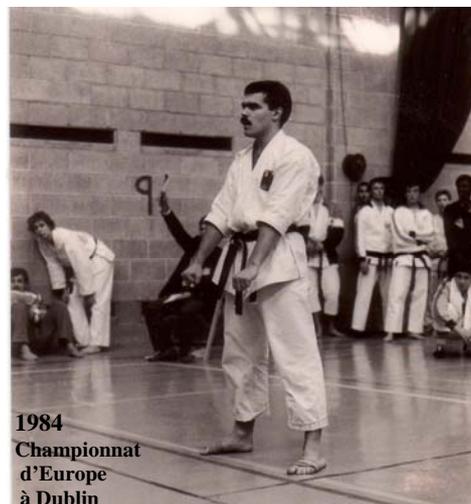

HANDING OVER TO SHIHAN OF THE KSK ACADEMY

After Sensei Dirck Heene, it's the turn of **Pascal Petrella**, Shihan of the KSKA for Germany, who consent to talk about himself and his life before then after his meeting with Sensei Kase...He also has been transformed, and he could talk for ever...

FSK-Ha : *When did you begin with practicing karate and who where your instructors ?*

Pascal Petrella : « I have started practicing karate in 1977 at the age of 12 with sensei Mario Sammarco, 6th dan KSKA, in Müllheim/Germany. In 1982 sensei Mario took me to Karate-Dojo-Freiburg, which was one of the most successful competition dojos in the 60ies/70ies and 80ies in Germany, to train with sensei Dr. Wolfgang Hagedorn. My seniors at dojo Freiburg had excellent JKA instructors: sensei Kanazawa (1968-1970) and sensei Hideo Ochi (1970-1974), who were living and teaching in Freiburg. In the German National Team I had the opportunity to practice first with the late sensei Horst Handel and later with sensei Hideo Ochi, which both had in my early years a great influence on me. Since 1983 sensei Dirk Heene, which is a school friend of sensei Mario, visited our dojo for seminars every year. He opened my eyes and made me realise that there is something else than JKA karate. In the mid 80ies I also went regularly to stages with sensei Kase, but since I was still very much involved in competition I was not ready for budo karate yet. Only after I retired from competition in 1993, I started to practice with sensei Kase more intensively, following in many stages all over Europe. In 1994 during my Master studies in Uk sensei Steve Cattle one of the top students of sensei Kase, and sensei Derek Ridgway (Shito-Ryu) had also a great impact on my understanding of kata bunkai. My studies in kata bunkai deepened strongly when practicing Shito-Ryu for 18 month in Singapore under sensei Wong Tuan Seng, while working there as a researcher at the university. But after enumerating the senseis which influenced my Karate-do and my live, I must say that sensei Kase, his karate and his personality had the strongest impact on me as a person and the way I practice, understand and teach karate. Sensei Kase changed my life. He showed me what is really important in Karate-do and in live, this made me more calm and balanced.



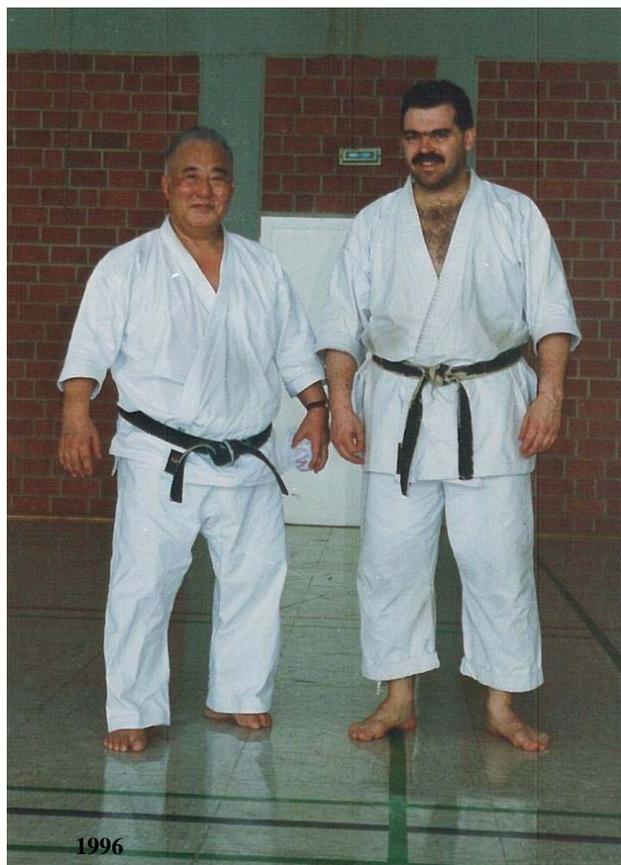
When and how did you meet Sensei Kase?

