

GUADARRAMA GASSHUKU AUGUST 2020



In spite of the difficult situation, especially in Spain due to the Covid-19 a small group of valiant Iberians decided not to let the opportunity of some good training pass and went on with an almost improvised gasshuku.

We were only 7 people and myself and the event took place from the 2nd till the 8th of August in one of our favorite spots; the beautiful Fray Luis de Leon Centre located just 10 minutes walk outside of Guadarrama village, near Madrid.

Feru Ni ("Feru the second") came from the city of Valencia, picked me up on Sunday morning at my apartment in Madrid and together went to Guadarrama where we met up with Feru Ichi ("Fernando the first") and Pedro. It was a joyful moment for we hadn't seen each other in a long time and since it was before lunch we went and had a small appetizer in our favorite bar in town. I explain the plan for the following days, enjoy a beer with some Ibérico ham and told jokes. And it was from a joke cracked by Feru Ni that the "unofficial" theme for this gasshuku was born:

"On one had is ok but on the other..."

The joke itself cannot be reproduced here not to harm sensibilities but the general meaning underneath refers to the fact that everything has good and bad aspects, ying and yang ("inyo" in Japanese).

The gasshuku itself started officially at 5pm on Sunday 2nd with the presence of both Ferus, Jose Luis, Pedro and Jean Pierre.

This time, since the first couple of days I was going to have just the most advance students I opted for a not so very usual format; We put everything upside down and went through our system in the reversed order from the learning perspective; parallel weapons first and then we went from top to bottom through the jo kata series, leaving the last session for kenjutsu and tanjo. I thought it would be interesting seeing all the series from most advanced to less, following the probable order of creation of the ryu in an attempt to get some insights (woth to

mention that the Ran ai and Gohon no midare series are not listed in the original densho and therefore were posterior additions –Gohon or Ran ai no midare being added quite recently by Shimizu sensei-).

Sunday and Monday then were dedicated to the parallel weapons (Jutte and Kusarigama) and we did them in the order in which I usually teach them; Jutte omote, Kusarigama omote, Kusarigama ura, Jutte ura and Kusarigama okuden (although this time we didn't do this last one series) They all review what they knew and learnt new katas.



The practice started always with Suburis and different sorts of uchikomi followed by some exercises designed to get familiar with important aspects of certain techniques in kata. Often a small demo of the full series was done and then kata were shown one by one and practiced extensively

Our training sessions in Spain traditionally start later than in the rest of Europe but this time was even later to meet the Centre's requirements. Morning sessions begun at 10am and finished at 13.30 while afternoon sessions were held from 17.30 till 20.30. Breakfast was served at 9am, lunch at 14.00 and dinner at 21.00. There was no cultural nor resting day.



On one hand the kama is shorter than the tachi, but on the other hand...

Every day after lunch those interested had shodo sessions led by Feru Ni while avoiding the hottest hours of the day.

Also, every night after dinner we had the opportunity of watching many private videos with Nishioka sensei from the years when I was living in Japan.

Tuesday was dedicated entirely to the Shiaikuchi or Okuden series of jo and as a novelty the ones who had already completed all the kata took a chance to practiced them in the original order as written in the densho (the order we learn them was probably decided by Shimizu sensei)

On Wednesday Raúl, the group leader from Seville and Josemi joined us and that night we cancelled dinner at the Centre and went again into town to celebrate. Now finally everyone attending was here.



From Wednesday we went through Gohon no midare, Samidare, Kage, Ran ai, Chudan and Omote. Friday afternoon we finished with kihon sotai dosa and Saturday morning was dedicated to kenjutsu, tanjo and free keiko before ending the gasshuku.



During our stay, we had a group of wonderful octogenarian women sitting near us in the dining room. It turned out that they had seen us before in previous years and enjoyed watching us from the distance while we trained. They wanted to see more of what we do so we invited them to watch and even had them as audience for an improvised enbu. Thus our first fan club was born.



But not everything was good. Unfortunately Jean Pierre had to miss the last couple of sessions due to some transitory health problems and the worst part was that he couldn't take his sandan test as programmed. I'm happy to announce that he is totally fine now and we hope he will have other chances to get his grade.

Friday evening we decided to finish a bit earlier and again went into town thinking that we deserved to satisfy our crave for Ibérico stuff and a round of beers before dinner.

Saturday morning unexpectedly one beginner from the group in Madrid showed up and took part in the keiko.

After finishing the practice we quickly packed up and went into town where some of our families joined and together had a gorgeous lunch in one of our favorite restaurants in Guadarrama. As we stuffed ourselves the gasshuku officially closed.

All in all the weather was fantastic and besides we could always train in the shade. Food was also superb and as usual we were very well treated by the staff at the Centre. We really feel at home there.

From here I wanted to thank to those who manage to come, it has been a really great one. Let's hope we can repeat sooner than later.

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