Mental Preparation for Piano Performance Using Principles of Aikido

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to the memory of the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, whose teachings have transformed my life and music. This thesis is the result of that continuing transformation, which I wholly expect to last a lifetime.

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“Aikido is not for correcting others, but for correcting one’s own mind.”

— Morihei Ueshiba, Aikido Founder, 1883-1969
Historical Overview: Morihei Ueshiba and the Foundations of Aikido

Much of what is understood about Aikido is the result of oral history, a series of talks by its founder Morihei Ueshiba, which were transcribed and edited by Hideo Takahashi and published in Japanese under the title Takemusu Aiki. This spiritual text provides the basis for understanding how Aikido might help relieve MPA in an effort to achieve optimal musical performance. For, although Aikido is a Japanese Martial Art, Ueshiba insisted that its practitioners never incite violence: “The desire to attack is proof that one lacks the confidence to emerge victorious. That is, one has already been defeated in spirit.”

This idea of being “defeated in spirit” is something most - if not all - pianists can identify within themselves because it's exactly how one feels after a failed performance. Amidst the mass of research on MPA, which centers on arriving at its definition, proving how wide spread it is within the musical community, and finding cures and treatments, the idea of “defeated in spirit” rings truest, which is why Ueshiba banned the word “enemy” from the Aikido vocabulary and created a path “centered on daily training with other kindred souls, mutually working together to polish and refine their individual characters.”

Ueshiba came by his pacifism the hard way. From his birth in 1883 to his death in 1969, he would experience the rebirth of the imperialism from the end of the Shoguns, the Sino-Japanese War, the Invasion of Taiwan, the Russo-Japanese War, WWI, WWII and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the American occupation of Japan, and the blossoming of a

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2 Ibid.
post-war democracy. Along the way, he would earn the nickname “The Soldier God” for his prowess, leadership and bravery in the field of duty, renounce violence, ban the word “enemy,” and finally earn the honorific title Ōsensei, the supreme teacher. This amazingly long and spiritual life was not pre-ordained, especially for a slight man who stood under 5’2” tall.

Morihei Ueshiba’s desire of his physically challenged youth, of wanting to be strong for his family and his countrymen, probably intensified his early attraction to the martial arts. But one night, in particular, would become the first stepping stone onto his future path. According to Morihei’s son, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, a gang of thieves (by some accounts, members of the

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3 Or ŌSensei. It means “the grand teacher” or “the venerable teacher.”
political opposition) broke into the house and beat Yoroku with great violence. “I wished at that time that I could have helped my father. I didn’t know what to do,” said the deeply chagrined man who would become Ōsensei.

After his early Buddhist and secondary schooling, Morihei graduated from the Abacus school with superior marks while still a teen and got a job as an auditor at the local tax office, which he subsequently quit after the passage of an unfair tax law, siding with protesting local fishermen and revealing early signs of an interest in the poor.

By 1901, Ueshiba decided to work in a business operated by his relatives, the Inoue family, in Tokyo, moving to the capital city after he turned seventeen. During his time in Tokyo, his attraction to the Japanese martial arts grew as his interest in business waned. He studied Tenjin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu under Tokusaburo Tozawa (1848-1912), but, less than a year after arriving, he had to leave Tokyo after falling ill with beriberi, a thiamine deficiency (vitamin B1) that can result in a loss of feeling and muscle function, mental confusion, increased heart rate, shortness of breath and swelling in the lower legs. His poor health forced a return to his native Tanabe, where, after recovery, he married his childhood friend, Hatsu Itogawa.

By 1903, at the age of 20, Ueshiba was, once again, restless and sought to enlist in the military; he was immediately rejected because he did not meet the minimum height requirement of 1.56 meters (about 5’1. 5”). After the disappointment, he returned home and set off into the mountains to do all sorts of stretching and hanging exercises in the woods in order to gain the

6 Meaning “Divine True Willow School” classified as a traditional school (*koryū*) of jujutsu. It was founded by Iso Mataemon Ryūkansai Minamoto no Masatari in the 1830s.
necessary half-inch to join the military. In late December of 1903, he reapplied and got accepted into the Thirty-seventh Battalion Osaka’s Fourth Division. During this time (less than four years), Ueshiba became well-known for his work ethic, leadership, physical feats and toughness, and expert his skill with the sword and the bayonet, reaching the rank of sergeant.