I got aware about sensei Kase first through a kata book, "Karate Katas Shotokan" in the early 80ies and afterwards through an article in a karate magazine and of course through sensei Dirk Heene who talked very highly about sensei Kase. First I saw sensei Kase in 1985 at his first stage in Homburg/Germany. Since that time, I went every year to Homburg, to practice with sensei Kase. I met sensei Kase first personally after a stage in Belgium 1989 where sensei Dirk Heene invited sensei Mario and myself to a dinner were sensei Kase was present. I was straight away impressed by his personality. He was very down to earth, and not arrogant at all as some other Japanese instructors I have met

before. I was amazed by his openness and by his stories about karate during WWII and the development of karate, his talk about Budo karate and that there is more than just competition karate.

Why did you select Sensei Kase as your teacher, la forme Kase-ha?

I don't know if someone can select a master as his/her teacher. Many karateka claim sensei Kase is their sensei, but I think it is more important that a master selects somebody as his student. Anyway I was from the beginning impressed by sensei Kase but I had one crucial experience in April 1995 in Valencia/Spain where sensei Kase asked me to assist him in Kata bunkai. So we did the first movement in kata Chinte and he asked me to attack full speed and power. Sensei Kase blocked my oi-tsuki chudan attack with otoshi-uke and I was really shocked and impressed by his block. I thought my arm was broken. His timing and the pressure of his block (Atobaya) were so perfect and uncompromising. This experience changed my way of thinking about blocking completely. In that moment I knew this sensei is different to all the senseis I practiced before. Since that moment I went to as much courses as possible to learn from this great master, not competition but Budo karate, something beyond pure technique. And I guess he felt my determination too, since that time he accepted me as a student and he asked me to assist him at many courses. But I was not only impressed by his karate, the closer I got to sensei Kase the more I appreciated his humble personality. Whenever I came for a seminar to Paris, Friday I obligatory had lunch with sensei Kase at his home, talking about karate and live drinking some beers or some wine, it was really like visiting my grandfather in Italy, he is now 96 years old. There was a strong feeling of connection, of closeness, but in the same time a great respect for him as a person, a karateka and because of his age, which implied also a certain distance.



Did you follow him regularly or have there cuts been in the relationship with him, and why?

Yes since 1995 I followed sensei Kase very regularly. Through the financial support of my dojo I was able to participate at least 10 seminars per year until he got sick in 2003. In this time, I and also my friend Pascal Lecourt, went to nearly every seminar with sensei Kase and had the opportunity to study and practice Kase-Ha-Shotokan-Ryu Karate Do in time of his biggest change and development in his karate. And at many courses we had the opportunity to assist and practice with sensei Kase under his watchful eyes. He helped us to develop further. The relationship to sensei Kase and also to his wife got very close. I visited him regularly at his home and when he was in Müllheim he also came to my home to have a meal together. In June 2003 I organised an 11 days tour with my students to Luxemburg, Hasselt /Belgium (Dirk Heene), Rouen (Pascal Lecourt) and Lorient (Christian Le Romancer) and Paris. After I told sensei Kase about the tour plan and that we will be in Paris as well, he insisted, that we all (26 people) come to his house to visit him. I was of course very proud that my students could see how sensei Kase lived and at that afternoon he told us a lot of stories about the history of karate-do. But also after he got very sick in September 2003 I visited him very regularly. I still miss him very much.



Since when are you teaching?

