

## Bali & Aikido – et reisebrev



Taxi driver: Hey Boss, where you going?

Me: Dojo Aora, you know it?

TD: Where? You want shopping?

Me: No, Dojo Aora, Aikido, martial art, training, just wait I think I have the address.

TD: Training, you want gym?

Me: You know Hammerhead Gym? I think it's the same building.

TD: AH, HAMMER HEAD GYM, YES YES I KNOW!

Silence...

TD: You want fight yes?

Me: Err, well, I want to practice Aikido, it's a Japanese martial art.

TD: Judo?

Me: No, it's...

TD: Ah Karate? (starts hitting into the air, no hands on the wheel)

Me: No, it's different.

TD: OK

Silence...

Practicing without a dogi feels strange, brings me back to when I first started Aikido...

My 20th birthday, all weekend spent on a seminar with Ulli Kubetzek Sensei in Stavanger, no dogi, fresh, but hooked, for life? Thanks to him kokyūho still means to touch the tip of your hat like Michael Jackson. The sensei smiles at me, I'm in seiza, trying to act like I learned to do visiting new dojos in Japan. «Sensei» I bow. He still smiles, «You want to practice? I see you have good seiza. »

I'm grouped up with beginners, and I should be, I am a beginner. It makes me happy not having to feel the pressure of others' expectations. Total on the mats there is about 8-10 people. A girl getting frustrated with ikkyō practice zones out and instead starts guessing where I'm from. «French? » «No? » «You look French» «Really? Don't know if I should be offended or happy, but still, no. » Australia, USA, England, Germany, Scotland after this she just starts saying random countries in where the majority of the population is white. «Sweden? » «Well as close as you can get without being correct. » «Iceland? » «Err, no I'm from...» «Norway? » Bingo. She smiles, not for long, reality reminds her of the practice as the sensei walks past, she produce a sigh and makes her friend change place with her.

I'm in Bali, it's hot, really hot, the roof is covered with fans, thank God, but the fan over my head

is wobbling and making noises, zanshin, zanshin, doing aikido with the image of a fan crushing down on you is an interesting feeling. After not to long the sensei makes me join the advanced part of the practice, it makes me happy getting to move away from the fan. They do a randori sort of practice where one stands in the middle, the rest attack in turns then change. The tempo is high in the beginning, after a while the heat dulls it all down. Dimitri Farmakidis sensei quoting Steven Seagal sensei pops into my mind «Show me what you got, when you got nothing left». Besides the randori the other thing that strikes me as different is when a man comments on my break fall saying «Bagus», and repeats it a lot. This means good in Indonesian, the word *Good* not being something I'm too familiar hearing in an Aikido setting. This maybe because of the senseis I had, but still... Are there a good and bad in Aikido? If there is one then there has to be the other. But some dojos you hear *good* and others you hear *bad*, I don't really know what to make of it.

After one practice the sensei, sensei Robinsar, gives me a ride home. We talk, talk about Bali, Aikido and just different things. He likes to talk, and smiles and laughs a lot, good company. He is originally from Java but lived most of his life on Bali, married a Balinese and says himself that he is more or less Balinese. He tells me that he will go to Bali's main dojo with a Japanese friend later this month and invites me along.



My phone rings. «Thomas? »

«Yes? »

«Its Robin, I'm a bit late, sorry, but I will be there soon. »

«No problem. »

Looking at the crazy traffic in front of me, he being late is more than easy to imagine, anything else would be shocking.

I'm waiting with a friend serving as camera man for the occasion, trying to spot his car in all the chaos, not really sure which side he'll be coming from.

After a while he picks us up, I sit back next to a Japanese couple apparently on their honeymoon. «He loves Aikido so he needs to practice on his honeymoon» Says Robin sensei and laughs. After a lot of talking and laughs, detours as the roads are closed we arrive at Samurai Dojo. I immediately get a feeling of being back in Japan, which can't be anything else but good.

The fact that the place has no western-style toilet makes it even more so. Change, practice, sit down, breathe, practice, sit down, breathe, practice.



The sensei shows 3 times and then we do, just like what's typical in Japan. The heat takes its toll on not just me and many of the aikidokas are forced to take some timeouts through the practice.

After practice the sensei signs my aikido-passport and I get this feeling that I know him from somewhere. He reminds me of Zen, of Suganuma sensei, it's something about the calm face, smiling even when he's not smiling, those eyes saying it's all okay. I leave a bit puzzled.

On the way back Robinsar sensei ask us if we have dinner plans and picks up his phone and calls one of his aikido students. This student runs a restaurant close to the dojo and when he hangs up he smiles and says «This is Aikido».



- av Thomas André Ims (Stavanger JuShinKan Aikido & Vestoppland Folkehøgskole), høst 2010