

NEWSLETTER



WINTER 97

Noticeboard

Courses for 1998 - Chorley Community Centre

Saturday 28 Feb	Weapons Class 2.30 - 4.30
Sunday 1 March	General Course 10.30 - 5.00 (appr)
Sunday 26 April	Weapons Course 10.30 - 5.00(appr)
Saturday 16 May	Weapons Class 2.30 - 4.30
Sunday 17 May	General Course 10.30 - 5.00(appr)
Sunday 5 July	Teachers Course 10.00 - 5.00
Saturday 12 September	Weapons Class 2.30 - 4.30
Sunday 13 September	General Course 10.30 - 5.00(appr)
Sunday 18 October	Weapons Course 10.30 - 5.00(appr)
Saturday 28 November	Weapons Class 2.30 - 4.30
Sunday 29 November	General Course 10.30 - 5.00(appr)

Altrincham Leisure Centre

Sunday 28 June General Course 1.30 - 5.30

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For further details, contact Mr Mucha on 01695 725045
A translation of the new grading syllabus is now available from Ian
Cherry or Mr Mucha

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If any club would like gradings, information, pictures, articles or small
ads published in the next newsletter, please send them to:

P. Alexander

64, Grafton Street, Preston, PR1 8JH 01772 257066

Gradings

Altrincham 16 Nov 97

Altrincham 16 July 97

Anita Wilson 4 kyu
Mark Wilson 4 kyu
Steve Taylor 3 kyu
Wendy Wallace 3 kyu
Kevin Wallace 2 kyu

Lostock-Stretford 24 July 97

Amanda Yates 6 kyu
Bernard Rose 5 kyu
Steve Whittle 5 kyu
Tony Yates 5 kyu

Gareth Hill 6 kyu (jnr)
Robert Moore 6 kyu (jnr)
Simon Baird 4 kyu (jnr)
Robert Gibbs 4 kyu (jnr)
Robert Shepherd-White 4 kyu (jnr)
Neil Butcher 3 kyu (jnr)
Rod McFarlane 3 kyu (jnr)
Christopher Wilson 3 kyu (jnr)
Stuart Wilson 3 kyu (jnr)
Edward Shepherd-White 3 kyu ni (jnr)
Helen Baird 2 kyu san (jnr)
Amanda Wallace 2 kyu san (jnr)
Joanne Asprey 6 kyu
Colm Buteaux 6 kyu
Dave Jones 6 kyu
Terry Atkinson 3 kyu

The Hakama and the Seven Virtues of Budo by Kelvin Rice

People who visit a dojo for the first time are often interested in the hakama. What is it for? Why wear it? What does it signify? This article aims to answer these questions.

The hakama is a garment worn by the samurai, and used today in the martial arts of kendo and kyudo, in addition to aikido. The first reason for wearing a hakama is to denote dan grades and first kyu grades with teaching certificates. This enables beginners and visitors to know who to approach for help. It also means that senseis and aikidoka unfamiliar with the class know who can take good ukemi.

In aikido training it is important that movement comes from the hips, not the shoulders. There should be a feeling of being centred in the hara, the lower stomach area, and in particular, the 'one point', the body's physical centre of gravity. Being centred in this area helps to develop good aikido technique, and is also important for the development of ki.. The hakama secured on the lower hips helps to develop this centralisation in the lower abdomen, and also provides some support to the lower back.

Beyond this, the hakama has a deeper, symbolic meaning, connected to bushido, the code of the samurai. All cultures have examples of warriors who

are also respected and wise people - samurai, Christian knights, King Arthur, Native American Indians, etc. All of these stress the importance of not just teaching how to fight, but developing maturity to provide balance and direction for the warrior. Martial technique and ability must go hand-in-hand with the warrior spirit.

O Sensei stressed the importance of this 'spiritual' side of aikido, and explained that the seven pleats of the hakama symbolise the seven virtues of budo. The seven virtues are: Jin - benevolence, Gi - honour or justice, Rei - courtesy and etiquette, Chi - wisdom, Shin - sincerity, Chu - loyalty and Koh - piety.