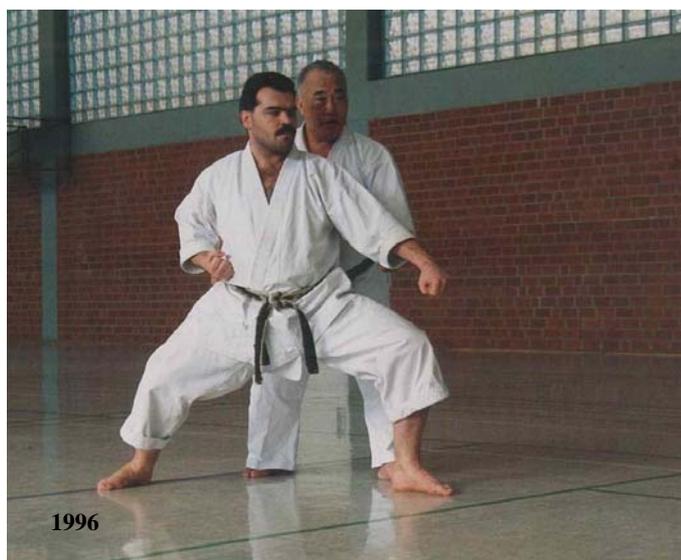
I am teaching Karate since 1980, first at my dojo in Müllheim, afterwards in Freiburg and then at all the places where I lived. Sensei Kase also pushed me to teach at international level, to get experience in teaching. At one stage in Portugal I arrived Friday evening at the hotel, and Antonio, the sensei there, told me that sensei Kase wants to see me in his room. After a warm welcome and talking about the flight and the weather he said: Pascal tomorrow you take the first training, I watch you teaching. Sensei Kase was always full of surprises. To be honest, I was quite nervous to teach under the watchful eyes of sensei Kase, and I was awake half the night. And since sensei Kase passed away my colleagues from the KSKA Shihankaï and myself are giving our full energy to preserve and develop the teaching of our master, sensei Kase for the next generation.

Do you think that it is possible to save the teaching of Sensei Kase or will history and individual personality influence it in the future?

History shows us that individual personality always influences karate in any style, which is the reason why we have so many different styles now. It is also a part of the Shu – Ha – Ri principle. This development you have also in life, first you are a child, then a teenager, afterwards and adult and finally you become a parent as well, hence the circle is closed. And of course you are not exactly like your mother or father, but if you like it or not you carry their values and principles inside you and you will pass those principles also to your children. I think this is the same principle in karate. Technique, a kata or kumite, special kumite movements are one thing, but in my opinion the most important value sensei Kase gave us is spirit, Budo spirit, or another Japanese term Shugyo, the old definitely hard and effective way of teaching martial arts, where the development of zanshin and fighting spirit is more important than technique to win a fight. Or to use the words of a French humanist : Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: « *Quand tu veux construire un bateau, ne commence pas par rassembler du bois, couper des planches et distribuer du travail, mais réveille au sein des hommes le désir de la mer grande et large* ».

Now you are a representative of the Sensei Kase's teaching; according to you, which qualities do we need to be a good "practiser"?

Have fun to train hard. Never loose the beginners mind. Practice, practice and practice! Keeping sensei Kase's words in mind:



- “Important is reality not formality”
- “Always use maximum speed and power”
- “Never stop practicing Karate”
- “Never loose stability of mind”

And following the dojokun of sensei Gichin Funakoshi

- Strive to improve your character!
- Protect and defend the path of truth!
- Cultivate a spirit of aspiration, endeavour and perseverance!
- Respect others, and always act with good manners!
- Refrain form violent and uncontrolled behaviour!

This in my opinion is Karate-Do!

The Kase Ha school is a way of research in the Shotokan style. Do you think the morphology indicates the style one is choosing? For example, the open hand allows the cosmic energy to enter through the body, and to root it to the ground and stabilize around the centre of gravity.

It is quite a workout to introduce this sensation, isn't it? What is your opinion?

First of all I think all martial arts are a way of research externally and internally, I think you can't fix that to a style. Maybe the morphology plays a role in choosing a “karate-style”. I think it is the personality of the student which makes him interested in a karate style, or say it differently to choose a master.

