

HISTORY

Modern day *aikido* has its roots in the martial traditions of ancient Japan going back to antiquity. There is no official written documentation that can trace *aikido* back to its root art. Nonetheless, it is generally acknowledged that the history of *aikido* has been handed down orally to present-day headmasters. The version of *aikido* presented in this chapter is sourced with permission from the International Shinkendo Federation and follows the oral tradition closely.

Yoshimitsu Miyamoto and his brother Yoshiie, who lived in Japan in the 12th century, were both famous *samurai* and claimed descent from Emperor Seiwa (858–876 AD). The Miyamoto family name had been conferred by Japanese emperors on sons that were non-heirs to the throne.

In order to improve their martial skills, the brothers researched the science and working mechanics of the human body and its skeletal functions. They did this by dissecting the bodies of criminals and those who died in the numerous civil wars of that period. Armed with this knowledge and understanding, they devised and formatted

some techniques that they then applied in combat. These techniques were collectively known as *daito* after their family ancestral home, the *Daitokan*. The brothers taught these techniques to members of the family and eventually, by the 15th century, one branch of the family established itself in a province known as Takeda Kai. This family branch then adopted Takeda as their family name.

During the era of almost constant civil warfare and strife, survival depended on mastery of martial skill and techniques, which had to be combat effective. The Japanese term for martial techniques is *jutsu*, a technique that had to be utilitarian and effectively deadly. There was very little philosophical thought or notions of spirit and character polishing, especially when the victors of combat lived and the wages of defeat was death. However, as time and civil society progressed, martial techniques were used less for combat and more for polishing the character and spirit.

Originally, it is said that *aikido's* root art was developed as a combat art based primarily on sword and spear techniques. Such techniques were used on battlefields against other soldiers wearing armor. At the time, empty-hand combat was practiced as a secondary study to the weapons arts. Subsumed within this type of empty-hand combat technique were additional levels of training known as *aikijutsu*. Research suggests that *aiki* was added to *jutsu* to reflect the change from the martial art being primarily sword-based to an art more focused on unarmed combat techniques. The basic, more generic empty hand *jujutsu*, or *jujitsu*, techniques could be used offensively, while the *aikijutsu* was more defensive in its nature and application. *Aikijutsu* was reserved for the higher-ranking *samurai*. The techniques continued to evolve and adapt with the needs of the times and were transmitted eventually to the Takeda family in the 16th century as *gotenjutsu*, or martial arts, for use inside a palace. It is interesting to note that for security reasons, the use of weapons within the palace was prohibited; so empty-hand combat techniques were extensively used in such security-conscious locations.

Kunitsugu Takeda, the sword instructor of the Aizu clan, passed on these teachings to qualified members within the clan. Top retainers, lords, and generals from Aizu, learned *aikijutsu* as a

defensive art to be used while working within the Edo castle, which was the seat of the Tokogawa Shogunate, Japan's military government of the day. As time passed, the Takeda family's martial traditions in the Meiji period (late 19th century) become known eventually as *daito-ryu aikijutsu*.

Sogaku Takeda lived in the Meiji era (1868–1912). During this time, major changes were occurring throughout Japanese society. Feudal Japan was forcibly dragged into the Industrial Age, and the process involved the assimilation of industrialized Western ways, the adoption of international trade agreements, as well as the elimination of Japanese society's social caste and class structure. The objective was to very quickly develop Japan as an industrial and colonial power, equal to the existing Western colonial powers of the day.

To achieve this goal, society and social mores had to be drastically changed. One such change made during the Meiji Restoration was, in 1876, a ban on the wearing of swords in public. This deeply affected the previously ruling *samurai* class, and was deemed as a slap in their collective face, because the wearing of swords in public was the hereditary right of the *samurai* class. Seeing the effects of these new changes, Sogaku modified the emphasis of *daito-ryu aikijutsu* from an art form exclusive to the ruling classes to one available to all. As a result of these changes, the revised art of *daito-ryu aikijutsu* became very popular. Sogaku is now acknowledged as its reviver.

Sogaku taught and nurtured several outstanding martial artists during his life. A very talented and accomplished student was Morihei Ueshiba, who eventually founded modern-day *aikido*.

Morihei trained and taught *daito-ryu aikijutsu* diligently during the years prior to World War Two (the pre-war period), while at the same time beginning development of his *aikido* style.

Immediately after the war ended, there was a general institutional repudiation of the martial and warlike aspects of Japanese society. Eventually, however, after the healing of the immediate post-war years, the ban on martial arts and traditions was lifted and Morihei resumed teaching *aikido*, which he then continuously modified and refined until his death in 1969.

Morihei's *aikido* evolved from its more combative *daito-ryu aikijutsu* ancestor, in both its techniques and its philosophy. In

Japanese, *do* is the term that describes this “way of life.” The *jutsu* philosophy seeks to achieve decisive victory by utterly defeating the opponent, and if victory calls for a fatal resolution, then so be it. The softer gentler *aikido* philosophy, however, seeks to also achieve a decisive victory, by demonstrating decisive, superior technical ability and accurate timing in order to gain control over the opponent. Once the opponent realizes the futility of further conflict, the *aikido-ka* will then voluntarily release his opponent, and both will leave the scene of conflict alive and intact.

THE PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES OF AIKIDO

Early Eastern philosophers pondering the nature of life and the universe observed that there is a duality in how everything works and operates. This duality is symbolized by the yin-yang symbol: light and darkness; strength and weakness; white and black; and life and death are all very common examples of what is represented by this symbol. Such thinking and philosophy also found expression in the understanding and the techniques of the martial arts.

