

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

Two world-class senseis were the instructors at our Wado and TSYR seminar on 17th and 18th February, 2018 in Berlin: **Toby Threadgill**, Kaicho and Menkyo Kaiden Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin ryu, is the first non-Japanese person to head a Koryu school. **Koichi Shimura**, 7th Dan JKF Wado-Kai and JKF Wado-Kai 1st instructor, is the Secretary General of the Tokyo JKF Headquarters. 150 participants from 16 nations (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US) among them high Dan grades, reflected the international importance of the seminar.

Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura explained the link between Shindo Yoshin ryu and Wado ryu¹ by means of three core principles of Wado ryu which have their origin in Shindo Yoshin ryu (SYR):

Ten-I, Ten-Tai and Ten-Gi. The interaction of these three principles is called I-Tai-Gi in TSYR and San-Mi-Ittai in Wado ryu.

I-Tai-Gi and San-Mi-Ittai

Toby Threadgill explained and demonstrated I-Tai-Gi using simple drills. Thus, he had the participants attack their partners with a straight punch. The defender's task was to move away from the attack and change his position in such a way that he was safe, but not the attacker, which is Ten-I. In so doing, he turned his body in such a way that he assumed a favourable position in relation to the attacker, offered as small an area as possible for an attack while, at the same time, making the movement sharp. This is the Ten-Tai principle. Ten-I and Ten-Tai were now used to break the opponent's balance and to control him. This is Ten-Gi. From these basic drills, Toby Threadgill moved on to selected partner kata of TSYR, such as Te Hodoki (getting out of a wrist hold), Tachiai Tedori Kuzushi (partner kata from which Hironori Otsuka derived Kumite gata) and the TSYR Kata Kinukuguri (from which Otsuka derived Kihon kumite 10). Toby Threadgill also conveyed to the participants that I-Tai-Gi always goes hand in hand with other principles such as relaxation and Chushin Tadasu (proper body structure), Maai and Sente.

¹ "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. 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."

Christina Gutz: A highly informative seminar with Toby Threadgill (USA) and Koichi Shimura (Japan) on 18th and 19th February, 2017, in Berlin: the link between Wado ryu and TSYR. <https://www.jkfwadokaisohonbu.de/>

Koichi Shimura started his session with Kihon since Kihon is most important in Wado ryu and its precise practice is the pre-condition for good karate. As to Toby Threadgill it was also important to Koichi Shimura that the participants maintained a correct body structure, worked from a relaxed state, observed proper Maai and were aware of the fact that they also act with Sente from a defence position. Koichi Shimura then applied the precision of the initial Kihon to Kata and Kihon kumite 1 – 10. Using the example of Kihon kumite 1 he specifically explained the principles of San-Mi-Ittai: The defender reacts to the attacker's first Tsuki yodan with a small lateral evasive movement of the entire body, i.e., Ten-I, and the simultaneous rotation of the body centre, i.e., Ten-Tai, and Ude Nagashi Uke with the right arm, i.e. Ten-Gi. The attacker's Gyaku Tsuki is also countered with a lateral evasive movement of the entire body, i.e., Ten-I, and a simultaneous rotation of the body centre, i.e., Ten-Tai, and a simultaneous defensive movement of the right arm and left Ura-tsuki, i.e., Ten-Gi. Koichi Shimura also illustrated the principles of Ten-I, Ten-Tai and Ten-Gi in Kihon kumite 2 – 10. The participants could, in particular, directly compare Kihon kumite 10 of Wado ryu and Kinukuguri of TSYR and experience the common principles of Wado ryu and TSYR.

Thanks to the close coordination of Koichi Shimura's and Toby Threadgill's sessions the participants were enabled to appreciate that Hironori Otsuka incorporated the principles of I-Tai-Gi from SYR as San-Mi-Ittai in Wado ryu:

SYR: "I-Tai-Gi translates to movement, body position, technique. It is related to Kuzushi, Tsukuri, Kake (off balance, superior position, execution). I-Tai-Gi is from Kenjutsu. Kuzushi, Tsukuri, Kake are from Taijutsu."

Toby Threadgill

Wado ryu: Ten-I = changing the position and turning out of the attack, Ten-Tai = rotating and re-orienting the body to assume a favourable position in relation to the attacker and to present as small as possible an area for the attack, Ten-Gi = executing the technique.

The participants also greatly appreciated the methodological approach to teaching of both Koichi Shimura and Toby Threadgill. What is more, both of them created a relaxed and concentrated learning climate with individual assistance and corrections, as well as a well-structured session which was also adjusted to each group of participants.

Wado und TSYR – Common points and friendships

Ten-I, Ten-Gi, Ten-Tai are principles which have their roots in TSYR and which were incorporated in Wado ryu by Hironori Otsuka. I-Tai-Gi and San-Mi-Ittai are prominent examples illustrating the common points and, in addition, the historic ties between TSYR and Wado ryu. Toby Threadgill as Kaicho and Menkyo Kaiden of TSYR and Koichi Shimura as one of the highest-ranking representatives of JKF Wado-Kai stand for excellent instruction and cooperation at a high official level. This exchange and the frank interaction in the spirit of friendship of all participants reflect the common points of Wado and TSYR: Existing friendships were strengthened and new ones were forged.

We'll meet again in Berlin in 2019

We are looking forward to meeting again at the Wado and TSYR Seminar with Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura in Berlin on 16th and 17th February, 2019.