



Consent to Violence and The Violence of Consent:
Martial Arts Training Amongst the Tokyo Police

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PhD Thesis

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Abstract

Martial arts are an integral part of police training in modern Tokyo, a city which enjoys unusually low rates of violent crime considering its size, population density, and economic standing. Having spent 11 months training in Yoshinkan Aikidō together with ten police officers, and then a further 7 months as an instructor, my research focusses on the embodied practices and ritualistic habitus of the specialised training that takes place within the *dōjō*. From this context I identify key social behaviours of how hierarchy is performed and experienced, and the ways in which care and consent are expressed and demonstrated in various different social situations. Using the *dōjō* as an example, I then apply these behavioural norms to the wider context of community policing in Tokyo in order to demonstrate how the city is created as a safe space for those who inhabit it. Focusing on embodied forms of communication within strict hierarchies and ritualistic constructions of space, my project looks at how actions of controlled violence are performed, consented to, and balanced with a situation of care in the aikidō *dōjō*, and what this demonstrates about community policing in Japanese society.

Table of Contents

Thesis Abstract.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
List of Figures.....	4
Glossary of Terms.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	8
Prelude – <i>Zagaku</i>	9
Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	34
Chapter 2 – Pain: The Unspoken and the Unspeakable.....	60
Chapter 3 – The <i>Dōjō</i> Space: Safe, Clean, Fun.....	89
Chapter 4 – Consent Through Embodied Communication: Balancing Violence with Care.....	131
Chapter 5 – Watching the Watchers: Open-Access Policing in Japanese Communities.....	163
Chapter 6 – Conclusion.....	199
Bibliography.....	208

List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Senshusei</i> training, practising <i>jiyuwaza</i> whilst the <i>sensei</i> watches. Taken by James Stier.....	Title page
Figure 2: Waiting in the <i>seiza</i> position in the <i>dōjō</i> . Taken by James Stier.....	8
Figure 3: Standing in <i>kamae</i> (the ready position). Taken by James Stier.....	32
Figure 4: <i>Senshusei</i> practice, performing a <i>jiyuwaza</i> technique whilst yelling a <i>kiai</i> as the <i>sensei</i> looks on. Taken by James Stier.....	43
Figure 5: The daily schedule we received at the start of the <i>senshusei</i> course.....	46
Figure 6: My copy of the <i>taisō</i> warm up routine with Japanese commands and their English translations: received at the start of the <i>senshusei</i> course.....	48
Figure 7: The two <i>keikōnissshi</i> showing two days of training.....	49
Figure 8: <i>Senshusei</i> practising <i>suwariwaza</i> . Taken by James Stier.....	57
Figure 9: My bloody <i>dōgi</i> at the end of the day's training.....	76
Figure 10: Lined up, sitting in <i>seiza</i> , eyes closed whilst silently meditating in the five minutes before class begins. Taken by James Stier.....	86
Figure 11: Drinking games at the <i>dōjō</i> summer party with <i>ippan</i> , <i>senshusei</i> , and <i>sensei</i>	89
Figure 12: Honbu Dōjō during the day.....	91
Figure 13: Honbu Dōjō during the evening.....	91
Figure 14: The entrance of Honbu Dōjō (from https://www.yoshinkan.net/dojoE/dojoannaiE.html)	93
Figure 15: The <i>dōjō</i> entranceway filled with shoes during a party (so many people came that the usual storage cupboards used for shoes were all filled up).....	93
Figure 16 & 17: Two pages from the <i>senshusei</i> handbook we were given at the start of the course, describing the duties of the <i>shinkoku tōban</i>	97 & 98
Figure 18: Everyone bowing towards the <i>Kamidana</i> at the start of a test.....	99
Figure 19: Students and <i>sensei</i> bow to one another.....	100
Figure 20: <i>Sensei</i> bow to each other.....	100
Figure 21: Students and <i>sensei</i> bow to each other again now that the test has begun.....	101
Figure 22: Students bow to one another before performing first technique.....	101
Figure 23: A picture from the popular Japanese anime film <i>Spirited Away</i> (2001), in this scene the main protagonist has been forced to take a job cleaning a large bathhouse.....	105
Figure 24: Group of <i>dōjō</i> members lifting up the training mats in order to deep clean beneath.....	106

Figure 25: Holes in the walls created from over-zealous training accidents are covered with sheets of paper.....	107
Figure 26: The <i>kamidana</i> (Shinto shrine) on the main wall of the <i>dōjō</i>	108
Figure 27: <i>Senshusei</i> relaxing in a curtained off section of the <i>dōjō</i> during their lunchbreak.....	119
Figure 28: Yoshinkan Aikidō members, staff, and <i>senshusei</i> eating and drinking together in the <i>dōjō</i> for the New Year's party <i>Kagami Biraki</i> ; the mallet for pounding the rice into mochi can be seen being wielded in front of a group of eager onlookers.....	119
Figure 29: Dressed in traditional <i>yukata</i> for the summer <i>dōjō</i> party.....	120
Figure 30: Once the ceremony was over we repositioned the chairs in order to take some group graduation pictures. A few were taken with serious expressions, but <i>dōjōcho</i> instructed us all to smile for a few as well. I now have a version of this photo hung on my wall at home.....	125
Figure 31: Blocking a <i>shomen-uchi</i> strike at the start of a technique as the <i>sensei</i> watches. Taken by James Stier.....	129
Figure 32: Bruises acquired from <i>shomen-uchi</i> and blocking practice.....	139
Figure 33: Layers of skin that have worn off the knees due to long <i>shikko-ho</i> practice.....	140
Figure 34: Photo of myself with a black eye.....	141
Figure 35: A favourite photo, this was taken by one of the <i>dōjō</i> staff after I had left Tokyo and returned from fieldwork. One of the last things I did as <i>sewanin</i> was create a design for a new Honbu t-shirt, but it was not printed in time before my departure. As well as posting a t-shirt to me in London, the police <i>senshusei</i> (who I had been helping to teach) posed for this picture to be sent to me.....	162
Figure 36: Local officer setting out on cycling rounds from Omote-Sando <i>kōban</i>	168
Figure 37: Diagram of Japanese police training.....	169
Figure 38: <i>Kōban</i> at Ikebukuro East.....	170
Figure 39: <i>Kōban</i> in Ginza.....	170
Figure 40: <i>Kōban</i> at Shinjuku Station.....	170
Figure 41: The most surveilled cities in the world – cameras per person (Bond & Moody, https://www.comparitech.com/vpn-privacy/the-worlds-most-surveilled-cities/ (Accessed 22/04/23)).....	177
Figure 42: The most surveilled cities in the world – cameras per square mile (ibid.).....	178
Figure 43: <i>Senshusei</i> class, <i>jiyuwaza</i> practice; I have just thrown <i>uke</i> and they are performing an <i>ukemi</i> whilst other <i>aikidōka</i> watch. Taken by James Stier.....	198

Glossary of Terms

Abunai – ‘danger’.

Aikidōka – person who practises aikidō.

Aisatsu – formal greeting.

Bokken – wooden sword (used for practice).

Dōgi – training clothes, in the case of *aikidō* this includes white trousers and top tied with a belt of a colour that corresponds to ones rank.

Dōjō – name of the fully-matted training space, but also of the building itself (including office, changing rooms, etc.). Can also refer to a particular aikidō club (if they have no permanent training space), or the group of people who are members of that club.

Embu – demonstration.

Ganbatte – ‘do your best’.

Gasshuku – ‘staying together at a lodging house’: used to refer to a training camp.

Hai – meaning ‘yes’.

Hajime – ‘begin’.

Honbu – headquarters.

Ijō desu – ‘that’s all’.

Ippan – regular *dōjō* classes, also used to refer to regular members.

Itai – ‘ouch’ / ‘pain’ / ‘it hurts’.

Jiyuwaza – free-flow techniques, performed continuously whilst moving around the space.

Kagami – mirror.

Kamai – ready position in Yoshinkan aikidō.

Kamidana – god/spirit shelf; traditional Shinto shrine that contains the house deities.

Keikōnisshi – training diary.

Keisatsu – police.

Kiai – loud shouts performed during techniques to express a strong spirit.

Kōban – police box.

Kōhai – used to refer to someone who is junior but on a similar level. For example, in a school setting students in a lower year are *kōhai* to those in higher year groups.

Kōhō ukemi – backwards breakfall.

Kokusai – international: used to refer to the non-police *senshusei*.

Konshū no hansei to shūkan ni tsuite setsumei seiyo – ‘please explain your reflection and habits from this weekend’.

Konshū no hansei to shūkan ni tsuite setsumei shimasu – ‘I will now explain my reflection and habits from this weekend’.

Kyotsuke – ‘attention’.

ōbi – belt.

Osu – an affirmative response that we were expected to give to any question/ comment/ order from a *sensei* whilst at the *dōjō*.

Rei – to bow.

Seiretsu – line up.

Seiza – traditional kneeling seated position.

Senpai – used to refer to someone who is senior but on a similar level. For example, in a school setting students in a higher year are *senpai* to those in lower year groups. Used as a suffix to names to demonstrate their position.

Sensei – teacher/instructor. Used as a suffix to names to demonstrate their position.

Senshusei – name of the course and those who take part. Also used as a suffix to the names of those enrolled on the course; for the 11 months of the course I was known as *Amy-senshusei*.

Sewanin – trainee instructor: a title given to those who have graduated from the *senshusei* course and have stayed to help teach the new recruits. This position receives no pay. Used as a suffix to names to demonstrate their position.

Shinsei ni rei – bow to the shrine.

Shinkoku – report.

Shinkoku Tōban – title of the *senshusei* who acts as leader for that day; duties included leading the greetings and filling out the training diary.

Shitsu reishimasu – please excuse me.

Taisō – a series of warm-up stretches and exercises.

Tantō – wooden knife (used for practice).

Tatsu – stand up.

Ukemi – breakfalls.

Waza – technique.

Yame – stop.

Zagaku – seated learning.

Zōkin – wash cloth.

Ichī, ni, san, shi, go, roku, shichi, hachi, kyū, jū – one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Gavin Weston and Dr. Julia Sauma, without whom I never would have made it to the end of this project. From the research methodology planning in Gavin's office during my MRes, to Julia's thoughtful motivation during my writing-up (even giving me the use of her flat when completing my last chapters), both have been continuous sources of inspiration and support. For the pushing, pulling, dragging, and hand-holding I am incredibly grateful.

I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone at Yoshinkan Aikidō Honbu Dōjō. Thanks to the commitment of the staff I had a transformative experience during my fieldwork, as both *senshusei* and *sewanin*, and the welcome I felt from everyone there was always appreciated. To my *senshusei* comrades I would like to express my pride at having completed the course together, and thanks for the interviews you allowed me to conduct. I also send my gratitude to the *sensei* who both patiently instructed me and answered all my questions, and particular thanks to Midori Ikegami for taking on the role of translator, as well as supporting me as a friend. I would like to send a special thanks to everyone that I practised aikidō with – thank you for not breaking me and instead making me stronger!

I would like to thank Dr. Tom Gill for sending me my first reading recommendations on policing in Japan when I was a Masters student, and then for hosting my research trip back to Tokyo in 2022. Enormous thanks to Brendan G. Craine for his assistance in searching for and translating research materials from Japanese to English for me, and to James Stier for taking and allowing me to use the beautiful black and white photos of our training.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, and my close friend Harriet, all of whom have been an incredible source of support and care throughout my PhD journey and without whom I never would have reached the finish line. Thank you all.

Prelude



Fig. 2: Waiting in the *seiza* position in the *dōjō*.

ZAGAKU

It starts from a standing position. In converse relation to a normal session, where you sit for the 5 minutes before the *sensei* (teacher) arrives to begin the class, this time we are standing during that time. Although, spending 5 minutes sitting on tired, injured knees is often painful, it is nothing by comparison to this weekly 5 minutes spent on your feet. The physical pain might not be felt at the time, but the anticipation of how bad it is about to become is enough to trigger fight or flight physiological responses in your body.

We stand to attention in two rows, evenly spaced along each side of the *dōjō*,¹ everyone facing directly across from their training partner. My position is on the end, furthest from the *sensei* and facing the window (one side of the *dōjō* is window from floor to ceiling, one story up from street level), which means I can see the street outside whilst I am standing, and can try to distract myself with watching the innocent business of those lucky people who are not inside this room right now. Seeing them, my thoughts always oscillate between wondering whether they realise how lucky they are not to be in here at this moment, and wondering how crazy *I* am to be voluntarily putting myself in this situation. Once the session begins my view will change, and I will only be able to see sky and rooftops, behind the row of half my comrades sitting together with me on the mats. I will be able to see the *sensei* if I turn my head to the left, but I cannot see the other people who are sat in line with me, except the one directly next to me, as his body blocks the others from view. Those of us sat on our side also have a view of the clock hanging on the wall. I still cannot tell whether this was a blessing or a curse.

The 5 minutes passes in silence. I am tense. So is everyone else. Even though I have just spent the entire break stretching and trying to make my muscles as loose as possible, it feels like these minutes of standing straight and unmoving are putting all of my efforts to waste. The only thought that comforts me is that, in just 90 minutes time, it will be my very favourite time of the week: the point at which it will be over, and I will be at the moment furthest away from the next time I have to go through the same experience all over again. I remember that I will be expected to speak, and I rehearse the Japanese phrase we all have to recite in my head, as it's long and we only say it once a week. I also think about what my comment will be for this instalment.

Time is up as Ueda-*sensei* enters the room. He removes his *dōjō* slippers and they are left in the hallway, as he performs his usual ritual of bowing once to the *kamidana*² shrine before entering, then once more after crossing the threshold. His bows are at an exact angle, and he pauses during

¹ Padded training room used for practice.

² God/spirit shelf.

each one; they are never quick or perfunctory, but always measured and with a show of deep feeling. After bowing he reaches his hands down and hooks both thumbs over the top of his *ōbi* (belt), gives it an adjustment by pulling it downwards whilst rotating his shoulders, then his hands drop to his sides as he walks to his position directly below the *kamidana* shrine in front of the mirror and kneels down into place without waiting. All of Ueda-sensei's actions I am only imagining in my head, matching the movements to the sounds I can hear along with my memories of having watched him enter the *dōjō* hundreds of times before. I cannot see him from my position, as I have to remain facing forwards and cannot turn my head. The moment Ueda-sensei starts to kneel is when Nakagawa-sensei gives the dreaded command, "*seiza!*" from his position at the top of the line.

Seiza is a specific position that contains cultural meanings of etiquette; in a country that often sits on the floor instead of on chairs, there are 'correct' ways of sitting in formal situations. This formal position is *seiza*: on your knees with feet tucked beneath your bottom. Different settings may have subtle differences in position, but in this *dōjō*, we were instructed the toes must be touching but not crossed, knees should be one fists width apart, back straight, shoulders down and relaxed, hands with fingers together and pointing inwards, resting on the upper thighs.

As *senshusei*, we are expected to do everything immediately, and as fast as we can, with sharp, snappy movements, but at this moment, our collective decent into *seiza* is slower than usual. Every millisecond we are able to delay what is coming is worth it. I also make a few clothing adjustments as I go down into position, pulling at my *dōgi*³ trousers to make sure I am not kneeling on a crease in the cloth, as well as loosening the material around my knees (if it is too tight across the front of the knees then this pressure can increase the pain, and if the material is too bunched up at the crease in the back of the knees, it can lead to sores). The moment I sit back on my heels is when I know whether the pain will start right from the beginning, or if I'll have some minutes of ease. Mostly, due to the stiffness of muscles tired from the day's morning training, my knees are painful from the moment we begin. The disappointment of this realisation hits me but I give no outward sign of distress. I take a few deep breaths. Nakagawa-sensei gives the command for "*Rei!*"⁴ and we all lean forwards to bow; placing hands on the mats in front of you, index fingers and thumbs creating a diamond shape as you bend at the waist, keeping your back and neck straight, then come back up in reverse of the same movement.

Ueda-sensei gives a command in Japanese that I don't understand, and we all move our hands into a specific meditation position (tips of the thumb and index finger from the left hand are pressed against the tips from the right, index fingers pointing straight upwards, with the rest of the fingers interlocked) and close our eyes. We remain in this position silently for maybe a minute

³ Traditional training clothes worn for martial arts practice.

⁴ "Bow!"

(my sense of time becomes distorted during *zagaku*), until Ueda-*sensei* gives another command and everyone returns to normal position and opens their eyes. He then gives an introduction in Japanese before the individual reviews begin. First up, “Matteo” is called by Ueda-*sensei*; he responds with a loud, “*HAI!*”⁵ and then everybody bows together. Once we are back up, Ueda-*sensei* asks in a level tone, “*Konshū no hansei to shuukan ni tsuite setsumei seiyo*”;⁶ to which Matteo has to shout in response, “*Konshū no hansei to shuukan ni tsuite setsumei shimasu!*”. Once he has given the correct phrase, he then has to talk about how he feels the past week of *senshusei* went and how he hopes to improve. We *kokusai senshusei*⁷ are permitted to say this part in English, but we are also not supposed to speak for very long, as we are only there as extras and it is the police who this is all meant for. No one can understand our English anyway. I listen whilst Matteo speaks and notice the ways he is repeating himself from the weeks before, see him struggling with his English. Even though we are sat opposite one another, I do not look directly at him but instead focus my eyes on the mats in front of me and just listen. I continue to recite the Japanese phrase in my head so that I will be ready when my turn comes; I am up next. My legs feel uncomfortable. Once Matteo is finished speaking, he shouts, “*IJŌ DESU!*”⁸, and we all bow together.

Then, I hear Ueda-*sensei* say, “Amy”, and I shout my, “*HAI!*” in a loud response, and we all bow again. I am asked the same question as Matteo, and I shout back my expected response. Even when I am addressing Ueda-*sensei* I do not turn my head towards him, but maintain my form, head straight, facing forwards. It is easier to shout loudly for the short, sharp bursts, such as ‘*HAI!*’, and ‘*OSU!*’⁹, but, even with so much practice, it is more difficult to maintain the loud volume for longer sentences. Still, I do my best to shout the entire phrase, as I know I am supposed to. I am measured in the speed of my response; I have learnt that it’s better to keep a steady pace when speaking the memorised Japanese phrases rather than trying to rush through them due to nervousness, as this leads to mistakes and fumbling. I speak my piece.

“*KONSHŪ NO HANSEI TO SHUUKAN NE TSUITE SETSUMEI SHIMASU!*” We have started doing *jiyuwaza*¹⁰ practice in training this week, and I found it very difficult. Not only is my *ukemi*¹¹ technique still too weak, but I am also struggling with the rhythm of the new movements. *Jiyuwaza* is all about speed and timing, but being unfamiliar with all of the techniques, I do not yet have the muscle memory to perform the movements, so I end up getting stuck as I try and think of what to

⁵ “Yes!”

⁶ For a translation of these phrases please see the glossary. I have kept them untranslated here because I had learned the phrases phonetically and did not know what they meant at the time.

⁷ International *senshusei*; the course for civilians that runs alongside the police *senshusei*.

⁸ “That’s all!”

⁹ An affirmative response that we were expected to give to any question/ comment/ order from a *sensei* whilst at the *dōjō*.

¹⁰ Free-flow techniques, performed continuously whilst moving around the space.

¹¹ Breakfalls.

do next. Uh, I know that the only way to get better at this is to practise over and over, so I want to do my best to improve as quickly as possible so that I can keep up with everyone else during training. “*IJŌ DESU!*” (The Japanese phrases at the open and close are spoken with more volume, although I try to project my voice loudly throughout the speech.)

Everybody bows. Ueda-*sensei* then moves onto the police and this same ritual is repeated, only with a slight difference; every new person who speaks has to talk about themselves but also comment on everyone else who spoke before them. This means they all have to maintain their concentration and listen closely to the others’ speeches before it is their turn. The order in which Ueda-*sensei* calls their names changes every week, and everyone hopes to be called early. It seemed to be random, but I also noticed that those who were worse at maintaining their composure tended to be picked last more often.

My brain does not follow the rest of the speeches, only listening out for the moments when I will need to bow. It is all spoken in Japanese, so I cannot understand what they are saying anyway. Once my speaking part is over, my brain can relax a little, as I don’t need to keep practising the phrase. But, this also means that I have no more distractions. My legs hurt. I do not let myself look at the clock, but instead try to calculate how many minutes might have passed. I quickly crush this thought out of my mind, as it’s too depressing to think of such figures yet, as we have barely begun and I don’t want to remind myself of how much longer I still have to go. I stare at the mats in front of me. They are a faded green colour. There are patches where the sunlight creates a sheen and I can see faint scratches, not permanent damage but created from toenails and the rough skin on the bare feet of everyone moving around during practice.

I glance up towards the faces of the police sat opposite me, and two of them have their eyes closed. I try to close mine, remembering what Scott-*sensei* told me about his *senshusei* experience, that he had always closed his eyes and slept for the first 20 minutes of *zagaku*. I try to close my eyes but, as usual, after only a few seconds, they pop back open again. I close them. I try to keep them closed, but I realise that I am having to exert considerable effort to keep them closed, so I allow them to open again. I am confused by this, as I know I am exhausted; I have been awake since 6am and training at the *dōjō* all morning, the same as yesterday and the day before that. Yet still, I cannot keep my eyes closed. I am too wired. I am physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, but I am still in extreme-concentration mode, and this will not switch off until I leave the *dōjō*. I stare at the green mats.

I want to look at the clock, but I don’t. I’ve made myself a rule: I have to put off looking at the clock for as long as possible. It’s a game I play with myself – what time will it read when I finally break and have to look? Will the predictions of how long it’s been that I’ve been keeping in my head cause disappointment or joy when the comparison is made?

My legs hurt. Patterns on the mats.

The first police *senshusei* has finished their speech and we are moving onto the next, which means bowing. This movement is a brief respite for my lower back.

Doing guess work in my head, I calculate that must mean we're 5-10 minutes in. Do not look at the clock. Scenes from the TV show I am in the middle of watching start to run through my head. I think about the current plot, the characters, and wonder how they will get themselves out of the situation they have found themselves in. How will the romance resolve itself?

Green mats.

A song is running through my head, but I don't know all the words.

My legs hurt. Don't look at the clock.

The second police *senshusei* has finished speaking – or were they the third? I run through an internal list of all of their faces and voices inside my head, checking off who has and hasn't spoken yet. This is only the second. We all bow. My legs hurt. The next police *senshusei* is called and starts speaking, about himself and the previous two.

How much time does that mean has passed?

My legs hurt, but the numbing process has begun, thank goodness. In this kneeling position, the blood gets cut off from below the knees. This means I will soon lose all feeling in my feet and calves – good, a few less body parts to be causing pain. Once the process is complete, I will have a short window of respite. However, this momentary ease will then lead to something much worse.

Do not look at the clock.

If the numbness in my body is at this stage, then that must mean we have been sitting for 15-20 minutes, right? However, time is warped in this state, so I must always assume the lowest possible estimate. 15 minutes. But maybe it's only been 10 minutes? If I think we're at 15 minutes but it has actually been less than that, when I finally allow myself to look at the clock, I'll have more time left than I expect, and it will be devastating. Must under-estimate. But we're now into the third police *senshusei*, so if you add up the time for me and Matteo, plus the two police before this one, it must mean more than 10 minutes has gone by, right? Still, for the purpose of giving myself a pleasant surprise instead of crushing disappointment when I do look at the clock, I have to go low.

Do not look at the clock.

I realise I've had the same three lines of the same song repeating in my head for a while, so I try to skip to another part of the same song that I also know the words for. How did the end of that second verse line go again? I make up what I think the line is. It doesn't sound quite right, but I sing it to myself like that anyway. I must look up the lyrics when I get home, as this mistake will bug me.

Patterns of scratches on the mats; I can see them on the one that's two mats away, but not the one directly in front of me, as the light doesn't hit it at the correct angle from where I am sitting.

Do not look at the clock.

In front of me, Matteo is fidgeting. No one else has moved, nor have their facial expressions changed.

My feet are almost completely numb.

One police *senshusei* finishes speaking and the next one is called. We all perform the two bows. It is now getting more difficult to sit back upright, and I find myself pushing my torso back up using my hands, instead of the usual, more graceful rise from the core muscles. Sitting back on my heels, I realise there is still the tiniest bit of feeling left in my lower legs.

Do not look at the clock.

Green mats.

How long has it been? Surely it must be 20 minutes by now? Do not look at the clock. How many of the police have already spoken? Run through the mental list, checking them off. We're on number five now, right?

Everything below my knees is numb. That means we must have been sat here for 20 minutes. But do not check the clock.

Matteo's fidgeting has gotten worse. He's put his hands down to the mats to relieve the pain. I wonder what issues he is having with his injured ankle? What does his experience feel like?

Do not look at him. Do not put your hands down.

Do not move. Not yet. You're not allowed to move yet. Stay still.

Do not look up at the clock, I know it's right there, but do not let your eyes flicker upwards to it. Look at the mats in front of you.

That song lyric is wrong, and it's throwing off the timing of the verse. How did this song get in my head anyway, was it the radio this morning?

The police *senshusei* have not moved. Do not move! It's not time yet. This numbness is a gift, do not waste it. Wait some more, wait till it gets much worse than this.

Think about it, right now it isn't so bad, right? Your feet and calves are numb, that's a gift. If you focus in on the parts that hurt, I mean really focus, examine it, pick the feeling apart. What is pain? What is this sensation coming from my knees and thighs? Why do I consider this feeling to be so terrible? What is it exactly? Can I put it in words? If I think about it really intensely I can deconstruct the sensation of pain with my mind. Focus. Whilst you can concentrate on it, you can recondition your experience of it. FOCUS. As soon as you stop thinking about it intensely, it will return to being just pain. Stay focused. Don't move, you don't need to move.

Don't look at the clock.

Don't move yet, not yet, you can't move until at least 35 minutes has passed.

Ok, maybe 30 minutes would be ok, same as last week. You made it to 30 minutes without moving last week, so make it to 32 minutes this week.

But you won't know how much time has passed until you look at the clock, so don't look at the clock yet.

You know what happens as soon as you look at the clock once, you break the seal and you can't stop yourself from looking at it again constantly after that, so don't look at it yet. Stay strong and don't look.

Don't move. Don't shift your weight.

The numbness is a gift. You know that as soon as you move the blood will rush back. The numbness was an investment, so don't waste it.

The pain in my knees and thighs is growing stronger. Quickly.

The urge to move is almost unbearable. But don't look at the clock yet.

Ok, once this police *senshusei* has finished her speech, then I can look. You have to make it until then. Don't move, wait for her to finish. She's already been talking for a while now, so it shouldn't be much longer. I just heard her say the name of one of the guys who spoke before – how far down the line was he again? How much more does that mean she still has to say? How long will she keep talking?

It doesn't matter, just wait. You're not allowed to move until she's finished.

She's paused in her speech; is she trying to remember something or is she suffering from the pain?

My legs hurt so much. The pain keeps growing.

Every cell in my body feels like it's screaming at me to move – anywhere, just move. Sitting still is the most difficult thing in the entire world.

How much time has gone?

I need to move, it hurts so much.

Don't move, she's still talking. She must be finishing soon.

Why isn't she finished yet. Hurry up! How long has she been talking for?

Pain.

Don't move, not yet, just a little longer.

I don't know where the pain is anymore. It's not my entire body, but it's everywhere.

There's just so much pain.

Don't move.

Don't look at the clock.

Why is she not finished yet? Just finish already!

It hurts, it hurts.

The police *senshusei* finally shouts, "*IJŌ DESU!*" and we all perform the two bows as the next person begins to speak. The bowing is now an incredibly awkward movement, and does not offer any relief from the pain, only from the urge to move. My legs are dead-weight beneath me. I sit

back up straight with difficulty and try to find the correct posture, but quickly realise that the posture I've been taught for *seiza* (pushing hips forward and belly out) is too painful, as it slightly increases the pressure on my knees and upper thighs, so I sit straighter. The pain is excruciating.

Look at the mats.

Immediately look up to the clock.

12:28. We've only done 28 minutes. I was telling myself only 25 minutes had passed, to avoid disappointment, but really, I had hoped we were at 35 minutes. My internal timer failed again.

There is still over an hour left to go.

Do not move, you're not allowed to move yet. It isn't time yet.

5 more minutes, you're not allowed to move for 5 more minutes. You have to get to 12:35 before you're allowed to move, otherwise you won't last until the end. Saving it up now is an investment for later, so don't move, not yet, you're not allowed to move yet.

The numbness is a gift, it means the pain is just everywhere else, but it's not happening below the knees. If you move the blood will rush back there, so don't move. I know the feeling of blood rushing back will be a sweet, sweet relief, that strange sensation that is painful and awful, but also somehow pleasant, but you can't have it yet. The longer you put it off the better.

Glance up at the clock, 12:29 – damn it, why did you look at the clock again so soon? Stop it, it's only going to make things worse if you watch the clock for every second that goes by. It will make everything seem even slower. Don't look at the clock.

It hurts so much.

Don't move.

The pain is making me feel nauseous. Is that actually caused by the pain? How does that work?

It hurts, it hurts. Everything hurts.

Don't move.

Stare at the green mats.

It's so painful. It's horrific, but don't move, not yet.

Don't move.

Don't move.

My hands are so sweaty.

It hurts so much.

Breathe.

The police *senshusei* is still talking.

Glance at the clock, 12:31 – damn it, you shouldn't have looked! It was still too soon!

The pain is awful.

Try to think of something else.

Don't move.

It hurts so much.

The song, what verse am I stuck on? Which bit is currently going through my head? It's been going around on repeat for a while now and I still can't figure out that lyric.

So much pain.

Switch to another song. What song do I know the words to?

Don't move, don't put your hands down. The relief when you finally get to move is going to feel amazing, just wait a little longer. Breathe. It hurts.

Look at the clock, 12:34, you're almost there! You're not there yet, but it's coming really soon. Don't move yet, but soon you can!

Maybe I could move now? It's only 1min earlier. Can I take this anymore? Am I at my limit? What is my limit?

Look up at the clock, still 12:34.

My body starts to move on its own, before my brain has given the OK. I must have dropped my guard, let my concentration dip for a millisecond, because it's not waiting anymore, it's going ahead with the first movement. I don't resist.

This initial relief action is a simple shifting of weight: I lean my body to one side so that the pressure is lifted slightly from the opposing leg, and I hold this position for 10seconds or so before shifting over to the other leg. This momentary loosening of the knee-joint allows for the pressure of the bend to ease, giving respite to the aching thigh, as well as allowing some blood to rush back into the lower leg and foot. As I even my weight back out again across both legs and settle back into position, it takes a few seconds for the sensation of the returning blood circulation to kick in. I wait in anticipation. It starts gradually, in the leg that was lifted up first, a slow, creeping of feeling that builds steadily. It's close to being pins & needles, and would turn into that if the pressure was released fully. It could be described as painful or uncomfortable, and it is, but it's a different kind of pain, and not nearly as bad as the original pain of *seiza*, so it is somehow pleasant. I am actually enjoying this slow spread of pain that is flooding through my lower legs and feet, just because it is new. It begins in one leg, then starts in the other, feeling like a wave crashing through my feet. I like it, and I don't want it to stop. I'm not sure how long the sensation lasts for, probably only countable in seconds, but I revel in it whilst it lasts. It makes me feel dizzy. It is a sweet relief and distraction from everything – this new pain that seems to be on the move and spreading, fills up my mind completely as I focus on the experience of it.

It is over too soon. It fades from the first leg and then the second, and is replaced by something new: an unbearable urge to move. This isn't the same as the constant need to relieve the growing pressure in my knees by putting my hands down and lifting my weight up, this is something else. It is specifically concentrated in my legs, and it very nearly makes me fall over because it is a contradiction: it's an unrelenting physical urge to move a part of my body which is currently

unmoveable. This urge does not come from my brain, but directly from the legs themselves. The legs take over and try to overwhelm the brain. They need to move. But they cannot move, they are cut off from blood circulation and trapped beneath my full bodyweight. And yet, my legs are screaming out that they need to move. I feel lightheaded. I do not move. I cannot move, at least, I cannot move my lower legs. The feeling almost makes me lose my balance before it fades and subsides.

Glance at the clock, 12:38. Damn, shouldn't have looked. Get a hold of yourself, you shouldn't look so often, it will only disappoint you. Everything is more difficult when you are constantly watching the clock.

Settle down. You've just had your treat, now you need to sit still. Be patient, keep thinking about the feeling of relief you just experienced, take that forward. The memory of that needs to stay in your mind to help you sit still for some more time.

Breathe.

My legs hurt. Are they completely numb again yet, or is there still some small feeling lingering?

Don't look at the clock.

Sing the song that's in my head. Still getting the lyrics wrong. What was that other song that was in my head the other day?

Don't look at the clock.

My hands are sweaty with the effort of not moving.

Random thoughts as I stare at the mats in front of me: my mind remembers back to a particular argument I had with a friend more than 3yrs ago. At the time, I hadn't said much, as I had convinced myself it wouldn't change anything. I now run through a monologue of everything I would like to say that I never did. In my imagination I am angry, yet rational and in control, and everything I am saying is worded just right. The other person has no response because my argument is airtight. They have no choice but to see the error of their ways.

It hurts.

Glance at the clock, 12:41, damn it, I looked without thinking again. I shouldn't have looked. Not even halfway yet.

Can I move again yet? No, definitely not yet, it's too soon.

So much pain.

My hands are sweating and my entire body feels hot. Is this because of the terrible pain, or because I just got myself all worked up with the imagined conversation in my head? Need to calm down.

Don't move.

Breathe.

Don't look at the clock.

The police *senshusei* has finished talking and the next is being called; I need to bow. The movement isn't any kind of a relief, it's now become incredibly difficult, as I'm no longer able to engage any of the muscles in my upper legs because they are too painful, my upper body flops forwards to where my arms are waiting in front of my body to prop up my weight. It's then my arms which have to propel me back up again. The movements are jerky and unbalanced.

So much pain everywhere. Look up at the clock, 12:43, which means I'm still not allowed to move. It's all so unbearable now, but I am not allowed to move.

I see one of the police sat opposite me shifting his weight slightly from one knee to the other, just like I had done. His eyes are closed and his facial expression shows discomfort briefly before he takes a deep breath. I see the police sat next to him take a long, slow breath as well.

I also breathe.

EVERYTHING IS SO PAINFUL AND THIS IS HORRIFIC.

There's no way I can concentrate on the pain to deconstruct it anymore, the intensity is too high and it's taken over my thinking functions.

Opposite me, Matteo put his hands down to relieve the pressure in his legs a while ago. I haven't been concentrating on him because I don't like to compare myself as this usually leads to problems: if I put myself in competition against him, then as soon as he moves, I will think that it's ok if I move. But it's not ok. He has some injury troubles which make *seiza* particularly bad, and anyway, we shouldn't be in competition. It's not a competition. The only one I'm competing against right now is myself. All I need to make sure of, is that I do better than I did last week.

It hurts, it hurts, the pain in my legs is consuming me.

I want so badly to put my hands down, but don't put your hands down.

My hands are sweaty; they hold onto the fabric of my *dōgi* with a vice-like grip to stop them from moving anywhere.

So much pain.

Look at the clock, 12:46. Past the halfway point.

Can I move again now? Is it ok to move again now? Has it been enough time to make it worth it? I'm trying to make the calculations in my head but I can't think straight.

Fuck it, I'm moving again, I don't care if it's time or not, I just have to move. I start the process of shifting weight onto one leg, then the other. As I am fully aware, the second time I do this movement, it will not have as much of an effect. Not only will the act of the movement itself be much more painful (the leg that takes all the weight is put under increased stress and the tension along the top of the thigh builds, making the pain even worse), but it also won't deliver that same rush of feeling like before. It's more difficult to raise my weight up and loosen the knee joint, since my lower leg has become such a dead-weight and the knee has been under so much pressure for an extended period and has become stiff. The first time I perform this movement I try to make it

as subtle as possible, so that the others might not notice. The second time I don't give a damn about this; I lean precariously to either side in an attempt to relieve the unbearable pressure that's been building up.

It's so painful when I settle back down into position, my knees protest with excruciating pain. As expected, the sensation of the blood rushing back to my lower legs is much more subdued this time, and is over much too quickly. There is also no urge for movement that follows.

It hurts, it hurts. OH MY GOD THIS IS SO PAINFUL.

Look at the green mats. PAIN.

Breathe. PAIN IS EVERYWHERE.

Don't move.

Glance at the clock – why did you look? – 12:48, not enough time has gone.

So much pain.

Do not put your hands down.

Hands are sweating and gripping onto my *dōgi*, I force myself to relax them in the hope that they will stop sweating so much. I tighten my abdomen and push my hands down on the top of my legs, but this results in a slight increase in pressure, meaning more pain, so I immediately stop. It's so difficult to keep my upper body straight and relaxed when my lower body is in the most horrific state. I shift my posture, but with the same result of more pain, so I quickly shift it back, trying to find the best position for the least amount of discomfort. This hurts so much.

Do not move, you're not allowed to move.

One of the police on the end discretely tries to put a surreptitious fist down onto the mats (using the hand that is on the opposite side of his body to where Ueda-*sensei* is sitting), but Ueda-*sensei* immediately spots it and calls out the police *senshusei's* name. He does not shout, but the way he calls out could best be described as a growl of displeasure, coming from deep in his gut. The police *senshusei* in question immediately lifts the offending arm back up onto his lap as he yells out an "OSU!" in response. His yell is loud, and filled with the pain that he is trying to keep contained within his body. His face is slightly contorted, just a pursing of the lips and slight squinting of the eyes – the face of someone who is suffering, but trying not to show it. The police *senshusei* who is currently speaking does not pause in his speech, but continues on in a loud voice throughout this scolding.

The pain is unrelenting. It's so bad and it's only continuing to get worse. You don't think it can get any worse when you are in the middle of it being so bad, but it can, and it does.

Breathe.

Glance at the clock, 12:49 – only one minute!?

Don't look at the clock.

DON'T MOVE, DO NOT PUT YOUR HANDS DOWN! You made it to 52 minutes last week, that means you have to do better this week, so don't move, not yet.

It's so painful, everything hurts so much, it's unbearable.

Breathe, look at the mats.

Two of the police I can see opposite me are slightly shifting their weight, both have pained expressions being repressed on their faces. The police *senshusei* who is next to them does not move, he does not look like he is in discomfort, he looks totally calm. He looks bored even. He has not moved, or flinched the entire time. He is amazing. He is a hero, what an incredible person! I am in awe of his strength and endurance.

What does my face look like right now?

I am in so much pain.

Glance at the clock, 12:50, of course it hasn't been any time at all since you last looked, what an idiot.

I'm losing control, the pain is consuming.

Don't move, don't put your hands down. My hands tense and release, tense and release their hold on my *dōgi*, like a cat flexing its claws as it relaxes. I am not relaxed; my hands are so sweaty.

I shift my posture again, but it hurts more in any other position.

It hurts so much. IT HURTS SO MUCH.

Breathe.

IT'S SO PAINFUL EVERYWHERE.

Glance at the clock, still 12:50.

Can I move now? It's almost time, right? So, can I just move now? It's only a few minutes, and this was how far I managed to get the week before. Maybe it's fine now.

No, don't move.

It hurts, it hurts.

Breathe. I'm dizzy, but breathe.

Stare at the green mats.

Look at the clock, 12:51 – only one more minute, just one more and then you've reached last weeks' time. Hold on, just hold on.

Legs are so painful; how can I stop this pain?

Don't put your hands down. Hands are sweaty.

Shift my posture, spine moves forwards then back again as I shift my hips and abdomen. As I go from a slouch back to straight again, I feel how weightless I am. There's a sweet spot when my spine is totally straight, where my upper body feels light, due to the balance. In that position, I'm barely using any muscles, or at least it feels that way.

My legs hurt SO MUCH.

Breathe, don't put your hands down.

Shift my posture back and forth, return to straight.

Glance at the clock, 12:52 – I'VE MADE IT TO LAST WEEKS' TIME!

But don't put your hands down yet, don't break. Now you've made it this far, you finally got here, so now you have to beat it, you have to do better. You have to improve your time, that's all you can do. Now, every second that tick's past, is a second *more* – it's extra, it's time that you're winning. You're now in the plus; keep it going.

It hurts so much, but don't put your hands down.

Why can't I put my hands down yet? Why can't I relieve this horrific pressure yet? I made it to the designated time, that means I can put my hands down whenever I want, right? Why can't I just do it now?

No, don't put your hands down, not yet. You've made it this far, just keep going a little more, every extra second that goes by is just a little more.

IT'S SO PAINFUL I CAN'T BEAR IT.

Breathe.

Ok, the next time the police speakers change, after that you can put your hands down, but not before. How long has this guy been speaking for? I have no idea, but you have a goal now; when he finishes and we've done the bowing, then you can relieve the pressure.

It hurts, it hurts – will I make it until then? I don't think I can wait.

Look at the clock, 12:53, that's one extra minute.

Breathe.

The pain is so unbearable – how can I bear this for any longer?

When will he finish speaking, I don't think I can make it.

Shift my spine back and forth.

My hands are so sweaty. They are so tense, but they are not pushing downwards into my legs. The entirety of my arms are tense with the purpose of not pushing downwards, just holding them in place. Do not put your hands down.

Glance at the clock, still 12:53, when is this guy going to stop talking?

I don't think I can make it until then.

But, if we have to do the bowing whilst I'm in the middle of lifting myself up with my hands, I won't be able to go back into *seiza* properly in order to perform the movement, so I have to wait. I have to wait until we do the next set of bowing; I have to be ready for that.

It hurts so much, it's making me nauseous.

I hear Ueda-*sensei* growl out someone else's name, as another of the police *senshusei* try to sneak a hand down to the mats by their side in order to relieve the pressure, if only for a moment. They shout a loud, "OSU!" in response and quickly return to position.

When is this guy going to finish talking?

MY LEGS ARE SO PAINFUL, WHY CAN'T I JUST PUT MY HANDS DOWN AND RELIEVE THIS PRESSURE?

Breathe.

Shift my spine back and forth.

So much pain.

When will he finish?

Shift the position of my hands – DO NOT LET THEM GO DOWN – to a fresh area of *dōgi* in order to relieve the hot sweatiness. The rest of my *dōgi* is also warm from my body though, so this doesn't work very well.

The pain is eating me up, I can't think of anything else.

When will he finish speaking?

Look at the clock, 12:54, stop looking so often, it doesn't matter what the time is, you will still have to sit here until Ueda-sensei tells you to stop.

When will the next bowing happen, when? I need to hold off until then, but when? Can I continue like this? I'm breaking, I can feel myself breaking. I'm unravelling. This hurts so bad, my legs, my legs.

Breathe, shift my sweaty hands, but do not let them go down. Grip the *dōgi*.

Look at the clock, still 12:54.

HOW MUCH LONGER IS THIS GUY GOING TO TALK?

There's so much pain, it's unbearable, I can't bear it.

Shift my spine. I feel nauseous, I feel dizzy, I'm breaking.

Why is this so terrible?

Why is he still talking?

THIS PAIN, THIS PAIN.

Look at the clock, still 12:54.

"IJŌ DESU!" – We all bow out awkward, jerky bows. The next speaker is called by Ueda-sensei, and we all bow again; it is so painful to bend forward like this, and I have to propel by body back upright by using my arms.

We all return to position as the next police starts speaking. I manage to wait until Ueda-sensei has finished saying his bit (for some reason it feels like it would be so much worse to break my position whilst Ueda-sensei is speaking), and the police has said the introductory line, and then I break.

My hands rush down to the mats, placing down on either side of my knees, they lift up my bodyweight. My bottom rises from its position sat on my feet, and the pressure in my knees and thighs is relieved as the bend in the joint is able to loosen. I lean forward.

I have broken. The clock reads 12:55.

I remain up in this position for a little time, it could be seconds, could be minutes, I have no idea. I don't care about anything except for the relief from the pressure in my legs.

The blood starts to flow back to my lower legs and feet; the numbness will be gone now, and I know that I won't be able to get it back again. Because I have now broken.

Ueda-sensei does not growl my name. I am not a Japanese police officer, therefore this horrific test is only for my own benefit, to make myself stronger for my own personal reasons, I do not have to be strong in order to protect others. This is not my job, this is for pleasure.

I want to stay in this raised up position, I don't want to sit back down in *seiza*, as I know that there is only pain waiting for me there. But I need to sit back down.

Sit back down. Why aren't you moving back down, sit back down now, you have to sit back down. DO IT.

Sit back into *seiza*, your relief time is over, sit back down.

I slowly lower my body back into *seiza*. It is painful, but not as bad as before, although now there is feeling back in my lower legs.

Breathe.

And now comes the guilt. I see the contortions of pain on the faces of my comrades as they try to suppress it, and I feel terrible. The fact that I broke, they saw that; they always see it. In this horrific little space, the movements of anyone has an effect on everyone – seeing me put my hands down and break my position would have made the act of maintaining their own composure all the more difficult. I am weak, and I feel terrible. I tell myself that I will try not to move again as much as possible for the rest of the time, even though I know that I will definitely move again. It's impossible now, I've broken the seal.

Don't look at the clock, you're not allowed to look. Sit still and breathe, look at the mats in front of you.

It still hurts, but not as bad as before, so stay still.

Breathe, remember to keep breathing.

Sing the line from the song in my head, the same three lines over and over. They've been going around on repeat in the background of my mind this whole time; switch over to the other part of the song you know. What about that instrumental section in between the chorus and verse, can you go through it all in your head? It's difficult to keep the timing right when it's just in my head, I lose my place too easily when there aren't any words.

My legs hurt.

I see two of the police opposite shifting their weight around on their legs.

Breathe. Don't put your hands down again.

How long has this police *senshusei* been talking for?

Don't look at the clock. Don't put your hands down.

Hands are sweaty, legs are painful, I can feel my feet beneath me now that the numbness has gone.

It hurts.

The time continues to move excruciatingly slowly, but it's in a fog and I don't really know what's happening. I just know that it hurts, the pain is growing, it's also in my lower legs now, and I'm trying to stop myself from moving or from looking at the clock.

I feel like I'm only semi-conscious, although I still can't seem to stop myself from feeling all of this pain.

Time on the clock, 13:11, I put my hands down again. I cannot stop it, I have to relieve this pressure. I am broken. Most of my weight is held up on my hands, which are balled up into fists. There is no sensation of blood rushing back, not anymore, as the blood is still there from last time. I am no longer capable of remaining in *seiza* long enough to get the numbness back. I am pathetic.

I stay up too long; my brain is so useless that it takes a while for it to register that I've been holding myself up out of *seiza* for a while. I should sit back down. I need to sit back down. But I remain up. My internal voice has lost its commanding tone, it has less force, as if even my inner taskmaster does not care to be a part of this anymore. I stay up for too long. PLEASE, sit back down. You NEED to sit back down in *seiza*.

I finally make myself sit, but 30 seconds later I am up on my hands again. I am so pathetic. I don't want the police to have to see this. I don't want Ueda-*sensei* and Nakagawa-*sensei* to see this – I really want them to think well of me and be impressed by me, but I'm so weak. I want to be an ideal *senshusei*, I want them to be pleasantly surprised by my capabilities, but right now I'm pathetic. I'm broken. Sit back down.

I remain on my hands and tilt forwards so as to enable the unbending of the knee joint even further.

I finally sit back down into *seiza*. I manage to maintain position for another 4 minutes before I break and I'm up on my hands again. This is the longest amount of time I am able to remain in position for. I try desperately to switch my willpower back on, to get it going strong again like it was for the first 55 minutes, but, for some reason, it just doesn't work. Sometimes my inner voice is too soft and weak, when I notice this I try to make it loud and domineering again, shouting loudly, forcefully at myself. But it never lasts, I cannot maintain it with the little energy I have left, and even when it is loud and forceful, my body simply doesn't want to listen. It's like I've lost my control of it. It's as if my body feels betrayed by my mind for having forced it to go through such a horrific ordeal (again), and it will no longer listen to its commands, having branded it an evil dictator not worthy to rule. I am broken.

In the final 15 minutes, a number of the police who I can see opposite me, are fidgeting, and I can see the anguish on their faces which they are no longer capable of hiding. Shifting a little is ok, but if you do it too much, and your movements are too big, you will receive the Ueda-*Sensei* growl. I cannot see the police who are in the same line as me, but I know who is struggling by who receives the scolding. Some look fine, some look awful, but this isn't necessarily an indication of the level of pain each person is in. Some are just stronger willed and/or better at dealing with the pain than others.

For the last 5/10 minutes, I am barely able to force myself back into *seiza*, and I spend more time up on my hands. My arms get tired and begin to ache, but this is still preferable to sitting back down. The fuzziness and exhaustion in my head has almost completely drowned out my willpower, which is now barely capable of having any effect.

I am momentarily distracted from my internal battle by a strange noise coming from the other end of my row. I cannot see what's happening, but I can hear slapping sounds, as well as moaning. I glance to the side slightly, just enough to catch movement in my peripheral vision; it's Oda-*senshusei*, at the very end. From the little I can see, and what I can hear, he is slapping himself, I think in the face and head, and his upper body is writhing around whilst his legs remain in position. The sound is awful. He's in so much pain from *seiza* that he's trying to distract from it by causing pain elsewhere. Being witness to this makes my nausea increase.

The last police *senshusei* finished speaking at 13:21. Ueda-*sensei* speaks for a while after that, but I don't understand what he's saying. Some of the police start to moan and groan as they can hardly take it anymore. Ueda-*sensei* continues to growl at anyone who breaks position by putting their hands down or fidgeting too violently. None of the police have broken like I have; they are all still in position.

Look at the clock, 13:26. I have just forced myself back down into *seiza*.

Everything hurts, there is no more numbness, just pain everywhere below my waist. My body feels so heavy.

Glancing around at the police, Shindo-*senshusei* is baring his teeth with eyes closed. He shifts his weight on his legs without putting his hands down, he actually shifts his left knee over by half an inch, and this action amazes me – how is he able to move his legs at all right now? He has large leg muscles, so maybe that's why. The police on the end tries to put a sly fist down onto the mat again but is quickly growled at and retreats with an "OSU!". Hori-*senshusei*, who is sat next to him, does not show any expression on her face but she is flushed red in her cheeks, and her posture is hunched over. Next to her, Takeda-*senshusei* remains completely in control, and looks as fresh as the moment we started.

Ueda-*sensei* has finished talking, and is now simply growling out the names of anyone who transgresses.

Look at the clock, 13:27. This could end at any time now. Ueda-*sensei* could take pity on us – every extra moment is agony, so any tiny amount of time that we finish early is a miracle.

I am back up on my hands again, the pain was too intense. It hurts everywhere and my mind is broken. I can hardly hear my own internal voice anymore.

Ogasaki-*senshusei*, who is sat next to me, starts to groan. This is now what fills my ears, a deep sound that is being released from his belly. It gives a sound to my own experience – to everyone's current experience – and there are moments when I cannot tell whether the noise is coming from him or me.

My arms are aching from holding up my weight, my right wrist is incredibly sore from training and I have to make sure to keep my hand straight.

Sit back down. These words in my head have almost lost their meaning, but I continue to repeat them anyway. Sit back down.

I finally manage to lower myself back into *seiza*, I nearly raise myself back up immediately, but I resist and place my hands on my lap, where they are supposed to be.

Look at the clock 13:28. This could end anytime now. Ueda-*sensei* just has to give the word. I tell myself that I will now remain in *seiza* until the end. I am not allowed to put my hands back down again.

It hurts though, everything hurts.

Do not move. Breathe.

Look at the clock, 13:28.

It hurts, but it's nearly over, it's so close to the end so do not move.

The groaning from next to me feels like it's my own body.

Look at the clock, still 13:28 – when will this end??

Ogasaki-*senshusei* isn't the only one letting out groaning noises, Shindo-*senshusei* too, and maybe someone else, maybe a few more people I can't see. There are noises of horrific suffering coming from this room. I am not making noises; I am mute. This is not an effort on my part, I simply have nothing left in me to let out. I am so broken.

The pain is everywhere, it is everything.

Look at the clock, 13:29.

There is no point in looking at the clock now, why am I even looking? It's the end now, but it's not the end, it's not over until Ueda-*sensei* says it's over, but he can say that whenever he likes now. Actual clock time is irrelevant, we are all on Ueda-*sensei's* time. Remember a few weeks ago when he made us continue for an extra 25 minutes? He doesn't care what any clock says, he will do what he wants, and what he wants right now is to torture us.

I am so tired and there is so much pain.

Must not move until the end, this is my final resolution and I must stick to it. I am already so pathetic, I was so weak to be broken so easily – none of these police have broken, they are all still in position, never being allowed to take the pressure off of their knees. What must they all be feeling right now, because I'm sure it's worse than me. Therefore, you have to hold on now until the end, just do this one last thing.