His experiences in war clearly established his life direction. During the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), he was in Manchuria (a deadly battleground) for eighteen months. His bravery and sense of calm during his military service and successful encounters on the battlefield earned him the nickname of the “the soldier god.” He claimed that when he got close enough, he could see the path of the enemy’s bullets — a flash of light just before the bullet hit its mark. The bullet, he said, would follow the path of that light and if he dodged the flash of the light, the bullet would miss him. This was the first evidence of Ueshiba’s extrasensory ability: dodging a barrage of gunfire.

Ueshiba left the army and returned to Japan in 1906. While in the army from 1904 to 1908, he trained *Yagyu Shingan Ryu Jujutsu* under Masakatsu Nakai (1891-1908) in Osaka (starting around 1904) and on an occasional basis after his discharge, receiving a teaching license in 1908. At his father’s behest, he gave up the opportunity to enter the prestigious Toyama officers’ school for professional soldiers and returned home once more, sacrificing his will to his Yoroku’s wishes. This did not turn out well. Ueshiba began to act strangely, engaging in Buddhist and Shintoist ascetic practices, such as fasts and days alone in the mountains, purifying

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7 Morihei Ueshiba received the rank of *Shoden* from a *Shihan* of the *Edo*-line of *Yagyū Shingan-ryū* stemming from the sixth lineal-headmaster, Goto Saburō.

8 Stanley Pranin, *Aikido Pioneers - Prewar Era Interviews conducted by Stanley Pranin* (Aiki News, 2010), 5. There is some uncertainty over whether Ueshiba was actually taught by Nakai, or by Masanosuke Tsuboi, one of Nakai’s students. It may have been that the formal name of the tradition was actually *Goto-ha Shingan Ryu*. 
himself in icy waterfalls and stormy seas, and, in general, causing his family grave concerned. He seemed to be desperately seeking a new direction in life, and found it after connecting to Minakata Kumagusu (1867-1941), a noted biologist who lived in his hometown. Ueshiba supported Kumagusu’s environmental and religious convictions and opposed the Meiji government’s plan to consolidate and eliminate thousands of small Shinto shrines in order to develop the land. With a righteous mind and a good deal of indignation, Ueshiba took action, petitioning officials, writing protest letters to newspapers, and organizing demonstrations. His son, Kisshomaru, would later recall that his father’s role in this movement was “warrior general.”

Ueshiba’s interest in national politics grew through his involvement in this affair. And so, at the beginning of 1911, Ueshiba’s father sought to influence and re-focus his son’s energies by setting up and opening a local dojo, hiring Kiyoichi Takagi (1894-1972), a Kodokan Judo master, to teach his son. This would last until 1912, when the Japanese government announced the beginning of the Hokkaido Project, encouraging people to settle in the northernmost, uninhabited area of the Hokkaido Island in order to serve Japan’s future food needs and protect the land from Russians, who were interested in its strategic location (and still are to this day). Ueshiba decided to relocate his family to the village of Shirataki, in Monbetsu County, Hokkaido, along with eighty other people from fifty-four households, who wanted to live as farmers. The pioneer spirit of “creating something out of nothing” fired up Ueshiba, who became the leader of the Kishu settlement group. He worked as a coordinator, supporter, provider, and guardian, establishing himself as the undisputed leader - one called, “King of Shirataki” - and leading the group through the adversity of harsh winters and life in the wilderness.

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9 A Japanese author, biologist and naturalist.
Ueshiba would spend seven years in Hokkaido, from 1912 to the end of 1919. It was during this time that he met Sokaku Takeda (1859-1943), a master of Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu, at the Hisada Inn in Engaru, Kitami Province, Hokkaido, in late February 1915, and started training under him. (This would be one of the most crucial events in the history of Aikido, since the art of Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu is its primary technical influence among the other Japanese martial arts in which Ueshiba trained.) Although the 20-year relationship between Sokaku Takeda and Morihei Ueshiba is often viewed as problematic, with misunderstandings, biases, and recriminations to this day, it is clear that there was a great deal of mutual respect between the two men. Indeed, it is difficult to find a movement in Aikido which does not originate in Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu. But that is where the similarity ends since, to this day, the substance of Aikido has nothing to do with what Sokaku Takeda taught Morihei. This interview below is what Ueshiba (shown as O sensei) has to say on the matter:

B: Did you discover Aikido while you were learning Daito Ryu under Sokaku Takeda?

