is of primary importance as in it the fundamentals of energy alignment may be found and practiced. This traditional posture, called **seiza** is one of only two fully aligned, unsupported seated positions available to the human being, positions wherein the knees are naturally below the hips, essential to allow the back to relax into fully extended vertical curvature. The other fully aligned seated posture is the full Lotus position of Yoga.

In the seiza posture energy enters the body from high above, passes downward through the spine, leaves through the coccyx, and passes into the Earth. The downward flow is nonlinear in the sense that it increases in density the closer to the Earth it comes, increased density the result of gravitational field differential.

In the aligned seated posture, nage's body from top of the head to the base of the spine is in a condition of maximum extensional range. This is experienced by nage as having the crown of the head connected by a 'heavenly string' from above, while gravity pulls the base of the spine downward into the Earth.

The human body is also preformally polarized, back to front. The body has evolved in such a way that action in front is more available and useful than action in back. Even absent intent, this preformal polarity can be seen, as the eyes face the front, and the joints of the arms are designed to facilitate forward-oriented activity.

In the preformal, the descending nonlinear current of energy within the body, combines with the back-to-front static polarity of the body to create a certain curvature, a hyperbolic curvature, which concentrates energy into a focal point located in the lower abdomen. This point of energy concentration (called **chushin**, or more generally **hara**) is the natural vortical focal point of energy in the optimally aligned human body, both the center of mass and the center of movement of the body.

The focus in the lower abdomen is recognized and considered to be important in all martial arts. But it is not something to be deliberately achieved by effort. It appears naturally when maximum extensional range exists in the spine. Many martial artists mistakenly project their 'hara' (vital center) forward while in the seated posture in the mistaken belief that such a projection will make them strong.

But what it really does is take emphasis off of spinal extension and transfers it to focus on the vortical center, something that leads to a collapse of extensional range. In the effort to project power from the center, the hips are rotated forward (base of the pelvic girdle moves slightly backwards), which is a reversal of the natural and correct direction of a freely manifesting vortical flow. Such a projection thus actually *negates* energy concentration in abdominal center.

Structurally, this projection of the abdominal center also induces and exacerbates a 'shearing effect' that already tends to plague the human body in the lower lumbar region, at the junction between the pelvic girdle and the body's torso. When a

practitioner ‘projects hara’ forward, the induced forces make maximization of spinal extensional range difficult, and causes abnormal compression forces in the lower spine.

Instead of projection of the abdomen, the practitioner should base seiza around primary alignment (receptivity), and spinal extensional range. That is achieved through sitting back into the descending hyperbolic spiral curvature (increasingly linear toward the ascending pole, increasingly curved underneath and forward in proximity to the body’s center of mass.)

Once aware of the tendency to rotate the hips in the wrong direction in the deliberate effort to project the abdomen, practitioners must take care not to rotate the pelvis excessively the other way. If that happens, the extension of the spine will again collapse causing an unwanted failure of *natural* projection from abdominal center.

The optimized posture manifests a vortical center in the lower abdomen entirely because of extensional range in the spine. The crown of the head ascends, the base of the spine descends. No other effort need exist in Seiza.

## **Kokyu-ho**

Kokyu-ho is an Aikido practice wherein nage and uke sit opposite each other in seiza, nage holding uke’s wrists or alternatively, uke holding nage’s wrists. When nage holds uke’s wrists, it is a practice wherein uke tries to uproot nage’s stability and take his balance to the side or over backwards. When uke holds nage’s wrists, it is a practice wherein nage attempts to uproot and push uke over.

Many practitioners treat Kokyu-ho practice as a battle of stability and strength wherein the sole goal is to destabilize one’s partner, while simultaneously resisting being pushed over oneself. But Kokyu-ho can be much more than that, serving as a proving ground by which the principles of non-resistance as a practical approach to the martial interaction can be closely examined.

In the basic practice, nage takes hold of uke’s wrists and uke proceeds to attempt to push nage over. Nage usually has two main options when this takes place, either to resist by actively counter-pushing (or diverting uke’s push) or to focus on passive stability (immovability.)

But another option exists, the option to approach uke with active, pure non-resistance. This is the approach that will be described here, an option that, while recognizing that resistance and diversion of input power may be necessary in certain situations, concentrates upon non-resistant principles and non-resistant energy management, both theoretically and practically. Perfection of a non-resistive approach to conflict, both on the level of energy and in technical application, is the deeper aim of Kokyu-ho as a practice, and lies at the heart of Aikido as an art form.

Kokyu-ho offers a place for study of how energy behaves in non-resistant systems in general, and specifically how nage might go about control of uke’s aggressive energy through non-resistive grounding.

