

= Morihei Ueshiba =

Morihei Ueshiba ( 1883 - 1969 ) was a martial artist and founder of the Japanese martial art of Aikido . He is often referred to as " the founder " Kiso ( 1883 ) or "sensei ( 1883 / 1969 ) , " Great Teacher " .

The son of a landowner from Tanabe , Ueshiba studied a number of martial arts in his youth , and served in the Japanese Army during the Russo - Japanese War . After being discharged in 1907 , he moved to Hokkaido as the head of a pioneer settlement ; here he met and studied with Takeda Sokaku , the founder of Daito - ryu aiki jutsu . On leaving Hokkaido in 1919 , Ueshiba joined the Moto - kyō movement , a Shinto sect , in Ayabe , where he served as a martial arts instructor and opened his first dojo . He accompanied the head of the Moto - kyō group , Onisaburo Deguchi , on an expedition to Mongolia in 1924 , where they were captured by Chinese troops and returned to Japan . The following year , he experienced a great spiritual enlightenment , stating that , " a golden spirit sprang up from the ground , veiled my body , and changed my body into a golden one . " After this experience , his martial arts skill appeared to be greatly increased .

Ueshiba moved to Tokyo in 1926 , where he set up the Aikikai Hombu Dojo . In the aftermath of World War II the dojo was closed , but Ueshiba continued training at another dojo he had set up in Iwama . From the end of the war until the 1960s , he worked to promote aikido throughout Japan and abroad . He died from liver cancer in 1969 .

= = Early years = =

Morihei Ueshiba was born in Tanabe , Wakayama Prefecture , Japan on December 14 , 1883 , the fourth child ( and only son ) born to Yoroku Ueshiba and his wife Yuki .

The young Ueshiba was raised in a somewhat privileged setting . His father was a rich landowner who also traded in lumber and fishing and was politically active . Ueshiba was a rather weak , sickly child and bookish in his inclinations . At a young age his father encouraged him to take up sumo wrestling and swimming and entertained him with stories of his great grandfather Kichimon , who was considered a very strong samurai in his era . The need for such strength was further emphasized when the young Ueshiba witnessed his father being attacked by followers of a competing politician .

At the age of six Ueshiba was sent to study at the Jizōderu Temple , but had little interest in the rote learning of Confucian education . However , his schoolmaster was also a priest of Shingon Buddhism , and taught the young Ueshiba some of the esoteric chants and ritual observances of the sect , which Ueshiba found intriguing . He went to Tanabe Higher Elementary School and then to Tanabe Prefectural Middle School , but left formal education in his early teens , enrolling instead at the private abacus academy , the Yoshida Institute , to study accountancy . On graduating from the academy , he worked at a local tax office for a few months , but the job did not suit him and in 1901 he left for Tokyo , funded by his father . Ueshiba Trading , the stationery business which he opened there was short lived ; unhappy with life in the capital , he returned to Tanabe less than a year later after suffering a bout of beri - beri . Shortly thereafter he married his childhood acquaintance Hatsu Itokawa .

In 1903 , Ueshiba was called up for military service . He failed the initial physical examination , being shorter than the regulation 5 feet 2 inches ( 1 . 57 m ) . To overcome this , he stretched his spine by attaching heavy weights to his legs and suspending himself from tree branches ; when he retook the physical exam he had increased his height by the necessary half inch to pass . He was assigned to the Osaka Fourth Division , 37th Regiment , and was a corporal by the following year ; after serving on the front lines during the Russo - Japanese War he was promoted to sergeant . He was discharged in 1907 , and again returned to his father 's farm in Tanabe . Here he befriended the writer and philosopher Minakata Kumagusu , becoming involved with Minakata 's opposition to the Meiji government 's Shrine Consolidation Policy . He and his wife had their first child , a daughter named Matsuko , in 1911 .

Ueshiba studied several martial arts during his early life , and was renowned for his physical strength during his youth . His training in Gotō ryū under Masakatsu Nakai was sporadic due to his military service , although he was granted a diploma in the art within a few years . In 1901 he received some instruction from Tozawa Tokusaburō in Tenjin Shin'ryū jujutsu and he studied judo with Kiyoichi Takagi in Tanabe in 1911 .

