

# Samurai News from Honbu



## Keiko Hajime 2005



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## Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

2005 opened with two demonstrations in little Tokyo: at the Village Plaza and Weller court. The Keiko Hajime seminar was held from January 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup>. I would like to thank all of those who participated.

In light of the recent disaster in Southeast Asia, I'd like to share a story about a Tsunami that hit Japan in November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1854 near the Wakaya Prefecture. The earthquake had a magnitude of 8.4. 1,700 people lived in the village where Hamaguchi Goryo, a 35 year-old man, lived. When he looked at the sky, there were lightning, clouds and strange noises coming from the ocean after the earthquake. He realized that a Tsunami would come, so he ran through the village and told everyone to run up the hill. Forty minutes after the earthquake, the Tsunami hit the village. It was dark, so Hamaguchi burned some straw so the people who were left behind would know where to run. The farthest house away from the hill was about one mile, but everyone ran towards the fire.

Five waves, each 5 meters high, hit the village that night. Usually with a five meter high Tsunami, the survival rate is 40%. However, Hamaguchi saved the lives of 97% of the villagers. After the Tsunami, he decided to make a bunker for the village with 1,518 Ryo (about 1 million dollars) of his own money, since the village leader did not have money to invest. On October 2, 1855, prior to the bunker's completion, there was an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.9 in Edo that claimed the lives of ten thousand people. He had a soy sauce store in Edo (now Tokyo), so he went back and

found that the earthquake destroyed his store. Hamaguchi was forced to go to his soy sauce store in Chiba prefecture. He then invested 20% of his savings back to the village to finish the bunker (which took 56,736 people and four years to complete).

Years later, at age 65, he left for America to study, but died only a year later. 4,000 people attended his funeral, and currently 8,000 people live in that village. 88 years from the previous Tsunami, another earthquake and Tsunami hit the village with a magnitude of 8.0 and a four meter Tsunami. However, there were no deaths because of the bunker. A person one said, "Plan ahead, and don't panic when disaster comes."

The people of South East Asia have suffered a terrible loss in life in the recent disaster. I hope that a self sacrificing person such as Hamaguchi Goryo will rise in Southeast Asia so that in the future their people will be prepared and share the same safety that Hamaguchi's village has.

Finally, I'd like to thank everybody for their continued support for Shinkendo.

Life is Shinkendo  
--Toshishiro Obata Kaiso

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# New Year's Celebration Enbu

By Daniel Zahn – Mashuu Dojo, Van Nuys, CA

Photos by Shatto Light

Mashuu Dojo was again in attendance at a Honbu Enbu. This time for the 2005 Japanese New Year Celebration in Little Tokyo. This was now my third time coming down to Honbu and I was excited as ever.

This was an interesting Enbu, in that we were to demonstrate at two different locations (but the Honbu also did this in New Years 2004). The New Year Celebration was a two day event involving 5 different locations in Little Tokyo. The timing wasn't clear at first but it became apparent that we would demonstrate at the first location, pack up and move over to the other location and then demo there.



The first demonstration was in Weller Court. We followed immediately after the exquisite Taiko Drum Performance by Zendeko. For this demonstration we only had 15 minutes and the Honbu members only were going to be on stage. The stage was a little small and the warm up area even smaller but the Honbu students managed to put together a great presentation using a mix of beginner, intermediate and advanced techniques including some Goho Battoho, Tanrenkata and Tachiuchi. Obata Kaiso closed this demonstration with some very exciting Soken (Two Sword) Tameshigiri.

Mashuu Dojo and other students helped out by passing out the New Years cards, which look very sharp this year. Before the demonstration started it wasn't easy to find people interested in the cards as they were all entranced by Zendeko. As soon as the Shinkendo demonstration started and interest peaked, it was very easy to pass out the cards to almost everybody there.



The second demonstration was in the Japanese Village Plaza. This time we had a much more open schedule and we probably used about 30 minutes. All the Shinkendo students there that day were able to demonstrate this time. The Honbu students reiterated some of their performance from the first demo and many more techniques were added. Mashuu Dojo was giving the opportunity to do some Tachiuchi. We demonstrated Ippondachi and Juppondachi. Given time we thought about going on stage to show some more advanced Tachiuchi but before long it was time to close with some Tameshigiri.



