

## History and Future of Aikido

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#### History of Aikido

Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), started developing aikido through his experiences with a range of other martial arts, such as Tenjin Shin'yo-ryu (a traditional school of jujutsu), Gotoha Yagyū Shingan-ryū (a battlefield art based on weapons and grappling techniques), judo and jujitsu, as well as philosophical and religious beliefs. Particularly daito-ryū aiki-jujutsu and Morihei Ueshiba's beliefs in Omoto-kyō were key influences in the development of aikido.

Daito-ryū aiki-jujutsu was developed by Takeda Sokaku in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century- although the school's tradition could be traced back hundreds of years in Japanese history – and Morihei Ueshiba was apparently Takeda's most well known student. Some elements aiki-jujutsu emphasizes include the early neutralization of attacks, throwing techniques and joint manipulations, as well as blending with the attacker and using the opponent's force against them. Many of these teachings were transferred by Ueshiba into Aikido, and augmented with spear, staff and bayonet movements, and particularly swordsmanship (kenjutsu). At this point, Ueshiba referred to his art as Aiki Budo, but it became formally known as Aikido in 1942.

However, Aikido began to move away from Daito-ryū in the 1920s as Ueshiba got closer involved in the Omote-kyō religion, which originated from Shinto, and in which Deguchi Onisaburo was important as a spiritual teacher. Key principles include integrated Kokugaku teachings and ideas on world harmony and peace, and teachings that see the achievement of personal virtue or utopia as a step to universal harmony. It is believed that Ueshiba's increasing focus on pacifism and his beliefs that Aikido should be an "art of peace" were inspired through his involvement with Omote-kyō. Ueshiba incorporated his philosophy of love and compassion into Aikido through emphasis on harmlessly redirecting attacks - ideally both the receiver and attacker stay unharmed.

While contributing to his spiritual growth, due to his connection with Deguchi Ueshiba gained access to political and military circles, and attracted financial support and gifted students. Some of these students later on founded their own style of aikido.

Key Aikido organizations that were founded include:

- Aikikai Foundation: This is the largest and original foundation, established in 1940, and was initially run by O'Sensei. After his death, Ueshiba's son Kisshomaru, took over the leadership, and Aikikai is currently still under leadership within the Ueshiba family, under Moriteru Ueshiba, and operates the Hombu Dojo. The Aikikai style is considered to be the traditional Aikido style and has aspects Morihei Ueshiba found important, such as non-competitiveness, but does not necessarily emphasize spiritual interpretations.
- Yoseikan: this was the earliest independent style and founded in 1931 by Minoru Mochizuki, a direct student of Morihei Ueshiba.
- Yoshinkan Aikido: this is considered to be a hard style of aikido, closer to aiki-jujutsu than styles of aikido developed after WWII. Yoshinkan is currently the second largest aikido organization worldwide.

- Shodokan Aikido: founded in 1967, this style is considered controversial due to its competitive nature.
- In 1974, Koichi Tohei left Aikikai due to disagreements with Kisshomaru Ueshiba over Ki development and teaching techniques, and founded Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido and the Ki Society. Ki Aikido originates from this and includes teaching methods based around the development of mind and body coordination and ki.
- A further style developed from Ueshiba's retirement in Iwama, by Morihiro Saito, and is referred to as the Iwama style. Currently, part of Iwama style practitioners remain with Aikikai, and another group formed Shinshin Aikishuren in 2004.

Besides in Japan, Aikido start to became popular internationally in the 1950s. The first dojo outside of Japan was established in France when Minoru Mochizuki went to France in 1951 and taught aikido techniques to Judo students. Following this, Kenji Tomiki brought aikido to the United States in 1953. Additionally, Koichi Tohei went to Hawaii in 1953 and established a range of dojos there. Other countries in which Aikido was introduced in the 50's and 60's include Great Britain (1955), Italy (1964) and Germany (1965). Today, Aikido dojos exist in a wide range of countries.

### **Future of Aikido**

#### How I think and hope Aikido will evolve.

Aikido has always been an art with a different philosophy than many other martial arts due to its non violent and harmonious nature – these make Aikido very different than other arts, and in theory should be attractive to many people. Because of this, I believe Aikido generally tends to attract more mature people that want to learn and help improve, rather than compete with and inflict harm to others.

As such it is my hope that as the broader society learns more about aikido, its philosophy and its practical applications, that an increasing number of people will realize they can learn, develop, and enjoy themselves, as well as contribute to others by participating in its practice.

However, this depends critically on how Aikido students involve, educate and attract others outside of Aikido. I believe this is still a large challenge, as many people already have other, established interests, and many people associate/group Aikido with all other martial arts, despite their differences.

As such, through programs such as the after school program that Roswell Budokan has instituted, the hope is that by attracting children at an early age, and enthusing them with the enjoyment and satisfaction that practicing aikido can bring, Aikido can increase its reach into society. For adults, the best way to attract people probably remains through word of mouth, open events and other marketing efforts such as participating in Japanese festivals. However, additional efforts can no doubt further expand Aikido's benefits on society.

For the practice of Aikido itself, from a philosophical perspective, I hope that over time some of the divisions between the different styles of aikido can be turned into a positive unification, where the core

beliefs and principles remain, but where there is room and respect for different interpretations, and these styles together can bring a greater body of knowledge and advancement to all practitioners.

#### My role in Aikido going forward

As I have learned more about Aikido in the past few years, I have started to realize that there is really (more than I ever thought possible) an almost unending variety in techniques, ways to improve coordination, and ways to apply core Aikido principles.

More importantly, partly as a result of starting to teach, I'm now starting to pay more attention to subtle aspects of Aikido, such as how to work with and interact with others in more compassionate ways, which have also started to positively impact my broader personal and professional life.

To me, Aikido is a great source of fascination, learning and enjoyment. It is my intent to increasingly bring across my enthusiasm for Aikido to others through training, (assistant) teaching, and to encourage others to explore and discover all that Aikido has to offer.