

About Birankai International

Birankai International, which was established in 2000, brought schools under Chiba Sensei's aegis in Europe, Britain, and North America together under a single umbrella organization to support their training. In 2001, Chiba Sensei wrote the following account of the formation of Birankai International:

At the 1997 French Summer Camp in Mejannes le Clap, one of the senior French instructors asked me to give a name to an international Aikido community whose size was growing rapidly with each passing year. The community has coming into being naturally. It has progressed into an international family with a strong and distinguishable character through an interchange of instructors from the USAF Western Region, British Aikikai, and various French dojos along with their associate members in Greece, Switzerland, and Germany.

Naming this community was needed partly because of the European political situation where organizational control is very rigid surrounding Aikido. It includes control by the government which tends to kill the free and open flow of the students-teacher relationship which of the utmost priority in our Aikido activity. Because of that situation, many concerned members have been looking for a new direction away from the current state of confusion and unhappiness there. They have been looking for a sense of identity in their Aikido lives.

After two years of careful thought, I chose the name Birankai. Biran is a Buddhist term meaning a cosmic storm that occurs in the moment before cosmic order shifts. It is a force of recovery, spontaneously manifesting itself to restore order. The storm can be powerful and violent. Yet, at the same time it is one that heals through cleansing and purification. In January 2000, I decided to formally start Birankai, taking advantage of the millennium and Year of the Dragon.