

= Aikido =

Aikido (Japanese : 合気道 , Hepburn : Aikidō) [a.i.ki.do] is a modern Japanese martial art developed by Morihei Ueshiba as a synthesis of his martial studies , philosophy , and religious beliefs . Aikido is often translated as " the way of unifying (with) life energy " or as " the way of harmonious spirit . " Ueshiba 's goal was to create an art that practitioners could use to defend themselves while also protecting their attacker from injury .

Aikido techniques consist of entering and turning movements that redirect the momentum of an opponent 's attack , and a throw or joint lock that terminates the technique .

Aikido derives mainly from the martial art of Daitō Aiki Jūjutsu , but began to diverge from it in the late 1920s , partly due to Ueshiba 's involvement with the Ōmoto-kyō religion . Ueshiba 's early students ' documents bear the term aiki Jūjutsu .

Ueshiba 's senior students have different approaches to aikido , depending partly on when they studied with him . Today aikido is found all over the world in a number of styles , with broad ranges of interpretation and emphasis . However , they all share techniques formulated by Ueshiba and most have concern for the well-being of the attacker .

= = Etymology and basic philosophy = =

The word " aikido " is formed of three kanji :

あ い joining , unifying , combining , fitting

き spirit , energy , mood , morale

道 way , path

The term " aiki " does not readily appear in the Japanese language outside the scope of Budo . This has led to many possible interpretations of the word . あい is mainly used in compounds to mean ' combine , unite , join together , meet ' , examples being 合同 (combined / united) , 合成 (composition) , 合一 (unite / combine / join together) , 連合 (union / alliance / association) , 統一 (combine / unify) , and 合意 (mutual agreement) . There is an idea of reciprocity , 相互 (to get to know one another) , 対話 (talk / discussion / negotiation) , and 面会 (meet by appointment) .

気 is often used to describe a feeling , as in 感じる (' I feel X ' , as in terms of thinking but with less cognitive reasoning) , and 感覚 (feeling / sensation) ; it is used to mean energy or force , as in 電気 (electricity) and 磁気 (magnetism) ; it can also refer to qualities or aspects of people or things , as in 気質 (spirit / trait / temperament) .

The term 道 is also found in martial arts such as judo and kendo , and in various non-martial arts , such as Japanese calligraphy (書道) , flower arranging (花道) and tea ceremony (茶道 or 茶室) .

Therefore , from a purely literal interpretation , aikido is the " Way of combining forces " , in that the term aiki refers to the martial arts principle or tactic of blending with an attacker 's movements for the purpose of controlling their actions with minimal effort . One applies aiki by understanding the rhythm and intent of the attacker to find the optimal position and timing to apply a counter-attack technique .

= = History = =

Aikido was created by Morihei Ueshiba (植芝 盛平 Ueshiba Morihei , 14 December 1883 – 26 April 1969) , referred to by some aikido practitioners as 大先生 (" Great Teacher ") . The term ' aikido ' was coined in the twentieth century . Ueshiba envisioned aikido not only as the synthesis of his martial training , but as an expression of his personal philosophy of universal peace and reconciliation . During Ueshiba 's lifetime and continuing today , aikido has evolved from the Aiki that Ueshiba studied into a variety of expressions by martial artists throughout the world .

= = Initial development = =

Ueshiba developed aikido primarily during the late 1920s through the 1930s through the synthesis of the older martial arts that he had studied . The core martial art from which aikido derives is Daitō ryū aiki jūjutsu , which Ueshiba studied directly with Takeda Sōkaku , the reviver of that art . Additionally , Ueshiba is known to have studied Tenjin Shin'yō ryū with Tozawa Tokusaburō in Tokyo in 1901 , Gotōha Yagyū Shingan ryū under Nakai Masakatsu in Sakai from 1903 to 1908 , and judo with Kiyochi Takagi (田村 清一 Takagi Kiyochi , 1894 - 1972) in Tanabe in 1911 .

The art of Daitō ryū is the primary technical influence on aikido . Along with empty handed throwing and joint locking techniques , Ueshiba incorporated training movements with weapons , such as those for the spear (yari) , short staff (jō) , and perhaps the bayonet (刺し身 , jūken) . However , aikido derives much of its technical structure from the art of swordsmanship (kenjutsu) .

