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Osensei, Omoto-kyo Theology, and Ichirei-Shikon-Sangen-Hachiriki

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"There was an extremely unworldly quality about his lectures on the Aiki path, from his main points or way of developing their content to his manner of talking. Sometimes he would reveal the workings of the universe through the interrelationship between the "Ichirei shikon sangen hachiriki" (one spirit, four souls, three sources, eight powers) of Ancient Shinto. On other occasions, he would jump to the subject of the hardships of settling Hokkaido. Then, in the next instant, he would make a complete turnabout and remark that "Aikido is the wondrous result of 'kototama'," mentioning for example the connection between the workings of the "su" sound or the "u" sound of kototama (=word-soul) and breath power." Then, suddenly, he would shift to describing incidents of martial prowess from the time he was in his prime. That is to say, he would freely describe the spontaneous knowledge, insights and images which came and went in his mind like lightning jumping from this topic to that. Moreover, subjects like more profound principles of theology would often suddenly pop up without the least regard to the circumstances and even his stories of martial valor contained references to his theory of the spirit, mind and body supplemented by practical examples." --Kisshomaru Ueshiba, speaking on Osensei's lectures, from the article, "Founder of Aikido (02): Day in and Day Out Training." (found at AikidoJournal.com)

In commenting within another blog entry I suggested that anyone interested in truly deciphering the meaning of Osensei's writings, and/or in determining or demarcating any practices that might be associated with such writings, would have to look at the context of the text in question. Toward that end, I repeated Derrida's warning that a text does not reveal its meaning at first glance -- that we must be cautious when seeing a phrase and claiming to know what it means just by seeing it and/or claiming to understand it by knowing it from another context. I said that this is especially true when it comes to Japanese religious culture.

So, what would be the context of Osensei's writings? Undoubtedly, there would be many. Undoubtedly, Osensei's writing is influenced by Chinese cosmology, Buddhist epistemology, Buddhist-Shinto discourse, Confucian thought, martial arts praxis, etc. Historical research into any of these areas is going to yield valuable information. For Osensei was a man of his times, like every man, and so as a man of early 20th century Japan, his thought, his writings, and thus his practices were influenced by all of these things. However, it is my opinion that one context stands out above the rest. This is especially true when we want to address the writings for which he has come to be considered a most profound figure; for which he has become known the world over. This context is the context of Omoto-kyo theology.

In the article, "Accord with the Totality of the Universe," Osensei uses the phrase, "the one soul, the four spirits, the 3 origins, and the 8 powers." The whole paragraph in which the phrase is contained reads as follows:

"The Great Universe embodies all the forces and powers (lit., "the one soul, the four spirits, the 3 origins and the 8 powers") and from them have come the origins of the human life force. The universe and mankind are as a single body. However, while mankind has the ability to unify with the universe, the fact that he is unable to accomplish this union is his unhappy condition. When a person stands before a shrine and prays his silent prayers it is for no other purpose than to unify himself with the godhead."

(Note: All quotes by Osensei in this essay are from the above-mentioned article -- found at AikidoJournal.com. When citing from the article, I have opted to use the translation "as is" in order to provide the reader with an ease of reference. Other terms are translated according to the translations used by Omoto-kyo. Again, this is done for an ease of reference. When my own translations differ from each of these translations, the reader will be clearly informed. If the first two translations differ, I have opted to use Omoto-kyo's translation, as their tradition's theology is what is being discussed here. Regardless, meaning is not lost, since in every case I have found the Omoto-kyo translation to function better than the translation provided in the article. I have tried to limit the use of Japanese terms, and I have opted not to mention the full chain of associations that Omoto-kyo corresponds to any one given thing, idea, or practice. This, as well, I have done in an attempt to keep things more clear and somewhat easier to follow.)

