

## What's on in December

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> Jiyu-renshu** (free practice)  
9.30 – 11.00 at Phoenix Martial Arts. Open to all aikidoka who regularly train with Wellsprings Aikido.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**Seminar with Tony Sargeant Sensei** in Jersey.

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> Kyu Grading**

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> Wellsprings Christmas Meal**

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> NO TRAINING**

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> Keiko osame** (last training session of the year) An opportunity to reflect upon your Aikido training in 2011.

Check out the [online diary](#) for details of future seminars and events.

## About KIAI

KIAI is the newsletter of Wellsprings Aikido. It is sent to all members of Wellsprings Aikido and to any of our friends who wish to receive it. If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list then please send your email address to [enquiries@wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk).

Contributions to this newsletter are welcome and encouraged. Please send them to [enquiries@wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk). If there is a topic that you would like covered in Training Matters then please let us know. On the list of future topics to be covered are bowing, posture, belts, training joyfully and following.

## T.I.A.E. Seminar in Poole



We hope that those of you who attended the seminar with Tony Sargeant Sensei and Paul McGlone Sensei last month enjoyed the training and that you found the input from these Sensei helpful. If this was the first seminar that you have attended you may have felt a little overwhelmed by the volume of information and material covered, much of which probably will have been new to you. Don't worry - it does get a *little* easier with time!

Richard Small has made available to us the photographs that Bethany Law took using his cameras on SUNDAY of the seminar. Aikidoka from Wellsprings are well represented in the 300+ photographs. Eventually a few of these pictures will make it onto the website. In the meantime we have them on a CD-ROM which you are welcome to borrow. Richard is happy for you to make copies of any photograph that is of interest to you.

## Tidbits

Kokyu is translated as breath. The term kokyu is made up of two syllables, “ko” which means to breathe out and “kyu” which means to breathe in. There is an important message here – you have to breathe out before you can breathe in.

## Training Matters

O'Sensei declared that "Aikido is misogi".

What is misogi? The Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America defines it as "*cleaning/purification of the body/mind/spirit*" and states that "*Misogi is a profound spiritual technology meant to bring human beings into direct unmediated communion with nature.*"

Misogi (pronounced me-sew-gi), purification, is the underlying philosophy of Shinto, the Japanese respect for Great Nature. Shinto is classified as a religion but it doesn't have many of the features most of us in the West would expect to find in a religion. Shinto has no founder, doctrine, commandments, objects of worship or organisation. Indeed, it didn't even have a name until after the coming of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism to Japan. After their arrival the indigenous practices of the Japanese people were given the name Shinto to distinguish them from these foreign religious systems.

The word Shinto is from the old Japanese and the 'to' has the same meaning as the 'do' in Aikido. Shin is another word for kami, meaning spirits, so Shinto is the way of the Spirits. For the Japanese everything is imbued with spirit. The spirit in each human is considered a child-spirit of the original spirit. This spirit becomes tarnished as a result of our activities in the mundane world. This tarnishing is not analogous to the concept of sin which is found in the Abrahamic religions. "*Shinto is a religion without guilt, which assumes the essential goodness of humanity and each individual's potential for good.*" Motohisa Yamakage

In the same way that our bodies need to be cleansed of the dust and grime that they pick up during the day our spirits need cleansing too.

"Mitsugi Saotome writes in 'Aikido and the Harmony of Nature' "Cleansing is a fundamental part of the natural order of life. The spiritual world and the material world are not separate but only different forms of the same reality, each

influencing the other... we must follow the laws of nature and purify the body, the heart, the spirit, even our physical surroundings."

The original meaning of misogi is purification with water. The Japanese character for misogi implies the physical act of bathing. O'Sensei regularly performed misogi under the waterfall in Iwama.

According to Motohisa Yamakage the most auspicious place to perform water misogi is where a river flows into the ocean. But misogi is also performed in the ocean, rivers and streams, lakes and, as in Iwama, under waterfalls. Misogi is still performed by aikidoka today. While it is more common in Japanese dojo, some dojo in the west have adopted the practice.