Ueshiba moved to Hokkaidō in 1912 , and began studying under Takeda Sokaku in 1915 . His official association with Daitō ryū continued until 1937 . However , during the latter part of that period , Ueshiba had already begun to distance himself from Takeda and the Daitō ryū . At that time Ueshiba was referring to his martial art as " Aiki Budō " . It is unclear exactly when Ueshiba began using the name " aikido " , but it became the official name of the art in 1942 when the Greater Japan Martial Virtue Society (Dai Nippon Butoku Kai) was engaged in a government sponsored reorganization and centralization of Japanese martial arts .

=== Religious influences ===

After Ueshiba left Hokkaidō in 1919 , he met and was profoundly influenced by Onisaburo Deguchi , the spiritual leader of the Ōmoto kyō religion (a neo Shinto movement) in Ayabe . One of the primary features of Ōmoto kyō is its emphasis on the attainment of utopia during one's life . This was a great influence on Ueshiba's martial arts philosophy of extending love and compassion especially to those who seek to harm others . Aikido demonstrates this philosophy in its emphasis on mastering martial arts so that one may receive an attack and harmlessly redirect it . In an ideal resolution , not only is the receiver unharmed , but so is the attacker .

In addition to the effect on his spiritual growth , the connection with Deguchi gave Ueshiba entry to elite political and military circles as a martial artist . As a result of this exposure , he was able to attract not only financial backing but also gifted students . Several of these students would found their own styles of aikido .

=== International dissemination ===

Aikido was first brought to the rest of the world in 1951 by Minoru Mochizuki with a visit to France where he introduced aikido techniques to judo students . He was followed by Tadashi Abe in 1952 , who came as the official Aikikai Hombu representative , remaining in France for seven years . Kenji Tomiki toured with a delegation of various martial arts through 15 continental states of the United States in 1953 . Later that year , Koichi Tohei was sent by Aikikai Hombu to Hawaii for a full year , where he set up several dojo . This trip was followed by several further visits and is considered the formal introduction of aikido to the United States . The United Kingdom followed in 1955 ; Italy in 1964 by Hiroshi Tada ; and Germany in 1965 by Katsuaki Asai . Designated " Official Delegate for Europe and Africa " by Morihei Ueshiba , Masamichi Noro arrived in France in September 1961 . Seiichi Sugano was appointed to introduce aikido to Australia in 1965 . Today there are aikido dojo throughout the world .

=== Proliferation of independent organizations ===

The largest aikido organization is the Aikikai Foundation , which remains under the control of the Ueshiba family . However , aikido has many styles , mostly formed by Morihei Ueshiba's major students .

The earliest independent styles to emerge were Yoseikan Aikido , begun by Minoru Mochizuki in 1931 , Yoshinkan Aikido , founded by Gozo Shioda in 1955 , and Shodokan Aikido , founded by Kenji Tomiki in 1967 . The emergence of these styles pre-dated Ueshiba 's death and did not cause any major upheavals when they were formalized . Shodokan Aikido , however , was controversial , since it introduced a unique rule-based competition that some felt was contrary to the spirit of aikido .

After Ueshiba 's death in 1969 , two more major styles emerged . Significant controversy arose with the departure of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo 's chief instructor Koichi Tohei , in 1974 . Tohei left as a result of a disagreement with the son of the founder , Kisshomaru Ueshiba , who at that time headed the Aikikai Foundation . The disagreement was over the proper role of ki development in regular aikido training . After Tohei left , he formed his own style , called Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido , and the organization that governs it , the Ki Society (Ki no Kenkyukai) .

A final major style evolved from Ueshiba 's retirement in Iwama , Ibaraki and the teaching methodology of long term student Morihiro Saito . It is unofficially referred to as the " Iwama style " , and at one point a number of its followers formed a loose network of schools they called Iwama Ryu . Although Iwama style practitioners remained part of the Aikikai until Saito 's death in 2002 , followers of Saito subsequently split into two groups . One remained with the Aikikai and the other formed the independent Shinshin Aikishuren Kai in 2004 around Saito 's son Hitohiro Saito .

