



Association of Serbian - Japanese Friendship

"Hanami"



Association of Serbian - Japanese Friendship started out as an additional activity of "Goshinkan", Japanese Martial Arts Club. The club was founded on 30 September 2005, and since then is dedicated to teaching Ju Jutsu and Sport Chanbara. The club has always aimed to broaden the older groups' knowledge about Japan, as well as to introduce the younger ones to our favourite, distant country. Beside the competitions and seminars all over Serbia, club's members have traveled and exchanged knowledge of Japan in other European countries (Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic...) Within our sports activities, we have hosted guests from Japan on several occasions. The archive at www.budo.rs is the best source of information about our activities in the field of martial arts.



In 2008, the club's president, Ms. Adrijana Barši, has visited Japan for the first time. The occasion was the World Championship in Japanese sword fighting, or Sports Chanbara, in Yokohama. She was placed 5th among the harsh competition of high dan rank holders. Besides an excellent sport result, she has brought with her to Vršac a great deal of knowledge, experience, and contacts. Her trip to Japan was followed by years of intensive cooperation and exchange with Japan. Vršac has hosted Kaori Kimura sensei, who has helped us to raise the level of our sport technique by training us intensively. That resulted in Ms. Adrijana winning the silver medal at European Championship in Moscow in 2012. With her return from Russia, Sports Chanbara has started to spread through Serbia, and we organized numerous competitions. At the European Championship in Germany, Ms. Adrijana was recognized as the only official representative for Sports Chanbara in Serbia.





Beside the sports skills, we are focused on studying the traditional aspect of martial arts, their philosophy. Thus we have, in 2010, hosted Toshiasu Yamada, sensei of Sekiguchi Ryu Batto Jutsu, 17th descendant of samurai family Yamada from Gifu, and his assistant, Takanashi Takara sensei.

With great support of Embassy of Japan in Serbia, friendships from Japan that we have built over the years, and great enthusiasm of "Goshinkan" club members, in February 2014, Association of Serbian - Japanese Friendship "Hanami" was founded. Very quickly we have managed to gather several Japanese language teachers, as well as many enthusiasts of origami, manga, anime, tea ceremony, Naruto, Kurosawa, Murakami, Kawabata... Within few months, we have organized a number of educational workshops in different areas, as well as a course in Japanese language. Local high school, "Borislav Petrov Braca" has soon joined us in our activities and



spreading knowledge about Japan, and we signed a cooperation protocol. Our guest at the signing ceremony was Chiemi Fukumori, a contemporary dance artist, who has mesmerized the people of Vršac during her one-hour performance. Inspired by her intertwining of traditional and modern Japanese dance, some of the dance schools from Vršac have expressed interest to learn from Chiemi. During her next few visits, Chiemi led a number of seminars of Japanese dance in ballet schools in Vršac.



Over time, about 50 members of "Hanami" have mastered basic Kanji characters, and the needs for greater knowledge and better connections with Japan have arisen. At that very moment, we received an invitation from Dai Butoku Kai for the great Embutaikai of the best martial arts masters in Butokuden in Kyoto. Koji Uchiyama sensei invited our president and her assistant to take part and represent Serbia in this event. Beside exceptional honour that was given to us with this invite to one of the biggest martial arts events, it was also a great challenge for us, as we were invited to perform a demonstration together with Kenji Nakazawa sensei. Nakazawa sensei has not only offered to help us to organize and prepare for the trip, but also to be our host during the stay in Japan.



The Municipality of Vršac has recognized the great interest of its citizens in getting to know this great and distant country that is Japan and has provided logistic support for our trip to Japan. The president of the Association was appointed official representative of Municipality of Vršac for cooperation with Japan. As the connection with Nakazawa sensei became stronger, the fund of information about Japan grew bigger. After the exceptional cooperation with

Nakazawa sensei, we came up with an idea to expand the connections between Japan and Serbia, Yokosuka and Vršac, towards other areas beside sports and martial arts. During our three-weeks stay in Japan we have had the chance to visit Tokyo, Kyoto, Gifu, Yokohama, Kamakura, but we spent most of our time exploring Yokosuka. There we have made invaluable friendships and learned a lot about Japan from Nakazawa sensei. The greatest honour was given to us by Municipality of Yokosuka, where its Mayor, together with his assistants, has welcomed us as representatives of Vršac and Serbia, and, in very pleasant conversation, exchanged information with us.



Due to the need for exchange of cultural information with Japan, Ms. Adrijana got interested in the topic of cultural heritage of Serbia. That led to her being appointed deputy director of a traditional manifestation, international festival of folk dance, "Wreath of Vršac". After our representatives came back from Japan, we have been thinking of a good occasion to host the representatives of Yokosuka Municipality. This festival would be a great opportunity, as Vršac will be hosting guests from Italy, Greece, Romania, Russia, Columbia, Mexico, Spain, USA... Since Japan hasn't participated in the festival in its 17 years, this year they would make a debut and be guests of honour of the festival and Vršac Municipality.