= = Hokkaidō = =

In 1912 , Ueshiba and his wife left Tanabe and moved to Japan 's northernmost island , Hokkaidō . At the time , Hokkaidō was still largely unsettled by the Japanese , being occupied primarily by the indigenous Ainu . Ueshiba was the leader of the Kishō Settlement Group , a collective of eighty-five pioneers who intended to settle in the Shirataki district and live as farmers . Poor soil conditions and bad weather led to crop failures during the first three years of the project , but the group still managed to cultivate mint and farm livestock . The burgeoning timber industry provided a boost to the settlement 's economy , but a fire in 1917 razed the entire village , leading to the departure of around twenty families . Ueshiba , elected to the village council that year , led the reconstruction efforts . In the summer of 1918 , Hatsu gave birth to their first son , Takemori .

In Hokkaidō , the young Ueshiba met Takeda Sokaku , the founder of Daitō ryū aiki jūjutsu at the Hisada Inn in Engaru , in March 1915 . Ueshiba was deeply impressed with Takeda 's martial art . He requested formal instruction and began studying Takeda 's style of jūjutsu in earnest , going so far as to construct a dojo at his home and inviting his new teacher to be a permanent house guest . He received a kyoju dairi certificate , or teaching license , for the system from Takeda in 1922 , when Takeda visited him in Ayabe . He also received a Yagyū Shinkage ryū sword transmission scroll from Takeda . Ueshiba then became a representative of Daitō ryū , toured with Takeda as a teaching assistant and taught the system to others .

= = Onisaburo Deguchi and Ōmoto kyō = =

In November 1919 , Ueshiba learned that his father Yoroku was ill , and was not expected to survive . Leaving most of his possessions to Sokaku , Ueshiba left Shirataki with the apparent intention returning to Tanabe to visit his ailing parent . En route , however , he made a detour to Ayabe , near Kyoto , intending to visit Onisaburo Deguchi , the spiritual leader of the Ōmoto kyō religion in Ayabe . Having met Deguchi , Ueshiba stayed at the Ōmoto kyō headquarters for several days . On his return to Tanabe , he found that his father had died . Within a few months , he was back in Ayabe , having decided to become a full time student of Ōmoto kyō . In 1920 Deguchi asked Ueshiba to become the group 's martial arts instructor , and a dojo – the first of several that Ueshiba was to lead – was constructed on the centre 's grounds . Ueshiba also taught Takeda 's Daitō ryū in neighbouring Hyōgo Prefecture during this period . His second son , Kuniharu , was born in 1920 in Ayabe , but died from illness the same year , along with three-year-old Takemori .

In 1921 , in an event known as the First Ōmoto kyō Incident ( Ōmoto jiken ) , the Japanese authorities raided the compound , destroying the main buildings on the site and arresting Deguchi on charges of lèse-majesté . Ueshiba 's dojo was undamaged , however , and over the following two years he worked closely with Deguchi to reconstruct the group 's centre , becoming heavily involved in farming work . His son Kisshomaru Ueshiba was born in the summer of 1921 .

Three years later , in 1924 , Onisaburo Deguchi led a small group of Ōmoto kyō disciples , including Ueshiba , on a journey to Mongolia at the invitation of retired naval captain Yutaro Yano and his associates within the ultra-nationalist Black Dragon Society . Deguchi 's intent was to establish a new religious kingdom in Mongolia , and to this end he had distributed propaganda suggesting that he was the reincarnation of Genghis Khan . Allied with the Mongolian bandit Lu Zhankui , Deguchi 's group were arrested in Tongliao by the Chinese authorities – fortunately for Ueshiba , whilst Lu and his men were executed by firing squad , the Japanese group were released into the custody of the Japanese consul . They were returned under guard to Japan , where Deguchi

was imprisoned for breaking the terms of his bail .

After returning to Ayabe , Ueshiba began a regimen of spiritual training , regularly retreating by himself to the mountains or performing misogi in the Nachi Falls . As his prowess as a martial artist increased , his fame began to spread . He was challenged by many established martial artists , some of whom subsequently became his students after being defeated by him . In the autumn of 1925 he was asked to give a demonstration of his art in Tokyo , at the behest of Admiral Isamu Takeshita ; one of the spectators was Yamamoto Gonnohy?e , who requested that Ueshiba stay in the capital to instruct the Imperial Guard in his martial art . After a couple of weeks , however , Ueshiba took issue with several government officials who voiced concerns about his connections to Deguchi ; he cancelled the training and returned to Ayabe .

