

## An essay on Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu succession and legitimate heritage

The idea of writing an essay on the - much debated - issue of what really happened in the last years of Takeda Tokimune Sensei came very early in my practice of this ancient art<sup>1</sup>. I've always been a person interested in the roots and the legitimacy of what I studied, and I soon came in contact with the debate between the Senseis teaching in Abashiri<sup>2</sup> and Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei<sup>3</sup>. Despite my personal ideas, based on the very high quality of the teachings I've been receiving, I've collected a lot of material about the years from 1988 to 1995, regarding the various claims on "mainline" Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu and the reknown Takeda Tokimune's will and succession issues. In **Part One** of this essay I wrote an objective timeline of what happened on these years, with "objective" meaning "accepted by both parties", therefore nothing of it is derived from my personal opinion, and I did not include accounts I found dubious or that are still matter of discussion. The purpose of this timeline is to provide a clear and informed ground for debating, without "blind-talking" as I saw – and see everyday – in various Aiki-related forums on the Net, both from the Abashiri and Tokyo groups' members. The sequence of the events is written in a narrative fashion, although you can consult the complete timeline for reference at the end of the narration. In **Part Two**, I'll discuss the issues regarding Kondo Katsuyuki's *menkyo kaiden* which, though heavily based on facts, contain my personal opinion and therefore should be read having this in mind.

### Part One

We'll begin the narration starting from 1988 that is a marking point in the school's administration. In fact, since the beginning of this year and until his death, Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei didn't directly teach anymore, but only supervised the lessons, sitting in the *kamiza*<sup>4</sup> position when present, and mandating Shigemitsu Kato Sensei (nominated Kangicho, second-in-line of the school, in 1980) the honor of conducting the lessons on his behalf.

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay I won't discuss whether Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu can be considered a genuine *koryu* or Takeda Sokaku's martial genius developed it or not. However it's my opinion that in both cases the roots of Daito-ryu are, actually, ancient.

<sup>2</sup> A small town in the northern edge of Hokkaido, mostly known for its prison.

<sup>3</sup> In using the word "Sensei" I'm referring to the general use in Japan, that's without a value judgement, but only a title given to whoever teaches and exercises certain professions (Doctors, teachers, artisans etc.).

<sup>4</sup> North wall of the dojo, position on which usually stands the Soke or the founder/reviver of the art, or a Shinto altar, either physically or represented either by a photo or a picture.

In the first days of January, Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei and Mr. Stanley Pranin – who met Kondo the year before, when he came in Hokkaido for an interview to the Headmaster – visited the Soke's house in Abashiri, where Takeda Tokimune showed them the *mokurokus*<sup>5</sup> of the school and a copy of the *menkyo kaiden*<sup>6</sup> awarded to Horikawa Kodo Sensei<sup>7</sup>. As stated by Kondo S. himself, all the documents were meticulously photographed with Pranin's camera.

During the next two years (1989-1990), Takeda Tokimune's health was deteriorating quickly, and all the administrative and teaching matters were left to Shigemitsu Kato Sensei, as in the last several years.

Finally, in April, 1991, the Soke himself called a meeting for his elder students (sixty-six of them were present) and his most close friends. During this meeting Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei revealed his will<sup>8</sup> about the future of the art: both his daughters Oshima Kyoko and Yokoyama Nobuko were to be his successors. It should be noted that, although the Soke didn't have any son, both his daughters gave him a grandson. The only one interested in learning the art (as appears clearly in the last demonstration of Takeda Tokimune, where the boy is sitting on his grandfather's side) was Kyoko's son, Oshima (later Takeda) Hitoshi, but was his aunt Yokoyama Nobuko (the younger sister) who was the most close to the Daito-ryu School. However, all the students promised to abide to the Soke's intentions, in front of him and his friends, amongst whom was even a personal acquaintance of the Emperor.