This time Nicholas Lauridsen of Honbu Dojo showed some basic Tameshigiri while Matthew Lynch, Sensei of Mashuu Dojo, handled announcer duties to describe the various moves Nicholas displayed to the audience.

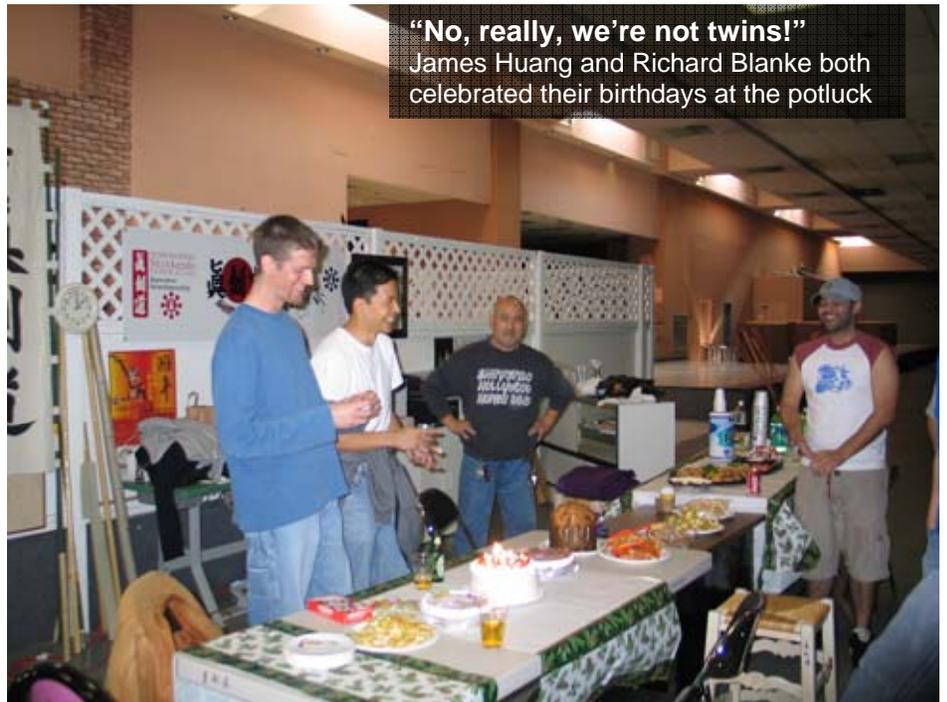
I definitely look forward to any future opportunities to participate in a Shinkendo Enbu.



# Honbu Nenmatsu O-Soji 2004

By Stephen Fast  
Photos by Nicholas Lauridsen

Saturday December 18, 2004 marked the Honbu Nenmatsu O-Soji (end of year clean up) and pot-luck party. The turn out was great and Sensei led the way infusing his spirit and energy into cleaning the same way he does with teaching. Every inch of the dojo was swept, mopped, scrubbed, and cleaned including the empty floor area. Afterwards, we enjoyed plenty of great food and drink. Thanks to all for coming!



# Keiko Hajime 2005

By Daniel Zahn – Mashuu Dojo, Van Nuys, California  
Photos by Shatto Light



Keiko Hajime was my first time going to a Shinkendo seminar. It was three intense days of training and an exposure to many new things. Also, it was a great opportunity to get to know others in the Shinkendo community, both near and far.

It was also a very rainy weekend. Lou D'Agostino Sensei graciously accepted responsibility for bringing the rain with him from New York. As I write this article, Los Angeles has returned to its usual weather so I would like to thank him for taking it back with him as well ☺.

Each of the 4 sessions (Friday afternoon, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning) began with 1.5 - 2 hours of Aikibujutsu. This was then followed by 2 hours of Shinkendo. I had never done Aikibujutsu before so I wasn't sure what to expect. I remembered reading that during Shochu-Geiko 2004, Obata Kaiso wanted everyone to do both Aikibujutsu and Shinkendo, so I was pretty sure that was true this time as well. Last time it was also pointed out that the Aikibujutsu would be adjusted to make it easier on new people so I wasn't too concerned.