O Sensei (Morihei Ueshiba): No. It would be more accurate to say that Takeda Sensei opened my eyes to Budo.

A: Then were there any special circumstances surrounding your discovery of Aikido?

10 The continuation of a martial tradition of the Aizu Clan dating back several hundred years. Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu was propagated in many areas of Japan during the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa periods by the famous martial artist, Sokaku Takeda. Known equally for his martial prowess and severity of character, Takeda had used his skills in life-and-death encounters on more than one occasion.
14 Or O'Sensei. It means “the grand teacher” or “the venerable teacher.”
O Sensei: Yes. It happened this way. My father became critically ill in 1918. I requested leave from Takeda Sensei and set out for my home. On my way home, I was told that if you went to Ayabe near Kyoto and dedicated a prayer then any disease would be cured. So, I went there and met Deguchi Onisaburo. Afterwards, when I arrived home, I learned that my father was already dead. Even though I had met Deguchi only once, I decided to move to Ayabe with my family and I ended up staying until the latter part of the Taisho period (around 1925). Yes . . . at that time I was about 40 years old. One day I was drying myself off by the well. Suddenly, a cascade of blinding golden flashes came down from the sky enveloping my body. Then immediately my body became larger and larger, attaining the size of the entire universe. While overwhelmed by this experience, I suddenly realized that one should not think of trying to win. The form of Budo must be love. One should live in love. This is Aikido and this is the old form of the posture in Kenjutsu. After this realization, I was overjoyed and could not hold back the tears.15

The first thing that one notices in this interview (1957) is that Morihei Ueshiba told that his encounter with Onizaburo Deguchi (1871-1948), the second spiritual leader of the Omoto Kyo16 religious movement in Japan, was the key to discovering Aikido. Deguchi was a master of the spiritual practice called chin kon kishin, a Way of Communication with the Divine Spirit of Kami/God through concentrated meditation. After hearing about Deguchi’s charisma, the impulsive Ueshiba visited him in Ayabe on his way home to ask for prayers to his ill father. Ueshiba understood Deguchi’s words, “It’s all right for him,” as meaning that there was nothing to be anxious about with regard to his father. But upon his return to his hometown of Tanabe, Ueshiba learned that his father had passed away: The final words for his son were, “Live your life freely and accomplish whatever you wish.”

Ueshiba was going to move back home with his family to succeed his father as a patriarch and teach at *Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu*, but apparently it didn’t happen before his father’s death. Suffering deep sorrow and regretting that he wasn’t at his father’s deathbed, Ueshiba spent the next weeks and months in prayers and meditation. Thereafter, he decided that since the meeting with Deguchi was so impactful, he would move his family to Ayabe and enter the religious life of *Omoto Kyo* in the spring of 1920. This year was the most challenging year in his life, going through his father’s passing, abandoning his home in Tanabe to move to Ayabe, and losing both of his sons to illness. In the next year, 1921, his son, Kisshomaru was born, an event that lifted Ueshiba’s spirits.

Deguchi was the first to recognize Ueshiba’s outstanding potential abilities both as a spiritual leader as well as a martial artist. Their relationship had a significant impact on the spiritual growth of Ueshiba and the humanitarian aspects of Aikido. Deguchi told Ueshiba that his mission was to develop a new martial art, one that would aid mankind. Deguchi realized that Ueshiba’s purpose on earth was to teach the true meaning of *Budo*: an end to all fighting and contention. For the next eight years, Ueshiba served as Deguchi’s assistant, named his art *Aiki Bujutsu*, taught at the *Ueshiba Juku dojo* (built in his private residence near the *Omoto Kyo* headquarters), headed up the local fire brigade, led the self-sufficient life of a farmer, and studied the doctrines of *Omoto Kyo*, especially *chin kon kishin* and *kotodama* — the spiritual function of the vibration of sound.

