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The historic link between Shindo Yoshin ryu and Wado ryu

Wado and TSYR Seminar with Koichi Shimura (Japan) and Toby Threadgill (USA) on 16th and 17th February, 2019 in Berlin

As in the past few years, two world-class senseis were the instructors at our Wado and TSYR Seminar on 16th and 17th February, 2019 in Berlin: **Toby Threadgill**, Kaicho and Menkyo Kaiden of Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin ryu, is the first non-Japanese martial artist to head a Koryu school. **Koichi Shimura**, 7th Dan JKF Wado-Kai and JKF Wado-Kai 1st Instructor, is the Secretary General of the JKF Wado-Kai headquarters in Tokyo. The participation of high-ranking representatives of JKF Wado-Kai from all over Europe and the 185 Wado karateka and TSYR practitioners from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK underline the international significance of the Seminar.

The historic link between Shindo Yoshin Ryu and Wado Ryu

Being a Koryu school, Takamura ha Shindo Yoshin ryu (TSYR) is one of the traditional Japanese martial arts which were 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.¹ 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.² 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 Sensei's legacy.

Ancient Japanese sword fighting still present in Shindo Yoshin ryu and Wado ryu

The martial arts of the samurai and, above all, sword fighting, were enhanced, refined and trained in the Japanese Edo Period (period of peace from 1603 to 1868). Toby Threadgill explained that Shindo Yoshin ryu (SYR) has preserved these martial arts and, thus, also their inherent principles. Otsuka transferred such principles as Sente (attack and initiative), Irimi and Tai Sabaki, which come from sword fighting, from SYR to Wado ryu.

¹ 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 5th June, 1967. With the foundation of the Federation of All Japan Karedo Organization (FAJKO, later renamed JKF) in the mid-1960s, the designation Wado Kai became official usage

See.: <http://www.canadajkwadokai.org/organisation/jkf-wadokai/> und <https://www.jkwadokaisohonbu.de/>

² Hironori Otsuka trained Shindo Yoshin ryu in Tatsusaburo Nakayama's (1870 – 1945) dojo in two periods between 1907 and 1921. (Source: Tobin E Threadgill) He met Gichin Funakoshi only in 1922, later Kenwa Mabuni and Motubu Choki and trained with these.

Sente and Maai are closely interrelated^{3,4}: This means that Maai is related to the behavior of the opponents as a function of time and space, whereas Sente describes the interactions between opponents in a fight.

In well-coordinated drills, Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura conveyed the concept of Maai: It denotes not only distance in terms of space and time, but all the opponents' intentions and movements in a fight. The participants practiced crossing various distances and improved their feeling of the right distance from which it is possible to "aggressively move into the opponent" (Irimi), exert pressure on the opponent, to distract him, to directly control him and to eventually win against him.⁵ Both Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura underlined the importance of correct Tai Sabaki in this context.

Toby Threadgill's and Koichi Shimura's sessions helped the participants understand that, as far as Sente is concerned, above all Sen no Sen (simultaneous timing) and Sen Sen no Sen (preventive timing) are used both in SYR and in Wado ryu. Both sensei explained in their respective groups⁶ the mental and the physical aspects of Sente, using, i. e., the example of feigning: The opponent is deceived into attacking by being offered an ostensibly easy target (physical Sente), and the reaction to this deception is then used for a counter attack. Toby Threadgill demonstrated the effectiveness of this feint in sword fighting which he then translated into Jujutsu drills for the participants, Koichi Shimura taught this type of feigning using Kihon kumite no. 10: While the defender moves backwards to evade the attacker's first Jodan Tsuki (physically defensive) he invites the attacker to deliver the second Jodan Tsuki and uses this punch to his own benefit with a counter attack (physically aggressive). This illustrated to the participants that mental and physical Sente not only belongs together but that, above all, the correct mindset is key to success, i. e., victory.

As in the past few years, the participants greatly appreciated Koichi Shimura's and Toby Threadgill's methodical approach to teaching which was adapted to each group's level. The friendly, concentrated atmosphere prevailing during the entire Course and the relaxed evenings when we had dinner together with more technical discussions were very agreeable.

Wado and TSYR – side by side in a spirit of friendship

Toby Threadgill, in his capacity as Kaicho and Menkyo Kaiden of TSYR, and Koichi Shimura, as one of the highest-ranking representatives of JKF Wado Kai, guaranteed an excellent seminar in terms of its content and cooperation at a high official level. This exchange and the open-minded interaction of all participants strengthens the link between Wado and TSYR: Existing friendships were renewed and new ones were established.

We'll meet again at the 2020 Berlin Seminar

We are looking forward to meeting again at the Wado and TSYR Seminar with Toby Threadgill and Koichi Shimura in Berlin on 15th and 16th February, 2020.

³ "Ma-ai Space-time, physical as well as psychological, that separates the two individuals." Ellis Amdur: Old School. Essays on Japanese Martial Traditions, Wheaton 2013, S. 375

⁴ „Ma 間 - Interval in terms of both space and time. In *budō* the spatial distance which, together with timing (*ai*) permits the adjusted movement (*sabaki*). The *kanji* for *ma* denotes "the sun shining through two gates". In *budō*, *ma* is distance, comprising *tōma* (long distance), *chūkanma* or *chūkan* (normal or middle distance) and *chikama* (short distance). ..."

<http://www.budopedia.de/wiki/Maai>

⁵ "Put pressure to force him to do anything, then you take the initiative. Bring him in a position where he can't counter ... You have to be able to take the initiative and own it", Toby Threadgill, Wado and TSYR Berlin Course on 6th and 7th February, 2016

⁶ Training was organised in two groups alternating between Toby Threadgill for TSYR and Koichi Shimura for Wado Ryu.