The groaning becomes louder as Ueda-*sensei* is speaking about something in Japanese. Are any of the police listening at this point? Are any of them even capable of listening?

Everything is so painful, when is it going to end?

Breathe, do not put your hands down again.

Please end.

Please end.

Please let us finish, it's time now, surely.

Please end.

So much pain, please let it stop.

I am broken, please end this.

Please end.

Ueda-*sensei* says something in Japanese and the moaning stops as everyone places their hands in another meditation position. Like the first minute of *zagaku*, only the position of the fingers is different: the fingers are all straight and together, fingers from left hand placed over fingers on the right, with both thumbs pointing upwards and their tips touching. This signals the end of *zagaku*, and is what we have all been waiting for, but it is still not quite over. As we are sat in this meditation position, eyes closed, we are told to count.

“ICHI!”

The room is shaken by the force of how loudly we are all screaming these numbers.

“NI!”

The pain we are all currently in is being let out.

“SAN!”

“SHI!”

We are so very close to the end of this torture.

“GO!”

The count cannot be overly hurried, however much we are all so desperate for it to end, but it still has to go at the correct pace.

“ROKU!”

“SHICHI!”

“HACHI!”

“KYŪ!”

“JYŪ!”

Ueda-sensei gives a command, and we all return to normal *seiza* position. Nakagawa-sensei then gives the command to ‘rei’, and we all flop forward. Already, at this point, I am lifting my weight off of my feet and my backside is starting to rise up into the air. Sitting back up again is excruciating, but I don’t think of it as much, simply because I know it is about to be over. Nakagawa-sensei then commands us to turn towards Ueda-sensei – I am the last to accomplish this. I do not know how, but everyone else manages to shuffle their entire kneeling bodies around 45-degrees, seemingly with ease, whilst I am stuck desperately struggling to move my deadweight. This inability to move with ease does not simply come from a lack of strength, there is also fear; the lower half of my body is so completely messed up at this point, so unable to protect itself or move and hovering in a semi-numbness, that I am afraid what will happen if I move it too suddenly.

With a lot of huffing and effort, I manage to shift myself around, so that I am facing towards Ueda-sensei like everyone else, and Nakagawa-sensei gives the final command for ‘rei’. Everyone bows. I belly flop forwards. I try to maintain my position, but my head is taking my weight by resting on the mats in front of me, and I am slowly unbending my knees. The *dōjō* is silent except for the shuffling noises of Ueda-sensei standing up, walking towards the door, bowing twice to the shrine, putting his slippers back on in the hallway, and then walking back to the office. I have never witnessed this scene myself, as my head was always down to the floor, but I have been curious about it – how is he able to just stand up after *zagaku*? Are his legs not numb? I don’t understand.

Once the sound of his footsteps fade down the hall, Nakagawa-sensei gives the command that we have all been longing for with every fibre of our being – it’s over. *Zagaku* is finished. Everybody breaks.

We are all broken.

Groans and cries of simultaneous relief and anguish are suddenly let loose from bodies which are flopping in all directions. Some fall forwards, head first, some sideways. Everyone finally letting all of their pain show.

I want to flop down on my face but I can’t; I am unable to make such sudden moves as my legs are too stiff. Even though I have been moving them whilst the others remained still, I have to ease my legs out of position slowly. It almost feels as though they would snap if I tried moving too fast. I am on my hands and knees, finally able to lift up my feet and, very delicately, bring my toes to rest on the mats. I stretch them gingerly. There is a feeling of nausea from all the sudden movement of blood. The action of moving any joints and muscles which have, for these torturous 90 minutes, been trapped and bloodless, is a new type of pain, but it is a pleasant one. It is a pain of relief, and I want to go slowly with it. My knees feel like the hinges on an old wooden door which has remained closed too long, and has become warped and creaking. All I want now is to flop over onto my side and lie, unmoving on the mats, but I know that this is not possible, because right

now, we need to stand up. I know from past experience that, if I really let myself fall to the floor, the getting up again will be all the more difficult, so I remain on my hands and knees, trying to flex my screaming ankles so that they can get ready to take my weight again.

I have to stand up now. I tell myself this, but I am not ready yet.

My groans of pain join with everyone else.

All around me there are broken police. Some are still lying on the floor, some have started to stand already, many are moaning, all are moving slowly. Nakagawa-*sensei* is already on his feet, stood straight, and is starting to hurry everyone along. Many of us still cannot move from the floor. Without anger but with some urgency, he is telling everyone to stand up on their feet, but his voice is soft and I can barely hear it over the noise of pain being let out. More than his urging, I am motivated by the simple idea that I do not want to be last. This is a common motivation for me throughout training: you do not have to be the best, but just make sure you are not the worst. I do not want to be the one that everyone has to wait for, the *senshusei* who drags the group down. I have been the last person to get to my feet in the past, and it was mortifying; I absolutely do not want to repeat it. I am already pathetic for having broken *seiza*, therefore I have no excuse not to be capable of standing. From my position on hands and knees, I slowly stretch out each leg behind me one after the other; my knees will have to straighten fully if I am to stand up, so I need to practise before they have to support my bodyweight.

The groans of pain around me have started to change their nature; instead of just an expression of release, they are now starting to puff with exertion – everyone is trying to get their broken bodies into a standing position in any way they can.

Having finished my preparations, I slowly draw one knee up underneath me, so that the foot is placed on the floor behind my hands. I flex the toes and ankle joint a few times; it is painful. I then start to transfer my weight onto this leg and foot from the corresponding knee, and try to convince my leg to start lifting up my body into the air. A lot of my bodyweight remains supported by my hands, as I have no ability to balance.

In the *dōjō* around me, about half of the police have already managed to get to a standing position, although they don't look stable, and cannot straighten themselves up into attention yet. I have to hurry, I don't want to be the last up; I don't want everyone to be waiting on me.

I have managed to transfer enough of my weight onto the foot so that I can draw the second leg up beneath me and place that foot down. I initially only rest on the toes, and my ankle is screaming at me that it cannot bend just yet. At this point I have to take a leap of faith – if I am going to stand, then I have to do this – I push off from my hands and try to balance my torso on top of my inept legs. I think I have made it, but then I lose the balance again and feel like I might fall, but Ogasaki-*senshusei*, who is positioned next to me (who made it to standing a few moments before I did), reaches out and offers me a steadying hand. I grab onto him in response; he is just

as wobbly as I am, but together we manage to stay upright somehow. I gradually stabilise myself, bringing my legs into a more comfortable position (if there is such a thing), and we both let go when we can now stand on our own. I am eternally grateful for the help, and it makes me feel connected to the entire room as I see others assisting each other in similar ways. There is no other time during our training when I feel so bonded with my fellow *senshusei* than in these moments of torture release.

I managed to not be the last person to get to their feet, but it was a close call. Now that I am up the struggle is not over; I need to force myself into *kyotsuke* (attention), which means heels together with toes pointing outwards at a 45-degree angle, legs straight, back straight, facing forwards, arms straight at our sides with fingers together. This will take a final herculean effort, but it's ok, none of us really mind, because this is the end. And this pain right now is nothing – our bodies may not be moving like we want them to, but at least we are able to move. The groans and heavy breathing quickly dies down as we all squeeze our sorry bodies into *kyotsuke*. Once everyone has finally managed it, Nakagawa-sensei gives a final command to *rei*, and we all stay bowed as he exits the room.

Our bodies sag. Excess moans and breaths escape from lungs. Some people start muttering or saying things to each other in Japanese. Everyone starts to hobble over to the back line of the *dōjō*, where we have to line up again. As some of us move away, we turn back and realise that a couple of people have fallen behind and are not moving. One of them is Oda-senshusei, the one who was slapping himself to distract from the pain, the other is Takeda-senshusei, who had never once moved or shown any change of expression on his face during the 90 minutes we just endured. Right now, he cannot put one foot in front of the other. They both look so pathetic, and they look up at everyone with slightly amused, yet pleading eyes. A few of us slowly walk back to try and help support them with smiles and laughter, not at their pain, but together with it. Their bodies are a complete mess.

Once we all finally make it back to the line-up facing the mirror, we remain standing, but a few bend over to touch the mats with their hands, and some of us make groaning, pained noises. We are supposed to kneel back down in order to bow to the shrine one final time before the session can officially end. No one kneels. Instead, we make the sound effects as if we were, for the benefit of the tiny curtained window in the corner, on the other side of which is Ueda-Sensei's desk in the *dōjō* office. Whoever is *shinkoku tōban* for that day gives the command, "*SHINSEI NI REI!*" to which we all respond with "*OSU!*" and a number of us slap the mats with our hands whilst still standing, to make it sound convincing. After this little charade is over, we are free to go. There is much backslapping and laughter as we all hobble out of the room; a feeling of togetherness.

Myself and the two women police hold onto the wall for support as we head towards our changing room down the corridor. I will be in pain for the rest of the day.

6 days, 22 hours, 23 minutes until next *zagaku* begins.¹²

¹² This autoethnographic piece has been published in full (<https://doi.org/10.5617/jea.9459>).

Chapter 1



Fig. 3: Standing in *kamae* (the ready position).

Introduction

Upon setting out on my PhD fieldwork, I had no real intention of doing the *senshusei* course myself. I had researched it and thought that by just training at the *dōjō* that conducted the course, I would be able to gain access to the police officers, ask them questions and observe. I arrived in Tokyo in December, taking the first few months to settle in, find myself somewhere to live, and enrol in Japanese school, making my way to Yoshinkan Aikidō Honbu Dōjō to start training in the new year. The first person I met when I went in to enquire about training was Lauren; a European woman who had completed *senshusei* a number of years before, and had stayed on as a *sewanin*¹³ to help teach. We got on immediately and, a month or so later, it was she who told me that the deadline for applications for that year's course was approaching, and strongly recommended that I sign up. I only had a few weeks to decide, so it was definitely a decision I made with my gut, but I understood myself well enough to know how much I would hate to simply stand on the side-lines and watch, always wondering how I would measure up in comparison, if I could do better. I was surprised to find that my dad (the only person in my life who had read Robert Twigger's *Angry White Pyjamas* (2007), which is an account of the author's own experience doing the course), was strongly against the idea, much to my amusement. He knew he would have no real say in the matter, and in the end he became my biggest cheerleader and source of support. The thought of making such a commitment was frightening, but the fact that the course start dates lined up so perfectly with my fieldwork plans, felt like such a lucky opportunity that I could not pass it up. I never once regretted my decision.

My rationale for choosing Yoshinkan Aikidō Honbu Dōjō as the main location for my fieldwork came from my interest in studying crime and policing in Japan. I had travelled around a number of Japanese cities before starting my postgraduate education, and had found the sense of safety and welcome incompatible with all of my other global travel experiences, specifically as a woman on my own. When interviewing a group of Japanese women who had been doing aikidō in Tokyo for years, two of them described how they had started practising when they spent time abroad. One of them had lived in Australia, the other in the US, and they had separately had almost the exact same experience: a friend of theirs who was also an Asian woman but had lived there longer than them, took them aside one day because they were worried for their safety. When walking the streets at night, "You walk like an Asian woman – this makes you a target!" was the general concern expressed. One of the women described being robbed and when she told her friend about it she ended up being scolded by her, saying that she needed to be more careful, "You're not in

¹³ Trainee instructor: a title given to those who have graduated from the *senshusei* course and have stayed to help teach the new recruits. This position receives no pay. Used as a suffix to names to demonstrate their position.

Japan, this is Australia!". I was not at all surprised to see the low crime rates when I later investigated these statistics but, more than that, walking the streets of Tokyo never felt oppressive or strained, even in the middle of the night I felt free of the usual tension that often followed me when out in public. Why did I feel safer in a country that was unfamiliar and where I could not even speak or read the language, than I did in London, where I had grown up? What was it about Japanese society that meant it was able to cultivate and maintain such a safe atmosphere in its public spaces? These were some of the initial thoughts and questions that eventually led to my PhD project.

Desiring a world that is free from the threat of violence, what lessons can be learned from places where that threat is comparatively low? Often in the social sciences, scholars tend to be drawn towards areas of high conflict, wanting to examine how and why such issues have occurred and are maintained (Fassin, 2013; Gill, 1997; Sørboe, 2020; Vitale, 2021). In simplified terms it is a focus on what has gone wrong, perhaps with the intention of learning about such mistakes so they can be avoided, or analysing a situation so that a solution may be discovered – all incredibly noble tasks. However, it is of equal importance to seek out the positive examples, examining reasons why a certain set of people appear to be doing well in one particular area, how a social structure is having positive effects for a community, so that we can learn from it.

The Western colonial shroud of 'progress' still hangs over much of academia, the result of which is that solid, critical analysis of positive social models are rarely looked for in the non-white, non-English speaking areas of the world. The Japanese state and social system appear to be working in tandem to create a consistently less violent society, that makes both worth considerable academic attention. There is a risk of romanticisation when examining such a topic; something which other writers have been accused of in past work (Ames, 1981; Bayley, 1991; Parker, 2015). Trying to describe potentially positive social situations whilst remaining critical is a fine line to tread, but that is what I have attempted to do throughout this thesis. I have not written about either the aikidō *dōjō* or the Japanese police as singular entities, but have situated both within their wider social contexts, hoping to show that it is the background within which they function that contributes to and defines their own norms and practices. In this thesis I will discuss what these two groups have in common; I located my fieldwork at the aikidō *dōjō* in order to closely examine how hierarchy, care, and consent were demonstrated within a defined space so that I might extrapolate these findings into the wider social context of city policing. As the specific *dōjō* in question has not only strong ties to the Tokyo police, but an almost constant presence of police officers, I gained an interesting view of how police are considered by the general public, as well as how the groups interact with one another.

Though there have been critical scholarly evaluations of the police in Japan (Miyazawa, 1992; Aldous & Leishman, 1997, Finch, 1999; Wood, Lyon & Abe, 2007) – many of which with good

reason – I have structured my own interpretations around the feedback and opinions I have heard from the regular citizens that I have interviewed; all of whom, without exception, have given positive responses. This being the case, I would either have to assume that all of these people are lying or have been manipulated into believing that their own living circumstances are not what they understand them to be, or believe what they tell me and examine where their positive impressions are coming from. As an anthropologist, I can only do the latter.

It is this focus on the perspectives of regular citizens and how they feel about their local police, that the main thread of my thesis argument stems from: the concept of consent. Current discussions in Western news and media largely focus on the sexual relations context of consent and how it is communicated or manipulated, but I hope to add a new perspective on such discussions by examining it in a different environment. The act of martial arts training requires constant embodied communications of consent (in order to remain a safe and positive experience for everyone involved), most of which remain unspoken. Such scenarios present rich information on the nature of such communications, and can act as a useful example to move discussions away from simplistic models of ‘No means no’ that currently circulate as the standard for social boundaries. This is also true for policing as, whilst many countries make the claim that they police by consent, such arguments are wearing increasingly thin in light of rising anti-police sentiment within the general public. The Japanese model of community policing that I will describe has a far greater emphasis on communication, care, and service, rather than top-down enforcement, creating a scenario that actively encourages the consent of the public. My consideration of both the police training in the aikidō *dōjō* and the structure of community policing in Japanese cities emphasises the role of constant communication together with social sensitivity and responsibility in how the people interacting in these scenarios are consenting to the behaviours and actions of both.

Before embarking on this thesis discussion I must confess to being a strong supporter of the Defund The Police movement which has been gaining traction in a number of countries around the world in the past few years. The existence of a state-run police system that deals with everything from shoplifting and sexual assault to tax fraud and drunk driving, leaves very little room for specialised response, and has led to an ever-increasing reliance on prison sentencing as the default. Such a system, in my view, provides no support for either victims or perpetrators (especially when considering the fact that many people can occupy both of those categories simultaneously), and contributes very little towards fixing anti-social behaviour, preferring instead to forcibly remove it from public view. However, I also believe it is essential that policing institutions globally be examined within their own social context and not be lumped into one conversation. Whereas there are significant factors of commonality, such as that they are funded and led by government and enforce laws as dictated by those in power, the way they are expected

to do so, the bureaucratic structures they work within, and the social behavioural norms they are judged by, vary greatly across different national contexts. For example, both the Japanese and American police forces carry guns, but there is a striking disparity between how often they are used in both cases. The British police do not typically carry firearms, yet there are comparable criticisms of racist violence being carried out by their officers as by those in the US (Haves, 2020; Vitale, 2021). Though Japan boasts a significantly less violent standard of interactions between its police and civilian population, that population also does not have the same multicultural and multiracial dynamic of the UK and US, a detail which it would be methodologically unwise to ignore; stereotyping and racial profiling of particular groups therefore happens less in the Japanese context,¹⁴ which means that the police do not target such groups and therefore there is not a structured antagonism that grows over time.

I situated the long vignette describing the practice of *zagaku* as the opening chapter for this thesis in order to set the scene for my fieldwork. The lack of contextual information was purposeful, for two reasons; firstly, I hope to place the reader in a state of bewilderment and confusion – as if searching for clues as to what is happening. This is the sensation I experienced a lot during my time at the *dōjō*, especially at the start of the *senshusei* course, so I wanted the piece to convey this feeling in whatever small way possible. Secondly, the text raises a number of questions that I will closely examine throughout the other chapters. Themes such as the purpose of pain, endurance, relations of power and hierarchy, ritualised performance, collective and individual relations to space and place, community and unspoken modes of communication, expressions and varieties of consent, not to mention the wider context of how this particular training was specifically created for members of the Tokyo police.

In this introductory chapter I will first discuss relevant anthropological theory on how the body is an essential site of cultural inscription, giving grounding for the auto-ethnographic character of my research. I will then provide the history and background of Yoshinkan Aikidō and the *senshusei* course, pointing towards how this particular style of aikidō has always had strong ties with the Japanese police, and has been very much influenced by it. I will describe the particulars of the course itself, to give a general idea of what the daily routine consists of, as it is more than just a martial arts practice. I will then go on to describe my research methodology and ethical considerations, and finally, I will give a brief overview of the chapters which make up this thesis.

¹⁴ I do not mean to claim with this statement that Japanese police are less likely to be racially biased than other police, but that they have less opportunity to be due to the more homogenous nature of the Japanese population.

Mary Douglas has situated the individual body as receptacle of social meaning and, therefore, as a symbol of the society it inhabits (Shilling, 2005: 64). Aikidō is a Japanese martial art, influenced by and created from various other Japanese martial arts (Shioda, 2013a), and therefore represents a particular type of cultural construct. Although each *dōjō* may differ, they offer an embodied space of contact that is both social and physical; a habitus that is in a constant state of creation and influence by everyone who chooses to practise. This contact also contains innate levels of potential violence. Although a difficult and slippery concept, for the purposes of this research I will be using the following definition:

Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality – force, assault, or the infliction of pain – alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning. (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004: 1)

Using this definition I intend to explore how the practice of a fighting style – an application of physical force that often inflicts pain – is not necessarily an act of violence if it is being consented to, as this does not constitute an attack on personhood. It is instead a *performance* of violence, as it is a means of acting out a violent encounter without the negative emotions of fear and anxiety that would normally occur. However, there is a potential for such a performance to cross over into the realm of actual violence if the practice devolves into a situation where someone is enforcing a power dynamic in a way that falls outside the comfort levels of the person/people they are practising with. This is why it is important to still use such strong terminology to describe this type of practice; whilst the intentions of most of those who do martial arts may be good, there is always an element of danger that exists within such training. As will be described in this thesis, there were instances when I experienced the crossing of such boundaries, resulting in a loss of trust that transformed what should have been productive practice into a situation of fear. It is important, therefore, to recognise the presence of such dangers, especially in a discussion about consent. How such comfort levels and personal boundaries of consent are managed and communicated during practice will be a key theme of this thesis.

There has historically been a strategic removal of violence from many different types of sports, occurring simultaneously with its removal from societies in general, as those societies have become more purportedly ‘civilised’ and thus contained within rules, a process Norbert Elias has referred to as “sportization” (Kiku, 2007: 40; Elias & Dunning, 1986). But whilst violence has been largely removed from the public sphere, the presence of it in a sanctioned and controlled manner within certain physical activities, contained within designated spaces, is widely accepted (García

& Spencer, 2014; Wacquant, 2014; Brown & Jennings, 2014; Graham, 2014; García, 2014; Spencer, 2014; Nash, 2017; Noel, 2016; Weinberg, 2016). Speaking of his time spent boxing in Chicago, Loïc Wacquant has argued that “the gym constitutes a small-scale civilising machine in Elias’s sense of the term: it simultaneously imposes strict taboos on certain forms of violence, lowers one’s threshold of acceptance of disorderly behaviour, and promotes the internalization of controls and obedience to authority” (quoted by García & Spencer, 2014: 13). From my own experience of training, this formula is an apt description of the aikidō *dōjō*. Negotiating the boundaries of the certain forms of physical force that are acceptable and unacceptable becomes particularly interesting when examining a martial art that promotes nonviolence at its centre.

Such tensions elicit questions of legitimacy and illegitimacy in the use of physical force. Generating an extra layer of interest to this dynamic is the presence of the state within this bounded space: the *senshusei* course was created specifically with the Tokyo riot police in mind, a separate course for civilians only being made available in the 1980s, and for foreigners in the 1990s. Max Weber has argued that one of the defining features of a state is its monopolization of the legitimacy of the use of violence in society (Weber, 2008). Anthony Giddens has elaborated on this idea, asserting that a stronger state will tend to subsume its capacity to inflict violence upon its citizens, and attempt to build a social context whereby they have the potential but not the need for such action (Giddens, 1987). How does something like the *senshusei* course – an intensive martial arts training created for the police, funded by the government but practised and taught in a public *dōjō* alongside civilians and non-Japanese nationals – fit into such a model, if at all?

The fact that something like the *senshusei* course exists within the Japanese policing institution is interesting in itself. The officers take 11 months out of their regular duties to embark on a martial arts training regimen whilst still being paid their regular salary.¹⁵ The *senshusei* is by no means the only option for this; there are a range of training programmes that officers can opt into such as motorcycle or wilderness survival training, and these are on top of their compulsory studies for joining the police, or for progressing up through the ranks (certain promotions include extra compulsory training and a test in order to qualify). Aikidō is also not the only martial arts option: judō and kendō are more popular and have similar instructors courses for police. One of the officers I trained with who was already a third dan level black belt in judō before he joined the *senshusei* course, told me he had chosen it because there was less competition than for the judō equivalent. Although originally for the Tokyo riot police, the *senshusei* has become open for regular officers to apply, and they do not need to have a background in martial arts in order to be accepted.

¹⁵ Whilst working police shifts they will usually get paid extra for overtime, which they do not receive whilst doing *senshusei*, but they still earn their basic salary.

In a different societal context – especially a place that has an antagonistic and negative relationship to its police force – the idea of intensive martial arts training for police would sound threatening, but that is not the case in Japan. Bourdieu has argued that “we can hypothesize as a general law that a sport is more likely to be adopted by a social class if it does not contradict that class’s relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level, i.e. the body schema, which is the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body.” (1977: 215). With this in mind, I would argue that aikidō was not so much ‘adopted’ by Japanese society, as has been created by and grown out of its history. The martial arts habitus and/or body schema that is experienced in a Tokyo *dōjō*, might then hold much insight into wider social embodied relations. This does not mean, however, that Japanese martial arts have remained static in their practices. Although they have often been treated as an embodiment of a particular form of trans-historical and unique national identity, like most cultural vessels, martial arts have been socially appropriated and constructed throughout their history (Edwards, 2005: 288; Shioda, 2013). Scott Schnell (2005: 202) has talked about the past as “commonly reconfigured in response to present needs. Thus tradition must be seen not simply as a static holdover from former times, but as an ongoing conceptual project – one that figures prominently in contemporary social and political agendas.” The way that aikidō has been taught, and the way the *senshusei* course has been managed and run, have changed and adapted in multiple ways over the years. The practice of *zagaku* is one example of this, as it was not always a weekly session, but was started as such by the *dōjōcho* a few years before I enrolled. It is no longer practised now – my year of the course was the last to have to endure it. The course has changed a number of times since I graduated, having to adapt to the pandemic conditions, and since then a reduction in hours due to reduced teaching capabilities. My experience is a snapshot of a much larger institution with a complex history (as might be said of most fieldwork), but by going through the course myself, submitting fully to every requirement and hardship I was able to map out the effects of such behaviours on myself and those around me.

Instead of being neglected completely, the body has historically been something of an absent presence in sociology. The body has been absent from classical sociology in the sense that the discipline has rarely focused in a sustained manner on the body as an area of investigation in its own right. For example, sociological theory seldom takes into account the fact that we have fleshy bodies which allow us to taste, smell, touch and exchange bodily fluids. (Shilling, 2005: 8)

Within the autoethnographies that have been written about martial arts, carnal descriptions of how bodies come into physical contact with each other and the effect this causes have not been provided in particular detail. According to Marcel Mauss, the body is both the original tool for

shaping the world, as well as the original substance out of which the world is shaped, and yet “of all the formal definitions of culture that have been proposed by anthropologists, none have taken seriously the idea that culture is grounded in the human body.” (Csordas, 1995: 6). The body has been a significant object for many social theorists (Foucault, 1979; Douglas, 2002; Merleau-Ponty, 2012; Bourdieu, 1977; Yuasa, 1987; Fraser & Greco, 2005), yet very rarely have the visceral, emotional, pleasure/pain ridden physical realities of our individual bodies been invoked by these descriptions (Shilling, 2005: 9). Even when such sensorial language is used, as in Wacquant’s (2006) descriptions of learning to box in Chicago, there is a tendency to look inward at one’s own individual body without any considered accounts of the ways and feelings of one body touching/interacting with another.

Phenomenological descriptions of this type are by no means easy to assemble into ethnographic description. Wacquant has admitted of the need to adopt a “quasi-theatrical mode of writing” (2014: 30) in order to bring the reader to a more in-depth understanding of his boxing gym field sight, for otherwise how might it be possible “to go from the guts to the intellect, from the comprehension of the flesh to the knowledge of the text?” (2014: 30). Rupert A. Cox has described having a similar problem trying to articulate the theoretical with the sensory: “The difficulty lay in finding a way to describe the active, embodied process of training as both a project of aesthetic form and as a more intangible inner experience... What [my] notes lacked was physical detail and a sense of the embodied nature of my experience and these relationships.” (2013: 9-10). I had a similar experience with my own writing when trying to describe my fieldwork. The *senshusei* experience contained minimal spoken interactions by comparison to the wealth of embodied learning that took place on a daily basis. In order to express the feeling and intensity of this, I have included longer, detailed descriptions – such as the opening chapter on *zagaku* – as a way to invite the reader into the lived experience of the training. Whilst the theorising that I have done throughout is important, understanding of the physical, embodied nature of my research is equally so, and I have endeavoured to express this as fully as possible through my writing style.

My intention with this mode of research was to use my own body to experience how cultural and social signifiers were instructed and emphasised for a small group of Japanese police officers. What lessons were considered significant, and how were such teachings received? In describing her autoethnographic research methods when studying *hatchobori* (a style of traditional Japanese dance), Tomie Hahn describes how “My body became one of my primary field sites... the dancers moving around me were in fact my field sites, and my own body a terrain to survey.” (2007: preface). A lot of the experience that was new to me, a foreigner, was already familiar and normalised to my Japanese comrades, and through this training I was able to identify how some

things were specific to the *dōjō* environment and *senshusei*, whilst others were normalised social practices in Japan.

Yoshinkan Aikidō & The Senshusei Course

Established in the 1920s, aikidō combines influences from a range of different martial arts practices. Its founder, Ueshiba Morihei, often referred to as ‘O Sensei’ by members, studied a range of applications of kendō and judō during his lifetime, as well as serving in the Japanese infantry in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 (Stevens, 1993: 6). Developed from an earlier martial art called Daitō-ryū-jujutsu, which he mastered under the tutelage of Takeda Sokaku (Shishida, 2008: 3), Ueshiba was also profoundly influenced by the religious group *Ōmoto-kyō*¹⁶ and formed a close bond with its leader Onisaburō (Stevens, 1993: 13). Combining the religious teachings of pacifism and nonviolent resistance garnered from his time practising *Ōmoto-kyō*, with his apparently unrivalled level and understanding of martial arts skills, he created a fighting style that he saw as “a road of great reconciliation and pacification” (Ueshiba M., 2013: 27). In his writings, Ueshiba has described aikidō as “a budō of harmony and accord” and that “there is no enemy. True Budō is the work of love. It is not fighting and killing. Rather it gives life and fosters all things; it is the task of generation and perfection” (ibid.).

Counterintuitively, considering the ideals of pacifism that were professed by Ueshiba, aikidō has had ties to both the Japanese military and the police force since its inception. As well as serving himself, Ueshiba had a number of friends and followers who were significant figures within the Japanese military, such as Navy Admiral Takeshita Isamu, who practised Daitō-ryū alongside him, and then devoted considerable time to the practice of aikidō as his pupil. He also put effort into the promotion of this new way, and organised demonstrations and introductions amongst other powerful personnel within the military (Shishida & Nariyama, 2002: 5). Ueshiba was also a prolific traveller and, up until World War II, as well as teaching at his *Kobukan*,¹⁷ he instructed at police and military schools around Japan, where he would hold special classes (Stevens, 1993: 17). Shioda Gōzō, the son of a well off paediatrician who built a *dōjō* at their home in Tokyo and would invite martial arts instructors to come and teach, originally a practitioner of judō, began training with Ueshiba in 1933. After World War II, Shioda set up his own aikidō school called Yoshinkan (meaning ‘Cultivating the Spirit School’), with its techniques often described as one of the harder forms of aikidō today.

¹⁶ Founded in 1892, and often categorised as a ‘new’ Japanese religion, it stems from Shinto and promotes the idea that high personal virtue leads towards universal harmony.

¹⁷ The Aikidō headquarters.

The *senshusei* course was designed and begun by Shioda, together with his top disciples, in 1957, as a training course for the Tokyo riot police. It became open for non-police to join in the 1980s, but an official tandem course (known as the *kokusai* or 'international' course) was instigated in 1991. The Aikidō Yoshinkan Foundation was only officially founded in 1955, so the *senshusei* has been a key part of the organisation since the beginning. The course has done much to shape the method and teachings of the Yoshinkan style of aikidō, for example the more rigid structure of the techniques (angles and timing of all body parts are strictly defined) by comparison to other styles, as well as the fact that the role of *uke* (receiver) is just as well mapped out as the role of *shite* (doer). I had done some Tomiki aikidō in London before going to Japan, which was practised very differently, though most of the core techniques were the same. For example, the *waza* (techniques) were not performed from both the left and the right side, and when receiving the technique you were not given specific instruction at all. The more fixed structure of Yoshinkan Aikidō techniques, make it more suitable to drill, over and over again – as we did constantly during *senshusei*. Also, being given specific steps and movements to follow as *uke* was a useful method of staying safe, resulting in the ability to perform the techniques harder and faster, without fear of causing harm. The Yoshinkan aikidō *kihon waza* was developed for this very purpose, whilst the top level *sensei* were teaching the first years of *senshusei* candidates.

Unlike most other mainstream *budō* styles, such as judō, kendō, karate, etc. the ethos behind aikidō is self-defence only. Not only this, but the ultimate goal is to have the ability to neutralise any form of attack and immobilise the attacker, but without causing them any physical harm in the process. The theory is that you blend with the energy of the attack that is being aimed at you, redirect this energy to off-balance the attacker, causing them to fall, at which point you pin them to the ground. If this is done skilfully, the fact that you are using the other person's strength and momentum and not your own, means that difference in size and strength become irrelevant, and you should have the ability to neutralise an attack from someone much bigger and stronger than you. Therefore, there are no attacks in aikidō, only defence. This is the core idea at least, however, in order to practise aikidō, you need someone to attack you, i.e. your partner. This is the *shite/uke* relationship.

Shite (pronounced 'shtay') means 'doer' – the person who is performing the aikidō technique

Uke (pronounced 'ookay') means 'receiver' – the person who is performing the role of attacker
and having the technique done to them

Yoshinkan Aikidō practice is mostly done in pairs,¹⁸ with both parties taking turns as *shite* and *uke*. The aikidō practice that takes place on the mats is a performance; the intention is to simulate a real attack situation, whilst also taking care not to hurt each other. Just as if you were learning something from a computer simulation, there are levels you progress through, which increase in difficulty; for beginners in aikidō the attacks usually need to be slower and lighter, compared to the full power demanded by high level *sensei*. As was often stressed during my training, the person training with you is not your ‘opponent’, but your ‘partner’; you have to work together in order to perform a good technique. The position of *uke* is not passive, in fact it is more physically demanding than the role of *shite*, as you are required to perform difficult manoeuvres in reaction to the technique being performed on you.¹⁹ These are often referred to as the ‘escape’: for example, when a strong, painful lock is applied to your arm in a certain way, and fighting against it will only cause increased pain or even serious damage, your only route of escape might be to flip over the top of your own arm in order to untwist and release the lock. This is the reason for the flipping and rolling motions performed in aikidō for, if they did not flip, the arm could be broken and/or they would be propelled head first into the floor.



Fig. 4: *Senshusei* practice, performing a *jiyuwaza* technique whilst yelling a *kiai* as the *sensei* looks on.

¹⁸ Dealing with multiple attackers is a skill you learn when you reach a higher level.

¹⁹ Performing the role of *uke* to a high-level *sensei* was considered an honour and a mark of both your skill and fitness levels. Demonstrations would often involve an older, well-respected *sensei* performing techniques on a hand-picked group of young practitioners, chosen for their ability to react fast and be strong enough to endure the superior strength of the *sensei*'s technique.

The types of attacks performed in Yoshinkan aikidō are varied yet formalised; there are strikes (forwards, diagonal, straight punch, with and without weapons), and there are grabs (from the front and from behind, on the wrists, elbows, shoulders, chest).

There are three main forms of training used in yoshinkan aikidō:

Kihon dōsa – these are set movements which start off being performed solo (done with a partner when you have gained more experience), which are said to contain all of the physical form required for the correct application of any technique. The point of practising these movements is to train your body in correct form and balance, creating muscle memory for when you learn the techniques, as well as strengthening important areas of your legs and core.

Kihon waza – these are the set techniques of Yoshinkan Aikidō. They begin in a standing or kneeling position with an initiating attack from *uke* (either a grab or a strike), from which *shite* uses the momentum from this attack to redirect the action, unbalance *uke*, gain control of their body, and bring them to the floor²⁰ where they are pinned down using an armlock. Each *waza* (technique) has exact footwork and form, all of which should be timed in precise coordination, otherwise the goal of *shite* controlling *uke* without using muscle strength will not happen.

Jiyuwaza – only taught at a higher level, this is the faster, free-flowing style of using the control techniques. In this training one type of attack is chosen (front strike, wrist grab, knife thrust, etc.) and *uke* runs towards and performs this attack on *shite*, who blends with the momentum by turning, and uses it to execute an aikidō technique which, if done well, should throw *uke* across the mats. *Uke* performs an appropriate *ukemi* (breakfall), stands back up as quickly as possible, and immediately runs back towards *shite* to repeat the attack. *Shite* will throw them multiple times using different techniques. This continuous flow of moves can go on for a pre-agreed set number of throws, or until the attending *sensei* calls a stop.

As well as the methods listed above, there are a number of other practice categories in Yoshinkan Aikidō, such as *jissen soku waza* (self-defence techniques, where you apply your aikidō skills in an unstructured scenario), *tasu dori* (*jiyuwaza* performed with multiple attackers), weapons training with *tantō*, *bokken*, and *jō*²¹, and various choreographed routines which are often used for

²⁰ There are a few techniques where both *shite* and *uke* remain standing, but the majority do not.

²¹ Wooden versions of a knife, sword, and staff used in martial arts training.

demonstrations. During my experience of training at Honbu Dōjō, *kihon dōsa*, *kihon waza*, and *jiyuwaza* were the main elements focused on in the regular classes, as these are the only areas on which you are tested for gradings.

Something that marks Yoshinkan as different from other forms of aikidō, is its formalisation of the movements of *uke* as well as *shite* during the *kihon waza*. When you are taught the movements for a new *waza*, you are shown the specific footwork and actions performed by *uke* during each stage of the technique, as well as *shite*. Whereas in other aikidō disciplines, the idea is that you should be in control of *uke* (if you do the technique correctly) – so *uke* should go where you put them in whatever way you direct – Yoshinkan has opted to formalise these movements (which has often meant receiving the criticism that this style looks too robotic and does not flow). The role of *uke* is incredibly important, but it is also where most of the danger lies; creating strict formal movements is a way of making sure *uke* engages properly with the technique, and also helps to keep them safe in showing them where they need to be in order to protect themselves. In a number of conversations with high-level practitioners, it was discussed that the reason Yoshinkan is considered such a ‘hard’ style of aikidō, is because this formalisation of movement enables the techniques to be practised harder and faster than they could safely be otherwise.

When the course first began it was a two-year commitment, though when I signed up it was nine months for the police and eleven months for the *kokusai* (the international civilian group), both with full time training five days a week. Our schedules were slightly staggered, with the *kokusai* arriving at the *dōjō* every morning at 7.30 am to begin training at 8 am, and the police arriving at 8.30 am to start training at 9 am. The *kokusai* would have all three of their training sessions before lunch (the first with the morning *ippan*²² class, and the second and third together with the police), then leave for the day at 2.30 pm (many of us had jobs that we would work in the afternoons). The police would train twice in the morning, then have a two hour lunchbreak, then have their third lesson in the afternoon.

²² Regular aikidō classes, also used to refer to the regular members.

Daily Schedule

Tuesdays ~ Fridays

7:30	Enter Dojo and Change
7:35 ~ 7:40	Aisatsu and daily meeting
7:40 ~ 8:10	Area Cleaning
8:10 ~ 8:20	Taiso
8:25	Seiza
8:30 ~ 9:30	1 st Training
9:45	Shinkoku - with police
9:55	Seiza
10:00 ~ 11:30	2 nd Training
11:55	Seiza
12:00 ~ 13:30	3 rd Training
13:30 ~ 13:40	Dojo Cleaning
13:45	Shinkoku - just in case
13:45 ~ 14:00	Area Cleaning
14:30	Leave Dojo

*Amy Senshusei keikōnisshi no teshutsu ni
maerimashita*

Every Thursday, the 12:00 class is **Zagaku**. This translates to "sitting and learning." Zagaku is a class where all senshusei sit in seiza with Chino Dojocho. Dojocho will ask each senshusei to speak about a particular topic, and also to give feedback to other Senshusei as well. The most common topic is "regret and habit". This is also the same topic as your weekly essays. Be sure you are ready to talk about this before each Zagaku session starts.

Saturdays

7:30	Enter Dojo and Change
7:35 ~ 7:40	Aisatsu and daily meeting
7:40 ~ 8:10	Area Cleaning
8:10 ~ 8:20	Taiso
8:25	Seiza
8:30 ~ 9:30	1 st Training
9:45	Shinkoku
9:55	Seiza
10:00 ~ 11:00	2 nd Training
11:25	Seiza
11:30 ~ 12:30	3 rd Training
12:30 ~ 12:40	Dojo Cleaning
12:45	Shinkoku
12:45 ~ 13:00	Area Cleaning
13:30	Leave Dojo

- *The dojo is closed on Mondays and Public Holidays.
- *The daily schedule may change due to Dojo events.
- *If a Senshusei has not missed one single day of training, he/she will receive a special certificate upon graduation, called "Kaikinsho." It is an honorable certificate for "100% perfect attendance."

Fig. 5: The daily schedule we received at the start of the *senshusei* course.

As can be seen from the daily schedule, training was only one aspect of our day, we were also assigned cleaning duties, had to memorise and lead the *taisō*²³ warm up, officially greet and show appreciation towards the ranking *sensei*, maintain a training diary (the *keikōnisshi*) which was checked and signed off every day, and write a weekly reflection essay that was submitted at the

²³ A set series of warm-up exercises and stretches.

start of every week. As *senshusei* we were judged just as much for our attention to these activities as we were to the physical training, as such tasks were an indication of attitude. Such judgement was often directed more towards the foreign members of the group, as the police and other Japanese trainees were well used to such cleaning and greeting practices, but there were regularly problems with those who came from other countries to join the course, who did not understand why they should also have to complete these other menial tasks.

One *senshusei* took on the role of *shinkoku tōban* every day (the police *senshusei* rotated every day, the *kokusai senshusei* swapped each week), and would be responsible for leading all of the day's greetings, leading the *taisō* warm-up, and filling out the *keikōnisshi*²⁴ for that day. Such tasks were highly ritualised, every interaction followed a prescribed form and its own phrasing – those of us who did not understand Japanese had to learn everything phonetically. This included the *taisō*, which was a specific warm-up routine that was performed in order, using pre-scripted phrases. Within the first few days of *senshusei* I was reprimanded for getting the *taisō* wrong (I had mistakenly thought I would be given a grace period in which to learn everything), so I made myself flashcards and forced myself to memorise the entire thing by practising every evening when I got home.

²⁴ Training diary.

Taiso – Warm-up

The warm-ups are very important since they are the beginning of your physical training for the day. The shinkoku toban leads the warm-ups. The other Senshusei will count with the shinkoku person on the 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 8th count. The energy and effort you put into the warm-ups will set the tone for the day and must be full of spirit and energy starting. It also must be learned by the end of the first month of training. On occasion, you will be expected to lead the warm ups for the ippan classes).

Taiso o shimasu	Start the warm-ups	Ashi no ura o awasete	Bring the soles of the feet together
Hirogatte kudasai	Spread out	Kokansetsu	Stretch hip joint forward
Chouyaku	Jump	Hikitsuke	Pull the feet closer (count to 10)
Kusshin	Crouch down and stretch the knees	Mo ichido	once more stretch the hip joint
Hiza o mawashimasu	Circle the knees	Hikitsuke	Pull the feet closer (count to 10)
Shinkyaku	Stretch leg to the side	Ryoashi o nobashite, ushiro e kairimasu	Bring both legs over your head
Fukaku	Lower	Tachimasu	Stand up
Zenkokutsu	Bend forward and back	Kubi o mawashimasu	Circle the neck
Taisoku	Bend to the side	Kata ashi o mae ni dashite akiresuken	One foot forward, stretch Achilles tendon
Kaisen	Circle the body from the hips	Ashi o kaemasu	Change feet
Mune no undo	Stretch the chest	Koshire	Twist you hip
		Hantai	Other side
		Koshi o mawashimasu	Circle your hips
Kata o mawashimasu	Circle the shoulders	Te okunde mae	Interlock your fingers, stretch your back
Kubi Zengo	Bend neck forwards and back	Ookiku ue	Stretch up
Yoko	To the side	Datsuryoku	Drop the arms
		Mou ichido mae	Stretch your back once more
		Ookiku ue	Stretch up
Mawashimasu	Circle (the neck)	Ashi o hirogete	Spread your legs
Suwatte kudasai	Sit down	Saiyuu ni taoshimasu	Bend sideways, both sides
Ashikubi o mawashimasu	Circle your ankle	Sonomama shita taoshimasu	Bend down
Hantai	Change feet		
Ryou ashi mae	Both legs forward	Ushiro ni sorimasu	Arch back
		Hinerimasu	Twist side to side
		Yame	Stop
Juunan maekara	Stretch forward	Tekube ashikubi	Shake out
Ashi o hirogete, hidari	Legs apart, to the left	Dogi o naoshite	Fix your dogi
Migi	Right		
Mae	Front	Taiso o owarimasu	We are now finished with taiso.
Saiyuu ni hinerimasu	Twist to the side		

Fig. 6: My copy of the *taisō* warm up routine with Japanese commands and their English translations: received at the start of the *senshusei* course.

The *keikōnisshi* had to be maintained every day, and there was a particular cupboard which contained other training diaries going back years. The police and the *kokusai* had to keep one each, as our training schedules were slightly different, but for both there was a short section at the bottom that had to be filled out with a short personal reflection on the day's training. These short comments, as well as the 3-page essay that had to be written every week, felt like both a means of communication with the *sensei* in the *dōjō*, as well as a method of enforced self-examination. The weekly essays in particular – it felt incredibly difficult to come up with something to write about

every week, when mostly the only thing on all of our minds was simply how much our bodies hurt and how tired we were. Yet, every week, we would all find something to reflect upon, and we would do so to a deeper level simply to fill the required pages.

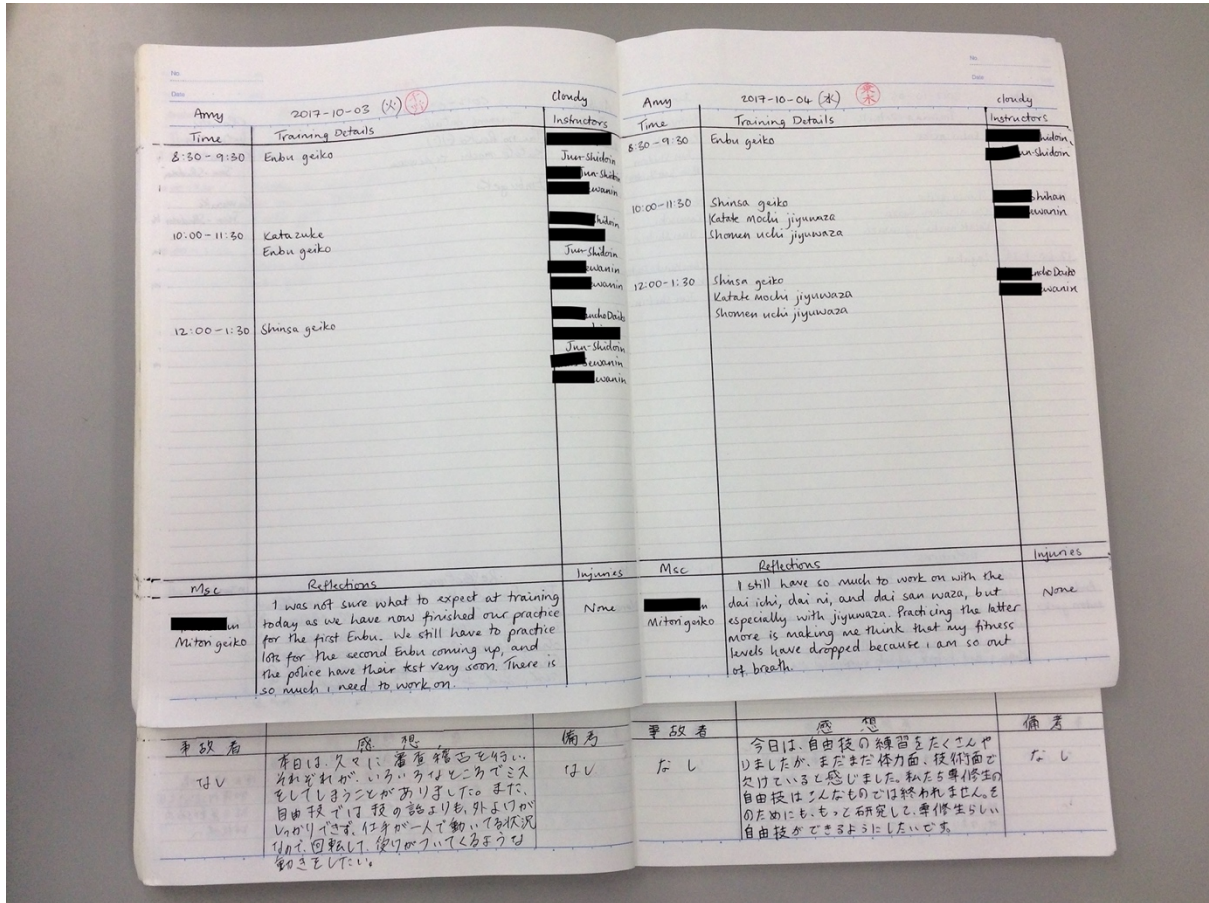


Fig. 7: The two *keikōnisshi* showing two days of training.

Japanese text translation:

Today we had preparatory training for the coming test after a while. We all made various mistakes. My Jiyuwaza's level was such that I dare not specify which was bad in particular. Far worse, I couldn't do any Sotoyoke at all. While doing Shite I was the only one moving, so I should master proper turns that make Uke follow my movement.

Today we did a lot of Jiyuwaza training and I felt that our stamina and technique are not good enough. Senshusei's Jiyuwaza must be far better than this. Therefore we should gain more knowledge and skills so that we could perform the Jiyuwaza worthy of our senshusei status.

Before starting the course, I asked a past *senshusei* graduate what the most difficult aspect of the experience had been: he replied how long it was. I remember feeling the truth of this statement when I was a few months into the training – I had memorised all the necessary Japanese phrases, had built up my strength and stamina, had gotten used to all the aspects of *dōjō* life such as the cleaning and constant bowing, was acclimated to pushing my body through exhaustion and pain, in short I felt like a veteran. And yet, I was barely a quarter of the way through. The *senshusei* course is intense, but it is also long, the extent of which feels similar to what professional athletes must experience. Because of this length, the endurance goes through stages, and the life of the *dōjō* becomes regular and normalised. I remember one occasion (it was in the last few months of the course) that I started to feel unwell with what turned out to be flu-like symptoms. I was so used to pushing through any discomfort that I was still coming to train every day, and my illness was noticed by the *dōjō sensei* before even myself. They understood my body and physical capacities so well that they noticed my difficulty and instructed me to sit out and observe the class. Whilst speaking on the phone with a friend that evening, I told them about my day and they asked, with some incredulity, “You’re not going to train tomorrow, are you?” I realised from their question that I had intended to do just that, that it had not even occurred to me not to, but as soon as I considered the situation further I realised they were right and that I should stay home and rest. From the amount to which the *dōjō* staff had been asking me if I was feeling ok the day before, I think they were on the verge of sending me home themselves, and they were happy that I took some days off to rest. This example encapsulates the care that is present alongside the strict brutality of the *senshusei* training; on the one hand the *sensei* were always pushing us to surpass our limits, and on the other they had an understanding of our individual bodies and made sure that we were well and taking care of ourselves.

Long-term experiences have the power to normalise certain behaviours and practices, and can have a more lasting effect. Therefore, in this thesis, with a close auto-ethnographic analysis of the *senshusei* course, I will define its various facets and purposes in order to map its social significance.

Research Methodology & Ethical Considerations

My research methods for this project were relatively simple but by no means easy. As already described, I identified the particular aikidō *dōjō* that taught the *senshusei* course as my intended research site, mostly so that I could gain access to the police themselves and observe their training whilst engaging in the normal lessons myself. However, as the timeline for the next *senshusei* lined up so perfectly with my fieldwork dates, I made the decision to enrol and was able to see it through

to graduation and then remain at the *dōjō* for another six months as an assisting instructor (*sewanin*) for the next years' recruits. As such, I did not experience the common problem of a lot of ethnographic researchers in trying to find people to engage and talk with me. At the start of the course there was very little talking in general, in fact, and instead of trying to artificially insert myself into a group, I had instant insider status due to being part of the *senshusei* cohort. It also gave me a chance to prove myself to those I was most interested in speaking to; in fully committing to the training and behaving as a model *senshusei*, the *sensei* and other trainees took a liking to me quickly, to an extent that otherwise might have taken months to achieve. This sounds slightly underhanded, but I was also engaging myself to such an extent so that I could map out the effects of such behaviours in my own body and mind. The incredible resilience and single-minded attitude that is required of all *senshusei* is not something that can be faked.