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17 The blending of spirit based on classical martial movement. *Jutsu* is technique, as opposed to *do*, which is a path or way. The name Aikido was used after 1942. Before that the art was called *Kobukan Budo, Aiki Jutsu, Aiki Ryu, Aiki Budo*, and other such things. Subsequently, the names *Tenshin Aikido* and *Takemusu Aikido* were also used.

18 Ueshiba Academy

19 A Way of communication with the Divine Spirit of Kami/God through concentrated meditation.
During this period, Ueshiba had been cultivating the foundation of Aikido: the unification of spirit, mind, and body. In 1922, Sokaku Takeda, the founder of a school of jujutsu known as *Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu*, visited Ueshiba in Ayabe with his family, remaining for five months to teach Ueshiba and members of the *Ueshiba Juku dojo*. At the end of his stay, Takeda awarded Ueshiba the *kyoju dairi menkyo*: a substitute teaching certificate that conferred upon him official status as an instructor of *Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu*. Deguchi, who disapproved of Takeda’s arrival at the scene, advised Ueshiba to start his own tradition instead of being a successor of *Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu*, since the methods of *Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu* were too combat-oriented and could not manifest the true meaning of *Budo*: the spirit of love and protection for all things.

In February of 1924, Ueshiba was one of few selected companions to accompany Deguchi to Mongolia in search of a place to establish a utopian community to be called a *Heavenly Kingdom on Earth*. A pacifist, Deguchi believed that once the great spiritual traditions of Asia were united, the rest of the world could be organized into an association of love and brotherhood under his direction. This vision was based on the idea that all teachings evolved from a single origin. Unfortunately, the party became embroiled in the political destabilization of the region and was surrounded by armed bandits and soldiers. Ueshiba’s mysterious ability to

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20 Morihei Ueshiba, *The Heart of Aikido*, 39. It became a key aspect in Ueshiba’s search for the true spirit of *Budo*. His eight years at Ayabe is believed as the crucial time for his spiritual development, and he studied Shinto philosophy from Onizaburo Deguchi and mastered the concept of kotodama (also otodama). *Otodama*, the first word “oto” means sound, and the second word “dama (or tama)” means spirit, meaning the “Spirit of the Sound,” is a long-held Shinto religious belief that sound is living and that there is meaning in sound. The same as with kotodama, “koto” means words, “Spirit of words,” is believed that because the words are living and influential, paying extra attention to what kind of words/sounds to be delivered is advised. Pianists’ deep consideration of tone colors, timing, length, dynamics, implication, expression to each tone is a practice of *otodama*. Their sensitivity in producing sound is a practice of *otodama*.

21 The continuation of a martial tradition of the Aizu Clan dating back several hundred years. *Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu* was propagated in many areas of Japan during the *Meiji*, *Taisho*, and early *Showa* periods by the famous martial artist, Sokaku Takeda. Known equally for his martial prowess and severity of character, Takeda had used his skills in life-and-death encounters on more than one occasion.
dodge a barrage of gunfire\textsuperscript{22} presented itself again with some of his students bearing witness. Ueshiba would describe the situation as follows: “Before the opponent could pull the trigger, his intention to kill would form into a ball of spiritual light and fly at me. If I evaded this ball of light, no bullet could touch me.”\textsuperscript{23}

The Deguchi party was captured, held as prisoners by the Chinese military, and taken to an execution site to be shot. After a last minute intervention by the Japanese consul in Mongolia, they were released and returned to Japan in July of 1924. Thereafter, Ueshiba trained much more intensely in his effort to establish the new style of his \textit{Budo}. For instance, he commanded his disciples, who were armed with \textit{shinken}\textsuperscript{24} to cut him in half (obviously without success). He practiced day and night, mastering the spear and utilizing his own methods of physical training and \textit{misogi}\textsuperscript{25} (spiritual purification). His martial skill reached an almost superhuman quality after intense practice. His spiritual enlightenment in 1925, described in the interview above, was the moment of the discovery of the missing aspect in his ideal \textit{Budo}: the spirit of love and protection for all things. It is useful to quote from Ueshiba’s own words on what the true \textit{Budo} means to him.

