



**Ahmed Nasri**

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Nationality: Tunisian

Dojo: Tunisie Aikido

Mr. Nasri stayed in Tokorozawa dojo as an uchideshi for two months. This is his first experience to stay in Japan. Not just aikido, he seemed to have gained many things in many ways through this uchideshi experience.

Uchideshi Training Experience  
Ahmed Nasri

The purpose of this letter is to provide a report on the results of our two months attending Kobayashi Dojo's Uchideshi program.

As you will recall, I was officially presented to the Kobayashi Dojo group in September 2008 at birth of 40 years' of Kobayashi Dojo.

After several months of administrative procedures, I was delighted to be able to start ASTER Uchideshi program in early September 2008. Now, having completed nearly two months uchideshi of life and training at Kobayashi Dojo, I love to share the following observations on my experience with you.

First, I was very impressed by the methodical and systematic way of teaching which is applied at Kobayashi Dojo. I have noted that the training began exactly on time and end on time. The same routine is used to warm up each practice session so that all participants are willing to train. I also noted that for each session one method of attack is usually maintained. However, day by day, the way to attack is systematically changed so that all students regular opportunities to practice the full range of basic techniques of aikido. This is different from many other dojos aikido, where the majority of time is devoted to training a small core of basic techniques. I even noted that the technical content of the Tokorozawa dojo and Kodaira dojo are generally well coordinated.

I also observed that each training session includes a technique based on suwariwaza and that near the end of each session at least 15 minutes is devoted to training either Jo or Bokken. The systematic focus on Jo-Bokken training is something that is very distinctive Kobayashi Dojos. In addition, I found that most sessions include a short period of time to study the latter part of the session. This allows students to practice specific techniques in preparation for classification. The structured approach each practice used in the system Kobayashi actually a very rich learning environment. He also aikido easiest to learn and is certainly a factor that has contributed to growth in student numbers in the network Kobayashi Dojo.

The last two months he gave me an excellent opportunity to observe and learn from Kobayashi style of Aikido. I have been impressed by the circular

and fluid style of Aikido practiced in the system of Kobayashi dojo. Although I am trained in "hard" before styles, there is no doubt that the style Kobayashi Dojo may be an effective method when applied by a qualified practitioner. The style of Aikido Kobayashi seems to be well adapted to an environment where students of all ages and skill levels practice together. It seems to foster a collegial atmosphere in the dojo and results in a remarkably low level of injuries. I have been surprised how few accidents occurred in the dojo, especially given the relatively large number of students training in a small amount of space.

Kobayashi sensei also noted that Kobayashi Dojo's instructors to participate fully in training with other students. Unlike most instructors in other dojos, Kobayashi sensei and demonstrate its technical instructors with partners of all skill levels and take systematically "ukemi" as well as delivery techniques. This "humble" approach to teaching creates an atmosphere where students feel comfortable to make mistakes and learn without fear of embarrassment or ridicule. It also allows students to feel good Ukemi "first-hand. I have observed the same difference in approach to Aikido *Enbukai* (demonstration), where Kobayashi sensei selected a section of students as his "UKE" instead of the instructors or a young uchideshi. This was in contrast to demonstrations by many other shihans.

Another feature of my experience at Kobayashi Dojos was an opportunity to participate in regular training of children. I took many notes the special attention given by the system Kobayashi to training and nurturing young Aikido-ka. The emphasis on making Aikido fun for children while gradually building their physical and mental skills is something that Kobayashi Dojo seems to have really developed. I noted how young students are gradually integrated into classes for adults through training on Sunday. The highest students seem happy to accept the responsibility to teach younger students, even if they end up sacrificing their own training from time to time.

Another distinctive feature of Aikido Kobayashi is the atmosphere prevailing in the dojo, before, during and after training. I noted that all students have always been courteous and polite to each other and respect for the dojo's label carefully. After training, it has always been an informal meeting of students around tea and sweets. This post-social contributes to a sense of the dojo as a "club" rather than just "gym". I also had the privilege to participate in many other social activities with other members of the dojo. All the events of the obligations to help students with the dojo and is probably an important factor that has contributed to the success of



Kobayashi Dojo. I noted that although the instructors were all treated with great respect by students, they participate in all social events and mix with students. I noted how instructors seem to take a real interest in life and activities of their students.

My experience as an uchideshi has also given us an insider view of the administrative part of running a successful dojo. There is no doubt in my mind that one of the main factors for the success of Kobayashi Dojo superb hotel is what happens behind the scenes. I had the privilege to attend the weekly meeting of the "inner circle" of Kobayashi Dojo instructors. From this experience, I realize how much effort is required to maintain such an organization to work well and avoid problems in administrative matters. Indeed, because the administrative part of the Dojo is running so well, their effort is barely visible to most students. I was very impressed by the role played by senior uchideshi, Mr. Shinozaki, to facilitate the functioning of dojo and uchideshi program. Just look at the long legacy of the former Kobayashi Dojo uchideshi who have "graduated" and open their own dojos to achieve the success of the uchideshi is in preparation for future instructors of Aikido.

One of the distinguishing features of the uchideshi is the level of activity. I originally planned to have more free time to use the dojo of the vast library of Aikido and videos or books. Unfortunately, the timing of intensive training, travel between the dojos and constant cleaning routine left me little free time. Even the preparation of regular meals and get adequate sleep proved to be a challenge.

To come to Japan to deepen my knowledge of Aikido has been a dream for me. Making this dream come true at Kobayashi Dojo was an experience I will never forget. I hope to express my sincere gratitude to Yasuo Kobayashi docho, Hiroaki sensei, and the other instructors of Kobayashi Dojo for the opportunity they gave to me. I am grateful to the contributors of Musubi Fund for financial assistance, without which I will not have benefited from this experience. Thank you Kasahara sensei for his guidance and translation during my stay and my co-uchideshi Mr. Shinozaki for his help. I also express special thanks to both Mrs. Kobayashi and Miyoko-san, who treated me like their family member, opening their homes for my food when I most needed. Finally, I express my gratitude to all the Kobayashi Dojo students with whom I trained with.

In conclusion, please accept my most sincere thanks for this "once in a lifetime experience."