And yes it is quite difficult to explain the sensation of rooting, transporting energy from the ground into the technique.

In karate-do, rooting means more than just standing on the ground, pushing oneself down. Rooting begins with the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of personality. Physical and energetic rooting is developed through kihon and kata training in karate-do, as a support to mental and emotional changes in life. And one reflects the other.

The grounding cultivated through karate practice manifests as stability in movements. Emotionally it manifests as a stable personality with clarity of purpose and full command of willpower. The spiritual aspect is cultivation in karate-do training (Shugyo) itself.

The development of Fudoshin (Immovable mind), Bushi-No-Kokoro (Warriors mind), Mizu-No-Kokoro (Mind like clear water) is a natural process when training is conducted in the traditional Japanese way of getting enlightenment through practice. If one is not rooted to the ground and if one does not have a correct structural alignment of the body to the ground, they lack of true power development.

As Shihan Kase said, "Ten-Chi-Jin", the energy from the universe, from the ground and from the body must be in harmony to develop real power.

Using the energy from the ground, one has to keep the centre of gravity low. This theory applies especially to beginners. If one has developed rooting to the floor well, see Shihan Kase, he can also develop e.g. in hanmi-dachi true power, this is the same as seite and hente principle.

The centre of gravity, called Tanden in Japanese, is floating between the chest and the lower abdomen. As one experiences negative emotions, the centre of gravity is traveling further upward into the torso, which can cause enough energetic pressure to produce a hard attack. In extreme fright the centre of gravity may rise up to the throat, making a person unable to say a sound. If one is able to experience emotions and then let go and relax, the centre of gravity returns back to the lower abdomen. And here we have a very important topic for karate which we also can use in normal life. Body and Mind should always be in balance in harmony!



1997

Body and Mind should always be in balance in harmony!

Sensei Kase said once: "Do" means to move, "Sei" means to be calm. In Japanese we have a saying :

"Do jo sei ari no sei jo do ari"

The meaning is: If you are externally active, than you have to be internally calm. And if you are externally calm, you have to be internally active (zanshin). You have to keep your energy flow going, this is something like yin and yang. It is important to have a good balance between internal and external energy.

I guess everyone has a different experience and feeling of rooting, of energy transport or even of using cosmic energy.

And yes, it is quite hard to explain this sensation, but in my opinion, only after many years of hard training you will eventually get there, and if you are lucky you have the trust of a master who is helping you.



You belong to the circle of people chosen by Sensei Kase to create the International Academy in 2002. You must be proud of that because it is a big responsibility; what's your feeling about?

When sensei Kase approached me with his suggestion, to be honest, I felt very odd, because I was only a 5th dan, and with 37 of age very young of age compared to many other senior instructors and older students of sensei Kase. But may be he had a bigger picture for the future, we don't know! And yes I am very proud of being a member of the Shihankai of KSKA, because in this way my colleagues and myself are able to preserve and continue the teaching of our master Taiji Kase. His karate lives on in us, and we have to develop it further. Yes, guess we all feel this responsibility, but I think there is more than only responsibility why we give our best to continue sensei Kase's heritage. It is the love for sensei Kase itself, he taught us the "desire of the big wide sea"...



You created your own organisation Kase Ha. Can you please tell us your organisation and its influence in your country?

In November 2006 I decided to found Kase Ha Germany. Actually I wanted to found Kase Ha Germany already 10 years ago, when sensei Kase was still alive, but due to the fact that there were some "high level karate masters", so called students of sensei Kase (practicing twice a year with him) this would have created a lot of political problems for me, and after consulting sensei Kase he suggested to wait for the right time to found Kase Ha in Germany. After sensei Kase passed away, all of these so called Kase students were never seen again. We have now about 10 dojos with about 350 members all over Germany. We are very well structured. I have a two way strategy to develop Kase Ha in Germany.



1. Bring up the level of the instructors (Training Kase Ha & support them with training methods)
2. Support high potential young karateka (Training & Financial support)

First we organise examiner seminar once a year to make sure, that all examiner have the same level how the Kihon, Kata, Kumite of the kyu examination program should be taught. In that seminar I also give them an idea of what are the general mistakes and how to get rid of them with the goal to reach a common level of basics until 1. dan. This is my work on the teachers' level. Another activity is: we offer a course (4 weekend seminars over 2 years) to give the instructors theoretical and practical background how to teach.

