

Ho Ei Juku Czech Gasshuku 2019 – Kadan Judo Club



This year's Gasshuku took place in the Judo Club Kadaň Dojo, in a small city in Northern Bohemia where some Judoka are also members of the Ho Ei Juku Czech Branch too. The main topics for the week were Japanese and Okinawan weapons, including katana, jo, sai, tonfa, kama and nunchaku. Special thanks go to Yaro, the chief Judo instructor in Kadaň, who made training in their Dojo for the whole week possible. Sensei Brian Hinchliffe (8th Dan karate and 6th Dan iaido, Chief instructor of the Ho Ei Juku and UK Chairman for the All Japan Martial Arts Federation) came over from England for the week to train us in these various Arts. We met on Monday 12th of August in front of the city hall in Kadaň, where the dojo is located. All the weapons and training equipment for the whole week had to be moved inside and after the Dojo was set up, the first training could begin.

We started with Japanese sword and Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iai-jutsu. For some of the junior members of the Czech Branch of Ho Ei Juku it was the first opportunity to meet Sensei Brian in person and to see his fine sword performance. After a warm-up with the traditional Chinese exercise, Hachi Dan Nishiki (8 Pieces of Brocade) routine, we started with reviewing of the basics of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu. Czech members that have joined the dojo since Sensei Brian's last visit could see for the first time how the techniques should look, performed by a 6th Dan with decades of hard training. And the seniors had the opportunity to polish their techniques further to continue on their path of mastery of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iai-jutsu. After 2 hours of sword training we switched to a completely new weapon for all of us, a wooden stick called Jo. After an introduction of the history of Jo we dug straight into the Seitei Jodo Kihon-waza. The main reason for us to start training with Jo was its complementary nature to the Japanese sword. The originator of Jo-jutsu had created a weapon that would counter the Samurai sword. Under the well informed guidance of Sensei Brian we were shown not only the basics of each technique, but we tried it on an opponent equipped with a Bokken (wooden sword) to see how it worked in reality.

Three hours passed quickly and we took a quick lunch break. After eating in a restaurant on the beautiful Kadaň main square, we returned to the Dojo and returned to the Jodo Kihon. After going through the first 6 techniques of the 12 and more than one hour we switched to the sword again. This time we split into 2 groups. The juniors were polishing the techniques of Omori Ryu Shoden waza, Tanimura Ha set while the seniors followed up with reviewing of the Okuden Tachi Waza, covering both Tanimura Ha and Shimoura Ha versions. Another hour passed and we joined again to go through the Bangai no Bu set. It was the first time the juniors had seen these forms and a chance for the seniors to correct any mistakes that emerged during the time they could not train under Sensei's Brian guidance. After going through the routine multiple times we had to stop the training because we needed to prepare the mats for a cutting session planned for Tuesday evening. Sensei Brian showed us how to roll and pack the mats, we prepared all of them and that ended the session for the first day.

Tuesday's session started with the Hachi Dan Nishiki routine, including some variations to the standard forms and then off we went with the sword again. We spent nearly the whole first hour focusing on sword handling fundamentals, including the so important left hand movements for nukitsuke, furi-kaburi, kiri-oroshi, chiburi and noto. Then we switched to Bokken and split into 2 groups again. The kyu-grade members were focusing on Omori Ryu Bunkai in pairs, while the seniors started to practice the Okuden Suwari Waza set. Training in pairs they gain the awareness of application of every single technique right from the start. Moreover, Sensei Brian showed us both the Tanimura Ha and Shimomura Ha versions at the same time when there were differences between them. It's really good to know the lineage of each form and to keep the traditional schools alive.

After going through the first 5 techniques of the Okuden Suwari Waza the 2 groups joined again. Sensei Brian explained to all of us the application of the next 2 very interesting techniques of the set. And we utilized the equipment of the Dojo to simulate both situations being with the sword under a balcony and attacking on a crossing of 2 narrow streets which were common in the narrow streets of old Japan. Even the kyu-grade members had fun practicing techniques they will need much later on in their Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu studies. Both groups stayed together to go through the very last technique of the set and then we switched weapons again. We returned to review the first 6 techniques of the Seitei Jodo Kihon. We managed to go through them twice only, then quickly reviewing them in pairs to check whether everyone's technique works in reality. This took us up to lunch break.

After lunch, Sensei Brian started to teach us the 6 remaining techniques of Seitei Jo-jutsu. Going through every single one in Kihon form and then trying on a partner with Bokken was very interesting and we were able to imagine the purpose of every move right from the start. Then we utilized a Shinai against the Jo to feel the dynamics of the wooden stick against the sword. We also had time at the end of the day to go through the Tachi Uchi no Kurai Tanimura Ha version as a quick review because the seniors will be performing this routine in their forthcoming trip to the All Japan Martial Arts Federation annual martial arts festival at the famous Butokuden in Kyoto. After reviewing some details for future training of the set, we moved on to the next weapon in this week's busy schedule, the Sai.

Sensei Brian performed the Hamahiga no Kata with the Sai to show us how this weapon is used and the Sai session could start. After exploring and trying the Sai basics we paired and checked the newly acquired knowledge on a wooden stick. And then came the Sai Jutsu Renshu kata. Time was running out really quickly so a quick application of some of the Renshu kata techniques on Bokken was all we managed to do. At the end of the session, Sensei Brian performed the Hamahiga no Kata again for us to watch again with a new perspective. We met again in the evening for the tameshigiri cutting session. We had the mats prepared as well as PET bottles to cut. First all of us tried some basic cuts with the water filled bottles. Then came the real deal with the mats. Sensei Brian was so kind to lend us his expensive cutting sword to try how it feels. We had a lot of fun that evening, cutting nearly all of the 80 bottles and a total of 45 mats.

