



## Calligraphy and Aikido: Parallel Techniques

Today, I would like to discuss the parallels between the three script styles found in calligraphy and how they can be applied to the teaching and mastery of Aikido techniques. The first and most common script style is *kaisho*, also known as block-style writing or printing. It is characterized by a clear delineation of stroke order, with all strokes present, forming the radicals that combine to create characters. This style is highly legible and serves as the foundation for printed characters. In Aikido, this is comparable to techniques taught or featured in books using photographs, where each step and transition is clearly articulated through footwork, hand and wrist movements, and body angle direction. As in Calligraphy, an incorrect sequence of strokes or steps leaves traces that are obvious to the trained eye.

A common challenge students face when performing *kaisho* is weakness at the beginning and ending of strokes. It may appear as if they are wiping paint on the paper rather than executing a stroke clearly. The three parts of a stroke are known as *ki-hitsu* (awakening of the brush), *sou-hitsu* (sending the brush), and *shu-hitsu* (bringing the brush back together). This can be taught in Aikido by ensuring proper weight transfer and correct step sequencing. Students often struggle with technique fundamentals due to improper weight transfer or incorrect sequence, making their movements awkward and ineffective.

The second script style is *gyo-sho* or semi-cursive writing. Its main characteristic is the connection of *ki-myaku* (ki-line) between strokes, weaving them together like a loosely-tied knot. *Gyo-sho* challenges arise when people move too quickly on curves or use uniform line thickness, which disrupts rhythm and diminishes the character's three-dimensional appearance. In Aikido, *gyo-sho* involves not allowing an opponent to grab hold while leading them into motion with more fluidity and fewer steps than *kaisho*. This can be difficult without first mastering *kaisho*'s fundamental steps.

The third style is *so-sho*, or fully cursive writing, sometimes called grass writing. It is the least legible but most dynamic style. In Aikido, *so-sho* involves minimal contact with the opponent while leading them into a whirlwind or whirlpool of energy. The throw is executed with little physical contact, also known as throwing with *ki*. However, without understanding and mastering the fundamentals of *kaisho* and *gyo-sho*, executing *so-sho* techniques becomes nearly impossible.

These three stages should be taught separately and their meanings clearly distinguished. In *kaisho*, movements are similar to a dragonfly's hovering and darting motion; in *gyo-sho*, they resemble a butterfly weaving in and out; and in *so-sho*, they can be compared to a bird swooping down and changing direction quickly. Just as *kaisho* represents stately walking, *gyo-sho* is akin to dancing, and *sou-sho* is like flying.

Applying these metaphors to Aikido techniques can help students understand how an opponent is first taken step by step before blending some steps together, eventually leading into an energy dance with minimal body contact but effective execution. These analogies between calligraphy and Aikido can enhance your understanding of both art forms.

Learning and performing Aikido techniques can be both rewarding and beneficial for your overall well-being. To effectively master these skills, follow these steps:

1. Begin by familiarizing yourself with the fundamental principles of Aikido. These include blending with your opponent's energy, maintaining a relaxed posture, and focusing on circular movements.
2. Next, seek out a qualified instructor or join a reputable Aikido dojo to receive proper guidance. This will ensure you're learning the correct techniques and practicing in a safe environment.
3. During your training sessions, pay close attention to your instructor's demonstrations and explanations. Don't hesitate to ask questions or request clarification if needed.
4. Practice each technique slowly and deliberately at first, focusing on proper form and alignment. Gradually increase your speed as you become more comfortable with the movements.
5. Consistently attend classes and practice sessions to build muscle memory and improve your skills over time.
6. Finally, remember that Aikido is a lifelong journey of self-improvement. Embrace its teachings and continue refining your techniques throughout your training journey.

By following these steps, you'll be well on your way to mastering the art of Aikido.

<http://www.samurai-walk.com/aikido-metaversity-readings.html>

For further information on the Aikido Metaversity Dojo and other online training, please contact William Reed at [reedwii@mac.com](mailto:reedwii@mac.com)