One difficulty with my fieldwork plans was that of acquiring permission to use the *senshusei* experience as the focus of my research on the Japanese police. From the moment I arrived at the *dōjō* (and even before that, as I had contacted them by email before arriving in Tokyo), I was upfront about my intentions and the reasons why I wanted to train there. Upon making the decision to join the next *senshusei* cohort, I communicated with the *dōjō* again and they asked me to write a brief explanation of what my research would be focusing on, before they gave official permission. The first draft of this proposal was returned to me saying that it was too long (I had erred on the side of providing as much detail as I could), so I reduced it down and resubmitted it to them. I then had to wait for the next official meeting between the *dōjōcho* and the supervising police officials to take place, before I received a response. By the time I was told their answer, I was already a few months into the course which, from the outcome, I think was both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand I was told that I had not been granted official permission to research the police and their duties, however, the *dōjōcho* decided to grant me permission to conduct my research on the *dōjō* and the *senshusei* course. Under the circumstances this felt like the best outcome I could expect; I was not affiliated to any Japanese university, nor would the aikidō *dōjō* necessarily be the correct route through which to ask for official permission from an institution like the National Police Agency (though it might be helpful to gain contacts), but the fact that I could still focus my research on the training that took place at the *dōjō* was an enormous relief. This permission was, I believe, granted on the strength of the reputation I had managed to build for myself as a dedicated and respected *senshusei*, so the fact that I had to wait for this amount of time was helpful in that regard. I was further convinced of this when, after I had completed the *senshusei* course and was volunteering as a *sewanin* at the *dōjō*, I was not only granted permission to contact and interview my fellow *senshusei* police graduates, but the chairman of Yoshinkan

Aikidō Foundation (a retired man who had previously worked as the head of the Tokyo police force) also heard about my ongoing research and offered to give me an interview.²⁵

Once I started the course, I had a tight routine to follow: whilst at the *dōjō* I was engaged with the *senshusei* training regimen, then once I got home I would write up my fieldnotes for that day. Due to how the days were managed by the *sensei*, there was no possibility for taking notes during training, so I was forced to rely on my memory each day. I tried to keep track of both my physical as well as mental and emotional states in my fieldnotes, as all of these factors were important aspects of the training. This intense form of autoethnographic method was written about and promoted by Wacquant after his research in a Chicago boxing gym:

The idea that guided me here was to push the logic of participant observation to the point where it becomes inverted and turns into *observant participation*. In the Anglo-American tradition, when anthropology students first go into the field, they are cautioned, 'Don't go native'... My position, on the contrary, is to say 'go native' but *go native armed*, that is, equipped with your theoretical and methodological tools, with the full store of problematics inherited from your discipline, with your capacity for reflexivity and analysis, and guided by a constant effort, once you have passed the ordeal of intuition, *to objectivise this experience and contrast the object*, instead of allowing yourself to be naively embraced and constructed by it. Go ahead, go native, but come back a sociologist! (2014: 27)

I was grateful for all the research I had done prior to setting out on my fieldwork for the very reasons Wacquant outlines: it enabled me to understand and analyse my surroundings whilst I was in the thick of it. An observation of the *senshusei* course from the outside never would have granted me the insights I was able to decipher through the use of my own body, and would have led to a very sterile interpretation of what was happening. As such, I concentrated on the embodied experience of myself and my cohort whilst I was *senshusei* and, once I had completed the course and became *sewanin*, I then occupied a perfect position to visually observe the training.

Due to my awareness of my position within the *dōjō* whilst I was *senshusei*, and an awareness of how my status would shift once I completed the course, I waited until it had finished before requesting and conducting interviews. For all the interviews, whether with *dōjō* staff, fellow *senshusei*, past *senshusei* graduates, or others connected with the Yoshinkan aikidō community, I informed them of my research intentions and sent a copy of the questions I would be asking in advance (when requested), and made sure they understood their right to withdraw consent at any time. Before reaching out to the police *senshusei* (who had finished the course by then and were back at their regular police duties), I made sure to check with the head of the *dōjō*, who said I was free to reach out to them and ask their individual permissions. My police comrades had all

²⁵ This conversation happened at one of the *dōjō* parties, but unfortunately it was near to the end of my fieldwork and I was unable to set up the interview before I left Tokyo.

known that I was doing research whilst we were on the course together, and most of them were very happy to talk to me,²⁶ so I was able to set up some interviews. Mindful of the original permission I was given, I made sure that my questions mostly concerned the *senshusei* training, and did not ask about their police work outside of this.

For all the interviews I conducted with Japanese speakers I employed the use of an interpreter. My intention had been to learn the language whilst doing my fieldwork, but after making the decision to join the *senshusei* course this was no longer possible. As I was, and have continued to be self-funded throughout this project, I did not have the financial resources to commit to the amount of lessons necessary to learn such a complex language. I did ten weeks of Japanese school upon my arrival in Tokyo, and had hoped to continue studying in my own time whilst on the *senshusei* course, but this did not turn out to be possible. I was too exhausted from the training to be able to concentrate on such a task, plus I had to spend many of my evenings working in order to support myself. I cannot deny that this lack of language skill has been a source of regret and frustration during the course of my research, but not having the resources to rectify it, I have used other methods to compensate. For example, I realised that I was able to observe the body language of everyone at the *dōjō* in much greater detail due to my lack of verbal comprehension. Most of the *sensei* did not speak English, but would give instructions in Japanese and expect us to respond; therefore I became especially attentive to the behaviour of those around me in order to pick up queues from them. This was also how I learned aikidō, as I could only understand some of the verbal instructions, I would pay close attention to the physical movements of a demonstration, so that I could then try my best to imitate them.

My lack of Japanese has also been a hindrance for my writing up period, as I have not been able to read academic materials written in the language. In order to overcome this, I applied for funding to pay for a bilingual research assistant who I requested to look into a number of important themes to see what has been written in Japanese. Although we experienced some difficulties of access (as neither of us had a Japanese University affiliation), he contributed some incredibly helpful information and references in the short time we were able to work together.

The process of anonymisation has been a difficult task for this project as, due to the fact that there is only one *senshusei* course, and one *dōjō* that teaches it, there is no way to hide this location. The Yoshinkan Aikidō Honbu Dōjō is also not very large, so there may be certain descriptions from my thesis that will be recognisable to those who are familiar with the place and its people. In order to confuse this as much as possible, however, I have not stated the year that I completed the course, and I have used different aliases in every chapter. In choosing these names, I have assigned English or Japanese to signify nationality, as this was relevant to the circumstance descriptions.

²⁶ The few who I did not interview said that they were too busy and could not spare me the time.

Another difficulty for this project was around the ethical necessity of doing no harm. In the ethical approval form I had to complete as part of my pre-fieldwork preparations, there were two particular questions that felt difficult to answer:

18. Might the research place you in situations of harm, injury or criminality?

19. Might the research cause harm or damage to bystanders or the immediate environment?

The practice of martial arts, especially in an intensive training like the *senshusei*, contains not just the possibility but a certainty of some level of harm being dealt to myself and myself to others. Whether it is just bruises and mild joint tenderness, or a black eye and permanent knee damage, there would be no way of avoiding such eventualities in this environment. The important factor in this situation is one of consent – everyone within my fieldwork site is there because they have consented to certain levels of potential harm, as have I. How much harm and the levels of individual consent being given in this setting, is exactly the topic that I will explore in my research, but in order to do this I have had to engage with the danger myself.

Overview of Chapters

I have focused the first chapter on the subject of pain in order to create grounding for the rest of the discussion. As is made clear from the opening vignette of *Zagaku*, the pain that is experienced as part of the *senshusei* course is not always simply a by-product but can sometimes be purposeful. Though there are a number of social scientists writing about martial arts and extreme sports (Abramson & Fletcher, 2007; García & Spencer, 2014; Wacquant, 2014; Brown & Jennings, 2014; Graham, 2014; García, 2014; Spencer, 2014; Nash, 2017; Noel, 2016; Weinberg, 2016; Breton, 2000; Matthews & Channon, 2016), their work contains minimal discussion of this aspect of the training and, as the circumstances of my fieldwork placed the experience of pain so much at the forefront, I wanted to take the time to explore and analyse its significance. What is the context of the pain that is endured at the *dōjō*, and how is it consented to (or not)? In this chapter I discuss the sociocultural context of Japan, as well as the historical medicalisation of pain and where martial arts practice situates within these environments. I also break the types of pain experienced during training into different categories and explore the relationship between control and trust within the *dōjō*. With this discussion I examine the possibility for pain to be utilised as a mechanism for transformation instead of merely a negative but inevitable consequence of training.

The next chapter examines the social relationship to space, how it is created and maintained within the *dōjō*. As this is the environment where such intense training takes place, I look at how it is made into a 'safe space' for performed violence to take place. The *senshusei* course is not simply about the aikidō training but also involves a variety of behaviours and actions such as bowing (to people as well as to the space itself) and cleaning, so taking a deeper look at these practices, I discuss how a relationship between people and the space is created. Using Joy Hendry's theory of wrapping as it is applied to Japanese culture (1993), I describe how all of the minutiae of the required *dōjō* behaviours create layers of respect and temporal pauses within the aikidō practice, which establishes attitudes of control and safety during even the most intense training. I also examine how the setting of the *dōjō* can shift instantly between different contexts, such as the intensity and seriousness of *senshusei* training, to the slouching relaxation of a break area, and even to the raucous merriment of a new year's party. Even though the setting remains the same, the sudden change in context allows for extreme shifts in behaviour and attitudes of those present, allowing both serious concentration and relaxed revelry to be given equal intention and merit. To describe this phenomenon I use the term 'scene-switching', and I explore in this chapter how the normalisation of such sudden changes allows for shifts in relationships and release of tension.

Building from the previous chapters, I then look at the concept of consent and how it is communicated within the *dōjō*. I describe my own experiences of butting up against people who held different expectations about what consent should be given during aikidō training, and ways that trust was both made and broken. A lot of this discussion looks at unspoken modes of communication within the *dōjō*, such as the taping of injuries, the groans and other noises made during practice, and the importance of individualised attention from the *sensei* toward individual bodies. As well as the toughness of the practice that we engaged in, there was also a great deal of care that was demonstrated, both on and off the mats, which was an essential element of *dōjō* life, and without which such performances of violence would have crossed into being actual violence.

The last chapter takes a step back from the microcosm of the aikidō *dōjō* and looks at the Japanese police force, with a specific emphasis on the role of the *kōban* (police box) within community life. Taking the themes that have been built in the preceding chapters, I examine the concept of care, hierarchy, and open communication that forms such a large part of the community policing across the country. In light of the current global conversations around the Defund The Police movement, the Japanese public, by contrast does not seem to have an antagonistic relationship with their police force (Ames, 1981; Bayley, 1991; Parker, 2015; Gill, 2000). In my analysis, I look at the role the *kōban* may have in this situation, examining questions that have been posed as to their capacity to act as mechanisms of state surveillance (Aldous & Leishman, 1997; Finch, 1999; Wood, Lyon & Abe, 2007), and how the open-access of their station within

communities makes for less of a threat than a public service. This openness, I argue, is a key factor in maintaining the consent of the public to be policed. I also examine the types and structures of the hierarchical relationships that are maintained, and how there is a responsibility to provide care and assistance within this structure, that helps to ensure a lack of violent coercion towards everyday citizens.

This thesis touches on a wide range of themes, all of which I hope to make a significant contribution towards. The ethnographic literature on martial arts has been growing steadily ever since Wacquant's work on boxing in Chicago (2006), but the topic is currently dominated by male social scientists and their perspectives. This may be one of the reasons why the subject of consent is not discussed as a central theme within these spaces, which I hope that my work will be a positive contribution to. Surprisingly, I also struggled to find academic literature written about martial arts in the Japanese context that dealt with the subject from a social science analytical perspective. Though there are a number of books, they tend to be written in a way to promote the practice of the martial art in question, and not to present theoretical critique.²⁷ As such, my own work that examines the practice of aikidō with a specific focus on Japanese social norms and behaviours, should present an interesting contribution to the anthropology of both martial arts and Japanese society.

When researching consent I struggled to find very much academic work that examined the concept outside of sexual relations, with most discussion focused on BDSM (Martin, 2011; Weiss, 2015). J.D. Weinberg (2016) has written a comparative on how consent is negotiated in the worlds of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and BDSM, which provides an interesting analysis of both legal structures and how they are negotiated by their members. I hope to add more detail and nuance to this discussion with my own account of the embodied communications that occur in the aikidō *dōjō*, providing autoethnographic data to a conversation that I believe has much to contribute to social understanding. My research should also be of interest to discussions about 'safe spaces' and how they are defined. Most conversations on this topic tend to revolve around a classroom setting, but I think that an expansion of what a place of learning might include could bring more to this field of study. I also believe that a physical example that deals with bodily injury instead of emotional could be a useful tool when explaining the importance of safe spaces to those who struggle to understand why such things are necessary.

Lastly, I hope that my research will provide a crucial bridge between the opposing ideas of what Japanese policing is and its role within society. As I will describe in this thesis, there have been some writers who have depicted community policing in Japan as an idyllic model of peace and unity (Ames, 1981; Bayley, 1991; Parker, 2015), whilst others have claimed it to be an

²⁷ This may be due to the fact that I was searching for literature written in English but was not able to conduct a thorough search in Japanese.

underhanded means of social surveillance and state control (Aldous & Leishman, 1997; Finch, 1999; Wood, Lyon & Abe, 2007); in looking into both sides of this argument and corroborating them with my own research findings, I have tried to navigate a path between them. Of particular value in this discussion was my analysis on how hierarchies of power are defined and managed in the Japanese social context. Building from Chie Nakane's work on this topic (1972), my experiences with the police and civilians inside the *dōjō* demonstrated a relationship of care and responsibility rather than one of top-down power enforcement which, when applied to the context of community policing, explains much about the social expectations and practices of the police in Japan. With these examples I hope that my research will offer a meaningful contribution to the current academic discussions around Japanese crime and policing as well as social manifestations of hierarchy.

Though the bulk of my research centres around the police training of the *senshusei* course, I have utilised this to gain a perspective on the role of the police in Japanese society. By framing my discussion around the concept of consent and how it is communicated, I will identify social norms of behaviour that occur in Japan and that impact the ways in which communities function as a whole. Some of these elements are very subtle, but they have significant effects when applied across a large group. By examining such behaviours within the *dōjō* it is then possible to identify their significance within the Japanese police force. Both scenarios encompass hierarchical relations of power and the potential for brutality, but they both also contain actions of care and respect that create a situation of balance. Constant communication is key to maintaining this balance, but it is not a simple matter of saying yes or no, so a close examination of how the needs of a diverse range of individuals is communicated and managed is crucial to understanding these social structures.

Overall this thesis begins from the micro embodied experiences of the aikidō *dōjō*, and moves steadily outwards to provide a macro examination of police relations within the Japanese community. Through a consideration of the behavioural norms and mechanisms that exist within the *dōjō*, and how they contribute towards maintaining the positive and safe atmosphere of this space, I intend to identify some key social markers that factor into the ongoing construction of Japanese society as a safe place to live.

Chapter 2



Fig. 8: *Senshusei* practising *suwariwaza*.

Pain: The Unspoken and the Unspeakable

“If tomorrow someone invented a fool-proof, cost-free pill, with no side effects, guaranteeing lifetime immunity from pain, we would at once have to set about reinventing what it means to be human.”

- David B. Morris (1993: 20)

I graduated from *senshusei* just over a month ago, and am now focused on my new role as *sewanin*. It's the morning class and I am in the *dōjō* with the new batch of *kokusai senshusei* recruits, shouting at them to move their bodies properly, put power into their steps, lean forward, move their arms with intention as if they're holding a sword. They look like an assortment of wet noodles. We are only a couple of weeks into the course and I am trying to adjust to my new role as *sensei*; I tell myself that everyone is this bad to begin with (whilst secretly assuring myself that I definitely hadn't been). Honda-*sensei* then appears in the doorway of the main *dōjō* but remains at the threshold, and my face instantly turns from a scowl to light, friendly, and respectful, as he gestures towards me and I eagerly dash over to him. He tells me there is a telephone call and could I come and deal with it, so I speedily excuse myself from the class, dipping quick bows and offering a *shitsureishimasu!* ('please excuse me') to Hayama-*sensei*, who is leading the session, bowing myself out of the *dōjō* and dashing down the hallway to the office. The phone call is from Alid-*senshusei*, who failed to show up for the days training, and is only just contacting us about it. I am surprised and a little worried about this, as this recruit had been demonstrating enthusiasm for the training thus far. But one of the most important elements of the course is that you always show up for training. Those are the rules. Even if you are injured and unable to train, you still have to attend and observe the classes. If you are sick with something contagious, then you need a doctor's note, and you should always notify the *dōjō* before the start of the day. This is what it means to be *senshusei* – absolute commitment and discipline.

I pick up the phone and am greeted with the croaky voice of Alid-*senshusei*, frequently interrupted by nasty-sounding coughing fits. He has a bad cold, and so couldn't come in today. I am sympathetic and offer him some advice about visiting a pharmacy to get medicine and ask if he thinks he wants to see a doctor, telling him to take care of himself and get some rest. Then he starts to tell me about how he thinks he might've sprained his elbow in training the day before, and that he was worried about it. I ask him some details about the injury, and tell him that he should get it checked out if he thinks it's serious, and recommend the clinic down the street from the *dōjō* where the doctors speak English and are very used to dealing with all of our aikidō-related ailments. But, instead of focussing on the condition of his injury, Alid-

senshusei then starts talking to me in earnest about the fear and worry that he is feeling as a result of it. Having gone through a lot of trouble during my own *senshusei* training, I had experienced this type of fear myself, and so I let him know that I understood. I tried to reassure Alid-*senshusei* by telling him a little about this, and explaining that this was a part of the training, that you would experience difficulties, but it was important to try to overcome them, and it was my job to offer support.

Then the tone of the conversation shifted almost imperceptibly, as Alid-*senshusei* started asking me more about injuries; “I just don’t want to get injured, I’m worried about it. I’ve heard there are often injuries on the course.” I found myself spluttering slightly on the other end of the phone, not quite sure what I was supposed to say to that. This guy has come all the way from India, moved to Tokyo, gone through a hellish time getting a visa, solely for the purpose of doing the *Senshusei* course. Aikidō is a martial art, and this course was designed for the Tokyo police, renowned for being an incredibly tough challenge that will take you to your limits. It’s not for everyone, but Alid-*senshusei* had actively sought it out and even been enthusiastic about it, and now, in his first week of training, he’s asking me about the possibility of injury as if he wants reassurance that it won’t ever happen. Of course it might happen – Aikidō is a fighting style, which means you’ll have to do some fighting. What on earth did he expect?

I try to remain calm on the phone and listen to his worries with sensitivity, but I’m struggling to find the correct way to respond. I don’t want him to quit the course – he has so much promise! – but I also can’t lie and tell him that everything will definitely be ok. I try for a middle-road and I get personal; I describe my own experiences of when I injured my elbow in the first month, but decided to train through it. I reassured him about how training partners look after each other on the mats, describing how everyone had silently made note of the elbow support I wore and always made a conscious effort to go easy on that area. I said that there are different types of injuries, some that you can train through and others that you shouldn’t, and how you needed to take care of your body, but also explaining that the first month of training was always especially tough because the *sensei*’s are trying to teach you how to protect yourself, spending lots of time practising *ukemi* (breakfalls) so that you don’t get injured when falling, as well as strengthening crucial parts of your body with the physical conditioning. None of what I said appeared to make much difference, however, and I struggled not to let my frustration show. I repeated that he should go and see a doctor if he was worried about his elbow, before ending the call and returning to the class.

Fieldnotes, 18/4/2018

According to Miyamoto Musashi, one of the most famous and beloved samurai figures from Japanese history, “The way of the warrior is resolute acceptance of death.” (2019). Whilst meandering the streets of modern-day Tokyo, one of the safest capital cities in the world,²⁸ such an imminent relationship with mortality might seem inappropriate or even a little absurd, but turn into a building and cross the threshold into a martial arts *dōjō*, and such an idea becomes recognisable. It is no longer death, however, that those who engage in practice have to confront and accept – the times when *samurai* had the unconditional rite to cut down anyone of lower rank who disrespected them, have happily been left in the past (Ikegami, 1997) – but instead the risk of injury. As death was for Musashi, injury is not something to be invited, but it is a constant possibility that lingers in the back of the mind throughout training, motivating the practitioner to maintain their concentration and discipline at all times. Those I trained with often described the pain that they endured in the *dōjō* as the only way to become stronger. This notion of ‘strength’ was not limited to the physicality of muscle density or speed, but was used as a catchall expression to include the mind, body, and spirit together in unity. As such, during my time training and teaching the *senshusei* course, pain was not only a by-product but was often utilised as a tool in order to effect and transform the minds, bodies, and spirits of those who trained. When committing to the *senshusei* course, the experience of pain and injury was not only possible but expected, and yet, every year, new recruits sign up, both from the Tokyo Police, as well as from all over the world.

Whilst pain was an everyday experience of being *senshusei*, the possibility of injury was common but not a certainty. As was being expressed in the opening vignette, my expectations when signing up for the course included the risk of injury that the intense training entailed, but Alid had not felt the same way, which led to his anxiety. Anthropological theorising of the concept of risk points out that it is always used in reference to a negative consequence – to risk something is to accept the possibility of losing it (Douglas, 1994; Caplan, 2000). In the example of extreme sports, however, there is also the concept that the risk of death or injury is a means of adding value to life (Abramson & Fletcher, 2007: 5). In the case of *senshusei*, pain is not being risked, but injury. Pain is an accepted part of training, something to be endured and even utilised as a method, but injury constitutes a different kind of pain, of the kind that contains a fear of lasting consequences. David Le Breton (2000) has written about how the long and intensive ordeals undertaken by those who enjoy extreme sports are the main focus of their participation, preferring to test their own capacity for endurance rather than to pit themselves against others in competition. This holds true for the *senshusei* experience as well, except for the circumstance of control, as the individuals in the *dōjō* are not just pushing themselves through every trial, but

²⁸ Tokyo was rated as the safest city in the world in *The Economist's 'Safe Cities Index 2019'*: <https://safecities.economist.com/safe-cities-index-2019/> (accessed 12/12/19).

have placed their trust in the *sensei* to dictate the terms of the training. This relinquishing of self-management is an important point to remember throughout this discussion, as I will be exploring how the experience of pain as positive or negative is crucially affected by the presence of consent. How that consent is expressed and managed will be the subject of chapter 4; the focus of this chapter will be the embodied experience of the pain itself in order to paint a picture of what it is that *senshusei* recruits are consenting to.

What is the experience of pain, and why do we choose to go through it under particular circumstances and not others? What is the relationship between pain and injury, and can either of them be experienced as a positive? In this chapter I interrogate these ideas by looking at the different instances when pain is examined in social theory as well as drawing heavily on my own auto-ethnographic experiences of pain during *senshusei* training. I have drawn attention to the unspeakable nature of pain in the title of this section, as this is a theme returned to again and again throughout the literature on this topic (Morris, 1993; DelVecchio Good, Brodwin, Good, & Kleinman, 1994). Our lack of language for the description of such bodily sensations is the source of much frustration, both in the medical sector as well as in the psychological and social sciences (Scarry, 1987; Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987; Glucklich, 2003), but pain is also universal to the human experience.²⁹ How we respond to it, however, is not. From a physiological perspective, pain is produced in the body through signals sent from external sensory receptors to the central nervous system, where they are interpreted by affective, hormonal, and perceptual processes, all of which are influenced and constructed by cultural and social relations (Good M-J. D. et al, 1994: 2). There are various cultures of pain, and our relationship with it is dependent on how we conceptualise it: factors such as acute/chronic, surface/internal, understood/unknown, purposeful/meaningless, are just some examples of the ways we can interpret our pain as positive or negative, which have very little to do with simply how strong the pain happens to be, and might be heavily influenced by cultural circumstance. The positivity perception can have such significance to an individual that it can even cause wounds to hurt less and heal faster (Beckmann, 2009: 56).

In order to examine these ideas, I will touch upon the various categories where pain is an accepted – whether welcome or unwelcome – feature, such as the practice of medicine, religion, sports, and BDSM, as well as going into detail regarding my own experiences and attempting to map out the different events that occurred within and to my body during fieldwork. In producing this record, and by using Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977), my intention is to demonstrate the experience of the *senshusei* course as a purposefully created sphere of social

²⁹ There are some rare exceptions to this, such as the condition known as congenital insensitivity to pain and anhidrosis (CIPA), which is considered to be a very problematic condition for the very fact that pain is a crucial warning system for the body, the lack of which can make daily life considerably more dangerous.

interactions and expectations surrounding and infiltrating the bodies of those who take part, and to discuss the lived experience of the varieties of pain and its effects. The purpose of this is to describe what the daily experience of *senshusei* training is, in order to provide an understanding of what is being consented to and why. The course was set up in order to train Japanese police officers so a close examination of what the training does to a person on an embodied level is crucial for understanding the individual and social motivations for such a practice. Not simply a by-product of aikidō training, the embodied relation of pain within the *dōjō* forms a key element in the construction of the *senshusei* habitus and, therefore, warrants close examination.

When looking into the current academic research on pain, the most common points of discussion circle around instances where it is unwanted, such as in chronic pain sufferers (Morris, 1993), or torture (Scarry, 1987), and if not then it is ritualised and embedded with cultural and/or religious significance (Glucklich, 2003; Norris, 2009), or as an example of ‘deviance’ and ‘matter out of place’, such as in the practice of BDSM (Beckmann, 2009; Weiss, 2006; Martin, 2011). The *amount* of pain being experienced in these different scenarios is not what sets them experientially apart, instead it is the key factors of time, agency, and emotional conception. How an individual *feels about* their pain seems to change depending on whether they conceive of it as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ and such inherent categorising appears to depend on the social habitus being occupied at the time when the pain occurs. Therefore, an examination of what I will call the ‘pain context’, which is one aspect of the *senshusei* habitus that contributes towards the experience as a whole, will be crucial to this phenomenological exploration.

Pain is often present even in the simplest of physical activities; going for a walk for example, the path may progress uphill, causing an increase in exertion and pain in certain leg muscles as they have to work harder in order to keep going, whilst also dealing with the pain of a blister forming due to ill-fitting shoes. Within this relatively mundane example there is a multitude of different variables that might compose the pain context: how able-bodied is the person? Do they go for walks as a regular part of their routine or is this unusual? Where are they walking to and from? Was it their choice to walk or an issue of coercion or circumstance? Are they alone or in company? Keeping this line of questioning in mind, what would the pain context be for the middle-aged office worker practising aikidō at a Tokyo *dōjō* twice a week? This practice would include the pain from muscles during the warm-up stretches, the pain from practising the *kihon dōsa*³⁰ and trying to get their body into the correct form, pain from impact on the mats when they perform a flip, pain from blocking or initiating a strike, pain from a control method being applied to joints by a training partner, and pain from stiff muscles the day after a particularly strenuous

³⁰ Set movements with Yoshinkan Aikidō that are used to practice correct form.

session. All of these instances are present within the pain context of the regular *ippan* classes. The *senshusei* experience goes further than this, as the training is a lot more intensive; those who participate have to attend three classes (4 hours) of training per day, five days a week, and the sessions are purposefully gruelling. In a similar way to how a member of a local 5-a-side football team trains at a different level to a professional Chelsea player, the respective pain contexts of each footballer or *aikidōka*³¹ would be different.

The pain context of the *senshusei* experience presents an interesting case study for this discussion, as pain is utilised as a method. A key example of this was the practice of *zagaku*, an account of which was given in the opening chapter; holding the *seiza* position for an hour and a half did not increase our aikidō ability or strength or technique, the purpose was to train our minds collectively through our bodies. Using pain to place our *senshusei* selves under extreme stress, whilst leaving it solely under our own individual control to maintain that stress position, opened up a possibility for group bonding and introspective change. This is similar to the practice of *kibadachi* in karate, where practitioners have to hold a standing squat position for an extended period (Bar-On Cohen, 2009), or the practice of *zazen*³² in Zen Buddhist meditation (Hori, 1994). In these examples, pain *is* the context, the purpose of which is to act as method to facilitate the possibility for transformation. Within the *senshusei* routine, our weekly *zagaku* sessions also came to serve another purpose as a point of comparison: nothing else we were made to do in training was as bad as the 90 minutes of *seiza*. The toughest of sessions, endless *suwariwaza*,³³ twenty rounds of bunny-hops, 2 hours of *hajime geiko*³⁴ without stopping – all of these otherwise torturous training programmes were made less excruciating by their comparison to *zagaku*.

There were changes that occurred in both my body and my brain as a result of these experiences; not only did I no longer react to physical pain in the same way, but my body stopped feeling it. I first noticed the extent of this change outside the *dōjō*, when I was at home using a manual screwdriver to take apart a desk; it was incredibly tough and I was not able to unscrew the last few screws, but instead of thinking, ‘I am not strong enough and the longer I try, the weaker I’ll get, so I should just quit’, I continued, relentlessly, to get it done. In the end I succeeded (which actually surprised me), but I also found I had created a large hole on the inside of my finger joint. In my use of the screwdriver, a large blister had formed and been ripped off, and I had felt none of it. It felt exhilarating to realise that my body had toughened up to such an extent. I was not alone in this experience, and a number of *senshusei* graduates shared similar stories of

³¹ Person who practices aikido.

³² A form of meditation practised in Zen Buddhism; there are various ways it is done, but a common example is to be seated in the lotus position for extended periods of time.

³³ Kneeling techniques.

³⁴ Practising every technique on the syllabus eight times each at maximum speed, the entire class having to keep up with the fastest pair.

unexpectedly painless scenarios as a result of the training. Our pain thresholds had been forcibly shifted.

This was one of the reasons why I had struggled to comfort the new *senshusei* recruits once I graduated to *sewanin*, and was helping to teach; I had become fully inculcated into the pain context of the intense training, had experienced its transformational qualities for myself, and had found them positive. I had also been aware of this intensity before joining the course, and had therefore prepared myself mentally. This was where my frustration stemmed from when I had the phone conversation with the new recruit Alid-*senshusei* – I could not quite understand why he was telling me that he did not want to get injured. No-one wants to get injured, nor do they want to injure someone else, but despite the fact that we did not want it to happen, we were training in a martial art, so there was always going to be some risk involved. I felt frustrated by the fact that I could not comfort him, but also because I thought that he should have been prepared for this upon enrolment on the course. The pain context for this environment should not have been a surprise to him.

This was one of the moments when the unspoken nature of the *senshusei* pain context became apparent to me. The constant presence of pain and injury within my own body did not feel like something I should articulate unless it reached a level of seriousness that meant I could no longer train. The *sewanin* would occasionally speak about their own past experiences, but this was mostly for the purpose of offering advice as to how best to relieve pain or speed up recovery for particular ailments. Amongst the police *senshusei* we would sometimes compare bruises or share taping techniques; whilst in the women's changing room the most often exchanged dialogue was, "*tsukareta!*" (I am tired) and, "*hiza itai!*" (my knees hurt), but even these vague complaints were reserved for break times when we were out of earshot of the *sensei*. This was a key aspect of the group dynamic of the *senshusei* experience: all of us were in pain, we were in it together, so it did not need to be discussed. Some people were perhaps in more pain than others, but, due to the impossibility of objectively assessing such sensations (Good M-J. D. et al, 1994: 6), this was impossible to measure, and therefore felt irrelevant. Even though we were bonded together as a group, it was starkly clear that each of our respective bodies was different, meaning that some would have been more and less susceptible to different aspects of the training. For example, Shindo-*senshusei* – who looked like a bodybuilder, was very physically strong and also a high level in judō – because of his athleticism he was able to power through a lot of the physical conditioning without too much trouble, and could also endure the increased intensity of partnering with the stronger *sensei*, but when it came to *zagaku* he struggled immensely due to the fact that his leg muscles were large, which made him heavier and less flexible and made sitting in *seiza* a lot more difficult. The pain context of *senshusei* was that everyone was suffering in some way or another, but none should show it. This situation of purposeful, silent endurance meant that the experience

was active, rather than a passive suffering (Morris, 1993: 54), which allowed for the construction of narratives of strength and power, instead of victimhood. The verbal incommunicability of the pain we were experiencing meant that we relied on the connection of shared experience, which made even the toughest of circumstances easier to endure, and there was a sense of pride that accompanied the quiet stoicism that permeated the *dōjō*.

However, this notion that pain was supposed to be borne in silence was never explicitly communicated. At the very start of *senshusei*, the *sewanin* were responsible for instructing us on the behaviours and rituals we would be expected to participate in and perform whilst at the *dōjō*, and the intensity of the training was often alluded to (Simon-*sewanin* told us that if we were ever pushed to the point where we needed to throw-up, all effort should be made not to soil the training mats, so if we were unable to reach the bin we should catch the vomit into the jacket of our *dōgi*), but our behaviour was very much our own responsibility. The noticeable anomaly in this situation was Matteo-*senshusei*, my Italian training partner; his inclination was to express his pain and discuss the details of his injuries whenever he had the chance. It was during the mornings when the two of us would be sat outside the *dōjō* entrance, waiting for the clock to read 7:30am exactly (the only time we were allowed to enter), listening to him tell me the latest updates about his achilles tendon or knee-joint, that I began to realise that articulating the complaints I had about my physical condition actually made them feel worse. The attitude of silent stoicism that was encouraged amongst *senshusei* was a muffler of sorts, stopping us from dwelling on our pain and discomfort, which then helped everyone keep training through it.

Matteo-*senshusei* was the exception. He had some genuine injury troubles from the very beginning of the course, but the way he performed his discomfort overtly fell very much outside of the usual *senshusei* habitus. His face was a constant window onto the emotional and physical sensations he was having, and instead of trying to hide his injuries, he would express the pain he was feeling through emitting jerky, unbalanced movements with his body whilst training. He was frequently reprimanded by the *sensei* for his 'lack of concentration' (Nakamura-*sensei* would often berate him by saying, "Weak face, weak mind") but, as Matteo-*senshusei* continued to express himself on the mats, the *dōjō* staff eventually seemed to tire of trying to rectify the issue. Despite the fact that he continued to behave in contradiction of the *dōjō* habitus, even after pressure had been applied from all directions, there were no real consequences. He continued to express his pain as overtly as he wanted, those at the *dōjō* continued to disapprove but also got used to that behaviour, and he went on to pass his final test and complete the course. I include this example to demonstrate what enforcement of the *dōjō* normative behaviours looked like – in this instance, it was minimal. The picture I describe of the *senshusei* experience may sound harsh and dictatorial, but the reality was that those who trained there took on the responsibility of upholding the *dōjō* habitus for themselves. Whilst there may have been some scolding and social disapproval, there

were no more severe methods of compulsion used to enforce preferred behaviour. Discussion of our active consent and participation in these behaviours will be explored in chapter four; for now I will go into detail on theoretical perspectives of pain.

Theories of Pain

The medicalisation of pain has a long history in Western thought, and is inextricably linked with common religious concepts and practices. One of the founding assumptions within biomedicine originates in the Cartesian idea of dualism which separates the mind from the body, spirit from matter, the real from the unreal, and places them in oppositional binaries (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987: 8). Japan has not experienced this same conceptual trajectory, but has been heavily influenced by Western methods of biomedicine since the arrival of Jesuit missionaries and Dutch physicians in the 16th and 17th centuries. Before this, their main influence had derived from China, whose evolving traditions of medicine were conceptualised within the complimentary binary model of *yin & yang*, which understands the entire cosmos as requiring a state of balance, such as between light and dark, masculine and feminine, hot and cold, etc. (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). This ideology was borrowed from Taoism and Confucianism, which promoted the importance of morality, social ethics and the maintenance of harmonious relations between individuals as a means of creating a healthy community and state. This healthy state was seen as a metaphor for the healthy body with an emphasis on mutual interdependencies and balance; the health of each organ depending on its relationship to all the other organs (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987: 12). Along with these influences, Japan has remained largely separated from Abrahamic theologies, and instead followed the teachings of Buddhism and Shintoism (neither of which espouse the concept of the separation of body and mind), whilst maintaining a strong, highly ritualised relationship towards its Imperial family (Horii, 2019). Japan has never had a dominant 'religion' in the same way as occurred in places like Europe (Ikegami, 1997), but instead cultivated a strong emphasis on honour and nationalism. This is only a brief snap-shot of what was a very complex history; for now I simply wish to draw attention to a few key points in order to highlight the idea that Japanese medical culture has been influenced by that of the West, but has not followed the same historical trajectory and is therefore distinctive.

Why is it important to examine the sociohistorical context of medicine when talking about pain? When trying to examine the condition of pain within the lived human experience, something that quickly becomes apparent is how much of English language academic discussion is limited to the confines of medicine and, therefore, how it is conceptualised as a problem that needs to be diagnosed and fixed. As David B. Morris describes it, in his book *The Culture of Pain*:

Today our culture has willingly, almost gratefully, handed over to medicine the job of explaining pain. This development, accelerating with the prestige of science over the last several centuries, has brought with it consequences that remain almost completely unanalysed. We are in fact standing at the dawn of an entirely new but not so brave world. Although almost all eras and cultures have employed doctors, never before in human history has the explanation of pain fallen so completely to medicine. (1993: 19)

The idea of pain itself being the issue that requires attention and not simply an indicator for some other problem, has sparked a great deal of medical research, and the instigation of a dedicated journal and association: the International Association for the Study of Pain was founded by a professor of anaesthesiology in 1973 (www.iasp-pain.org). Within this cross-disciplinary research area, 'sufferers' of pain are usually divided into the two categories of acute and chronic, the latter being the group which tends to receive the most attention from those outside of the strictly bio-medicinal field, focussing on the specifics of pain behaviour rather than the embodied feeling of pain (Good M-J. D. et al, 1994; Gatchel & Turk, 1999). The defining feature of these conditions is that the physical sensations are unwanted and seemingly out of the sufferer's control.

In contrast to this, what of the situations when pain is actively being sought, whether to be used as a method or to be experienced for its own sake? Elaine Scarry's work examines the processes of torture, and how the infliction of extreme pain is a form of unmaking, at the mercy of which victims lose conscious sight of their sense of personhood (1987). Such a form of extreme abuse elicits fear; that pain can be experienced at such extreme levels that it takes over everything else and places a person outside of their own existence, even if there is no permanent physical damage left behind. Yet there are other examples of such levels of pain being undertaken willingly, such as in religious and cultural rituals. Examples of such practices exist cross-culturally, such as Christian self-mortification as a means of absolving sin and bringing oneself closer to god; Muslim rites of mourning where the mourners beat and tear at their own flesh as a means of demonstrating their grief; rites of passage such as the Ugandan Gisu tribe's coming of age ritual of male circumcision, where the community gathers to witness the boys' capacity to maintain control over themselves during the painful rite (Heald, 1986); or the Zen Buddhist monk who trains himself by remaining seated and unmoving for hours in incredibly uncomfortable meditation positions (Glücklich, 2003). The pain being experienced is not secondary, but is in fact a defining feature of these practices. Focusing on the Gisu example, Suzette Heald has written about this practice of male circumcision amongst the Ugandan tribe, a ritual that boys must go through in order to be considered men within the community (1986). The purpose of the ritual is to instil within the male subject a capacity to experience *lirima*, described as an inherently manly quality that refers to a form of violent emotion. The circumcision is conducted in public, under

the watchful gaze of his community, the purpose of which is so that they can all watch to make sure he displays no outward signs of the terrible pain he is enduring, as this will be taken as a sign of weakness (Heald, 1986). The boys' ability to endure such awful pain in stoic silence is the social test of attaining the rites and status of manhood. Being subjected to pain, not avoiding it but submitting to it with purpose, is a recurring theme for many different coming-of-age rituals cross-culturally (Morris, 1993). Morris questions why pain is the method of choice in so many cases:

A transformation of consciousness, however, might occur through mechanisms other than pain. Why is pain—rather than, say, music or drugs—the favoured instrument? The answer... concerns the inherent bond between pain and sacrifice. Rites of initiation involve the passage into a state of full participation in a social group that requires a sacrifice of childhood freedoms. They in effect signal a change that we might describe as an acceptance of the more experienced, self-aware, responsible frame of mind that characterises adulthood. Pain is the medium and mark of sacrifice. It takes away our independence. It binds us, however dimly we understand it, to the adult world in which our personal choices will inevitably acknowledge the overriding law of the group. (1993: 181)

Such examples draw attention to an added level of Scarry's notion that pain is a means of unmaking, which is that this can then be utilised as a method for transformation and *re*-making (Beckmann, 2009; Glucklich, 2003; Norris, 2009). The pain experienced in these circumstances is still terrible, and is understood as something to be 'suffered', yet it is not necessarily negative. If pain is universal to the human condition, then what better practice to utilise for an equality of experience.

Another example which brings additional nuance to this discussion is the practice of BDSM, within which it is often the pain itself that is the focus of the experience, but that pain must be framed within a context of the predetermined 'scene' being played out in order to hold meaning (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007; Langdridge, 2007). Coined in 1991 as an umbrella term to include a wide variety of non-mainstream kinks, the acronym is an abbreviated amalgamation of B/D: Bondage and Discipline, D/s: Dominance and submission, and S/M: Sadism and Masochism. But even in this context, 'pain play' is a specific genre of sexual expression, and not a standard element of these interactions (Weiss, 2006). The reasons people seek out pain for gratification may differ widely, but the common factor within this community is a deep and complex understanding of consent. Emphasis is often placed on the surface appearance of the 'dom' (dominant)/'sub' (submissive) relationship with the dom being the person in charge of their subs behaviour (and punishment). In actuality, the power structure is described by practitioners as the opposite, with the dom playing out their prescribed role – strict rules and guidelines having been negotiated and agreed upon in advance of the 'scene' – whilst taking responsibility for their sub's wellbeing by constantly checking their body language and reactions to make sure they are always enjoying the

encounter³⁵ (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007). Sexual arousal alters a person's pain perception, and can even increase thresholds by up to 80% (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007: 45), so the pain experienced in SM scenes is a specific type of pain that is actively created by the participants; these experiences of pain have been described as spiritual and even transcendental by those who regularly engage in such practices (Beckmann, 2009: 99). The intricacies of how consent is emphasised and enforced within the BDSM community will be discussed more in the next chapter.

However, whilst the examples of purposefully initiated pain are all relevant, we do not need to venture out into such extreme territory in order to locate such incidents. An interesting characteristic of the culture of pain is that researchers are drawn to social peripheries that are perceived as perverse, whether this is because a secular understanding finds the occurrence to be excessive and unnecessary, or because our mainstream consciousness sees the act of combining pleasure with pain as 'matter out of place', as with BDSM (Martin, 2011). It is not necessary to look to the exotic for examples of self-induced pain, but it is the scenarios where such sensations have been normalised are almost never spoken of, and even if they are, their positive conceptualisation causes a disconnect from the situations of pain we consider to be negative. It is all pain, but our understanding of what the pain is *for* changes the experience of it.

The most obvious examples of this are sports and dance, but in actuality, most forms of physical training, whether for fitness, flexibility, agility, or technique, will include a certain amount of discomfort. How much pain will often depend on the level of invested intent; a professional athlete is likely to regularly push themselves to their physical limits in a way that someone who plays on a Saturday 5-a-side team will not. Yet there is pain involved in both, whether it is bruises or sprains acquired from a mistimed tackle, or the ache of sore muscles the day after a particularly long run. Whereas such pain still might not be wanted, the emotions associated with such discomfort will often be infused with pride, satisfaction, and the anticipation of being faster or stronger next time. Pain is present in a wide range of capacities across different sports and activities and the amount to which an individual is willing to experience it is often a significant factor in choosing which activities they would like to engage in. The experience of pain is a natural part of the body, and is therefore inextricably linked with the acquisition of 'bodily capital' (Wacquant, 2006).

In the practice of martial arts, this link is arguably even more pronounced, and yet the subject of pain is curiously absent from academic writing. The study of martial arts is a growing theme within the social sciences but throughout existing ethnographies on styles such as boxing in Chicago (Wacquant, 2006), Capoeira in Brazil (Downey, 2005), or Kalarippayattu in South India

³⁵ This power dynamic is as described by those experienced in S/M encounters, and who place enormous emphasis on consent during play. I do not mean to argue that every single private encounter follows this same pattern, but this is how such situations are supposed to play out, and enthusiastic consent is considered a must within the BDSM community.

(Zarrilli, 1998), the subject of the pain experienced during training is almost never present. Loïc Wacquant comes close; in his book *Body & Soul*, he gives incredibly rich ethnographic detail describing the training as he experiences it at the old boxing gym near his university where he becomes a member. His descriptions give an idea of the homely brutality of the place, and he even invites the reader to experience the thrill of sparring as he recounts whole fighting episodes blow-by-blow. Wacquant's writing is filled with emotion, heavy breathing, and sweat that is saturated with embodied masculinity and gives the reader an insight into his physical state during this experience. Yet the closest he ventures towards a description of the pain of punching solid bags or being punched himself is the occasional insertion of "Ouch!" into his accounts (Wacquant, 2006: 75). The embodied experience of pain is not an easy thing to write about; as was noted by Scarry, our language is lacking in the vocabulary necessary for describing such sensations, and therefore limits our ability to share it (1987). Yet there seems to be another layer within martial arts, and that is the complete acceptance of pain as unavoidable, and therefore not worth mentioning. Everybody knows that getting hit in the face by a boxer is painful, everybody knows that landing on your head when trying to learn how to do a handstand is going to hurt, everybody knows that doing two hundred consecutive sit-ups will leave your muscles screaming, but you have to get hit in the face if you want to box, you need to learn how to walk on your hands to perform certain capoeira moves, and you must train through the pain if you want your muscles to get stronger. Because such pain is a standard part of the martial arts training habitus, it often becomes invisible to those who are engaged within it. There might be a certain amount of auto-ethnographic blindness to such discussions of pain within the martial arts research community, as such environments commonly espouse ideas of pain being something that should not be outwardly expressed. Such demonstrations are often considered a sign of weakness, so it is not surprising that academics who train in these environments become acclimated to ignoring pain and therefore do not write about it.

One of the defining characteristics of *senshusei* training was that it brought pain to the forefront, utilising it very much for its own sake. As described previously, the most obvious example of this was the torturous weekly practice of *zagaku* but there was also the infamous thousand *ukemi*³⁶ class, or the 20 minutes of *shomen uchi*³⁷ practice hitting and blocking the arm of your training partner with your own, whilst the *sensei* yell at us to go harder. And throughout all of this, another key factor of being *senshusei* is that we were not supposed to complain or even show that we are in any pain at all. This is a common characteristic present in various *dōjōs*, gyms, fields, and sports halls everywhere, the idea being that you must feel the pain, but you are not allowed to express it. In her auto-ethnographic account of training in a Tasmanian boxing gym, Meredith Nash discusses

³⁶ Breakfalls.

³⁷ Front strike.

this type of behaviour as a form of negotiating masculinities (Nash, 2017), but in my own training experience I noticed other elements of communication happening beneath this enforced silence. The pain that we were all experiencing was still being performed, it was simply being expressed on a subtler level, and with a clear differentiation between, to use Erving Goffman's model, the frontstage and backstage (Goffman, 2021).³⁸

Instead of just two stages, however, during the *senshusei* course the prevailing feeling was that it could be broken down into three: within the *dōjō* there was the frontstage performance given during training, which also carried over into whenever you were in the presence of a *sensei* or any other person who was not a fellow *senshusei*, meaning you had to maintain the façade of strict discipline in the common areas such as the hallway. Then there were certain ways in which we could relax within our breakout areas, which included the changing rooms and the small *dōjō* when it had been walled and curtained off from the main *dōjō* (this was where *senshusei* could spend their breaks); in these backstage areas we could chat, treat our wounds, eat and drink, and change our clothes between sessions. And then, at the end of each day, we all returned to our private 'off-stages' when we went home. For the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to these three spaces as front-stage, back-stage, and no-stage. Our performances of the pain we were all feeling changed significantly depending on which of these spaces we were inhabiting. A clear example of this was the moment at the end of *zagaku*; when the *sensei* exited the *dōjō*, an action which transformed the space from front-stage to back-stage, the bodies which were consumed with pain but had been strictly kept under control, were suddenly allowed to let go, resulting in a collective release of anguish displays. During these situations, I was often unable to differentiate whether a groan had come from myself or from one of the other bodies next to me, our performances all merging into a mass of shared experience. At this moment came a feeling of being united in our mutual understanding of this agony and was, every week, the instance when I felt closest with my *senshusei* comrades. However, within the backstage contexts of the *dōjō*, I still did not perform the pain of my other training ailments – such expressions remained stoically suppressed until I left the *dōjō* and went home to my off-stage. The importance of space and how behaviours changed when moving between different contexts will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

It was this group mentality which helped to break down the barriers between self and other that the notion of pain as un-sharable often creates. Whereas language may prove an inadequate medium, shared experience can create a situation where language becomes unnecessary. If pain

³⁸ This comes from Goffman's dramaturgical theory of human social interaction: that daily life is a series of performances that individuals act out in order to behave appropriately for the situation they are in. The 'frontstage' refers to this act, and the 'backstage' refers to a hidden/private area where an individual can drop the act of their social roles and be entirely themselves.

is common to the human condition, then placing a group of people in extreme pain all together has the potential to be a unifying encounter for the purpose of unmaking and re-making without the need for verbal communication. One way to equalise such an experience is to make it extreme; some *senshusei* might have been fine sitting in *seiza* for 45 minutes, but 90 minutes would put excruciating stress on the body of almost anyone. During the physical conditioning sessions which drove us to the point of collapse, Hayama-*sensei* would make the fittest *senshusei* do a few extra rounds than everyone else, as they needed more in order to push them to their limits in the same way as the rest of the group. Everyone had to be united in our levels of suffering, and some bodies were treated differently than others in order to achieve this.

As well as the different spaces where pain is being experienced, there are also various contexts and circumstances which can make a difference. In my attempt to discuss the intricacies of the embodied nature of pain, I have broken down the suffering of *senshusei* training into four loose categories: self-inflicted pain, pain inflicted by others, pain inflicted upon others, and pain outside of training. In the remainder of this chapter, by separating out these contexts and offering auto-ethnographic examples for each, I aim to highlight the complexity of the pain context that is created within the 11 month training period, instead of sweeping it into the realm of assumption and leaving it unsaid. In Mary Douglas' anthropological study of risk, she pairs it with the concept of blame, showing it to be an important social aspect of the resulting consequences (1994); my experience in the *dōjō* makes an interesting example of this idea. Not all pain was experienced in the same way, even when it was an accepted part of the social engagement so, in order to properly engage with the question of consent to such experiences, they need to first be described.

Self-inflicted Pain

This category refers to the aspects of training where no other body was in physical contact with mine, and the only reason I was experiencing pain or discomfort was due to my own actions. The weekly practice of *zagaku* is an excellent example of this, as there was no one physically holding us and no cord tying our bodies in place, instead it was a trial of mental fortitude where we did our best to remain unmoving whilst the stress of the kneeling position caused increasingly unbearable levels of pain.³⁹ Another example was the infamous *1,000 ukemi* class that every *senshusei* group is put through within the first month of training, in our case three times. It was the standard *kōhō ukemi*; a type of breakfall that involves rolling backwards and using the

³⁹ The question about how much agency I actually have during these situations, and the effects of the power structures within the *dōjō*, will be explored in further detail in later chapters.

momentum created from a forwards kicking motion and the swing of the arms to stand back up again in a quick, smooth manoeuvre, without placing hands on the mat to push with.

2nd session of the day with Hayama-sensei was simply the most horrific physical training I've ever experienced: after spending 15 minutes switching between 50 press ups, straight into 60 crunches, then back to press ups, without a break in between. I have no idea how many reps we got through. Once that was done, we spent approximately 35 minutes doing *kōhō ukemi*. No break.

It's the Saturday class, so all the *senshusei* are crammed together in the main *dōjō*, as there's a regular *ippan* class being held in the small *dōjō* on the other side of the partition. It makes me wonder what we must sound like to them.

Hayama-sensei positions himself at the front of the class, stood directly in front of the mirror which spans the length of the wall, beneath the shrine. He faces us, looking relaxed. His shout is loud and demanding, yet he is calm as he relays instructions to the room full of sweaty faces in front of him. But these are not just verbal instructions he's giving us, he is leading with his own body – he's down on the mats, effortlessly performing the push-ups as if mocking us. Leading by example, he calmly yells out the number of reps, and demands that we all count along with him in our loudest voices. Most of the *senshusei* are struggling against the weight of their own bodies, and many of us use the counting as a means of screaming out the exertion we are feeling from our muscles. My wrist is painful from practising wrist-locks, so holding my bodyweight is a struggle. My arm strength is weak – I can manage the crunches, though I grit my teeth through the burning ache in my abs, but the push-ups are beyond my capabilities. The tension in my body quickly buckles, and I'm doing a movement which looks more like a belly-flop than anything else; it's the only way I can physically get myself off the floor.

Finally, there is no more call for the next rep, and we all collapse into the mats, many landing in the puddles of sweat which have formed beneath our bodies. But before we can catch our breath, we are instructed to get to our feet, and we all stand to attention as quickly as possible. I am positioned towards the back, but the space is not very large and, from what I can see, Hayama-sensei has not even broken a sweat. He also appears to be breathing quite normally as he shouts out the next instruction: "*Kōhō ukemi!*". He begins immediately, and starts counting, which we repeat one beat behind. He performs at a furious pace and from the start I am struggling to keep up.

