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Let´s celebrate what unites us

Wado and TSYR Friendship Seminar with Toby Threadgill (USA), Shuzo Imai (Germany) and Tran Hieu Minh (France) on 12th and 13th May, 2018

For the first time ever, Wado ryu, JKF Wado-Kai and Shindo Yoshin Ryu were trained at the same place by leading instructors: **Toby Threadgill**, Kaicho and Menkyo Kaiden Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin Kai, **Shuzo Imai**, 8th Dan Wado-Ryu DKV and 7th Dan JKF Wado-Kai and **Tran Hieu Minh**, 7th Dan Renshi Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Academy. More than 100 participants from 9 countries (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, UK) attended this Friendship Seminar.

A friendship has uniting elements and, in accordance with this tenet, Toby Threadgill, Shuzo Imai and Tran Hieu Minh chose Ten-I, Ten-Tai and Ten-Gi as the guiding elements of their sessions. These three fundamental principles of Wado Ryu have their origin in Shindo Yoshin Ryu (SYR).¹

Friendship is defined by reciprocity and mutual appreciation and liking. Consequently, the training on Saturday took place in three groups according to experience and grades which Toby Threadgill, Tran Hieu Minh and Shuzo Imai took turns to instruct, adjusting their training contents to the composition of each group. On Sunday, all participants trained together in one group under the guidance of Shuzo Imai, Toby Threadgill and Tran Hieu Minh, respectively. The participants worked with changing partners during the seminar in order to exchange their skills and knowledge. This exchange was characterised by a high level of motivation, openness, concentration, friendliness and the willingness to learn with and from one another.

Ten-I, Ten-Tai and Ten-Gi

The interaction of Ten-I, Ten-Tai and Ten-Gi is called I-Tai-Gi in Shindo Yoshin Ryu and translates as movement, body position, technique. It is related to Kuzushi (unbalancing), Tsukuri (superior position), Kake (execution). I-Tai-Gi comes from Kenjutsu, Kuzushi, Tsukuri, Kake from Taijutsu.² Toby Threadgill started with basic Taisabaki drills, followed by more complex partner kata, such as some selected Tachiai Tedori Kuzushi and Tantodori. He demonstrated impressively before each section that these and the Wado partner exercises originate in the fights of Japanese samurai with weapons, such as swords.

¹ Unlike Koryu, the traditional Japanese martial arts which were established before the beginning of the Meiji restauration in 1868, Karate is part of Gendai Budo, i.e., 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. Otsuka studied Shindo Yoshin Ryu in Tatsusuburo Nakayama's (1870 – 1933) dojo from 1905 to 1921 and received Menkyo Kaiden from him in 1921. Thus, there is direct link between Shindo Yoshin Ryu and Wado Ryu through Otsuka. Shindo Yoshin Ryu is a koryu school which was founded by Matsuoka Katsunosuke in 1864. An authorised branch, the Ohbata/Takamura branch, is nowadays headed as Takamura Ha Shindo Yoshin Kai by Toby Threadgill in his capacity as Kaicho and Menkyo Kaiden. Otsuka met Gichin Funakoshi only in 1922, later also Kenwa Mabuni and Motubo Choki on the Japanese mainland and studied Okinawa karate with them.

See: Toby Threadgill and Shingo Ohgami: Takamura-ha Shindo Yoshin-ryu Jujutsu: History and Technique. <https://www.koryu.com/library/tthreadgill1.html> (Issue: 22.03.2018) and www.shinyokai.com
² Toby Threadgill, see: Christina Gutz: The SYR basis of the core principles of Wado Ryu: Ten-I, Ten-Tai, Ten-Gi. Wado and TSYR Seminar with Toby Threadgill (USA) and Koichi Shimura (Japan) on 17th and 18th February, 2018 in Berlin. <https://www.wado-karate.de/nachrichten-berichte/> and <http://www.berliner-karate-verband.de/>

The term used in Wado Ryu is San-Mi-Ittai: Ten-I = changing the position or slightly evading the attack, Ten-Tai = turning and reorienting the body to assume a favourable position in relation to the attacker and to present a small area for an attack, Ten-Gi = executing the technique. Tran Hieu Minh started his session with basic San-Mi-Ittai drills which he gradually developed into more complex partner exercises. He placed the focus on suppleness and smooth movements which flow seamlessly into one another and – in a figurative sense – eventually turn several techniques into a single one. Shuzo Imai started with Kihon and developed on this basis numerous partner exercises so that the participants could practice San-Mi-Ittai in a more physical and effective manner. He placed his focus upon acting from relaxation which is the pre-condition for fast and powerful techniques.

All three sensei explained in the context with Ten-I, Ten-Tai and Ten-Gi Taisabaki³, which also has its origin in SYR: Nagasu, Inasu and Noru are fundamental principles of partner kata, both in TSYR and in Wado.

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This seminar was a genuine friendship seminar. We learnt what unites us, what we have in common in our Budo history and the present. This exchange and this reciprocity strengthen all of us, we get to know each other (better) and new friendships are forged. TSYR, Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Academy, Wado Ryu and JKF Wado-Kai may look optimistically into the future.

Meeting again in Berlin in 2020

We are looking forward to meeting again at the Wado and TSYR Friendship Seminar with Toby Threadgill, Shuzo Imai and Tran Hieu Minh in Berlin on 30th and 31st May, 2020.

³ Taisabaki means body management and usually refers to an evasive movement. Taisabaki in Wado Ryu directly originates from Shindo Yoshin Ryu. There are three different principles that apply to Taisabaki: Nagasu (letting flow), deflecting the attack or moving with it and the simultaneous sidestepping from the line of attack, often combined with a counter attack. Inasu (evading): Evading or deflecting the attack, often combined with Tai-Otoshi, i.e., dropping the body to move under, into or around the opponent's attack. Noru (accompanying): Moving with Musubi (contact) with the opponent to control his techniques or movements. The evasive action is usually combined with Atemi (a precise strike) to a vital point and often ends with Nage (throw). What is also important is the flow of the movements and alternating correctly between relaxation and tension or Kime.