

The beginnings of Aikido

The name aikido is formed by the combination of three characters in the Japanese language. Ai, which means joining; ki, which means spirit and do, which means way. These three words actually summarize the essence of aikido as a form of martial art— the joining of the spirit to find the way. It was only in the period from 1930s to the 40s that the name aikido was officially accepted as the name of the martial arts form.

Aikido uses techniques that do not damage or kill unlike other forms of martial arts. The movements and skills being taught are just meant to divert attention or immobilize people. This is perhaps the reason why most people prefer aikido, because of its focus on peace and harmony as opposed to aggression and conflict. In fact, aikido developer Morihei Ueshiba believes that to control aggression without causing any injury is the art of peace.

Ueshiba, who is also called Osensei, which means Great Teacher, created aikido from the principles of Daito-ryu aiki-jujutsu. He incorporated the techniques of the yari, the spear; the juken, which is a bayonet; and the jo, which is a short quarterstaff). But what ultimately separates aikido from other forms of martial arts is the fact that its practitioners can attack while empty-handed. Practitioners need no weapons for protection.

As a young child, he was much into physical fitness and conditioning. This is because of his vow to avenge his father's death. Eventually, his studies and activities brought him to the discipline of the different martial arts. He studied all. He even has certificates, fencing, fighting with spears, etc. He has learned it all. This is perhaps the reason why aikido is such a diverse and multi-disciplinary form of martial arts.

Yet despite his know how, he remains dissatisfied. He felt that there is still something missing. It was then that he turned to the religions. He studied under a spiritual leader, Onisaburo Deguchiof the sect Omoto-kyo in Ayabe. Deguchiof taught him to take care of his spiritual growth. He then combined his spiritual beliefs and his mastery of the different martial arts. Aikido was born.

His association with this charismatic spiritual leader Deguchiof also paved the way for his introduction to the elite political and military people as a martial artist. Because of this connection, he was able to establish aikido and even transferred the teachings to students, who have in turn developed their own styles of movement in aikido.

Aikido is a combination of the different styles of jujitsu as well as some of

the techniques of sword and spear fighting, of which Ueshiba is an expert. To get an overall picture, aikido combines the joint locks and throws techniques of jujitsu and the movements of the body when fighting with sword and spears.

Oriental in origin, it was brought to the west by Minoru Mochizuki when he visited France in 1951. He introduced the aikido techniques to students who are learning judo. In 1952, Tadashi Abe came to France as the official Aikikai Honbu representative. Then in 1953, Kenji Tomiki toured through the United States while Koichi Tohei stayed in Hawaii for a full year where he set up a dojo. Aikido then spread its influence in United Kingdom two years after and in 1965, it reached Germany and Australia. At present, aikido has centers all over the world.