

# TAKEJI TOMITA

## *From studying with O-Sensei to the creation of Aiki Shin Myo Den.*

Takeji Tomita is a very charismatic master of Aikido. As a concrete thinker and as a teacher of Takemusu Aiki, he has done much to spread this aspect of O'Sensei's legacy throughout Europe.

In this article we will recount the course of this « Gentleman-warrior of modern Aikido », who throughout his life has been able to develop his Aikido by strictly observing the principles of the Budo.



*Soke Takeji Tomita*  
Photo ©Johan Westin 2005

## *First experiences with Aikido...*

A high-level expert engaged in a constant search and evolution of his Aikido and a renowned specialist of Aikido weapons (Aiki Jo and Aiki Ken), Tomita Sensei was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1942 in Hamamatsu, in the province of Shizuoka, on the Japanese island of Honshu. He began practising Aikido in 1961 at University following classes given by Shoji Nishio Sensei and registers at the Tokyo Aikikai in 1962.

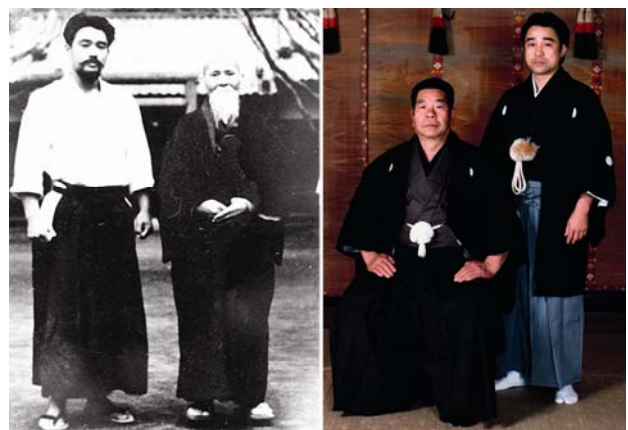
During a training course set up by the University, he discovers the sanctuary of Aikido and the Dojo of Iwama in Ibaragi-Gun. There, in Iwama, Tomita Sensei meets the founder of Aikido, O'Sensei Morihei Ueshiba for the first time.

He is deeply impressed by the personality of the latter. He also gets acquainted with Morihiro Saito, who was to become his master.

From 1962 on, after his first visit in Iwama, he decides to follow the teaching of O'Sensei and of his assistant, Morihiro Saito Sensei.

In 1968, he becomes Morihiro Saito's Uchideshi and is rapidly adopted by the Master's family. Being an honorary member of the Saito household was difficult because of the severe physical training it implied and because of the gardening work and the medical assistance provided by the Saito family to O-Sensei.

Tomita Sensei practiced for about 7 years at the Iwama Dojo. Those years were for him formative years dedicated to education and to discovering the way of Budo.



*Tomita Sensei - O Sensei*  
1969

*Saito Sensei - Tomita Sensei*  
1988

*Photos © Tomita Sensei personal collection.*

In december 2008, Tomita Sensei commented this period of his life and said: « *I encountered Aikido by chance as a student in college. That's how I met Morihei Ueshiba and Saito Sensei. Now I have to admit that there was a deeper meaning to these events. Of course I was trained during the long period of time I spent with them (about 7 years), but more importantly, they deeply influenced and inspired me. Today, I consider myself lucky to have been trained and influenced by great masters like them.* »



***Soke Takeji Tomita***

*Photo ©Johan Westin 2007*

## ***On the way to Stockholm for a deeper study and understanding of Aikido...***

After O'Sensei's death, at the invitation of the Swedish Federation of Judo, Tomita Sensei arrived in Sweden in August 1969. He was 27 years old and holder of 4<sup>th</sup> dan, granted by the founder.

He first settled in Göteborg, where he and his students had a great influence on the local Aikido scene. He then moved to Stockholm in 1976 where he founded the dojo he stills leads today.

Tomita Sensei's pupils often ask him why he came to Sweden; his answer today is as follows: « *Actually, apart from my mission of developing Aikido in Scandinavia, I lived in Stockholm for 20 years without really knowing why I was here. After separating from Saito Sensei to found my own academy, I remembered a conversation with Arthur Lockyear back in 1991 during a seminar in England. He referred to the experience Saint Paul had to go through on the road to Damascus: after somehow 'losing his Master', he found himself alone to meet a great destiny.* »

*[...]*

« *Later, thinking about it, I thought this trip to Stockholm was as important to me as it had been to Saint Paul: on my way to Stockholm for a deeper study and understanding of Aikido.* »

*[...]*

*Living in Stockholm, I escaped Japan's rigid social structure and hierarchy according to which orders given by a higher-ranking person have to be obeyed. In Sweden, I enjoyed 'freedom of thought', which allowed me to study and learn Budo and Aikido as I understood it.* »



***Soke Takeji Tomita***

*Photo ©Johan Westin 2005*

## *The necessary independence for a deep personal search...*

After accompanying Saito Sensei for many years in his various travels in Europe and in America, Tomita Sensei followed his destiny and his necessary need for independence... In 1992, after consulting with Saito Sensei, he decided to create his own organization, the Takemusu Aiki Tomita Academy.



