

## Flashback: *Jichinsai* Ceremony, 1982



The Lynch Dojo had an auspicious beginning, with a ground-breaking ceremony (*jichinsai*) performed by Hisao Inaba, Deputy Chief Priest of Nikko Toshogu, one of Japan's most famous Shinto shrines.

The priest, in ceremonial dress, is shown above on the site after the ceremony on 10 September, 1982, flanked by David and Ken Lynch.

Nikko Toshogu has had strong links with New Zealand since our government donated a white horse, named Marutai, to serve as the shrine's *shinba* or "sacred horse" and then offered a replacement horse, Koha, when Marutai died. The sacred horse is housed in the shrine's beautifully decorated stable, which is registered as a national treasure. Koha carries the chief priest at the head of the shrine's large-scale festival parades held twice a year.

Nikko Toshogu has sent a number of cultural groups to New Zealand including teams of *yabusame*, horseback archers.

Nikko Toshogu also features in the early history of aikido. A master of one of the jujutsu forms that make up the roots of aikido was once in residence there as a priest.

In the ground-breaking ceremony the priest recited prayers for the success of the dojo and "purified" the area by waving a purification wand (*haraigushi*) with many long paper streamers attached to it. Small scraps of sanctified white paper were scattered on the ground.

It was a colourful ceremony, enjoyed also by a group of Kiwi carpenters having their tea break before continuing with the dojo construction. This was completed in mid-1983, but the dojo was not officially opened until 1989 after the Lynch family returned from Japan.