Today , the major styles of aikido are each run by a separate governing organization , have their own headquarters (??? , honbu d?j?) in Japan , and have an international breadth .

= = Ki = =

The study of ki is an important component of aikido , and its study defies categorization as either " physical " or " mental " training , as it encompasses both . The kanji for ki normally is written as 気 . It was written as 氣 until the writing reforms after World War 2 , and this older form still is seen on occasion .

The character for ki is used in everyday Japanese terms , such as " health " (元気 , genki) , or " shyness " (気恥 , uchiki) . Ki has many meanings , including " ambience " , " mind " , " mood " , and " intention " , however , in traditional martial arts it is often used to refer to " life energy " . Goz? Shioda 's Yoshinkan Aikido , considered one of the " hard styles " , largely follows Ueshiba 's teachings from before World War II , and surmises that the secret to ki lies in timing and the application of the whole body 's strength to a single point . In later years , Ueshiba 's application of ki in aikido took on a softer , more gentle feel . This was his Takemusu Aiki and many of his later students teach about ki from this perspective . Koichi Tohei 's Ki Society centers almost exclusively around the study of the empirical (albeit subjective) experience of ki with students ranked separately in aikido techniques and ki development .

= = Training = =

In aikido , as in virtually all Japanese martial arts , there are both physical and mental aspects of training . The physical training in aikido is diverse , covering both general physical fitness and conditioning , as well as specific techniques . Because a substantial portion of any aikido curriculum consists of throws , beginners learn how to safely fall or roll . The specific techniques for attack include both strikes and grabs ; the techniques for defense consist of throws and pins . After basic techniques are learned , students study freestyle defense against multiple opponents , and techniques with weapons .

= = Fitness = =

Physical training goals pursued in conjunction with aikido include controlled relaxation , correct movement of joints such as hips and shoulders , flexibility , and endurance , with less emphasis on strength training . In aikido , pushing or extending movements are much more common than pulling

or contracting movements . This distinction can be applied to general fitness goals for the aikido practitioner .

In aikido , specific muscles or muscle groups are not isolated and worked to improve tone , mass , or power . Aikido @-@ related training emphasizes the use of coordinated whole @-@ body movement and balance similar to yoga or pilates . For example , many dojos begin each class with warm @-@ up exercises (???? , junbi tais?) , which may include stretching and ukemi (break falls) .

= = = Roles of uke and tori = = =

Aikido training is based primarily on two partners practicing pre @-@ arranged forms (kata) rather than freestyle practice . The basic pattern is for the receiver of the technique (uke) to initiate an attack against the person who applies the technique ? the ?? tori , or shite ?? (depending on aikido style) , also referred to as ?? nage (when applying a throwing technique) , who neutralises this attack with an aikido technique .

Both halves of the technique , that of uke and that of tori , are considered essential to aikido training . Both are studying aikido principles of blending and adaptation . Tori learns to blend with and control attacking energy , while uke learns to become calm and flexible in the disadvantageous , off @-@ balance positions in which tori places them . This " receiving " of the technique is called ukemi . Uke continuously seeks to regain balance and cover vulnerabilities (e.g. , an exposed side) , while tori uses position and timing to keep uke off @-@ balance and vulnerable . In more advanced training , uke will sometimes apply reversal techniques (??? , kaeshi @-@ waza) to regain balance and pin or throw tori .

Ukemi (??) refers to the act of receiving a technique . Good ukemi involves attention to the technique , the partner and the immediate environment ? it is an active rather than a passive receiving of aikido . The fall itself is part of aikido , and is a way for the practitioner to receive , safely , what would otherwise be a devastating strike or throw .

= = = Initial attacks = = =

Aikido techniques are usually a defense against an attack , so students must learn to deliver various types of attacks to be able to practice aikido with a partner . Although attacks are not studied as thoroughly as in striking @-@ based arts , sincere attacks (a strong strike or an immobilizing grab) are needed to study correct and effective application of technique .