From the very first *ukemi*, I am in pain. It's my back or, more specifically, my spine; it's bleeding. We have already spent a lot of time during the week practising the different

methods of falling, and the rough material of my *dōgi* has chafed and rubbed the skin away. It has made me wish I weren't so skinny, as it's specifically the points where my vertebrae protrude that have taken the most damage. The *dōgi* I'm wearing has a seam that runs directly up the spine, making the problem even worse; I attempt to shrug my jacket slightly over to one side in a bid to shift the position of the seam away from the raw patches, but it's no use. I'm wearing a sports bra and a vest between my skin and my *dōgi*, but it isn't enough. Rough, rigid *dōgi* seam scours my already bleeding spine with every roll I take on the mats. The pain is burning and sharp, and I anticipate it every time I go down. But I do not stop. The pain might be enough to throw off my form (which was terrible to begin with anyway), but I keep going, swept up in the group momentum. I am conscious of the pain in my back, but I am concentrating on desperately trying to go faster; I can feel myself about to fall behind Hayama-sensei's pace at any moment. The fact that we are facing the mirror means that we are all able to see everyone else, and I am unconsciously scrutinising the room every time I stand back up; has anyone fallen behind yet? Am I the only one struggling to keep up? I absolutely do not want to be the first to drop behind, I have to keep up the pace – surely we won't go on for too much longer, right? 5 minutes go by like this, and some have started to drop from Hayama-sensei's pace. I somehow managed to keep going long enough so that I wasn't the first person to fall behind. My form has disintegrated, and my back is a mess, but somehow I'm not thinking about it. The pain is still very much present, but it's receded into the background somewhere. Now the only thing I'm thinking about is the clock. We've been going for 10 solid minutes now, Hayama-sensei has not slowed from his original pace, the tone and volume of his voice has not changed, and neither has his relaxed facial expression. I keep expecting him to call a halt, but he doesn't. All the time we keep going, I am in disbelief, then another 5, 10 minutes passes just the same and I laugh internally at my own naivety. It's never going to stop.

Josh-sensei and Miyamura-sensei walk between our exhausted bodies, yelling at anyone who tries to rest. At one point, Josh-sensei picks up the *senshusei* next to me by the scruff of his *dōgi* to force him back onto his feet, yelling at him to continue. He has a stereotypical American style of encouragement during hard training "Don't give up!" / "back on your feet, come on, keep going!". He doesn't speak Japanese but would occasionally throw in "*Ganbatte!*"⁴⁰ / "*fighto!*" for the police. Miyamura-sensei is very quiet and understated, but he would occasionally clap his hands and say something quietly like "*Ganbatte*", but mostly

⁴⁰ "Do your best!"

just observing us. During the entire session, the noise of moaning, straining, crying out in exhaustion and pain, kept growing.

Then came my revelation. It must've been around the 20-25minute mark, when I had already gone through the crushing disbelief and then futile acceptance of the fact that we would probably continue this *ukemi* practice forever (or until the end of class), and I had been continuing in a trance-like state for some time. It was during one of the countless moments during my inner-monologue when I repeated the phrase, "I can't go on" inside my head for the hundredth time, when it suddenly occurred to me: I could go on. In fact, I was going on. This realisation hit me like a slap in the face; all my thinking thus far had been focused on the 'can't', without ever stopping to notice the lived reality of my present state. I was doing it; my *ukemi* had become incredibly sloppy, I couldn't keep my feet together, I was slow, and frequently had to use my hands to get back up again, but I had not stopped. My back was painful, and my thighs and abs burned, but they were still functioning in the way I needed them to. I was amazed. I kept going.

It ended up being 35 minutes solid, which took us to the end of class, before Hayama-*sensei* allowed us to stop. He was barely out of breath. I flopped down in a heap, the same as everyone else around me, and I contemplated the fact that I could have gone longer. The fact that I was still going when we were allowed to stop meant that I hadn't seen my end. This thought changed my relationship with my body from that point forward.



Fig. 9: My bloody *dōgi* at the end of the day's training.

The above is an example of a transformative moment that occurred during my *senshusei* experience. During this extended period of pain and exhaustion, endured within a context where those sensations were not considered legitimate reasons to stop the activity, I was able to learn something about my own body that I had not been aware of previously. This realisation of how much I was capable of, and that pain and tiredness could be withstood and even managed to an extent I had not previously considered possible, produced a change in my mental state that stayed with me ever since.

It is doubtful that such a deep alteration would have been possible without the situation pushing me to extremes in such particular ways. This was not a pain being inflicted on me from an external influence, it was my own repetitive bodily movement rolling back onto the mats again and again that caused my bloody back and my aching muscles. There were external figures of authority (the *sensei*) instructing and pressuring us to continue, but all of them had been through the exact same experience in their own training, and the *sensei* in charge of the class was leading by his own example. There was also the comforting yet coercive presence of the other *senshusei*; locked into the group dynamic, none of us could stop because we all continued. Without these factors working simultaneously, I am fully aware that I would not have been able to endure such training for as long as I did, and yet my transformative moment only dawned 40 minutes into the session. It was not simply about the pain, but putting my own body through the endurance of it for an extended period of time, pushed through by the group momentum and encouragement from the *sensei*, all of which were integral elements of the *senshusei* habitus that constructed the pain context, which opened up the possibility for such a transformative experience.

This example presents a picture of how pain can be used productively. In her work on pain utilised in torture, Scarry describes the intense pain inflicted on a prisoners body as a method of unmaking that persons world, the experience being so intense and all-consuming that it obliterates everything else from consciousness (1987). In an examination of pain used in religious rites and practices, Glucklich takes this theory further by exploring the various ways that painful sensations are harnessed in many different religious contexts, and used as a purposeful method of re-making and transformation (2003; Norris, 2009: 25). Taking an analogy from the 16th century Muslim scholar Shah Abdul Latif, he describes, “just as the blacksmith transforms ore into steel, so the mystical guide prepares his disciple by putting him through the fires of pain and suffering in order to transform an ordinary individual into a brilliant receptor of God’s unity.” (Glucklich, 2003: 25-6). The transformative possibilities of physical pain has also been described as a particular element of pain play in the BDSM scene that is purposefully sought by those who engage in such practices (Beckmann, 2009: 106). The key element present in these examples that has the power to shift such extreme experience from negative (as in torture) into something

positive (potential transformation) is the presence of consent and agency – a topic that will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

Pain Inflicted by Others

The areas where I experienced the most pain as a result of sparring with others were in my wrists and elbow, both the result of the aikidō methods of control we were learning, which concentrated around the manipulation of the arms and shoulders. Half of training was spent trying to grasp the techniques by applying them to a partner, the other half was my partner attempting them on me. Constantly being forced into such stress positions day after day took its toll on our joints; sometimes this slowly accumulated into pain, as happened with my wrists, and other times there were accidental over-exertions of force applied, which could result in an injury, as occurred with my elbow. The one occasion when the *Yoshinkan Aikidō* handbook mentioned pain was in a description of one of these techniques, *Yonkajo Osae* (fourth control): “For beginners, the pain of *yonkajo* is severe, but by continual practice of *yonkajo* it is possible to develop strong and flexible wrists.” In other words, the pain was part of the technique, but the more you endured the faster it would make you stronger.

Although the pain I experienced in my wrists and elbow was not as severe as the pain I endured in my knees (which eventually became so bad they required professional treatment and caused me to miss a week of classes), it was often a lot more troubling during training. This was because my knees were under my control, but my arms were constantly being given over to someone else. During sparring practice, everyone takes turns between the role of *shite* (the doer of the technique) and *uke* (the attacker to be foiled) and as *uke*, you are required to allow *shite* to take control of your upper body using the technique being practised. This meant that my painful wrists and elbow were constantly at the mercy of whoever I was training with. The fear that was sometimes present in this situation – which would increase if I was partnered with someone who liked to train hard – amplified my sensitivity to this pain. This sensitivity was a self-defence mechanism, heightening my awareness so that I could tap out quickly, or move my body out of harm’s way with the slightest application of pressure. It was for this reason that the building of trust between training partners was so important, especially as our skills increased and we were expected to go harder.⁴¹ A response I heard frequently to my interview question, “What is the importance of pain during *senshusei* training?” was that it was necessary to understand the pain of a technique if you were going to be applying it to others.

⁴¹ I will go into more detail regarding this building of trust between training partners in the next chapters.

The ability to adapt the application of pressure to a partner's body was a crucial element during training; injuring or getting injured was bad for everyone involved. As our hours of daily practice accumulated, so did the stress injuries in different parts of our bodies. The fact that we were discouraged from communicating or showing pain became tricky when we developed weaknesses in particular places, but for this purpose there was a language of taping that took place. I wore an elbow support for most of training after the joint was strained, and this item acted as a cue for those who partnered with me, letting them know how to take care of my body. I remember my surprise when I forgot to bring this support to training and so had to go without on one occasion and, whilst pairing with one of the police *senshusei*, he immediately noticed its absence and pointed to the elbow in question to enquire whether it was ok before starting the technique. For instances when the sensitive area was not visible beneath the *dōgi*, I was instructed by a *sensei* that I should wear a strip of tape around the corresponding wrist of that arm, as this would act as a signal to any training partner that they should proceed carefully on that side.

Pain Inflicted upon Others

Within the vast catalogue of techniques taught in Yoshinkan Aikidō, there are only two which work against the elbow joint, instead of with it: *hijishime* and *hijiate kokyūnage* ('hiji' meaning 'elbow'). *Hijishime* is a standing lock where you capture *uke*'s outstretched arm and clamp it beneath your arm pit, then pivot in order to apply backwards pressure against the elbow joint. *Hijiate kokyūnage* is a throwing move, where you manipulate *uke* so that their arm is across your body, holding their wrist with one hand, then placing your other arm against the back of *uke*'s elbow you turn that arm against the back of the joint in a corkscrew motion whilst stepping forwards in order to rotate their shoulder and send them flying. These are my two least favourite techniques, both to give and to receive; because sudden pressure is being applied to the back of the elbow when the arm is extended, it feels incredibly nasty and usually made me nervous. If applied too quickly, or if *uke* is not ready to react, these techniques have snapped bones. I was not the only one to feel anxious when practising this technique, and I was in fact taught a way of doing it where the pressure was applied to the upper arm instead of the elbow by one of the *sewanin*, after having a private discussion about how terrified we both were of hurting our *uke*.

During my *senshusei* year I was physically one of the weakest of the group. I was tall, which had a certain advantage (5'7": similar height to most of the Japanese men, and significantly taller than the Japanese women), but my upper body strength was lacking. Also, my permanent training partner Matteo was 6'1", with tough arms from his background in Muay Thai, so nothing I did to him ever seemed to have much effect (even the top instructors sometimes struggled to apply the

arm controls on him). During training I found this incredibly frustrating, but this situation also allowed me a significant amount of freedom in my actions; I could do whatever I wanted and did not need to worry about injuring him. This was only true of certain techniques – the reverse elbow techniques were dangerous for everyone – but it felt a lot more comfortable training with someone who was stronger than I was, than training with someone weaker. Whenever we would switch partners and I would be with one of the women, it made me incredibly nervous when I felt how delicate their bodies were when under my control. I found it difficult to apply much pressure to them at all, the fear of injuring them was so strong. In contrast, I often felt a similar sensation emanating from Shindo-*senshusei* whenever I paired with him; his muscular figure made the extreme difference in our strength levels obvious at a glance, and out of everyone I trained with, he applied the least amount of physical pressure, clearly sensitive to the potential harm he could easily inflict.

Maintaining control and building sensitivity was essential in *senshusei* training, but the changes that were being made to our bodies sometimes made this difficult. With all of the intensive physical conditioning we were being put through, I was getting stronger, but I had no idea how much. Having never trained for anything prior to this experience, my body was unfamiliar in the muscles it was developing and the things it was able to do, on top of which my aikidō technique was improving. There were a number of moments I remember being paired with one of the police *senshusei* and being shocked when they let out a groan or cry in reaction to the technique I had just applied to them. On these occasions, my immediate reaction would be to loosen up or let go completely, as I was flooded with a sense of worry that maybe I did not know my own strength and had inadvertently caused damage.

This self-restraint continued even past my graduation from *senshusei*. Training together with some *senshusei* alumni, who have since become high-level *sensei* and were helping me prepare for my 2nd Dan test, I was constantly being instructed by Joseph-*sensei* to “Go harder!”. At first I started moving faster, but then his next critique went further as he said, “Go harder Amy, we can take it!”. This comment shocked me as I realised that I had been holding back for fear of hurting these men, who were 3rd, 5th, and 6th Dan grade black belts. They were all used to throwing each other at full force, and here I was dancing around them, the fear of harming my training partner so ingrained in my movements that I had been unable to engage the full force of my body to properly train with these high level individuals. I regrouped inside my head, and decided to take Joseph-*sensei* up on his offer.

Pain Outside of Training

The act of showering was a daily trial. Leaving the *dōjō* after training each day, coming home exhausted and wanting to collapse but needing to wash off the sweat and occasional blood meant that I could not escape it. That first moment when the water hit an area of my body where the skin had been grazed off brought a sharp burning sting that made me shrink away. As I convinced myself to go back under the water, the pain from the raw area would lessen, but never fully disappear. There were multiple parts of my body where this problem persisted, such as my spine, knees, elbows, and feet. I always felt my legs not wanting to remain standing as I washed, the muscles completely spent. Once I had dried and treated my various wounds with antiseptic gels and prepared ice-packs for my knees, I would delicately drop myself down onto my bed. I was faced with the daily struggle of finding a position, any position, where I could sit comfortably in order to relax. My knees would hurt when they were fully straightened, but also when they were bent too much, so I would prop a cushion underneath them and put my legs up. The sores on my back would be weeping after the shower, and covered in antiseptic gel. It was too much effort to remain upright without leaning on something, so I would drape a cloth over a cushion before reclining onto it. The contact was always painful, but it tended to subside as long as I did not move or cause friction. Whilst at home I presented a very different picture to the tough, stoical *senshusei* from the *dōjō*.

Suffering through all the physical trials that are expected of *senshusei* whilst at the *dōjō* was incredibly tough, but it was the time outside of this, when the adrenaline had disappeared, when the pain of training really took its toll. All of the niggling hurts that are taken no notice of whilst on the mats, suddenly make themselves known when at the supermarket or watching a movie. I met with Ella-sensei for lunch on a Sunday during the first month of the course and, as we walked to a café she asked me with cheerful concern why I was limping. I responded that I actually had no idea why, but my knee seemed to be giving me problems – even though this particular pain never showed itself during training. In response to my confused expression, she laughed and said, “Oh that’s totally normal – even though you’re fine in training, you’re a complete cripple in your normal life! I was hobbling all over the place.” In an interview with another of my *senshusei senpai*, Samuel, we got into reminiscing and laughing about injury stories; he described one of the worst things he remembered about his time on the course was not the *suwariwaza* performed during training, but waking up every morning to the pain of the scabs which covered both knees cracking as he got out of bed.

The training only allowed two days off per week, which was never enough time to heal. I was always covered in bruises, which I often had to explain and make a joke out of when I went to my teaching job in the evenings. I found myself researching what foods were good for healing and trying to insert them into my diet however I could. During the time I had acquired a black eye, I had to wear sunglasses everywhere in order to cover it up. The outwardly visible marks of training

that instilled a certain pride within the *dōjō*, suddenly felt inappropriate the moment I stepped outside.

During the *senshusei* course there is a colourful spectrum of pain you are expected to endure and embrace. Some of this is for the purpose of toughening up the physical body, such as building muscles or making particular areas of skin impervious to bruising or damage (through subjecting it to repeated bruising and damage), and some is pain for pain's sake as a means of strengthening the mind. Both of these techniques are by no means new or original. Yet, the circumstance of pain being utilised as a teaching method recurs in many different scenarios in Japanese society outside of the martial arts *dōjō*. The practice among Zen Buddhist monks of sitting completely still in painful positions for prolonged periods of meditation in order to train the mind and spirit, is no doubt where the inspiration for *zagaku* came from. An added feature of this religious training is being beaten with a stick during this meditation (Hori, 1994). Such practices are not limited to those seeking religious enlightenment however, and are often utilised in other contexts. *Seishin kyoiku*, which loosely translates as 'spiritual training', is a standard practice used by Japanese companies for teaching their workers. Anyone from bakers (Kondo, 1990) to bankers (Rohlen, 1973) can be sent on a company retreat where they might be required to sit in *seiza* on a gravel floor, join daily *zazen* meditation with trainee monks, or complete a 25 mile endurance walk in the summer heat without water. In such instances, the endurance of pain and discomfort is considered an important learning tool, the logic being that instilling a lesson through the body will have a greater impact and more lasting effect than a solely intellectual form of engagement (Rohlen, 1973).

Within these practices there is a boundary; that between pain and injury. Maintaining uncomfortable seating positions, being hit with a stick (in this instance), or completing a long distance walk, may result in pain and exhaustion, but should not cause injury beyond some bruising, stiff muscles, and blisters. Some would argue that even this level of bodily harm would be unacceptable when in training to work as a bank teller, but the trend in these instances, leans more towards an acceptance of pain as an opportunity to learn. Certain types of pain may be uncomfortable but they are not damaging, and can in fact be a useful means of embodied learning. What the lesson is may be different in different situations, or even for different people, but it can be used as an opportunity if the people in question are willing. This is where the importance of consent is crucial to such modes of learning; if the individual is not actively and purposefully engaging in such trials, then their experience is not a personal one, but is instead something that is being imposed upon them, as a result of which it is natural to expect resistance and negative feedback. Training in martial arts is by no means irrelevant to the work of a police officer, but the

intensity levels of the *senshusei* experience is not a realistic comparative for their daily tasks.⁴² It is only a tiny handful of officers who sign up for the course each year, meaning that *senshusei* is only for those officers who actively seek to do it, so their commitment to the ordeals of the course originate from their own individual will. The importance of consent and how it is communicated will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter four.

Exploring and understanding the particulars of one's own body, was a key element of *senshusei* training. In having to hold the low lunge positions of the *kihon dōsa* for purposefully long periods of time, I learned the difference between muscles that hurt, and muscles that cannot (usually meaning the difference between straining and shifting, or collapsing to the floor). It was also crucial to closely monitor my own body in order to differentiate between regular pain and injury pain. Everyone was dealing with lumps, bumps, swellings, and scrapes, but there was a difference between ailments that could be trained through and injuries that required proper attention and rest. In a similar way to how researchers have tracked the ways that professional dancers are constantly having to differentiate between what is 'niggling pain' and what is serious injury (Tarr, 2018; McEwan & Young, 2011), as there was no one who can feel what was going on inside a person's body other than themselves, we were expected to take responsibility for our own care. Whilst the *sensei* would always push us hard during training, they were also sympathetic and understanding with regards to injury. For example, after Ogasaki-*senshusei* dislocated her shoulder during a bad fall in practice, she continued to train until the end of the course with her arm in a sling. During this time, not only was she exempted from performing *uke*⁴³ (even during her test they had another *senshusei* sub for her), the *sensei* would often provide extra attention in teaching her special methods of making certain techniques work with the use of only one hand. There were other members who attended the *ippan* classes who had particular physical disabilities, and they were always treated respectfully and the various training moves would be adapted to their bodies. Whilst the *sensei* were incredibly strict in teaching us the 'correct' movements for every technique, a sign of a high-level master was adaptability, and they would demonstrate this liberally in such situations.

The most intense pain of my *senshusei* experience was from my knee. This is a common location where everyone endures some trouble, due to the strength required to keep your body low at all times, but mainly from the constant *shikko-ho* ('knee walking') that we had to perform throughout the various techniques. The fact that we would become bruised and bloody around our knees was inevitable, but for many *senshusei* this developed into deeper problems. These could often be broken down into the categories of internal or external; the external pains were derived from

⁴² A description of typical police duties will be described in chapter 5.

⁴³ This role requires the *aikidōka* (person who practices aikido) to perform flips and rolls, which was part of the reason for our intense physical conditioning, but was not possible with her shoulder injury.

surface bleeding and bruises, but internal pains were an indication of more serious damage within the joint. The first time I felt something was seriously wrong internally with my left knee was when I placed it down onto the mat during practice and I was hit with a sensation that I later described as feeling like I had knelt on a shard of broken glass. At the moment it happened I was too shocked by this sudden stab to let out any noise, instead it felt like I had been winded and my teeth reactively clenched shut. Without stopping what I was doing, I continued on and completed the technique as normal. Matteo-*senshusei*, who I was partnered with at the time, noticed something was wrong and asked if I was ok to continue, but I shrugged off his concern and gritted my teeth to keep going. Even though it felt like my kneecap had cracked every time I touched the offending area down onto the mats, I did not stop training. Through trial and error of unabated practice throughout the day, I realised that the pain was not receding, but that it only caused the sharp pain when I knelt on the top area where the kneecap was, so I did my best to adjust my position as much as possible. This happened in mid-September, the sixth month of the course, at which point I was already fully accustomed to training through the pain.

This initial incident occurred on a Wednesday, but I did not get it checked out professionally until the following Tuesday. Not knowing what was wrong, and already being used to the comings and goings of various pains, I simply put on a kneepad and tried to ignore it in the hope that it would go away. It did not. Even after the two days of rest there was no change, so I spoke with Elliot-*sensei* and Nakamura-*sensei* about it and then visited a local clinic they recommended. The x-ray was clear, but I was instructed by the doctor that I was banned from doing *seiza* for a while, plus I should not train for at least a week. Whereas the veto on *seiza* gave me secret relief, the idea that I could not train elicited a surprisingly strong emotional reaction. The constant fear of injury was not focused on the harm done to my body, but that it would mean I could no longer train. Despite the constant brutality of the *senshusei* routine, the thought of not being able to continue felt devastating. I was given painkillers and some local anaesthetic patches to use on my knees, an information leaflet showing stretches I could do to help, and a note for the *dōjō*.

Time is a defining element of the *senshusei* course: you are expected to fully commit yourself to its hardships 5 days a week for 11 months (9 months for the police). That period is gruelling and painful, but it has a predetermined end date, after which we are free to quit aikidō and never return to a *dōjō* again. But 11 months is a long time. When I first started the course, upon asking Samuel-*senpai* what he had found most difficult about it, he responded, “It’s just really long.” I remembered this comment when I was 3 months into the course; battered, bruised, muscled, and familiar with all the routine and necessary Japanese vocabulary, I had already been through so much and felt like a veteran, yet I was not even halfway through the course. It was indeed long, but it was not forever. Contrast this with those who experience chronic pain throughout their life, that they have no choice or control over, and it is easy to see the extent of the phenomenological difference. In

terms of longevity, another comparison could be made to cultural practices that include an extreme incident of bodily pain, such as circumcision in initiation rituals. Such practices will often include a complex preamble of sacred rites and preparation, but the incident itself will only take place on one particular day (Heald, 1986). In contrast, the *senshusei* course is a test of endurance. You may endure extreme pain in one training session, but then you have to return the next day, the next week, the next month, and do it all again.

Although I have provided some examples in order to situate the *senshusei* course within its Japanese social setting, this should not suggest that such training is considered to be the norm. Whilst I was in the midst of this fieldwork, a number of my Japanese friends were horrified as I described to them my usual routine. Even the *ippan* members who trained at the same *dōjō*, under the same *sensei*'s, and became very familiar with each year of *senshusei* recruits, found the training methods extreme and looked on us with a mixture of awe, and downright confusion as to why anyone would put themselves through such an ordeal. In my interviews with the police *senshusei*, which were conducted after we had all graduated, a frequently recurring answer to the question "What was your most hated/ difficult/ painful aspect of the course?" was "*Zagaku*". When I would then ask why they thought we had to perform *zagaku* each week, a few of them shook their heads and replied that there was no point, it was simply meaningless torture! Yet, despite feeling this way, they had remained in position and unmoving, gritting their teeth through the pain every week. To my knowledge, no one questioned the validity of this practice to the instructors, even if they did not agree with the need for such training, everyone endured to the best of their ability. In conversation with Max-*sensei* about *zagaku*, he told me that, even though the pain was horrific and caused him to have thoughts of chopping his own legs off, he always felt a sense of accomplishment and pride when it was over.

Physical pain is present in so many different ways in sports, dance, and martial arts that it is often neglected in academic theory. In this chapter I have instead looked to discussions from medical anthropology (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987), religious rituals (Beckmann, 2009; Glücklich, 2003; Morris, 1993), BDSM (Beckmann, 2009; Weiss, 2006; Martin, 2011), and torture (Scarry, 1987), with a particular emphasis on situations when pain is not just present but actively sought. Scarry's examination of pain in torture techniques as a method of unmaking (1987) is a key starting point for examination of the pain context of the *senshusei* course: during the most intense periods of training, the world outside disappeared from consciousness, forcing us into a state of introspection. Much like in the coming-of-age and BDSM examples, the inescapable nature of this experience created a phenomenological space for an individual to initiate change – the act of unmaking opened up the possibility for remaking (Beckmann, 2009; Glücklich, 2003). In this way, pain is not only an accepted by-product of training but is actively utilised as a method. The essential aspect of such a situation that moves it away from Scarry's description of torture is the

circumstance of agency and consent. The *senshusei* experience is actively sought by police officers and martial artists, both of whom have the option to quit if they are unable or unwilling to continue. The intense training is a choice, one that was made every day as we woke up early and returned to the *dōjō* ready for whatever punishment that day's training might bring. This sense of agency was what enabled us to utilise the pain context of *senshusei* as a method of unmaking and remaking into something stronger and more positive, but also acted as a constant negotiation of our bodies within an environment of performed violence, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3



Fig. 10: Lined up, sitting in *seiza*, eyes closed whilst silently meditating in the five minutes before class begins.

The Dōjō Space: Safe, Clean, Fun

What do people make of places? The question is as old as people and places themselves, as old as human attachments to portions of the earth. As old, perhaps, as the idea of home, of “our territory” as opposed to “their territory,” of entire regions and local landscapes where groups of men and women have invested themselves (their thoughts, their values, their collective sensibilities) and to which they feel they belong. The question is as old as a strong sense of place—and the answer, if there is one, is every bit as complex. (Basso, 1996: Preface)

The word ‘*dōjō*’, which translates as ‘place of the way’, was originally used to describe the training area for Buddhist monks, a place where they would, and still do, sit and meditate; it is a hall or place for immersive learning, most commonly associated with the traditional Japanese arts ending in ‘*do*’ (from the Chinese word ‘*tao*’ meaning ‘way’ or ‘path’) such as *Kendō* (the way of the sword), *Sado* (the way of tea), or, in this case, *Aikidō* (the way of harmony). The word is used in a number of different capacities in Japanese; when an *aikidōka* says ‘the *dōjō*’ they may be referring to the matted training area where practice takes place, or the entire building including the changing rooms, office, entranceway, etc., or they may be discussing the club and its membership (as most groups do not have their own permanent training space, classes will usually be held in a public sports centre, so ‘the *dōjō*’ will refer to the club or group of people who train under a particular *sensei*). In this chapter, I will mostly be discussing Honbu Dōjō where I trained, which does have a permanent site, and that includes an office, meeting room, changing rooms, toilets, and a staff room with a small kitchen, as well as the matted training space which can either be used as one large room or a dividing screen can be put in place to create two smaller training rooms.

As has been described in some detail from my opening chapter’s description of *zagaku*, and the previous chapter on pain, the *dōjō* is a highly ritualised space where high risk and often extremely painful techniques are repetitively practised. In order for this to be done safely, and in a manner which encourages practitioners to return class after class, this potential for danger is balanced with a feeling of care and respect both from the *sensei* and fellow practitioners. In this chapter I will describe how a strong emphasis on the act of cleaning, as well as the ritualised interactions that occur within the *dōjō* create a temporal, spatial, and psychological layering between the danger of the performed violence of the aikidō techniques, and the people who are safely trying to learn them.

Honbu *dōjō* is not only a site for aikidō practice, but can also be highly social and playful depending on the context. In describing these shifts in behaviour I will discuss how drinking and laughing together with those who you train with, helps to cement and strengthen the relationships between practitioners, which can then allow everyone a greater sense of safety and

camaraderie during practice. My intention is not to paint a picture of a utopian dream of unwavering peace and love – there will be those who do not get on well and so avoid each other’s company at large get-togethers, there are also those who become romantically involved after meeting at the *dōjō*, some of whom eventually marry, and some even then divorce. There are smaller cliques that form, and there are plenty of people who come to train but do not attend the social functions at all. Such events do however, often serve to relieve tension and bring people together in a generally positive situation. The *dōjō* parties are an injection of fun and jolly relaxation quite different from the atmosphere that is cultivated during training, where everyone is concentrating hard on the task of embodied learning. Sometimes they are a simple get-together of people chatting, some people drinking, and everyone clearing up and heading home once the food has been consumed, other times they become raucous and unruly, with drunken *sensei* trying out moves on equally inebriated *senshusei* whilst a crowd of onlookers laughs and cheers them on. Such atmospheres usually depend on who is present at the gatherings, and as the group of *senshusei* changes every year, so do the parties. The group I trained together with were not big drinkers, so the parties never became unruly, but the next year’s group were quite the opposite and there was even an occasion where one of them threw up all over the entranceway after drinking too much, which all of their fellow officers had to quickly try and clean up.



Fig. 11: Drinking games at the *dōjō* summer party with *ippan*, *senshusei*, and *sensei*.

A wide variety of different behaviours and interactions are occurring in the same space. Between the intense, serious concentration required during training, the relaxed attitude of break times, and the raucous interactions of the social events, everyone's behaviour shifts drastically between these contexts, and personalities are expressed in very different ways. Yet the main purpose bringing everyone together into this space is the practice of aikidō, many of whom have been returning regularly to train at this *dōjō* for many years. As was written about in detail in the previous chapter, the techniques being taught can be painful and potentially dangerous when not applied with care for one's partner; aikidō is, after all, a martial art with the purpose of dealing with and subduing a violent attacker. Care and attention then, are key factors in creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming environment where anyone can feel comfortable to train. A significant amount of responsibility for this sits with the *sensei*, who must lead by example, make sure to teach everyone how to keep themselves safe when performing the role of *uke*⁴⁴ during training, and make sure to keep a close watch on all their students as the sessions go on. But it is up to all the students as individuals to look after each other as they train together, and the atmosphere that is created within the *dōjō* during lessons is a large part of this.

How do the ritualised behaviours enacted within the *dōjō* create temporal barriers around times for serious training, differentiating them from the more relaxed atmosphere which is enjoyed during break times? What is the purpose of the constant cleaning duties of the *senshusei*, and how do such actions effect the relationship to space? How do the forms and attitudes of training contribute towards making the *dōjō* a safe space for practising potentially violent techniques? These are the main questions I will unpack during this chapter.

Before I arrived in Tokyo to conduct my fieldwork, having only an understanding of Japanese martial arts *dōjōs* from academic books and how they were typically portrayed in popular culture, I must admit to some surprise when I first visited Honbu.⁴⁵ To begin with I had trouble finding it as, much like with many businesses in Japan, it was not situated on the ground floor at street level, but one floor up. Not only that but it sat above a pachinko parlour,⁴⁶ with a gym and a few floors of residential apartments above.

⁴⁴ As was outlined in the introductory chapter, *uke* is the role of receiving a technique, which means being subjected to armlocks and/or being thrown in certain prescribed ways.

⁴⁵ 'Honbu' is how those of us who trained there referred to the Yoshinkan Aikidō Honbu Dōjō, so that is how I will be referring to it in my discussion.

⁴⁶ Pachinko is comparable to slot machines, though as gambling for cash is illegal in Japan, small silver balls are used in the machines which can then be exchanged for prize tokens (that can often be exchanged for cash at a different venue, all of which is to circumvent the legal restrictions). Pachinko Parlours are incredibly loud and colourful, with music blaring over the sound of the rattling machines.



Fig. 12: Honbu Dōjō during the day.



Fig. 13: Honbu Dōjō in the evening.

This was not the romantic, wood panel-lined, 'traditional,' old-Japanese styled location I had unknowingly been imagining. Yet here it was, completely uncaring about the world outside its boundaries. Even when the Western pop music that was being blared out below would seep through the floors as we all sat in silent meditation waiting for class to begin, no one paid it any mind and remained focused on the task at hand; that of practising aikidō.

It feels like a mind trick trying to remember the initial impressions and feelings I had about Honbu back when I first entered through its doors, as I grew so intimately familiar with every mat, every cracked bit of paint and hard-to-reach corner during my time there. Like trying to describe the face of a close family member –knowing it so well, there are so many memories and so much personality tied up in that face that objective description is almost impossible.

The site is made for functionality, for the teaching and learning of aikidō above all else. As I came to understand during my time there, Honbu did not have a large budget with which to manage its daily needs, so most of the decorative aspects were old and worn, though always kept immaculately clean. Upon entering, there is a window to the office directly in front of you, a large bronze bust of the founder, Shioda Gōzō-*sensei*, is on the left, and to the right is a large wooden cabinet for visitors to place their shoes inside, which sits on one side of the corridor that leads to the rest of the building. As is normal in Japan, the entrance is a step lower than the rest of the space, marking where shoes should be removed before stepping up inside. Straight down the corridor is the women's toilets and changing room, before which the hallway turns to the left, passing the men's toilets and changing room, and then leading to the matted training space. Through this passage there are pictures on the wall, including old sepia-coloured photographs of Shioda-*sensei* together with prominent guests such as one of the Kennedy brothers and a famous African-American boxer, as well as a glass cabinet displaying Honbu merchandise including aikidō-themed t-shirts and books. There is also a large noticeboard, where information about class schedules and upcoming *dōjō* social events is put up for everyone to see as they walk past.



Fig. 14: The entrance of Honbu Dōjō.



Fig. 15: The *dōjō* entranceway filled with shoes during a party (so many people came that the usual storage cupboards used for shoes were all filled up).

The training space at the end of the corridor is the main focal point of the entire floor; it is what all the other rooms and facilities are there to support. The *dōjō* can be used as one large room, or divided into two smaller training areas with the use of a movable wall with sections that slide into place when needed. These are referred to as the large and the small *dōjō*. The large *dōjō* is what can be seen from the street, with a floor to ceiling window spanning all across one side. It also has a large mirror the length of the main wall, above which sits the *kamidana*.⁴⁷ The small *dōjō* contains two smaller mirrors, the brooms for cleaning, as well as a row of metal lockers used by the male police *senshusei* during their time on the course (the women use the lockers in the women's changing room, as it is less crowded than the men's). Mostly, the partition was kept open, the main times it was put up was to separate the *senshusei* from the regular training. For example, during the early morning *ippan* class, which began before the police *senshusei* had arrived for the day, the partition was put up and training took place in the large *dōjō*, so that when the police *senshusei* arrived they could get changed and ready in the small *dōjō*. The same was true of the early afternoon classes, as the *senshusei* were on their lunchbreak and would sit or lie on the mats in the small *dōjō* next to the lockers, eating and/or napping to recover some energy to be ready for their afternoon training. For the two sessions of the day when the international and police *senshusei* trained together, the partition was open and the police would be positioned in their pairs in the large *dōjō*, whilst the internationals had our positions in the small *dōjō*, with the *sensei* sauntering between. From the very beginning of the course, we had all been placed into pairs and given a particular position, from which we had to start and finish every session.⁴⁸

As has already been touched upon, the small and large *dōjōs* were often used for other purposes than just aikidō training. During the two hour lunch break period in the middle of the day the police *senshusei* would close the partition between the two *dōjōs*, and draw a curtain around the area where their lockers stood, and in this temporary privacy they would eat their lunch, chat about that day's classes, tend to ongoing wounds, play on their phones, and even take naps. During this time no one needed to be alert to the instructions of a *sensei*, or jump to attention to offer a bow. It was a time of relaxation and recuperation, bodies lounging on the very same mats that they would be throwing each other around on when the next training session began.

As well as break times spent in the small *dōjō* there were also party times spent in the large *dōjō*: at a number of specific times in the year, Honbu would organise and host large celebrations for all of its members to attend. Food would be ordered in, as well as lots of alcohol, and some

⁴⁷ Meaning 'god-shelf', the *kamidana* is a small Shinto shrine that traditionally houses the family/house deity.

⁴⁸ I was unfortunately unable to take photos of this, due to my own participation at the time, and a need to maintain some anonymity for the other trainees.

form of entertainment; for a Christmas party there was a quiz and a game of bingo where everyone had to bring one gift to add to the pile, meaning that there would be at least one gift for everyone who played. At the New Year's event of *Kagami Biraki* there was a heavy wooden trough with a large mallet that was used to smash sticky rice into mochi (the children got to take turns with the mallet), which was then prepared into traditional red bean soup for everyone to eat. There were also official meetings that took place amongst the higher ranking *dōjō* staff, representatives from the Tokyo police force, and members from the Yoshinkan Aikidō board. For these occasions we (*senshusei*) would be instructed on how to set out the folding tables and chairs in the *dōjō* space, how many bottles of water to set out, etc., ready for when they all arrived.

Throughout this chapter I will examine these different contexts in more detail, as well as discussing how behaviours shift drastically between these changing circumstances. Utilising Joy Hendry's theory (1993), I will examine how such behaviours create temporal and psychological layers of 'wrapping' that neutralise the potential for violence during practice. Having previously described the embodied experience of the pain of *senshusei* training, this chapter will explore the space in which such trials take place, and how relationships of trust and care are built within temporal and spatial boundaries of the *dōjō*. This will be a crucial contextual layer before moving onto a discussion of consent and how it is communicated within these specific contexts in the next chapter.

The Constant Bowing and Endless Cleaning

One thing that, as someone freshly arrived in Japan from the UK, takes a significant effort to get used to, is the bowing. While in the *dōjō* – especially as *senshusei* – the act of bowing is performed constantly, and for various reasons, so that you must always be on your guard for the possibility that you could need to stop and bow at any given moment. For example, everyone must bow when they enter the *dōjō* building, once towards the office whilst offering a verbal greeting and once towards the bronze bust statue of Shioda Gōzō-*sensei* that sits in the entrance. This must be done again when you leave. Everyone must also bow every time they enter and exit the *dōjō* training space, regardless of whether there is anyone else present – the bow is towards the *kamidana* and the room itself. At the start of each lesson all the practitioners line up in *seiza* for 5 minutes until the *sensei* arrives, once they enter and seat themselves at the front everyone bows towards the *kamidana* in unison, then the *sensei* spins around (whilst still kneeling) and the students and *sensei* bow to each other, then, if there are multiple instructors present they will bow to one another, after which the lesson is allowed to begin. At the end of a session, this routine is repeated in reverse, but with the students all remaining in a bowed posture whilst the *sensei* stands up and

exits the *dōjō*. During training, which is done in pairs, partners bow to one another before they begin a technique, and bow again when a halt is called. A *sensei* will often call everyone to gather around when they are giving a demonstration of how to best perform a particular move, at the end of which, before returning to their own practice, everyone will bow to the *sensei* in thanks. As *senshusei*, we were also expected to stop and bow any time we encountered a *sensei* or any other *dōjō* member in the corridor of the building. *Shinkoku* was a strictly enforced ritual of our daily routine, consisting of a complex system of bows and prepared phrases that the *senshusei* had to perform twice per day – once in the morning to ask permission for the day’s training, and once in the afternoon to give thanks for the day’s instruction.

Shinkoku

During Shinkoku, senshusei (as a group) ask the instructor to train in the morning and thank the instructor for the training after the final class.

For one week, on a rotational basis, a Senshusei is assigned responsibility to lead the group as Shinkoku Toban and perform Shinkoku.

Shinkoku Times

	Tues - Fri	Sat
Initial	9:45	9:45
Final	13:45	12:45

Shinkoku Toban's Responsibilities

- 1 To perform Shinkoku during the week (ensuring all Senshusei are accounted for)
- 2 To lead all Senshusei into seiza 5 minutes before training.
- 3 Maintain a Senshusei training log (Diary) (listing instructors, techniques, and comments for each class)
- 4 Cleaning the Kamidana.
- 5 Checking cleaning supplies, and requesting for refill to sewanin if needed.

Shinkoku Phrases

Initial Shinkoku (requesting permission for each days training)

Training XXXXX Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko yoroshiku onegaishimasu
 Mitori Geiko XXXXX Senshusei, hon jitsu no mitori geiko yoroshiku onegaishimasu
 Translation XXXXX Senshusei, and (number) others request permission to train today.

Final Shinkoku (thanking for the each day's training)

Training XXXXX Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko arigatougozaimashita.
 Mitori Geiko XXXXX Senshusei, hon jitsu no mitori geiko arigatougozaimashita
 Translation XXXXX Senshusei, and (number) others thank you for today's training.

Test day shinkoku

Initial: XXXXX Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko narabi ni shinsa yoroshiku onegaishimasu
 Final: XXXXX Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko narabi ni shinsa arigatougozaimashita
 Translation: XXXXX Senshusei, and (number) others request permission to train and test today
 Translation: XXXXX Senshusei, and (number) others thank you for today's training and test today

Final (written) exam shinkoku

Initial: XXXXX Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko narabi ni shurio kentei yoroshiku onegaishimasu
 Final: XXXXX Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko narabi ni shurio kentei arigatougozaimashita
 Translation: XXXXX Senshusei, and (number) others request permission to sit the final exam today
 Translation: XXXXX Senshusei, and (number) others thank you for today's final exam

shogun

Opening (beginning of year) and closing (end of year) ceremony shinkoku

Initial: xxxxx Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no ~~keiko~~ narabi ni kaiko shiki
(opening ceremony)/ shurio shiki (closing ceremony) yoroshiku onegaishimasu
Final: xxxxx Senshusei, hoka (number) mei, hon jitsu no keiko narabi ni kaiko shiki
(opening ceremony)/ shurio shiki (closing ceremony) arigatougozaimashita
Translation: xxxxx Senshusei, and (number) others request permission to attend the
opening/closing ceremony
Translation: xxxxx Senshusei, and (number) others thank you for today's opening/ closing
ceremony

Note: xxxxx is the name of the person performing shinkoku
(number) is the number of Senshusei (not including the shinkoku person) participating
If there are more than one Senshusei performing mitori geiko, the regular shinkoku is
followed, except 'keiko' is changed to 'mitori geiko'

Shinkoku Procedure

- 1 Senshusei line up quickly at attention (heels together, hands at side) in shinkoku order in the corridor outside the office in front of the office door.
- 2 The shinkoku person makes sure all Senshusei are present and then knocks on the office door opens the door and takes one step in and says, "Osu, Shinkoku onegaishimasu." (No need to address to a specific person in the office, nice, strong voice to everybody in the room. Make sure you are bowing as you say these things.)
- 3 Then close the door, quickly returns to his/her position at the end of the line.
- 4 When the instructor is ready, the shinkoku person says, in a loud voice "xxxxx xxxxx ni rei", filling in the blank with the instructor's name and correct title.
- 5 All Senshusei bow together. (No "Osu")
- 6 The shinkoku person steps forward, turns and faces the instructor and bows. (Only Shinkoku person bows)
- 7 After the instructor bows, the shinkoku person performs the appropriate shinkoku.
- 8 After the instructor answers, the shinkoku person bows and return back into line.
- 9 The shinkoku person then says, in a loud voice "xxxxx xxxxx ni rei", filling in the blanks with the in the blank with the instructor's name and correct title. All Senshusei bow and say "Osu" staying in the low position of the bow. The Sensei will give a response. After the response return halfway up from the bow then quickly back down saying "Osu".
- 10 Wait in line bowing until the instructor returns to the office and then leave the corridor quickly and quietly (no talking).

Note: If a Senshusei is performing mitori geiko, he/she participates in the shinkoku as usual, but is not included in the count. Immediately after the final bow, the Senshusei promptly says "Hikitsuzuki Shinkoku Onegaishimasu". The other Senshusei quickly leave (making sure not to step between the instructor and the Senshusei performing shinkoku). When the corridor is clear, the Senshusei bows and performs shinkoku as in the above procedure.
Bowling and Osu must be timed in unison.
The senshusei performing and additional shinkoku must be placed on the left side of the line. When Hikitsuzuki Shinkoku is called, the remaining Senshusei run down towards the Sho-dojō.

Fig. 16 & 17: Two pages from the *senshusei* handbook we were given at the start of the course, describing the duties of the *shinkoku tōban*.

But all of these bows are not created equal. They can consist of anything from a quick dip of the head, to a straight backed, hinged at the waist to a precise angle just slightly lower than the *sensei* who you are exchanging bows with, or even a full forehead pressed to the floor from a kneeling position towards your training partner at the end of a session. Non-Japanese practitioners who enrol on the *senshusei* course are given strict instruction on correct bowing form – the spine must remain completely straight whilst bending from the waist, the arms remain clamped to the side of the torso with hands and fingers pointing straight down, the head should not come up but follow the angle downwards with the rest of the upper body – meaning that no excuses are allowed after this point for sloppy form. One of my training partners seemed to struggle with this and would constantly look up whilst bowing, for which he was strongly reprimanded and made to practise the movement over until he could do it correctly. The intensity of your bow would often correlate with the situation you were in; for example, in the photographs below – stills taken from a video of our black belt test – we are tense with anticipation and the need to perform everything, including the bowing, with the utmost precision and intensity in order to demonstrate both our skill and our attitude of full commitment.



Fig. 18: Everyone bowing towards the *Kamidana* at the start of a test.



Fig. 19: Students and *sensei* bow to one another.



Fig. 20: *Sensei* bow to each other.



Fig. 21: Students and *sensei* bow to each other again now that the test has begun.



Fig. 22: Students bow to one another before performing first technique.

The type of bow you performed was context specific and a significant part of the complex social relations within the *dōjō*. For example, as described above, the *senshusei* would be reprimanded and drilled on correct form if their bows were considered sloppy by the *sensei*, but a regular *ippan* *dōjō* member would never receive the same treatment. For them, the action of bowing was simply a part of the social contract, it would be unheard of for them not to do it, but how they performed their bows were entirely left to the individual. This is a good example of the difference in relationship; as *senshusei* we had willingly placed ourselves under the complete authority of the *sensei* (and those of us who were civilians were paying a considerable amount of money for the privilege), whereas the *ippan* members were simply paying the regular monthly fee to come and receive instruction in aikidō, not to be called out on their manners. The *sensei* were respected – and sometimes even revered – by the *ippan* for their skills, but their goals and incentives were different, as was their style of training. The *sensei* were the ones who understood this the most, and they adapted their behaviours and training methods according to the situation, being much more friendly and relaxed towards the *ippan*, then strict and unyielding with the *senshusei*. These switches in attitude were constant and instantaneous – even though we were all inhabiting the same space and all practising aikidō, personalities would shift fluidly to match the appropriate context (of which I will go into more detail later in this chapter).

This is an illustration of the somewhat contradictory status of *senshusei* within the *dōjō*; we were simultaneously afforded considerable respect from the *ippan* members, whilst also expected to serve them and show deference towards them during training and social events. *Senshusei* were responsible for the upkeep of the entire *dōjō*, which included regular cleaning duties (which will be described in detail below), but also the facilitation of *dōjō* events and parties, such as setting up the room, making sure everyone's drinks were kept topped up, entertaining the children who were present, and then clearing everything away at the end of the evening (this was expected

regardless of how much alcohol the *senshusei* consumed themselves). During the course, whenever *senshusei* joined a regular *ippan* class we were expected to act as good training partners, meaning that we were tough, durable bodies that they would not have to worry about breaking whilst performing the various techniques. Concurrent with this servile expectation was a high level of respect from the *ippan* members towards the *senshusei*. Within the *dōjō* we all had one thing in common, which was our aikidō, and in that regard everyone recognised and acknowledged the toughness of the *senshusei* training, and this fact placed us at a different level than those who trained in a more regular way. As the head *sensei* said in his speech during our graduation ceremony, the black belt of a *senshusei* is different than others, and we are considered special within the aikidō community.

This multifaceted relationship was also demonstrated from the *sensei* towards the *senshusei*, although it manifested in different ways. Their strict, tough attitudes towards us were considered a form of 愛の鞭 (*'ai no muchi'* translated as 'whip of love', a Japanese phrase meaning tough love), demonstrated as extra attention and effort in order to teach us correct form and attitude, as well as improving our aikidō technique. Their authoritarianism was directed solely towards the *senshusei* as a part of our training; they created an environment of unrealistically high expectations (for example showing us how to do a technique which they had practised for 20 years and expressing exasperation when we were unable to immediately copy it perfectly), and would not let us alone until we made noticeable progress. Even though their manner was harsh, we would crave their attention during our lessons, hoping for Yamashita-*sensei* to stop and correct something, or for Hiro-*sensei* to physically push our body into correct form; having their full attention felt like a gift. Their attitude was entirely different when teaching the *ippan* classes; they would give demonstrations of techniques and saunter around the room offering tips with a smile and guidance to specific pairs, but there would be no reprimands and no demands to drill a particular movement until it was performed correctly. In this way, even as new recruits, we acquired a closer mentorship relationship with the *sensei* than many *ippan* members who had been training at the *dōjō* for years. A certain aspect of this was due to the intensity of the *senshusei* training; we were at the *dōjō* five days a week, doing three sessions a day, whereas most of the *ippan* would train a few evening classes when they had time. The *senshusei* bows towards the *sensei* were crisp with tension, but they also had to spend a lot more of their time bowing properly towards us in response. Performing *shinkoku* twice a day meant that the ranking *sensei* also had to step out and receive our thanks, offering their own straight bows in return.

The style of teaching employed at the *dōjō* had recognisable routes in Buddhist training, not just for the *senshusei* but for all the regular members as well. Victor Hori has attempted to describe this teaching method after he spent 12 years training as a monk in a Zen monastery in Japan, the phrase he uses is 'Teaching Without Teaching' (1994). The method is simple: an instructor tells

you what to do but gives minimal explanation or hints as to *how* to do it. The purpose of this, as Hori describes it, is that in having to work out how to do a task yourself, you will invariably learn a range of other things in the process from your mistakes and misdirection:

Teaching By Teaching is task-oriented, aiming to get the task done in the most efficient way possible; it trains the person only as much as is required by the task. On the other hand, Teaching Without Teaching is the opposite, or shall we say, complementary. It takes as its ultimate goal the training of the person. It is person-oriented; teaching how to do the task is only a means to the goal of the spiritual training of the person. (1994: 13)

This lack of explanation was common practice amongst the *sensei* of the *dōjō*. Some instruction would be offered, but it would be vague and cryptic, always emphasising balance, and that if our balance was solid, we would be strong and the technique would work. In the *ippan* classes the members would smile and shake their heads, muttering good-naturedly how it looked like magic as they went back to their own training, but as *senshusei* we would be reprimanded for not being able to perform it perfectly after only one demonstration and a simple explanation. A similar pattern of behaviour was described in Hori's account in regards to being suddenly assigned the cooking duties for the entire temple without any instruction, but still being subjected to harsh scolding for getting even the slightest thing wrong (1994: 12). There are a number of underlying purposes of this behaviour pattern: first it is intended to instil a sense of humility, never allowing a student to become overly proud or think themselves above others (this was also true of our relationship towards the *ippan* members), and second, amongst the *senshusei* it created a constant state of alertness during all the time we spent at the *dōjō*. During training we had to remain vigilant to every detail, remembering every small piece of advice offered by a *sensei* and paying close attention to any demonstration given in the hope of picking up some hints. Outside of training was no different, as *senshusei* we were expected to react instantaneously to any instruction and even the presence of a *sensei* in the hallway meant an immediate stop and bow as they walked past. This constant state of alertness meant that our senses were heightened whilst we were in the *dōjō*, and had us paying much more attention to our spatial and social surroundings than normal.

Not only was bowing a social mechanism of respect and embodied communication between people at the *dōjō*, but also towards the space itself. As has been described, we were all expected to bow at the entrance of the building, towards the bust statue of Shioda Gōzō-*sensei*, towards the training area, and towards the *kamidana* as we moved in and out of the *dōjō*. Not only were we expected to give thanks to our teachers but also to the mats where we trained. If the bow were the only action expected of us, then I imagine it could easily have been a simple body movement

incorporated into our *dōjō* habitus that might not have resulted in a significant internal affect, but there was also the cleaning duty that was a daily part of our routine. After every single training session, once we had bowed out the *sensei*, it was standard procedure for everyone to go and pick up one of the brooms that hung at the back of the room and sweep the mats clean. In the *ippan* classes this task was a leisurely and often talkative time, for the *senshusei* classes it was supposed to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible (though, as the *sensei* would no longer be in the room to watch, the speed of our cleaning movements would depend on how exhausted we all were from the class just finished). For the afternoon slow classes, which were usually attended by older members, one of the *sensei* would often immediately return to help them with the clean-up. The *sensei* were highly respected but that did not mean that they were above the act of cleaning, and they maintained the cleanliness of the entire *dōjō* themselves. Most of the year this only consisted of the main office and meeting room, as it was part of the *senshusei* duty to thoroughly clean the rest of the building, but once the *senshusei* had graduated the staff took over all the cleaning duties.

