



Keijustukai Aikido

Author: Thomas H. Makiyama
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The mysterious 'Force'-like philosophy of Aikido can often baffle and intimidate the novice and indeed everyone else. Here, Makiyama, one of the 'old-school', seeks to change that.

Thomas H. Makiyama, who died only a few years ago, was one of the best known of the Japanese martial arts instructors. Practicing with Gozo Shioda's Yoshinkan organisation for many years, he ultimately parted with them and began teaching things his way. This book, then, is the manifesto for his organisation, and from the very beginning it is clear that the author is seeking very much to be his own man.

As with most books of this type, Makiyama's 175 page volume is separated into several sections, with photographs augmenting the written instructions and the whole thing being preceded by the obligatory 'History of Aikido'. Furthermore, a specific introduction, which discusses the author's particular style and his reasons for writing the book, is also included as one might expect from this sort of manual. What makes this book different from practically all the others I've read, though, is the level of detail. There is a clear sense that the author feels that the several decades between the time of writing and the period that saw Aikido founder Morihei Ueshiba in his prime have seen the art grow away from its roots, that the principles and practices of the art that had once been crystal clear have become cloudy, and for no good reason. As a consequence, Makiyama repeatedly states that whilst his techniques may well look similar to those practiced in other organisations, his are actually very different, because they are being done as they should be. This accounts for the surprising attention to detail in his instructions. Rather than attempt to cover everything quickly, Makiyama concentrates on less, but in minute detail.

In the end, then, the partisan approach of Makiyama's book is clearly designed to draw a line under what has come before, i.e. the Yoshinkan (and though it the Traditional) School(s). That said, it is refreshing to see one of the great practitioners of Aikido 'Doing away with the mysterious philosophy' of the art – a clearly different approach from that of some of the other greats. Not least of these is the founder Ueshiba, around whom many 'Jedi'-like legends have grown since his death. Newbies will also find the extended pictorial instructions very useful. A good book.

8 sausages out of 10

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