Without seeing the kanji, I feel pretty safe in assuming that this phrase reads in Japanese as *ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki*, which I will translate, following Omoto-kyo's translation, as, "The One-Spirit, the Four Soul-aspects, The Three Irreducible Elements, and The Eight Powers (or The Eight Forces)." From what I have learned of Japanese culture through my studies, one would probably be wrong in assuming that this phrase is particular to Osensei, to Aikido, or to the martial arts. In all likelihood, this phrase goes back quite a distance in time (and probably in space as well -- with maybe traces of it in China or even India). It will also have many interpretations. In fact, so multitudinous are these interpretations that some will most likely be in outright contradiction to others. We can also assume that this phrase, with its many meanings and its many contexts, also has many ways of being represented. This means that we will most likely be able to see it as a part of architecture, landscapes, paintings, mandalas, political organizations, and/or geometric shapes, etc. Without too much risk at all, we can also assume that it can be represented on the human body itself.

However, what does such a phrase mean according to Omoto-kyo theology? For me, that is the real question to ask and answer if one wants to understand what Osensei meant by such a phrase. Unfortunately, this is not my area of study concerning Japanese religious history. Therefore, I cannot off the top of my head go into any real kind of depth or detail -- certainly not at a level that would satisfy any real kind of academic review. However, I can offer enough information to perhaps spark further interest along these intended lines. After all, there does seem to be a decent amount of information that is quite accessible to anyone with such an interest. It is not as if Omoto-kyo is a tradition with few records and/or that hides itself from the public eye. In fact, Omoto-kyo is the exact opposite of this! Omoto-kyo wants its theology to be known, and it wants it to be known by the entire world. So why do we know so little then? In my opinion, the lack of historical research done on Omoto-kyo seems to come from its lack of attraction to up and coming scholars. If Omoto-kyo is

treated at all by scholars, it seems to only be treated as one of the many New Religions that sprung up during the modern period. In such studies, these traditions are treated as a single mass, one that is then open to sociological analysis of one type or another. This great reduction is further compounded by the fact that such studies are most often only concerned with the legal troubles Omoto-kyo's had with the Japanese state.

Adding to this dilemma, in my opinion, is the fact that most of Aikido's history is carried forth in the mouths and pens of practitioners whom are either not historians and/or do not hold themselves to the tenets of scientific historiography. This is not to say there is not good history out there, such as what you find on this journal (which one day will prove to be beyond any kind of measurable value -- I am sure). However, most interest in Aikido history is centered on either individual Aikido practice and/or the political agendas of various groups. For this reason, more folks are talking about how Osensei dodged bullets and/or how unique he was as a martial artist than they are working to uncover the details of Omoto-kyo theology -- which is the context of Osensei's writing and, I will add, the context of his understanding of Aikido.

Nevertheless, Omoto-kyo theology is out there, and it is out there for the taking. It is out there for the taking because Omoto-kyo is a tradition that seeks to understand itself as a world religion. As such, its theology is translated into many languages, and it is available on many mediums. Omoto-kyo is probably as far as one could get from an esoteric tradition. If Omoto-kyo theology is difficult to get a handle on, it is only because of its complexity, not its availability. This cannot be denied: Omoto-kyo theology is immensely complex (i.e. multi-relational). Although I have closely studied my graduate mentor's work on the Buddhist-Shinto multiplex at Kasuga, and though my own work deals with perhaps an even more complex tradition that centered on the deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu, I must say that I have never seen a theology as complex as that of Omoto-kyo. The adjective "convoluted" does not seem to come even close when describing the teachings of Onisaburo.

If you will excuse my colloquialism, Omoto-kyo has taken China's epistemology of correspondences and spoon-fed it crack. To the casual reader, Omoto-kyo theology will most likely look like the ranting of an insane mind. This immense complexity, I suggest, is most likely what was behind folks not "getting" what Osensei was talking about -- not that they were not familiar with Shinto discourse, Budo esoterica, Buddhist epistemology, etc. So complex is Omoto-kyo's theology that I have my suspicion that the theology does not make sense in total. The way it seems to continually fold back in upon itself makes it seem that eventually it will undoubtedly end in contradiction. If this is true, this however is not a problem at any kind of practical level, since probably no one -- not even Onisaburo or Osensei -- could ever think of the discourse in total. It is simply that immense, in my opinion.