Harai is ritual purification using materials other than water materials such as green plants, paper, soil, and salt (e.g. salt is scattered over the sumo-wrestling area) or through the use of sound. Because misogi and harai form a linked sequence of acts and ideas, they are often referred to by the single term misogiharai and some people use the terms interchangeably.

For O'Sensei the practice of Aikido was a form of misogi.

O'Sensei taught eight major misoginogyou (practices of misogi) namely:

1. Mizunogyou (purification and breath training with cold water)
2. Amenotorifunenogyou (3 exercises, including torifune, the rowing exercise, combining movement with breathing . Abe Sensei says that these "*connect to the cycle of giving/accepting – triangle/circle – yin/yang and develop your Ki and Kokyu power to incorporate into your techniques*".)
3. Furitamanogyou (shaking hands in front of hara to passively train the breath while in standing meditation)
4. Noritonogyou (chanting of long prayers to further train the breath)

## 5. Otakebiokorobinogyou (to train the breath)

Otakebinogyou (Lifting the hands over the head, and body up on the toes, bringing hands back down to below the tanden while shouting “eee-aaaay” and forcing all the breath from the body.)

Okorobinogyou (two different practices using tegatana “two-fingered sword” cutting, shouting “eee-aaaay” and forcing all the breath from the body.)

## 6. Chinkonnogyou (seated meditation, with specific hand postures, hand gestures, and specific meditative visualisations)

## 7. Genshokunogyou (specific dietary measures designed to change the blood from acidic (typical) to alkaline [to promote proper breathing, and correct mind/attitude/heart – kokoro-e]. It is a diet made up mostly of brown rice with a side dish of vegetables.)

## 8. Bunkontouitsunogyou (a seated meditation with breathing and awareness but not necessarily visualisations. Always performed as the final practice for a moment of silence and reflection.)

These practices, formalised by Kawatsura Sensei and Futaki Sensei, were based on traditional Japanese customs rather than religion. Their purpose is to develop kokyu (breath power). The founder included some of them in every training session. O'Sensei also performed misogi with jo, ken and fan (video clips can be found on YouTube).

Ritual misogi is structured, involves chanting in Japanese and, although the format of the ritual is widely available on the web, is best led by someone who knows the ceremony and how to pronounce the Japanese!

If you would like to practise mizunogyou an alternative form of purification with cold water which could easily be performed here on the Dorset coast and which doesn't require an experienced practitioner to instruct us is ubinari,

purification by sea water. Ubinari involves wading into the water at high tide. The salty water removes impurities which are then taken away by the receding tide. The festival of Hamauri (“going down to the beach”), celebrated on the third day of the third lunar month (24<sup>th</sup> March 2012), is a day of spiritual cleansing and renewal. Traditionally on this day women and girls in Okinawa visit the beach to purify themselves in the sea with ubinari and to walk barefoot along the sand (another form of purification). These days the whole family tends to go with them to enjoy a day at the beach.

The other important aspect to mizunogyou is breath training. To train the breath misogi needs to be performed regularly. Martial artists for whom this is not possible substitute daily cold showers! If you are not quite ready to adopt such extreme measures then use this breathing exercise to start to develop the breath.

1. Sit or stand with an upright, relaxed back. Give your weight to the ground.
2. Focus awareness on the area at the very centre of your body, a few inches below the navel.
3. Breathe out through the mouth, allowing all air to naturally empty, then gently lean forwards a few degrees to expel remaining air. Return to the upright position.
4. Breathe in through the nose.
5. Continue to breath this way allowing your breathing to naturally slow down. This is okinaga, long-breathing.
6. Once you are familiar with okinaga you can add this visualisation to your practice.

Imagine the out-breath gathering waste, negativity, and weakness from each cell which it then expels out from the body via the lungs.

As you breathe in, inhale the energy of the universe and send it to every part of the body.

At the end of this newsletter, given on a separate page for ease of use, is an exercise combining breath awareness and visualisation. Tony Sargeant Sensei has high regard for this exercise and he used to teach it at the old Orwell Dojo which is where Richard Small was introduced to it.