One of the most significant responsibilities for *senshusei* outside of training is cleaning; during their time on the course (9 or 11 months) they are fully responsible for the cleaning of the entire *dōjō* building. Every *senshusei* member is allocated a particular area (for example, I shared the cleaning of the women's toilets, changing room, and shower room on rotation between myself and the two women police officers), and within the daily schedule there are two time slots dedicated to cleaning duties. On my first day, when being given instructions as to which product to use where, the *sensei* told me not to think of it as a chore but as a means of "Scrubbing my soul"; such tasks were supposed to be an opportunity for meditative reflection, as well as a necessary part of the daily upkeep. The entire building had to be kept to a cleanliness standard of a five star hotel (despite the worn out carpet and the occasional cracks in the walls), and we were expected to clean thoroughly whether it needed it or not.

The method of cleaning was also significant, as it enforced a practice of cleaning by hand as much as possible. For example, there was a Hoover, but it was only used on the hallway, meeting rooms, and office, never the *dōjō* or the changing and bathrooms. There was no mop, and we were instead expected to use an assortment of *zōkin* ('cleaning cloths', most of which were old and ragged). When cleaning the floors of the bathroom and changing room I was instructed to use one wet *zōkin* to wipe the floors with the use of cleaning spray, then another dry *zōkin* to wipe away the excess liquid, all of which had to be done on my hands and knees. The *dōjō* mats also had to be wiped down at the end of each day's training; I remember my surprise the first time I saw this, as the method of running forward with backside in the air whilst both hands held a cloth to the floor was something I had only previously seen in Japanese anime.



Fig. 23: A picture from the popular Japanese anime film *Spirited Away* (2001), in this scene the main protagonist has been forced to take a job cleaning a large bathhouse.

Such a method of cleaning demonstrates the emphasis on ‘scrubbing the soul’ as, whilst maintaining the cleanliness standards of the *dōjō* was of course essential, the act of cleaning itself felt like an important aspect of training. Washing floors in this way of running with a cloth pressed to the ground in front of you was not easy – it took those of us who were new to the method many tries and embarrassing faceplants to get the hang of it – and it required considerable arm and core strength to maintain the physical position. Having to use this technique at the end of the day, when everyone is tired from multiple training sessions, is a tough task in itself, and yet everyone diligently picks up a *zōkin* as soon as the final lesson is over, without any fuss. Using the stooped running method was by no means compulsory, it was simply a technique which many people already knew and were familiar with, and the *dōjō* mats were an ideal place for it. To those of us who were not Japanese, and had therefore never attempted such a movement before, it became a matter of pride for us to learn it so as not to be the only ones unable to perform in such a way. Due to the fact that everyone participates so readily in these chores, it would be obvious if anyone were to slack off, and during all my time at Honbu I never witnessed anyone do so, whether from *senshusei* or *ippan*.

Then there was *osoji*: the annual deep clean. For this one day no training would take place but the regular members would all be invited to take part in giving the entire *dōjō* a deep clean, even removing all of the training mats to catch any accumulated dirt beneath, as can be seen in the photo below. Many regular members participate in this duty, they work hard and lots of fun is had as everyone invests their time and energy into caring for the space in which they train. Then, once the task has been completed and everything is back in its proper place, the *dōjō* provides food and drink, which is laid out on folding tables placed across the mats, and everyone enjoys the usual party atmosphere (occasionally spilling onto the freshly-cleaned floor). The year I took part there was a large order of pizzas for everyone to share, which we all did with great enthusiasm.



Fig. 24: Group of *dōjō* members lifting up the training mats in order to deep clean beneath.



Fig. 25: Holes in the walls created from over-zealous training accidents are covered with sheets of paper.

Such cleaning practices, emphasising both the levels of cleanliness but also the act of cleaning as a purpose in itself, can be traced back to both Shinto and Buddhism. *Osoji*, the full house (or in this case *dōjō*) clean that happens annually or semi-annually comes from an old Shinto Great Purification ceremony, even though many people do not associate the practice with its historical significance anymore (Ono, 2011: 91). Cleaning takes a prominent role in Japanese life in general, for example the schools in Japan do not employ cleaners or janitors but instead assign the pupils to regular cleaning duty. This is the same for police officers, as they are expected to clean and maintain the *kōban*⁴⁹ where they are stationed. When discussing the cleaning ritual with some aikidō friends over lunch, they claimed that they would feel uncomfortable if they did not give the training area a wipe down after class.

The act of cleaning itself, to the extent of spending hours scrubbing already clean floors, forms a prominent part of daily life at Zen Buddhist temples (Reader, 1991: 82; Hori, 1994). In both Shinto and Buddhism a strong emphasis is placed on purification, of which the rigorous cleaning is a part, but amongst the Buddhist monks it is also an important aspect of their training, inculcating a deep sense of humility and connection with the spaces they inhabit and the objects they use (Hori, 1994). Such effects were certainly felt by those of us who took part in the *senshusei* course; the act of cleaning the training space as well as the various rooms of the *dōjō* building allowed us to form an intimate relationship with the space itself, giving us a comfort and familiarity with the mats and walls as we endured the tough training. Whilst the bowing between people created and maintained a feeling of mutual respect and acknowledgement, bowing towards and constant cleaning of the *dōjō* built a connection with the space that was intimate and imbued with care. For example, I was responsible for cleaning the *kamidana* before training started each morning, for which I had to get the ladder out and perch at the top with my cleaning materials. The carved wooden structure is both intricate and delicate, and certain parts of it looked worn down and worryingly easy to break. I had a special *zōkin*, kept separate from the others, that I used to clean it, trying to poke the edges into the tiny ridges and gaps of the shrine where the dust had gathered as gently as possible. There were a number of logs attached along its roof that would shift out of position at the slightest touch, so my training partner would have to stand at the back of the room telling me to “Move the second one from the left just a tiny bit to the right” to make it in line with the others. I knew that little shrine intimately from these daily interactions, after which I would spend the entire day bowing to it as I moved through the training routine.

⁴⁹ Japanese police boxes.



Fig. 26: The *kamidana* (Shinto shrine) on the main wall of the *dōjō*.

At the time, I did not know the significance of this structure, I did not know that the white paper boxes represented blessings from important shrines, I had not yet even looked up the meaning of the word '*kamidana*', and yet these simple daily tasks had created a relationship of care and even reverence. When I use the word 'reverence' here I feel the need to contrast it to other examples; there is a reverence one might feel when gazing at a holy relic displayed in a church, or for a non-religious example, when looking at an original Van Gogh painting in an art gallery, but this was different. In those two examples the object may be beautiful and may have a weight of historical significance, but they are far away and out of reach. The sense of reverence I felt towards the *kamidana* at Honbu became very personal; I knew every hard-to-reach corner, I knew where certain parts were coming loose, I knew that the little offering of salt would become hard if left too long without being changed, I knew the delicate detail of how the structure had been made, and I knew all the areas where my *zōkin* could not reach where dust had accumulated for years before I arrived. We were all bowing towards the *kamidana* constantly throughout the day, but we were also bowing to the *dōjō* space itself as well as to one another, which made such bodily compartments feel more casual in a way that was also intimate and familiar.

In a similar way to the bowing, the cleaning tasks also serve as an indication of character to those around you: were you taking your responsibilities seriously or just slacking off? At the point after I had graduated from *senshusei* and had begun managing the new recruits as a *sewanin*, the other *dōjō* staff informed me that they had not been performing their cleaning duties rigorously enough, and so I was told to check their areas every day before they would be allowed to go home. There was even an incident of a new *senshusei* recruit (not one of the police, who are all used to

such duties as they are expected to maintain the cleanliness of the *kōban* where they are stationed, but a man who had travelled from Europe to take part) quitting on the very first day when he was told about the cleaning requirement, expressing his distaste for the very idea of having to do such a menial task. The *sensei* who recounted this story to me expressed their relief that the student did not stay, as they would not have done well and clearly did not understand the purpose of the *senshusei* training.

One of the most important aspects of these bowing and cleaning behavioural examples is the social context of them; everyone does it without a fuss, as if it is only natural, because it is. If these behaviours have to be enforced, then the element of mutual respect and care is dulled. When conducting interviews with the staff and other regular members at the *dōjō*, I often asked them what the ‘purpose’ of these actions were, to which the overwhelming response was simply because that is how it has always been done, so that is how it is! This type of answer was not limited to this example, but has been a common refrain recorded by other social scientists who have attempted research on rituals in Japan (Martinez, 2013). However frustrating I found this answer to be at the time, after some reflection I realised how accurate it was; such behaviours are inherently social and they create and maintain social bonds within a community and towards the space where the community comes together. The act of bowing does not require two people in the same way a handshake does, but a lack of appropriate reciprocation would create a jarring breach within the social group. The very fact that everyone does it means everyone continues to do it.

These behaviours are a perfect example of the Japanese *dōjō* habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; Taylor, 1999). Whilst many of these actions are replicated by *aikidōkas* who live and practise outside of Japan, their meaning is inevitably altered by the fact that they are being performed within a different social context. The examples I have written about – bowing and cleaning – are not limited to the *dōjō*, but are an entrenched part of everyday life in Japanese society, meaning that, even if they are heightened within the *dōjō* setting, the wider social habitus is already familiar and it is therefore a natural progression.

The embedded nature of this social context was made clear to me when I was presenting a paper at a conference about the importance of such behaviour patterns in creating a safe space for violence to be performed and practised. During the questions an academic who was also a martial arts instructor who, based on our conversation, I assumed had also trained in Asia, appeared keen to export these behaviours to be practised at the *dōjō* he had set up in his home country. He asked me what I thought about how to get people who are not Japanese to engage in these respectful behaviours, at which moment I realised I could not imagine it. Introducing such behaviours would mean teaching them from scratch, which would no doubt include having to supply a detailed explanation for every bowing occasion, and punishing those who did not comply. This would have to be done again every time a new member joined, and the behaviours would be

difficult to learn if only being practised for a few hours once or twice a week. All of this would unavoidably result in a change of meaning to those actions, and be completely reliant on the group members deciding to take it seriously; if only some were willing to commit, their enthusiasm would quickly fade if their actions were not being reciprocated by everyone else in the group. The bowing and cleaning that takes place in the Japanese *dōjō* is also taking place in daily life in some form or other; the *dōjō* is simply one iteration of it; to act against such a social norm would take considerable will and be seen as a striking form of deviation.

An example of another type of behaviour which is so ingrained in daily life in Japan that it has structural implications, is the removal of shoes upon entering a space. Any home or building that expects a person to do this has a built-in entryway that is on a different level to the rest of the building; upon walking through the door there will be a small area where you can remove and leave your outdoor shoes before stepping up into the inside of the place you are visiting. All residential homes I visited had this feature, as did Honbu, as did the English Academy where I worked teaching adult classes in the evenings. There is often a locker or shoe rack in the entrance where footwear can be stored, and many homes and businesses provide simple slippers for visitors to use whilst inside. At Honbu there were slippers used by the staff members and visiting VIPs, but the regular members had to go barefoot for training so did not use slippers when they removed their shoes and went to get changed (there were slippers inside the toilets that could be used so that no-one had to walk around that area in bare feet). At the English Academy, on the other hand, there were always enough slippers for everyone who entered. The reason I wanted to highlight this example is to show how certain behaviours, if they are socially embedded, will form their own structures around them to both facilitate and enforce their practice. I compare this to my childhood home where my stepmother was constantly having to remind us to remove our shoes when we came in from outside so as not to get the floors dirty, or how I will always have to ask when visiting a friend's house in the UK, "Would you prefer I take my shoes off?" when coming through the door. Such a question is necessary because not everyone has the same rules. When in Japan, if you enter a place and it has a lower entrance and there is a step up into the rest of the building, that is an automatic signifier that shoes must be removed.

It is useful to think about the bowing and the cleaning behaviours in a similar way; the extent to which these actions are practised within the *dōjō* may seem excessive, but it is by no means unusual in the wider social context. Throughout the Japanese school system, children and teenagers are expected to bow towards their teachers at the start and end of class, and they are assigned regular cleaning duties when they will be responsible for cleaning the various classrooms and areas they use. If they are a member of a sports team they will be required to clean their practice area and equipment, as well as bow to their coaches, and bow to the members of an opposing team at the start and end of a match. Therefore, upon joining Honbu for the first time,

the staff told me that they would give beginners some instruction as to what to do (where to put their shoes, when they will be expected to bow, that they should come to the *dōjō* five minutes before class begins and join the line of other *aikidōkas* to sit in *seiza* for quiet meditation, etc.), but this rarely requires practise or repeated reminders, as such behaviours are already socially familiar.

It is through these constant behaviours that relationships to a place and/or space are actively created and maintained. According to Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, “The space occupied by the body, and the perception and experience of that space, contracts and expands in relationship to a person’s emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural dispositions.” (2003: 2). Considering the danger inherent in martial arts training – especially for *senshusei* – it is important to recognise the incremental yet crucial significance of such behaviours, in making the training experience that occurs inside the *dōjō* a positive one. In the next section I will discuss how the *dōjō* space is formed by those who train and teach within it, into a safe space for this performance of violence to occur in a productive and affirming manner.

The Dōjō as ‘Safe Space’

The continuous practise of these ritualistic behaviours served to create and maintain a certain atmosphere of reverence and respect amongst those who frequented the *dōjō* space. Such an attitude greatly contributed towards the feelings of safety and care which permeated throughout training, transforming this simple, matted room into a safe space for the practice of potentially harmful techniques; a performance of violence. The term ‘safe space’ has become popular in recent years in the English language to the extent that it has arguably become an “overused but undertheorized metaphor” (Barrett, quoted by The Roestone Collective, 2014: 1347). I have been guilty of using this phrase with my university students, informing them that I want our classroom to be a ‘safe space’ for positive discussion, but failing to provide any detail or explanation as to what the term actually means. I intend to avoid making the same mistake in this discussion.

The concept of ‘safe space’ derives from the 1970s women’s and LGBT movement and was originally used to name physical meeting places where likeminded people could meet and share their experiences in a safe environment. In recent years, the term has primarily been used in higher education, and ‘safe space-policies’ have been adopted at many universities in order to prevent discrimination, harassment, hatred and threats. The historical background to the concept is to protect marginalised groups from violations, threat and

hatred and to offer them a safe space. When the concept is transferred into the classrooms of compulsory schooling of children, the meaning partly changes as the framework and aims of cohabitation are different. In short, 'safe space', in this educational setting, is understood mainly in terms of classrooms where students can speak freely, without being afraid of their peers or their teacher. On one hand, safe spaces need to be open enough to include all kinds of perspectives and positions coming from the students. On the other hand, this 'openness' needs to be structured by certain rules to which everyone can agree, in order to make the exchange of ideas safe for both students and teachers. (Flensner & Von Der Lippe, 2019: 276)

I have found this to be a particularly useful and relatively comprehensive definition, which I intend to build from in this discussion. However, it is important to note that the term 'safe space' has not found the same popular usage in Japanese. There is an argument to be made regarding the lack of racial diversity (by comparison with other countries) in Japan, which may be why such terminology has not reached mainstream discourse, although there is a growing movement for the rights and recognition of those within the LGBTQ+ community. But even though the phrase itself is rarely used, there are concrete examples within Japanese society of policies being enacted in order to create safe spaces, the most obvious instance of this being the women only train carriages in the city subway systems. Restricted to certain times (namely, at night, when travelling might be more dangerous), there is a carriage at the end of every train that will be reserved for women so that they can feel safe from the threat of violence from men whilst travelling. When I took a short trip to Kyoto, the hotel I stayed at had a women's floor; such examples are found in a variety of instances in Japanese society. For this reason, I do not think the absence of the specific term in Japanese usage means that it is redundant to discuss the concept within this social context.

The way that 'safe space' is used in a classroom setting is mostly with regards to psychological safety rather than physical. The way in which I will be examining this term within the *dōjō* setting will place more emphasis on physical safety, though psychological effects will also be a factor. With this discussion I hope to contribute a useful example to the arguments around safe spaces and their importance for positive learning (Boost Rom, 1998; Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019; Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015; The Roestone Collective, 2014). By converting the conversation from psychological to physical violence, the need for safety and care becomes more obvious, even though the healing process from a sprained elbow might in fact be much quicker and more straight-forward than the emotional scars delivered by an insensitive comment. Transferring such a discussion to the physical body – the strengths and weaknesses of which are often (though definitely not always) visible even to a stranger, unlike a person's psyche – and examining how such a diverse assortment of physiques are able to train happily and safely together, could offer a useful model when introducing the concept of safe space to new students and teachers in a range of other settings. A key factor of the *dōjō* environment, that sets it apart from some classrooms, is the fact

that those who train there have actively made the decision to do so. Many classroom settings contain young people who have little choice but to attend as dictated by parents and state schooling requirements – this is an important distinction to make as the presence of active consent is a crucial element of the environment I am writing about and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The first step when defining a ‘safe space’ is acknowledging that the need for such a thing signifies the presence of danger (The Roestone Collective, 2014); in the *dōjō* this could be the danger from the outside, of an unwanted attack or sexual assault, or the danger inherent within training itself, of a reckless partner applying too much strength when practising a technique which then causes injury. The danger from the situation which might occur outside in everyday life is exactly what the aikidō training is for: to give the student the tools to be able to defend themselves if such a thing were ever to happen, (which I imagine is often the goal of the academic classroom as well, though the attack would be psychological rather than physical). Such a situation is entirely outside of a *sensei*’s control, and therefore they are unable to protect their students from it. What goes on inside the *dōjō* is where the *sensei* can exert their influence, and marking this distinction is important. The aikidō techniques being taught and learnt are inherently dangerous, both when applied well and when applied badly, depending on the practitioners level of strength. Aikidō is different from a lot of other martial arts in that there are almost no distinctions between practitioners; in judō classes, for example, practitioners are split according to their physical weight and level, but aikidō has everyone of all sizes and levels training together. In the *ippan* classes at Honbu, the instructors would separate the white belted beginners from the brown and black belts (yoshinkan aikidō only has these three colour differentiations to distinguish grades), but this was mostly because we would be learning different techniques. Smaller *dōjōs* that only have one *sensei* will have everyone training together, regardless of level. Brown belt level could often be achieved in a year, at which point you would be training together with fourth and fifth dan level black belts who had been practising their skills for a few decades. Size and physical strength also has very little to do with aikidō ability,⁵⁰ so amongst the group there would be five foot tall women throwing around tall, bulky men, and vice-versa. Age also varied considerably, many of the *dōjō* regulars had full heads of grey hair, and there were even those with disabilities – the very first time I trained in the *ippan* class at Honbu I was partnered with a man who was only able to use one of his hands; he was already a black belt and we adapted the techniques to his needs easily as we trained. For this type of training to take place the *dōjō* has

⁵⁰ Both Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of Aikidō, and Shioda Gōzō, his disciple and the founder of Yoshinkan Aikidō, were infamously small. I was shown Shioda-*sensei*’s *dōgi* (a prized relic still kept at Honbu) whilst I was there, and it looked like one used by a child. The two most senior *sensei*’s at Honbu whilst I was there also had small figures.

to be an inclusive and welcoming space for all different types of bodies and abilities. If it was not, then the resulting membership would be more uniform and lacking in diversity, as is true for male-dominated fighting styles like boxing.⁵¹

Another significant characteristic that is, to my knowledge, unique to the Yoshinkan style of aikido,⁵² is the formalised movements of *uke*; as well as the prescribed steps and movements which must be followed by *shite* to perform a technique, there is also a corresponding set of specific movements that *uke* must perform when receiving each technique. The idea behind this is that as long as *uke* follows these movements correctly they will be able to protect themselves from the possible harm of the technique. I have often heard criticism of aikidō from non-practitioners who may have watched a video of a demonstration, claiming that it looks fake because the people performing the role of *uke* are flipping themselves in the air, with what looks like very little movement from whoever is performing the technique on them. There are some techniques that do physically throw the partner, but often the flip is a means of escape from a wristlock which, if no action were taken, could very easily break an arm. Due to this use of flips, rolls, and various types of breakfalls (*ukemi*) in the techniques, a lot of emphasis is placed on teaching new students the various different ways of falling; this is done slowly and carefully at first, often with the use of an extra, thicker padded mat placed on top of the regular mats for a more cushioned landing, in order to build up confidence in the beginners. There are also different types of *ukemi* that can be used for each technique depending on a practitioners level of comfort; for example, I knew a couple of women who only started learning aikidō in their late 60s, and therefore did not feel able to learn the flipping style of *ukemi*. This posed no problem during training, and they simply used a slow turning roll instead.

One crucial point that is made by The Roestone Collective is that, “a safe space is never completely safe.” (2014: 1346). This is certainly true of the *dōjō*, and generally understood though rarely discussed; when practising such physically demanding techniques, accidents will sometimes occur, resulting in various levels of pain and injury (as described in the previous chapter). However, it is the awareness of this danger that helps to create a more caring and attentive group when training together. The purpose of creating a safe space for practising this performed violence is, therefore, to minimise this risk and teach all *aikidōkas* how to keep each other safe. Such space is therefore “not static, but a constant movement between safe and unsafe, individual and collective”, allowing students to encounter risk on their own terms, literally feeling out their boundaries through somewhat messy negotiations between bodies (The Roestone Collective, 2014: 1355).

⁵¹ While there has been a greater influx of women joining the sport in recent years, from all accounts I have read boxing gyms are still overwhelmingly male.

⁵² Two other popular aikidō styles are Tomiki and Aikikai, neither of which have prescribed movements for *uke*.

In their work on how safe spaces are created for the purpose of experiential learning, Veronika Kisfalvi and David Oliver describe the need for the teacher or instructor to be able to “hold” their students; “they can do so by providing the students with a feeling of boundaries and limits, of being “held together,” and not in danger of chaotic disintegration in an emotionally charged but unmanaged situation” (2015: 723-4). Creating such a feeling, they argue, creates a potential space where students can try out new things and experiment without too much fear; “to be outrageous with minimised risk, to challenge and to attempt to influence their peers, to get feedback from their fellow students and the instructor, to be creative and playful, and to move toward greater self-confidence.” (2015: 724). They also use the word “contained” to describe this safe space making, which requires some consideration spatially and temporally. As teachers/ instructors there is only a limited amount of time to interact with students; these are the instances of learning that will often (though by no means always) take place in some sort of classroom. It is only during the specified class time frame, and within the classroom space, that the teacher has any control and therefore ability to ‘hold’ their students in order for them to experience safe yet playful learning.

When training at Honbu, both the space and the time shifts are marked with almost dramatic distinction. The space is bounded, there is a clear line between inside and outside, and there is also a marked distinction between training time and breaks or social time. The act of bowing to the space upon entering and exiting the *dōjō* is a marking of what that space means and is used for. Before each training session all students are expected to sit in *seiza* in silent meditation for five minutes in order to ready themselves for the concentration levels necessary for a safe and productive practise. There is a similar ritual carried out at the end of class, though instead of the silent meditation, everyone chats whilst they grab a broom to sweep the floors. Even the individual techniques are marked with a bow towards your training partner before you begin the movements. The *sensei* will be present throughout class, strolling around the space watching all the partners training together, stopping to offer specific advice wherever they think it will be helpful. Whilst training as *senshusei*, the *sensei* would be a lot stricter and instead of offering helpful tips we would be berated for making mistakes; and yet this attention was something many of us craved. As an example, during the earlier months of the course, I would often struggle with my training partner as he was significantly taller and heavier than I was, and would also become lazy when he was tired (which was most of the time, as we were all in a perpetual state of exhaustion), which would result in him becoming an incredibly heavy *uke* that I was unable to move. One of the *sewanin*, whose job it was to help train us, would notice when this partner began to slack off, and would reprimand him until he improved. I was grateful for this vigilance, as it allowed me to train productively instead of struggling under a deadweight, even if that vigilant criticism was also often turned on me.

One of the main differences between *senshusei* and regular *ippan* training was that the way we were 'contained' by the *sensei* was closer to the realm of danger and potential harm. The containing itself was more rigidly enforced, as we were not allowed to relax in the way the *ippan* members could: the performance of violence was expected to be closer to the real thing. This is one reason why the training was so strict, as the potential for harm was greater and therefore our concentration levels had to be raised to match. I was told early on by one of the *sewanin*, who had only completed the course himself the year before, that Saturdays were when injuries most commonly occurred, as it was the last day of training for us (the *senshusei* schedule ran from Tuesday – Saturday, with Sunday and Monday off), and being at our most tired was when our concentration would dip. *Senshusei* training was tougher than the *ippan*, but we were still always expected to take care of ourselves and each other, calibrating our strength levels as we swapped between partners.

The complex assortment of bowing and cleaning behaviours that I have described thus far all contribute towards the experience of the *dōjō* as a safe space by creating layers of care and respect amongst all the practitioners towards the space as well as each other. In Joy Hendry's book *Wrapping Culture*, she identifies a range of examples of this emphasis on layers, from kimono, to traditional architecture, and even the structure of the Japanese language itself. Following from her theory, the social actions I have described present an interesting example of how the potential danger of the aikidō training is wrapped in temporal and behavioural layers of care and respect that together serve to hold the practitioners in safety and comfort whilst they train. The bowing, for example, marks the training space as special upon every entry and exit, marks the *sensei's* as figures of authority and skill, marks all fellow *aikidōkas* as worthy of respect, and marks the start and end of training to denote when heightened concentration is required. Continuously throughout training, everyone is bowing to their partner at the start and finish of practising a particular technique; this short, automated action acts as a sort of barrier that helps to maintain control and concentration.

When I first became *senshusei* and had to learn all of these actions and how often they should be performed, I found it incredibly stressful and difficult, but once the movements were inscribed into our bodies to the extent that they became automatic (this process does not take long when training every day), they became something of a comfort. In her work on the concept of risk, Deborah Lupton has described how the postmodern era is characterised by uncertainty and constant flux, the insecurity of which meaning that people are required to deal with risk in their everyday existence (2013). The strict routine of the *senshusei* course eliminated uncertainty – we all knew exactly where we needed to be and what we should be doing at all times, the experience of which felt comfortable. This was another way in which we were 'held' during the course, and the sense of stability helped us to feel confident when pushing ourselves physically and

emotionally during practise. Performing such actions everyday was also a form of place-making, as we were actively engaging our bodies in the ritual of *shinkoku* and keeping the building clean, we were making ourselves a part of the space every day, grounding us emotionally as we pushed ourselves through the challenges of the course.

There are a range of different reasons why training can become stressful; sometimes it is because you have been drilling a specific technique for an hour and cannot make it work no matter how hard you try (often feeling like your diligent practise is only moving you further away from the correct answer), other times you may be paired with a *sensei* who is making their body purposefully heavy in order to highlight your unbalanced form and sloppy technique. But each time you finish and move back into position to perform a bow and stand to attention, the physical familiarity of the movements allows for a moment of breathing and calm. Feelings of frustration and stress often lead to tension in a practitioners body, which has a negative effect on technique as aikidō is all about relaxation. The moment you attempt to use brute strength to force a technique it means you are doing it wrong (which does not stop people from trying, whether accidentally or on purpose), and this can also lead to the possibility of injury for your training partner. The constant micro-breaks created by the bowing that occurs throughout training creates a layer of buffering that enables practitioners to step away from their frustrated failure to reset themselves and try again. I do not mean to claim that the insertion of quick bows eliminates negative feeling and, therefore, all possible danger, but it is one small practice that, without forethought on the part of the individual, helps to bring them out of their own head in order to take a breath.

The constant cleaning acts as another such layer, as it performs the double function of creating a more intimate relationship with the space itself, allowing each person to become familiar with the soft mats, and also as a more relaxed social interaction with everyone who has just been training together. Often amongst the *ippan* members, as soon as the brooms have been put away they would return to the pairing they were in during the lesson and continue what they had just been practising, only with more animated discussion than they might normally engage in during the official training time. Others may just chat about how they were preparing to take their next test, or why a particular regular did not show up for class that evening. Such cleaning practices are a commitment to the care and maintenance of the space, but it is also a communal action which is mostly done together in a group. Such sociality transforms the otherwise boring physical chores into a time for everyone to interact together in a more relaxed atmosphere, outside of the temporal boundary of the lesson time, but still on the mats and with that day's training still fresh in the mind. The intensity of the lessons is sustainable due to their short duration and the immediate shift in mood that takes place outside of them. The friendly, jovial interactions that are the norm outside of class act as another layer of care that wraps around the dangers of training,

building friendships amongst the members so that they are personally invested in the positive practise and development of skills of one another as well as themselves. The intensity of such shifts in behaviour and attitude that occur within the *dōjō*, and how this allows for the intense concentration of training as well as jovial relationship-building between practitioners, will be discussed in the next section.

Scene-Switching

The social context of these behaviours is important as the same people can be gathered together in the same space and yet behave entirely differently depending on that context. So far I have mostly described the *dōjō* during times of training and cleaning duty, but it can also be engaged with in a relaxed, casual manner, for example when the *senshusei* sit sprawled on the mats during their break, eating lunch, checking phones, tending to injuries, and even napping; or when there is a social event hosted at the *dōjō* and everyone is chatting, joking, eating, drinking, and on some occasions getting raucously drunk.



Fig. 27: *Senshusei* relaxing in a curtained off section of the *dōjō* during their lunchbreak.



Fig. 28: Yoshinkan Aikidō members, staff, and *senshusei* eating and drinking together in the *dōjō* for the New Year's party *Kagami Biraki*; the mallet for pounding the rice into mochi can be seen being wielded in front of a group of eager onlookers.



Fig. 29: Dressed in traditional *yukata* for the summer *dōjō* party.

The space itself is quite plain. Though there are pictures and framed calligraphy on the walls, there are also holes from over-zealous training that have been papered over, and, even though it is kept incredibly clean, it has not been repainted in what looks like years. In this way it is a lot like its namesake; the term *dōjō*, literally meaning ‘place of the way’, was initially used to describe the formal training spaces for Buddhist monks, and the way the space is arranged is not much different. Hori has compared the plain, unassuming architecture of the traditional Buddhist temple to the more striking buildings favoured by Western Catholicism, and how the two different styles speak volumes about the purpose of the space:

The Zen monastery is person-focused, the daily schedule and the methods of training all designed to focus great pressure on the individual person and bring him quickly to a moment of awakening. By contrast, the Catholic monastery is place-focused, the emphasis being to create a total time and place environment that perpetually reminds the monk of his vocation to God. (Hori, 1994: 35)

The *dōjō* takes on the characteristics of what is being performed within it; during training sessions it is heavily ritualised and the mats are treated as sacred ground, cleaned by hand multiple times a day (whilst also regularly being covered in sweat and even blood), during breaks it is a comfortable place to sit or lay down for a recuperative nap, and during parties it is a sociable place to tease one’s seniors and consume dangerous amounts of alcohol and party food. In this way, it is as Hori describes, ‘person-focused’, as it easily allows for the context to be dictated by the people within it.

When I had just begun my time as *senshusei* I was shocked at the extreme shift in behaviour that took place across these different contexts, and found it hard to keep up. I was so focused on learning all of the strict etiquette that I was expected to perform during training that I found it incredibly difficult to suddenly let all of that tension go without much explanation or warning. My first experience of this was the *senshusei* welcome party that took place roughly one month into the course; the attendees were made up of *dōjō* staff and various police officials plus the chairman of Yoshinkan Aikidō, and at this event all of the *senshusei* were expected to perform a skit as part of the entertainment. I had heard of this practice as a standard right-of-passage used in many different situations in Japan, and I was very nervous. I had never thought I would find a practical use for the juggling skills I had spent hours honing when I was a bored undergraduate, but I gave thanks to this period of my youth and asked a Japanese friend to help me write a short (hopefully witty) speech of introduction for my performance. What I was not prepared for, however, was the

extent to which the police *senshusei* had committed to their performances. They had split into three groups: first up were a group of three who did a comedy sketch; second, the two women had dressed up (complete with long wigs) as Sailor Moon and Sailor Mercury⁵³ and proceeded to use aikidō moves to defeat two of the others who were dressed as villains; the last group of three was made up of one man dressed in full drag (he had a blonde wig, short skirt, had gotten the women to do his make-up, and he even showed off to me that he had shaved his legs for the occasion), whilst the others were in black trousers and white shirts, the latter of which they stripped off at the finale of their performance to reveal something written across their bare backs whilst the man in drag danced and sang around them. I was witness to all of them getting ready in the small *dōjō* that had been cordoned off to create a backstage area, during which time I nearly collapsed with laughter. When my turn came I ended up forgetting some of the lines from my prepared speech because I was so distracted.

Earlier that same day we had all been fully engaged in our training, performing rigidly straight-backed bows to the *sensei* during morning and afternoon *shinkoku*, yelling out “*OSU!*” at the top of our lungs when given instruction and throwing each other around the mats with as much enthusiasm as our tired bodies could muster. We had then followed strict instructions as to how to set up the *dōjō* ready for the party that evening, making sure the tables were positioned correctly, checking the supplies of food and alcohol, and making sure the Chairman’s special glass was placed at his setting. As the guests arrived we greeted them in the entrance, put their shoes away and gave them slippers, offering bows in every direction as we guided them down the short hallway to where the party would take place. The way all of the *senshusei* would fall over each other to be as helpful as possible made it seem oddly competitive, with one person taking a guest’s shoes, another opening the cupboard door for them to be put away, a third handing over some slippers, and a fourth putting the slippers into position in front of the guest’s feet. Once everyone was seated and we had made sure to pour them drinks and make them feel welcome, the *senshusei* left to get ready for our skits. Once these were over we all changed back into our *dōgis* and came back to the party to join the drinking and merriment, whilst also keeping an eye to make sure everyone’s glasses were kept filled, and the empty food containers and bottles were taken away. The cohort that I trained together with were not big drinkers, so the parties did not run late, but the year after (when I had moved up to *sewanin*) would drink until they dropped – quite literally, as I remember one of them passed out on the mats slouched against the wall as the party continued around him. For someone who is not used to it, these drastic shifts in behaviour feel shocking, and it took me a considerable amount of conscious effort and practise to be able to pull it off myself.

⁵³ Two main characters from the popular anime *Sailor Moon*.

Erving Goffman's social theory describes human behaviours as being structured around a front-stage (or region), a back-stage, and an outside where individual performances of self shift appropriately (2021). According to Goffman, "[a]ll the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify." (2021: 78). This metaphor is helpful for this discussion as the *dōjō* space can be examined as a form of stage, but with the emphasis being on its role as a location for various theatrics to be performed, rather than a context that remains static. Depending on the time, the people present, and the purpose of the gathering, the *dōjō* mats can collect puddles of sweat and sometimes blood from the *senshusei* training, they can be a soft place for a breaktime nap, a site of slow, excruciating pain (i.e. *Zagaku*), a cushioned area for children to roll around, a site for serious official business discussions, or a place for food, drink, and drunken revelry. Even if the same people are present in these situations, there is a stark shift in behaviour and general attitude that takes place once the context has changed, a shift that was noticeably more difficult to affect for those of us who were not Japanese. In all of these changing contexts the *dōjō* stage is set up for different genres (politics, sports, romcoms, etc.), and the same actors may perform different roles according to the play that is occurring at any one time.

The term 'codeswitching' has been used widely in the anthropology of language, as well as other disciplines, to describe the ways people shift between languages and/or dialects in the middle of speaking in order to demonstrate a change in attitude or express a certain idea or feeling that might be culturally specific (Bullock & Toribio, 2009; Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Kathryn A. Woolard provides this definition: "Codeswitching can be defined as an individual's use of two or more language varieties in the same speech event or exchange... Codeswitching can occur between forms recognised as distinct languages, or between dialects, registers, "levels" such as politeness in Javanese, or styles of a single language." (2004: 73-4). As described in the introductory chapter, I was not able to develop my Japanese language skills to a high level during my fieldwork, so I will not be commenting on the shifts in language that occurred in these changing *dōjō* contexts, instead I will be focussing my discussion on the behaviours of the members I interacted with. For the slightly different circumstance that I am describing here, and that it is focused on personality, attitude, and behaviour instead of being limited to language, I have created the term 'scene-switching' to denote the stark shifts in social performance that take place within the *dōjō*. The actors remain the same, as does the setting, yet they seem to play different character roles as soon as the scene or context changes. This is by no means unique to the *dōjō* setting; the long, intense working hours followed by outrageous and equally intense drinking parties is a well-known routine of the Japanese salarymen. Something that does set the *dōjō* apart is that, in the instance of Honbu – a permanent site solely for the use of its membership – the various different social contexts all take place within the same space. For other aikidō clubs who practise in a shared *dōjō* space in a public sports centre, this space will only be for training,

and the more relaxed socialising will take place at a local *izakaya* or restaurant. The same goes for office workers, any after-hours revelry will usually happen away from the office at a separate location. The members and staff at Honbu would often organise get-togethers at local restaurants, or go out for post-training drinks at an *izakaya* down the street, but the official *dōjō* events would be hosted in the building itself, and on the training mats.

Annual events that were held at the *dōjō* outside of regular training included official ceremonies to mark the beginning and the graduation of the *senshusei*, smaller social gatherings for *senshusei* and their supervising police officials (such as the welcome party described above), official meetings of the board of Yoshinkan Aikidō, and various larger parties for all the membership throughout the year, such as Christmas, New Year, and spring. These events all serve different purposes, and the mood is different accordingly, but all will be undertaken to the fullest. As an example of what I mean by this, I will describe my *senshusei* graduation ceremony. The police course is nine months long by comparison to the international *senshusei's* eleven months, so our graduations happen at different times, and the year I joined there were only two other internationals who completed the course together with me. By this time we had been training at Honbu for what felt like a lifetime, been through so much together and built a significant relationship with the *dōjō* staff and the building itself. Yet, despite the occasion being one to celebrate us, we were still expected to set up the room for the occasion; this involved cleaning, bringing out folding chairs and the podium which was kept stored away, unfurling the two *dōjō* flags (one the Japanese national flag, the other the flag of Yoshinkan Aikidō) and fixing them to the mirror in the large *dōjō*. The official ceremony was set to start at 11am, so we began preparing from 10am. Hosono-*sensei*, Jamie-*sewanin*, and Matt-*sewanin* helped and gave us meticulous direction as to how the room should be laid out. The flags had to be perfectly straight and no chair even a centimetre out of line with the rest. We were all wearing our black suits – *senshusei* and *sensei's* both – as this was the standard uniform for any official ceremonies (I had purchased mine in a hurry at the start of the course when I was informed the wearing of it would be mandatory for the opening ceremony, and by now it fit my body slightly differently in various places where I had lost weight and gained muscle). Once we had the room set up to Hosono-*sensei's* liking, he then proceeded to run through with us how the ceremony would progress, making us practise when and how to respond when our names were called, when to stand up to collect our certificates, how to hold them, what to do with them once we sat back down and, of course, when to bow. Such ceremonies must be performed flawlessly, but there is a complex routine of actions to be gone through, meaning rehearsal is necessary.

The large *dōjō* was set up with the podium beneath the *kamidana* in front of the mirror (so that the flags would frame the main speaker), three chairs next to each other directly in front of the podium, where the graduating *senshusei* would sit, and a line of chairs perpendicular to this along

the large window where all of the *dōjō* staff would watch. It was a testament to the occasion that, not only was everyone in suits instead of the usual *dōgis*, but we were all sitting in chairs instead of on the floor. We three *senshusei* and the majority of the *dōjō* staff members seated ourselves first, with Hosono-*sensei* stood in the corner to give directions as we progressed through the performance. Tamura-*dōjōcho* was the last to enter, and after the usual bows he went and stood at the podium. He had his prepared speech written down on a piece of paper, which he read from whilst he spoke – I was very grateful that he did so in English. As he began, he projected his voice and took on a serious demeanour, as if speaking to a much larger room with many people present, instead of just the handful sat directly in front of him. The speech was short, mostly focussed on telling us that we should feel proud of ourselves for having come this far, that not many people complete the course, and that a *senshusei* black belt is not like others, but is in fact special, and we are special for having achieved it. From his position to the side of the podium, Hosono-*sensei* called out our names one by one, and we each approached the podium to receive our certificates, which were presented and received with two hands and another bow before returning to our seats.

Laced through the strong emotions I was feeling at finally reaching this goal, I kept wondering: Who this performance was for? Why project your voice in a small room with only a handful of people? Why practise such a strict sequence of bows and responses for a five-minute ceremony where everyone present also witnessed the rehearsals beforehand? There is an obvious answer to these questions: it was for us. There are no other onlookers; no one is permitted to invite family and friends to attend, so there is no one else. Yes we had been the ones to set up the room, and yes we had had to rehearse our parts beforehand, but this was all in order to give the occasion some pomp, to make sure this short ceremony was immersed with the solemnity and grandeur deserving of those who have gone through the *senshusei* course and endured it to the end. There was already a familiar sense of anti-climax that comes when a large undertaking is finally finished (much like the end of exams or graduating from university; I expect I shall feel something similar when I finally manage to hand in this thesis). The details of this ceremony are an attempt to demonstrate the importance of what we have just accomplished, and all the *dōjō* staff are fully committed to doing so, which means they must act the part.



Fig. 30: Once the ceremony was over we repositioned the chairs in order to take some group graduation pictures. A few were taken with serious expressions, but *dōjōcho* instructed us all to smile for a few as well. I now have a version of this photo hung on my wall at home.

The strong commitment to these roles, and how they can switch instantly between contexts, allows for a multiplicity of intersecting hierarchies and identities to not only exist but be manifested continuously by each person in every group. Age, gender, experience, job title, are just a few examples of characteristics which can define a person's position in a social hierarchy, but which one is important in a particular context is rarely static. The police for example, whilst they are training at the *dōjō* they are *senshusei*, which means they do exactly as they are told, as fast as possible, by any of the *sensei*. Yet, when they are on duty at their *kōban*, they would have authority over those same *sensei*, due to the fact that the latter are civilians.

The question of gender during training was something that I found particularly interesting during my time at Honbu. Before arriving in Japan I had trained for one year at an aikidō club in London, and therefore could not help but make comparisons. The vast majority of those I trained with in both locations were men, but the difference with how they reacted to me as a woman was noticeable. At the London *dōjō* I was never allowed to forget that I was female; some men would go too light on me, assuming I was delicate, others would go too strong to make sure I knew who

was dominant. There was one regular member who would repeatedly inform me that he sparred with me in a particular way “Because you’re a woman”, and yet another whose romantic advances I had to firmly decline. As well as these examples there were many people there who I enjoyed training with and made me feel comfortable and welcome, yet the gendering was always taken for granted. Alex Channon and Christopher R. Matthews have compiled a range of articles from women and men who train in martial arts and are constantly contending with gendered expectations and identities when in these spaces, in their edited volume *Global Perspectives on Women in Combat Sports: Women Warriors Around The World* (2016). Reading these essays I felt much in common with the frustrations expressed by the women, like how they wanted to be taken seriously but were constantly contending with men who either felt uncomfortable hitting a woman, or who felt the need to prove their own masculine dominance through force. In all the various situations described, the simple fact of being a woman was an unignorable factor and always had an effect on the environment and behaviours of those within it.

My experience at Honbu dōjō felt different. There was an impression of being ungendered whenever I put on my *dōgi* and knelt down ready to begin class, as if the performance of my gender was no longer relevant within the context of training. The impression instead was that of being treated as a body, those I trained with reacting to its various strengths and weaknesses without regards to the sex organs within it. Being Caucasian may have contributed to this, as it placed me outside of the gender expectations usually faced by Japanese women, but in my interviews and conversations with the other women at the *dōjō*, they did not seem to feel themselves differentiated from the men in the way I had felt in London. Though I was never able to gain a significant amount of upper-body strength, at 5’7” I was physically on par with many of the Japanese men, which made sparring feel more equal and productive. The *dōgi* that is worn for training is not only unisex but also boxy and square, mostly hiding the characteristics of the body beneath it. Once changed into our training gear, everyone is an *aikidōka* first and foremost. The scene-switching that I have been describing is reinforced by the layers of actions that occur at the start and finish of training (kneeling in *seiza* for five minutes, bowing upon entry to the *dōjō*, bowing to the *sensei*, etc.), to emphasise the commitment everyone is expected to demonstrate during practice. At such times, other identities are shed and their aikidō status comes to the fore, which is usually dictated by experience: the instructors will be given authority in order of their rank within the *dōjō*, and the students will defer to the embodied knowledge of those with the greatest skill. Mostly this will be calibrated in accordance with grade levels – as a second degree black belt (2nd *dan*), I would take on the role of *kōhai* if I was paired with a 3rd *dan*, and they would be the *senpai*.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The *senpai-kōhai* relationship is embedded in Japanese society and is supposed to foster a particular type of peer-to-peer support: the ‘*senpai*’ would be someone who has more experience but not necessarily in a

Gender disparity is apparent in the leadership within the Yoshinkan Aikidō organisation, however, with very few *dōjōs* being run by women. When I asked one of the *dōjōchos* I interviewed as to why he thought this might be the case, he posited that it might be to do with the fact that the women often pause their training if/when they have children (as his own wife had done). He then went on to point out, however, that the one woman who was currently the head of a very well respected *dōjō* did have children of her own, so this could not be the case for her, and he shook his head to motion that he did not know what other reasons there might be. I asked this same question to a group of women, many of whom had been practising aikidō for over ten years, and they responded that, whilst the women are not necessarily blocked from positions of power, they are not supported to reach for them either.

The status of *senshusei* disrupted the usual *dōjō* hierarchy slightly, in that even when we had not yet reached black belt level, all of the regular members understood the type of training we did and therefore felt inclined to go tougher on us if we trained in the *ippan* classes, despite our lower rank. The title of '*senshusei*' was a specific identity marker amongst those at Honbu, and it was even used as a suffix to our names – I was referred to as '*Amy-senshusei*' by everyone at the *dōjō* whilst I was on the course. The importance of being *senshusei* was so strong that it trumped all our other identities; once I stepped inside the building I was *senshusei* before I was anything else. Such an intense level of commitment – not only being acted out by me but everyone else around me – felt like a process of ungendering. Once changed into my *dōgi* and on the mats ready for training, we were all treated according to this specific identity, and we were all held to the same standard. We had to perform our respect to one another without favouritism, we had to train at maximum intensity regardless of who we were partnered with, whilst also having to take care of each other and maintain our concentration in order to keep everyone safe.

For myself, such an atmosphere felt incredibly freeing. There was something unusual about being allowed to take everything so seriously, amongst others who took you seriously in response, to invest in yourself and your surroundings so completely, but then still have the capacity to snap out of it and have silly fun as soon as the lesson was over. I found the experience of being able to put my gender performance to one side during training liberating.

Inside the boundaries of Honbu *Dōjō*, such shifts happen continuously in the examples I have already described. The strict, unyielding *sensei* from lessons will transform into a jovial merry-maker, eager to join in with the party games during the *dōjō* socials; the hesitant white-belt from the beginners class will become chatty and animated when folding up their *dōgi* in the changing

position of structured authority over the '*kōhai*', an easy example would be school students – seniors would be the *senpai* to the freshmen's *kōhai*. Within this dynamic, *senpai* are supposed to offer guidance and support, in return for which *kōhai* might offer to assist them in menial tasks and show them respect as elders. This relationship can be abused, but when it works well it can prove beneficial to all, and those who start as *kōhai* will inevitably become *senpai* themselves as they grow/gain more experience.

room; the stoic *senshusei* who silently struggles to keep up with the group during training, confidently performs a hilarious comedy skit in front of his superior officers. These sudden and absolute scene-switches are possible because everyone is committed to whatever context they are in, and it is this dedication that recreates the *dōjō* as a safe space for practise every time a new lesson begins.

All of the behaviours I have described in this chapter are demonstrations of commitment and care, both to the physical space and to the people of the *dōjō*. The bowing and cleaning are methods of enacting respect, not overtly but inherently, as part of a mundane understanding that you belong and are willing to perform care towards the community. The scene-switching not only allows for different personalities to flourish, but also creates a behavioural structure that encourages everyone to try their best in different situations and shed irrelevant social trappings when they are not needed. A rich banker who wishes to learn aikidō will start as a white belt and show deference to the *sensei* just like everyone else, and a young woman who trains hard and develops her skills will be treated with respect and asked her opinion on how to perform difficult techniques during practice. This respect during training will not then be diminished when she dresses in a flowery *yukata* for a *dōjō* social event, which means that she does not have to choose between these two identities, but can enact them both within the appropriate context. These behaviours of social respect and the capacity to commit fully to different performances of self depending on the situation are crucial elements in how the *dōjō* is created as a safe space for violence to be practised. Of course, not everyone who trains has the same idea of what level of intensity and possible pain they are willing to consent to; how these differences are communicated and calibrated will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4



Fig. 31: Blocking a *shomen-uchi* strike at the start of a technique as the *sensei* watches.

Consent Through Embodied Communication: Balancing Violence with Care

Martial arts training is one of the few conditions when it is socially and legally acceptable to consent to violence being enacted and received, and yet, within the growing social science research into such practices of 'controlled violence', there seems to be very little discussion of how this consent is communicated. The feeling of safety is a crucial factor for many who wish to train, so how is this atmosphere created within an environment that is teaching people how to fight? Training facilities of all different styles are usually trying to attract new members and beginners, but people would be unlikely to remain in an environment where they felt under unrestrained physical threat with no recourse to safety. The likelihood and scale of bodily harm is a significant factor in deciding what type of physical activity to engage in; for example, not liking the idea of being hit in the face would make a person unlikely to take up boxing, but they may instead choose a 'boxercise' class; the very fact that such a program exists for fitness purposes, with the experience of danger purposefully removed, is evidence that many people are not willing to consent to engaging their body in such a situation of controlled violence. Further to this, does the act of entering a particular training session automatically signal absolute consent to the violence contained within its practice? Staying with the boxing example for a moment, does entering a boxing gym mean that you automatically consent to being punched in the head with no protective gear? No it does not. Does attending boxing classes mean that you consent to the instructor hitting you, a beginner, at full strength? No, you would expect not. If someone is engaged in solo practise in front of one of the heavy bags, does that mean they consent to being punched in the gut by someone else who is walking past? No, a person would probably be ejected from the gym if they did such a thing. Even during an official match, where both people have come with the express purpose of fighting each other, they are in full gear and standing inside the boxing ring, do either of them consent to being punched before the starting bell has rung? Again, no. The well-used phrase 'hitting below the belt' comes from this exact idea that such an action is unacceptable because it goes against the prescribed rules of engagement. There are unspoken rules and expectations that most people will sense immediately about such an environment that denotes the expectation which, even when you are engaged in a practice of physical violence, no one wishes to cause undue 'harm'⁵⁵ as we are all social beings trying to keep each other safe and on friendly terms.

⁵⁵ As has been discussed in chapter 2, there are different types of pain/harm, some that helps you get stronger and some that causes serious injury; in this instance I am referring to the latter.

Jill D. Weinberg has written a book comparing the ways in which consent is negotiated in MMA (mixed martial arts) training and in the BDSM community (2016). In the MMA example, the rules of engagement have been legally codified by external regulators, mostly for the purpose of making the fights acceptable for mainstream promotion and consumption. Weinberg describes how this leads to fighters actively seeking out ways to bend and break those rules in strategic ways in order to win their competitions in a cost versus reward type analysis. In contrast to this, the BDSM community actively sets themselves apart from any forms of legal intervention for fear of negative social judgement, and in recognition of the unending variety of the types of play that their members engage in, and instead overconform their practices of consent on an individual basis. Experienced practitioners teach entire seminars on the importance of consent, including how to negotiate boundaries before a 'scene', and also maintain sensitivity to a partners wellbeing throughout by paying close attention to body language (Weinberg, 2016). My research presents an interesting third example, as there are no formal regulations in aikidō, but neither is consent actively spoken about. One distinct factor about aikidō that sets it apart from other martial arts styles is its lack of competition,⁵⁶ as a result of which, it has not fallen prey to the 'sportisation' which has infiltrated many other styles: if there are no competitions, there will be no promoters or investors wishing to make money from the spectacle of someone else's physical abilities. There is no such thing as 'winning' in aikidō, and therefore, no incentive to overwhelm your partner. The *senshusei* experience might even have more in common with BDSM, as those of us who sign up for the course are giving our consent for the instructors to take control of our bodies as they put us through the intensive training (in a similar way to how a sub would submit themselves to a dom), yet without the extensive negotiations around our personal feelings of what we are and are not comfortable with beforehand. As I will discuss in this chapter, there is a wealth of unspoken embodied communication happening within the *dōjō*, whether amongst the *senshusei* or in the *ippan* classes. Having previously described the pain and injuries that occur, as well as the ritualised space of the *dōjō* itself, I will now go on to illustrate the ways in which different bodies, with different strengths, weaknesses, and intentions, are able to train comfortably and safely together.