The 7<sup>th</sup> of July, Takeda Munemitsu<sup>9</sup>, one of Tokimune's younger brothers, declared he had a written will from his brother that designated him as his successor in the School. It should be noted that Munemitsu never learnt the art thoroughly, since he only had some lessons from his brother and merely watched his father Sokaku's techniques. Actually Takeda Munemitsu had the Soke sign a tattered "postcard" on which he himself had previously written a fake will, designating him the official heir. As it is obvious, such a "document" had no legal value, but this event clearly manifested to all the students, friends and relatives of the Soke that his mental status was precarious, because of his illness.

On September, 6<sup>th</sup>, Mrs. Yokoyama Nobuko, Tokimune's younger sister, was officially recognized as the future Headmaster of the School. The next day, September 7<sup>th</sup>, Takeda Tokimune Sensei was officially admitted to be under serious medical treatments, and transferred to the hospital.

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<sup>5</sup> The scrolls that contain all the techniques of Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu.

<sup>6</sup> The "Full transmission" of the art, a certificate that states the receiver learnt all the techniques.

<sup>7</sup> The *menkyo kaiden* was actually awarded by Takeda Sokaku Dai Sensei, who, unfortunately, died before signing the scroll, prepared from Horikawa Sensei, since Sokaku, as it's well-known, was an illiterate.

<sup>8</sup> By the English word "will" it is intended here the declaration of intentions of the Soke, not a legal document, written or formally spoken.

<sup>9</sup> There is another relative with the name Takeda Munemitsu, who also has laid claims to the succession, but he's a great-grandson of Takeda Sokaku.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December of the same year, Mrs. Nobuko Yokoyama was officially declared as legal tutor and representative of her father, Takeda Tokimune Sensei. Shortly after, she excommunicated from the family and from the school her uncle Takeda Munemitsu for the fraud he committed against his brother.

Some days later, Mrs. Yokoyama Nobuko, supported by Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei<sup>10</sup> told Matsuo Sano Sensei and Shigemitsu Kato Sensei (who had already offered his position of Kangicho to both sisters, since they were arguing on various succession issues, trying to settle their quarrels) that, since the Soke was not present, they shouldn't teach in the Daitokan<sup>11</sup>. As Yokoyama Nobuko was one of the appointed successor (as in the promise made in April), and the future Headmaster, they abided to her request, signing, with all the students (except for seven people) the famous "Forms of Resignation" from the Hombu dojo, and not from the School as someone still says. They continued their training in a nearby dojo (at the Abashiri Port), always under the direction of Kato Sensei, as it had been in the last eleven years. From this point on, the relationship between Kondo Katsuyuki S. and the other elder students is completely broken.

Early in 1992, in an interview to Mr. Stanley Pranin, Kondo Katsuyuki S. clearly declared his loyalty to the head family (a.k.a. the two daughters of the Soke, Oshima Kyoko and Nobuko Yokoyama, who even was legal representant of the Soke), and that he'd abide to their decisions, as it was the promise the elder students<sup>12</sup> made in front of the Soke on April of the year before. The voices he reports, that call him "Evil Kondo" derived from the rumor that he wanted to become Headmaster of the school himself, using his friendship relation with Mrs. Yokoyama Nobuko. It seems that, at this time, the Soke, in one moment of lucidity, asked his daughter (and representative) Nobuko to register the Takeda *mon* and the name of the School to the Patent Office, but since they were afraid of rendering public the Soke's illness and other private matters, she didn't comply. There was a three-day meeting between the two successors, from where came the decision to not register the *mon* and the words '*Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu*' as trademarks. Furthermore, they stipulated a pact that admitted<sup>13</sup> a legal action from a sister if the other wanted to break this decision. Since the family and legitimate heirs didn't register the trademarks, Kondo Katsuyuki S. decided on his own and registered to himself the *mon* and the name of the School, officially for "preserving" them, even though he directly acted against Tokimune's daughters decision.

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<sup>10</sup> It is an acknowledged fact that Kondo S. and Mrs. Nobuko Yokoyama were, and are, close friends.