When we do come to Omoto-kyo theology through the writings of Osensei, we discover something very enlightening: In most cases, Osensei is simply quoting (without citing) Onisaburo. This is something I have always had my suspicions aimed toward. It was something I mentioned a while back to Dr. Goldsbury in an email discussion we once had. Back then, I felt this might be true because of Osensei's social and educational background -- it being "somewhat" out of line with such a complex and culturally universal system of thought. This is not to say that Osensei did not understand what he was talking about -- in fact, he definitely appears to be quite fluent in Omoto-kyo theology. He definitely has a deep understanding of its teachings and of what they mean for the world, for himself, and for his art. In addition, he definitely seems to have achieved a complete melding of his spirit, his mind, and his body, to the thoughts and practices of this tradition. However, there is no doubt that to get what Osensei is saying, we need to understand what Onisaburo said. For me to really

get a sense of this however, I had to get around the Aikikai's efforts, and the efforts of certain authors, etc., to present Osensei as an eruption of genius on the timeline of human history. As far as Osensei's writing goes, if we want to think in terms of "genius," the real genius is Onisaburo. This means then, if we want to understand the more complex, more profound writings of Osensei, we just have to look at what Onisaburo said in his Omoto-kyo theology.

Let us ask: What is ichirei-shikon-sangen- hachiriki according to Omoto-kyo theology?

Ichirei, or One-Spirit, is a reference to the spiritual aspect of the ultimate deity, the creator God, GOD, the "one and only" God, etc. This God is the essence of all religions, and all traditions. That is to say, for example, there is no difference between this God and the God of the Christian Bible. They are the same. This is not a Japanese kami in the traditional sense. Understanding this deity as THE universal being of all creation, of the universe, etc., is central to Omoto-kyo's mission of attempting to establish peace on Earth by propagating what is common to all Mankind -- that which is beyond race and creed, etc. This "being" has many manifestations but "he" is mainly known as Kamususanowo-no-okami.

It is in Kamususanowo-no-okami that Omoto-kyo posits the possibility for achieving mystical union (i.e. a reconciliation of the subject/object dichotomy) -- which Omoto-kyo considers a part of God's plan (i.e. establishing an age of peace, love, wisdom, etc., on Earth). That is to say, according to Omoto-kyo theology, there is a relationship between our capacity to practice and receive love (for example) and our capacity to seek and gain a union with God. What makes such a union possible is that the spirit of God, ichirei, is in all things, in all people, in the entire Universe, in all creation, etc. Therefore, what is most natural for humans, what is most harmonious with all of creation, is to seek this union out, to realize this union for oneself, to become aware of this union through the very fibers of our being -- which themselves are thoroughly saturated with the spirit of God. Osensei writes:

"Mankind's role is to fulfill his heaven-sent purpose through a sincere heart that is in harmony with all creation and loves all things."

(Note: Before going on to explain how we realize ichirei and/or do not realize it, and without getting too trapped in the circular logic of Omoto-kyo theology, it might be interesting to point out that Kamususanowo/God is represented with the kotodama SU, is understood as the source of both Yin and Yang, and is also considered the hypostasis of the Buddha, Jesus, Bodhidharma, and Confucius. If we look at Osensei's lectures from this point of view, the point of view of God being all things, beings, actions, and ideas, perhaps, differently from Kisshomaru, we will not come to think of his discussions as "jumping all over the place.")