As well as rules of engagement that should apply equally to everyone, at any gym or *dōjō* there will be a range of people of various body types, strengths, and abilities all training together, and most will unconsciously be negotiating their training with the other bodies around them, trying to find a level appropriate and safe for all involved. Some may do this automatically, others may require guidance, and most will be influenced by their socially constructed notions of bodies and

⁵⁶ As the techniques of aikidō are solely self-defensive, competition would not be possible as there would be no attacker. The only contests I have seen involve a pair demonstrating their technique for judges to score their performance.

how they should interact. Such interactions will also fluctuate, as the strength and skill levels of different people go up and down. Wacquant (2006) describes a situation of this kind when one of his usual sparring partners had to vocalise his needs to the coach, complaining that Wacquant had gotten a lot stronger so now he needed to ease up on the strength he used when they practised together.

Whilst conducting my fieldwork I noticed that these communications were rarely spoken out-loud; instead, there was an atmosphere of care fostered by the instructors as well as sensory negotiations that were mostly communicated through bodily interaction during training. As was described in the previous chapter, the habitus of Honbu *dōjō* is constructed as a safe space through constant enactment of ritual behaviours of respect, enabling the potentially dangerous practices of training to be performed with a sense of security. The *sensei*'s wield total power over this space, combining behaviours of strict authoritarianism, with a welcoming, jovial sense of care, and the members who train together maintain this atmosphere by engaging in these behaviours of respect, and committing themselves to a heightened awareness of all the other bodies they train with.

Having already described the experiences of pain, as well as how the *dōjō* is created into a safe space for performed violence to be practised in the preceding chapters, I now intend to examine the subtleties of communication and the situation of care that is created in the *dōjō*, that enables such painful experiences to be undertaken in a positive way. The intense physical hardship which is an accepted part of the *senshusei* experience has been discussed as an embodied method of unmaking and re-making, and consent is a defining factor in this situation; committing to such harsh training by choice is what can facilitate an interpretation of the wounds acquired during practise as something necessary, and even a source of pride (Le Breton, 2000). Training in this way can be a positive experience as long as it takes place in a bounded space and an atmosphere of care is maintained as a counterbalance to the violence being performed. This sense is created by the *dōjō* staff, but it is largely maintained through the constant daily interactions between training partners, everyone trying to learn painful submission techniques whilst simultaneously looking out for the wellbeing of the other bodies around them. It is these corporeal communications of consent, and the juxtaposition of performances of violence within an atmosphere of care that will be focused on in this chapter.

Such an intensely physical experience that places particular emphasis on pain, the *senshusei* course shares a number of commonalities with the more violent types of coming-of-age rituals across various cultures, which have been widely theorised in anthropological discourse. One significant difference however, is the level of agency involved in participation: out of the Tokyo police only ten officers complete the course each year, a choice they make under no pressure (they may even have to deal with negative attitudes from their colleagues and/or superiors, as doing the course means they will be away from their usual work duties for nine months), as well as no

particular benefits of status or pay upon completion, except that they will be a qualified aikidō instructor for their unit. Due to the intensity of the training, I had originally assumed that the *senshusei* course must hold significant weight within the police force, but during my interviews with the officers I trained with, they nonchalantly explained that this was nothing more than qualifying them to be instructors, and that it would not help their career prospects in any other significant way.⁵⁷ Unlike the social significance of coming-of-age ceremonies, such as the previously described ritual of adolescent circumcision amongst the Gisu in Uganda (Heald, 1986), I found that there were no apparent implications of social stigma, and the course is very far from compulsory. The choice to become *senshusei* is an active one, and the motivations for participation and completion were mainly personal – wanting to push past limits and become stronger within themselves or simply wanting to learn aikidō. This choice could be considered even more active in the case of the *kokusai senshusei* as, not only are they committing to the course for pleasure, full-time, for eleven months, many travelling from overseas for this express purpose, but they are paying for the privilege. The initial act of application and enrolment is not a matter of consent, but of enthusiastic request: our monthly fee was paying for a group of *sensei* to obliterate our bodies, push us through whatever we thought our limits were, and apply their well-practised methods of controlled violence to our persons in order to teach us how to perform them ourselves.

The start of the course acts as a form of threshold: before the course begins, both police officers and civilians are actively applying and making arrangements that will enable them to commit themselves to the full-time regimen for the nine or eleven month period. This is an act of will and desire on the part of these individuals, as the commitment can often mean considerable inconvenience and even hardship. For example, those applying to the *kokusai senshusei* course must plan how they are going to financially support themselves during this time, and some of the police had to deal with the disapproving attitudes from their superiors. One of the police officer's wives, during my year, even gave birth to their second child, for which the officer in question only missed two days of training.⁵⁸ This is an example of the amount to which our own individual wills are, to a certain extent, cut off from the moment we begin. In taking the resolution to commit to the *senshusei* training, we are fully in control and making this decision for ourselves, but as a part of this, we are handing our persons over to the control of the Honbu instructors and placing ourselves in their hands. Such a relationship can be both a blessing and a curse, as the *sensei* will push you to your physical and emotional limits that might feel uncomfortable, but relinquishing all decision-making to someone else, within a contained environment, can also feel relieving

⁵⁷ This is one of the ways that the *senshusei* course has changed over the years it has been running, as when I interviewed an older *sensei*, who had helped train the police in the 1980s-90s, he told me that the course had previously been considered prestigious and would lead to promotion.

⁵⁸ This is not so unusual in Japan, as men are given almost no paternity leave.

(though this is entirely dependent on the presence of trust in such a relationship). As discussed in the previous chapter, the strict routine of the *senshusei* course, dictated to us by the instructors, becomes a source of comfort as you always know where you are supposed to be and what you should be doing. This is where the significance of experience is crucial as, only if we are able to trust in the judgement of those in charge, will we be able to comfortably push through the tough training (the concept of hierarchy will be discussed in the next chapter). It is then their job to create a setting of intense concentration and expectation in a way that will enable us to explore our own boundaries in ways that we might never have been able to accomplish on our own.

This situation is aided by the presence of other fellow *senshusei* to suffer together with, as well as high level *sensei* who can inspire a certain level of awe with their skills. Such a condition is easily comparable with professional athletes placing themselves in the hands of their trainers, or even psychiatrists who might need to place a patient under considerable emotional distress in order to break down mental barriers and overcome a problem. The scenario of placing oneself into the care of an 'expert' and relinquishing a certain degree of control to them is not uncommon. This is especially true for something like medical surgery where the patient has to be placed under anaesthetic, as they will be entirely unable to engage with what is happening to them; because of this, it is required practice that the doctor explain the procedure to the patient in full beforehand, and have them sign a consent form. Outside of this example, it is rare that we relinquish control of ourselves in full; the levels to which we are willing to do this is something we negotiate continuously and those who have taken up the position of power would need to be wary of such signals. In the examples above, of the professional athletic trainer, the psychiatrist, or the surgeon, none of these individuals would (we would hope) want to break their subject or cause them unnecessary harm – I use the word 'unnecessary' here as there is often a degree of instability or emotional/physical pain that needs to be endured in order for positive results to be achieved – the purpose is usually to make the subject stronger, in whatever capacity might be relevant. It is the same situation with the *senshusei* course. Upon registering, the understanding is that the *senshusei* will do their best to achieve whatever the *sensei* instructs them to do whilst they are in the *dōjō*. But this does not mean that a *sensei* then has the right/power to snap your arm whilst demonstrating a technique on you, or strike you around the head if you make a mistake. There is a certain understanding of what is appropriate behaviour during this training that, even though it is never expressed aloud, seems to be implicitly understood. The police *senshusei* have an added layer of oversight in the form of higher ranking police officials who maintain a close relationship with the *dōjō* staff and have the authority to request changes to the training in relation to any feedback that they have heard from the recruits.

Present within this agreement was a large amount of trust – if not for this, then I do not believe anyone would have signed up, police or civilian. For the officers, a large amount of this would be

the connection to their work; the fact that Yoshinkan Aikidō Honbu Dōjō has maintained such a close connection with the Tokyo police force, who have been sending their people for training for over fifty years, implies legitimacy. The *senshusei* course has a reputation for being extremely tough, but that is part of the challenge. Plus there are a number of police superiors who sit on the AYF board of directors, as well as those who keep up a communication with the *dōjō* staff in order to feedback on any issues they may have heard about from the officers being trained.

Within the daily grind of *senshusei* routine, there is also the knowledge and relationship that builds up with the instructors, as (this is a key factor for the *kokusai senshusei* as well) every *sensei* teaching on the course is themselves a graduate *senshusei*.⁵⁹ There is a wide range of experience levels present within this structure, for example Tom-*sewanin* had only completed the course the year before I began, Katou-*sensei* had completed eight years prior, and for Sasaki-*sensei* it had been eighteen years. Since doing the course themselves, they had all remained at *Honbu* in order to teach the recruits that came after, as well as to train and improve their own skills. This situation not only demonstrated a serious amount of teaching experience and aikidō ability, but also the comfort of knowing that they had endured the same ridiculous training as they were now demanding of us. They had all experienced the frustration, pain, and exhaustion for themselves, and therefore they knew that it was possible. Alongside this, there also existed a significant amount of participation; for example, both Matsumoto-*sensei* and Nakamura-*sewanin* would sit in *seiza* for *zagaku* as they made us endure it, and Katou-*sensei* would lead (at an inhuman pace) the solid hour of *kōhō-ukemi* practise at the front of the class (hardly breaking a sweat as the rest of us disintegrated into exhaustion, as described in the earlier chapter). There was a strong emphasis on leading by example, eliciting mixed emotions of admiration, comfort, camaraderie, and frustration that we could not do it as well or as fast. As past *senshusei* graduates, it was the *sensei's* responsibility to embody the goal for everyone to strive towards (a burden that I felt acutely when I became a *sewanin* myself). With regards to the more accomplished instructors, this goal often felt impossible as, after so many years of training, they were capable of incredible technique, the power of which was so subtle that it was mostly impenetrable to those who were of a lower level, even as they tried to teach it to us. One of the youngest of the police *senshusei* I trained with told me how much the impossibility of this difference in skill level had frustrated her, that she would sometimes become upset about the fact that she could not do what they did. One of the other *senshusei* would offer comfort by reminding her that these techniques had taken the *sensei* ten years or more to develop, so it would be unreasonable to think that she would be able to perfect them in just a few months.

⁵⁹ This situation changed during my time teaching; due to a number of *sensei* leaving the *dōjō*, the two non-*senshusei* graduates had to take on some of the instruction due to being short-staffed. Their classes tended to be less strict.

Within the context of the instructors constantly telling us what to do, the most significant relationship during training was with your partner. As I described briefly in the introduction, one person is always playing the role of the 'attacker' (*uke*) for the other to neutralise and apply the aikidō technique to (*shite*). Whilst training, both within the confines of *senshusei*, as well as regular *ippan* classes, we would often switch around partners and have to pair with a variety of different body types, all comprising a range of skill levels. Everyone must adapt themselves accordingly. This is where the concept of consent during training becomes apparent as, just because you have entered the *dōjō* in order to learn aikidō, that does not mean you would find it acceptable to get injured. Accidents are understood to be an unhappy byproduct of training, but it seems as though the very presence of such possibilities of danger is what causes those who train together to do their best to look after one another. The constant existence of violence as the theme of what *aikidōkas* have gathered together to learn, produces a heightened sense of care within the context of training. Because everyone is aware that they could cause serious harm if they are not careful, this stimulates a level of sensitivity towards ones training partner. As such topics are very rarely spoken of out loud, the general sense is that this feeling stems from the base understanding that, even though people have come to the *dōjō* to learn a martial art, they absolutely do not want to cause harm to each other.

With such an understanding in place, how then does everyone continue to practise safely when performing techniques on each other that are inherently for use in situations of violence? Talking is frowned upon during training – and completely prohibited in *senshusei* classes – so there is an embodied communication being maintained between yourself and your partner from the moment you face-off. For example if I am paired with someone significantly stronger than me, but who is only applying very light pressure, I might increase my own level of pressure in order to signal to them that I can take more.⁶⁰ There is also an implicit understanding that the person who is the higher level *aikidōka* should make sure to take care of the lower partner, utilising their embodied knowledge to assist and teach the other. But this is also the case of the *aikidōka* who is significantly bigger/stronger than their partner – aikidō is not supposed to be about physical strength, therefore 'muscling' a technique on someone is not only considered to be bad form, but also a clear indication that you are doing it wrong. Due to the nature of Yoshinkan Aikidō as a *budō* style which incorporates wrist, arm, and body grabs as well as prolonged situations of contact through blocked strikes, there is ample opportunity for communication to be passed between the bodies that are engaged in practise.

⁶⁰ This does not always work, either because the partner does not interpret the signal correctly or because they are uncomfortable applying more pressure, but I will still make it all the same.

There are also outward signals, such as tapping out,⁶¹ where the person who is performing the role of *uke* and is having an arm-lock applied to them can use their free arm (or sometimes their foot) to tap once or twice on the mats or on a part of their own body, creating a sound and action that immediately tells their partner to release them. Even though speaking is discouraged, the *dōjō* is still full of sound, whether it is the thumping of body parts hitting mats or training partners, or the sounds that escape from those bodies when they do. As well as the body-to-body communications, there is also a warning system of groans. Again, this is specific to each person, as some make lots of noise throughout training, whilst others remain silent, but the type, intensity, and volume of a groan usually acts as an indicator to the well-being of the *aikidōka*. Such a signal is much quicker and contains greater urgency than a double-tap, and is, therefore, of crucial importance: if, for example, you apply a technique wrong in a way that could seriously harm your partner, them letting out a sudden yelp of pain should cause you to drop your hold on their body instantly. I experienced some trouble during *senshusei* training due to the fact that my partner was so vocal in his groans, so that I did not know what I was supposed to react to. On a number of occasions, upon the instant when he let out a groan that sounded like he was in great pain, I immediately stopped to check if he was ok, at which times he would look up at me in confusion and reply that yes, of course he was absolutely fine. Throughout our training together it caused me a great deal of stress that I could not depend on this particular form of signalling when I sparred with him. All of these intersecting performances and negotiations are what constitute the embodied training habitus, (Bourdieu, 1977), but they are also practised differently depending on the person. The expectation is that you do your best to adapt to the particular individual you are paired with at any one time, whether they are bigger, smaller, stronger, weaker, more experienced, older, younger, louder, or silent, the aim is to keep each other safe whilst performing actions of violence in a simulation of danger.

Training as a regular member at the same *dōjō*, you soon grow familiar with the various bodies you train with, and you build up an understanding of the levels of intensity other members prefer, yet the negotiations of consent between partners remains constant throughout practise. Some will like to train with more force in an attempt to create a more realistic scenario of danger, and may signal this to their partner by applying increased resistance to them, thus inserting a dose of realism into their performed role of 'attacker'. I often noted this behavioural pattern from those at *Honbu* who trained in the *ippan* classes, towards the *senshusei*. There were particular periods of the course when *senshusei* were expected to train together with the regular members and, as everyone was aware of the severe nature of the special training regimen, pairing with the *senshusei* presented an excellent opportunity to practise at increased levels of intensity.

⁶¹ This form of communication is common throughout most martial arts and is used cross-culturally.

The reason the two are viewed differently is because there was a vast difference between the *ippan* and the *senshusei* classes. Whereas the *ippan* members could attend classes however much or little they wanted, and apply themselves to the training with whatever level of effort they found appropriate, the *senshusei* are under the command of the *dōjō sensei*. The same *sensei* taught both types of classes, but their attitudes would change significantly between the two. Some of the *sensei* had more drastic personality transformations than others, but always the expectations for the types of training sessions worked on different levels. With the implicit understanding of mutual care during training, the *senshusei* were constantly encouraged to overcome this state, in order to apply more force to their partner. This was incredibly difficult. Trying to deliver an action which might contain enough power to cause real harm to a partner, felt like driving against a solid barrier – it was as if my body refused to obey such a command, and others experienced similar difficulty. Whenever we practised *hijiate-kokyūnage*, one of the only techniques where pressure is applied to the back of the elbow joint in a sharp motion that *uke* is supposed to react to by rolling forwards to escape, Scott-*sensei* would only ever perform the technique by applying said pressure to the back of the upper arm (as previously mentioned). He told me he purposefully did it that way because the technique frightened him for the possibility it contained to cause serious damage to a partner's elbow. He could not bring himself to consent to the danger of that prospect and so made the decision to adapt his method.

During *senshusei* classes, having the *sensei* reprimand us for not going hard enough during training was a common occurrence. This was an oft-repeated line from Ueda-*sensei*, who would aim his anger specifically towards the police – what was the point of them learning a soft version of the techniques? How would that help them against real criminals? An example of this was an occasion when Ueda-*sensei* expressed his irritation that we were not delivering our strikes with enough force and intensity at our partners, and so he made everyone practise *shomen-uchi*⁶² for 20 minutes without stopping. As we all struck our partners, and then took our turn to be struck, again and again, in time with everyone else, Ueda-*sensei* and the *sewanin* all yelled at us to go harder. As the bruises formed on our arms, we all inwardly fought against the desire not to hurt our partners, as well as not wanting to hurt ourselves.

⁶² *Shomen-uchi* is a forward strike: using the hand in a chopping motion, it should be aimed at the centre of your partners face, coming downwards from above. This strike can be dealt with in a number of ways, but on this occasion it was meant to be blocked by the other person putting their arm diagonally in front of their face. Both arms should clash around the outer wrist area.



Fig. 32: Bruises acquired from *shomen-uchi* and blocking practice.

This photo was taken in the changing rooms: we smile and jovially compare our bruises, as if they were battle scars. It is because this was an accepted part of the training, and we knew – at least we trusted that the *sensei's* knew – that this would make us stronger, meaning that this pain and injury had a purpose. We felt pride at the accomplishment of our endurance. We also trusted each other; the idea that we would not injure our partner (at least not seriously), seemed to be so deep-seated that it did not require discussion. The *sensei* had to get angry and constantly remind us to go harder on each other, in order to get us to apply increased pressure on our partners. And yet, even as they performed their displeasure, this was only a top layer, with an understanding of mutual care remaining beneath. During *senshusei* my training partner was half a foot taller than me and had trained for years in muay thai – if he had really struck me as hard as he could then there was a possibility of a lot worse than bruises. Amongst the police there was one who looked like a body-builder, and another who had very skinny arms that always made me nervous for their fragility – the same amount of force could not have been applied to all of these different bodies

without an occurrence of serious injury. The *sensei* understood this better than anyone; they may not have had a problem with pain, but injury would mean an inability to continue training, which nobody wanted. Therefore, whilst yelling at all the *senshusei* to go harder, there remained an implicit understanding that pressure should only be applied appropriately, and that we should be looking after one another.

Within these training circumstances, there were certain injuries and physical ailments which were common, even to some levels expected. Wrists were always sore from repeated strain practising various wrist-locking techniques, and most people suffered problems with their knees, whether it was ripped skin from the hours of *shikko-ho* (knee-walking), as shown in the photo below, or internal injuries with the joint. Being professional aikidō practitioners themselves, as well as having taught year after year of *senshusei*, the *sensei* were well aware of the bodily ailments to be expected on the course. Part of the role of the *sewanin* was to offer advice about how to protect from and deal with injuries as they occurred: I received advice about where to purchase medical supplies, how to tape my bleeding knees for practise, how I should affix a clean make-up sponge to the grazed areas of my spine to protect them from continuous aggravation. These types of injuries were an accepted and expected part of the routine.



Fig. 33: Layers of skin that have worn off the knees due to long *shikko-ho* practice.



Fig. 34: Photo of myself with a black eye.

This photo, showing the time when I was given a black eye by one of the *sensei*, was not received in the same way as all my other, far more serious injuries had been by the *dōjō* staff. Aikidō is not a striking style, the application of hits and punches are used as feints in order to off-balance rather than to deliver an attack, so the face is not a typical area of danger. When paired for training with one of the *sewanin*, I had forgotten to block a pre-scripted attack to the face, and as a wake-up call the *sewanin* had given me a pop in the eye. I had not thought of it as significant at the time, or even afterwards when it swelled up as, unlike my other injuries and ailments, having a black-eye had no impact on my ability to train, and it did not cause me any pain. The reaction of the other *sensei* however, was noticeable; a black-eye in aikidō was injury out of place, and they did not approve the action. They consented to beating up and causing pain to my body in all sorts of ways, but this

seemed to fall outside of those boundaries, and the *sewanin* responsible for it was given a talking to.

There were other instances of this sense of violence tinged with care throughout the course, for example having an especially brutal sparring session paired with a *sewanin* who showed no mercy during the techniques, but then gave me ice-packs to apply to my sore elbows as soon as the session was over. There was another occasion when I was surprised to discover I was receiving silent sympathy from the strictest of all the *dōjō* staff: Ueda-*sensei* was having us take turns practising *jiyuwaza*⁶³ in our pairs; as the *dōjō* was small, and this practise required a lot of space, we would perform one pair at a time whilst everyone else stood lined up watching. Instead of being with one of the other *senshusei*, I was paired up with a large, muscular *sewanin*, who proceeded to fling me around the mats like a rag-doll when it was our turn. I could hear the watching *senshusei* occasionally let out empathetic groans as they observed me smashing into the mats with frightening force. One of the purposes of this practise was to build up our stamina in preparation for our next test, so Ueda-*sensei* made everyone continue these bouts until they were ready to drop, but when it came to my turn, he cut us short. There could have been any number of reasons for this act of mercy, but considering the uncompromising toughness of this particular *sensei*, I liked to think that he saw me struggling with the intensity, had a moment of concern for my well-being, so decided to let me off five throws early. Most of the other *senshusei* graduates I spoke with had similar stories to share, in which the usually tough *sensei* broke character for a moment to express concern and care for their wellbeing.

When you are paired with a *sensei* for training, the embodied negotiations change – you are in their hands and they will train at a level they think you can take, which is usually just a bit harder than you are comfortable with. In these situations, the trust you have in the *sensei*'s ability to read your body and their skill in aikidō, is what constructs these situations into a positive experience and allows you to feel safe in their hands. The best place to be if you want to learn someone's technique, is opposite them as their partner, so having the opportunity to train together with *sensei* is part of the privilege of *senshusei*. This is how the circumstances are supposed to work, but this sense of trust can be lost if the boundaries are pushed too far. And yet, even when I experienced a loss of trust with one particular *sensei*, and became genuinely afraid of sparring with him, the terms under which I had relinquished my consent to the *senshusei* course still held firm, and I did not complain, did not stop training, but gritted my teeth and carried on. I eventually expressed my discomfort in private to a senior *sensei* who I had a personal relationship with, but mostly I maintained my trust that the situation would be recognised by those who were more experienced, and if they judged it to be inappropriate, they would intercede, which was exactly

⁶³ Free-flow practice, where *uke* attacks continuously; *shite* throws them, they break-fall, then jump straight back up for another attack, not stopping until a *sensei* gives the word.

what happened. Below is an autoethnographic account of the situation as I experienced it, along with a section of the interview I conducted with the *sensei* in question.

Andy-sewanin

It is the third session of the day and I am exhausted. This is nothing new. We are months into the course and I cannot even remember what a painless, well-rested body feels like. I have been training with a bad elbow since it was strained in the first month, my back is bruised and grazed from *ukemi* practise, and my knees are tender and missing a few layers of skin. This is what it means to be *senshusei*. I am trying my best to jump up quickly at the end of every technique and dash back into position, but my body is heavy and struggling to keep up with my will-power. There are three *sewanin* keeping a close watch over us, shouting corrections and admonitions whenever they spot a mistake, or think we're not putting in enough effort.

Ueda-*sensei* stands in his signature position; back straight, shoulders relaxed, both feet firmly planted on the mats, thumbs tucked into the front of his old, frayed black belt which hangs loosely from his hips. He manages to look simultaneously bored and sharp as his gaze wanders over the sweating bodies around him. His focus is always directed towards the police, we *kokusai senshusei* are of little concern to him at this point during the course, and he leaves us under the authority of the *sewanin*. The three of them circle around Luca-*senshusei* and I, judging our inept movements. As it is one of Ueda-*sensei* sessions, we all know to expect a rough 90 minutes.

Ueda-*sensei* barks the command for *hajime geiko*, and we all get into position. Nakamura-*sensei*, the most senior *sewanin*, quickly directs Luca-*senshusei* and I into place standing opposite one of the *sewanin* each, meaning we will be sparring with them for this practise instead of each other. Ueda-*sensei* yells out the name of the first technique, and as soon as he gives the command "HAJIME!" ("begin"), we all launch into the appropriate fighting pattern at full speed.

Hajime geiko is a particular training method used in *senshusei* classes: the *sensei* calls out a technique which is then to be performed at speed twice on the left and twice on the right by each partner, making a total of eight run-throughs (this can increase if one of the *sensei*'s present sees you make a mistake and tells you to start again), before the next technique is called. This usually continues without respite until every technique on the current syllabus has been covered. When Ueda-*sensei* does *hajime geiko* there is no speed that is good enough; as soon as the very first *senshusei* pair has completed the technique and made it back into their starting positions, he gives the shout for the next one. Either you are fortunate enough to be the quickest

pair, and are therefore just on time, or you are constantly playing catch-up. No one is given the chance to catch their breath.

For the first technique I am facing-off with Nakamura-*sensei*, who is the lightest and most agile of all the *sewanin*; his power feels like a whip when he throws me, but he also makes things easier for me when it's my turn, as his reactions are so quick and I don't have a mass of bodyweight to contend with. The second technique is called and the *sewanin* rotate; now I am opposite Andy-*sensei*, physically the biggest and strongest, but with the least experience of the three. I feel a slight dread as I know what's coming. At the sound of "HAJIME!" we quickly engage and he grabs my wrist in a vice-like grip; I initiate the motions and try to engage the wristlock, but his arms are so thick that I can't get a good hold, and his body feels so solid that it's difficult to move – I feel as though my efforts are just bouncing off. Going as fast as we can, we switch over and it's his turn to perform the technique on me; as I feel him take a hold of my body during the movements I am nervous – I can feel how strong he is, and he is using that strength on me. He flings me down onto the mats with a loud *kiai*,⁶⁴ and I let out an involuntary "Oof" as the air is knocked out of my lungs. I scramble back to my feet as quickly as possible and run back to position ready for the next set. Again, Andy-*sensei* applies the wristlock with solid force and flings me down so hard that I find it difficult to control my landing. Stand up quickly, back to position, initiate the attack, try not to fall behind. There is no time to think during *hajime geiko*, all available oxygen is necessary to keep muscles moving and reacting as you rely on instinct to move you into the correct alignments and positions, but something in me breathes a sigh of relief when the *sewanin* rotate once more and I am partnered with Scott-*sensei* (who is also incredibly strong, but much more sensitive in his movements). He is quick and allows me to throw him without resistance, and I feel like I've caught up some lost time and am drawing closer to the shout of Ueda-*sensei's* commands.

All too soon I am back opposite Andy-*sensei* again, and the nerves return. They are not for nothing, and he wrenches my wrist and drives my body hard into the mats to an extent that feels excessive. Somewhere in the back of my mind a hopeful voice wonders whether he has accidentally forgotten to readjust his level of pressure; having just switched from Luca-*senshusei* (who is similar to his own size and strength), maybe he was using the same amount of force on me by mistake? As the pounding does not let up, I realise that there was no mistake, and my nerves grow. As we continue through the techniques, he does not even spare a thought for my bad elbow (I have been wearing a support on it for a while, and there is an unspoken understanding that partners will take note of the weakness and adjust their level of pressure accordingly, but on this occasion it was meaningless). I feel like a ragdoll in his terrifying grip,

⁶⁴ The shout/cry made during training; this should come from deep in the belly and be projected as loudly as possible as a means of demonstrating strong spirit.

anxious and confused as to why he is applying so much strength to every technique. Have I done something to piss him off? Or am I just imagining things? I immediately start to examine my own mindset and doubt creeps up – is there a part of me that thinks he should go easier on me because I’m a woman? But I know that I wouldn’t want that, I don’t want to be coddled or treated as if I’m weak. I want to be tough, I want to become stronger. Yet there is a physicality that I cannot deny – I am not of the same build as *Andy-sensei*, or *Luca-senshusei*, my body is simply more breakable. But I have not broken yet, so maybe this level of intensity is actually ok? As I try to reassure myself of this, I compare *Andy-sensei*’s actions with those of Scott and *Nakamura-sensei*, who are regularly eager to beat me up, but who are, right now, going a lot easier.

Cries and yelps are escaping from my body – elicited from a mixture of physical pain and emotional frustration at my own helplessness, and I have no control over them. *Andy-sensei* has always been a rough partner, whenever I had paired with him before I had felt the sense that his hard style of training came from positive intentions – he was a tough-love drill sergeant who just wanted to push us to get stronger. His harsh tones had even been comforting at times. But today is different; his level of aggression has ramped up a few levels, and he isn’t responding to my signals of discomfort. I have always tried to remain silent and stoic during even the toughest training, but the force from *Andy-sensei* is making me cry out.

My face is screwed up from the pain and feelings of powerlessness as I continue to scramble to my feet and dash back into position after every technique. My breathing is coming ragged through gritted teeth as we continue to move as fast as we can, trying desperately to keep up with the unending call of “*HAJIME!*”. We have completed a number of rotations by this point and my body feels weak. My eyes are watering, or is it tears? I am *senshusei*, and I tell myself this is all part of the training; I must endure. Due to the repeated wrenchings, my arms have lost strength, and it feels like I hardly have control over them when I try to initiate a strike, and my grip strength is almost non-existent, which only seems to make *Andy-sensei* come at me harder. The other two *sewanin* feel light by comparison.

At certain moments I catch *Scott-sensei* with a strange expression on his face: is he looking uneasy? Does he disapprove of the level of strength being used by *Andy-sensei*, or is it just my own wishful thinking? My suspicions are confirmed when I overhear him quickly saying a few words to *Andy-sensei* during one of the rotations: “Hey, ease up a little dude.” The only thing I can think is that I’m saved! It wasn’t just my imagination, this situation really is getting out of hand – thank goodness someone said something to him! Any feelings of relief and vindication are short-lived; the next time I am paired with *Andy-sensei* I realise that he has ignored *Scott-sensei*’s directions, and is continuing to handle my body at full force. What had been experienced as nerves, anxiety, and doubt before, now suddenly turns to fear. I do not know whether this

person is in control of themselves, but they are so much stronger than me, and they are my *sensei*, which means there is nothing I can do against them. I just have to get through this. These thoughts only appear as a swirl of emotions through my head as I will my exhausted body to continue moving, still held in thrall to the sound of Ueda-*sensei's* "HAJIME!" I continue as best and as fast as I can. My technique is a complete mess at this point; I don't have any strength left and my concentration is clouded with frustration and anxiety. I am afraid my weak elbow will receive further damage, the main reason I am so desperate for this not to happen is because it could mean that I wouldn't be able to train, and I absolutely do not want that. I am secretly praying not to get injured because I do not want to take any time out from practice.

As the rotations continue I notice that the other two *sewanins* are acknowledging the difficulty of my situation by taking it particularly easy on me. This has never happened to me before, especially not in *hajime geiko*. Every time Andy-*sensei* performs a technique on my bad elbow I am letting out a cry of pain, but now I am paired with Nakamura-*sensei* and he is barely touching me on that side, allowing me to move on my own. It's usually impossible to read much from his face, as his expression never changes, but I can feel him trying to give my body a rest between bouts with Andy-*sensei*, and I am incredibly grateful.

Everyone is struggling for breath and streaming with sweat as we force our depleted bodies to flip and roll and get straight back up again. My knees are screaming at me whenever a *suwariwaza* (kneeling technique) is called, and I cry out my *kiai's* especially loud. Every time I make it through another round with Andy-*sensei* I pray it will be the last – how many more techniques are there to go? Have to get up, move quickly, keep going, push through it, concentrate, don't fall behind.

Once the last technique is called, those who finish first remain standing in *kamae* (the ready position), waiting whilst the slower pairs complete all their movements and catch up. I finish my sets before Luca-*senshusei*, who continues to struggle on next to me together with Scott-*sensei*. When stood in *kamae* you must fix your gaze straight ahead at your partner, so I take stock of the room using my peripheral vision. Everyone is breathing hard, two of the police have lost their belts during the intensive practise and are standing with their *dōgis* hanging loose. I am so exhausted I can hardly focus, but I am so used to the position of *kamae* by now that my body returns to it automatically. All I can feel is relief that I made it through without injury.

I glance up at the clock on the wall; we've run over the session time. I estimate that the *hajime geiko* lasted for about 45 minutes. Luca-*senshusei* is the last to finish, and he heavily drags himself into a stooped position; he is reprimanded by one of the *sewanin* and tries to straighten up his posture through his ragged breathing. Ueda-*sensei* shouts the command "Kamae nore!" and we all step back out of *kamae*, at which point he tells us to fix our *dōgis* and

the two police rush to put their belts back on. The session then comes to an end with the usual bowing to partners, bowing to the *kamidana*, and bowing to the *sensei*.

When I tell him that my interview with Stephanie-*sensei* had gone on for 2.5 hours, Andy-*sensei* smiles and claims that there's no way he'll have enough to say to fill that kind of time. We are sat in a crowded coffeeshop down the road from the *dōjō*, and Andy-*sensei* has just insisted on paying for my coffee. Today is graduation day; the traditional ceremony had been held at the *dōjō* in the morning, where I had received my *senshusei* certificates and black belt, with my name embroidered in Japanese katakana, from Yashiro-*Dōjōcho*. It all feels anti-climactic, and I still can't quite believe it's over.

Andy-*sensei* has not opted to stay and teach another year, and will be flying back to his home country in a few days, so we had scheduled our interview for the only time he had available.

Amy—I wanted to ask you about the black eye incident, because I wanted to ask about what happened on your side of this. I'd received so many injuries, and no one has blinked an eye. But that black eye, all of them were upset by that, whilst I thought 'this isn't effecting my training in any way, this is the most minor of all the injuries I have received; why is this so concerning?'

Andy—So they actually didn't frame it as 'you gave her a black eye and this is why we're talking to you', it was actually a couple weeks afterward. No one said anything initially.

Amy—Ok, did you feel anything initially from people?

Andy—Maybe... maybe only slightly. I honestly did not feel much pressure at all. I honestly didn't even feel all that bad for you because I knew it didn't hurt you that much (*we both laugh*).

Amy—At the time it just happened, and we just carried on.

Andy—(*leans in towards recording device*) And for the record, she did not block a standard *atemi*! I did not try to sneak it in, I was throwing it at the prescribed time during that *kihon waza* (*we both laugh*), and she was too tired and lazy and did not block! So, FOR THE RECORD!

Amy—(*Continuous laughing*) I forgot the block!

Andy—I actually caught some of the police with the same *atemi*, but I hit them in the forehead or the cheek, and yours my knuckles landed right there in the socket. So anyhow, to answer your question fully, I honestly did not feel any significant pressure right after it happened, like nobody

pulled me aside, nothing like that. And, what you were saying about being watched closely, Honda-sensei is always kind of overprotective – he didn't do the *senshusei* course and I think he finds what we do pretty rough.

Amy--- Yeah, he's always saying, "ABUNAI! ABUNAI!",⁶⁵ to everything we're doing.

Andy—Yeah, he was always like that, so that didn't seem especially abnormal. But it was a couple weeks later that Stephanie-sensei sent me an email, probably on behalf of Yashiro-sensei or in conjunction with him. 'hey, you know, as a *sewanin* you're a caretaker, it's important that no one's ever afraid to train with you. You need to be able to adjust your power to your partner', etc. 'Yashiro-sensei and I would like to sit down and talk with you at such-and-such time'. So I immediately suspected that this was about that incident, and I wrote back and said, 'If I need to go easy on Amy then just tell me and I will, but I want you to know that I train hard with Amy because I care about her and I want her to be stronger. And I want her to have the experience that she signed up for and expected. I want her to have the hardships that everyone gets exposed to'. And essentially I was saying I don't want her to have the girl version of the *senshusei* course. Which, you would have better insight into this, but I kind of got the impression – I always felt like the *sensei* kind of gave the women a slightly less – and maybe you disagree – but I thought that there were times when they were going easy on them. And, the course is individualised, but I definitely didn't think if I was in your position I would've wanted to be that much easier, you know? I understand, you don't want your arms broken, but you also don't wanna be like, 'was that too hard for you?' or like, 'why don't you take a break?' or whatever (*we laugh*). So, in this email I essentially said, 'I train hard with Amy for the same reason I train hard with everyone; because I want them to be strong'. God forbid if anyone ever tries to fuck with you Amy I want you to be like, 'this guy isn't as strong or as rough as Andy! (*more laughter*) Nooo problem!'. And I really mean that. That was one of the other things towards the end of the course, you talked about things that surprised you, I was amazed by how much stronger you got. At the beginning you seemed a bit like – I remember giving you a hard time about prancing like a pony (*I laugh*) and you were a bit of a pixie, and by the end you were like bam! Bam! You just seemed more solid.

Amy— It's interesting that you brought up the thing with Stephanie-sensei speaking to you about that, because I did have a few moments during the course, when I experienced fear with you. I always have in my head this one particular training session when I already had the bad elbow and we were doing *hajime geiko* ...

⁶⁵ "Danger! Danger!"

(I go into detail describing the scenario above, and about my own feelings of fear, frustration, and powerlessness at that time, also discussing my inner conflict regarding the issue of being a woman on the course – not wanting to be coddled, but also not wanting to be broken.)

... I always thought about it more as bodies, rather than gendered bodies. Which is very difficult because we are gendered bodies, and that does happen to mean that the 3 women in the class have the weakest bodies out of everyone. Which is irritating in my feminist soul. I don't want to be, but that is the reality; knowing what my body limits are and knowing that those limits are different to these strong, muscly guys that I'm with and in a reality sense I am more breakable than them. So I wanted to talk about that with you, explain that, and see if you had any comments about that.

Andy—Well thank you for sharing that with me. The first thing I will say is that I'm sorry – I'm sorry for any significant distress that I caused you.

Amy—I never thought that this was about intentions – I never thought that you wanted to hurt me, but I also knew that I was at your mercy.

Andy—So please understand that's important for me to say that, just in case! And so, I am sorry that you were scared to train with me, again that was never my intention. In retrospect, it may've been the wrong thing to do, there's always a better way to do something. I can't change it, I can learn from it – we can both learn from it.

Amy—And I definitely learnt things about myself from it as well. Because, most of the time you *didn't* break me, there were just one or two occasions when something went slightly, a little bit stronger (*laugh*) but, even though it was scarier, I didn't break. And after these sessions I would always think, 'am I overreacting? Can I go this hard?'. So it was more a matter of, once the fear happened it was difficult to get rid of it.

Andy—Yeah, I think that's perfectly natural. I could've approached that better, I definitely could've... just not done that. What I can tell you is that my intention was that, this wasn't me inflicting violence on you, it was about both of us understanding the nature of violence. I told you a number of times that I'm not interested in fighting. I chose aikidō because of its emphasis on harmony. But, in order to understand violence at a deep level you have to experience it to some degree. And the dōjō is kind of this laboratory for experiencing controlled violence and, especially or almost exclusively in the *senshusei* course, how far can we take that? And, thank goodness you did not break (*laughter*); here you are stronger. I'm not going to take credit for that, but you went through some pretty significant stuff, and maybe you don't believe me, but maybe that was just as scary for me.

Amy—I can believe you on that.

Andy—because it would've been horrifying –if I had broken your arm, I would've been devastated. That would've been horrible. But, together we experienced the nature of violence. Maybe after *hajime geiko* – you can ask Scott – maybe I did not feel good about it, those were scary for me in a way too. And very emotionally charged, and – violence is a very emotionally charged thing. And, in this very strange course, we are able to have these little experiments, where we can have these surges that are almost a true, violent encounter, not all the way. But I'd love to elaborate more on that particular incident. So, then I did meet with Stephanie and Yashiro-sensei. I had also said in that email you know, 'in regards to feeling fear when training with me,' I said that, when I trained with Hayama-sensei, I was very fearful of training with him, because he was extremely hard on me. But, I ended by saying that I would've been devastated had he ever eased up on me, and felt that I wasn't strong enough to be able to train with him, and my experiences with him were very transformative, because there was many times that I squared off with him and Nakamura-sensei and they were basically experimenting on me (*we both laugh*). They'd just go full-on, so there were plenty of times that I was extremely scared and concerned for my wellbeing, but it made me way stronger in the end, and I was very grateful for that. But what I didn't appreciate when working with you, and what they brought up and completely made sense when they told me, was 'listen Andy, you're only a *sewanin*, Hayama-sensei's been training for 10yrs – he knows how to adjust, he can read bodies and calibrate. You're new, and you're not really a *sensei*, you're just supposed to be looking after these guys, you're their training partners, you're supposed to be taking care of them. It's not your responsibility.' So I had to eat some humble pie there, (*we laugh*) you know I was like 'yeah, you're right.' And, I don't know if you could tell, but I definitely-

Amy—Yes, there was definitely a point when it eased off and didn't have that problem anymore.

Andy—Well I'm glad that you were no longer scared to train with me. I really enjoyed training with you; at the beginning I was basically seeing how much you could take, and I didn't know what to expect from you. And I felt like I slowly turned up the heat, and I was like, 'this girl is really strong.' You were stronger than a lot of the cops. And I was like, 'she can take this.'

Amy—That's surprising.

Andy—No, you were. And let me be clear, we're not just talking about physical strength, I mean that's not the true measure of someone's strength. I could tell that you were very mentally strong, and that's much more important. But also, I think you're stronger physically than maybe you even believe?

Amy—This is the thing – I don't know how strong I am.

Andy—I think that you're stronger than you realise, and I certainly realised it; I was like, 'I feel like they're being unnecessarily soft on this girl, maybe I'm going to turn up the heat (*laughter*)... and like I said, in retrospect that was not my responsibility, and... I'm sorry if I left any long term effects on you! (*we both laugh*)

Amy—No, no, not at all! I just definitely wanted to bring it up to see what your comments would be about it.

During the writing of this chapter I have received some very interesting and mixed feedback on this piece of autoethnography and subsequent interview excerpt. When being discussed amongst my PhD peers, in a room that happened to be all women, none of whom were martial artists themselves, they were entirely disapproving, some to the point of ranting about Andy-*sewanin's* comments during the interview, pointing out how it felt to them like a textbook example of a male abuser excusing his own behaviour. This was the opposite of what I had intended when I made the decision to include these two examples from my fieldwork side-by-side. With the first excerpt I wanted to highlight the experience of fear that can occur during training when trust is broken between sparring partners, as it is important to understand that such training is a practice of violence which is only made safe by the active intentions and reflexive actions of those who train together. I wanted then to present this section of my interview with the person in question to show them in a different light, outside of the *dōjō*, in a friendly environment, on positive terms with myself, describing the experience from their own perspective. Having grown so used to the aikidō training environment (and an especially tough one at that), I was surprised by the reactions from my academic cohort and found myself trying to defend Andy-*sewanin's* actions by pointing out that I had never felt any negative intentions from him when we trained, and that it had been a case of misguided interpretations of his own power and responsibilities at the *dōjō* that had led to the negative situation.

Later, upon discussing the chapter with a different member of my cohort who was also a woman writing about martial arts, she had a very different reaction to the above sections which was much more in keeping with my intended purpose. Having been in similar situations herself, she instantly understood the presence of violence that I was trying to outline, but also the complex relationships we have with those we train together with and how such violence will not automatically equate to negative personal feelings. From her comments, she did not interpret

Andy-*sewanin* as a bad person trying to cover up his inappropriate behaviour, but as someone negotiating their role in this practise space.

The role that gender played in this situation cannot be ignored however, especially as Andy-*sewanin* highlighted the fact that I was a woman as a key element of his motivation. The comments he made about this hit home to me, as I had been internally grappling with such questions throughout my training. The blind spot for Andy-*sewanin* was that my status as ‘female’ seemed to be the only thing he saw, whereas I was aware of myself as being the same size and shape as many of the men who trained there, including the *senshusei*. Being taller than at least half of the men who trained at Honbu Dōjō, I felt released from a lot of the usual tension I had felt when training in London where I was so often physically dominated by the mostly male training groups. I was also *senshusei*, which had made me tougher and stronger than I had ever been in my life (though my physique remained skinny as I do not put on heavy muscle easily). Andy-*sewanin* commented on this, but interpreted it as a reason to prove I could go harder instead of accepting the fact that it was not necessary for me to prove anything to anyone.

But I’m a Girl...?

As the only two non-Japanese women who frequented Honbu (and we had the added commonality of both being British with only a few years age difference), Anna-*sensei* was one of the people I became closest to during my fieldwork. Even though we were both close with the other staff and regular members (the majority of whom were male), there was an instant sense of camaraderie that occurred between us as two women within a male-dominated space. The very first time I came to Honbu *dōjō* to discuss the possibility of doing my research there, Anna-*sensei* was the person I was directed to, and as soon as I mentioned the gender dynamics I had experienced when training back in London, she expressed an instant eagerness to discuss things more, saying, “We have so much to talk about!” with a knowing smile on her face. She had completed the *senshusei* course four years before me and, after leaving Japan for a year, had returned and stayed on at Honbu as a *sewanin*.

At 5’8” and with a slim, sporty build, Anna-*sensei* was slightly taller than me and had more physical strength, but both of us were of a similar height to most of the Japanese men we trained with. Not only this, but we were both *senshusei*, a title which seemed to trump that of ‘female’ (at least among the Japanese *sensei* and practitioners) whilst we were at the *dōjō*. Anna-*sensei* was strong and very dedicated to aikidō and Honbu *dōjō*, not only working as an instructor but also

assisting with the international communications in the office, all of which was unpaid.⁶⁶ There were a number of occasions when we shared our perspectives on how it felt to train within such an environment, and how our ideas about our own bodies and the role of *senshusei* and/or *sewanin* sometimes caused us turmoil. As well as confiding in her my worries about training with Andy-sensei (as depicted above), I also described the difference I felt between the training I had done in London compared with my experiences in Japan. When training at Honbu as a *senshusei*, I felt a certain sense of liberation from the constraints of socialised gender norms that I had been faced with back in the UK; I had always felt frustrated when male training partners would not engage with me seriously “Because I was a woman”.⁶⁷ Since becoming *senshusei*, however, the people I trained with – both fellow *senshusei* and regular members – dealt with me seriously, and I was able to engage in training in a much more purposeful way. Anna-sensei, who had not practised aikidō before coming to Japan, said that she also felt this satisfaction, but that there were the occasional moments when she felt like this intensity was taken too far. Perhaps due to the combination of factors that she is taller than many of the men, looks physically strong, and has completed *senshusei*, but she admitted to sometimes feeling that the regular members took liberties with this, and assumed they could use her as a guinea-pig to train with at increased levels of pressure and strength. In a comical moment she described the thought that would pop, unbidden into her mind at such times: “But, I’m a girl...? Why do you want to beat me up?”. This line (which had us both in stitches of laughter) encapsulated the socially gendered thought processes that we both struggled to shake off throughout our training: because I am female and you are male, I do not want to engage in this violence, and you should not aim it at me. Throughout training, not only were we struggling to understand and communicate the levels of intensity that we were willing to consent to, but there was the additional dimension of questioning our own ingrained gender assumptions.

The presence and participation of male and female practitioners in such a setting is useful in highlighting the fact that there are two types of consent being engaged during training: the consent to receive violence to your person, as well as consenting to deliver it upon someone else. Alex Channon has conducted research into mixed-sex martial arts practise in the UK, and describes the incredible difficulty many of the men have in trying to make themselves attack female sparring partners, and the corresponding frustration of the women not being taken seriously and having to endure unsatisfactory training (2016). Due to the limitations the men had placed upon themselves – or their social setting had placed upon them – the result was that the

⁶⁶ It was an institutionalised practice at Honbu that if you stayed on at the *dōjō* as a *sewanin* after completing the *senshusei* course, this position would be unpaid.

⁶⁷ This was a phrase said to me on a number of occasions when practising aikidō in London.

women who wanted to train with them were denied the opportunity to consent to being hit for the sake of practise.

Meredith Nash has written about her experiences of boxing in a predominantly male gym in Tasmania, and she describes having to negotiate her own identity of masculinity within that space (2017). There is a particular incident she describes in detail, about an experience of sparring with a newcomer to the gym. She had already been training there for a significant amount of time, and had carved out a respectable space for herself amongst the men (with a lot of hard work), at which time she is asked to pair with a new potential member in order for the instructors to read his potential. This man engages with her on a level that she finds incredibly uncomfortable, which she thinks might have something to do with the fact that he does not want to lose to a woman, and the instructors (male) do not intervene. They do, however, climb into the ring with this newcomer afterwards, and proceed to engage with him on a much harsher level than would usually be appropriate. How much this behaviour was a matter of revenge/ teaching the man a lesson is not described, but the consequences of this incident fell on the woman having to be confronted with the difficult contradictions of being female within that environment (Nash, 2017). She may not have wanted to be 'saved', but she also did not want to be exposed to uncontrolled, dangerous violence. In some ways she might have felt pleased that her instructor taught the newcomer a lesson, as it would indicate loyalty and inclusion within the group, but this scenario could also feel emasculating, falling into the trope of weak woman needing the strong man to rescue her. This auto-ethnographic description provides an interesting contrast to Loïc Wacquant's account of training at a boxing gym in Chicago (2006), in which there are no women present at all.⁶⁸ Wacquant engages himself in this space as a man, surrounded by other men. The gym is hyper-masculinised, and there is an obvious sense of the performativity enacted by the men he describes, and identity that they all negotiate in different ways, but from his account there is no extra layer of second guessing. When Wacquant depicts two men training together, there is only size, strength, and experience to dictate the level of engagement, there are no questions of, 'is this his real strength, or is he going light on me because I'm French?'. Such questions create a level of complication and uncertainty for everyone involved when trying to negotiate the level of performed violence being consented to, in both the giving and receiving.

There was one situation I came across, as I was traveling around Japan, where a group of female *aikidōka* had chosen to avoid these gendered circumstances by setting up their own private group. Most were members of a local *dōjō* and trained there regularly, but they had also set up a secret women only gathering and arranged to train together – the most advanced amongst them acting as *sensei* – once a week in a separate location. As I was friendly with one of their number, I was

⁶⁸ Women are present in the book, but they are relegated to the peripheries and strictly kept away from the training.

lucky enough to be invited to train with them whilst I was in town. There was usually four of them, and they claimed that they sometimes felt fed up with having to train with the men, hence why they set up this separate session. One woman claimed the men were often too rough, but when I joined their practise it very quickly became clear that they were all incredibly strong, and had no problem with being thrown around themselves and delivering serious attacks to one another. Instead it felt like a separate safe space, where they were not vastly outnumbered, and could control the pace of their own training. Presenting an inversion of Wacquant's account, these women negated the gender uncertainties by creating their own gender-specific space, allowing them to train as hard or as soft as they wanted without the self-questioning or unease that can occur within a male-dominated setting. I also found the experience positive because the bodies of the women present, although various in size, none of them were stiff and heavy – a common factor amongst the men, and a characteristic which often made the execution of techniques significantly more difficult. Instead, all the women present were fully engaged in facilitating the learning of everyone in the group, and acted as energetic but yielding training partners for one another.

Taking account of these circumstances and attitudes, there was a certain amount of un-gendering that occurred during training at Honbu. In actuality, it might have been this disregard for gender during practise that the women who formed their separate group found uncomfortable. For my own experience, there were a number of intersecting labels which constructed my identity at the *dōjō*, the most obvious of which were that I was a woman, I was British, and I was *senshusei*. All three of these were tied up in my body: it's strength, height, physical capacity, resilience and skill. The theory of aikidō was developed as a means of a smaller, weaker person being able to defend themselves against a bigger, stronger attacker, therefore physical strength is not necessary for the performing of good technique, but it does help you when receiving someone else's, and means you can endure more heavy-handed practise. Within the *dōjō*, the title of *senshusei* appears to trump all other identity markers. The course itself is given a great deal of respect from the other members of Honbu, as well as the wider Yoshinkan Aikidō community. Those who take part are even considered to be a little peculiar – why put yourself through such an ordeal? Why not practise normally like the rest of us? – especially the *kokusai senshusei* group, as they do not have policing responsibilities to justify such an experience. Because of this atmosphere of toughness, plus the fact that those who do not do the course only hear stories of the intense training that goes on, the *senshusei* are regarded as a different type of *aikidōka*, and there is an assumption that their bodies are strong and resilient against physical strain.

This does not mean, however, that our *senshusei* bodies did not vary and should not have been taken care of the same as everyone else's. The language of taping and the communication of groans took place in both *senshusei* and *ippan* classes. The wearing of traditional *dōgi* for practise has a certain neutralising effect on bodies: they are unisex and their boxy shape tends to disguise

curvature; the straight trousers are secured with a drawstring and the jacket with the use of the *ōbi*. Women are supposed to wear a t-shirt beneath, but the men will sometimes do this as well.⁶⁹ Due to their shape, the only significant features that can be discerned about the body beneath is its height and bulk, the latter of which can be deceptive under the heavy material. Other than a difference in belt colour,⁷⁰ the wearing of *dōgi* makes everyone the same, neutralising the differences of status or personality which may exist outside of the *dōjō*, and creates an atmosphere where everyone must treat the bodies around them with equal sensitivity. Due to the fact that it is difficult to distinguish the body beneath the *dōgi*, it is necessary to pay close attention to the embodied communications of consent and intention which are expressed through the contact of practise.