Many of the strikes (?? , uchi) of aikido resemble cuts from a sword or other grasped object , which indicate its origins in techniques intended for armed combat . Other techniques , which explicitly appear to be punches (tsuki) , are practiced as thrusts with a knife or sword . Kicks are generally reserved for upper @-@ level variations ; reasons cited include that falls from kicks are especially dangerous , and that kicks (high kicks in particular) were uncommon during the types of combat prevalent in feudal Japan . Some basic strikes include :

Front @-@ of @-@ the @-@ head strike (???? , sh?men 'uchi) a vertical knifehand strike to the head . In training , this is usually directed at the forehead or the crown for safety , but more dangerous versions of this attack target the bridge of the nose and the maxillary sinus .

Side @-@ of @-@ the @-@ head strike (???? , yokomen 'uchi) a diagonal knifehand strike to the side of the head or neck .

Chest thrust (??? , mune @-@ tsuki) a punch to the torso . Specific targets include the chest , abdomen , and solar plexus . Same as " middle @-@ level thrust " (???? , ch?dan @-@ tsuki) , and " direct thrust " (??? , choku @-@ tsuki) .

Face thrust (???? , ganmen @-@ tsuki) a punch to the face . Same as " upper @-@ level thrust " (???? , j?dan @-@ tsuki) .

Beginners in particular often practice techniques from grabs , both because they are safer and because it is easier to feel the energy and lines of force of a hold than a strike . Some grabs are historically derived from being held while trying to draw a weapon ; a technique could then be used

to free oneself and immobilize or strike the attacker who is grabbing the defender . The following are examples of some basic grabs :

Single @-@ hand grab (????, katate @-@ dori) one hand grabs one wrist .

Both @-@ hands grab (????, morote @-@ dori) both hands grab one wrist . Same as " single hand double @-@ handed grab " (?????, katate?te @-@ dori)

Both @-@ hands grab (????, ry?te @-@ dori) both hands grab both wrists . Same as " double single @-@ handed grab " (?????, ry?katate @-@ dori) .

Shoulder grab (???, kata @-@ dori) a shoulder grab . " Both @-@ shoulders @-@ grab " is ry?kata @-@ dori (???) . It is sometimes combined with an overhead strike as Shoulder grab face strike (?????, kata @-@ dori men @-@ uchi) .

Chest grab (???, mune @-@ dori or muna @-@ dori) grabbing the (clothing of the) chest . Same as " collar grab " (???, eri @-@ dori) .

= = = Basic techniques = = =

The following are a sample of the basic or widely practiced throws and pins . Many of these techniques derive from Dait? @-@ ry? Aiki @-@ j?jutsu , but some others were invented by Morihei Ueshiba . The precise terminology for some may vary between organisations and styles , so what follows are the terms used by the Aikikai Foundation . Note that despite the names of the first five techniques listed , they are not universally taught in numeric order .

First technique (?? (?) , ikky?) a control using one hand on the elbow and one hand near the wrist which leverages uke to the ground . This grip applies pressure into the ulnar nerve at the wrist .

Second technique (?? , niky?) a pronating wristlock that torques the arm and applies painful nerve pressure . (There is an adductive wristlock or Z @-@ lock in ura version .)

Third technique (?? , sanky?) a rotational wristlock that directs upward @-@ spiraling tension throughout the arm , elbow and shoulder .

Fourth technique (?? , yonky?) a shoulder control similar to ikky? , but with both hands gripping the forearm . The knuckles (from the palm side) are applied to the recipient 's radial nerve against the periosteum of the forearm bone .

Fifth technique (?? , goky?) visually similar to ikky? , but with an inverted grip of the wrist , medial rotation of the arm and shoulder , and downward pressure on the elbow . Common in knife and other weapon take @-@ away .

Four @-@ direction throw (????, shih?nage) The hand is folded back past the shoulder , locking the shoulder joint .

Forearm return (????, kotegaeshi) a supinating wristlock @-@ throw that stretches the extensor digitorum .

Breath throw (????, koky?nage) a loosely used term for various types of mechanically unrelated techniques , although they generally do not use joint locks like other techniques .

Entering throw (????, iriminage) throws in which tori moves through the space occupied by uke . The classic form superficially resembles a " clothesline " technique .