As ichirei is the spiritual essence of all that is, Omoto-kyo has no problem expressing the mystical union it advocates as a oneness with Nature, or with ourselves, or with the Universe, or with Heaven and Earth, etc. These phrases all mean the same thing at a theological level in Omoto-kyo. However, though all of creation shares a singular spiritual essence, and though it is most natural for us as humans to seek out this essence, a mystical union with God is not the inevitable conclusion to our existence. For various reasons, relevant to the age we are living in (see below), we are both incapable of this Oneness and of practicing Love, which is God's inherent and most overriding nature (i.e. what Osensei calls a "United Body of Love"). As a result, True Love, or Real Love, is not available to us in our lives if the spirit is not cultivated toward that end. We see this idea when Osensei writes:

"...while mankind has the ability to unify with the universe, the fact that he is unable to accomplish this union is his unhappy condition."

The spiritual essence of God (i.e. ichirei) that is in us as humans is called the nao-hi. It is this nao-hi that allows us as moral beings to determine right from wrong, evil from good, beauty from ugliness, etc. In other words, our conscience is not only the voice of God, it is of the spiritual essence of God. It is this aspect of Kamususanowo/God that interacts with the four soul-aspects, or the shikon, that are also inside of us.

Shikon, or the four soul-aspects, are ara-mitama, nigimitama, sachimitama and kushimitama. Each one of these aspects corresponds to a human virtue in terms of an essence and in terms of a set of functions. The four soul-aspects are broken down thusly:

- Ara-mitama -- its essence is audacity, and its functions are willingness, resolve, perseverance, diligence, and fortitude.
- Nigimitama -- its essence is affinity, and its functions are peace, discipline, order, governance and association.
- Sachimitama -- its essence is love, and its functions are benefit, creation, production, evolution, and nurture.
- Kushimitama -- its essence is wisdom, and its functions are skill, sensibility, observation, awareness, and enlightenment.

(Note: Here, "audacity" is meant to denote that spiritual fortitude necessary to think/feel that one can rise above their material existence.)

The aspect of the One Spirit (i.e. ichirei), and the four soul-aspects (i.e. shikon or ara-mitama, nigimitama, sachimitama, and kushimitama) interact within/through us as certain moral essences (i.e. audacity, affinity, love, and wisdom) are measured up against our conscience (i.e. nao-hi). This allows us to cultivate those virtues (i.e. willingness, resolve, discipline, association, nurture, sensibility, awareness, etc.) that mark the spiritual life (i.e. a life free from the bane of materialism, immorality, selfishness, etc.). In turn, these things come to produce five kinds of self-applied drives or capacities. These drives/capacities are the drives/capacities necessary for pursuing a union with God. They are: a drive to examine oneself, a capacity to experience a sense of shame, a drive to repent, a capacity to revere, and a drive/capacity to awaken to truth. Ichirei-shikon then is formulaic breakdown of how and why we as human beings can and should pursue a mystical union with God.

(Note: For an interesting discussion on Shame, please see:
<http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?p=100000>)

According to Omoto-kyo, one's spiritual journey should be marked by the drives/capacities that come to us as part of our inner nature and as part of our efforts to follow the impulses of the nao-hi and the cultivated virtues of the shikon. However, should we deny ourselves the natural inclination of allowing the nao-hi to guide our four soul-aspects, and thus prevent ourselves from cultivating both a sense of morality and a capacity for living a spiritual life, not only do we not cultivate within ourselves the drives or capacities necessary for a union with God, we also risk the overall corruption of our soul. When this occurs, each soul-aspect degenerates respectively as hostility, depravity, rebellion, and insanity. Thus, these things come to dominate our body/mind in terms of both thought and action, and we are thus reduced to the superficial, the material, and the delusional, etc. in our

daily lives. This is perhaps the way we should understand Osensei's recounting of the gold body incident. We might be wise in focusing in on the possible symbolic significance of gold - of becoming a being made of gold. For gold, the world over is a symbol of material culture, selfish desire, superficial attachment, etc. Osensei writes:

"30 years ago I was extremely weak of body. At that time I secretly harbored a dream. In this dream I wanted to be the strongest man in all of Japan -- no, more than that, in the entire world! I decided I would become the possessor of a martial power unequalled by anyone. With this dream before me I trained severely. One day a navy man confronted me, a person said to be a 7th dan holder in Kendo. Strangely, as I faced him I felt as if my body was surrounded by a shining brightness and I easily secured victory.

