

**Christina Gutz**

**A highly informative seminar with Toby Threadgill (USA) and Koichi Shimura (Japan)  
on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2017, in Berlin: the link between Wado ryu and TSYR**

Two world-class senseis were the instructors at our Wado and TSYR seminar on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2017 in Berlin: **Toby Threadgill**, Menkyo Kaiden and Kaicho Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin ryu, is the first non-Japanese person to head a Koryu school. **Koichi Shimura**, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan JKF Wado-Kai and JKF Wado-Kai 1<sup>st</sup> instructor, is the Secretary General of the Tokyo JKF Headquarters. 160 participants from 18 nations (Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, UK, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, Hungary, the US) among them high Dan grades, reflected the international importance of the seminar.

Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura placed the focus on the common points of Shindo Yoshin ryu and Wado ryu both in the past and in the present and also looked ahead.

**The past**

Being a Koryu school, Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin ryu (TSYR) is one of the traditional Japanese martial arts which was established before the beginning of the Meiji restoration in 1868. Karate is part of Gendai Budo that is of the martial arts developed in Japan after 1868. Consequently, Wado ryu, founded by Hironori Otsuka (1892 – 1982) in 1934, is also a Gendai Budo martial art. Unlike Okinawa karate, which is based on self-defence, Wado ryu is based on Sente, i.e., attack and initiative. Hironori Otsuka was trained in classical Budo and transferred his knowledge from Shindo Yoshin ryu to Wado ryu.<sup>1</sup> Toby Threadgill described this as follows: "Otsuka took the core out and put the Shindo Yoshin ryu core in it. ... He made it more Japanese." In this manner, he transferred Koryu lore to Wado ryu. Koichi Shimura, in his capacity of Secretary General, represents JKF Wado-Kai at the highest level and, thus, has a direct relationship to Otsuka's legacy.<sup>2</sup>

**The present**

Koichi Shimura's and Toby Threadgill's high level was reflected in the training contents and in their approach to teaching. In Koichi Shimura's session, the participants trained Kihon, Kihon kumite 1 – 10 and selected kata from the JKF Wado-Kai syllabus. Koichi Shimura convincingly conveyed the technical standard of JKF Wado-Kai. The participants noted most importantly that for Koichi Shimura and

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<sup>1</sup> Hironori Otsuka began to train in Shindo Yoshin ryu in Tatsusaburo Nakayama's (1870 – 1933) dojo in 1905. In 1921, he received Menkyo Kaiden in Shindo Yoshin ryu from Nakayama. He met Gichin Funakoshi in 1922 and, later Kenwa Mabuni and trained with them.

<sup>2</sup> Hironori Otsuka founded the precursor organization of the Wado Kai Association, the "Dai Nippon Karate Shinko Club", in 1934. This is considered to be the original foundation of the Wado ryu. Hironori Otsuka established the "Zen Nippon Karatedo Renmei" in the 1950s. The name "Zen Nippon Karatedo Renmei" was changed to "Wado-Kai" on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1967. With the foundation of the Federation of All Japan Karatedo Organization (FAJKO, later renamed JKF) in the mid-1960s, the designation Wado-Kai became official usage.

Cf.: <http://www.canadajkwadokai.org/organisation/jkf-wadokai/> and <https://www.jkfwadokaisohonbu.de/>

Toby Threadgill alike the Budo principles are the key to understanding and success.<sup>3</sup> Koichi Shimura began his training session with Kihon and said that Kihon was most important and that continuous, precise practice was the pre-requisite for good karate. Fundamental principles such as relaxation, the correct body structure/Chushin Tadasu, Hikite, smooth and flowing movements make effective techniques with Kime possible. With respect to Kihon kumite, he underlined correct Maai and Sente: „You should/could attack any time.“ Toby Threadgill also emphasized the importance of basic technique, saying that the precise execution of techniques and diligent and self-critical practice was indispensable for making progress. For instance, the participants could see parallels between the TSYR partner kata Yoko Nuki for escaping from a wrist grab and Pinan Sandan, and compare the TSYR partner kata Kinukuguri with Kihon kumite 10. Toby Threadgill demonstrated impressively that the uniqueness of Wado ryu is due to its historical roots in Shindo Yoshin ryu and that the techniques originate from sword fighting: He illustrated this with TSYR partner kata: first with Bokken, then with Tanto and, finally, as Jujutsu, i.e., without weapons. In these demonstrations and the following training the participants recognised the parallels between the techniques and realised that the principles are the core of the partner kata.

The participants very much appreciated Koichi Shimura's and Toby Threadgill's approach to teaching, both of whom succeeded in producing a relaxed and concentrated learning environment: well-structured training sessions which were flexibly adjusted to each group of participants, individual assistance and corrections.

### **The future**

The purpose of the Seminar has been for ten years now to make the historical link between Shindo Yoshin ryu and Wado ryu visible and touchable in the present. This year's seminar was enlightening and pointed towards a promising future: Toby Threadgill as Menkyo Kaiden and Kaicho of TSYR and Koichi Shimura as one of the highest-ranking JKF Wado-Kai representatives guaranteed not only an excellent training quality, but also cooperation at an official level. This exchange between Wado and TSYR makes common features visible and provides an opportunity to preserve and improve knowledge and skills. It is very important and wonderful to experience each year the friendly and open interaction of the participants. For this reason we may rest assured that Wado and TSYR will be strengthened for the future.

We are looking forward to meeting again at the Wado and TSYR seminar with Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura in Berlin on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

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<sup>3</sup> „You have to practice! The key are the principles. Kata is the vessel. It holds principles. You have to understand the theory and how to apply theory.“ Toby Threadgill, Wado and TSYR Seminar, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2017 in Berlin