Last November, we organized "Days of Japan in Vršac 2014". Over eight days, the citizens of Vršac have had the chance to enjoy in promotion of Japan. The opening was marked with sensational sounds of Taiko drums from "Sakura No

Ki Taiko" troupe, and the performance of Japanese national anthem and a number of Japanese compositions by local music school, accompanied by choir, harp, and flute. The official part of the opening was dedicated to speeches of representatives of Embassy of Japan and Municipality of Vršac, and the president of our Association. The special guest at the opening ceremony was professor Takeshi Nakano from the University of Osaka, who came to Vršac to help with the realization of a project related to environment protection in Serbia. All of this was happening in front of a Japanese flag consisting of thousand origami cranes, made by our members, representing our wish to strengthen the connection between Serbia and Japan. Numerous guests have had the chance to enjoy in the exhibitions of Ukiyo-e and Hanga prints, Japanese dolls, samurai swords, books, fans, kimonos, children's drawings and literary works, and photographs taken during the visit to Japan in September.





The whole week, our fellow citizens were learning about Japan through various activities: workshops of origami, Taiko drums, manga and anime drawing, Japanese ceramics, as well as screenings of Akira Kurosawa's films. What fascinated them most were

the tea ceremony presentation, held by a professor from the Department of Japanese language at Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy, PhD Milica Jotov, and literary gathering hosted by Marijana Rašković, MA in Japanese language, who introduced us to works of Murakami and Kawabata. The event culminated in the business forum, organized in cooperation with Economic Section of Japan's Embassy in Serbia, SIEPA, and Serbian Chamber of Commerce. Embassy's representative, Mr. Inuyama, introduced entrepreneurs of Vršac to the possibilities of export to Japan, and Municipal President of Vršac talked about what Vršac has to offer to Japan. The event finale was dedicated to martial arts, which were the original source of cooperation with Japan. Competition in Ju Jutsu and Sports Chanbara was marked by wonderful, friendly atmosphere, with over 200 competitors from all over Serbia. We used this occasion to present Sports Chanbara as a demonstrative sport at the Olympic Games 2020 in Tokyo.





Following "Days of Japan in Vršac 2014", the beginning of 2015 was dedicated to various activities in the area of exchange between Japan and Serbia, and to excellent promotion of Japan in Vršac. Embassy of Japan donated us a collection of books that have greatly contributed to broadening our knowledge in culture, sports, education, tourism, and economy of Japan.

High school "Borislav Petrov Braca" has, following the great interest of its students, decided to officially introduce Japanese as a foreign language to be taught there from the beginning of the next school year. This has been made possible by the great support of professor PhD Ljiljana Marković, associate dean at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, and the first person from Serbia to receive an award from Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for her continuous work in the area of Japanese language and Japanese studies. She was presented with the award on the Day of Belgrade University. Significant help was also provided by professor PhD Milica Jotov, who has contributed, with her extensive commitment, to an increase in interest of our fellow citizens in the wonders of Japan. Since the beginning of this year, Ms. Adrijana and professor Marijana Rašković have, together with other aficionados of Japan, constantly worked on educating citizens of Vršac, especially school children. Within the next month, the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at the University of Belgrade will give a presentation in high school "Borislav Petrov Braca", where students will get introduced and acquainted to the possibilities of studying Japanese language and literature in Serbia.



This year, Vršac will be hosting Kenji Nakazawa sensei as a guest of honour of our club and association. He will be leading a martial arts seminar in July for everyone from Serbia who is interested.

In August, Vršac will be hosting the president of International Sport Chanbara Association, Kaicho Tetsundo Tanabe, and its general secretary, Kenichi Hosokawa sensei. They will, together with 22 masters from Japan, lead a seminar for all European teams on 15 August. The following day, European Championship will take place, where we are expecting the representatives of Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia and of Sports Association of Serbia. After our meeting in Japan, Mr. Tanabe and Mr. Hosokawa have visited the Embassy of Serbia in Japan and used that chance to point out the significance of forming a national branch of Sports Chanbara Association in Serbia. As a sign of appreciation for the contribution to our Association's development, we would be honoured if the Ambassador of Japan in Serbia could open this great event.



Considering that we are expecting visits from a number of Japanese officials in July and August, we have decided that "Days of Japan in Vršac 2015" will last for two whole months. Citizens of Vršac will have the chance to participate in lectures, workshops, and trainings related to Japan every day. We wish to provide an active summer for our fellow citizens, to learn, practice, and enjoy in everything that Japan represents. During these two months, we plan to gather everyone from Serbia who has and is able to share vast knowledge of Japan. Also, citizens and guests of Vršac will have the chance to

enjoy amazing exhibition of Mr. Inoue, an artist who was introduced to us by Kenji Nakazawa sensei during our visit to Kamakura. His wife, Mrs. Inoue, was one of the first disciples of O sensei Morihei Ueshiba. We have had honour to meet them both in person, and now Mr. Inoue wishes us to display his works in Serbia and in that way support our efforts for cooperation between Japan and Serbia. His artwork depicts castles of Japan and the Heike Samurai history. The 12 pieces describe the Genpai war between Heike Clan and Genji Clan, after which the capital of Japan was moved to Kamakura from Kyoto, for the first time in history.



This has been a short biography and summary of activities of "Goshinkan" Japanese Martial Arts Club and Association of Serbian - Japanese Friendship "Hanami". We have also tried to present you some of our plans for this year. We can freely say that Vršac has built strong connections with Japan and we will try to make them even more productive in the future, for the benefit and pleasure of our citizens , as well as of all the people who choose Vršac as a friendly destination.

Association „Hanami“

Adrijana Barši