The traditional \textit{Budo} has not come to completion yet. \textit{Budo} in the past was for the period of physical constitution. That time was necessary for us to strengthen the foundation. We should not pursue only the world that is visible to our eyes, because that creates never-ending conflicts. We need to manifest the world that is invisible to the eyes to achieve a world in unity. This is the completion of the true \textit{Budo}. The \textit{Budo} in the past was about friction between things (to make a

\textsuperscript{22} Gozo Shioda, \textit{Aikido, My Spiritual Journey} (New York: Kodansha USA, Inc., 2013), 151-154. Gozo Shioda said, “This is also something that I personally saw with my own eyes.” Mitsugi Saotome, \textit{Aikido and the Harmony of Nature} (Shambhala Publications, Inc. 1993), 10.
\textsuperscript{23} Saotome, 10.
\textsuperscript{24} live swords
\textsuperscript{25} The ritual of purifying oneself
solid and refined foundation). Now we need to let go the past and rest our souls on that
foundation. Without a spirit of love, we can’t accomplish our great mission of universal
humanity. Attitude of love is Seigan no Kamae: a mental set with unclouded eyes and clear mind.
Truth is intangible. People who practice Japanese Budo should not make enemies. The secret of
Bu is not about forms.26

Morihei Ueshiba

The connection between Ueshiba’s involvement in Omoto Kyo and the growing maturity
and later founding of Aikido is clearly evidenced by Koichi Tohei (1920-2011),27 an early
disciple, and Shingo Suzuki, a former chief instructor of Kodokan Judo and childhood friend.
Both men appreciated Ueshiba’s skillfulness and began training under him. Tohei said that
Ueshiba was an alchemist seeking the true meaning of Budo, and Deguchi showed him the path
to that answer, allowing him to master the relaxed state of mind and body, called shizentai,28 that
is essential to Aikido.

Although the Ueshiba Juku29 in Ayabe was open only for Omoto Kyo believers, its fame
spread in Budo world, and many nonbelievers, mostly military soldiers, applied for admission.
Thus, Ueshiba spent most of 1925 and 1926 in Tokyo, teaching his style of jujutsu to a number
of influential people, including Admiral Isamu Takeshita and former prime minister Gombei
Yamamoto, eventually moving his family to the capital city in 1927. Due to the rising number of

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26 Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Aiki Shinzui,154. Translated by the author. Technically Seigan no Kamae is a middle guard sword
posture with kissaki (a point of sword) pointed at the opponent’s eyes in Kenjutsu (swordsmanship.) By pointing the kissaki at the
opponent’s eyes you make it difficult to judge the length of the blade, and may be able to trick your opponent in his distance from
you. In this context, Morihei’s use of these words is more philosophical. It means that when you face the opponent, see things
with your heart instead of eyes, since things that are visible to your eyes trap your mind. It’s important to see with your heart to
gain a broad perspective to see its substance. There is the quotation that has the similar meaning of Seigan no Kamae. It is only
with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye. Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900-1944)
27 The only student of Morihei Ueshiba to be officially awarded tenth dan and a figure of central importance in the post-war
aikido world.
28 Tohei, Tenpu Namkamura and Morihei Ueshiba, 62-68.
29 A small 18-tatami-mat dojo built by Ueshiba.
applicants, Ueshiba moved to a larger piece of land in the Ushigome district of Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo, where the formal dojo (named Kobukan) and his residence were to be built. During this time period (around 1930), Jigoro Kano (1860-1938), the founder of Judo, came to visit Ueshiba at his Mejirodai Dojo and remarked: “This is the ideal martial art that I had in mind. This is true Judo.” Kano immediately dispatched two of his own disciples to train with Ueshiba in order to best improve Aikido and Judo. In April, 1931, the Kobukan dojo was complete, and a year later, the Society for the Promotion of Martial Arts, an Omoto Kyo-affiliated organization, was founded (with Ueshiba as the lead instructor) to promote his martial art on a national and international scale. It was not easy to become Ueshiba’s students at that time: It required recommendations from two reliable sponsors. He taught many influential people, leaders in all categories: military, government, business, education, and art, and through these connections, he instructed the police force and those connected with the Imperial Court. Since training was so intense and disciplined, the dojo was called “dojo of hell.” It was about this time that students such as Gozo Shioda (1915-1994), Rinjiro Shirata (1912-1993) and others joined the dojo.