The first part of Aikibujutsu training each day concentrated on various Aikibujutsu self-defense techniques. On the first day the techniques didn't involve any rolls or falls which made it easier on people like me. We started with various techniques to deal with an attacker



that grabs your arm. On the second and third day more techniques were added to deal with other kinds of attacks and you would now sometimes throw the attacker. Obata Kaiso enriched the training by telling us how some of the techniques we were learning were taught to Japanese Metro Police to allow them to subdue people without the use of weapons. I was fortunate throughout the weekend to have partners who understood my lack of training in rolls and they allowed me to practice the techniques without requiring this of me.

The second aspect of Aikibujutsu training was Bojutsu. This was an area of Aikibujutsu that I enjoyed immensely. Initially I had a little trouble getting into the

swing of things. Once I remembered my cardboard tube samurai days of youth I was able to get my Bo rotating

properly. Those of us who were new to Bo were put under the guidance of various Honbu students and sometimes taught by Obata Kaiso directly. We learned some basic Bo movements in forward, right and left stances as well as some Suburi drills. We learned basic attacks and blocks for Bo Tachiuchi that we were to later practice throughout the seminar.

The Shinkendo portion of Keiko Hajime was the main reason I had attended and I was not disappointed. We covered a wide range of techniques, many of which were new to me. I believe some of the Tachiuchi we were learning was quite new as well. There were a few participants there that were new to Shinkendo and Honbu students again provided instruction to them on some of the basic moves.



others.

Some Goho Battoho was included in the seminar, with a focus on Henka (Variations). We also went through the first 5 sets of this on the last day.

We were drilled on some of the Toyama Ryu sets, an area I had been learning for a few months now and liked a lot. This time as well we quickly moved into techniques that were new to me. Because of the relationship between the basic and advanced techniques, I was better able to follow along with the advanced portions.

A big part of the Shinkendo sessions was the Tachiuchi. Initially we did partner practice of various beginner and intermediate forms. As the seminar progressed some more advanced things were added, all of which were new to me. Upon my Sensei's advice, I tried to get a wide range of partners during these sessions. This would allow me to gain the most experience and benefit from the Tachiuchi practice. I am very grateful to all of the people I worked with on these new forms.

Throughout the seminar I found myself in awe of the depth of knowledge and helpfulness shown to all by the Honbu students. I would again like to thank everyone that trained with me and helped me to get the most from this seminar. I hope I was able to help some of you as well. I look forward to seeing you all at future seminars.

As we got into Shinkendo each day we generally started with going through various Tanrengata as a way to warm up and practice. Performing the techniques with such a large group gives you a new feeling of intensity and focus. We ended up going through the all 10 Tanrengata during the seminar, skipping only the third on the first day, but going over all on the last day. The last 3 were new material to me. I tried to follow along initially, but soon decided I would be better off observing and trying to follow along later if we did them again. This strategy worked out well for me since when we did return to them I was better able to follow the

# Shinkendo Special Guest: Ryo Ishibashi

By Michael Shu  
Photos by Shatto Light



As announced on the forums, on February 4<sup>th</sup>, famous Japanese actor Ryo Ishibashi visited the Honbu to reunite with Obata Kaiso and Nathan Scott Sensei after 10 years. For those of you unfamiliar with Ryo Ishibashi, you may actually find his face familiar as he has been in a number of Japanese and U.S. movies. His most recent American release was "The Grudge", a remake of a Japanese haunted house movie.

Ishibashi-San, came with an entourage of Nihon TV cameramen and producers. When I walked into the Honbu, Obata Kaiso and Ishibashi-San were sitting on a couple of chairs on the dojo mat holding an interview. The entire interview was in Japanese (zenzen wakarimasen) but it seemed that Ishibashi-San was the one asking the most questions – a lot of them seemed to be related to Shinkendo and the Samurai.

After the interview, class started as usual. Obata Kaiso invited nearby dojo to bring their students so a couple of Mashuu Dojo students came to join in on the fun. The class was videotaped by two cameras as Ishibashi-San watched. From time to time Obata Kaiso would explain to Ishibashi-San what was going on.

