

AIKIDO

WARRIORS FOR PEACE



A
NIALL O'BRIEN CENTER
for Active Nonviolence, Reconciliation and
Community Futures
and
KYOKAN DOJO - BACOLOD
Affiliate of Aikido Philippines

COOPERATION PROGRAM

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For further information, please contact:



Niall O'Brien Center
for Active Nonviolence, Reconciliation
and Community Futures

Patrick Koop

Tel. +63 34-7083638
Email Patrick@paxchristi.ph
Website www.paxchristi.ph



Kyokan Dojo Bacolod
Affiliate of Aikido Philippines

Stella Fuentes
Noel Fuentes

Tel. +63 34-4341691
Email aikistella@yahoo.com
Website www.kyokan-dojo.ph

Cover Image "The Aikido Heart of a Warrior" by Kenneth Materum
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1. The Art of War

By the end of the eighth century, the *Samurai* (meaning "those who serve") were peasant-farmers who fought for their lords. As conflict between landlords became more frequent, it became necessary to train armed groups to protect the respective boundaries. At this time, these armed groups were called *Samurai* or *Bushi* (*prestigious warrior*). Their status in society was established with the feudal era, a military government (the Shogunate) that was formed in 1192. This Shogunate encouraged austerity and the pursuit of martial arts and related disciplines for the Samurai. These studies were eventually codified and called *Bushido* - the Way of the Warrior.

As the feudal era advanced, the Samurai came to occupy the uppermost ranks of Japanese society. Their principal duty was to learn and practice martial arts, the skills necessary to fulfill their allegiance to their lord for whom they were expected to fight and die. There were numerous martial arts, which the *Bushi* were required to learn: *Kenjutsu* (sword techniques), *Bajutsu* (horsemanship), *Kyujutsu* (archery), and *Sojutsu* (spear techniques) constituted the principal combat arts. Additionally, it was necessary that the *Bushi* learned a secondary system of unarmed combat techniques (*Jujutsu*) to support their armed fighting methods.

During the 16th century, Japan was embroiled in civil wars. Each feudal lord (*Daimyo*) struggled to maintain a powerful independent position within the country. In order to survive, each Daimyo had to create a stable, unified force of his own, which required a very strong bond between the lord and his *Bushi*. *Bushido*, the code of the Samurai, encouraged the development of combat techniques, cultivated the qualities of justice, benevolence, politeness and honor; and above all inculcated the idea of supreme loyalty to lord and cause.

The next two and a half centuries were relatively peaceful for Japan. The Samurai class saw little combat, though they continued to practice and refine the various martial arts.

Buddhist concepts strongly influenced the martial arts and all Japanese culture. Beside discipline and military education, the life of the Samurai became enriched by the cultivation of the spirit and mind through the arts of writing, painting, calligraphy, and philosophy. Many of the truly Japanese arts that were born of the samurai still exist today, such as sword drawing, *Kendo*, archery, as well as tea ceremony.

The fighting arts were transformed from combat techniques (*Bugei*) into "ways" (*Budo*), stressing self-discipline, self-perfection, and a certain philosophy of life. The dimensions of the martial arts expanded - beyond the simple objective of killing an enemy - now including many aspects of everyday living. Particularly after the decline of the samurai class, the martial "techniques" became martial "ways", and a great emphasis was placed upon the study of Budo as a means of generating the moral strength necessary to build a strong and vital society.

The Meiji restoration (1868) brought not only the return of Imperial supremacy, but also a westernized culture, political, and economic way of life to Japan. The samurai class virtually disappeared under a new constitution that proclaimed all classes equal, but the essence of Bushido, cultivated for many centuries, continued to play an important part in the daily lives of the Japanese. Budo, being less combative and more concerned with the spiritual discipline by which one elevates oneself mentally and physically, were more attractive to the common people and were readily taken up by all social classes.

2. The Art of Peace

Understanding *Aikido* is not possible without knowing its roots in the Samurai tradition. Literally, *Aikido* means the way (*Do*) of harmonizing (*Ai*) with universal energies (*Ki*). It was ultimately developed as one of the latest martial arts but its roots were planted more than a thousand years ago:

Throughout the Shogunate, unarmed combat techniques developed into different systems and styles. Varying battlefield situations and the technical requirements of feudal warfare led to the establishment of various schools (*ryu*), which were controlled by, and passed down through the large powerful Samurai families. One of these systems was *Aikijutsu*. It is not completely clear where *Aiki* techniques originated, but the *Aiki* system is said to have originated with Prince Teijun, the sixth son of the Emperor Seiwa (850-880). It was passed on to successive generations of the Takeda family and was made known only to family members and retainers. The techniques came to be known as *Aizu-todome* (secret techniques).

