

DIRK KROPP

Aikido teacher and dojo manager

I was born in Cologne in 1959. While searching for a new sporting activity and form of self-defence, I came across aikido at the age of 16. The combination of mental and physical exercise, the aesthetics of this martial art and its effectiveness impressed me deeply. I started to do aikido.

In 1979, after having finished school and done my military service, I decided to break off my studies in telecommunications and devote myself entirely to my daily training – which at that time took five hours a day. I made aikido my profession. I founded my dojo in 1985, where I have now been teaching, day after day, for more than 30 years. I was awarded 7th Dan in 2011.

I am a founding member of the Bundesverband der Aikido-Lehrer (Federal Association of Aikido Teachers). In 2014, I was elected spokesperson of the Bundeslehrerkomitee (Federal Committee of Teachers). Since 2005, within the scope of my many years of intensive training, I have been preparing a handful of experienced practitioners to become teachers.

From 1975 to 1988 I oriented myself to aikido master Katsuaki Asai. Since 1984, I have travelled to Japan almost every year, where I maintain, to this day, my contacts to the roots of aikido: in the Aikikai Honbu Dojo in Tokyo, I practised with Kisshomaru Ueshiba until his death. Since then, I have attended the practice sessions held by his son Moriteru Ueshiba.

In Japan, Dr Kokichi Hatakeyama fostered my development until he passed away in 1988. The respected physician and experienced swordmaster made it possible for me to spend several months at a time in Japan. He introduced me to the local martial arts world and enriched my aikido training with deep insights into the eastern holistic view of life and his peaceful philosophy of swordsmanship.

Inspired by my experiences in Japan, I developed with great care a meditative style of aikido practice in the nineties, which places the healthy and peaceable potential of the martial art to the fore. I have my designed and moulded my dojo with the same care so that here – away from everyday life – people can devote themselves solely to this quiet style of practice.