In December, 1935, the so-called Second Omoto Incident, a government intervention to suppress Omoto Kyo, broke out, leaving its headquarters destroyed and its leaders in captivity. Ueshiba was almost arrested; from then on he maintained a distance from the activities of Omoto Kyo in order to remain as a martial arts instructor at various military institutions.

Up to the outbreak of the Second World War, Ueshiba was extremely busy teaching, becoming well-known throughout the country and spawning many dojo branches in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. But the war soon emptied the dojos of students, as Ueshiba became
increasingly troubled by the disparity between his ideas of world cooperation and the actual state of the affairs. This dissonance reached its apex in 1943, when the Army Ministry of Japan asked him to instruct soldiers in *Aiki-ken/Aiki* sword\textsuperscript{30} after a survey clearly showed that the best soldiers were mostly Aikido practitioners. Ueshiba became furious by the request and refused to comply:

> “Cutting someone down is a mortal sin. However, because this is a war, that is unavoidable. Although this situation came out from the patriotic spirit and innocent heart, if I teach *Aiki no Ken* — *Aiki* sword, for the purpose of killing enemies, all of our Japanese people would become demons. This would result in the end of this country. I had a gut-wrenching anger. I thought I would rather be ill (than saying yes or no), then I became ill for real.”\textsuperscript{31}

This statement of Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1968) shows one of the most crucial moments in his life as a founder of Aikido. Even though the intention of saying no was purely about protecting his country, that rejection would have meant war-time disloyalty. However, the fact that he became deadly ill after the request made his answer clear without offering his official rejection to the Army Ministry. From this point forward he made the firmest resolution on the direction of Aikido: the path toward the principle of non-resistance - no competition, no enemy, no antagonism, no violence toward anyone or anything - would manifest a spirit of “loving protection for all things.” This resolution was the turning point that marked Aikido’s path apart from the other Japanese martial arts. As Ueshiba said:

\textsuperscript{30} The name given specifically to the set of Japanese sword techniques practiced according to the principles of Aikido, taught first by Morihei Ueshiba (Aikido's founder), then further developed by Morihiro Saito, one of Ueshiba's most prominent students. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiki-ken

\textsuperscript{31} The Morihei Ueshiba’s episode described by Hiroshi Tada, a Japanese Aikido teacher holding the rank of 9th dan in the Aikikai. Translated by the author. Nihon no Shintai,
“Harmony, love, and courtesy are essential to true Budo, but the people who are in power these
days are only interested in playing with weapons. They misrepresent Budo as a tool for
power struggles, violence, and destruction, and they want to use me toward this end. I’m
tired of this stupidity. I have no intention of allowing myself to become their tool. I see
no other way but to go into retreat.”

Ueshiba went even further, saying that when humans allow all egoism to evaporate, they
purify and attain a spiritual state of selflessness, resulting in an astonishing force arising from
within. He strongly suggested the beneficial usage of that force in a constructive manner instead
of a destructive direction such in war. After this, Ueshiba’s the word ‘enemy’ and its concept
disappeared from his teaching forever, even though it was still during the war time:

“The universal world of peace and harmony is manifested by harmonization of heaven
and earth. Aiki is the love that connects not only humans, but also whole creation
together.”

