

**Christina Gutz**

## **Wado Pentecost Course 2013 in Berlin**

### **The Tanden: The body's center of ki and gravity**

More than 100 participants met for the traditional Pentecost Wado Course 2013 in Berlin. The instructors were Shuzo Imai, Takamasa Arakawa, Bernd Alscher and Christina Gutz.

#### **The training**

The Course lasted for three days and comprised the full diversity of Wado karate: kihon, kata and kata kaisetsu, idori, kihon kumite, ohyo kumite, self-defense, tanto dori, as well as tachi dori. The instructors' common principle was the significance of the tanden in connection with important principles of budo in general and Wado Ryu in particular, such as chushin tadasu (correct body alignment), tai otoshi (dropping the body), and tai sabaki (evasive action). Each session began and ended with joint exercises, whereas the participants practiced in the main units in separate groups according to their grades.

Shuzo Imai placed one focus in his sessions on kihon since it provides the basis for a deeper understanding of all techniques and for executing complex series of movements. He pointed out that the techniques can be executed fast and effectively if the movement is released from the tanden, caused by relaxation and uses the body's center of gravity. He demonstrated and conveyed this in tachi dori and tanto dori, as well as in other exercises with partners.

Takamasa Arakawa also underlined the importance of the tanden. A basic distinction is made between the upper, middle and lower tanden, the latter being the most important one in karate and budo in general since it is the "seat" of inner energy, ki, and the foundation for a stable and "earthed" stance and proper breathing and supports the control of one's mind and emotions. In his kumite and partner training, Takamasa Arakawa emphasized the importance of tactical thinking and acting, e.g., go no sen, sen no sen and sen sen no sen. Go no sen means that the opponent attacks and one's own defense prevents further action by the attacker. As far as sen no sen is concerned, the attack is anticipated and prevented with a faster counter-attack. Sen sen no sen, finally, means anticipating an attack by striking faster than the opponent who himself tries to anticipate one's own attack.<sup>1</sup> Takamasa Arakawa also provided detailed and specific advice to the participants in the kata Naihanchi and Niseishi, as well as idori by referring to important budo principles. As in previous years, his approach to teaching, as well as his comprehensive knowledge and skills were very convincing.

Bernd Alscher and Christina Gutz also emphasized in their sessions the importance of the tanden as the place where energy concentrates and where it is released, thereby enabling the execution of fast and effective techniques.<sup>2</sup> Upon practicing ippon and ohyo kumite, Christina Gutz explained that the awareness of maai (correct distance from the partner), metsuki (gaze) and zanshin (attention) are essential for working effectively with a partner in general and, in particular, for competition and self-defense.

All in all, this course illustrated the importance of the tanden in budo and in karate. Furthermore, the instructors tried to put across to the participants that acting from one's center supports well-balanced, friendly and respectful interaction. The careful interaction between the participants and their high level of concentration during the course were proof that this is possible.

#### **Dan gradings**

The following karateka successfully graded before the high-ranking Dan grading committee comprising Rob Zwartjes (9<sup>th</sup> Dan), Shuzo Imai (8<sup>th</sup> Dan), Carlos Molina (8<sup>th</sup> Dan) and Josef Schäfer (6<sup>th</sup> Dan):

6<sup>th</sup> Dan: Bernd Alscher, Domingos Ssousa and Christina Gutz,

1<sup>st</sup> Dan: Adrienn Wenczel, Erika Fodor, Helga Gläser, Nikolett Mikle, Nóra Izsó, Szabina Kálmán.

## **Wado Pentecost Course 2014**

The instructors of next year's course will be Toby Threadgill, Menkyo Kaiden Takamura-Ha Shindo Yoshin Ryu, and Shuzo Imai, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan Wado Ryu. Toby Threadgill and Takamasa Arakawa, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan JKF Wado-Kai, will alternate annually.

We invite all budoka to come to Berlin and practice with us!

*Pictures made by Tamás Stefán: Túzmadar SE, [www.tuzmadarse.hu](http://www.tuzmadarse.hu)*

---

<sup>1</sup> See Kenei Mabuni: Empty Hand. The Essence of Budo Karate. Edited by Carlos Molina. 1st Edition Chemnitz: Palisander 2009

<sup>2</sup> See Christina Gutz: "Ten Chi Jin is the key to developing Nairiki, the key to unlocking the true depth of Japanese budo." Takamura Yuki-yoshi – Takamura-ha Shindo Yoshin Ryu. Wado Course with Toby Threadgill (USA) and Bob Nash (USA) in Berlin from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2013