

2018 Guadarrama Summer Gasshuku

The seminar took place from 5th to 10th of August 2018. It was held at the Fray Luis de León Complex, that many will remember from the 2008 FEJ summer camp. It was organized by the TaiIitsuKan from Madrid seeing Kees Bruggink Sensei and Vicente Borondo Sensei as teachers.



The timetable was set taking into account Spanish summer temperature with 3 hours of training in the morning and the later afternoon. Early morning sessions were originally planned for Tuesday and Thursday, but due to request of enthusiast students they were finally held almost every day.

Most days therefore started out with one hour of exercises with Kees Sensei based on Kihon and other basic movements. After breakfast, we restarted at 9am with Suburi and Uchi Komi, as it was done by Nishioka Sensei in his regular training sessions. In order to be able to go into details on Kihon, two of them were practiced every day in Sotai.

The second half of the morning session was dedicated to Katageiko. Throughout the week, each series up to Gohon-no-Midare was demonstrated by the teachers.

After that, they were shown again two-by-two with comments and then practiced in detail with further corrections as needed. Ample time was given to questions, before going to the next two. "We want you to leave without the slightest doubt in your mind," as Vicente Sensei put it.



The later series, including Okuden, were practiced as a whole with individual corrections given by the teachers as necessary.

After morning practice, some of us enjoyed a cool-down in the pool. It was quite hot, but the park provided enough trees for us not to be exposed to the sun too much.

With extras like laundry service, free bar the whole day and the pool available to us after both training sessions, we felt quite comfortable at the site. Another plus was that despite high temperature during the day, nights were cool and refreshing.



After lunch and siesta, Keiko recommenced at 4pm, starting out with Kenjutsu practice: basic cuts and some exercises connected to Shinto Ryu. We managed to go through the 8 Odachi Kata during the seminar.

Again, the second half of the session was used to continue with Jodo Kata.

Vicente Sensei encouraged us to change partners often and with a little over 20 participants we were able to train with all of them. The participants came from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Spain. Throughout all Keiko sessions there was a studious atmosphere, with people eagerly concentrating on the proposed points and corrections. Discussions were held to a minimum, referring to the readily available teachers. Still, some students have to remind themselves that the best way to help their training partner is to concentrate on bettering one's own technique.



I personally feel, I've made a step further in understanding the basic strikes and being able to bring this into Katageiko. Often, we have the problem that things we learn in isolated exercise cannot be reproduced during Kata. Old habits tend to interfere. Kees Sensei reminded us of Nishioka Sensei referring to the last strike in a Kata as Uchi Komi. This

interrupts the habitual way of doing things and helps connect back to what we experienced during the exercise.

Another point I enjoyed very much was the emphasis on the different characteristics of each series. For example, Vicente Sensei explained about the usage of breath in higher series and Kees Sensei demonstrated "double Kiai" in Kage.

Together with an evolution in Ma-ai, Kankyu, precision and observation this presented new challenges and allowed us to make further steps in understanding.

Evenings were filled with watching footage of when Nishioka Sensei was in his 50ies, ad-hoc Mondo or just enjoying a good laugh and beer together.

Kees Sensei gave us information about "Dai-dô Shô-I" = Different in small things (Shô-i) but identical in the big ones (Dai-Dô):

"This reminded me of what Pascal Sensei once used as a concept. Why this concept? I think it is an important one, especially given the future of our SMR Jodo tradition. What does this concept tell us?

When there is a large number of teachers within a tradition you will always encounter (technical) differences in the different groups that follow the tradition - in our case the FEJ. But in the end, we all go in the same direction. There are different ways and directions in your life and everyone who reaches the highest level (the top of the mountain) sees the same moon.

So SMR Jodo does not change in the core, but the conditions and people will change in the world. This is a fact that we must accept if we want to keep SMR Jodo alive, and the FEJ. There are many directions in SMR Jodo, but in the end, we discover that we are not different at the core, but only the way to it.

Sometimes it will be confusing when you get lessons from different teachers, but try to be open for advice. The biggest pitfall is that you will not follow the advice of your own or (a) teacher. Or that you decide to follow your own path because you find it better. By doing this, you will let go of the true essence that underlies this.

This is also a reason why many practitioners do not make progress. It is important that we are always looking for improvement during the study of Jodo."

For the cultural day, the Spanish group proposed several visiting options, but finally only a visit to El Escorial was made by some of the participants. Others chose to stay for an additional morning practice with Kees Sensei.

The two groups met up in the centre of Guadarrama for Tapas and a late lunch. The afternoon was free, but some decided to meet for more training on their own.

A few exams were held on Thursday evening after the regular session. All examinees were successful: Alvaro for Gokyu, Lluís for Yonkyu, Monica and Raül for Sankyu and Javi and Lars for Shodan. Congratulations!

Saturday morning an additional two hours of training was offered before a late breakfast.

All too soon we had to pack and leave the site. After car-pooling to Madrid, we enjoyed a final lunch and beer at a small restaurant near the airport.

I want to thank the Spanish group for a smooth and flexible organization of the seminar, the teachers for their effort and energy and all participants for the enjoyable training experience.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the Kagamibiraki and hopefully for another encounter in a similar setting next year.

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