Having experienced considerable frustration at the limitations of gendered behaviour when I trained in London, this context of having my role as ‘woman’ superseded by my status as *senshusei* felt incredibly liberating, and I found my enjoyment increased significantly. As is apparent from my experiences of training with *Andy-sensei* depicted above, our preconceived ideas of gender could not be dismissed, and gave rise to a number of judgements both from myself and him, but these issues did not arise in the same way when I trained with the Japanese instructors, *senshusei*, and members at the *dōjō*. Unlike *Anna-sensei’s* experience, I greatly enjoyed the more powerful level of training that I was able to engage in during classes and, although I still sometimes could not stop myself from wondering whether I was being given an easier ride, I did not feel the same level of sensitivity about being a woman in a man’s domain. It was mainly when training with the British and American *sensei* that I felt conscious of my gender as a factor, compared with the Japanese *sensei*, when I simply felt like a body. My body was stronger than some and weaker than others, and therefore dealt with accordingly, always being demanded to push past my limits, with an understanding that those limits were specific to me. I found it telling when conducting my interviews with various Japanese *sensei* and *senshusei* graduates that when I posed the question of whether they thought the course was different for women and for men, not only did they all answer in the negative, but many cast me a look of confusion as if they did not understand the premise of the question. The title of ‘*senshusei*’ – like most Japanese honorifics – is gender neutral,⁷¹ and while you are within the context of the *dōjō*, this is your identity before anything else. Some may find this overwriting of gender freeing (as I did), but there is also an element to

⁶⁹ There was one man I trained with who always wore a t-shirt beneath his *dōgi* to cover over his various tattoos. Some of the men would wear the extra layer during the winter months; I observed both *Ueda-sensei* and *Hayama-sensei* wearing shirts when they taught during colder weather, but they wore low V-necked t-shirts so that they would not be obviously visible above the collar of their *dōgi*.

⁷⁰ At Honbu there was only white, brown, and black.

⁷¹ For example the honorifics ‘san’, ‘kun’, and ‘sensei’, which are placed after a person’s name to denote their relationship towards the speaker, can be applied to any gender: e.g. “Amy-san and Andy-san” would be a polite form of address.

which it can feel unnerving and give a sense of a lack of control. Many women who practise aikidō may not want to relinquish their gender identity, and in having to do so feel themselves exposed to a level of performed violence that makes them uncomfortable. Just because the *dōjō* is a context which offers a chance for undoing gender norms, this does not mean that everyone will consent to partake in such an action.

It was therefore within the hands of the *dōjō sensei* to demonstrate a sensitivity towards their individual members; regardless of what a body was, how did that body wish to be treated? Within the context of *senshusei*, the fact that training was individualised to a certain degree, made such adaptability possible. For example, the two female police *senshusei* who completed the course together with me were not as physically strong as the men, but in the next year group (when I was teaching as *sewanin*), the two women were clearly the strongest. One of whom was already an international champion in iaido (another *budō* style focused around the drawing of a sword to cut with a single attack), and had arm muscles that rivalled most of the *sensei*, as well as being incredibly focussed and skilled at body control. Looking comparatively, whereas the first two women were sometimes not expected to keep up with the men in their group, the second two women were often picked to lead in the physical training. The iaido champion was also often used as *uke* by Furukawa-*sensei*, a police aikidō instructor who enjoyed flinging *uke*'s around in unplanned directions to amuse his onlookers. The origin of this type of practise stemmed from the idea that everyone must 'do their best', and that effort was the most important element of good training. With this in mind, the training would sometimes be adapted to the various body types; for example, Hayama-*sensei* would often demand an extra lap of bunny-hops or frog-leaps from the strongest handful of *senshusei* than he did for the rest of the group. When the purpose of training is to push people past their limits, but all the bodies involved have different capabilities and limitations, the amount expected of each person must vary. Witnessing the treatment of different *senshusei* during my time at Honbu, it became clear that the defining factor was of physical capacity more than anything else, and the social ideas of gender which may have existed outside of training, were distinctly absent.

Is It Consent If You Can't Say No?

In the above ethnographic descriptions, as well as in the earlier chapter on pain, I have recounted scenarios of intense physical and psychological pressure. In the account of our weekly *zagaku* sessions presented in the opening vignette, the purpose was to demonstrate the harsh realities of *senshusei* training, and how it was normalised into routine for those who took part. During my interviews with both police and *kokusai senshusei* graduates, we would often discuss the

nightmarishness of the prolonged *seiza*, or the endless *hajime geiko* sessions but, with smiles on our faces as we recounted our suffering, the interviewees would often say that they saw no need for such training, and felt that such extremes had been pointless. Such details of what methods the *senshusei* training would entail were not necessarily known beforehand by most who signed up for the course, it was simply that we knew it was renowned for being tough. A couple of the police I trained with admitted that they were shocked when the training began, and had not thought they would be able to manage it, and yet all of them stayed to completion, and applied their bodies wholeheartedly. Ueda-sensei insisted that it was his purpose to shock – the course was designed to stretch the police to their mental and physical limits, and maintaining such extreme training conditions was a means to achieve this.

Explanations were rarely passed down to the *senshusei* with regards to why certain things were demanded of us during training, we were simply expected to do exactly what we were told, as quickly as possible, no questions asked. For example the weekly practice of *zagaku*, in which we had to endure the torture of sitting in *seiza* for ninety minutes whilst the police recounted their ‘Regrets and Habits’ of the previous week. Similar to Bar-On Cohen’s account of *kibadachi* in karate (2009), where practitioners are expected to hold themselves in a wide-legged stance as if they are sat astride a horse for ninety minutes whilst stood in a circle, the fact that no one knew why they were enduring such a trial was not considered particularly relevant, it was only important that they do it. The physical experience of the event and the pain experienced by the body is encompassing enough that it does not require explanation or belief:

...both the accomplishment of maintaining the *kibadachi* posture for an hour and a half, and the shift of achievements from the physical body to the traits of selfness or mentality and then back to the physical body, do not depend on belief. The participants need not believe in their capacity to withstand the physical duress, nor do they need to believe in the potentiality of transforming achievements from the physical to the mental and vice versa. Furthermore, many of the young participants are not even aware of the aim of *kibadachi*. Like many aspects of training pertaining to the interface between the parts of the lived body, this exercise, too, is not explicitly explained; the participants are simply told to remain in this squatting posture for an hour and a half. Thus *kibadachi* achieves its effects even when the participant has no prior knowledge of the effect. This spare practice comprising only one movement – or, rather, one mode of refraining from movement – operates through the doing itself. (Bar-On Cohen, 2009: 613)

Similarities can be drawn between such practices and the processes of Zen Buddhist training; not only will the monks spend extensive periods sat in *zazen*, but there will be almost no explanation given as to why such an exercise is necessary, or what it is supposed to accomplish. Victor Sogen Hori has argued that this lack of information is an integral element to the Zen training, the focus being on the action of learning and discovery, rather than having a ‘correct’ answer (1994). This

centring on process rather than resolution is an important distinction of the *senshusei* style of traditional Japanese *budō* training, and yet also seems inherently contradictory: a student must do everything their *sensei* says, exactly as they instruct, without deviation, but is not supposed to question why, and is instead expected to find out the answers for themselves. The purpose of which is to simultaneously allow students to find their own way, whilst strictly keeping them to a narrow line, in the hope that this will make them stronger. This type of model relates to the discussion of safe spaces in the previous chapter and how, in order for performed violence to be practised safely, the environment must contain a level of control: “At its best, the experiential classroom becomes a space that can allow intense situations involving frustration, anger, and conflict as well as playfulness and discovery to arise but also to be contained.” (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015: 722). Without boundaries or purpose, martial arts training would simply be bullying and violence, but within the container of ‘*senshusei*’, the same methods can be consented to for the appropriate time, and utilised as a process of potential transformation.

Purpose is a key factor when examining the existence of agency and consent within a specified context, and is arguably what distinguishes consensual action from conformity or coercion (not that these are mutually exclusive). A person can consent to being cut open for the purpose of making their body more aesthetically beautiful, in the case of plastic surgery, or can actively participate in scenarios of humiliation and torture for the purpose of sexual gratification, such as those who engage in BDSM (Beckmann, 2009). There are also many ritual and religious examples of intentional bodily harm being utilised for social and spiritual transformation (Glücklich, 2003; Morris, 1993). The commonality between these various examples is that they all have an explicit purpose, and they mostly involve the assistance/guidance of an authority figure in whom the person in question has placed some level of trust. In the case of plastic surgery, trust is placed in the hands of the surgeon; when taking part in SM play there will be a partner(s) who will be trusted to remain within predetermined limits of the performed scene (Beckmann, 2009); for religious/cultural rites there are figures of authority who will offer guidance to those involved. During *senshusei* training, the recruits are giving their consent to the *sensei* to do whatever needs to be done in order to train them, the purpose of which is to make them stronger. The skills and strength acquired during this intensive course are not insignificant, but are instead a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977); every *senshusei* who completes receives their instructors licence which, for the police, means training their co-workers, and for the *kokusai* can mean staying on at Honbu to help teach, or setting up their own *dōjō* somewhere else. The significance of this type of cultural capital has a long history of romanticisation, both in and outside Japan, in the form of martial arts movies; when watching the harsh training regimes endured by the main characters from *The Karate Kid* (1984), or *Rocky* (1976), or my personal favourite, *Kill Bill: Vol. 2* (2004), we see these as moments of inspiration and a testament to the character’s strength of will.

The absorbing nature of this type of drama comes from the purpose of those who are training, whether this is to win a competition or to murder an ex-lover, they are consenting to such intense physical trials in order to build strength and skill in their chosen form of bodily capital.

Although there is no camera rolling, and no burning passion fuelled by the need for revenge, those who engage themselves on the *senshusei* course become committed to the harsh realities of the training because they want to become stronger, learn aikidō, and complete the challenge in front of them. Such a mentality is comparable to those who run a marathon, or engage in an Iron Man, the main difference being that the training of the *senshusei* is the challenge, rather than the means to a culminating event. Within this environment, a great deal of trust is placed in the *sensei* to know what they are doing, to know what the *senshusei* should be doing, and to read their individual bodies appropriately in order to maintain the fine line that exists in pushing them past their limits without breaking them. Further discussion of these hierarchical relationships and how they function in the Japanese social context specifically, will be examined in the next chapter.

Communication about what levels of performed violence and painful training a person is comfortable with is rarely spoken out loud, whether for *senshusei* or *ippan*, and has not received much attention within other martial arts ethnographies (Wacquant, 2006; Garcia & Spencer, 2014; Nash, 2017). But just because the word ‘consent’ is not vocalised does not mean that the concept itself is not overtly present. In such practices of the body, there is an intricate communication of body language and attitude that all practitioners have a responsibility to be sensitive to, and is the task of the *sensei* to observe and regulate; as many fellow martial artists have discussed with me, the creation of a positive training environment is almost entirely dependent on the philosophies of the teacher. Different practitioners have different perspectives on how the performed violence should be balanced with care, and it is this difference which requires a constant vigilant sensitivity whilst training with multiple people. In chapter 2 I described how the experience of pain does not necessarily negate the feeling of safety, and can in fact be utilised as a method for strengthening and transformation, and in chapter 3 I outlined the various ways in which the *dōjō* is continuously created and maintained as a safe space for such painful practise to be endured. Both the above discussions hinge upon the enthusiastic consent of individual practitioners towards their training in order to be true. In this chapter I have described the multifaceted ways that consent is communicated within the *dōjō*, whilst remaining unspoken. The *senshusei* training is an extreme example of this but, because of that, it also contains the greater possibility for individual growth and transformation. The origin and purpose of this course was and is for Tokyo police officers, who deal with much lower levels of violent crime than their counterparts in other big cities such as London or New York, so why is such training available to them? Extrapolating from the themes of the last three chapters, I will next examine the social role of police in Japanese society.

Chapter 5



Fig. 35: A favourite photo, this was taken by one of the *dōjō* staff after I had left Tokyo and returned from fieldwork. One of the last things I did as *sewanin* was create a design for a new Honbu t-shirt, but it was not printed in time before my departure. As well as posting a t-shirt to me in London, the police *senshusei* (who I had been helping to teach) posed for this picture to be sent to me.

Watching The Watchers: Open-Access Policing in Japanese Communities

The very first interview I conducted when I began this research during my Masters, before I had even planned to do a PhD, turned out to be an instrumental example of everything I would go on to research about policing and crime in Japan. My friend Yuki told me about when her parents' house was broken into one night whilst she was home alone. She described an incredibly frightening experience which luckily only resulted in the theft of a few documents before the burglar ran away for fear of discovery. A few weeks later, however, her family started getting calls from a loan shark – it seemed the thief had used the stolen documents to borrow a large sum of money in her mother's name from some "Dodgy people". Despite various attempts to explain that they had been robbed and that they had never borrowed any money so therefore had no intention of paying anything back, the loan shark refused to believe them and the threatening nature of the calls increased. This reached such a distressing level that she and her family went to their local police for help. After listening to their story, the officer very quickly knew what to do – he immediately called the loan-shark (Yuki was not sure how he knew who to call, but he apparently did), and instantly began to tell him off by saying things like "What are you doing? These people are ordinary, nice people!" She explained that the officer never expressed any notion that the loan-shark should not be conducting this type of business, but that he should not be bothering 'ordinary' law abiding citizens. By the time she and her family returned home they received a call from the loan-shark, but this time he sounded almost like a different person as he tripped over his excessively polite language attempting to apologise for any trouble caused. With one well-placed phone call, their harasser had been transformed from a pit-bull to a simpering puppy, and the problem that had been so distressing was instantly resolved.

The defining feature of this story is the emphasis on relationships; the fact that the police officer whom the family spoke with knew exactly who to call, meant that they must have known each other and had an understanding of their line of work. The fact that the loan shark changed their behaviour so drastically after speaking with the officer – scene-switching from intimidation to meek apologist – demonstrates the type of authority that the police have; they will not stop the loan shark from conducting their (possibly shady) business, but they will make sure such business does not encroach into the lives of innocent, 'ordinary' people. And it is clear from the response that the loan shark also wishes to maintain a less antagonistic relationship with the local police, and will therefore acquiesce to such demands, and adapt their behaviour accordingly. After the robbery occurred, there were no actual laws broken, no literal 'crime' to speak of, yet the police

officer involved listened patiently to the details of the situation, and used his connections to intervene on the family's behalf.

It is this emphasis on community involvement and social interaction that I will examine in this chapter. In a similar way to how I have described consent being communicated through constant physical and social interaction in the aikidō *dōjō*, I will argue that consent is also granted to the Japanese police through their open forms of engagement and relationship-building within their communities. The physical situation of the *kōban* buildings creates a node of social care and arbitration that people are free to ignore or utilise as and when they require. The open-access of these institutions means that police officers are always visible and available to the public they serve and, in a similar way to the watchful gaze of the *sensei* during training at the *dōjō*, their regular but unimposing presence helps to maintain a sense of security for those who are interacting in their locality. The *dōjō* is a bounded space with one main focus – practising aikidō – whereas public streets are diverse and in constant motion, so these contexts are not the same, but I will examine in this chapter how the social mechanisms and behaviours that contribute towards a sense of collective safety are in fact similar.

Whilst they are engaged on the *senshusei* course the police officers make significant effort to be friendly and helpful towards the staff and regular members (as has been described in the previous chapters). Without needing any instruction they practically fall over themselves trying to serve drinks and clear away empty food containers during the *dōjō* parties, or act as jovial entertainers towards the children when they come for classes. During the summer *gasshiku* (training camp)⁷² with the *ippan* members, as soon as the coach had parked next to the hotel where we were booked to stay the police *senshusei* immediately stationed themselves next to the road to help everyone cross safely, paying particular attention to the younger members. They were all very sociable and made an effort not just to be friendly but to be of service as much as they could, for the purpose of which they maintained a heightened state of attention to everything around them at all times. Even though they were not on duty at their *kōban*, their role as caretakers within the community was ever-present.

Martial arts training is a compulsory part of policing in Japan, whether it is judō, kendō, or aikidō, all officers are required to practise regularly (hence why there are instructors courses like the *senshusei*). In a different country, with a different cultural and social context, the idea of police being highly trained in fighting techniques might feel sinister or threatening, but this is not the case in Japan. One reason is that the type of martial arts being taught are considered to be an important part of Japanese culture, and another is that, at the core of these different forms, is a purpose of not causing harm. Aikidō, as has already been described, is a self-defence only style of

⁷² A weekend trip was organised by the *dōjō* staff every year for all members to attend, including those from the children's class.

fighting, the pinnacle of which is to have the skill to face any type of attack and be able to defend, neutralise, and disarm the attacker without causing them any injury. Judō, the kanji for which translates as 'the gentle way', may seem rough because it is focused on body throws, but when performed with skill such throws should allow the other person to land safely. Kendō seems farthest from being usefully relevant to police work, as the practice of it requires a bamboo sword and extensive body armour, but again there is no harm being dealt more than a few bruises, the focus being on timing and precision. The training for all of these styles focusses on more than simple skill, but also strengthening the body, building endurance, and providing a site for meditation and personal growth. Also, training in this way is useful practise for dealing with any physical altercations without fear or panic. One of the police *senshusei* I interviewed after we had completed the course told me they had managed to subdue a large teenage boy using his aikidō skills (he was a rugby player and his family had called the police because he was drunk and causing a disturbance). Another commented on how grateful he was to train with tall foreigners, as now he does not worry about having to confront them whilst on the job.

Attention and sensitivity to one's training partner is emphasised in all of these martial arts, and it is a similar ethos that creates the condition for a style of policing that is welcomed in the community. In this chapter I will be examining the Japanese policing system from within its own specific cultural and social context, using some examples of police in other countries in order to make a comment on the criticisms of this system as its own unique subject rather than as a cross-cultural comparative. I will examine the role of the *kōban* as an established policing institution throughout Japan, critically examining the concept of state surveillance and discussing whether such a term is an appropriate descriptor of the way in which the police engage with the public. I will then discuss how hierarchical relationships map out in the Japanese context and what that means for police relations within their communities; I will describe a policing structure that is fully embedded in its social location, and is constantly receiving both the consent and regulation of the people through active relationship building, open engagement, and consistent attention to the mundane.

Kōban – A Cornerstone of Japanese Policing

The chief of the police school in Fukuoka pointed out in 1934 that "the current institution of the police was not established after a careful exploration of 3,000 years of history in Japan, an examination of the Japanese spirit, and a consideration of Japanese morality, but was *imported* from France and was adapted to the Japanese spirit and morality" (Mori, 2000: 71-2). Even though the basic structures may have been imported, as Walter Ames puts it "the police have not

been moulded in a vacuum... they fit Japanese society like a glove fits the hand, and the societal hand has determined the form of the glove." (Quoted in Hendry, 1995: 214).

Richard Ericson and Kevin Haggerty have described community policing as a "romantic delusion" that never was possible and never can be (1997: 67). However, from what I gathered from those I spoke with, there exists a high level of social trust and respect for the Japanese legal and governmental institutions, and the police, as the front facing representatives on the ground, benefit from this attitude (Parker, 2015: 9). In his influential book on Japanese policing in 1991, David Bayley highlighted the fact that during 1987 there had been only 50 complaints received against the police from the Human Rights Bureau in all of Japan (Bayley, 1991: 3). Whilst some have pointed out the considerably weak formal checks on their police powers by comparison to other countries (Finch, 1999: 495), Bayley discusses whether this low number is because people are not as sensitive to police misconduct. An examination of the media attention given to such topics has caused some to identify a too generous stance (Finch, 1999: 496), but others to reason that there might just be a lack of police scandals in the first place, giving the media nothing to write about (Bayley, 1991: 3). I would put forward another possible reason why official complaints might be low, but also why such figures might provide an inaccurate picture of public feelings towards the police, which is the emphasis on social expectations and repercussions over official/legal methods. In a discussion about the role of the law within Japanese communities, Joy Hendry describes an example of a family who's son accidentally drowned in a neighbour's pond, and how they subsequently took legal action against the neighbour. Whilst everyone had been sympathetic to their loss, the fact that they took action to demand *legal* compensation led to them being vilified and ostracised by their community, as this was seen as entirely inappropriate behaviour towards a neighbour, when the death had been an accident (1996: 210). Official routes of complaint or action are seen more as a last resort by many, as informal, social sanctions are far more effective (Hendry, 1996: 218). It may not be surprising then, that the number of 'official' complaints against police officers in Japan are low, though this may not be an accurate measure in accounting for their public relations.

This situation is comparative to the discussion from the previous chapter regarding the different ways consent is approached in MMA fighting and between BDSM practitioners. Fighters in the world of MMA have regulations imposed upon them by external bodies for the purpose of making the fights more palatable to a mainstream audience, but the fighters themselves are not invested in these rules, even strategizing on ways to break them that will provide an advantage in their official matches. The BDSM community, however, is strongly invested in creating and maintaining enthusiastic consent for every individual who takes part in such activities, and they manage this by teaching practitioners how to negotiate boundaries beforehand as well as to be sensitive to body language during scenes (Weinberg, 2016). In this example, though there are no

official rules, those who practise are actively forming and communicating their boundaries with each other, and are therefore much more invested in maintaining them. This open and constant communication is key for creating a positive, safe environment, and it is a similar pattern of social interaction that defines the role of the *kōban* within the community, as I will describe in this section.

One of the details I was struck by during my research was the response I invariably received (from civilian interviewees) to my enquiry as to the protocol for public complaints about a bad *kōban* officer; there would be a pause as they thought about it as well as a look of confusion on their face, almost as if they thought my question was strange somehow. Although a few people gave the disclaimer "It depends on the person", everyone admitted that they had never had experience of, or even heard about an unfriendly or rude *kōban* officer. Even if you are caught doing something wrong, their polite manner remains: one woman I interviewed who was a part-time journalist and Japanese teacher, told me about when she had been in a car accident which, she admitted quickly, was "Totally my bad!" She described being unhurt but badly shaken up and the *kōban* officers who were first to arrive on the scene were quick to try and comfort her – one of them even telling her that she was a good driver, even though she was well aware that she had been at fault. Another of my interviewees told me about being caught speeding, but instead of being authoritative the police had been incredibly polite, saying "*Sumimasen* (I am sorry), you were driving a little fast".

Another of my interviewees who, apart from a few years living in London, had grown up in the same area of Tokyo in which he now still lived and also worked. His local knowledge was extensive, and he regaled me with stories from his "Rude-boy" youth; being stopped whilst cycling and being taken to the local *kōban* to check his bike registration (all bikes are registered in Tokyo), both handing in and reclaiming lost items at the lost and found facility, and being kept an eye on by local officers whilst going through his rebellious teenage years. Though he described a range of experiences (some of the people I spoke with had had no previous experience with the police more than simply asking for directions), there was a noticeable sense of fondness and positivity to all of his depictions. One of his comments that set us both laughing was when I mentioned the popular maxim I had become familiar with that you would never find a fat Japanese police officer, as they are constantly walking and cycling on patrol (Parker, 2015). His response:

They're cycling around a lot. I think they're doing their policing in the area, and they're still using a 1970s bike but they're the fastest. We got chased by them and they always get you – they always get you! All the kids know that. We've got the latest bike and they've got that one but they somehow always get you.



Fig. 36: Local officer setting out on cycling rounds from Omote-Sando *kōban*.

I was told stories like this with smiles of nostalgia and without a single hostile word towards the local *kōban* officers. In fact, whenever I tried to enquire whether any derogatory nicknames existed for the police in Japanese, my informants would usually give me a look of confusion (a look I came to recognise). I had an especially interesting time when I tried to explain the nickname ‘the pigs’ to those of my informants who had never visited England; the response was bewildered surprise.

In the opening few pages of his research, Bayley gives the following description:

The Japanese police display a pride in themselves that is quite remarkable. They are supremely self-confident, not doubting the worth of the police role in society or the public's support of it. The annual *White Paper on Police* betrays no deep-seated anxiety about the position of the police in modern Japan. Police officers are neither defensive nor alienated. Though they have a strong sense of belonging to a distinct occupational community, solidarity has been self-imposed. They have not been driven in upon themselves by a critical public, isolated among their own kind. There has been no "blue power" movement in Japan, no organized effort among police officers to fend off threats to police autonomy. (1991: 4)

During my fieldwork, when I interviewed the police officers who I had trained with as *senshusei*, I did not pick up on any great sense of pride as police officers that Bayley appears to be describing. Granted, my pool of participants was low (I was able to interview eight of the ten officers from my cohort), but they had all signed up for and completed the most gruelling training available to

members of the force, yet I was surprised at their laid-back, laissez-faire attitudes; none expressed any burning desire towards the seriousness of the work, but instead seemed to look at it as a good job. When I asked them why they had decided to join the police, a few of them expressed their desire to help people, a couple talked about how they already had an interest in martial arts and this job would allow them to continue with that,⁷³ and one even pondered for a minute and then stated that he had simply liked the uniform.

This sense of relaxation becomes even more surprising when you examine the training requirements and working schedule of a typical police officer in Japan. Recruits can join the police with a high school diploma or a university degree, but will then have to engage in different amounts of training respectively. The below diagram (taken from a handbook created by the Japanese National Police Agency) outlines the various training necessary for joining and progressing through a policing career. During the earlier stages, most recruits and officers live in police dormitories, then move to family accommodation when/if they get married.

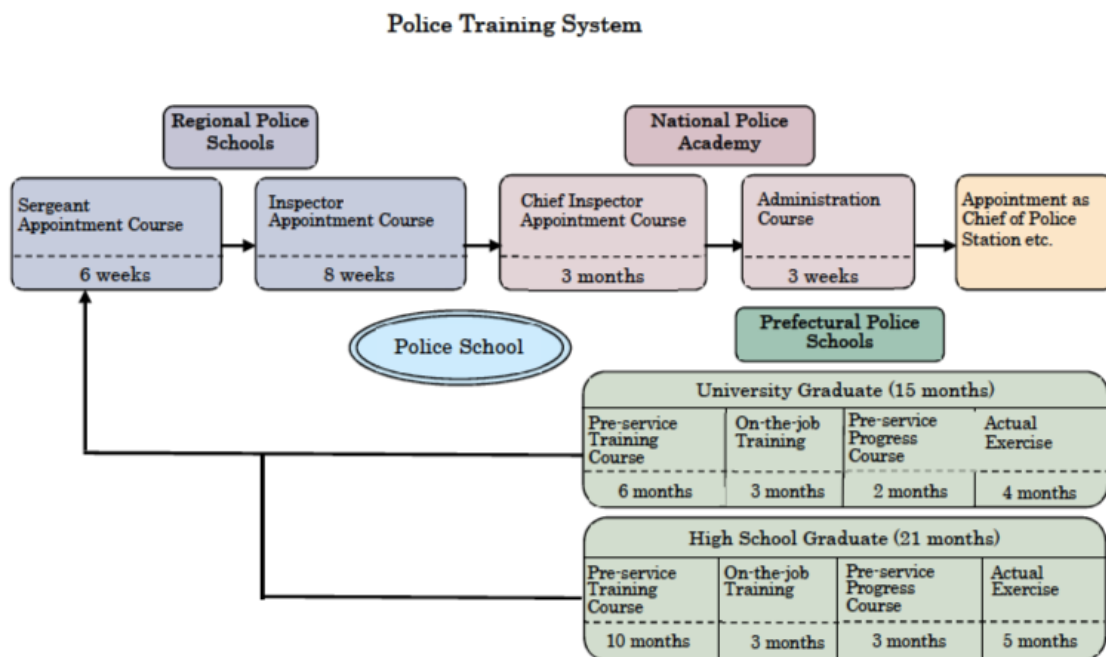


Fig. 37: Diagram of Japanese police training.

Once they are a fully-fledged member of the police force, most officers start out in the regional division working in a *kōban*⁷⁴ (local police box). Although surprisingly varied in size, shape and

⁷³ This particular answer demonstrates the obvious bias in my interview group.

⁷⁴ There are two types of police boxes in Japan: *kōban* and *chuzai*sho. The difference between the two is usually one of population density; the *kōban* exist in cities and the *chuzai*sho (which usually serves as both a

architectural style (as you can see from figures 3, 4 and 5), there are over 12,000 *kōban* and *chuzai*⁷⁵ situated around the country (National Police Agency).



Fig. 38: *Kōban* at Ikebukuro East.



Fig. 39: *Kōban* in Ginza.



Fig. 40: *Kōban* at Shinjuku Station.

Usually situated in busier street locations, they are staffed by a minimum of four officers at one time, the general duties of whom tend to vary depending on the location. According to a Japanese police recruitment website, the typical schedule of an officer looks like this:

· 7:00 / *Wake up*

Married officers commute from their own houses, but unmarried officers typically live in special, dormitory-style police housing. All officers must arrive at the station in a formal business suit.

· 8:45 / *Arrive at the police station (main station) for morning assembly*

Kōban officers must first report to the police station before starting their shifts. They change into their uniforms and carefully check their individual gear. All officers then assemble for the morning address (chōrei) from the department chief, in which assignments are given and a general debriefing is given on any major emergencies or other important events. This is concluded with an inspection of personal gear (radio, puncture-resistant vest, sidearm, police notebook, etc.).

· 10:00 / *Travel to Kōban, Update and Debriefing from Previous Day's Officers*

house for the police officer and his family, as well as his workplace) are more often found in rural areas. As my own research was conducted in Tokyo, I will be referring to the *kōban* in my discussion.

⁷⁵ *Chuzai* are live-in police boxes that are common in rural areas; the police officer lives there with his family.

Upon arriving at their kōban, the officers are debriefed on the previous day's events by the previous day's officers. Afterward, they carry out their day per that day's schedule.

• 10:30 / Taking Calls & Giving Assistance

The next 90 minutes are spent responding to phone calls and giving aid to civilians who come to the kōban. This can include giving directions, processing or responding to lost-and-found claims, and reports of petty crimes (purse-snatching, disturbing the peace, etc.)

• 12:00 / Lunch

At noon, the officers take a one-hour lunch "break." In reality, it isn't much of a break at all; officers are expected to reschedule, shorten, or even go without a break if necessary to carry out their duties. However, each kōban shift lasts until the following morning, so it is important for the officers to ensure they take time to rest and refuel at some point during the day.

• 13:00 / Daily Rounds (junkai renraku), Traffic Enforcement

Officers spend the next three hours making the rounds of local businesses and households. These visits have many purposes, including crime deterrent, as well as keeping the public informed about police activity. As part of this process, the officers will collect names and phone numbers for different households. This information is added to the community register (meibo), which is used to perform wellness checks during emergencies. An officer's daily rounds help instil an awareness of the police presence in the community and creates opportunities for members of the neighbourhood to communicate directly with police and express their concerns or needs, etc. While conducting their daily rounds, officers also take the opportunity to give tickets for illegal parking and other traffic-related violations.

• 16:00 / Paperwork

In the early evening, kōban officers respond to emergency calls and instructions from the station and address any emergencies or crimes that occur within their jurisdiction. This can include investigation of suspicious persons or objects, thefts or shoplifting, public groping (chikan), altercations between civilians, underage drinking, and smoking in non-smoking areas. Responding to each of these scenarios also involves the completion of relevant paperwork, which is done upon arriving back at the kōban.

• 17:00 / Standing Watch, Public Surveillance

"Tachiban" or "Standing watch" refers to the portion of each shift that a kōban officer spends

standing in front of the kōban. By making him or herself publicly seen, an officer reinforces the sense of police presence and police activity, which helps to reduce crime. Standing watch is especially valuable in the morning and evening hours, when there are many commuters and pedestrians out and about and, subsequently, greater risk of traffic accidents and pickpocketing, etc.

• 22:00 / Nightly Patrol

Kōban officers begin patrolling their areas of jurisdiction in a police cruiser. While on patrol, officers investigate suspicious individuals, make arrests, deal with drunken or rowdy civilians, and conduct whatever policework is necessary during that time. During the course of their patrol, if kōban officers receive notice of a crime or emergency that has occurred, they will immediately go to respond to it.

• 00:00 / Checkpointing (mini kenmon)

Kōban officers will establish a checkpoint on a major road, where they will stop passing vehicles in order to briefly question the occupants. This serves as a way to identify suspicious persons and ensure that traffic laws (e.g., drunk driving prohibitions) are enforced.

• 2:30-6:30 / Sleep and Break Time

The kōban officers spend this time sleeping or resting in shifts. There is an on-call room (kamin shitsu) with a bed, where officers can get a few hours of rest. However, if an emergency should occur any time during these four hours, officers are expected to be ready to respond at a moment's notice.

• 7:30 / Standing Watch

As before, the time spent standing watch is used to monitor the area around the kōban and enforce traffic laws.

• 10:00 / Shift Change/ Completion of Remaining Paperwork

The officers for the next shift arrive at this time, and they are debriefed. The kōban officers preparing to end their shift also complete any clerical duties (paperwork) that they have not finished. If there are any lost-and-found items at the kōban, these are passed into the care of the new shift officers. When this is completed, the kōban shift ends.

• 11:00 / Going home

The day on which a kōban shift ends is referred to as hiban (“ending of a watch”). Officers receive the day after a kōban shift as a day off, per the “one on, two off” system (ikkin, nikyū sei). Even within hiban, there are two types: “standby hiban” (taiki hiban) and “regular hiban” (tsūjō hiban). The officers on standby hiban return home, but they are expected to be ready to respond if duty calls. Officers on regular hiban are considered “off duty,” but even they can be called into action if the situation demands it. As a result, officers on hiban must always be mentally prepared to return to their police duties.⁷⁶

An important detail to note is that the regular *kōban* officers do not play a significant role in criminal investigation; it is detectives who have this responsibility. According to Setsuo Miyazawa, “Even when patrol officers have a chance to arrest a suspect by themselves, they have to transfer the case immediately to the detectives.” (1992: 43-4).

The officers stationed at particular *kōban* have special obligations and duties within their catchment areas. Some have argued that police in Japan have it easy because there is such a low amount of crime – especially of the violent variety – for them to have to deal with (Aldous & Leishman, 1997: 148), but the small amount of time spent by police anywhere in the world on directly dealing with crime has been largely accepted in recent research (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997: 19). The role of the *kōban* officers actually looks more like social work than policing, but with the added responsibility of informal arbitration of community conflict. Citizens can turn to their local *kōban* for any kind of counselling and problem resolution, known as *komarigoto sōdan* (which literally translates as “annoyances consultation”) and will rely on their powers of judgment (Parker, 2015: 13). The stories I was told during my research varied greatly: one of my interviewees told me about when her son had lost his train pass and had no money with him to buy another ticket so had gone to the nearest *kōban* in order to use the phone. Instead of calling home, however, the *kōban* officer had simply lent him the money he needed from his own pocket. Another interviewee told me about a *kōban* situated in a particular area of Tokyo which was renowned for very expensive bars and clubs: he described one night when a queue of people had formed outside the *kōban*, made up of patrons and bar owners who were all arguing about being overcharged and appealing to the local officers to intervene.

The physical situation of the buildings themselves are an important aspect of the *kōban*, and should not be overlooked, as they are a permanent beacon to people in the community, whether they need directions, advice about a dispute or have been the victim of crime themselves, everyone knows where to go. There does not appear to be a protocol for turning someone away from a *kōban* for wasting police time with something trivial. For example, in the ethnographic

⁷⁶ <https://shingakunet.com/bunnya/w0001/x0003/ichinichi/> (accessed 22/04/2023).

descriptions given by Bayley (1991), and a few years later by Parker (2015), of the various chats with the homeless, with drunks, with young people unable to get home, with old people who simply want company, there never seemed to be a situation underserving of their time and attention. As Bayley explains it,

A *kōban* patrol officer, to function successfully, must cultivate the ability to listen patiently. Police officers spend endless hours allowing people to demonstrate that they are alive, have problems, feelings, values, and a uniqueness that is significant. Listening is often an end in itself; it makes no contribution to further action on the part of the police officer or the private individual. (1991: 19)

Having the patience and willingness to help and listen so attentively is especially remarkable when you look at the shift timetables at a *kōban*, as detailed above. The low crime rates may make policing sound like a simple task in Japan, but it appears that more effort is put into preventative measures of strengthening community relations than in dealing with crime after it occurs. Although the officers that I trained with all hated the practice of *zagaku* and claimed to find it pointless, I cannot help but be reminded of those sessions when I look at the emotional endurance that is required in their regular police duties.

But these *kōban* are not simply a place of work. With the demanding shift times, along with the system of allocating specific officers to specific *kōban* for a number of years at a time, they become a type of secondary home where officers eat, sleep, relax, and build relationships with co-workers and local inhabitants (Bayley, 1991: 23). They are also responsible for the cleaning and general upkeep of the space (hence why all of the police *senshusei* were so used to the cleaning duty when they were at the *dōjō*). In this way the boundaries between the police and the public become porous; this space that is personal to the officers, is also a space for the local community. The relations of power in this dynamic inevitably become blurred; whereas the police have legal powers to impose order on regular citizens, the citizens themselves have a right to visit this space and take up the time of the *kōban* in any mundane way they choose, the officers having a duty to pay attention.

This breaking down of boundaries occurs in the other direction as well, in the form of regular home visits. According to protocol, the officers at each *kōban* are supposed to conduct a residential survey by visiting every home within their catchment area twice a year in order to record who is living there and what their situation in the community is, as well as circulating information on any local crime issues. Although this may be the rule on paper, from what I gathered from my interviews this is not the reality. Most of my interviewees admitted to never having been visited, although this was qualified with opinions about how things are different in Tokyo because it is so crowded and people move around so much, making it difficult – and

somewhat futile – for the police to keep track. During the almost two years I lived in Tokyo, I never once received a visit from a local police officer (which, considering the purpose of my research, left me very disappointed). One of my interviewees told me that she had been much more familiar with the local officers where she grew up (a rural town), and another told me that her elderly mother was friendly with their local police, as she was the only person who was at home during the times of their visits. Whilst clearly not a strict practice, not only are the home visits good for maintaining up to date knowledge about the area each *kōban* is responsible for, but it also forces the officers to meet the regular people within the community, the citizens who are not drunk, angry or lost, the people whose peace it is their job to keep. A number of studies from other countries have noted the regular complaints of officers that their work only ever brings them into contact with the ‘lowest’ end of society, and that this inevitably causes a psychological backlash of negative stereotyping and bad feeling towards the public. The residential survey acts as an antidote to this hazard, keeping the lines of communication wide open and promoting community involvement and trust (Bayley, 1991: 81).

In their research on this topic, Christopher Aldous and Frank Leishman have discussed the "positive, sometimes surprisingly uncritical, appraisals of the Japanese police system amongst Western commentators since the 1970s have generally highlighted the *kōban* as the key to Japan's apparent success in law enforcement... By contrast, Yoshio Sugimoto (2010) is at pains to stress the importance of the *kōban* as a means for 'close surveillance on the private lives of individuals' despite its international reputation as 'a way of reducing crime rates'" (2010: 3). My issue with this view is the division of the concepts of the *kōban* as devices of surveillance *versus* their role in community engagement and crime reduction; in trying to emphasise the importance of one over the other they miss the possibility that both might be true. There are two terms that require closer examination within these arguments: firstly, ‘crime’; this is something that discourse around policing globally has in common, and that is a focus on certain types of crime over others. In the literature on policing in Japan, I have read very little about their prowess in dealing with cybercrime or in their capacity to investigate tax evasion, for example, as has also been the case for discussions on policing in other countries. Instead the general focus tends to be around more physical actions that happen in everyday public space, such as theft, assault, public disturbance, etc. Domestic abuse is also mostly included in these discussions, yet the conversation on which often circles around the difficulty of intervening when such actions take place in private spaces. The second term that requires closer examination is ‘surveillance’, which is often used in relation to the state, but is rarely unpacked as a concept. What type of watching is surveillance? In chapters 3 & 4 I described the watchful gaze of the *sensei* as crucial in establishing the *dōjō* as a space where practitioners felt safe to perform potentially dangerous aikidō techniques. This watchfulness was about care and mentorship, for which the term ‘surveillance’ would be

inappropriate. Taking account of the cultural context of how the police function in Japan, I will unpack this concept in the next section.

What Does Surveillance Look Like?

The concept of 'surveillance' is something that is often discussed but rarely defined. A highly politicised word, what does it include and exclude, what are the different methods used, and are they all the same? Claims of state surveillance have been used by a number of scholars when writing about the Japanese *kōban* system (Wood, 2009; Murakami Wood & Abe, 2011; Aldous & Leishman, 1997), therefore I would like to examine this idea more closely. As an example, we do not usually describe parents watching their children in a public playground as surveillance, but we would describe security cameras stationed in the area watching everyone as such. Regardless of whether said cameras had been installed by the local government or by a private business, whether the footage is being actively watched or whether it is being wiped after recording, surveillance is still the most appropriate descriptor. This highlights another important distinction; machine versus human surveillance. By 'machine' I am referring to security cameras, which is a method of observation that is only helpful in catching a criminal once a crime has already been committed. Using CCTV footage the owners of a shop might catch someone breaking in and stealing property, which can then be handed over to the police for them to identify the perpetrator and take action. But watching footage after the fact cannot stop an incident from happening; a camera will not intervene. If the incident is only about the damage or theft of property then compensation can be acquired or goods returned, but in the case of something like an assault, the physical/mental/sexual trauma is done and will more often than not have permanent repercussions for the victim, no matter what steps are taken to arrest and punish the attacker after the incident has occurred. The presence of a person, however, creates the possibility for intervention, the focus being on prevention rather than punishment after the fact.

There is a significant and obvious difference in the type of surveillance that is possible for a camera versus a human. If a camera is recording then all of that footage is captured; everything that is in the line of sight of that lens will be saved, regardless of whether there are any illegal actions, and vast amounts of unspecified data will be collected. A human, however, is forgetful. We do not take in everything we see (especially if we are watching the exact same view we have seen every day for the past year), we are easily distracted and unfocussed. A human watching and gathering data is not the same thing as a security camera, as most things that are seen are either ignored or forgotten, but when there is something of interest, judgement can be utilised and action can be taken. Judgement is the key factor here, as those judgements can be wrong and/or

fuelled by prejudice. A human onlooker can also witness all kinds of behaviours that are not illegal, but may result in negative judgements being passed, whereas a CCTV will often have its footage automatically erased if it is not flagged for any particular need.

Life in Japan (especially in large cities like Tokyo) will contain both machine and human watchers at all times. Yet, considering Japan’s reputation for technological advancement, a number of studies have shown that it contains relatively few CCTV when compared with other large cities around the world. Cities in China are by far the most electronically surveilled (to such an overwhelming extent that I have removed them from the data spread). Below are two tables that show the number of CCTV by population and by area size; they show the top cities for each, then below are the figures for Tokyo, highlighted in blue.

Fig. 41: The most surveilled cities in the world – cameras per person⁷⁷

Country	City	# of CCTV Cameras	# of People (2022)	# of CCTV Cameras per 1,000 People	Size of city Miles ²	Cameras per square mile	Crime Index 2022
India	Indore	200,600	3,208,722	62.52	1505.02	133.29	48.37
India	Hyderabad	440,299	10,534,418	41.80	2801.93	157.14	43.96
India	Delhi	436,600	16,349,831	26.70	301.93	1446.03	59.31
India	Chennai	282,126	11,503,293	24.53	459.07	614.56	40.57
Singapore	Singapore	108,981	6,039,577	18.04	281.20	387.56	27.64
Russia	Moscow	213,000	12,640,818	16.85	969.50	219.70	37.67
Iraq	Baghdad	120,000	7,511,920	15.97	2007.72	59.77	60.48
England (UK)	London	127,373	9,540,576	13.35	606.95	209.86	53.25
Russia	St. Petersburg	70,000	5,535,556	12.65	555.60	125.99	39.12
United States	Los Angeles	34,959	3,985,520	8.77	469.00	74.54	49.75
Taiwan	Xinbei (New Taipei City)	35,000	4,470,672	7.83	792.50	44.16	14.32
South Korea	Seoul	77,814	9,975,709	7.80	233.67	333.01	25.77

⁷⁷ Bond & Moody, <https://www.comparitech.com/vpn-privacy/the-worlds-most-surveilled-cities/> (Accessed 22/04/23).

Thailand	Bangkok	77,975	10,899,698	7.15	603.09	129.29	41.50
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	54,519	7,643,256	7.13	428.57	127.21	21.92
Turkey	Istanbul	109,000	15,636,243	6.97	2006.18	54.33	47.54
United States	New York	56,190	8,177,020	6.87	300.39	187.06	47.07

Japan	Tokyo	39,504	37,274,000	1.06	5240.15	7.54	23.59
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Fig. 42: The most surveilled cities in the world – cameras per square mile⁷⁸

Country	City	# of CCTV Cameras	# of People (2022)	# of CCTV Cameras per 1,000 People	Size of city Miles ²	Cameras per square mile	Crime Index 2022
India	Delhi	436,600	16,349,831	26.70	301.93	1446.03	59.31
India	Chennai	282,126	11,503,293	24.53	459.07	614.56	40.57
Singapore	Singapore	108,981	6,039,577	18.04	281.20	387.56	27.64
South Korea	Seoul	77,814	9,975,709	7.80	233.67	333.01	25.77
Russia	Moscow	213,000	12,640,818	16.85	969.50	219.70	37.67
England (UK)	London	127,373	9,540,576	13.35	606.95	209.86	53.25
United States	New York	56,190	8,177,020	6.87	300.39	187.06	47.07
India	Hyderabad	440,299	10,534,418	41.80	2801.93	157.14	43.96
India	Mumbai	63,598	20,961,472	3.03	438.22	145.13	45.18
Mexico	Mexico City	80,000	22,085,140	3.62	573.36	139.53	69.07
Bangladesh	Dhaka	16,000	22,478,116	0.71	115.83	138.13	64.07
South Africa	Johannesburg	17,332	6,065,354	2.86	129.27	134.08	80.73
India	Indore	200,600	3,208,722	62.52	1505.02	133.29	48.37
Thailand	Bangkok	77,975	10,899,698	7.15	603.09	129.29	41.50
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	54,519	7,643,256	7.13	428.57	127.21	21.92
Russia	St. Petersburg	70,000	5,535,556	12.65	555.60	125.99	39.12

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Japan	Tokyo	39,504	37,274,000	1.06	5240.15	7.54	23.59
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Arguments have been made (especially by state governments) that the presence of CCTVs reduces crime, and yet data from the years since electronic surveillance has been rolled out on a large scale has provided mixed and inconclusive evidence on such a claim (Ratcliffe, Taniguchi & Taylor, 2009; Cerezo, 2013). Taking a look at the crime rates included in the above data shows no easily discernible pattern with regards to the number of CCTVs in a particular area. As mentioned above, camera footage may be helpful in catching a perpetrator after the crime has been committed, but may not prevent it from happening. The argument that knowing a CCTV is watching would stop someone from committing a crime for fear of the legal consequences has some merit, but this will not account for crimes of passion or desperation which, considering the well-established connection between crime and poverty (Huang, Laing & Wang, 2004), many criminal actions are.

The comparatively small amount of CCTVs in Japan is a signal away from the surveillance argument of the *kōban*. If their main purpose was simply to watch the local community, then they might have easily (and cheaply) been replaced with cameras over the past few decades, as has been happening in other countries; London, for example, has seen a rise in CCTV together with a reduction of physically present police officers. But surveillance is not the same as involvement – the *kōban* is an entrenched part of the community, it's officers are required to build relationships and listen without complaint to the needs and squabbles of the people who come to them. They are active in this purpose, by patrolling on their old bicycles, rushing to assist in traffic accidents, paying visits to local schools, businesses, and homes, and building relationships with the people in the community. The job of a *kōban* officer in Japan is not simply about watching for crime and anti-social behaviour, its purpose is to be involved and helpful to a community, so the majority of this work cannot be replaced by cameras. Cameras do not interact. This does not mean, of course, that they are all good at their job, that every officer has good judgement in dealing with disputes, that they are never insensitive, or that they never slack off in their duties, but the structure of how the police function is designed for care rather than enforcement.

That is not to say that the purpose of the *kōban* has always been the same; a look at the history of their inception in Japanese society paints a much more troubling picture, and provides ample evidence of their purpose as a method of state control and surveillance. In the early Meiji period, Fukuzawa Yukuichi, an enlightenment thinker who was instrumental in the formation of a police force in Japan, struggled to find an appropriate translation for the word 'police'. Provisionally, the word he settled upon was *torishimari*, which means 'control' (Mori, 2000: 7). The institutions of the *kōban* and the home visits were features inherited from this era, when the motivation was far

more one of surveillance and control of the people (Parker, 2015: 21). Some of the most troubling stories about the Japanese police date from the period just before World War II, as this was when the repressive forces of the state appear to have been at their peak with the creation of such institutions as the 'thought police' in 1911. Officially called *Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu*, 'Special Higher Police' or *Tokko* for short,⁷⁹ this special unit was in charge of dealing with anything that might potentially be a threat to public order. Around this time *kōban* were utilised for surveillance and control purposes, keeping in quick contact with the *Tokko* in order to report any signs of resistance (Aldous & Leishman, 2000: 7). The repressive and frightening nature of this period in Japanese history has often been noted and even provided inspiration for George Orwell's novel *1984*.

Yet, an examination of this frightening history would be incomplete without an acknowledgment of the national upheaval that occurred as a result of World War II. The defeat of Japan by America and the Allied Forces should not be underestimated in how it affected the nation as a whole. The entire Japanese constitution, written and imposed by America in 1947, is still in existence today. A Japanese friend commented to me that she had read the constitution in school but had found the language to be strange and difficult to understand because of the fact that it was originally drafted in English and translated into Japanese afterwards. One of the most impressive details of this constitution was the outright renunciation of war and the rule, set out in Article 9, not only never to engage in international conflict, but the complete disbanding of any armed forces.⁸⁰ After 36 years of the *Tokko* and a short but devastating few years of war that was rife with fierce nationalism and encompassed *kamikaze* pilots, mass poverty, and two atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the subsequent turnaround and fast-paced economic development has been the subject of much academic discussion (Wolferen, 1990; Sakai et al., 2005). Such a shift involved a significant social upheaval, exchanging a wartime extremist nationalism for a version of capitalism that invested significantly in the wellbeing of its citizens. This description is an over-simplification of what was a very complex time, but it is crucial to highlight the levels of change in the social consciousness that these occurrences would have had. This is especially important as so much of the research that discusses the repressive, surveillance heavy elements in the history of the Japanese police system, does not give any mention of this significant point of social change.

⁷⁹ They later became known as *Shiso Keisatsu* - 'Thought Police'.

⁸⁰ **Article 9.** Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized. - http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

After the war ended and the new constitution was imposed, the Japanese armed forces were disbanded (or rather, was renamed and reclassified as the Japanese Self Defence Force (SDF)), as was the *Tokko*. However, the system of the *kōban* remained. Robert Smith has described the social progress made at the time:

Accompanying the stability or decline in rates of violent crime is the successful transformation of the public's perception of the police from that of occasionally brutal, usually harsh figures of authority accorded respect largely based on fear to one of a very different kind. It is today the assumption of a vast majority of Japanese that police and public alike are on the same side in the unremitting effort to maintain order and minimize the dangers encountered by ordinary people in the conduct of their daily lives. (2009: 125)

Everything that I learned during my own fieldwork has led me to agree with Smith's assertion; the police are a part of everyday life, not as a brutal reality that cannot be helped and therefore must be endured, but as a contributing part of the community, with faces, names, and personalities that can be examined and judged on individual merit rather than as a faceless structural entity.

In a discussion about state power and surveillance I would be remiss if I did not include a consideration of Michel Foucault, specifically his examination of the Panopticon. One of the key elements of his discussion on this topic looks at the effects of distancing the watched from the watchers, in ways that are relevant to my own argument. Designed as an optimal example of prison architecture, the purpose of Bentham's design was to shift away from previous state practices of locking people away into darkness by instead exposing them to light and, most importantly, the inescapable view of their jailors.

In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions – to enclose, to deprive of light, and to hide – it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap. (Foucault, 1979: 200)

Foucault describes Bentham's purpose in designing this structure: the prisoner must be always visible to the guards, and must always be aware of that visibility, but the movements and gaze of the guards themselves must be kept hidden from the prisoner. In this way the prisoner will not know exactly when they are being observed but the possibility that they are is ever-present, with the intended consequence that the prisoner ends up watching themselves, becoming in a sense, their own jailor.