<sup>11</sup> The Daitokan is on the backside of Takeda Tokimune's house.

<sup>12</sup> It is unclear if Kondo S. was present to that meeting, as it might be deduced from his words, since the sixty-six students present were lately called the "seishin", the students of the "pure heart".

<sup>13</sup> In Japan, recurring to court and trials is considered very dishonorable and dequalifying, and most problems are solved with social, political or familiar pressures. Lawyers are considered one of the lowest classes, and there are only twelve-thousands of them in the whole country.

Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei died on 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 1993, leaving no formally spoken nor written will, in a punctual legal sense<sup>14</sup>. A few days later, the appointed successor Mrs. Yokoyama Nobuko, not tolerating the many political issues raising from this heritage, abdicated from her position of Headmaster, leaving as the only heir (for these matters) Mrs. Oshima Kyoko, the elder sister, who soon asked the students led by Shigemitsu Kato Sensei and Matsuo Sano Sensei<sup>15</sup> to come back training in the Daitokan, proposal that they immediately followed.

Early in 1994, the elder students of Takeda Tokimune – the same “pure hearts” present in April, 1991 – called a meeting, open to all the other students, that was held on two separate sessions. Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei was invited to both the meetings, but always refused. During these encounters, the students signed a document on which they confirmed the promise made in front of their Sensei in April 1991, and a few other points regarding the preservation of the techniques. That was the formal foundation of the Nihon Daito Ryu Aikibudo Seishin Kai association.

But in July of the same year, Mr. Oshima Masanobu, Tokimune elder daughter’s<sup>16</sup> husband, decided to change his name in Takeda, as legitimated by Japanese law and tradition for preserving ancient and noble family names and, as Takeda Masanobu, unilaterally declared himself Soke of the Takedaden Daito Ryu Aikibudo<sup>17</sup>, sending a letter to all the Daito-ryu organizations<sup>18</sup>. At this point there was the real fracture between the different organizations<sup>19</sup>, as some of them accepted his claim, like the recently founded Seishin Kai, and some refused, like the Takumakai or Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei.

Mr. Takeda Masanobu, subsequently, also proposed an appeal to Kondo Sensei registration as a trademark of the Takeda *mon* and the words “Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu”, comprised of variations.

In September, 1994, Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei called his own meeting, without the approval of either Takeda Kyoko or Masanobu, at which he invited only the leaders of the Daito-ryu organizations that not recognized Mr. Masanobu as the new Soke. During this meeting he was either elected or acclaimed as the new Headmaster of the school. This is recognized as the birth of his association, the Daito Ryu Shimbukan. A month later, in October, strong of the new position,

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<sup>14</sup> Except for the meeting in front of him, held in April, 1991.

<sup>15</sup> That is, all the former students of the Soke, except from Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei and other seven students.

<sup>16</sup> At this point, as I stated earlier, Mrs. Oshima Kyoko is the actual heir.

<sup>17</sup> This was the name of the association of which Takeda Tokimune was Soke, that is considered, even today, as the largest Daito-ryu organization.

<sup>18</sup> There are a number of Daito-ryu organizations including *Takumakai*, *Kodokai*, *Roppokai*, the dojo led by Sagawa Sensei, and other minor organizations and private family dojos.

<sup>19</sup> Please note that the organizations do not comprise all the students. Usually the students are invited to become members only after years of study. Examples are the citated Takumakai, and the Seishin Kai, whose members were the teachers at the Hombu dojo, that had (and has) many students not members, since it was property of the Takeda family.

Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei asked the Seishin Kai members to leave the Daitokan. They refused, not recognizing his status and titles<sup>20</sup>, neither the meeting he held in September.

However, in December the fire inspectors of Abashiri required the Daitokan to be closed for security problems, since the building was old and not repaired as the modern standards. The Daitokan reopened again a month later, in 1995, and with alternate fortunes<sup>21</sup>, remained open until the year 2000. In the meanwhile, the students, led by members of the Seishin Kai Association (that was Matsuo Sano Sensei and Shigemitsu Kato Sensei, who had always directed alone the lessons since 1988) trained in the dojo near the port<sup>22</sup>.