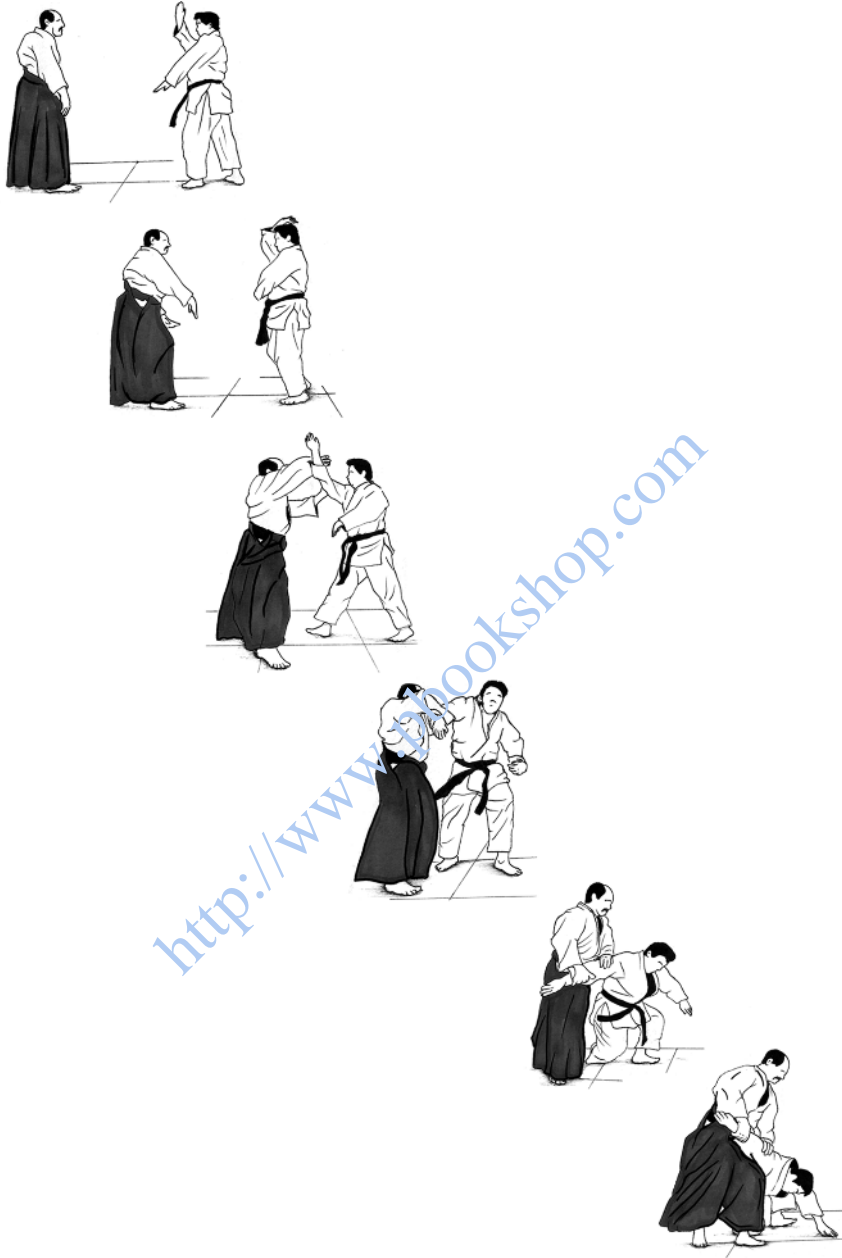
In *aikido*, this core belief can be expressed thus:

1. Attack strongly if your enemy is weak; in other words, be hard if your opponent is soft.
2. Harmonize and merge with your enemy if he is strong; therefore, be soft if your opponent is hard.

The key to success in *aikido* is to understand the state of the opponent. The competent *aikido-ka*, by virtue of dedicated practice and superior technical ability, is able to correctly gauge whether his opponent is weak or is strong, and whether the opponent is balanced, or is off balance. Only then can he select the correct technique and response in order to resolve the danger in a harmonious manner.

The following illustrations “Controlling the weak force,” show one basic technique that demonstrates how a weak opponent can be

Aikido



Controlling the weak force
Illustration by Deepak Ram Ayengar and Yong Jie Yu.

controlled, by competently assessing that the opponent is weak, and then directly entering, turning, and diverting the weak opponent away from his original path.

Let us now try to visualize how this *aikido* technique can be used and applied in trading. If the competent *aiki* trader, by virtue of dedicated practice, superior technical ability, and good timing, is able to determine that the selling force is weak, then he needs to join with the strong buying force by directly opposing and entering against the weak seller, turning and diverting and reversing the weak seller's direction. Conversely, and also obviously, if the competent *aiki* trader is able to determine that the buying force is weak, then he can join the strong selling force, to repel and reverse the direction of the weak buyer.

Now we look at "Be with the strong force."

Here, a strong opponent is charging in. The *aikido-ka* assesses this force as strong and unstoppable, but by virtue of dedicated practice, superior technical ability and good timing, is able to harmonize and merge with this strong force. In trading terms, if the competent trader assesses that the market is strongly bullish and up, he will be looking for ways and means to merge and buy, instead of selling in opposition to the strong force. Similarly, in a strong bearish market, it will be wise to merge with the selling force, and not act in opposition as a buyer.

These two *aikido* examples will be used as a mental anchor in a visualization process that will guide the thinking and action of the competent trader using *aiki* principles. We will be referencing these images to reinforce the *aiki* trading concepts that will appear throughout the rest of this book.



Be with the strong force
Illustration by Deepak Ram Ayengar and Yong Jie Yu.

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