Heaven @-@ and @-@ earth throw (????, tenchinage) beginning with ry?te @-@ dori ; moving forward , tori sweeps one hand low (" earth ") and the other high (" heaven ") , which unbalances uke so that he or she easily topples over .

Hip throw (???, koshinage) aikido 's version of the hip throw . Tori drops his or her hips lower than those of uke , then flips uke over the resultant fulcrum .

Figure @-@ ten throw (????, j?jinage) or figure @-@ ten entanglement (????, j?jigarami) a throw that locks the arms against each other (The kanji for " 10 " is a cross @-@ shape : ?) .

Rotary throw (????, kaitennage) Tori sweeps the arm back until it locks the shoulder joint , then uses forward pressure to throw .

= = = Implementations = = =

Aikido makes use of body movement (tai sabaki) to blend with uke . For example , an " entering " (irimi) technique consists of movements inward towards uke , while a " turning " (?? , tenkan) technique uses a pivoting motion . Additionally , an " inside " (? , uchi) technique takes place in front of uke , whereas an " outside " (? , soto) technique takes place to his side ; a " front " (? , omote) technique is applied with motion to the front of uke , and a " rear " (? , ura) version is applied with motion towards the rear of uke , usually by incorporating a turning or pivoting motion . Finally , most techniques can be performed while in a seated posture (seiza) . Techniques where both uke and tori are standing are called tachi @-@ waza , techniques where both start off in seiza are called suwari @-@ waza , and techniques performed with uke standing and tori sitting are called hanmi handachi (?????) .

Thus , from fewer than twenty basic techniques , there are thousands of possible implementations . For instance , ikky? can be applied to an opponent moving forward with a strike (perhaps with an ura type of movement to redirect the incoming force) , or to an opponent who has already struck and is now moving back to reestablish distance (perhaps an omote @-@ waza version) . Specific aikido kata are typically referred to with the formula " attack @-@ technique (-modifier) " . For instance , katate @-@ dori ikky? refers to any ikky? technique executed when uke is holding one wrist . This could be further specified as katate @-@ dori ikky? omote , referring to any forward @-@ moving ikky? technique from that grab .

Atemi (???) are strikes (or feints) employed during an aikido technique . Some view atemi as attacks against " vital points " meant to cause damage in and of themselves . For instance , G?z? Shioda described using atemi in a brawl to quickly down a gang 's leader . Others consider atemi , especially to the face , to be methods of distraction meant to enable other techniques . A strike , whether or not it is blocked , can startle the target and break his or her concentration . The target may become unbalanced in attempting to avoid the blow , for example by jerking the head back , which may allow for an easier throw . Many sayings about atemi are attributed to Morihei Ueshiba , who considered them an essential element of technique .

= = = Weapons = = =

Weapons training in aikido traditionally includes the short staff (j?) , wooden sword (bokken) , and knife (tant?) . Some schools incorporate firearm @-@ disarming techniques . Both weapon @-@ taking and weapon @-@ retention are taught . Some schools , such as the Iwama style of Morihiro Saito , usually spend substantial time with bokken and j? , practised under the names aiki @-@ ken , and aiki @-@ j? , respectively .

The founder developed many of the empty @-@ handed techniques from traditional sword and spear movements . Consequently , the practice of the weapons arts gives insight into the origin of techniques and movements , and reinforces the concepts of distance , timing , foot movement , presence and connectedness with one 's training partner (s) .

= = = Multiple attackers and randori = = =

One feature of aikido is training to defend against multiple attackers , often called taninzudori , or taninzugake . Freestyle practice with multiple attackers , called randori (??) or jiy?waza (???) , is a key part of most curricula and is required for the higher level ranks . Randori exercises a person 's ability to intuitively perform techniques in an unstructured environment . Strategic choice of techniques , based on how they reposition the student relative to other attackers , is important in randori training . For instance , an ura technique might be used to neutralise the current attacker while turning to face attackers approaching from behind .

In Shodokan Aikido , randori differs in that it is not performed with multiple persons with defined roles of defender and attacker , but between two people , where both participants attack , defend , and counter at will . In this respect it resembles judo randori .