Aikijutsu remained an exclusive samurai practice handed down within the Takeda family until Japan emerged from isolation in the Meiji period.

The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, was born on December 14, 1883, to a farming family. From his father Yoroku, he inherited a samurai's determination and interest in public affairs, and from his mother an intense interest in religion, poetry and art.

At the age of 29, Ueshiba met Sokaku Takeda, grandmaster of *Aikijutsu*. After meeting Takeda, Ueshiba seemed to forget everything else and threw himself into training.

A second fateful encounter for Ueshiba was the acquaintance with the new Omoto-kyo religion and its master Deguchi Onisaburo. As pacifist, Deguchi was an advocate of non-violent resistance and universal disarmament. He was noted to have said, "Armament and war are the means by which the landlords and capitalists make their profit, while the poor suffer." It is intriguing that a man of this nature could become so

close to a martial artist such as Ueshiba. However, Deguchi came to the conclusion that Ueshiba's purpose on earth was "to teach the real meaning of *Budo*: an end to all fighting and contention." The study of Omoto-kyo and his association with Onisaburo profoundly affected Ueshiba's life. He once stated that while Sokaku Takeda opened his eyes to the essence of *Budo*, his enlightenment came from his Omoto-kyo experiences. During his early 40s (around 1925), Ueshiba had several spiritual experiences, which so impressed him that his life and his training were forever changed. He realized the true purpose of *Budo* was love that cherishes and nourishes all beings.



"The world will continue to change dramatically, but fighting and war can destroy us utterly. What we need now are techniques of harmony, not those of contention. The Art of Peace is required, not the Art of War."

Morihei Ueshiba

In 1927, Deguchi Onisaburo encouraged Ueshiba to separate from Omoto-kyo and follow his own way. This he did, moved to Tokyo, and built a formal *dojo* (training hall).

In 1942, supposedly because of a divine command, he longed to return to the farmlands. He had often said, "Budo and farming are one." World War II had emptied his dojo, and he was tired of city life. He moved to the village of Iwama. Here he built an outdoor dojo and the now famous Aiki Shrine.

Iwama is considered by many to be the birthplace of modern-day Aikido, "the Way of Harmony." Prior to this move, his system had been called Aikijutsu, then Aiki-Budo, still primarily a martial art rather than a spiritual path. From 1942 (when the name Aikido was first formally used) to 1952, Ueshiba consolidated the techniques and perfected the religious philosophy of Aikido.

After World War II, Aikido grew rapidly. Morihei Ueshiba had become famous as "O Sensei" or (the grand teacher) of Aikido. Right up to the end of his life, Ueshiba refined and improved his "Way", never losing his dedication for hard training.

In April 1969, O Sensei fell ill and told his son Kisshomaru "God is calling me...." He was returned to his home at his request to be near his dojo. As his students made their last calls, he gave his final instructions. "Aikido is for the entire world. Train not for selfish reasons, but for all people everywhere."

3. Martial Art and Peace Work

The partnership between the Niall O'Brien Center for Active Nonviolence, Reconciliation and Community Futures (Pax Christi Pilipinas) and the Kyokan Dojo (Aikido Philippines) started in summer 2004 with an experimental presentation of Aikido as an effective and creative approach for nonviolent conflict intervention. Through hands-on martial art demonstrations, participants of youth peace camps were introduced to basic principles of active nonviolence. After positive feedback, Aikido became a core method in various peace-building trainings from self-transformation to conflict management courses for business managers. Its techniques provide a supportive physical experience for many relevant concerns of creative self- and conflict transformation.

Convinced by the potentials of the Japanese martial art and its true and multidimensional contribution to constructive peace work, the Niall O'Brien Center decided to promote Aikido as such. We value Aikido not

only as a method for the education of peace capacities and multipliers but also as a strategy itself with a very unique approach to conflict situations. Furthermore, our goal is to understand, mainstream and spread peace-building measures of "the Way of Harmony" by studying its philosophy, spirituality and techniques.

4. The Aikido Approach

Aikido is in many ways outstanding both within the martial arts and the peace work community. To give some examples:

After the Samurai disappeared Aikido was one of the few martial arts that never turned into a purely sportive, contestant or ceremonial form. It focuses on keeping the martial art tradition of Samurai culture (ethical code, etiquette, holistic personal development) in all its dimensions – body, mind and spirit.