Then it was Tameshigiri time. Nathan Scott Sensei came up first followed by a couple of Honbu students. Then Kaiso called Ishibashi-San over, who seemed extremely reluctant. After some coaxing from Obata Kaiso, Ishibashi-San got on the mat and picked up a shinken. It was Ishibashi-San's first time and Kaiso guided him through proper swing angle and tome. After a few practice swings, Ishibashi-San gave it a go, cutting cleanly through the mats with left and right kesagiri. Kaiso moved on to kiriage, which Ishibashi-San had some trouble with so Kaiso helped him with some examples and standing in front as a mirror example.

Kaiso answered a few more of Ishibashi-San's questions for the camera crew before it was time for our visitor to leave. It was great having Ishibashi-San at the Honbu and we all hope that he will visit us again soon (at least sooner than ten years o\_O).



# STREET EFFECTIVE AIKIDO

By Jeremy Young – Tatsumaki Dojo, AR



Is aikido really effective? This is a question I asked myself as I started my training under Randy Beard Sensei. To me, the idea seemed ridiculous that one could “flow” with someone’s attack, embrace it, and then use it to their advantage. This was definitely not the “martial arts” I knew! My TV heroes would have embraced someone’s attack with a swift spinning back kick to the chin or some sort of secret death touch. For the first time, I have seen aikido used by my instructor as a street effective means of self-defense.

An “incident” took place just prior to attending our fist session of Keiko Hajime. We were downstairs in the mall waiting for the arrival of chairs and tables. As we waited Beard Sensei and I browsed a table of t-shirts for his children. Out of nowhere we heard some Bruce Lee-style yells behind us. At first we ignored them; however this did not fend off a tall Hispanic kid with a badly maintained Mohawk. He stepped between us with the clanging of his cellular phone hanging from a cheap necklace around his neck. He bowed to us in a manner that can only be appreciated by those of us who remember “Kung-Fu”. He began asking us questions and making comments that made me quite uncomfortable.

I was unsure how to handle someone whose behavior was extremely bizarre and borderline threatening. He started telling us that he too was a warrior. “I once killed a hummingbird” he stated in a whisper, “killed him with one shot.”

“Really!” my instructor said, with excitement in his voice, “what did you kill him with, birdshot?” The kid was visibly surprised by Beard Sensei’s reaction.

“I killed him with a BB gun”, he said. Then back to his whispering tone, “But I could have killed any bird. Anyone can kill a pigeon, or even a sparrow, but to kill a humming bird you must wait...for just the right moment. Like a warrior I became the Yucca tree. Then I dug a small hole with my foot and buried him.”

“Got ‘em!” exclaimed Sensei with a laugh. The reaction of this guy to Sensei’s positive and excited responses was amazing.

He made one more attempt to reach us on a “warrior” level. “And do you know why I killed him? I killed him because I am the Aztec warrior god, Huitzilopochtli!” mispronouncing the name. “Not like my brother, he is crazy.”

“Really!” said Beard Sensei of how great he was and how he was really glad we met. Eventually, the kid got off of the “baka grasshopper” routine and started talking more on the same level. He even offered to sculpt the Aikibuken symbol for us! As it turns out he is an art student from USC – go figure.

As we left him to go look for the Keiko Hajime chair and table delivery, it hit me that I had just witnessed Aikido in action as a street defense. This guy had obviously intended to unnerve us with his “crazy ramblings” and who knows what his reaction would have been had we became angry or told him to go away.

Budo trains not only physical but mentally and spiritual. I had just watched my instructor mentally flow with his aggressive ramblings, embrace them, and reverse them to an exiting point, in which Beard Sensei pawned him off to Nicholas Lauridsen who was seated some twenty five feet away... (on behalf of Beard Sensei and myself, we apologize to Nicholas). Instead of becoming angry and annoyed, it was Sensei Beard’s positive reactions that totally changed this guy’s attitude. Beard Sensei answered my question of Aikido’s street effectiveness by example, his normal teaching manner.

# Chillin' Kangeiko

By Christian Woerl – Shinkendo-Club Katana, Munich, Germany

On January 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, the annual Kangeiko of the Shinkendo-Dojo Munich/Fuerstenfeldbruck took place in Oberweikertshofen near Fuerstenfeldbruck.

