

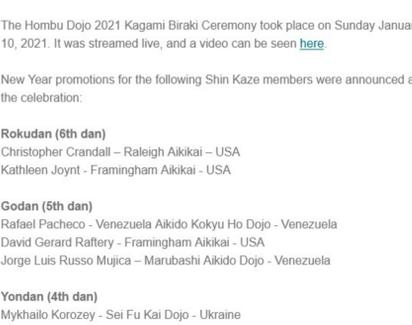


News from Shin Kaze

January 2021

Shin Kaze Aikido Alliance is an organization dedicated to the practice and development of Aikido. It aims to provide technical and administrative guidance to Aikido practitioners and to maintain standards of practice and instruction within an egalitarian and tolerant structure.

Hombu Dojo Announces Shin Kaze Kagami Biraki Promotions



The Hombu Dojo 2021 Kagami Biraki Ceremony took place on Sunday January 10, 2021. It was streamed live, and a video can be seen [here](#).

New Year promotions for the following Shin Kaze members were announced at the celebration:

Rokudan (6th dan)

Christopher Crandall – Raleigh Aikikai – USA
Kathleen Jojnt - Framingham Aikikai - USA

Godan (5th dan)

Rafael Pacheco - Venezuela Aikido Kokyu Ho Dojo - Venezuela
David Gerard Rafferty - Framingham Aikikai - USA
Jorge Luis Russo Mujica – Marubashi Aikido Dojo - Venezuela

Yondan (4th dan)

Mykhailo Korozey - Sei Fu Kai Dojo - Ukraine

The official list of Aikikai Kagami Biraki promotions is [here](#).

In addition to the above, promotions for the following Shin Kaze members were registered at Aikikai Hombu Dojo at end of 2020.

Yondan (4th dan)

Gillian Macleod - Bushwick Dojo - USA

Sandan (3rd dan)

Elisa Beebe - Framingham Aikikai - USA
Charles Calcagni - Bushwick Dojo - USA
Caroline Zeiss - New Haven Aikikai - USA

Nidan (2nd dan)

Brenda Caldwell - New Haven Aikikai - USA
David Foreman – Brampton Aikikai - Canada
Lori Sudderth - New Haven Aikikai - USA
Sean Wheeler - Aikido of Austin - USA

Shodan (1st dan)

Eduardo Dordely - Aikido Avila Dojo Aikikai - Venezuela
Armin Namayandeh – Toronto Aikikai - Canada
Volodymyr Pyrozhev - Sei Fu Kai Dojo - Ukraine
Zhushman Valentyn - Sei Fu Kai Dojo - Ukraine

Our heartfelt congratulations everyone, please keep up the good work!



Kagami Biraki in the Akira Tohei Sensei tradition

By Jo Birdsong Shihan

Kagami Biraki (KB) is a New Year celebration held at the Hombu dojo and other dojos. Dojos celebrate the New Year differently according to the traditions handed down to them by their teacher. Kagami means a mirror, Biraki means to open, and thus Kagami Biraki is a "Mirror Opening". KB is rite of passage from one stage of life to another. At Hombu dojo high-ranking promotions, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9th dan take place as part of this celebration.

Decorations are frequently placed around the dojo. In old Japan they were recognized with their great symbolic meanings, but today most people just think of them as traditional holiday decorations.

Stacked rice cakes, often with an orange on top (representing orchards) and other decorations, are placed on the ceremonial center of the dojo, the shinzen. Called Kagami Mochi, these rice cakes are rounded in the shape of old fashioned metal mirrors and formed from hard dough of pounded rice. They symbolize full and abundant good fortune. Their breaking apart (or opening up) is the "Mirror Opening," after which Kagami Biraki is named. Bits are then traditionally consumed, often in a red bean soup. Besides the Kagami Mochi, there is always plenty of Sake on hand to celebrate the speeches given at the dinner.

Akira Tohei Shihan of the Midwest Aikido Federation introduced KB to its members upon its arrival from Japan in 1972. Every January a KB Seminar was held at the Midwest Aikido Center.

The KB seminar is a time for coming together with all the members of the Federation, and for rededicating ourselves to our training of Aikido, our teacher, and one another. Tohei Sensei talked about seminars as being an opportunity to strengthen our selves, our Aikido, and a time to pause from other life obligations to come together. He likened these to the rings on a bamboo plant that make the plant stand tall and strong, for if the bamboo were to grow and grow and not pause, it would be weak, and bend, and waver in the wind.

