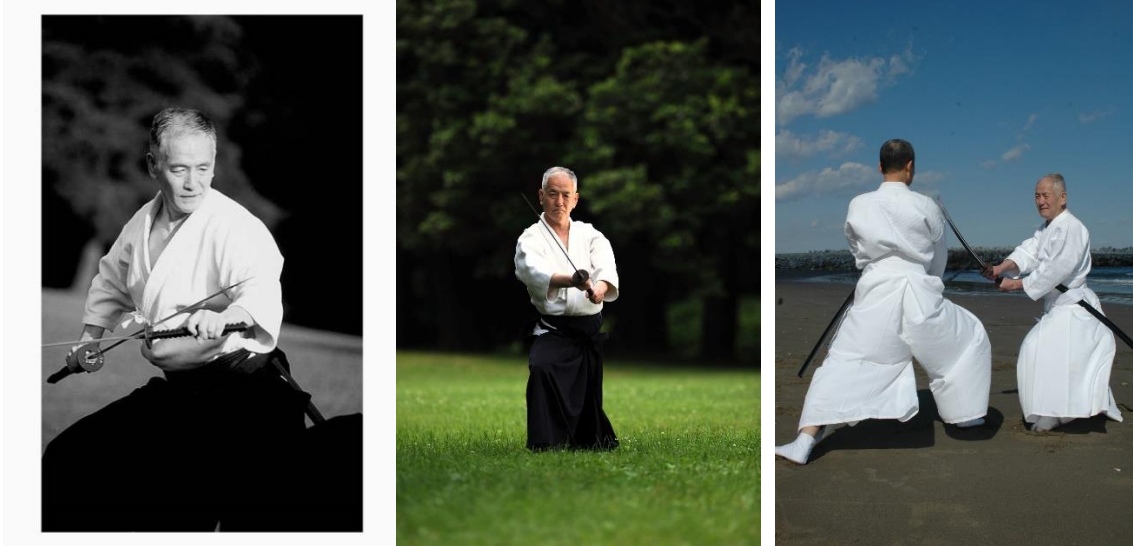


Inaba Minoru sensei - the way of the sword

Andrzej Bazyłko



For centuries, successive generations of masters have been following the same path - the way of Budo - the way of warriors. Each of them, following his path, is led by his predecessor for a while, and then goes alone and paves the way for his successor, who will also follow him for a while until it is time for him to become the conqueror and guide. This is how the achievements of generations make up a work from which everyone can draw. This is how the legacy of Kashima Shin Ryu was born. It was the same when Inaba Minoru sensei (born 1944) followed the way of Budo with his teacher Kunii Zen'ya sensei (1894-1966), who was considered to be "Musashi of the Showa era". Their time together was limited. When they met, Kunii sensei had already had two heart attacks, so his health was severely strained, and yet he was not in the habit of saving himself while teaching. He was ready to sacrifice his life for his students. He did not teach, but he was the teaching. Just before Kunii sensei's death, when every major shock was dangerous for him, Inaba sensei visited him and was forced by him to undergo the most important training in his life. Kunii sensei, despite his difficult condition, demanded from Inaba sensei to fully engage and participate in extremely intense kenjutsu training, during which he had to attack and knock over Kunii sensei with full force, which directly threatened the master's life. This last lesson was that Budo is a matter of life and death.

Inaba sensei teaches throughout his life that you have to be fully present, be real, you have to be yourself. Otherwise, do not pick up a sword as it is deadly dangerous. However, commitment is not enough. You have to know what you are training for. Basic questions must be answered: what is important enough to draw a sword, when to use it, and when is the right time to sheathe it?

Ashizu Uzuhiko (1909-1992) - the spiritual teacher of Inaba sensei and shinto thinker provided support in the development of reflection on the most important values for him.