Jin or benevolence means to be desirous of doing good, and to be charitable, kind and helpful. To balance their education, the samurai studied calligraphy and poetry as well as martial arts. They developed both Yin and Yang qualities, and an important concept was 'Bushido no Nasaki' - the tenderness of the warrior.

Honour or justice is about allegiance to what is right, earning and maintaining high respect and reputation. There are obvious dangers in teaching people effective martial technique if they cannot distinguish between right and wrong.

The martial arts world sometimes suffers when the media claim that some martial artist has used their skills to further their criminal career (although the facts are often seriously distorted). Aikidoka need to develop their own principles of the difference between right and wrong, and to have the courage to stand up for what they believe is right.

Courtesy and etiquette are seen in all aikido practices, with formal line-ups and bows, but bushido requires martial artists to act in a polite and considerate manner at all times. bushido suggests that politeness is a poor virtue, if it is practiced for fear of offending a person. It should follow from a sympathetic regard for the feelings of others.

The other qualities that the hakama symbolises are wisdom, sincerity, loyalty and piety or sense of duty. Combined with courage, these virtues become the true warrior spirit. It is vital to practice the arts of aikido and to refine martial skills, but O Sensei stressed that the study of aikido does not just involve learning technique, and is not limited to the time that we spend in the dojo or practising technique at home.



The hakama is an important reminder of the significance of our aikido practice.

"From the time that you rise in the morning to the time that you retire at night, you must follow the path of aiki, and pursue the harmonisation of the world and all its inhabitants"

Morihei Ueshiba, quoted in *Abundant Peace* by J. Stevens

"The hakama prompts us to reflect on the nature of true bushido. Wearing it symbolises traditions that have been passed down to us from generation to generation. Aikido is born of the bushido spirit of Japan, and in our practice we must strive to polish the seven traditional virtues"

Morihei Ueshiba, quoted in *The Principle of Aikido*



How to fold the hakama

Leaving the hakama carelessly about after using it will wrinkle it. Folding it neatly after usage will keep the pleats sharp without having to iron them. It will also make for a neat appearance the next time it is worn. So to acquire this good habit, always fold the hakama neatly.

When you kneel on the ground to fold a hakama, never turn your back to the kamiza - this is disrespectful.

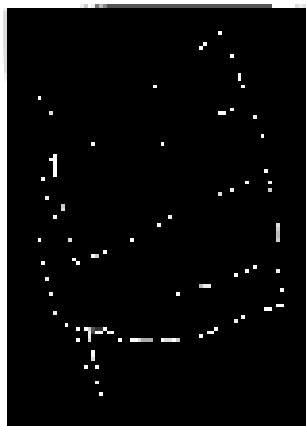


Figure 1. First place the hakama on the floor with its front face down. Arrange the back and front straps one on top of the other. Straighten the pleats down the centre of the back carefully

following the folding creases. Then straighten out the sides of the hakama from the back support to the hem.

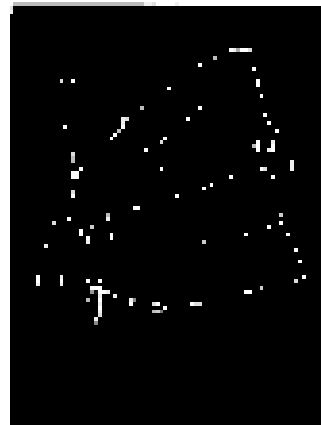


Figure 2. Flip the back support over with the left hand. Then holding the support and the two hems of the hakama with the left hand and the hems of the front and back with the right hand, stretch the hakama tightly.

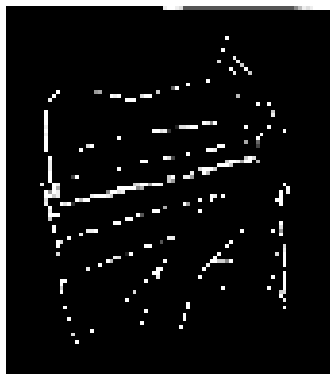


Figure 3. Turn the hakama over with both hands in one move. This time the back of the hakama should face down. In turning the hakama over, be sure to keep the hakama stretched tightly to prevent the pleats down the centre of the back from being disarranged. However in turning the hakama over, it does not matter if the other parts are disturbed. Now arrange the front of the hakama.