Josef Sturm Sensei from Switzerland, Peter Lukasz from Hungary, Gregor Cohnen from Bonn/Germany and Shinkendoka from the Netherlands and Poland joined us. And of course, our bavarian neighbours from the city of Straubing, Karl Heini Sensei and his still enthusiastic guys. Again, we invited Brent Hire Sensei to be our seminar-leader.

Like last year we had a lot of snow in Bavaria (Bayern). Brent likes it, so we ordered some snow again. Perfect weather for some outside-practice. After some Taisabaki and Suburi, Hire Sensei guided us outside to the snowy fields. First we did 200 Suburi. Our feet nearly turned to ice, but we still had enough energy to do some Ippondachi. It was a great experience, but we were grateful for some warm water to put our feet in.



During 1000 Suburi we had the opportunity to warm up a little bit. The training-hall is quite large; there is a lot of space to "Kaeshi"-around.

The rest of the day was filled with the word often used in Shinkendo – HENKA. Hire Sensei showed and explained us the different Ippondachi variations followed by advanced Battoho. In the evening we had some traditional Bavarian food.

The next day began with Bojutsu-lessons. We did some Bogyo and Kogeki exercises, followed by Shuji no Kon Dai. It's really hard to follow Brent Senseis' fast and fluid movements, but he is a great teacher and always understands our problems.

Now it was time for some Kumite. Brent showed us some new forms, and we tried hard not to hit each other. Unfortunately there was not enough time for Bojutsu.

Before lunch, Brent took some time to show us 2 ancient swords. One of them was around 400 years old. It



was quite amazing to observe these masterpieces. He also taught us how to observe a sword.

After lunch we started with – HENKA. Brent Sensei explained some new forms of Tachiuchi HENKA, followed by Sanbon Batto.

And, of course – HENKA – until the end.

It was a great seminar. Thank you to our European neighbours, and we hope to see some more at our next Kangeiko. And, of course, thanks to Brent Hire Sensei for his patience and detailed instruction.

# Honbu as Guest: Kyokushin Karate Championships

By Michael Shu  
Photos by Shatto Light

February 6<sup>th</sup> 2005 –The Honbu Dojo was invited to perform at the Kyokushin U.S. Karate Championships which were held at the JACCC/ Japan America Theater in Little Tokyo. The Kyokushin Los Angeles Dojo shares the same space as the Shinkendo Honbu Dojo, so it was very nice of them to let us give a small performance between the sparring semi-finals and finals.

We were scheduled to perform between 5 and 6 but Obata Kaiso told us to arrive at the Japan America Theater at around 2:30PM to watch the elimination and semi-finals. When I arrived at the theater to join Obata Kaiso, Saito Sensei, and Chuck Light, the opening ceremony just beginning. After a small demonstration by the children students (including a display of board and brick breaking), all the fighting competitors lined up as Director Shokei Matsui gave an opening speech. Then a karateka came up to sing the U.S. National Anthem – with surprising vocal talent.



