

Vancouver Shibu Dojo visits Hombu Dojo

I had forgotten how beautiful the island of Okinawa was until our flight's final approach into Naha International Airport. The weather was slightly overcast with a thin layer of clouds over the island, but the sun's rays cutting through the clouds and onto the city was simply breath taking. As we grabbed our bags and left the secured area, we were met by Hiroshi Akamine *Kaicho* and YukiYuki Arakaki *Sempai* who whisked us to our Air BNB location in Kimoji.



Upon dropping off our bags in our apartment, we headed over to Shureido to purchase some gear. One of our students, Brian, who arrived a week earlier, had informed us that there wasn't much at Shureido. Heeding his advice, we arrived at Shureido not expecting much, but we were quite surprised that the company actually had very little. All the dogi we ordered were going to take a month to make and there were very little kobudo equipment at the location.

Disappointed we took a taxi and headed to the Hombu Dojo in Tomigusuku for our first class. When we arrived, we were happy to see the other members from the Vancouver Dojo already there warming up. For this trip, the Vancouver Dojo had 10 members take part:

Shou Mooney
Brian Lowe
Gerry Van Gaalen
Sandy McLaughlin
Louis Belleville
Raiden Chung
Bob Mooney
Garson Ho
Alice Chung
William Chung



The class was great and we trained along side a group from Hangzhou, China and other members from the Hombu Dojo. The class was taught by Akamine Kaicho, Dell Hamby Sensei, and Fumiya Matayoshi Sensei. After the training, our group went to the local Izakaya with Akamine Sensei and Hamby Sensei. After consuming some delicious local food and a large amount of local brew, Akamine Sensei created a schedule of training for our dojo. We pretty well were training everyday that we were there (except Sunday), but luckily for us our sessions were in the morning to beat some of the afternoon heat and humidity that Okinawa was famous for. Under the watchful eyes of Akamine Kaicho and Hamby Sensei, our kata and basics were corrected to where they should be. As we savour the heat and humidity in the dojo, the sweats poured out of everyone there to the point where we utilized the roof on top of the Dojo to dry our dogi or to the neighbourhood Laundromat to wash the grime off.



The training at the Hombu Dojo was excellent as we trained during the day and on designated evenings. We had the opportunity to train with the Shanghai group that was also there as well as a representative from Hong Kong.

On a Saturday night, we all headed to an “all you can eat and drink” restaurant in Naha. There we met with members of the Hombu Dojo, the Hangzhou Team, and members of the South African Team. It was an amazing evening as we all mingled with other members from the other dojo and exchanged information and ideas.



On a Wednesday after the day training session, Akamine Kaicho and Katsuji Akamine Sempai and his wife, took members from our dojo to visit some memorial sights. Some of the sights visited were:

- Gichin Funakoshi (founder of Shotokan) – Onoyama Koen
- Kosaku Matsumora (expert Tomari karateka) - Arayashiki Koen in Tomari
- Kanryo Higashionna (expert in Nahate Karate) and Chojun Miyagi (founder of Goju Ryu) – Matsuyama Koen
- 32 Chinese Families (Chinese pilgrims in Okinawa) – Kumemura
- Anko Itosu (expert in Shurite Karate-student of Matsumura)- Makabi Cemetery
- Chomo Hanashiro (expert in Shurite Karate-student of Itosu) – Makabi Cemetery
- Sokon Matsumura (expert in Shurite Karate-student of Sakagawa) – Makabi Cemetery



We finished off the tour with a visit to Akamine Eisuke Sensei's grave in Tomigusuku near the Hombu Dojo. As a bit of trivia, we noticed that the name on Akamine Eisuke Sensei's Haka (Turtle Shaped Tomb) was actually *Nagamine Anji*. When I asked Akamine Sensei this, he pointed out that his ancestry was related to Nagamine Anji, who was a lord in the Chuzan area during the feudal times. Nagamine Anji was banished from Okinawa and was sent to one of the remote islands. He returned back to Okinawa and assumed the name of Akamine to avoid capture. Thus, his family has now inherited the Akamine surname.



We managed to visit the brand new facility called the *Okinawa Karate Kaikan* (沖縄空手会館), nestled in the hill top in Tomigusuku. This facility opened in March 2017 and is built for karate and kobudo events. During the time we were there, it served as the venue for the Okinawa Worldwide Seminar which took place from August 1st to 6th. The event was well attended and had representation around the world. One of our students, Brian, was able to take part in the seminar and learned a great deal about Okinawa karate and kobudo.



We concluded the trip with a belt grading at the Hombu Dojo presided by Akamine Sensei, Dell Hamby Sensei, Fumiya Matayoshi Sensei, and administered by YukiYuki Aragaki Sempai. Although everyone did well on their exams, the lesson learned was that there was always room for improvements. That we should not be satisfied with our current level, but try and strive for perfection of techniques. Our last days concluded with an evening out at a local izakaya behind Shureido, with good friends and new friends of the Shimbukan Family.