Wednesday was to be a special day for most of the Czech Ho Ei Juku Branch as promotion grading tests would happen. After the obligatory first exercises of Hachi Dan Nishiki, we started with Bokken and elementary movements with a partner. Nearly one hour passed when we switched to the Jo and a final review of the whole Seitei Jodo Kihon waza under Sensei Brian's supervision. There were some corrections of everyone's mistakes after completing the whole syllabus in just a few hours. After that we took our Iaito swords again and went through the Omori Ryu as a standing form all together before splitting into two groups again for training. The kyu grade members got to experience the first technique from the Eishin Ryu set and try the Tatehiza position. The primary horizontal Nuki Tsuke cut from the Tatehiza, Yoko Chiburi and Noto retracting the sword back to Tatehiza were the primary techniques. After the basics, the next two techniques of the Eishin Ryu set followed. The seniors had time to go through the whole Okuden Suwari Waza set as a review before lunch.

After lunch, the very first grading exam came for some of the kyu grade members. After performing selected techniques from the Omori Ryu set under Sensei's Brian command they went through the Tachi Uchi no Kurai Tanimura Ha routine. Then the knowledge test followed. After the evaluation of the kyu grade performance, the seniors followed. They performed the whole Eishin Ryu Tanimura Ha set and Tachi Uchi no Kurai Shimomura Ha routine, which was also a good opportunity for the kyu grades to see this performance. Then we went back to the Sai again. Sensei Brian showed us some of the Sai Jutsu Renshu kata techniques variations and we reviewed the whole Renshu kata again. We had some time to practice some of the most difficult parts of the routine and check whether the techniques work with a partner with a wooden stick. And then came the presentation of the next weapon of the week, the Nunchaku. As the Nunchaku was not a completely new weapon for most of us, we quickly went through the basic movements; attacks and blocks. We tried the attacks on an opponent with a block to check whether it really works and we are able to control the weapon after hitting something. Then we tried some of the blocks against an opponent using a wooden stick. After that the Nunchaku Renshu kata came onto the schedule. Unfortunately we had time to go through it only a few times before the session ended for the day.

The Thursday training session started again with the Hachi Dan Nishiki and then Sensei Brian presented us with the grading certificates. Congratulations go to Marek for passing 3rd Dan, Karel 2nd Dan, Milan 2nd Kyu and Kuba 3rd Kyu in Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iai

Jutsu. Many thanks to Sensei Brian for all of the guidance over the years. Then we started with the Sai once more to review the basic defence and counter attack routines. With partner and a Bokken we tried some techniques from the more advanced Hamahiga no Sai kata and back to the Renshu kata. After polishing of some of the details we were able to focus on after 3 days of practicing the kata we moved on to the penultimate weapon on our list; the Kama. As usual, we went through the basics of Kama blocks and attacks first. Then we went on for the Kama Jutsu Renshu Kata to try the solo techniques in a more complex routine. After a lot of practice, we once again tried the Kama techniques on a partner with a wooden stick. Then we had nearly an hour before lunch to train with any of the weapons used so far from the week's training and ask Sensei Brian any questions on the weapons.

After lunch, we had finally arrived at the last weapon on our 2019 list, the Tonfa. We started with the basics as usual. Trying these with a partner with a weapon was a good way to check whether the technique was performed right. The Tonfa Renshu Kata followed up. Because it was very similar to the Kama Renshu Kata, we went through it quite quickly. Then we checked the Kata techniques against an opponent again. Then Sensei Brian showed us the Hamahiga no Tonfa Kata. Since it was the last day of this year's weapons Gasshuku, we reviewed all of the weapons routines together. Then we had a last chance to ask Sensei Brian any question in person and we officially ended the 2019 Weapons Gasshuku. Thanks to Sensei Brian for an interesting time spent together.

Friday was the only day this year devoted to Goju Ryu Karate and reviewing of many routines we had been through over the years. We started with the five very basic Taikyoku Katas. Then the Sanchin kata followed and the three Gekisai Dai katas. The long Sanchin kata followed. Reviewing and polishing all of the Saifa, Seiunchin, Shisochin, Sanseiru and Pa-Chu katas took us nearly 90 minutes. Then we started with the Naihanchi kata. Because it is very similar to the Tekki Shodan kata from Shotokan style, we just compared the differences between the Goju Ryu version and Shotokan version and moved on. We spent nearly half an hour with Sepai kata because we would need it for the forthcoming Japan trip. Then came the Seisan, Kururunfa and Suparinpei. So much to do and so little time! We managed Tensho kata, then before lunch went had time to go through the details of the ceremony we would need for our performance in Japan in September.

Most of the Friday afternoon was spent going through the performance for our Japan trip in detail. This would be beneficial for all of the Ho Ei Juku members that were preparing for the Butokuden performance as people from several countries will be in the team. We utilised the remaining time to discuss and polish the Kururunfa and Suparinpei katas. And then the Summer 2019 Czech Gasshuku was over.

Many thanks to Sensei Brian for coming to Czech again this year and spending so much of his precious time with us. All the members of Ho Ei Juku Czech Branch are looking forward to meeting Sensei Brian in person again in the near future.

Marek Knapp (3rd Dan Karate & Iaido)

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