Meetings mark human life. Both Kunii sensei and Ashizu sensei, Inaba sensei's teachers, had a huge impact on his life, but it was possible thanks to the meeting of Shimada Kazushige (1927-1985), who became Inaba sensei's mentor. Shimada sensei was interested in Budo, he knew both Kunii sensei and Ashizu sensei as well as Ueshiba Morihei sensei (1883-1969). Thanks to this, he could help Inaba sensei to find his own way. Inaba sensei, who had previously started training in Aikido Hombu Dojo and had the opportunity to draw inspiration from the conversations and trainings of Ueshiba Morihei sensei, attended on his recommendation the private dojo of Yamaguchi Seigo sensei (1924-1996) in Kasumi-cho in the Roppongi district, and then conducted trainings under his supervision at the university. Inaba sensei learned from Yamaguchi sensei how to use the body and make it stronger. It was also Shimada sensei, having arranged for a letter of recommendation from Ashizu sensei, who took Inaba sensei to the Takinogawa dojo led by Kunii sensei.

The one-to-one teaching, when the teacher communicates his experiences directly to the student, is unique today. Usually, the trainings take place in a smaller or larger group, techniques or exercises to be practised are shown by the teacher with the assistance of one or more students in the center of the dojo, so that all participants can see them. Then the participants repeat what has been shown and the teacher gives them instructions. It is a completely different experience, which, contrary to appearances, lacks the most important feature in teaching Budo - direct transmission. Verbal transmission, observation and the occasional opportunity to feel the technique performed by the teacher on yourself or to accept the attack performed by the teacher are indirect kind of transmission. In this case, time flows differently. The year and a half that Inaba sensei spent in Kunii sensei's dojo seems to be a short time, but daily long hours of training directly with the master are priceless.

When the teacher is gone, you have to go on alone. A year after the death of his master, Inaba sensei made the first step towards his independence by giving a real sword performance at the May Festival at Tokyo University. He performed shinken tachiai, inspired by demonstration of Master Kunii at the Kashima shrine and encouraged by his words: "You can do it."

After a period at the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department where he began working to understand better what real fight is in modern society and in the editorial office of the weekly "Jinja Shinpo", which enabled him to remain an assistant to Ashizu sensei and to study shinto, he began teaching in Shiseikan in October 1973, dojo at the Meiji shrine in Tokyo, at the request of its first director Tanaka Shigeho sensei (1928-2020) and teaches there to this day. He was the director of Shiseikan in the years 1994-2009.

Inaba sensei has been teaching at the Tokyo University Aikido Club since 1967. He pays special attention to teaching students because he believes that the traditional spirit of Budo has disappeared among the Japanese, and without this spirit people are short of willpower and independence.

He conducted the first seminar in Poland in Warsaw in 1997, at the invitation of Jerzy Pomianowski sensei, who, being the Polish ambassador to Japan in 1997-2002, was his direct student. Then Inaba sensei led two more seminars in Plock in 2006 and in 2007. He also conducted seminars in other countries in Europe, mainly in Germany, as well as in France, Great Britain, Norway and Greece, in which his Polish students took part, and classes in Japan for groups of students from various countries, including Poland. Andrzej Bazylo sensei, Tomasz Sowiński sensei and Adam Radecki sensei had the honor to participate in special courses for a limited number of selected students, which Inaba sensei directed in recent years.

Inaba Minoru sensei teaches Budo, understood as "the lifestyle of following your own Bushido (the way of the warrior) through training of Bujutsu (fighting techniques)", which includes Aikido and Kashima Shin Ryu, a school covering many disciplines such as: kenjutsu (wooden and bamboo sword fighting techniques), batto jutsu (techniques of drawing and cutting with a real sword), shinken tachiai (techniques of fighting with a real sword in pairs), sojutsu (techniques of yari or spear fighting), jojutsu (techniques of fighting with a stick), naginata jutsu and taijutsu (fighting techniques without using a weapon). The essence of this path is drawing on the legacy of Kashima Shin Ryu, from

the experience of generations of masters, to shape a person, his strength of character, the ability to make difficult decisions, and thus make him capable of building a healthy society.