Sensei suggested that when we set our goals for the coming year, that we reach out and set big goals, goals that we might not be able to reach in one year. He would say, "The big goal unachieved would still be worth the challenge and could be achieved in the next year". Think big and try hard was his message.

There were always several classes of Aikido at KB seminars. Before dinner, Sensei would give a short demonstration with several senior members. We received this each year as a wonderful gift from our teacher.

Kagami Biraki / New Year's Day practice at Toronto Aikikai

By Robert Zimmermann Shihan

For the past 35 or so years, Kagami Biraki or New Year's Day practice has taken place at Toronto Aikikai on January 1st at noon. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, this year it was a virtual class over Zoom with bokken.

Kagami Biraki is a celebration that officially kicks off the New Year. It is a tradition in the martial arts that represents renewal, re-dedication and spirit.

The New Year's Day practice at Toronto Aikikai has a special significance attached: being the first practice of the year, its aim is to help us re-establish our focus, re-examine and clarify our goals, reinforce our commitments and prepare us for the year ahead.

There are two related elements in this day's events: practice and celebration. As one of my teachers once explained, in oriental philosophies it is said there are 108 obstacles (or "passions") that cloud one's heart and bring confusion to one's mind.

These obstacles must be identified and dealt with (cleansed) in order to purify one's self so as to re-establish one's original clarity and purpose.

Based on this, our New Year's Day class focuses on the practice of one technique, which is repeated 108 times, each repetition representing the removal of one of these obstacles.

Celebration follows the practice, where rank promotions are announced and we share in a potluck lunch, some drinking, storytelling and lots of laughter. Although this year we had to skip the potluck lunch, we got to keep the rest, and it was well worth it.

Happy New Year everyone!

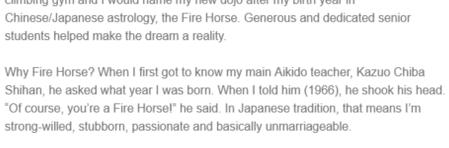
Pandemic Discussion: Would you like to get together with other Shin Kaze teachers and students to talk about your concerns and challenges for your dojo around the COVID-19 situation? We are planning a Zoom conference in English and Spanish in the new year. Let us know what topics you would like to discuss to help all of us navigate through this difficult time. Please email with comments to shinkazeaikidoalliance@gmail.com.

Shin Kaze News

Coordinator for Latin America

The Technical Committee is pleased to announce that in early January it added a new role of "Coordinator for Latin America" to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Jesús González (aka Chucho), 6th dan, dojo-cho of Aikido Zen Bu Dojo in Caracas, Venezuela, has been nominated for that role, and he will be working closely with Chris Crandall, the TAG Chairman, helping to address, coordinate, bring up issues and offer perspectives on matters pertaining to Aikido in Latin America.

New dojo in Uruguay



We are happy to welcome the first dojo to join Shin Kaze in 2021.

Seimei Aikikai Dojo, located in the city of Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay was founded by Sensei Luis Sei Fong, 5th dan (second from the left in the picture), as a non-profit organization to spread and practice Aikido.

Dojo-cho Luis Sei Fong is a Professor of History, a Professor of Drawing, a Watercolor Painter and Director of the Luis Sei Fong Plastic Arts Workshop of Montevideo.

He began practicing Aikido in 1976 at the Fujiyama Dojo and, beginning in 1977, he trained under the direction of Kurata Katsutoshi Shihan of the Kumazawa Dojo in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 1980 he began teaching Aikido at his "School of Aikido", a 10-mat dojo in his house, until 1989.

In 1986 he received Shodan from the hands of Sakanashi Masafumi Shihan, transforming his dojo into Sakanashi Dojo, the Uruguayan branch of the Argentine Aikido Diffusion Center until 2001. Yamada Shihan awarded him ranks from Nidan to Godan. In 1989 the dojo moved to Club Atenas (Montevideo) and then, in 1995, to the Platense Patin Club, where it currently has a 90 square meter (45 mat) tatami.