It is essential to understand at the outset of this description of Kokyu-ho, that non-resistance is a unique condition, something entirely different from very low resistance. Even the lowest level of resistance is completely different in a fundamental way from pure non-resistance.

Non-resistance is a unique condition which contains native infinities, infinities of impedance (similar to resistance but based upon oscillation of energy), and infinities of conductivity. Through non-resistance, nage may begin to work with those infinities, to come to familiarity with their existence, their meaning, and how to tap into their innate power in technical application. How well a practitioner is able to do this comes directly from familiarity with and practice of their use in technique.

Non-resistance exists on both psychological and physical levels. Psychologically, non-resistance exists when nage decontracts fully, moving beyond thought into alignment with the Origin. From that position all psychological positions are potentially

available. The fully decontracted state is the foundation for the kamae of non-resistance.

On a physical level, non-resistance is a transparency of alignment which takes incoming energy into ground through skeletal alignment and muscle tone. A practitioner who is working to implement a non-resistant martial strategy presents transparent alignment to incoming energy, providing that energy with a simple, physical line of conductivity into contact with the Earth.

Such a line of decontracted conductivity need not involve deliberate contractions of muscles; all that is needed is muscle tone. Because muscles are relaxed, they retain potential for full contractive range. Such a condition is one of 'relaxed power', wherein the potential for contractive peak intensity is always present.

On a practical level, decontracted alignment is only partially successful in conduction of incoming energy to ground. If an extended arm encounters incoming energy straight on, energy can be conducted to ground efficiently. But the effect on the body will be quite different when the same energy is received from the side. Because it is not possible to dissipate energy efficiently at all angles out of a single stable position, practical use of non-resistive transparency requires that nage shift the ground of technique as necessary to redirect and/or conduct incoming energy optimally. **Reset of Ground** is a key aspect of technical non-resistance, that works in concert with non-resistant conductive transparency.

In the martial interaction, reset of ground is made in such a way that it resolves multiple incoming vectors of energy simultaneously. Non-resistant martial techniques deal with such incoming power, not just in conductive transparency, or just reset of ground, but through a combination of these factors into instantiation of a **throwing spiral**, an upstream figure that seeks to bring all incoming energies to the same focal point, deep within the Earth directly under nage's center.

The throwing spiral is most often a logarithmic or hyperbolic spiral, in the set of which nage not only manages all incoming energies, but

does so while simultaneously achieving non-resistive stability. In the set of the throwing spiral, uke (or more than one uke) is caught into the trajectories of the arms of the spiral.

Not only is the reset of ground and establishment of the throwing spiral important on a technical level, but it is also a major part of non-resistant strategy to reset ground psychologically.

Reset of ground psychologically means to move beyond the known, that movement essential to implementation of non-resistance. It may take considerable work before that becomes possible, but reset of psychological ground is the foundation for free action, the key element of the non-resistant approach to the martial interaction. In order to achieve freedom in technical application, the bounds of the known must be understood. The profound reset of ground that such an investigation leads to is that which will ultimately lead to freedom in technique.

Nage's ability to move freely, to choose the center of technique, physically and psychologically, allows him the ability to determine and set the optimal ground of the martial interaction. The fact that this can be done even once, suggests the possibility exists to manifest a continuous reset of ground, a fluidity in reset of consciousness that could potentially place the body into optimal transparent alignment at all times. That this may be possible isn't just theoretical; it is evident to many that this is exactly what Morihei Ueshiba accomplished and frequently demonstrated in the unique martial capability that characterized his later life.

For the beginning to intermediate martial artist, even a single effective reset of ground will, at first, be technically difficult. Uke, for all intents and purposes, appears to be unpredictable, and the whole notion of grounding as a foundational approach to uke's control may seem foreign. The suggestion that a spontaneous and continuous reset of ground, both physical and psychological, might be possible, that it might even be desirable, appears at first to be an intimidating, formidable task.

In fact, it would be impossible if one needed to accomplish it entirely on one's own. What is not

figured into the equation, at least at first, is that, lying dormant in the center of one's being, deep within consciousness, lies an incredible Intelligence, an Intelligence that only awaits a moment of true foundational stillness, by which it can emerge and suddenly permeate experience.

Kokyu-ho is key to this study, a study wherein set of ground is a primary focus. Only marginally more complicated than Seiza itself, the fundamental principles of non-resistive energy management can be studied in depth through Kokyu-ho's simple physical techniques. Emerging familiarity with non-resistant principles begins to break the logjam of automatic resistive coping mechanisms that have populated the human mind for thousands of years. As practice and skill evolve, a deeper understanding will emerge without effort....