After that, however, a conceited feeling was born inside of me, and while walking through a garden I thought that innumerable golden threads came down to me from the universe. Then, a golden light whelmed up from the earth and engulfed me. Eventually I attained a feeling that my body was turned into a body of gold that expanded to universal proportions. Here I felt that the God(s) were chastising me for my ever-growing conceit and I cried tears of gratitude."

Is it too far of a stretch to suggest that Osensei penetrated through the delusion of material reality by having (or receiving) a vision of himself at its extreme? In his quest for the fame of being the world's most powerful martial artist, did he finally come to see the idiocy of his desire after he achieved a victory that at one time would have been deemed important by him but that could no longer be experienced as such? Now, as a human being made of gold, as a human being made of gold that was the size of the universe itself (it would seem, competing with God), was it from there that he realized that even if the whole world would come to desire him, he would still be lost to the truth of his existence? It would seem so.

It would seem that his tears of gratitude came to him because of the grace he received. This was a grace that exposed him to the lie he was living by failing to harmonize more properly the various aspects of his soul with the spiritual aspect of God that was within him (i.e. *ichirei-shikon*). For did he not in seeking supremacy over another man through martial prowess come to corrupt the workings of his soul - by allowing himself to practice various forms of hostility, depravity, rebellion, and insanity? Is it not a hostile and depraved act to combat another human being when reasons of fame and glory underlie one's motivations? Is it not a kind of rebellion against one's own nature and against God (as *Omoto-kyo* understands the concept) to seek material power and/or any power outside of mystical union? Are not such quests for this kind of power a distraction or a departure from the work that allows us to finally discover what is real and important? Is it not insane to choose such a lesser power over such an obviously greater power -- to look to be great before other corrupted men than to seek to be great before God? Whatever we may think, it seems very apparent that Osensei answered all of these questions in the way that *Onisaburo* had led him to. For in Osensei's vision, we see the degenerative soul-aspect drives of hostility, depravity, rebellion, and insanity, replaced by the harmonious soul-aspect drives of self-examination, repentance, shame, and an awakening to the Truth. Through his tears, of salt and water, Osensei seemed able to purify his soul of the corrupted aspects, by examining his inner self, by repenting for what he saw through his self-examinations, by feeling a sense of shame that would repulse him from ever acting that way again, and by seeing the Truth of God's way within himself. This is a great contrast from what we see in the moral causes and/or the ontological accomplishments of other Budo. Osensei writes:

"In the past, there have been a number of superlative masters of martial arts but we should never forget the great number of them who disappeared on the battlefield of this material world simply for lack of enough training in the true spirit of Budo, in sincere love, and in the battle against the self."

No matter what form the ontology of ichirei-shikon may be represented through, any corresponding practices refer back to this above-mentioned theology in Omoto-kyo. This is true whether these aspects of the soul are represented with sounds, kami, elements, colors, shapes, directions, etc. We can see this point being made by Osensei when he writes:

"When a person stands before a shrine and prays his silent prayers it is for no other purpose than to unify himself with the godhead."

As, for example, ritual, or rule-governed behavior, in such a theological system would seek to cultivate those essences and aspects of our inner being by having us practice self-examination, a sense of shame, repentance, and truth, it would seem that Osensei would have us also understand his art in this manner as well. This means, for Osensei, if he did think of Aikido as an act of purification, or as a ritual act, Aikido is a practice that must function through ichirei-shikon, and thus it is a practice that aims at a union with God. He writes:

"Aikido is the Budo (martial art) which opens the road to harmony; it is that which is at the root of the great spirit of reunification of all manifest creation."

