

An Honest Man 2

[Itsumomanabu](#) has left you a message: “**you are so full of crap anessi you stole the techniques from Okamoto Shihan. You have no real back ground in Daito Ryu. You are not an honest man.**”

When can a person legitimately be considered a “stealer” of techniques and thus dishonest?

I have found that people use techniques that my guest instructors and I have taught on our videos without bothering to credit the style, the video, or the instructor. One sensei, having learned from our videos, appeared at a large convention that I attended, and showed a *waza* that looked strangely familiar to me. I looked up his name on the program and it also seemed familiar. Ah, he was one of my customers. Rather than dress him down about stealing the *waza* (he did after all pay for the video), when it was my turn to demonstrate I lectured publicly about instructors crediting their sources.

Our purpose as instructors is to teach. If an instructor wants to limit the dispersion of his material, he has to build restrictions into membership as Daito-ryu Kodo-kai and Roppokai have done. Outlying students of video instruction, however, have never agreed to those restrictions so they can learn from the video as can anyone else. They are dishonest only if they pass off the learned *waza* as an ancient technique of their recently invented system, if they imply that they invented it themselves, or that they learned it from personal instruction.

If they are not very good at what they do or if their system is not very popular, their imitations will be ignored, but ironically, if they are talented practitioners and their systems gain an audience, they will be accused of stealing techniques *even if they came about them legitimately, credit their sources, and can make the waza work*. Then decades later, when Ueshiba’s *waza* no longer looks like Takeda’s or when Shioda’s no longer looks like Ueshiba’s, they will be duly recognized as thoughtful, insightful, well-studied founders.

In my case, I have been to both Kodo-dai and Roppokai seminars, have acted as uke for instructors of both systems, albeit for a very brief stint, and have helped explain aiki techniques to those less exposed to them at these seminars. I don’t claim any level of expertise in any seminar- or video-learned *waza* and I do credit my sources when teaching, whether or not one of my videos is being shot. I do however claim a certain level of expertise in the arts in which I was formally trained. Mr. Itsumomanabu and other YouTube critics are probably unfamiliar with those arts.

Those who spend time on the internet trying to find excellent budo, often come away disappointed, feeling it is their obligation to detract from instructors who, in their minds, cannot be as good as their own personal instructor, their favorite instructor, or their federation’s head instructor, and thus attempt to strike down any pretenders to the imaginary throne of Budo King.

Certainly there are many candidates who qualify for being overthrown. I know an instructor who attended a high-level aiki seminar (I have the seminar and him on VHS) and then less than a month later published a video with the identical techniques, never citing their origins, and implying that they were *waza* from his own system—a system that was only ten years old. Now, if this instructor had credited his source,

mentioned that he was trying to incorporate the techniques into his system because they fit with already existing techniques, I would have no problem with him. As it was, he asked for a personal endorsement because he had, unsolicited, endorsed one of my videos. All he had to do was work on the newly learned material for a few months, integrate it into his system, and be upfront about its origin, and I would have been happy to give him a ringing endorsement. Being a principled martial artist, I could not.

Honest criticism is part of the educational process. I don't mind being coached or corrected by instructors, high level or low, but I wonder sometime what sort of personality runs to defend an art or instructor that was never attacked nor needs defending from the supposed cad who has spend decades developing his skills, training in several arts, and is careful to honor those who have provided insight and tuition.

Usually, honest, professional critics research their subjects before they draw their conclusions, illustrate their claims with examples, and include a byline with their own names and backgrounds. Those who don't are...well...not honest men.