The second strategy which we follow to develop Kase Ha in Germany is to invite every 2-3 month the best young students (high potentials) from every dojo in order to practice Kase Ha on an individual level. In this seminars are not more than 20 students, but this will be the future instructors of Kase Ha in Germany.

The influence of Kase Ha in Germany is not very big. But still we are working on it and slowly people from other dojos and associations are approaching us with the request of being a member of Kase Ha Germany. Kase Ha Germany is very proud to be the host for the KSKA-Gasshuku in Berlin in October 2008, and I hope we can also welcome a lot of our friends from France.

According to you, what are the factors to develop Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha?

There are of course many factors. But technically it is documented in the KSKA dan-grading syllabus. But what you need most is an excellent instructor who can show you the way to go beyond technique.



Which are the perspectives of evolution of the KSK Academy?

The KSKA Academy is a very young association. The members of the Shihankai, are all originated from different countries, all from a different karate background, all with a different mentality, some are professional, some are amateurs, some are older some are younger. But even with the different background we had in common the love for Karate, the love for sensei Kase and Kase Ha and the love for practicing karate as a martial art, Budo karate. The Shihankai composed by sensei Kase is in my opinion, 3 years after Sensei Kase passed away, 3 years of working together, practicing together and teaching together, I think the Shihankai is a guarantor of the preservation Kase Ha Shotokan Ryu Karate-Do and the guarantor of the future development of Kase Ha on an international level. Because all 6 members of the Shihankai represent, regarding to their individual personality and approach to karate, different facets of Kase Ha. Sensei Kase had so many different facets in his Karate and nobody of us is of course like him, but I think the diversity of the Shihankai members (karate & personality) is very attractive to all kind of karate practitioners at all levels and also for all age groups. The first step for the association was, together with sensei Kase, to introduce a dan-grading syllabus which really reflects the basic teaching of sensei Kase. Second we had to develop the statutes of the KSKA and register the KSKA as an official association, which was done now in December 2007. In the same time we decided to offer two seminars per year for our members a) to give them the change to practice Kase Ha on an international level b) to meet the Kase Ha family c) to promote Kase Ha in different countries.

We have to promote the principles of Kase Ha :

- Kase Ha is a Budo martial art, not sports

Karate and specially "Kase Ha" is reality not formality (technique), we have to reach a higher level beyond technique and physical power, for that we have to go beyond our limits.

Sensei Kase was rigorous and astonished his western students because of his spontaneity. Would you please tell us an anecdote from which you still remind, among all those punctuating your own experience with him?

I could tell you many anecdotes, but here is one where his reaction really astonished me and changed my mind:

In 1995 when I came back from my studies in UK, I had only karate in my mind and the first 6 month I practiced karate every day, I had no other thought. But than I had a car accident, it was my fault. And so I had to pay some money to the insurance. Therefore in order to get money I needed to work again. But 1996 was a bad economic year in Germany and even with two degrees from different Universities in two different countries I couldn't get a job within two month. Discussing this with a fellow student from UK, which was than working at the University in Singapore, he had a job offer for me as a research engineer. .. Singapore? A job offer? What about training with sensei Kase? I thought! My first reaction was I can't go. I was very indecisive. At the next stage I went to sensei Kase and told him about the job offer and my worries not be able to practice with him. His reaction was: "Pascal no problem, go to Singapore. There you can develop some special technique. Practice yourself. He said: "I also had to go away from Japan, to experience different culture and different lifestyle it was not always easy but it enriched my life ...". I didn't expect this answer at all. He changed my negative emotions and thoughts into positive thoughts and he even gave me the confidence it would be the right thing for me to go for some time to Singapore.

Sensei Kase taught me, doesn't matter what happens, see the positive side of it. "The glass is not half empty, the glass is half full".

Thank you very much Pascal, for your answer...

Thank you very much for the interview. Good spirit and good training to my friend Pascal Lecourt and to all the Kase ha students in France.