Prompted by a divine command (as Ueshiba described), he left the Kobukan dojo in the
hands of his son, Kisshomaru, and moved with his wife to Iwama in Ibaraki Prefecture to retire
and look after his health. He obviously foresaw that the war would not end well for Japan and
hoped that his Budo would become the creed of a new era. During and after the Second World
War, Ueshiba devoted himself to farming, practicing, studying, and supervising the construction
of the Aiki Shrine and Shuren dojo. Prior to this relocation, his style was called Aiki-jutsu, then
Aiki-budo. During this time, he also formulated the concept of Takemusu Aiki, which represents
Aikido’s highest form of mastery. The highest goal of Aikido is to keep producing a synergy

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32 Saotome, 11.
33 Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Aiki Shinzui (Tokyo: Yahata Shoten, 2002), 47. Translated by the author.
34 Takemusu Aiki is Morihei Ueshiba’s vision of how the ultimate martial art should be, how his aikido should be, an art which
harmonizes all living beings.
effect with the circulation of life-generating force: the spirit of love. Iwama could be called the birthplace of modern Aikido, “The Way of Harmony.”

On August 14, 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allies, known as Victory Over Japan, and marked the end of World War II. For Japan, it was the beginning of a long road to recovery for a shattered country. Ueshiba was confident that Aikido would flourish and offer mental and spiritual sustenance to a wounded people. In 1948, while Japan was recovering from the chaos of war, the Aikikai Foundation was formed to promote Aikido in Japan and around the world; its first director was Ueshiba’s son, Kisshomaru. Until that time, the General Headquarters of the American Occupation had prohibited all teaching and training of Budo. Ueshiba was almost detained for alleged ties to war criminal activities as a combat instructor. However, after a United Nations military police search, no evidence was found, and Aikido was allowed to resume its active role in the restoration.

Ueshiba, respectfully called Ōsensei (Great Teacher), was still in Iwama teaching and training in Aikido as his fame spread across Japan and abroad, feeding the steady growth of his martial art throughout the 1950s. Among the Japanese martial arts traditions introduced internationally after the Second World War, Aikido stood in an unequaled position because of its non-competitive approach and message of peace. There was a significant increase in the number of people seeking Aikido instruction, and some of the senior students - Gozo Shioda, Koichi Tohei, Ueshiba’s son Kisshomaru - began to take an active part in spreading its lessons overseas by sending teachers.
In the early 1950s, Aikido was first introduced to France by Minoru Mochizuki (1907-2003), and shortly thereafter to the United States by Koichi Tohei. In 1961, Ueshiba made his first and only visit to Hawaii, accompanied by his students, Koichi Tohei and Nobuyoshi Tamura (1933-2010) in order to attend the opening ceremony of the newly completed Honolulu Aiki Dojo, the first facility outside of Japan built specifically for the practice of Aikido. (Tohei had been visiting Hawaii since 1953, and he returned a number of times in the ensuing years, building a thriving Aikido community before Ueshiba’s first visit.) Tohei’s concise and clear methods, especially on the topics of $ki$, were well-received in Hawaii’s cross-cultural environment. So much so that, at the time, Ueshiba said, “I have come to Hawaii in order to build a ‘silver bridge.’ Until now, I have remained in Japan, building a ‘golden bridge’ to unite Japan, but henceforward, I wish to build a bridge to bring the different countries of the world together through the harmony and love contained in aikido. I think that $Aiki$, offspring of the martial arts, can unite the people of the world in harmony, in the true spirit of $Budo$, enveloping the world in unchanging love.”

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In March of 1969 Ueshiba was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. Rather than undergoing surgery, he insisted on spending his remaining time in his dojo. A month after being released from the hospital, on April 26, 1969, Ueshiba took his son’s hand, smiled, and said, “Take care of things,” and passed away in his sleep at the age of eight-six. Prior to his death, he instructed his disciples with one final message: “Aikido benefits all the people for the world. It is not only yours. Train hard to serve the mission for the universal peace.”

36 Since then, his wish has been passed on, and will continue to live in the Aikido practitioner’s heart.

From the 1980s onwards, Aikido has been attracting a diverse range of people - regardless of age, social status, gender, culture, nationality - because of its well-balanced training emphasis on technical, spiritual, and ethical aspects.

“Sixty years have passed since the spread of Aikido overseas began. During this time, Aikido has become established in 130 countries. Aikido has taken root all over the world because it is recognized as a way to train the mind and body, and as such, its value extends beyond race and border…. Aikido is expected internationally now as a new culture of humanity in the 21st century.”

37 http://www.aikikai.or.jp/eng/aikido/about.html