As we can now note, we are to understand ichirei and shikon to be related terms or concepts. In the same way, we are to understand sangen and hachiriki to be interrelated. In addition, the two couplings (i.e. ichirei-shikon and sangen-hachiriki) relate to each other by understanding the whole of ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki to denote The Three Attributes of the Godhead (i.e. God). The three attributes of God are: "his" Spirit, "his" Body, and "his" Power (or force or energy). The Three Attributes are related as: God's spirit correlates to ichirei-shikon, "his" Body to sangen, and "his" Power to hachi-riki.

When Onisaburo looked out upon the world, in noting that everyone and everything is of God, he conceived of God as a kind of ultimate Parusha figure (from Indian mythology). In ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki, God's spirit is at the core of everything created (e.g. the nao-hi inside of us or the whole system of ichirei-shikon); and because the world has taken form, God's body is at the core of every form (i.e. sangen); and because the world is marked by action, God's "power" (or "force" or "action") is at the core of every movement (i.e. hachiriki). Ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki then is a formula for living the spiritual life by realizing every aspect of the created universe to be an aspect of God and a call for our mystical reunion with "him." Because of God's nature, ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki is also a call for the cultivation and practice of Love. Osensei, it seems, thought of Aikido as a way of reconciling our lives with this formula, with the fundamental aspects of God and thus with ourselves. We see this idea when he suggests that Aikido is a good remedy for the "weak." (Note: The article translates this as being "weak bodied" but in all likelihood Osensei is referring to those individuals that cannot live in harmony with the Universe/God or with the formula of ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki. In my opinion, Osensei is not referring to a weakness of limb, and thus he is not positing Aikido as a fine physical fitness regiment. We can note this in the remedy Osensei offers at the end of the article. He does not tell people to practice more suwari-waza and/or to do more suburi training. Instead, he opts to help them by sharing with him his daily routine of religious practices. Thus, we can see, Osensei is referring to the weakness that comes to us through a spiritual corruption

of the total self. Such a weakness then is a kind of incapacity to fulfill our human destiny to become one with God and/or to live in harmony with the nature of the Universe, etc.) In such a suggestion, when he notes that the "problem with the weak-bodied people of today is that they are unable to survive in a world of absolute accord and absolute non-desire," he tells us exactly what Aikido is and what it is supposed to do. Aikido is a path for union with God; it is a path for regaining our spiritual self as we distance ourselves from material culture. In the phrase *ichirei-shikon-sangen-hachiriki* we come to know how and why this is possible.

(Note: Before continuing on to discuss *sangen* and *hachiriki* in more detail, I thought it interesting that Osensei marked the weak with both an incapacity to live in accord with the Universe/God/Nature/Etc., and with an incapacity to practice non-desire -- which we should note as a non-desire toward material things. This too is quite in line with Omoto-kyo's theological stance on material culture. For example, Omoto-kyo considers the Earth to be marked by various ages. These ages are all defined according to the spiritual regression of Man -- it being directly related to Man's attachment to material culture. The ages are broken down as follows:

- The First Stage: The Age of the Gods -- in this stage humans on Earth were capable of very high states of spirituality and were thus able to mingle with celestial beings or discarnate entities.
- The Second Stage: The Age of Silver -- in this stage Man was still capable of mingling with celestial beings but here He also began to seek mundane knowledge and thus he began to deviate from the laws of Heaven and Earth.
- The Third Stage: The Age of Copper -- in this stage, while He remained aware of the laws of Heaven and Earth, Man no longer relied upon them to make decisions.
- The Fourth Stage: The Age of Iron -- in this stage Man disregarded the laws of Heaven and Earth entirely and thus he became materialistic. As a result, Man lost His knowledge on the spiritual world. Virtue disappears from Man's everyday existence, but Truth remained.
- The Fifth Stage: The Age of Mud -- in this stage Man progresses materially as He continues to regress spiritually. Here both Virtue and Truth disappear from Man's daily existence. Now, in this age, in the age we are now in, Man must work to discover for himself both Virtue and Truth. To do this, Man must distance himself from the trend toward materiality (i.e. from His desires for material things and for superficial knowledge).