?moto @-@ ky? priests still oversee the Aiki @-@ jinja Taisai ceremony in Ueshiba 's honor every April 29 at the Aiki Shrine in Iwama .

= = Tokyo = =

In 1926 Takeshita invited Ueshiba to visit Tokyo again . Ueshiba relented and returned to the capital , but while residing there was stricken with a serious illness . Deguchi visited his ailing student and , concerned for his health , commanded Ueshiba to return to Ayabe . The appeal of returning increased after Ueshiba was questioned by the police following his meeting with Deguchi ; the authorities were keeping the ?moto @-@ ky? leader under close surveillance . Angered at the treatment he had received , Ueshiba went back to Ayabe again . Six months later , however , and this time with Deguchi 's blessing , he and his family moved permanently to Tokyo . Arriving in October 1927 , they set up home in the Shirokane district . The building , however , was too small to house the growing number of aikido students , and so the Ueshibas moved to larger premises , first in Mita district , then in Takanawa , and finally to a purpose @-@ built hall in Shinjuku . This last location , originally named the Kobukan ??? , would eventually become the Aikikai Hombu Dojo . During its construction , Ueshiba rented a property nearby , where he was visited by Jigoro Kano , the founder of judo .

In 1932 , Ueshiba 's daughter Matsuko was married to the swordsman Kiyoshi Nakakura , who was adopted as Ueshiba 's heir under the name Morihiro Ueshiba . The marriage ended after a few years , and Nakakura left the family in 1937 .

Between 1940 and 1942 he made several visits to Manchukuo ( Japanese occupied Manchuria ) where he was the principal martial arts instructor at Kenkoku University .

= = Iwama = =

From 1935 onwards , Ueshiba had been purchasing land in Iwama in Ibaraki Prefecture . In 1942 , having acquired around 17 acres ( 6 @.@ 9 ha ; 0 @.@ 027 sq mi ) of farmland there , he left Tokyo and moved to Iwama permanently , settling in a small farmer 's cottage . Here he founded the Aiki Shuren Dojo , also known as the Iwama dojo . During all this time he traveled extensively in Japan , particularly in the Kansai region teaching his aikido . Despite the prohibition on the teaching of martial arts after World War II , Ueshiba and his students continued to practice in secret at the Iwama dojo ; the Hombu dojo in Tokyo was in any case being used as a refugee centre for citizens displaced by the severe firebombing .

The prohibition ( on aikido , at least ) was lifted in 1948 with the creation of the Aiki Foundation , established by the Japanese Ministry of Education with permission from the Occupation forces . The Hombu dojo re @-@ opened the following year . After the war , however , Ueshiba delegated most of the work of running the Hombu dojo and the Aiki Federation to his son Kisshomaru , choosing to spend much of his time in prayer , meditation , calligraphy and farming . He still travelled extensively to promote aikido , however , even visiting Hawaii in 1961 . He also appeared in a television documentary on aikido : NTV 's The Master of Aikido , broadcast in January 1960 .

In his later years , he was regarded as very kind and gentle as a rule , but there are also stories of terrifying scoldings delivered to his students . For instance , he once thoroughly chastised students

for practicing j? ( staff ) strikes on trees without first covering them in protective padding .

= = Death = =

In 1969 , Ueshiba became ill . He led his last training session on March 10 , and was subsequently taken to hospital where he was diagnosed with cancer of the liver . He died suddenly on April 26 , 1969 . Two months later , his wife Hatsu also died . ( ?? ?? ; Ueshiba Hatsu , née Itokawa Hatsu ; 1881 ? 1969 )

= = Development of aikido = =

Aikido ? usually translated as the Way of Unifying Spirit or the Way of Spiritual Harmony ? is a fighting system that focuses on throws , pins and joint locks together with some striking techniques . It is unusual among the martial arts for its heavy emphasis on protecting the opponent and on spiritual and social development .

Ueshiba developed aikido after experiencing three instances of spiritual awakening . The first happened in 1925 , after Ueshiba had defeated a naval officer 's bokken ( wooden katana ) attacks unarmed and without hurting the officer . Ueshiba then walked to his garden and had a spiritual awakening .

I felt the universe suddenly quake , and that a golden spirit sprang up from the ground , veiled my body , and changed my body into a golden one . At the same time my body became light . I was able to understand the whispering of the birds , and was clearly aware of the mind of God , the creator of the universe .