In 2001 the dojo left the Aikido Diffusion Center and joined the Aikido Foundation of Argentina until 2017, at which time it started operating as an independent dojo. In 2019 it joined with the Nagare School of Aikido, and through it, the Uruguayan Aikido Federation, an organization that brings together the main dojos in Uruguay. Also in 2019 he received a visit from Renshi Olivier Maccario (godan) and his wife, Sensei Nathalie Vergeron (sandan) from the Kobayashi Ryu Association, based in France and led by André Cognard Shihan. Because the KRA and Aikikai styles are similar, and he felt it enriched the practice of his Aikido, he invited them to share in the instruction, and in this way the dojo became the only one in Uruguay where two different Aikido styles are practiced.

Seimei Aikikai Dojo joined the Shin Kaze Aikido Alliance in January 2021.



Dojo Profile: New Haven Aikikai

By Liese Klein, Chief Instructor

"Why don't you open your own dojo?"

When my first teacher asked me that question, I was shocked. After all, although I had been bitterly complaining about the dojo I was attending at the time, I wasn't ready, I thought to myself. I needed more experience, more money – and our small metro area of under a million could barely support one Aikido dojo, much less two.

A few months later, when the dojo situation went from bad to worse, I had a vision: Fire Horse Aikido. I would start small by renting the birthday party space in a rock climbing gym and I would name my new dojo after my birth year in the Chinese/Japanese astrology, the Fire Horse. Generous and dedicated senior students helped make the dream a reality.

Why Fire Horse? When I first got to know my main Aikido teacher, Kazuo Chiba Shihan, he asked what year I was born. When I told him (1966), he shook his head. "Of course, you're a Fire Horse!" he said. In Japanese tradition, that means I'm strong-willed, stubborn, passionate and basically unmarriageable.

The Fire Horse, which comes every 60 years, was considered so unlucky for girls until recent times that many Fire Horse girls went "missing" over the centuries in East Asia. They were either registered a little late or, sadly, never got a chance to live at all.

So when I started my dojo in 2009, Fire Horse was its name. We slowly grew over the years, moving from the birthday party room to a tiny office that just barely fit our 20-foot-by-20-foot mat. Then we went upstairs in the same building to a bigger room, which was so cold in the winter that water froze on the floors.

Eventually, we tired of being one of only a few tenants in a locked former ammunition factory with a broken elevator and lots of asbestos. (This creepy old building is the setting for my Aikido adventure story, Demon Dojo.) We went across town into another factory that was in a better location but also freezing cold in the winter, boiling hot in the summer.

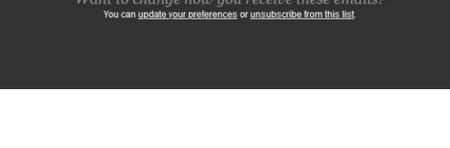
Finally, we found a third former factory that actually had heat and air conditioning! We may never leave. Now operating as New Haven Aikikai-Fire Horse Dojo, we grow into a strong Aikido community of about 35 adults and nearly 40 kids, pre-COVID.

The future is uncertain, but we are hanging onto our space and practicing online as much as possible. A strong core of senior students keeps the Aikido spirit aflame, and I'm so happy that I decided to take the leap and open my own dojo.

Yes, Sensei. You were right.

Tips for Your Dojo

Starting with this issue we will be providing some tips that have proven to be helpful in running and promoting our dojos. Please send us your ideas so we can share them with the membership!



Tip: Promote Your Dojo With Canva
What is your dojo's theme for this year? What is a quote from O-Sensei that is particularly meaningful for you? Use simple graphics to get the word out on social media with Canva, a site that makes it simple to turn words into eye-catching images that are easy to scan and understand. Then post on Instagram, Facebook and everywhere! (Thanks to the great folks in the ASU for passing on this idea - Liese Klein)

Dear Dojo-cho and Supporters:

Please distribute this newsletter to your members and friends and anyone interested in the Shin Kaze Aikido Alliance. If you would like to receive this newsletter directly, click [here](#).



Donations

In these difficult times and as a nonprofit organization, Shin Kaze welcomes donations to support its programs and further its mission.

Please donate here: <http://shinkazeaikidoalliance.com/donate/>

We would also like to mention that we accept gifts of stock as well as bequests to help us build our Shin Kaze Aikido Alliance endowment.

Thank you for your support!



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