## Aiki jo in Bideford



Richard Small sent in this photograph for inclusion in KIAI. It was taken at the workshop that Mark Sensei conducted for the Aiki jo group in Bideford, Devon in September 2011. Richard writes:

“Mark Sensei chose to teach the seven awase as indicated by Daniel Toutain as a Shodan requirement at Iwama.

The seven awase, so clearly taught by Mark, culminated in a demonstration of the first kumijo with an explanation as to how the simple awase contribute to more advanced understandings and skills.”

## 2012 Deshi in Greece

The 2012 programme runs from 5<sup>th</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> June. It provides the opportunity to live and train with Tony Sargeant Sensei at his Dojo in Kefalonia. The Main Deshi week is 12<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> May. More information is available on [Tony Sensei's Mind & Body Management website](#). Click here to view [a slide-show of images from the uchideshi held in September 2010](#).

## Wellsprings on the web

[www.wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk](http://www.wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk)

This newsletter is now available online (as .pdf). It's only accessible from the home page at the present but eventually will be accessible from the drop down navigation bar too.

More links have been added in [Resources>Links](#) including a number relating to [Shinto and Misogi](#) and a must see (and hear!) [Japanese T.V. Report on Iwama Ryu Aikido](#) featuring Saito Sensei from 1992 (to view English subtitles click on the small cc icon just below the YouTube screen).

## Dear Santa,...

This year why not ask Santa for your own ken or jo or for a new gi (beats socks any day!).

In the long-run it is best to buy weapons made from white oak (such as these [ken](#) and [jo](#) from Nine Circles) right from the outset as they are harder, will take more punishment and will last you many years. If cost is an issue and you are not sure of your long term commitment then this [entry level ken](#) is fine to start with (Mark Sensei has a few of these available for £7). Be aware though that these lighter kens will not stand up to long term, heavy duty partner practice and you will eventually want to/need to buy weapons in white oak.

Mark Sensei will be placing an order with [Nine Circles](#) before Christmas. If you or Santa would like to buy anything then please let Mark Sensei know by 11<sup>th</sup> December. Remember that **the prices shown on the Nine Circles website do not include VAT or postage** however the club does get a small discount on weapons and clothing but not on gifts and other items.



## **Breath Awareness with Visualisation Exercise used at the Orwell Dojo**

(as remembered by Richard Small)

Breathe in and out through your nose with the mouth closed and the jaw relaxed. Slightly close the throat\* and perform long-breathing. Softly close your eyes and keep them closed throughout.

Now imagine yourself in a beautiful, private, secluded garden where everything is to your liking. You are sitting next to a large earthenware pot with a lid. The pot is so large that you could climb in and kneel or sit inside it.

Remove the lid and quietly place it to one side. The pot is full to the brim with pure, clear water, the finest water you can ever find.

You are going to use this pure water to cleanse yourself, to wash away any negatives, toxins and other parts of your being that are no longer of use to you. If you wish you can imagine yourself sat naked in front of you and visualise the body being washed clean.

As you draw the breath imagine that you breathe in some of the clear water. As you breathe out, imagine you breathe out the water, washing the outside of your body.

Each in breath will take water from the pot and each out breath is used to wash the body, slowly, carefully and not missing a bit. There is sufficient water in the pot to cleanse every part of your body.

After some time has passed the pot will be empty and your body thoroughly cleansed. Climb into the pot and sit or kneel again ..... feel what it is like in there, live what it is like, know what it is like.

You can stay in the pot for as long as you wish. When you have finished climb out from the pot and kneel again to replenish the pot for your next visit. Only the finest, cleanest water can be used. In your mind find the whitest clouds that adorn great mountains. Breathe in these clouds through the nose. Breathe out through the mouth and as you breath out shape your lips like the lip of a jug to pour the pure water from the clouds into the pot. When the pot is full to the brim replace the lid.

You feel a great peace and calm as you stand to leave the garden. This garden and the pot with the pure water are always here for you and you can return at any time.

\*This is achieved by tilting the head forward SLIGHTLY until you feel a narrowing of the air passage. Do not narrow the air passage by bringing tension into the throat. Please ask Mark Sensei if you are not sure.