At that moment I was enlightened : the source of bud? [ the martial way ] is God 's love ? the spirit of loving protection for all beings ...

Bud? is not the felling of an opponent by force ; nor is it a tool to lead the world to destruction with arms . True Bud? is to accept the spirit of the universe , keep the peace of the world , correctly produce , protect and cultivate all beings in nature .

His second experience occurred in 1940 when engaged in the ritual purification process of misogi .

Around 2am as I was performing misogi , I suddenly forgot all the martial techniques I had ever learned . The techniques of my teachers appeared completely new . Now they were vehicles for the cultivation of life , knowledge , and virtue , not devices to throw people with .

His third experience was in 1942 during the worst fighting of World War II , Ueshiba had a vision of the " Great Spirit of Peace " .

The Way of the Warrior has been misunderstood . It is not a means to kill and destroy others . Those who seek to compete and better one another are making a terrible mistake . To smash , injure , or destroy is the worst thing a human being can do . The real Way of a Warrior is to prevent such slaughter ? it is the Art of Peace , the power of love .

The technical curriculum of aikido was undoubtedly most greatly influenced by the teachings of Takeda Sokaku . The basic techniques of aikido seem to have their basis in teachings from various points in the Dait? @-@ ry? curriculum . In the earlier years of his teaching , from the 1920s to the mid @-@ 1930s , Ueshiba taught the Dait? @-@ ry? aiki @-@ j?jutsu system ; his early students ' documents bear the term aiki @-@ j?jutsu . Indeed , Ueshiba trained one of the future highest grade earners in Dait? @-@ ry? , Takuma Hisa , in the art before Takeda took charge of Hisa 's training .

The early form of training under Ueshiba was noticeably different from later forms of aikido . It had a larger curriculum , increased use of strikes to vital points ( atemi ) and a greater use of weapons . The schools of aikido developed by Ueshiba 's students from the pre @-@ war period tend to reflect the harder style of the early training . These students included Kenji Tomiki ( who founded the Shodokan Aikido sometimes called Tomiki @-@ ry? ) , Noriaki Inoue ( who founded Shin 'ei Taid? ) , Minoru Mochizuki ( who founded Yoseikan Budo ) , Gozo Shioda ( who founded Yoshinkan Aikido ) . Many of these styles are therefore considered " pre @-@ war styles " , although some of these teachers continued to train with Ueshiba in the years after World War II .

Later , as Ueshiba seemed to slowly grow away from Takeda , he began to change his art . These

changes are reflected in the differing names with which he referred to his system , first as aiki j?jutsu , then Ueshiba ry? , Asahi ry? , and aiki bud? . In 1942 , the martial art that Ueshiba developed finally came to be known as aikido .

As Ueshiba grew older , more skilled , and more spiritual in his outlook , his art also changed and became softer and more circular . Striking techniques became less important and the formal curriculum became simpler . In his own expression of the art there was a greater emphasis on what is referred to as koky? nage , or " breath throws " which are soft and blending , utilizing the opponent 's movement in order to throw them . Ueshiba regularly practiced cold water misogi , as well as other spiritual and religious rites , and viewed his studies of aikido as part of this spiritual training .

= = Students = =

Over the years , Ueshiba trained a large number of students , many of whom have grown into great teachers in their own right . Some of them were uchideshi , or live @-@ in students . There are roughly four generations of students . A partial list follows :

= = Honors = =

Medal of Honor ( Japan ) , 1960 .

Order of the Rising Sun , Gold Rays with Rosette , 1964 .

Order of the Sacred Treasure ( Japan ) , 1968 .

= = Works = =

Morihei Ueshiba , The Secret Teachings of Aikido ( 2008 ) , Kodansha International , ISBN 978 @-@ 4 @-@ 7700 @-@ 3030 @-@ 6 [ 1 ]

Morihei Ueshiba , Budo : Teachings of the Founder of Aikido ( 1996 ) , Kodansha International , ISBN 978 @-@ 4 @-@ 7700 @-@ 2070 @-@ 3 [ 2 ]

Morihei Ueshiba , The Essence of Aikido : Spiritual Teachings of Morihei Ueshiba ( 1998 ) , Kodansha International , ISBN 978 @-@ 4 @-@ 7700 @-@ 2357 @-@ 5 [ 3 ]