

THE SEVEN PLEATS OF THE HAKAMA

The hakama is not intended to be a trophy or a mere status symbol, worn by and reserved for yudansha only. Years ago in many places and dojos practitioners of all ranks wore the hakama. It was not associated with higher rank and technical skill, but more with the Spirit of Aikido. As Budo trainees, through physical training we strive to reach a high level of technical skill and expertise; however, we should remember too that as martial artists we also endeavour to aspire to things greater than and beyond the physical, beyond technique and that would be our personal, internal growth and development. We all grow older and become weaker, slower and less capable physically but, what we have accomplished and built internally and made part of who we are will never grow outworn, will always remain vibrant and strong. As Saotome Sensei says "...this is the trophy..."

The Aikido hakama has seven pleats, each one representing a certain character trait. We as Aikidoka are encouraged to consider these qualities as a means of improving upon ourselves as people, living and working in the global community, always with a view to peace and harmony.

So, the Hakama Pleats:

1. Jin - benevolence, kindness
2. Gi - honour, justice
3. Rei - respect, courtesy, etiquette
4. Chi - wisdom
5. Shin - sincerity
6. Chu - loyalty
7. Koh - piety