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (Foucault, 1979: 201)

Since Foucault wrote this piece, the levels of surveillance outside of prisons in everyday public life has grown enormously, and one reason for this is the increased development and cheapening of CCTV technology. If a key factor in the Panopticon concept is a disconnect between the person/people being watched and those doing the watching (or not, as the case may be), then the electronic method is a near perfect encapsulation of that idea.

It is for this reason that I would argue the situation with *kōban* police officers is different, and should not be lazily lumped together with other means of surveillance. As described by Foucault (1979: 200), “Visibility is a trap” and if so then it also applies, to some extent, to those stationed at *kōban*. The nature of the work, the fact that they are at the service of the public for whatever they need, regardless of whether it is related to ‘crime’ at all, the fact that they are stationed in a permanent location, open to the community twenty-four hours a day, every day, makes them just as visible to the public as the public is to them. Arguably, the police are more accessible than anyone else, as members of the public can shut their doors to the police (unless a warrant for forced entry has been obtained), but the *kōban* must remain open and welcoming to anyone who wishes, regardless of their needs and motives. The social watching goes on in all directions, but it is the *kōban* police who are the most visible.

Where the state insists on secrecy from the people is where the breakdown of trust begins, as then the question of ‘who watches the watchers?’ is no longer answerable. Living in London, though I may be highly surveilled whenever I am in public, I do not even know where my nearest police station is, nor do I know what goes on there. I do not ever see police officers unless there is a festival or protest, or if an incident has occurred (in which case I tend to see ambulances and fire engines much more often). Such sightings bring with them a sense of threat rather than safety; times when I have been at peaceful protests and have politely tried to ask an officer a question, they have refused to make eye contact and either ignored me or offered curt responses that do not invite further interaction. During the few years I lived in Japan, I saw police officers and their *kōban* everywhere I went, stood ready to help with any questions a passer-by might have, just as visible and accessible to the public as the public are to them.

As has been touched on above, there is significant emphasis on social obligations and duties within Japanese communities, to an extent that official figures of formal complaints may not

provide an accurate accounting of police/public relations. If an officer behaves wrongly and this is spread around within the community where they work, then the social sanction that would follow would have serious repercussions and is, therefore, taken seriously. The human engagement makes actions identifiable and attributable to specific individuals, for the police as much as for regular citizens. Instead of engaging with the public as faceless representatives of state law and punishment, the *kōban* officers are individually known and identifiable by members of the community. Such engagement and accountability also allows for the building of trust, hence why the social element of police work is so strictly emphasised (it may be an officers least favourite part of the job, but they still have to do it).

It should also not be assumed that the Japanese public are subdued and/or anaesthetised from judging the state too harshly due to the ongoing relationship maintained by the local *kōban*. We can see an example from 2002 when the Japanese public did not agree with a proposed government plan to install a new electronic database system called *Juki-net*, the purpose of which was supposedly to streamline public services by combining details of citizens already kept by various different institutions, and inputting them onto one system. Although seemingly innocuous in nature, there was enormous opposition to the installation of *Juki-net* and protest from the Japanese public. A poll conducted by *Asahi Shinbun* (a popular newspaper) showed that 76% of the population were against the introduction of *Juki-net* until an appropriate privacy protection law was in place (Wood, Lyon & Abe, 2007: 562). According to Wood et al, "The threat to freedom symbolised by the new registry was cited as a main reason for civil disobedience. Writer Morimura Seichi also argued that Japanese 'individualism' was at stake... an interesting critique in the light of the oft-cited priority of the group in Japanese consciousness." (2007: 562). From this example, we can see that the social trust that exists towards the state in Japan cannot be labelled as blind but is considerably engaged and informed.

This seeming aversion to online forms of streamlining, and instead an emphasis on face-to-face interaction is not limited to the police; an aspect of life in Japan that I found surprising, considering the countries international reputation for technological advancement, is how much older ways of doing things still persisted. As a few examples, many shops do not take card payments and only use cash, fax machines are in wide use (they had one in the office at Honbu), many businesses are not listed on google maps and do not even have a website, and so many actions still require face-to-face interaction. For instance, when you move house in Tokyo, you need to register your new address at the local ward office; these are enormous buildings that managed all administration for the area – couples register their marriages here, taxes are calculated, etc. But all of these things must be done in person, there is no online form that can be filled out, instead you must spend a few hours to visit the office, find the relevant department, take a ticket and wait for your number to be called so that your request can be processed. This

stubborn emphasis on human interaction for such processes is a significant factor in connecting people to their community as well as their local government. Also, much like with the *kōban*, the physical presence of the local ward offices is another example of how people can engage with the state; instead of the bureaucracy being processed in some unknown location cut off from the public, regular citizens can visit and make enquiries for whatever they might need.

In *The Nation State and Violence* (1987), Anthony Giddens discusses the relationship between state authority and states' use of force against its own citizens as a means of control. With particular focus on liberal democracies in a European mould, Giddens argues that states that subsume and avoid the use of violent force against their own citizens through bureaucratised surveillance are to be considered 'strong states', whereas those that use force and the threat of violence as the primary mode of control are 'weak states'. In practice these areas are a lot more complex; 'strong states' might have more substantial armies or police forces which makes the threat of violence implicit without having to use threats, for example. If a lack of the threat of violent force is the defining feature, then Japan might be labelled as one of the strongest states in the world, but what this model does not take into account is the level of autonomy wielded by the public to shape their own communities. Giddens' language – similar to many other scholars who discuss such topics – characterise 'The State' as a solid entity that is separate from the general public. In the case of Japan, due to the open nature of the police and the constant face-to-face interactions everyone has with their local bureaucracy, such boundaries are blurred. The police chat with anyone who comes to their *kōban*, eat lunch at the local restaurants, respond immediately to traffic accidents, deal with lost property, and listen to disputes – they are an entrenched part of the community and do not hold themselves apart from it.

Another factor in this blurring of boundaries happens in the other direction, as there are a range of ways in which community members can invest their time and energies within their own areas of residence and work, that is separate from the police. For example, the *Anzen anshin machizukuri jourei* – 'Safe and secure community building ordinances': first introduced in Tokyo on July 16, 2003, and has been amended several times since, most recently in 2015. The law consists of 35 ordinances that cover the following:

1. General Provisions (Articles 1–7)
2. Promotion of Independent Community Action for Crime & Accident Prevention (Articles 8– 10)
3. Increased Security for Private Residences (Articles 11–15)
4. Increased Security for Roads & Public Parks (Articles 16–18)
5. Increased Security for Retail Businesses (Articles 19–20)

6. Maintaining Public Safety in Nightlife Districts (Articles 21–23)
7. Maintaining Safety for Children at Schools, etc. (Articles 24–27)
8. Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unlawful Use of Dangerous Goods (Articles 28–30) 9. Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Targeted Fraud (Articles 31–33)
9. Miscellaneous Ordinances (Articles 34–35)⁸¹

The stated goal of Tokyo’s ordinances is to, “Create a framework for the realization of a safe, secure society through the promotion of community building and clarification of the duties of both citizens and Tokyo Metropolitan Government toward preventing crimes or accidents that threaten the lives, property, and wellbeing of the region’s inhabitants.” This group of ordinances is built upon the vision of a concerted effort by both organizations and individuals toward creating a safer and more secure society, in terms of not only crime prevention but also disaster preparedness, etc. As such, the aims of these laws and their related programs and initiatives are extremely wide-reaching, and include everything from increased funding for the installation of public lighting and security cameras to the formation and education of neighbourhood watch groups, safety patrols, demonstrations, and crossing guards along school routes. The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department website lists several of these organizations and initiatives, including 3,696 groups comprising 116,600 individuals (as of December 2021) who are active in ensuring the safety of their local neighbourhoods. Their actions include public awareness campaigns, patrols, cleaning up trash, and standing watch in areas where crime is common. Also, the so-called “Blue Patrol,” citizen volunteers who patrol for crime in specially marked cars with blue warning lights, were active in 301 different groups comprising some 19,000 members and using 786 vehicles (also as of December 2021).⁸² There does not currently seem to be any specific data analysis on what effects such community groups have had on crime prevention in their areas, but for the point of this discussion that is not the main focus. What such community groups demonstrate is a further blurring of the boundaries between what is considered ‘police work’ and what can be done by civilians within their own communities. These figures also show a large number of people who are willing and ready to commit their time and energies to such causes. This is one factor that should not be underestimated, as the act of such involvement requires an ongoing commitment from participants – not everyone will be eager, I have no doubt, but the social expectation exists to an extent that community-led groups not only function but wield considerable autonomy and social power.

⁸¹ 東京都安全安心まちづくり条例 'Tokyo Safe and Secure Town Development Ordinance' https://www.reiki.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/reiki/reiki_honbun/g101RG00003308.html?id=j7 (accessed 27/09/2023).

⁸² Ibid.

One anecdotal example of this from my fieldwork was from a conversation I had with one of my fellow *kokusai senshusei*. We had just completed the course at this point and were meeting some other *dōjō* members for a social at a local *izakaya* (Japanese style pub). Three of us were chatting in the street as we waited for everyone else to arrive and Alex was telling us about how he and his wife were planning to set up their own bar in Tokyo. This was apparently causing them enormous trouble, the likes of which, he complained, would never happen where he was from.⁸³ He told us that they had found a good place that was for sale, they had the money for it, but the local business community group were blocking their purchase or renting of the sight (I forget which they were wanting to do). He complained of how they were demanding character references that had to be written by people who lived in Japan and had known them a significant amount of time, before they would allow them to continue. It seemed that they would only be allowed to take over the premises if they could prove that they would be a positive addition to the community. Alex expressed his irritation about these hoops that they were being forced to jump through (it seems they did have people who could and would vouch for them, but he was frustrated by the process), and stated that they had double the amount of money needed but were still being hindered. I remember my own silent disagreement with his annoyance – though I could understand why he felt frustrated, the idea that a community group would have the power to dictate who could and could not start a business in their area regardless of how much money they offered felt like an unusually anti-capitalist situation. It also explained a question that I had been pondering in the back of my mind about how a city like Tokyo still managed to retain so many small independent businesses everywhere. Certain large chains do exist of course, like KFC and Starbucks, but they do not dominate to the extent of somewhere like London.⁸⁴

There is a flipside to this situation, however, that it is important to address, and that is the potential for exclusion of certain groups who may be deemed ‘undesirable’ by community leaders. One element of the situation that Alex dealt with was a question of whether such paperwork would have been demanded if he and/or his wife had been Japanese. Alex was white and, judging from his attitude when he was complaining about their situation, he was not used to being treated in such a way. It left me with the thought that Japan might be one of the few places where whiteness does not equate to unquestioned privilege.

At the time when Alex was describing his troubles I was already somewhat familiar with this type of opinion, as I had experienced it from other foreigners living in Japan. In his book *The Japanese Police System Today: A Comparative Study*, L. Craig Parker recounts a story told to him by

⁸³ A European country I will not identify to maintain his anonymity.

⁸⁴ Economics and small business ownership is not the focus of my research (and would be a whole other thesis in itself), so I will not go into more detail on this topic here, I merely wish to use this anecdote as an example of the autonomy wielded by communities even in large cities like Tokyo.

a Japanese-American woman who was stopped by police when going to lunch with an American friend. They were asked for their identification but the American friend had left his alien registration card (which all foreigners are required to carry) in his office and, instead of allowing him to quickly fetch it, they were escorted to a local *kōban* where they were questioned further, instructed to write an apology, and to report back with the missing ID within the next three days. Parker describes how annoyed the woman was at such treatment, both during, and after (2015: 63). I heard similar stories recounted by people in a social media group for ‘expats’⁸⁵ living in Tokyo, the general tone of which was always frustration and anger that they should be treated in such a way. Seeing the vehemence of such complaints often left me a little uncomfortable as I thought about comparative examples; even without conducting extensive academic research on policing, I could list names of black men and women who have been shot and killed by police officers in the US, or those who have died in police custody in the UK. The opening chapter of Didier Fassin’s book on policing in France, *Enforcing Order: An Ethnography of Urban Policing*, describes a situation where his own teenaged son is picked up by police and questioned without his parents or legal counsel, as they try to bully him into confessing to a crime he had nothing to do with (2013). Having an understanding of such comparative examples, and the lived reality of fear that many communities face when they are being policed by a state-backed institution that is so openly hostile towards them, the situation of being stopped and politely IDed by Japanese police officers does not feel of much importance. I have included this comparative as an example of the different ways that the local Japanese police perform their role in society than is true in other countries. There is a difference between living with the possibility of being inconvenienced, and the possibility of being shot; even if both situations stem from unjust use of state power, they are not the same thing and should not be equated. Even where prejudice exists (and it invariably always will), the *kōban* is not a tool of enforcement and intimidation but a locality of community assistance.

As has been described in previous chapters, the *sensei* who teach aikidō wield incredible power within the walls of the *dōjō*. There is a very strict hierarchy, with the *dōjōcho* at the top running everything as a dictatorship, and being shown deference and respect by all the other lower *sensei* and students. From my experience a Honbu, the *dōjōcho* never had to enforce his power, it was simply granted by all those who looked toward him for guidance and, though in many situations – such as the *senshusei* training – he was ruthlessly strict and demanding, he also demonstrated support and care towards those who trained under him, and would let loose and laugh together with everyone at the *dōjō* parties. This is a type of hierarchical authority that is common in Japanese society, and is comparable to that which is wielded by the local police: a

⁸⁵ A term that communicates a certain amount of privilege in itself; the group was made up of English speakers, most of whom seemed to be white.

power that is granted from below and layered with responsibility and expectations of care. It is this hierarchical dynamic that I will discuss in the next section.

Hierarchies of Power And Responsibility

Hierarchy is a significant factor in martial arts *dōjōs* and police forces all around the world, but the Japanese social context has its own quirks and norms that heavily influence both. In this section I will examine the ways that hierarchical relationships influence social interactions and also shift between changing contexts. I outlined the concept of scene-switching in chapter 3 as it related to changes in social settings and their different behavioural expectations; in this section I will discuss how people scene-switch between different hierarchical patterns. I will also highlight how such relationships are not simply about power that is directed downwards, but instead point to the weight of responsibility and social expectation that exists in the Japanese context. The purpose of this is to demonstrate how local police, though they may technically hold positions of authority towards the public, actually function within a social model that complicates this situation, meaning that they act as servants of their community rather than enforcers of order.

The fact that social hierarchy is so embedded in everyday life in Japan means that it is entirely natural for everyone to play both the superior and subordinate role without discomfort, and even to be able to fluidly switch between the two. The model is not simply a top-down power dynamic but is in fact about responsibility and care dependent on the situation. As the superior, a person will have certain obligations to look out for and support those below, rather than simply inflicting their will upon them. As was described in Chapter 3, a change in context may see a drastic change in not only behaviour, but social rankings; for example there was a man who trained at Honbu who ran a shop in the neighbourhood selling high quality *sado* (traditional tea ceremony) supplies and equipment. As a leaving gift the other *dōjō* staff bought me a full set of *sado* items, and he told me I should visit his shop for a demonstration of how to use everything before I left, which I did. By this time I had completed the *senshusei* course and had been assisting at Honbu as *sewanin*, so I was treated with marked respect by all who came to train at the *dōjō*. As soon as I went to this man's *sado* shop, however, our roles were instantly reversed, and he was the superior, to whom I showed deference and respect. The change of scene switched our hierarchical relations instantly.

When I talk of hierarchy, I do not want to create an idea of stiff formality – that is not the case at all. Whilst there are occasions where such behaviour was practised (such as the formal ceremonies and demonstrations), the usual modes of interaction are incredibly friendly and jovial. Though I was given respect at the *dōjō*, that does not mean I was not also teased and joked with between classes and at parties. The argument I wish to make is that there is a comfortability when

interacting with those both above and below in social settings, and a fluidity to the changes in circumstance that make it easier to communicate around such things. The police in Japan might wield a certain authority, but that also means a responsibility to those they serve, and this set-up does not create a barrier between themselves and others.

Chie Nakane wrote her book *Japanese Society* in the 1970s that went into significant detail on how Japanese social hierarchies functioned, particularly in professional capacities. Much of her thesis described the difference between horizontal and vertical organisation structures: horizontal has an emphasis on the relationships of those who occupy the same level, whereas in the vertical model the person in charge has strong bonds with the people below them. Using academia as an example, the horizontal structure would mean that professors form their own group, as do teaching assistants, and students, and their closest relationships and interactions are within those groups, compared with a vertical structure where a professor would spend more of their time with the teaching assistants and students who they have personally supervised and mentored. In Nakane's description, Western countries such as the US and UK function in a horizontal structure, compared with Japan that operates within a vertical one.

An obvious example of this structure is the martial arts *dōjō*: whilst learning aikidō⁸⁶ a student will become a member of a particular *dōjō* that is run by a particular *dōjōcho* and, although there may be multiple other *sensei* teaching as well, they will be disciples of the *dōjōcho* and, therefore, follow that person's aikidō style. As a student learns more they will tend to favour a particular *sensei* and often try to attend their lessons more than anyone else's. Once practitioners reach a certain level, they may even strike out on their own, setting up their own *dōjōs* and taking on their own students, but this will often be under the umbrella affiliation with a larger *dōjō* run by a more senior *sensei*. The London *dōjō* where I train, for example, though the head *sensei* is at a very senior level himself, we are aligned with the *dōjō* of his *sensei* in Japan, and the technique he instructs is faithful to the Yamanashi style (he has often pointed out my 'Honbu style' during training with disparaging exasperation).

The relationships between disciples and their *sensei* are faithfully maintained, often for decades and across great distances, though not necessarily between disciples who trained at the same level together. If the relationship is a positive one (and most people will not put in such effort to maintain relations with someone whom they do not respect and feel affection for), then from the top there is benevolent guidance and care, from below there is respect and loyalty.

The vertical personal relationship is more dynamic in character than the horizontal relationship. Protection is repaid with dependence, affection with loyalty. Because this is not an equivalent exchange, it tends to enlarge the emotional element beyond that to be found in

⁸⁶ This is the example I am most familiar with, but this structure is present across disciplines.

horizontal relations, and to make for easier control of the actions of individuals. This relationship does not bind the subordinate only; it also binds the leader who, though he may often appear to be able to exercise a great deal of power, sometimes of a despotic type, in fact, in comparison with leaders in other societies, finds his authority checked and controlled at a great many points. As I have said, the loyalty of a subordinate to his leader is highly regarded in Japanese ethics, and is often forced by the leader, but in practice the cost of receiving loyalty is high. It is governed largely by the relative quality of the relation between the leader and the subordinate, indications of which may be found in the political, economic or emotional elements. Normally all these factors are present, although the emotional factor has particularly important connotations. (Nakane, 1972: 67-8)

A number of important factors about the Japanese vertical relationship dynamic are that new members entering a group will often have a number of seniors to choose between before committing any loyalty, and that “seniority is based on length of service in a group or an institution, rather than a man’s actual age.” (Nakane, 1972: 69). As has been described above, when learning aikidō a student is free to experience a range of different *sensei* before deciding on which to follow, and such decisions are not limited to the aikidō style, but also the personality and teaching methods of the *sensei*. The temporal nature of this structure also means that, whilst a person will start at the bottom of the hierarchy, as long as they remain within the group and build good relationships, they will move steadily upwards, not always dependent on special talents or ability. Whilst doing the *senshusei* course we were not able to choose our instructors (though we all had our preferences), but the fact that all of the *sensei* had themselves been through and completed the course, was a significant factor in gaining our trust and respect. On the flip-side of this, there are a number of individuals I have encountered in Yoshinkan Aikidō (at whose identities I would never dare to hint), who are generally considered to be of low abilities but who have achieved a high ranking due to their ongoing commitment to the organisation.

Another key element of this dynamic is the weight of responsibility that is carried by the person at the top towards their subordinates. During my fieldwork, I heard of an incident at another *dōjō* where one of the *sensei* injured an *ippan* member during practise. This particular instructor was a favoured disciple and *uke* to the *dōjōcho* and, because the injured person was so angry that they even threatened legal action (incredibly rare in Japan), the *dōjōcho* took responsibility for his pupil and resigned his position.

In a business situation it is the same; if a subordinate makes a mistake, the responsibility for the consequences is taken on by the superior. The needs and opinions of those below can also have a significant impact on the actions taken by those above; Nakane describes an incident when Asahi Beer and Sapporo Beer created a plan for a merger (the two companies had originally been a single enterprise called Dainihon Beer Company, which had divided into two just after the war). The two directors were familiar, having worked together previously, but they had very different

management styles; Yamamoto, director of Asahi Beer was known to be despotic, whereas Matsuyama, director of Sapporo was a democratically minded manager as well as a pioneer of scientific techniques in beer production. When plans were announced publicly that Yamamoto would take the role of director upon completion of the merger, the executive staff of Sapporo united in opposition to the idea, stating that they would not work under him. Even though they were aware of the financial benefits of the unification, they held to their opposition so strongly that the plans were scrapped just two days later, and Matsuyama commented that he would never think of instigating a merger again (1972: 59). This example is interesting for the fact that it seems to complicate Nakane's own theory; whilst it illustrates the power of those below to exert great influence over their superior, it also demonstrates that relations within the organisation were both vertical and horizontal, as they could not have presented a united front in this instance if such relationships had not existed. Whilst the descriptions of these two different hierarchical models creates interesting points for comparison, it is unhelpful to position them as an either/or binary. Instead I would like to draw out the concepts inherent within such hierarchical relationships and discuss how they map onto various different social interactions.

For instance, the responsibility of care and attention, as well as authority, that exists within the role of the superior; it is helpful to conceptualise this as a type of mentorship. When a *senshusei* completes the course and wishes to stay on at the *dōjō* as an instructor and assist with the next group of recruits, the role they are given is *sewanin*, which means 'caretaker'. They are not yet at the level of *sensei*, so their role is to guide the new students in their behaviour and discipline, offer advice on caring for their body and injuries, and set an example of good conduct and practice (though this role is interpreted very differently by the individuals to whom it is given, as has been discussed in previous chapters). Young Japanese police officers just starting out in their jobs start by working at *kōban*, and their role towards the public bares a lot of similarity to the *sewanin*. From my own experience, I would argue that police officers are a great deal more friendly and open by comparison to a number of the *sensei* I trained with; the structure of individual *dōjōs* are run like dictatorships (due to the reverence all members and *sensei* pay towards the *dōjōcho*), so the general atmosphere depends greatly upon the personality and preferences of the person at the top. I cannot offer any insightful comment on the hierarchical nature that is practised inside the police force between its officers, as such data was not within the remit of my fieldwork, but as it is organised by a strict ranking system, a certain rigidity of structure may be inferred.

Nevertheless, social hierarchical structures are not necessarily fixed. There may be certain characteristics which always elicit respect (for example, much emphasis is placed on age), but relationships may also shift drastically with a change in context. I have already described the concept of scene-switching, and how dramatically behaviours and attitudes can shift depending on what is expected in a particular setting, such as the notorious drinking culture of Japanese

business men and women, who are deferential and diligent whilst at work, but then become raucous and playful when they go for drinks after the working day is over. In chapter 3, I described my own difficulty in performing the instant switch from serious *senshusei* to merry drinking buddy on the days when we hosted *dōjō* parties, but how effortlessly all of my Japanese cohort adapted to the change. There are subtler examples of this switch as well, for example, I heard a story about a *sensei* called Yoshida, the head of a different *dōjō* and his aikidō partner, Hayashi; they were both at an exceptionally high level, Yoshida was the *dōjōcho*, and Hayashi was his second in command, and usually acted as his *uke* in aikidō demonstrations. They had a number of Western practitioners who trained at their *dōjō* and, after the two had performed together, a few of these students overheard Hayashi reprimanding Yoshida for the mistakes in his technique. The students, who all held the *dōjōcho* in godlike reverence and were used to the overtly hierarchical nature of *dōjō* life (as I have mentioned, it is usually run like a dictatorship), were appalled by this apparent lack of respect from Hayashi towards their superior, and were heard complaining about it. However, when Yoshida got to know of their displeasure he corrected them by pointing out that the demonstration in question had been with weapons (sometimes used in aikidō, but not often), at which Hayashi was more expert than Yoshida, which meant that, in these circumstances, Hayashi was the superior regardless of their official ranks.

As has been detailed above, the work of a police officer stationed at a *kōban* is gruelling; absurdly long hours coupled with the fact that they must always be available and friendly to any and all people who might wish to visit them, no matter the reason, is a test of mental fortitude. Then they must also be alert to any emergencies that could arise, and be the first on the scene for any incidents of theft, violence, traffic accident, etc., sometimes without proper sleep or food. There is a burden of care that defines the work, comparative to the vertical relationship dynamic of the superior to their subordinate, described by Nakane. The police wield a certain amount of authority over members of the public, but it is a type of authority that is often demonstrated as a duty of care and only maintained due to the complicity and consent of the public; the vertical structure of organisation cannot exist without both a superior and the followers who recognise and acknowledge them as such.

Whilst we were training together at the *dōjō*, it was obvious how seriously all of the police *senshusei* took their roles as ‘helpers’ in any situation that involved the other regular members. Being *senshusei* was a part of their police training, so they continued to act on their responsibilities as such. As has already been described in previous chapters, during the social events they were all quick and efficient to prepare the space, attentive towards the needs and positive atmosphere of the guests, and made sure to clean everything up at the end (of course, they made sure to have their own fun as well!). When training with the *ippan* they gave themselves

as willing dummies to be used in practise, and on any occasions where the child members were present they would be sure to act as playmates, entertainers, and babysitters as required. I never noticed any instructions needing to be given in these situations, it was already well-established amongst themselves as to how they should engage with everyone there. In return, they were well liked and trusted by all of the other *dōjō* members. Despite the fact that they mostly trained separately, and that they would only be at the *dōjō* for nine months before returning to their regular work (after completing *senshusei* it was rare for the police to come back to train at Honbu), everyone welcomed them and made the most of their company whilst they were there. Many members of the *dōjō* had been training there for years, even decades, so nine months was a comparatively short stint to engage with the membership community, but those at Honbu were used to this turn-around, so it never seemed to be a problem. The police *senshusei* were also younger than most of the other long-term *dōjō* members, which would have been a contributing factor in how they behaved towards everyone. This situation bares a lot of parallels with the police who work at the local *kōban*; the particular postings will only be for a couple of years to one location, then they will be moved around. Such changes are to make sure that the officers do not become too entangled in the local politics of a specific area, and do not form rigid alliances with particular people (such politics existed at the *dōjō* as well, which the police *senshusei* never had to engage with). These regular moves also mean that the act of relationship building within a community is never over; as soon as an officer becomes comfortable in one area, that familiarity is taken away as they are transferred somewhere new.

A comparative example of this type of leadership structure, that emphasises service rather than coercion, is written about by Pierre Clastres in his ethnographic descriptions of power relations amongst native populations in the South American rainforest (2020). In his book *Society Against The State* he describes how “The first explorers of Brazil and the ethnographers that came after often emphasised the fact that the most notable characteristic of the Indian chief consists of his almost complete lack of authority” (2020: 28). Yet the political and social structure that Clastres goes on to describe is not without a power structure, it is simply without the violence of coercion. A number of factors are key to such a model; one is the separation of war and peace time into distinct situations for which different leaders are chosen. During times of conflict the war chief wields absolute power over the group, especially the fighters, but during peacetime he loses this power entirely. The purposes of peacetime leadership are very different, with the intent to steer away from internal conflict as much as possible.

Normal civil power, based on the *consensus omnium* and not on constraint, is thus profoundly peaceful and its function is “pacification”: the chief is responsible for maintaining peace and harmony in the group. He must appease quarrels and settle disputes – not by employing a force he does not possess and which would not be acknowledged in any case, but by relying

solely on the strength of his prestige, his fairness, and his verbal ability. More than a judge who passes sentence, he is an arbiter who seeks to reconcile. The chief can do nothing to prevent a dispute from turning into a feud if he fails to effect a reconciliation of the contending parties. That plainly reveals the disjunction between power and coercion. (Clastres, 2020: 30)

Many countries separate their military from their civilian policing, but in Japan's case their military has very minor use. Though there have been continuous attempts to overturn it, Article 9 of their American imposed constitution stipulates that they are no longer allowed to have offensive capabilities, so the Self Defence Force (SDF), is precisely that. Their methods of internal policing are not then subject to the influence of an offensive militaristic mindset, but instead remains focused on arbitration and social cohesion.

The set-up and locating of the *kōban* are a means of signalling the stability and use of those working there. However, as Clastres describes of the Amazonian chief, if the police themselves do not act in a way that is trustworthy and beneficial to the community, then they will lose their power of persuasion and authority for social reconciliation. If members of the community seek out police to arbitrate, this gives weight to their decisions and they are able to exert their influence towards reconciliation. It is only when these powers are lost that a more hard-lined form of enforcement defined by coercion and punishment starts to creep into effect, thus becoming a 'weaker state' in the Giddensian model. Thinking about this in terms of a specific example, we can look at the *kōban* which is stationed in a popular nightlife area, near to a street that has a number of high-priced establishments where the customers often disagree about their bill. In such a situation, when lots of alcohol has usually been consumed, disagreements can potentially turn violent if there is no means of solving them, but instead of getting into fights the people in question can head to their local *kōban* and line up with everyone else in order to have their grievances heard and decided upon by an independent adjudicator. It is not possible to quantify that which has been avoided, but my own experience of alcohol-fuelled nightlife tells me that there is great potential for violent outbursts resulting in harm to both people and property when arguments are escalated unchecked. After things reach this state, police would have little choice but to intervene with physical force, and impose criminal punishments on those involved. In this case it will also be beneficial to the business owners to cultivate a positive relationship with the officers stationed locally, and such a relationship will be helpful to the police in understanding their community and having a familiarity with the characters of those who frequent it.

Clastres describes another element in the South American power structures that is relevant to the Japanese case: "The second characteristic of the Indian chieftainship – generosity – appears to be more than a duty: it is a bondage." (2020: 30). The strength of this rule amongst these social groups is important in separating wealth from power, and is practised to such an extent that some

ethnographers noted that you can identify a chief because he will be the person with the fewest possessions and wearing the shabbiest ornaments (Clastres, 2020: 30). Police officers stationed at local *kōban* are not without adequate salaries and are not required to part with their personal possessions upon request (though the earlier example of the officer giving the teenager money so that he could buy a train ticket home shows that some elements of this are practised), but the ultimate generosity that they are expected to provide – as an essential part of their job – is of their time and attention.

As has already been described, the *kōban* are situated to act as a beacon for people in the community, and anyone who wishes is able to visit and take up the officers' time no matter how mundane or unpleasant their reason. Such a situation is not dependent on the individual officers themselves (they might very well despise this aspect of their job), but is a fundamental part of the police role in the Japanese system. They are also not restricted by location; living in a different prefecture is irrelevant to such open access and if you are currently in that area you can visit that *kōban*. Whether every officer deals with any and all situations 'well' is another question that would require a significant stint of intensive research in itself, but considering the fact that there is no perceptible antagonism between police and public, even in the current era of growing anti-police sentiments in other parts of the world, not to mention all of the positive responses I received during my fieldwork, should be ample evidence in support of the role that police play in Japanese society.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have tried to steer away from replicating the uncritically glowing descriptions of the Japanese police that a number of social scientists have described before me (Ames 1981; Bayley, 1991; Parker, 2015). Nor do I particularly agree with those who have analysed the Japanese system as a sinister means of surveillance and state control (Aldous & Leishman, 1997; Finch, 1999; Wood, Lyon & Abe, 2007). Whether or not the *kōban* structure of policing has the potential to operate as a more heavy-handed mechanism of the state, the reality that I found during my fieldwork was one of positive interaction with a community that felt the presence of such officers as a positive. On the one hand there is the legal structure; the *kōban*, where they are stationed, what powers the police have, what the written laws and regulations are, etc.; an examination of just this may show a potential for heavy state control and an unnerving watchfulness as if there were suspicion around every corner. But mapping out and critiquing the structure without delving into the social context will not give a clear picture of the role that the police have in everyday life. When, as in Japan, there is a strong emphasis on social ramifications,

official/legal methods are utilised far less, making it very difficult to quantify attitudes and behaviours in statistical data. Qualitative research methods are necessary in such a case, and what I discovered during my own fieldwork tracks along similar lines as the other ethnographic work that has been conducted by the likes of Ames (1981), Bayley (1991), and Parker (2015).

In his book *Policing in Japan: A Study on Making Crime*, Miyazawa offers a critique of these earlier ethnographic studies written by Western researchers (Ames, Bayley, and Parker), and tries to highlight the various ways in which the Japanese police are not as angelic as they have been made out to be. A key part of his criticism focuses on the methods of criminal investigation as opposed to the local *kōban* patrols, and he asserts that the code under which detectives work is highly problematic and open to misuse (1992). I have no means of corroborating or critiquing his claims, as I did not have access to such data in my own fieldwork, instead I have focussed on the wider community engagement elements of policing in everyday life. I do not intend to assert that the inner workings of how particular crimes are investigated and dealt with are a model of excellence – I have already asserted my own personal inclinations towards the Defund The Police movement – but I do think the time and energies that are directed towards community life and the open availability of the *kōban* are important factors worthy of close consideration.

Many academic examinations of policing focus on the concept of structural violence: ways in which the system causes harm to people rather than protecting and/or supporting them. As such, I would like to comment on the structural non-violence of the Japanese *kōban*. An examination of the role they play in their communities, how they are ready and available to listen to the needs of the citizens (regardless of whether they can do anything to help, the listening is by no means insignificant), and how they are kept in check by the social pressure from said community, shows an investment in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Instead of being closed off, there is open-access, and therefore open communication. I do not necessarily believe that police are the best institution to fill this role (social workers, councillors, child support specialists are just a few that I would personally wish were included as a resource under such circumstances, but then I also do not know the type of skills taught to police officers, other than martial arts), but this could also be an issue of naming; *kōban* patrol officers do not undertake criminal investigations – that is the sole purview of the detectives – their purpose is to serve and engage with the community, so the fact that they all fall under the heading of ‘police’ could be where a lot of the cross-cultural comparatives are inadequate. The concept of policing in Japan, means something different to other places.

The themes that I have built throughout the previous chapters have relevance outside of the *dōjō* as well. As was true of the *senshusei* recruits, the role of *kōban* police is one of caretakers within the community, available to the public for whatever mundane purposes might be demanded of them. In this chapter I have discussed the complex nature of hierarchy and how it is

expressed and performed in Japan; even though the police may have authority, their actions are to be in service to the people and, unlike with many other national police agencies who claim the same thing, this seems to be the lived reality. Such open-access allows for the community to check the power of the police, and the continuous flow of interaction that occurs is a means of communicating consent as well as actively participating in the process of maintaining a safe local environment. As was true during training at the *dōjō*, the consent might remain unspoken, but the engagement is an important tool of communication that all are actively sensitive to.

Chapter 6



Fig. 43: *Senshusei* class, *jiyuwaza* practice; I have just thrown *uke* and they are performing an *ukemi* whilst other *aikidōka* watch.

Conclusion

I must admit that I was slightly terrified when I made the decision to enrol for the *senshusei* course. I had never pushed my body physically before, and I was nervous about being able to keep up. What if I was the worst in the group? How would that affect me psychologically? I kept thinking about the stoicism that must be maintained during the training – my default response to making mistakes was to laugh whilst pointing out the error, but as a *senshusei* you are not allowed to speak or react, you must simply continue. What if I accidentally laughed whilst a *sensei* was correcting me, what would happen? Even though I had only recently arrived to this *dōjō* and knew none of the staff well, the thought of their disapproval felt worse than anything else. Looking back on this time I cannot help feeling a little embarrassed by my need for their acceptance and approval. As it turned out I never did let an embarrassed laugh slip during training – the serious and unswerving intent of all the *senshusei* and *sensei* was infectious from the start, and I found myself easily scene-switching into the necessary mindset. I found that I was not the worst in the group, so that burden was never mine to carry. Although it was brutally tough I never experienced the sense of dread when waking up in the morning that I so often had when working uninspiring office jobs back in London. Instead I would wake before my alarm and instantly jump out of bed to start getting ready for that day's training. Satisfaction and self-worth sat alongside the endurance and exhaustion (which may sound surprising given that I was continuously being given criticism without any praise), and I found myself wishing that more police officers, and not just in Japan, could have the benefit of such holistic learning.

The existence of the *senshusei* course as an option for police officers to sign up for speaks volumes about the institution of policing in Japan. Though it is only available for ten recruits per year, it is not the only training option available; there is a commitment to the personal and professional growth of officers that is very different from the cost-cutting methods in the UK, or the myopic focus on militaristic weapons in the US. As I have described in this thesis, the *senshusei* course is not simply about learning aikidō moves, though that is a large part of it, but about building strength of character. That does not mean that everyone who completes the course experiences inner transformation – far from it in some cases – but the style of the training creates the circumstances for such to occur.

I began this thesis with an autoethnographic account of *zagaku*, the weekly endurance trial which constituted the most hated part of our regimen, in order to demonstrate the intensity of the course, but also the sense of community and social relationships of the experience. We all endured the terrible pain of prolonged *seiza* together as best we could, but as soon as it was over the stoicism act broke as we all cried out together, helped each other to our feet, and faked the

final ritual kneeling to the shrine together. I wanted to paint a picture of the suffering, but also the camaraderie, the submission to the rigors of training, and the small acts of rebellion when the *sensei* were out of the room. As well as setting the scene for what life as a *senshusei* was like, this piece should have raised questions about the experience of pain, the significance of the space and its rituals, our relationships with the *sensei*, the sudden shifts in our behaviour, and why community police officers are sent to endure such brutal methods. All of these questions I have explored and posited answers for in the chapters of this thesis.

In chapter 2 I explored the nature of pain, looking at how it has been academically theorised, but also tried to present a visceral picture of the experience itself. The fact that it is an accepted part of martial arts training means that it is often overlooked as a site of examination. The *senshusei* course brought such experiences to the forefront however, so it was important to give it significant attention in the early stages of the thesis; a discussion about consent would be incomplete without a thorough understanding of what is being consented to. It was also important to emphasise the relationship between pain and violence; they are strongly connected but not the same thing, as pain has the potential to be utilised under specific circumstances, as a method for personal growth and transformation if it is being endured on purpose. Nor is pain necessarily the same as injury, as there are ways of eliciting the former without the unpleasant long-term effects of the latter, i.e. *zagaku*. Whilst such an experience might not necessarily be welcomed, it can be embraced in certain circumstances; within the *senshusei* experience it was an accepted method of making oneself stronger both physically and mentally. The defining element of such a condition was the presence of consent and intentionality; even when there was a lack of understanding there was still trust in the *sensei* and our training partners that we would remain safe through the discomfort and emerge stronger on the other side.

As physical pain is a near universal human experience, the use of it was a key aspect of such group training, as the collective endurance of it brought us closer together whilst simultaneously pushing us towards personal growth and transformation. Experiencing such trials together as part of a cohesive group was an important part of the training. Police officers do not work alone but as part of a team, and the feeling of camaraderie that was created through the mutual endurance of such hardship was a model of how they had to perform during their regular policing duties. Not only were we experiencing the pain of training in our own bodies but we were inflicting it upon our training partners, all the while trying our best to keep each other safe. The constant swapping between the role of *uke* and *shite* during practice meant a continuous shift of power, making sure that we maintained an awareness of our own body as well as that of our partner at all times. Knowing the feeling of pain for oneself as well as the pain of your training partner is an intimate experience that often results in an embodied sensitivity to the people around you in a way that connects you to them.

After describing the intensity of the training in detail, it was then important to describe the space in which such trials took place. In the next chapter I wanted to emphasise the significance of the space and how we all built a relationship to the walls and mats where we pushed ourselves to such extremes. The pain of the training was endurable because it was a part of the course and took place within a specific, bounded environment. In academic discussions about the *senshusei* experience people would often compare it with military training, but the fact that we all went home to our own lives at the end of the day enabled us to maintain behavioural boundaries that differentiated the experience from that of a soldier. Whilst the psychological impact of the training was strong, we were not separated from our regular lives, and therefore did not struggle to maintain our individual senses of self throughout the course. Personal reflection was actively encouraged in the form of the weekly essays we all had to write and submit. Though the physical and mental struggles of the training were extreme, it did not feel coercive, but instead was presented as a challenge to be overcome. And at the end of each day we could all return to our own homes and loved ones, drop the act of stoicism, and tend to our aching bodies.

Using the two core examples of the cleaning and the bowing that were regular aspects of daily life at the *dōjō*, I wanted to show how relationships were created with the physical space itself, and how this produced a deeper, personal connection for us. These behaviours produced layers of respect towards both the animate and inanimate, in ways that contributed towards making the *dōjō* into a safe space for the painful and potentially dangerous practice to take place. As I have emphasised from the beginning, the practice of martial arts is a performance of violence – a play of physical attack and defence – that, if not engaged in safely and with sensitivity, has the potential to spiral out of control into real violence. By structuring the training to include a multitude of micro-pauses in the form of bowing, as well as longer moments of reflection like the five minutes of silent *seiza* at the start of every class, the potential for those who are engaged in training to lose control of themselves and/or forget their commitment to keeping their partner safe, is greatly diminished. As I described from my own experience, such actions are not always effective and situations can arise where someone fails to understand the boundaries of their training partner, leading to a loss of trust and feelings of unsafety. The watchful presence of the *sensei* is crucial for just this reason; the knowledge that there is an authority figure on hand who can offer advice or can intervene in a negative situation helps to maintain a sense of order for those who train together. It is the role of the *sensei*, not only to teach proper technique, but also ‘hold’ those who are engaged in practice so that they can feel secure whilst trying out potentially dangerous moves.

The cleaning duties we were expected to perform helped to maintain a sense of humility and grounded us all in the space itself, and the bowing similarly created continuous moments of connection to both people and place, whilst also marking boundaries of time and location. The fact that these actions were performed by everyone together created a friendly atmosphere that

tempered the strictness of the hierarchical structure; everyone helped with the cleaning of the *dōjō*, and whilst it was a strict rule that *senshusei* must always stop and bow to a *sensei*, the action was always reciprocated. Both of these actions also created a structure of routine that felt comforting and increased our feelings of safety whilst we were in the *dōjō*. Such behaviours trained us to pay attention to our surroundings at all times (for example, constantly watching for a *sensei* as you would need to stop and bow whenever they appeared), which contributed to our individual sensitivities during training, allowing us to adapt to our partners' needs with more accuracy and attention. All of these behaviours contributed to a group sensitivity and awareness that actively made the *dōjō* into a safe space for everyone to train.

The concept of scene-switching was a key element of the over-all atmosphere of *dōjō* life, as the intensity of the *senshusei* training was offset by the lazy relaxation of breaktimes and the jovial release of the social events. This was a core aspect of the *dōjō* itself – the fact that it could house the same group of people behaving in such extremely different ways depending on the context of the setting, meant that it could house a wide range of different emotions and memories. When I think back on the green mats of the *dōjō* I do not only think of the horrors of *zagaku*, or the streaks of blood from *suwariwaza*, but also the limbo competition we had for the child members, and pouring drinks for the *sensei* and *ippan* members whilst we sat teasing the *dōjōcho* at a party. Being able to invest fully into the *senshusei* mindset during training hours felt good because it could be released and switched for a friendly sociable one as soon as the context changed. We did not need to fear the rebukes of the *sensei* the entire time, we could relax together and experience them in an entirely different social dynamic. This switching meant that no-one carried the burden of such a strict code of conduct all the time, but were able to express their personalities in whatever way they felt best suited to the environment.

Once I had set the scene in terms of the physiological experience of the training, as well as describing the location in which it took place, I was then able to analyse and explore the concept of consent as it applied within the *dōjō*. The circumstances were different for *ippan* members than for the *senshusei*, as the former were engaged in training from a state of individual autonomy that differed from person-to-person, whereas the *senshusei* had essentially placed their consent in the hands of the *sensei* and trusted their expertise to push us hard without breaking us. In this chapter I described how the concept of consent remains unspoken but is implicitly implied and constantly being negotiated through embodied forms of communication during training. There was a range of different signals that everyone understood and paid attention to during training, such as the language of taping to show where injuries might be lurking and should therefore be approached with care, and the sound of the groans and noises people made as they trained. Even though we were performing techniques of violence that held the potential to cause serious harm, the

atmosphere of sensitivity and active attention to one's training partners made sure that the training felt safe and injury was rare.

Even though we all remained vigilant and sensitive towards the bodies around us, that did not mean that there were no instances when specific people crossed the line of their partners comfort, which resulted in fear and a loss of trust. Engaging in training that reaches high intensity levels means balancing a thin line between comfort and discomfort, and within the *dōjō* setting it was made clear that such actions should only be taken by experienced *sensei*, who knew how to read and calibrate to the needs of different body types. It is in these types of situations where gender can act as a complication as, due to the social stigma around the idea of a man hitting/harming a woman, regardless of their respective size and strength, mixed training can elicit internal questions about how certain actions should be interpreted. For example, as a woman practising martial arts – a situation that is male-dominated – though I might want to engage in intense training I also do not want a man who is physically stronger than me to use his full strength on my body. There might also be situations where a man might refuse to train at the intensity levels I would like, as he feels too uncomfortable with the idea that he might hurt me, thus removing my own capacity to consent to the circumstances of my own will. I grappled with these questions often during my fieldwork, but I also found that, due to the scene-switching that occurred in the Japanese *dōjō*, my gender identity was superseded by my status as *senshusei*, and I was able to experience the freedom of being treated as a human body by the Japanese *sensei* and training cohort, instead of a female one.

Signing up for and doing the *senshusei* course was my method of gaining access to the Tokyo police, and training together with them gave me interesting insights into the work that they do and their role within the community. Comparing the responses from my own interviews and general enquiries, I found that the qualitative data I gathered corresponded with earlier examples of ethnographic research into the same topic (Ames, 1981; Bayley, 1991; Parker, 2015), even though these examples have received some criticism since being published. Having experienced the police officers I trained together with as a part of the *dōjō* community, and seeing how they interacted as helpers and caretakers with ease, I focused my discussion on the community policing that centres around the local *kōban* in Japanese cities. In the cityscape you are never further than walking distance from a *kōban*, staffed at all times with police officers who are unable to turn people away, no matter their reason for coming to see them. From these community focal points they will deal with lost property, give directions, make patrols around the streets on their bicycles, act as independent arbitrators of arguments between locals, and act as first responders to any traffic accidents in the area (to name just some of their duties). The *kōban* are a point of open-access for anyone seeking help, advice, or just an ear to listen to them.

Some scholars have argued that the *kōban* are for the purpose of state surveillance rather than as idyllic mechanisms of community involvement, but when unpacking the term ‘surveillance’ and comparing the Tokyo example to those of other large cities around the world, this argument did not seem to fit. For one thing, if this were the case then it is reasonable to assume that there would have been a large amount of CCTV cameras installed in these same areas, either to assist or replace the *kōban* officers in their work, but Tokyo has a much lower rate of this technology than other comparable cities globally. Whilst observation and active watching are certainly a part of the work, *kōban* police seem to function more in their open-access availability to everyone in the community than in trying to enforce a sense of state watchfulness. In my discussion on safe spaces and how they are created and maintained in chapter 3, I describe the importance of the *sensei* presence in the *dōjō*, and how it is their role to keep an eye on the training so that they might intervene if they sense anything wrong; it is a similar type of situation with the *kōban* officers towards the community. Their presence nearby can act as a social form of comfort, but this is only true because they do not actively impose themselves and try to enforce order as a means of control. Through the *kōban*, officers keep up a constant communication with the local citizens which, similarly to how feelings and intent are communicated between bodies in the constant contact of aikidō practise, the officers are able to gauge the consent of the people to how they are behaving. Social stigma is very effective in Japanese social relations, which means that a quantitative analysis of how many official complaints are made by citizens against the police probably will not provide an accurate picture of the situation. Because of this, I would be interested to conduct more research in this area, in order to discover what the everyday interactions between local police and citizens are like and what types of problems are faced.

The nature of hierarchical relations and how they are experienced in the Japanese context are key to understanding the policing situation. Using Nakane’s vertical model (1972) I described the ease with which people are used to navigating relationships with those considered to be above or below them in a particular social context, but also how those situated at the top of a hierarchy are expected to demonstrate care and attention towards those below, bearing a responsibility for their welfare and not simply wielding power over them. An addendum to this theory, however, is my concept of scene-switching; this notes that hierarchical relationships are not fixed but are often context-specific, meaning that different situations will result in changing structures of power, as well as different behaviours within those power relations. My use of the *dōjō* as a field site allowed me to witness and define these social relations, all of which mapped onto the role of the police in Japanese society in a way that made sense of earlier research discrepancies. Although the police wield power, there is a weight of social expectation for them to utilise their role as caretakers within the community, giving up their time and energies to anyone who visits the *kōban* without complaint. This type of policing places greater emphasis on being of service to the

community – and allowing the members of that community to dictate what service they require – rather than a ‘force’ focused solely on ‘fighting’ crime.

The themes discussed in this thesis journey from the micro to the macro in an attempt to highlight the connections and importance of both facets of human sociality. The feeling of pain is a fundamental human experience that often remains unspoken, but through certain practices, can be engaged with socially and with specific purpose. The space where such episodes take place and are endured is incredibly important, and the relationships which are created both temporally and spatially are the means by which such extreme circumstances may be practised in a state of care and consent. This consent should not be taken for granted, however, and such potentially dangerous practices require a great deal of sensitivity and communication (whether spoken or unspoken), in order to manage the mental and physical wellbeing of those who choose to take part. I do not wish to portray the Japanese *dōjō* as an idyllic example of safe and positive martial arts practice – I have provided detailed examples of times when I experienced the opposite – but I do wish to point out the structures of social interaction and behaviours that contribute towards creating a positive training space. Whilst individuals will all act differently, the *habitus* of the environment creates normative behaviours that are worthy of attention.

Such commitment to open communication and sensitivity to different needs is also a factor that must be emphasised in the macro environment of cities and states in order to manage the safety and wellbeing of citizens. The patterns of behaviour identified and analysed within the *dōjō* setting provided an interesting point of extrapolation for an examination of the Japanese police. Many of the behavioural patterns that could be identified in the *dōjō*, such as how the hierarchical relationships manifested, the embodied communications of care and attention, and the stark shifts in behaviour between different social contexts, are noteworthy aspects of how local police engage with their communities. Witnessing the frank eagerness of the police *senshusei* during my time together with them, how much they gave of themselves, both in the training and their social interactions with the other *dōjō* members, it was clear to see how much they prided themselves on being of use to those around them, even in the most mundane of ways. Once again it is not my intention to portray the entirety of the Japanese police force as friendly neighbourhood guardians who are always sensitive and caring towards the diverse population of their community, but to point out the social structure in which they function and how it constructs their role in society. Rather than a focus solely on crime fighting, the *kōban* function as a permanent site of community service, in whatever form that might be. Will the officers always respond sensitively and appropriately to the problems put before them? No of course not, but the fact that they are accessible and available to all, no matter the reason, opens a line of constant communication between police and public that serves an important function for all involved.

As I began this thesis with a personal reflection, I will bring it to an end in the same way. Throughout my discussions I have hinted at the ways in which the *senshusei* course can be a mode of transformation and personal growth; whilst this certainly was not true for everyone, it was for me. Using my autoethnographic research intentions as an excuse, I tried to fully invest myself in every aspect of the course as I was instructed, in order to try and find out if there would be any effects from such behaviours. I mentioned at the start of this chapter that I was told I could not laugh or apologise if I made a mistake during training – as was my natural tendency to do – but that I must silently carry on. Taking this on board as I was instructed, I realised quickly that such behaviour changed my relationship to my own mistakes and errors: I became unembarrassed and acceptant of them. This simple restriction made me realise that we would all be making mistakes constantly, and that these occurrences were not special enough to warrant a pause in training to draw attention to it, you simply had to continue with training and remember not to make the same mistake again. This was also true when being told off by a *sensei* – whether you thought you deserved the scolding or not was for you to decide internally, as you were not allowed to argue under any circumstances, the only response we were permitted to give was a loud “OSU!”. Whilst being scolded is never pleasant, I was aware that they were generally trying to keep us humble and on our toes, so such occurrences would sometimes happen regardless of our performance, and we would simply have to bear it. But instead of making me feel less confident, knowing what was happening and accepting it internally made me feel stronger in my own sense of self and convictions.

After completing the course I felt a confidence and sense of solidity in my person – both physically and mentally – that I had never before experienced. Knowing what I had endured, but also how hard I had worked and what I was capable of if I put my mind to it, even if it was only applicable in these specific circumstances, made me feel proud and sure of myself. I remember a thought that occurred to me at the start of the course, and which I still think of now: doing *senshusei* was easier than doing a PhD.

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