

Shukokai Founder, Tani Sensei, revisits Oz for his style's 40th Anniversary Celebrations



Shukokai founder, 70-year-old Master Chojiro Tani — clad in traditional Samurai garb, right down to the spectacular orange wig — demonstrated Kata Suparimpa.

As part of the international 40th Anniversary celebrations of the founding of Shukokai, the Australian Shukokai Karate-Do Renmei hosted a visit to our country of Chojiro Tani Sensei, founder of one of the strongest of the Japanese Karate styles, and respected throughout the world as one of Mabuni Kenwa's most senior students. (Mabuni Sensei founded the Shito-Ryu system of Karatedo).

This was Tani Sensei's first visit to Australia for nearly 20 years. Tani Sensei was accompanied by Ishitobi Sensei, 6th Dan (one of the instructors at the Honbu Dojo in Japan, a Kata and Kobujutsu specialist), sent by the world headquarters to assist Tani Sensei with the teaching. Sensei Tani is now in his seventy- first year and, although very spry and active (as will be attested to by the many Australian students who have now trained with him) the Japanese Honbu now always sends one of the younger instructors to assist when he is teaching in overseas branches.

The course was held over three days, at the ASKA Honbu Dojo in Melbourne. Consisting of traditional Shukokai/ShitoRyu kata training, it was attended by 75 senior students from around Australia, *Yudanshakai* (Black Belts) and senior Brown Belts, with both Perth and Sydney branches sending representatives to join their Victorian colleagues. Instructor and *Uichi Deshi* training was held each morning for three hours, and the course for all the other students was in the evening, lasting for two and a half hours.

The Instructors' course was particularly arduous, with Sensei Tani taking the group daily through basics and Pinan Kata training to ensure correct development before turning his attention to the Shito-Ryu kata, *Useishi*. This kata is widely known by its modern Japanese name, Gojushiho. Useishi is the original Okinawan name and is still commonly used by Shito-Ryu practitioners. Taught in its original form, this kata is very beautiful but demanding, with highly complex and advanced movements.

Normally taught at Sandan level, Tani Sensei and Ishitobi Sensei drilled the group constantly (and mercilessly) for three days until the kata movements and timing had become second nature. *Bunkai* (kata application) was taught and demonstrated. On the last day of the course each instructor had to present Useishi to Tani Sensei for personal checking and correction. For all, a most harrowing experience...

The main course was devoted in part to the development of basics in *kumite*, and Ishitobi Sensei utilised many drills to develop speed and timing. Correct use of power from the hips was constantly stressed. This was the fun part of each session, with students sweating but happy with the many aspects of speed development they had been taught.

Then Sensei introduced the Shito-Ryu kata, Wanshu (known by Shotokan stylists as Empi). Although a short kata when compared to others like Chinto (Shotokan's Gankaku), Wanshu is a relatively complex kata with many sudden changes of direction, stance and height. Again drilled constantly, in first the movements and then in regards to timing, we eventually saw the emergence of a kata with substance and strength and a gradual understanding of the kata's complexities. Of course, much training over the next months and even years will be required to really develop these kata, but the understanding gained of kata training methodology will assist the students greatly over the years.

The final session on Saturday was followed by grading evaluation, announcement of results, and the official opening of the new Headquarters Dojo of the Australian Shukokai Karate Do Renmei. A brass plaque to commemorate the event, and unveiled by Tani Sensei, is to be seen in the main training area. The opening consisted of Sensei Tani demonstrating Kata Suparimpa and playing the traditional Japanese bamboo flute. After which he cut the ribbon over the plaque, announced the dojo open and announced the results of the grading. A very simple but moving ceremony and one very much appreciated by the Shukokai *Yudanshakai*, most of whom were present. (A complete list of grading results is to be found at the end of this article).

Saturday night marked the final celebration, with Sensei in Australia, of our 40th anniversary. The Croydon Leisure Centre, in the Southeastern suburbs of Melbourne, was filled to capacity (*every one of the 1,200 seats taken and more than 100 others squeezed into standing room only!*) with students, parents and friends to watch 400 juniors from the Shukokai clubs demonstrate their skills. This was followed by superb demonstrations by all the ASKA senior instructors, including a skilfull a demonstration of kata Unsu, in its Shito-Ryu form, by Ishitobi Sensei.

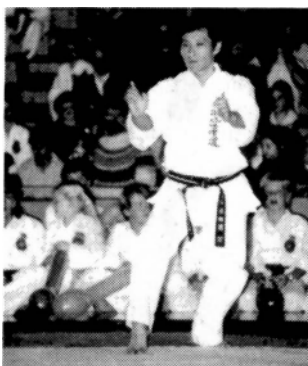


Australian Shukokai uchi-deshi with (front row, left to right): Sensei Paul Mitchell, Master Chojiro Tani and Sensei Ishitobi. Back row (left to right): Ronan Mitchell, Neil Hyams, Darren Brierley, Kevin Gately, John Uiterwijk and Wayne Adams. Centre (left to right): Steve Kelly, Scott Gibson, Justin Thek and Davide Gullotto.

The final moments of our anniversary celebrations in Australia had arrived. The lights died, spotlights came on and Sensei Tani, wearing the traditional garb of the Samurai warrior, emerged playing the bamboo flute. He then demonstrated the kata Suparimpa, accompanied by the strains of traditional Japanese music. On completion of the kata, 50 children, who had been placed around the matted area, released balloons and as the lights came back on, Sensei Tani was paid respect by a standing ovation and thunderous applause. Two hours of really exciting and entertaining Karate.

The Australian Association then presented Tani Sensei and Ishitobi Sensei with silver plaques to commemorate their visit, ASKA tracksuits to keep them warm in the depths of the next Japanese winter, and other gifts to take home to their families.

A great week in the history of Australian Shukokai and one that will be remembered for a long time by those that were involved. This month (August) the Australian Shukokai National Karate Team will compete in the Shukokai World Championships in Helsinki, Finland and then, two weeks later we have been invited to Kobe, Japan, to participate in a massive *Enbukai* (demonstration) and Championship, with an estimated 600 competitors from Japan and other countries around the world. This is the final event of Shukokai's anniversary year and the Australians will be there.



Ishitobi Sensei, 6th Dan, demonstrates Kata Unsu at the celebratory demonstration night. A Kata and Kobujutsu specialist from Shukokai's Honbu Dojo in Japan, Ishitobi San was sent by the world H.Q. to assist Tani Sensei with the teaching in Australia.