Moreover there can never be contest in Aikido. The foundation of all Aikido techniques is the neutralization of destructive energies. Applying offense techniques (attacks) would be the opposite of this basic principle. In the strict sense there is no fight in Aikido.

Aikido is a body-mind-spirit discipline. Its techniques are an important factor for studying and understanding "the Art of Peace" but the ultimate goal is the holistic personal transformation and the transfer of the physical experience to all life situations.

Aikido was born into combat, the destructive extreme of conflict behavior. At this birthplace it meets people who live or grew up in war and never experienced a peaceful environment. Having the same background, Aikido can present its own developments as a martial art from "the Art of War" to "the Art of Peace" as an offer for fundamental

change. Aikido can be a mentor to survive in combat situations without classical fighting; by facing conflict in a constructive, creative way.

The physical experience is for most of people the entry point to both Aikido and peace work. Through its techniques, Aikido provides the evidence that nonviolent action is not just a theory applicable only by self-sacrificing holy or at least extraordinary people. It offers a hands-on concept for every ordinary person who is willing to face conflict and violence nonviolently.

Aikido transcends the ethical code of the samurai by enriching it with the perspective of reconciliation. The substantial and essential change in the interpretation of warfare towards peace leads to a new performance: seeing an opponent not as an enemy, dealing with an opponent through neutralizing the aggressions, not the aggressor and even protecting an opponent from injuries and humiliation.

5. Program

Our program puts emphasis on the different dimensions of “the Art of Peace”

- Physical Exercise
- Philosophy
- Spirituality/Religion
- Strategic Management
- Intercultural Experience
- Nonviolent Intervention, Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation

Each dimension attracts different people (body-mind-soul). But whatever dimension interests first, by degree, a greater understanding and internalization of the other will follow as well.

The general Aikido program offers a variety of courses and contents:

Traditional Aikido Practice

The classical way of training: regular practice on the mat. The overall goal is to train people to become multipliers of peace as Aikido instructors and peace workers

Aikido for Caregivers

The classical way of training exclusively for young women from less privileged families (e.g. working as caregivers, nannies, housekeepers)

Kids Classes

A traditional Aikido course designed for the special needs of children and based on peace education principles



Aikido at the University

The academic program “Master of Arts in Conflict and Reconciliation Studies”, a cooperation project of the Niall O’Brien Center and the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod City, allows students to approach Aikido from different perspectives. The Aikido dimensions are discussed in online lectures and experienced in various courses and workshops. Participants may choose Aikido as an elective course for in-depth studies and for knowledge transfer to other life situations

The Peace and Development Educators Training Program

This six-months training program introduces participants to the foundations of creative conflict transformation and faces the major challenges in Negros and the Philippines – identity, development and ideologies. Aikido is used as a method for the self-transformation process of participants in their empowerment course on identity

Conflict Management Courses

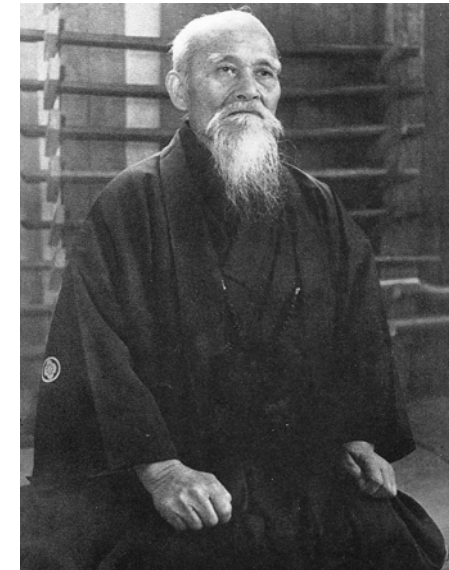
An introduction into practice and philosophy of Aikido for business managers, politicians and officers providing creative alternatives to the usual “Art of War” mentality and approach in professional life



Aikido Practice for Young Combatants and Conflict-Torn Communities

First applications of using Aikido techniques and principles for the promotion of active nonviolence with combatants and the youth of conflict-torn communities have shown positive feedback, vivid participation and the request to know and experience more about this approach. Starting April 2006, regular monthly workshops will be offered

Morihei Ueshiba interpreted the Art of Peace in the broadest possible sense and believed that its principles of reconciliation, harmony, cooperation, and empathy could be applied bravely to all the challenges we face in life – in personal relationships, as we interact with society, at work and in business, when dealing with nature. Everyone can be a Warrior for Peace.



“The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. Foster peace in your own life and then apply the Art to all that you encounter.”

Morihei Ueshiba