= = = Injuries = = =

In applying a technique during training , it is the responsibility of tori to prevent injury to uke by employing a speed and force of application that is commensurate with their partner 's proficiency in ukemi . Injuries (especially those to the joints) , when they do occur in aikido , are often the result of tori misjudging the ability of uke to receive the throw or pin .

A study of injuries in the martial arts showed that the type of injuries varied considerably from one art to the other . Soft tissue injuries are one of the most common types of injuries found within aikido , as well as joint strain and stubbed fingers and toes . Several deaths from head @-@ and @-@ neck injuries , caused by aggressive shih?nage in a senpai / k?hai hazing context , have been reported .

= = = Mental training = = =

Aikido training is mental as well as physical , emphasizing the ability to relax the mind and body even under the stress of dangerous situations . This is necessary to enable the practitioner to perform the bold enter @-@ and @-@ blend movements that underlie aikido techniques , wherein an attack is met with confidence and directness . Morihei Ueshiba once remarked that one " must be willing to receive 99 % of an opponent 's attack and stare death in the face " in order to execute techniques without hesitation . As a martial art concerned not only with fighting proficiency but with the betterment of daily life , this mental aspect is of key importance to aikido practitioners .

= = Uniforms and ranking = =

Aikido practitioners (commonly called aikid?ka outside Japan) generally progress by promotion through a series of " grades " (ky?) , followed by a series of " degrees " (dan) , pursuant to formal testing procedures . Some aikido organizations use belts to distinguish practitioners ' grades , often simply white and black belts to distinguish kyu and dan grades , though some use various belt colors . Testing requirements vary , so a particular rank in one organization is not comparable or interchangeable with the rank of another . Some dojos do not allow students to take the test to obtain a dan rank unless they are 16 or older .

The uniform worn for practicing aikido (aikid?gi) is similar to the training uniform (keikogi) used in most other modern martial arts ; simple trousers and a wraparound jacket , usually white . Both thick (" judo @-@ style ") , and thin (" karate @-@ style ") cotton tops are used . Aikido @-@ specific tops are available with shorter sleeves which reach to just below the elbow .

Most aikido systems add a pair of wide pleated black or indigo trousers called a hakama (used also in kendo and iaido) . In many schools , its use is reserved for practitioners with (dan) ranks or for instructors , while others allow all practitioners to wear a hakama regardless of rank .

= = Criticisms = =

The most common criticism of aikido is that it suffers from a lack of realism in training . The attacks initiated by uke (and which tori must defend against) have been criticized as being " weak , " " sloppy , " and " little more than caricatures of an attack . " Weak attacks from uke allow for a conditioned response from tori , and result in underdevelopment of the skills needed for the safe and effective practice of both partners . To counteract this , some styles allow students to become less compliant over time but , in keeping with the core philosophies , this is after having demonstrated proficiency in being able to protect themselves and their training partners . Shodokan Aikido addresses the issue by practising in a competitive format . Such adaptations are debated between styles , with some maintaining that there is no need to adjust their methods because either the criticisms are unjustified , or that they are not training for self @-@ defense or combat effectiveness , but spiritual , fitness or other reasons .

Another criticism pertains to the shift toward ki as the focus of training . After the end of Ueshiba 's seclusion in Iwama from 1942 to the mid @-@ 1950s , he increasingly emphasized the spiritual and

philosophical aspects of aikido . As a result , strikes to vital points by tori , entering (irimi) and initiation of techniques by tori , the distinction between omote (front side) and ura (back side) techniques , and the use of weapons , were all de-emphasized or eliminated from practice . Some Aikido practitioners feel that lack of training in these areas leads to an overall loss of effectiveness .

Conversely , some styles of aikido receive criticism for not placing enough importance on the spiritual practices emphasized by Ueshiba . According to Minoru Shibata of Aikido Journal , " O Sensei 's aikido was not a continuation and extension of the old and has a distinct discontinuity with past martial and philosophical concepts . " That is , that aikido practitioners who focus on aikido 's roots in traditional jujutsu or kenjutsu are diverging from what Ueshiba taught . Such critics urge practitioners to embrace the assertion that " [Ueshiba 's] transcendence to the spiritual and universal reality were the fundamentals [sic] of the paradigm that he demonstrated . "