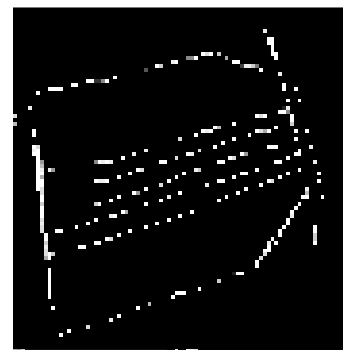


Figure 4. Carefully lay the front and back hakama straps on top of each other. Stretch out, smooth, and align the pleats along the starting side coverings of both the front and the back. In doing this do not disturb the parts already ordered in the back, and arrange both the front and back so that their hems are well stretched and their side openings lie neatly on top of each other.



Figure 5. Working from the outside in, arrange each pleat in accordance with the correct crease marks. Again in doing this, do not move the back part of the hakama which you have already arranged.



Figure 6. Fold both outer edges of the hakama inward so that nothing is left further out than the top of the hakama.

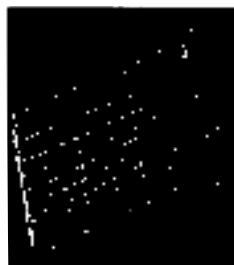


Figure 7. Lightly pat along the lines marked by the dashed lines in the sketch. This will make it easier to fold the hakama into three parts.



Figure 8. Fold the hakama from the hem at the first dotted line.



Figure 9. Now fold the upper part of the hakama over to the left, and straighten the back support which was hidden under the foot side. The following explanation will teach you how to fold the straps.



Figure 1. Turn the back support of the hakama so it faces you. Pull the short straps attached to the back of the hakama towards you, and the long straps attached to the front, lay to the side of the hakama.



Figure 2. After straightening out any wrinkles or folds in the long straps of the right side, fold it in half lengthwise. Then put it on the hakama starting the strap diagonally across to the left.



Figure 3. Arrange the long left strap in the same way. But start it to the right so that it will cross the strap from the right side.



Figure 4. Pass the short, right strap over and under the crossing of the two long straps, and bring it straight towards you.



Figure 5. Secure the place where the short strap crosses over the long ones by passing the short strap to the right, over itself and under the long strap. Then pull the free end toward you.



Figure 6. Pull the end of the short strap further towards you to get rid of all the slack. Then fold it upward to the left, in the direction it naturally tends to fold and press it on the long strap.



Figure 7. In the same way, pass the short strap of the left side through the center crossing of the two long straps. Then pass the free end of the crossing of the two long straps. Then pass the free end of the short strap over and under itself and the left long strap. Finally stretch the short strap up to the right. In stretching it upward, pass it under the short strap on the right side. This will make each band secure since they are held down in turn by another band as shown in Fig 7.

Many people forget the proper way of fixing the straps, this device may help:

1. Pass through the center of the unhook. (Fig 4)
2. Cover the end. (Fig 5)
3. Walk the right way. (Fig 6)

This should be easy to remember because they are Aikido principles.

Excerpts from 'Dojo Rules', published by the BAB as an advisory document for clubs:

- 1.1 Aikido is a martial 'way' practising controlled forms of potentially dangerous techniques, therefore at all times students must give the strictest adherence to the directions of the supervising instructor, whose responsibility is to ensure safe and meaningful practice.
- 1.2 Students have a duty to protect the health and well-being of each other, both junior and senior. They should:
- not execute techniques in a dangerous or reckless manner
 - seek to develop control in the practice of martial arts to avoid being hurt or causing injury
 - never use superior skill or position within the dojo to gratuitously inflict pain or abuse others physically
- 1.3 As Aikido has as its ethical basis the resolution of conflict through the development of harmony in the conduct of human affairs, it therefore requires that ALL practitioners should accord each other respect and consideration at all times.

(the complete document will be circulated)

NB. Aikidoka are reminded that a respectful attitude includes not eating or chewing gum while on the mat!