**Soke Takeji Tomita**  
*Photo ©Johan Westin 2007*

To complete his practice of aikido and to propose a teaching tailored to his Western pupils, Tomita Sensei concentrated on the study of anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, and physics. He also carried out general researches on the history of Japan to develop coherently a personal approach to Aikido that observes the Budo tradition.

From this personal search and this multi-disciplinary work emerged an original teaching, adapted to the Western world, leaving no room for “approximative approaches” or for “superficial approaches”, based on copying gestures and movements without explaining the principles of the traditional practice of the Budo.

These kinds of approaches are unfortunately widespread in the Western world.

Tomita Sensei quotes the founder to explain the approach that guides his pedagogic research :

*« Morihei Ueshiba described Aikido using beautiful words and concepts, linked to the Divine: the Universe, Peace, Love, etc..(« Art creates freely and multiplies techniques according to the design of the Divine... » O'Sensei), these words inspired great admiration but also all kinds of fantasies about something we in fact don't understand. »*

[...]

*Through this method, people thought they could develop powerful Aikido. But the thing is O'Sensei never explained a more practical or useful method to reach this power!*

[...]

*The Japanese, for example, hear the word 'tanden' with emotion, feeling it. But teaching it in Europe, explaining what it is is impossible because of the differences between our cultures.*

[...]

*Without a physiological, bio-mechanical, anatomical approach, it is virtually impossible to explain in English or in Swedish what the most vital element of Budo is! [...] « not having this approach leads to distortion of the practice. »*



**Tomita Sensei 1989**

*Photo © Renée Subel*

**Tomita Sensei 1995**

*Photo © Tomita Sensei personal Collection*

*Of the theory in the practice ...*

## *Aiki Shin Myo Den... or the outcome of a lifelong search dedicated to Aikido...*

Today an 8th Dan, Tomita Sensei still lives in Stockholm. Although he's always played an important role on the world scene of Aikido, he has always kept his distance from the official organizations, finding thus the necessary freedom and independence to develop his art by observing the original principles of the Budo as strictly as possible.

Never giving in to the sirens of advertising and profit, his art spread outside of Sweden, and a lot of dojos follow his teaching in France, Italy, Portugal, Finland, England and Russia, free from the constraints of official federations.



*Stage International de Week End à Sète - Décembre 2008  
Organisé par l'Aikido Takemusu Aiki France*

Tomita Sensei points out to the efficiency and the accuracy of his techniques as the heart of his art. During his performances, his behavior is superb, his techniques are not only full of beauty, discipline and accuracy, they are also efficient and powerful. All these qualities that sum up Tomita Sensei's Aikido can be found in his teaching.

After forty years of practice, of search, with the will to promote the qualitative over the quantitative and to take his – necessary- distance from « the other ways to practice and teach Aikido », Takeji Tomita Sensei finalized his work by including the principles that rule the Japanese Budo in the **AIKI SHIN MYO DEN**, of which he is the **SOKE**.

He is a very approachable master for his students and chooses to teach to small groups of 25 to 60 people in national and international training courses.

He will celebrate his 40 years in Europe in July 2009 during a summer training course organized in Sweden with all his pupils and all who follow him in his approach...



*From white to black belt, Tomita Sensei works with you and corrects your movements...as close to you as possible...*

## *In conclusion ...*

Let us quote Arthur Lockyear's sentence: « with great Budo men such as Tomita Sensei teaching us their art, we may go through an experience akin to Saint Paul's on the road to Damascus » In other words, the teaching of Tomita Sensei gives us the basic and essential knowledge that will allow us to find our own way, and then to free ourselves from his teaching.

**Roger Gayraud**

*ATAF's Technical Adviser (Aikido Takemusu Aiki France).*

**Alexis Samatan**

*Chairman of the ATAF.*

*Tomita Sensei's website : <http://www.takemusuaiiki.org>.*

*Tomita Sensei will be in Paris on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2009 to lead a training course. For information: [yannick.andoel@snv.jussieu.fr](mailto:yannick.andoel@snv.jussieu.fr)  
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