In the end, like all mystical traditions, and as we can see here in Osensei, Omoto-kyo approximates one's closeness to God with one's distance from the material world. In classic fashion, we thus see Osensei opting to increase his distance from the material world and from people attached to the material world when he writes:

"Even so, as I traveled down this path I found human interaction had become more and more of a hindrance so I moved up to Tokyo and now I have retreated to (a farm in) Iwama, in Ibaraki Prefecture. It seems that by lessening my interaction with human beings I am much more able to acutely intuit the principle of oneness with the Universe.")

So what is *sangen* as the Body Attribute of God? *Sangen* are the three irreducible elements of the physical world. Many East Asian traditions have such a notion. However, there is not a single

understanding of what these three elements are or how they are to fit in with one's practice. For Omoto-kyo, in terms of matter (i.e. in terms of God's body), the world of existence can be broken down into the categories of mineral, plant, and animal. These are the sangen of Omoto-kyo. As I said above, we are to think of the sangen and the hachiriki as interrelated. These sangen (i.e. God's body or the world of matter) consists of subtle and intricate combinations of the hachiriki, or the eight powers, or the eight forces. The eight powers/forces (i.e. hachiriki) are varying degrees of the union of Yin and Yang energies (which are the forces of God, "his" movement, "his" action, "his" energy, etc.). The eight types of energies (i.e. varying degrees of the union of Yin and Yang or God's Power) are: an activating force, a quieting force, a melting force, a coagulating force, a pulling force, a loosening force, a combining force and a dividing force. Because of the interdependency of God's spirit to God's energy to God's body, force or energy on this plain of existence also has the capacity to interrelate power/force/energy to matter/shape/form. These combinations or energy mark the mineral, plant, and animal aspects of creation. However, because all of these things are of God, and as we are of God as well, and as these things are also of God's Power, the sangen also function within the microcosm of our being. For example, the mineral aspect is used to fasten our soul to our physical body; the plant aspect is used to enrich us; the animal aspect is used to animate us with Life.

As with the shikon, the sangen and the hachiriki also correspond to numerous other things, feelings, directions, colors, sounds, shapes, kami, etc., in Omoto-kyo. These correlations are used ritually to bring a sense of being of the presence and in the presence of God and/or "his" primary attribute of Love -- which can be thought of as the ultimate power of God. It is important to understand this sense of power that is quite peculiar to Omoto-kyo and thus most likely to Osensei as well. Please note the following two passages. The first one is considered an Omoto-kyo maxim. Onisaburo authors it:

"God is the spirit which pervades the entire universe, and man is the focus of the workings of heaven and earth. When God and man become one, infinite power will become manifest."

Now please note the following passage written by Osensei in the related article:

"Thus, by imbibing the principle of the Universal, and receiving the ki of the Heaven and Earth, when I unified this entire human body, I realized the subtle depth of Aikido that manifests such great power, and attained the principle of oneness with the Universe."

Remembering that the universe is equivalent with God, we see that Osensei is opting to follow the Omoto-kyo maxim perfectly, suggesting that his realizing of the subtle depth of Aikido and the manifestation of great power is directly attributable to him having attained a mystical union with God. Whatever this power is, or however it may be applied, for better or worse, we know from what Osensei says earlier in this article that he is not referring to the kind of power that makes one unequal in martial prowess. It is not the kind of power that comes to you by trying to be the strongest martial artist in the world. If anything, Osensei's shared confession suggests, such a quest, as a quest of the ego, of selfish desire, of pursuing material or worldly things, prevents us from attaining the infinite power of which Onisaburo speaks -- the power he pointed Osensei toward, and the power Osensei seems to be pointing us toward: The Power of Aikido.