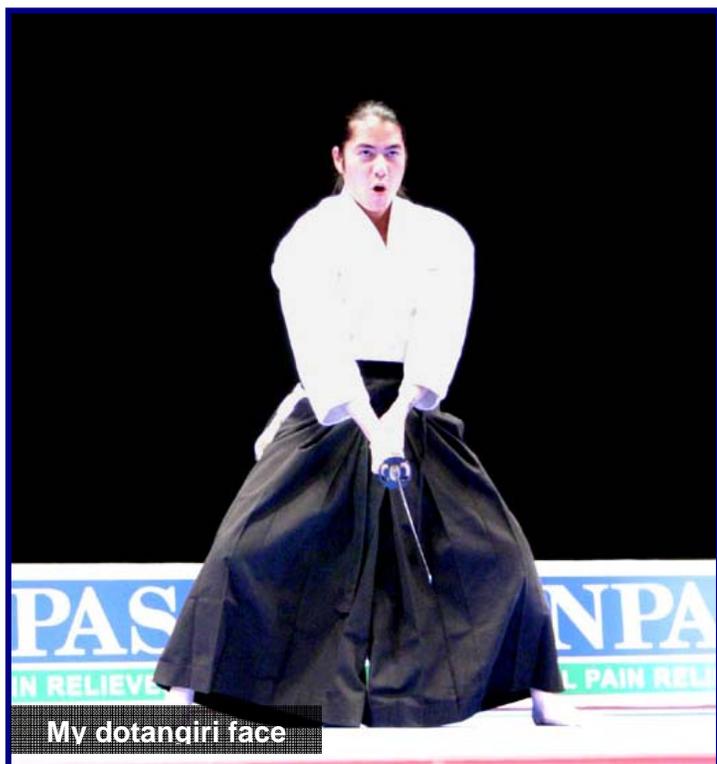
One of the less bloody battles

Five judges, four sitting at each corner of the ring and one on the mat, demonstrated acceptable and foul strikes while familiarizing the audience with the scoring system. It was at this time I realized that the sparring was to be held full contact WITHOUT PROTECTIVE GEAR!!! Mouthpieces, groin cups, and female chest plates were the only acceptable gear.

The lightweight category was first, so the first two fighters came up for a 3 minute round. Their punches weren't full power, but as we watched more matches, it became apparent that the reason wasn't for control, rather to conserve energy through the grueling round and possible 2 minute extension. Each round consisted of a flurry of punches and kicks. Sometimes a kick would land so hard that a puff of dust would fly off of their dogi.

I noticed a strange scoring rule: punches to the face were illegal, but landing a kick to the head was completely legal. Warnings were given by the judges if a punch landed onto the face or head, but if a kick landed to the head – game on. One competitor was outright floored by a wheelkick to the back of the head. At this point I was wide-eyed, so I excused myself to find where James Huang was.

I found James outside in the lobby watching the events on a TV screen. An EMT team was tending to a KO'ed competitor on the stage and fighters were walking around the lobby with bloody dogi (from bleeding fists apparently). James and I couldn't help but feel a little out



My dotanqiri face

of place with our clean dogi, hakama, and lack of battle scars.

We busied ourselves practicing our routine in the back alley before coming in to watch the Semi-Finals. These were even more brutal than the first ones, especially the heavyweight categories. Then we were finally called up to prep backstage. Competitors and crew were cramped into one area offstage so we literally rubbed elbows with bloodied up competitors before we were up.

The stage was cleared off and the announcer gave a brief introduction to Shinkendo. After about a minute the music started, cuing me onto stage. I began solo with Shoden no Kata, Goho Battoho Henka Yonhon-mei, Chuden-Sei, and Chuden-Do. Obata Kaiso commented that the bright lights pointed at me created a nice reflection on the sword, and that the calmer nature of Shinkendo kata was a fresh change from the hardcore sparring surrounding us.

James and Saito Sensei came up to perform some Ippondachi and Isonami, and then I was up again with James for Juppon 19. Afterwards, we put the target stands into place and Obata Kaiso demonstrated Tameshigiri, to which he received many "oohs" and "ahs". The stands were rearranged and Obata Kaiso pulled out his second shinken,

and many people whispered to each other in excitement. Kaiso unleashed a flurry of Nito-ken tameshigiri and drew great applause with each set. Afterwards, we all lined up and bowed and received a great round of applause.

Then the entire backstage crew helped us with clean-up... this was a welcome change to our usual after-demo clean-up.

The Kyokushin Karate Championships is my first Shinkendo demo on an indoor theater stage. It was a far more focused experience with a much better crowd. Obata Kaiso pointed out that the audience was there to see martial arts and thus were much more respectful to us than in outdoor venues where people off of the street were the audience. This was a great experience for all of us and hopefully we will have more chances to perform in such an environment in the future.



## Photo Bonanza!

Photos by Shatto Light, Lou D'Agostino, and Nicholas Lauridsen

Here we have all the photos not included with the rest of the articles due to formatting reasons. But there are so many good shots I just had to create a section *just* for them!

You may have noticed the name Shatto Light popping up quite a bit in this newsletter. Shatto is the mother of Honbu Dojo's youngest student, Chuck Light, and she has been very enthusiastic of his involvement, taking her camera to every event he has attended. She is very proficient with the camera and has given the Honbu some of the best photos this past year.

**Enjoy!**



The Family

Chaaaarge!!



The Extended Family



Japanese Village Plaza Demo



Obata Akira – Kaiso's Brother visits



Proudly wearing the flag into battle



Jeremy Young's Baby Jyane!



Sake? 7-Up? Mizu?  
KOMPAI!!!



Hachoo!!!

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