

30th Anniversary of Affiliation with Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Academy
40th Norwegian Summer Camp
2019
Halden, Norway

Participation in the Wado Academy Norwegian Summer Camp

Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Renmei

(International Federation of Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Organizations)

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Preface

I would firstly like to extend my heart-felt gratitude to the Third Generation Grandmaster Hironori Otsuka, Oistein Riber Sensei, and Wado Academy for providing me with this precious opportunity to attend the 40th Wado Academy Norwegian Summer Camp. The Norwegian Summer Camp was held from Thursday, June 27, 2019 to Saturday, June 29, 2019. Third Generation Grandmaster Hironori Otsuka taught at the course alongside Arthur Meek Sensei 7th Dan Renshi of Wado Academy. I was also asked to instruct at the course. We divided all sessions into groups which were taught by each one of us in rotation. This course was my first experience teaching outside Japan so I must admit that I was quite nervous initially. I would like to take this opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts during this summer camp.

Some insight into the Norwegian branch of Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Academy

Head Instructor: Oistein Riber Sensei

Branch: Around 16 Dojos with over 1,000 members

This marks Oistein Sensei's 40th Summer Camp in Norway. Perfect attendance!

Day 1

Third Generation Grandmaster was set to teach from the first day of the camp. Alas, mechanical trouble delayed his KLM flight by one whole day, leaving only Arthur Sensei and myself to instruct on this occasion. There were around 70 participants (both kids and adults) on the first day, ranging from white belts all the way up to high Dan grades. Arthur Sensei and I split participants into two groups, and both took one group each. I did inquire to Oistein Sensei and Arthur Sensei about what they wanted me to teach, however, they conveniently left that completely up to me...not an easy task, I tell you! Since that was the case then, I made my decision to go over Kihon (basics) we usually instruct at Honbu Dojo and Tsukiji Dojo in Tokyo, with a focus on correct Kihon movement and connection of the whole body.



Practice of Wado Academy syllabus as witnessed in Kyu and Dan gradings

Day 1 of the Summer Camp ended on a high note. We returned to the hotel and met up with Grandmaster who managed to fly in from France without any further incident. On Day 2 of the camp we divided everyone into 3 groups, with Grandmaster taking one group and Arthur Sensei and myself also one group each as per the previous day. We then rotated between groups so that everyone at the camp got to train with each one of us.

I made sure to confirm what Grandmaster and Arthur Sensei were teaching so that when I changed to their group, I would ensure that I covered different content to what they had already instructed.

This format of teaching at seminars really tested an instructor's ability to generate content ad-hoc. Both Second and Third Generation Grandmasters have frequently spoken about the high level of instruction and training syllabus required in seminars taught outside of Japan. However, this was the very first time for me to witness this international standard with my very own eyes. For the first time in my life I felt how difficult it must have always been for our Grandmasters to instruct in yearly large-scale global seminars outside Japan.



Kyu and Dan gradings

Kyu grading was held at the end of the second day and Dan grading at the end of the third and final day of the summer camp. It was a privilege to be one of the Dan grading judges on the panel this time. Dan grading really tested the stamina of each examinee to the fullest. The grading was composed of all basics starting with Jun-Tsuki, Gyaku-Tsuki, Jun and Gyaku-Tsuki with Keri, with a plethora of additions including Tobikomi-Tsuki/Tobikomi Nagashi-Tsuki and many original Ohyo-Waza (application techniques) with some containing up to 57 moves! But wait, there is more! Kata, Kihon-Kumite, Kumite-Gata, and Jiyu-Kumite. Of course, there was some undulation in the quality of performance of each technique, however, the syllabus was so much richer in content and far stricter than what we have in Japan. Not to mention the fact that the grading itself took at least triple the amount of time to complete when compared with our domestic grading syllabus.



When comparing the grading syllabus and the standard of the grading itself, I think there is definitely a way we can benefit from further cultural exchange between Europe and Japan so that we can both learn from, and influence one another in order to raise the overall global standard of Wado-Ryu technique by reaching a sturdy middle ground.

Globalization in Wado-Ryu

I am uncertain whether I should use the expression “globalization” in this case, however, it is clear that Wado-Ryu technique is truly a global entity. The experience of teaching overseas, carefully observing Grandmaster’s instruction in this seminar, and interacting with Arthur Sensei, Oistein Sensei, and other Norwegian Senseis has reassured me that Wado-Ryu technique has been carefully passed down to each generation of leadership. What I have seen is that basic technique is left intact and true to its origin, disregarding the physical location where it is practiced. Each Sensei in that particular region has managed to carry over the authenticity of Wado-Ryu technique and enrich its execution with their own unique method of body movement, via their own ingenuity and life-long pursuit of Budo. Third Generation Grandmaster has further endowed this with his concrete definition of core and muscle utilization, giving all devout practitioners something tangible they are able to pursue, no matter what their nationality or physical location may be. Perhaps, then, “globalization” is applicable in this instance after all!

Leaving Japanese soil

It has been a while since any Japanese-stationed instructor has had the chance to witness the world of Wado-Ryu outside Japan and to also be able to instruct at any global seminar. This was truly a blessing for me and an eye-opening experience, as I expressed this to Grandmaster several times. One thing that really resounded with me was that instructors and students outside of Japan truly ‘crave’ direct tutelage from our Grandmaster. When I compare this thirst for learning Wado-Ryu with the current situation in Japan, I feel that Japanese students have lost their appetite for pursuing authentic Wado-Ryu technique. This may be due to the fact that they are no longer ‘hungry’,

colloquially speaking, as they have been feasting on direct tutelage from the Grandmaster domestically for years now at Honbu Dojo monthly trainings and countless seminars throughout Japan. This may be the biggest difference in enthusiasm towards training when looking at both ends of the spectrum with these cultures. As much as this experience was a blessing, it has also left me with some crucial food-for-thought when it comes to reinforcing our Renmei efforts here in Japan in my role as Secretary General. Some things that are already on my 'to-do' list are revisiting opportunities to bring back camps for Japanese seminars and selecting certain Japanese Shihan-class instructors to go abroad and instruct.

Karate is going to debut in 2020 Tokyo Olympics for the very first time. We have high hopes for Annika Saelid of Wado Academy Norway who has already taken home a gold medal in the Under 18 Female Kumite division in last year's Wado-Ryu Karate-Do Japan National Tournament and further went on to win gold in the 3rd Youth Olympic Games! As we enter the year 2021, we will host the next Wado-Ryu Karate-Do International Tournament here in Tokyo and use these fair winds to help us demonstrate and reinforce true and authentic Wado-Ryu for all those around the globe.

I would like to conclude my report by once again expressing my sincerest gratitude to Third Generation Grandmaster for giving me this priceless opportunity and also to Marko Bursac of Honbu Dojo for accompanying me on this trip and providing his linguistic support. I end this humble report with an oath to tirelessly continue perfecting my Wado-Ryu technique.

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