

## Half-Year of Living, Practicing and Sweating in Japan

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A half year has already flown by and now I'm sitting on the tatami of Tokorozawa dojo with my laptop in front of me. I get shocked but also amazed everytime I look back on this journey.

Before becoming a uchideshi I heard the stories about the everyday practicing, with the 5 hours sleep and the long never ending days. These kind of stories that my sempais told me got me all interested in going to Japan to try it, because it sharpens once aikido, body and soul they said. But for me it was not only all about the practicing that mattered and how good you could become as an aikidoka, for me it was also about going and living in Japan as a conscious human being. The reason why I use the word conscious is because I was born and lived in Japan for a total of 6 years. But it's not something that I really remember to well of, so to be able to come to Japan as an adult and see but also understand how people and society works felt like a once in a lifetime opportunity, and to do it now when i'm fairly young 20 year ish is better than doing it when i'm 40 or 50 years old.

So anyway, the first day I came to tokorozawa dojo I met the head uchideshi Lin and the other uchideshis Franco and Melissa they taught me how to sweep the tatami clean things and so on. And I got amazed by how much cleaning we had to do and when Franco said "Me and Melissa are gonna leave next week" I felt like, how am i supposed to do this all alone, cleaning, cooking food etc. But it turned out fine after few weeks and the more time passed the more I started to understand how things worked with the cleaning but at the same time I realized that there where always new places to clean and new things to learn.

Sleep was also something that was difficult to get in the beginning especially at tokorzawa, because the train on the Siebu shinjuku line that passes by every now and then. So in the start I always woke up and stayed up late because of the trains that passed by which made my sleep less. But with time I got use to it and it stopped bothering me after awhile. And my sempais that only said that 5 hours sleep was everything one would get turned out to be false in a way because sometimes you could get sleep between the classes which was nice as well.

But after the first two weeks of learning adapting to the surrounding I started to feel more comfortable with myself and the people around me. So instead of think how I should clean and in what way I should help sensei that just went to auto mode and I didnt have to stress in the same way so I could relax and at the same time I became friends with the members of kobayashi dojo and we would spend time together eating lunch, dinner sometimes together etc.



*With the other uchideshis and members of Aikido Kobayashi Dojo*

The training schedule was very tight and as uchideshi you are busy all the time, it was keiko everyday except Mondays, normally I used to go to aikido hombu dojo in shinjuku and sweat there as well. But sometimes sensei would take us out on a trip somewhere which were very nice and sometime we uchideshi or friends would do something together. Someday I was just staying in the dojo all day because of lack of sleep but overall Mondays are important as recovery day for uchideshi.

But more that the regular uchideshi routines I had the chance to experience some unique thing while I stayed in Japan. We uchideshi could follow Kobayashi soshihan to the ministry of defence in Japan to see all Japan self defence force aikido demonstration which not many people don't get access to.

And some of my swedish friends came to Japan, some for work but some for aikido practice so during my time in Japan I could also maintain my swedish but also hang with people I knew since before.



*Dojocho took us to Koma shrine and after that we went to a nearby onsen*



*Just Outside of the Ministry of Defence  
Headquarters*

I did also turn 20 in Japan meanwhile I was doing uchideshi and I had the honour to put on a kimono and take some seijin pictures. Seijin means adult in Japanese and when a person turns 20 no matter the sex normally takes a photo while posing with kimono as sign of becoming mature. Thanks to the Kobayashi family I had the honour to have a once in a lifetime opportunity like this fulfilled and I'm very grateful. When I showed the pictures to

Kobayashi Soshihan he laughed and said "You look young, must be your brother!"

Now when I'm sitting here thinking about what changed me most is probably my view on sleep and tiredness that has changed a lot. Before I used to think that I always needed 8 hours of sleep to keep up with school, work or normal life. But with the uchideshi experience it has given me a new understanding that sometimes when you get 4-5 hours sleep you can still keep going if you're devoted and motivated. Of course you're tired but still somehow it shows that no matter how few hours you sleep you can keep going. Maybe not forever, but still it feels good to know that my body worked well with few hours of sleep.

But probably I won't be sleeping 4-5 hours during the night when I get home to Sweden but it feels good to know what your body can do.

The other thing that probably changed is my mind or how I work as a person I can now work better under stress and see different things around me, like multitasking. That you can be concentrating on one thing, but do another at the same time but also understand what people want before they show or speak. And these are things that I hope that I will bring back to Sweden so I can use that in everyday life. But at last the most important thing that I will be bringing back to Sweden is the Japanese norms and culture, how things work, but also, how people work, everything from what's happening outside on the street to things happening on the tatami. It can be small things from pouring beer for someone else to letting someone get off the elevator first, like everyday



*Some of my Swedish friends Helga, Magnus and Nicklas. Magnus stayed in Japan for three months, practiced a lot meanwhile teaching at Tokyo University, and also took his 3rd dan test.*

happenings. And as a conclusion I hope that I've become a better person, a person that understand different situations and how you can handle them in different ways according to the society.

Lastly I want to sincerely say thank you to Kobayashi soshihan and Hiroaki dojochō for letting me experience the uchideshi life these past 7 months, thanks to the musubi kikin I received. I would never been in Japan for a long time without the musubi kikin so from the bottom of my heart thank you. And also thank you Koyanagi sensei, Kasahara sensei and all the other teachers and all the members at Kobayashi dojo for showing your hospitality and support. Without your help I would never been here thank you. Thank you.

この7ヶ月間お世話になりました。心から感謝いたします。本当にありがとうございました。