Subsequently, a few months later, in 1995, Kondo Katsuyuki declared his dojo, located in Tokyo, as the new Hombu<sup>23</sup>, and had his association, Daito Ryu Shimbukan, recognized from two Japanese *kobudo* associations<sup>24</sup>.

In 1998 the Japanese Court rejected Takeda Masanobu's appeal, confirming Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei the copyright on the Takeda *mon* and the words "Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu" and variations thereof, virtually preventing the use of the title *Soke* by Takeda Masanobu. There's another trial going on at the moment, even though, at present, I don't know exactly the matter that involves.

The next year Takeda Munemitsu, the one excommunicated from the school in 1991, died.

The situation at the moment sees Takeda Hitoshi and his son<sup>25</sup> train in the art at Abashiri with the Seishin Kai and Daito Ryu Aikibudo senior students, while Kondo Katsuyuki, whose dojo is very small in comparison to the last two, in Japan, is very popular in the United States of America, since Mr. Pranin of *Aiki News*, recognize him as the new Headmaster. He already declared he won't recognize Takeda Kyoko and Masanobu's descendants as *Soke* or Headmaster, even if they've Takeda blood in their veins.

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<sup>20</sup> Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei was elected with titles like *Hombucho* and *Somucho*, used by Takeda Sokaku.

<sup>21</sup> During the years from 1994 and 2000, the Daitokan was subsequently opened and closed as the fire inspectors saw fit, totaling only thirty-four months of activity over seventy-two.

<sup>22</sup> The one built in 1991, as stated earlier.

<sup>23</sup> Actually, since then, there have been two Hombu dojos of mainline Daito Ryu, both not recognizing the other: the Daitokan (followed by the other dojo near the port) in Abashiri, and Kondo's Shimbukan in Tokyo. The art remains still bisected by these two dojos and the organizations and Senseis behind them.

<sup>24</sup> The *Nihon Kobudo Kyokai* and the *Nihon Kobudo Shinkokai*.

<sup>25</sup> Respectively son and grandson of Takeda Kyoko and Masanobu and grandson and great-grandson of the late *Soke*.

## Complete Timeline of events

### **1988**

Since the beginning of this year and until his death, Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei didn't teach anymore to anyone, but only supervised the lessons, sitting in the kamiza position when present, and demanding Shigemitsu Kato Sensei (nominated Kangicho, second-in-line of the school, in 1980) the honor of conducting the lessons on his behalf.

#### January

Early this month, Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei and Mr. Stanley Pranin visited the Soke's house in Abashiri, where Takeda Tokimune showed them the mokurokus of the school and a copy of the menkyo kaiden awarded to Horikawa Kodo Sensei. As stated by Kondo S. himself, all the documents were photographed with Pranin's camera.

### **1989-1990**

### **1991**

#### April

The sixty-six (66) most senior students and many other close friends of Takeda T. Sensei (including members from the Emperor's court) went to a meeting in front of the Soke. During this meeting Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei revealed his will about the future of the art: both his daughters Oshima Kyoko and Yokoyama Nobuko were to be his successors. All the students promised to abide to the Soke's intentions, in front of the Soke's acquaintances and friends.

## July

Takeda Munemitsu , one of Tokimune's younger brothers, had the Soke sign a "postcard" on which he designated him the official heir. As it is obvious, such a "document" had no legal value, since it was taken by fraud. This event clearly manifested to all the precarious mental status of Tokimune Sensei, derived from his illness.

## September

On September, 6th, Mrs. Yokoyama Nobuko, Tokimune's younger sister, was officially recognized the future Headmaster of the School. The next day, September 7th, Takeda Tokimune Sensei was officially admitted to be under serious medical treatments, and transferred to the hospital.

## December

On the 4th of this month, Mrs. Nobuko Yokoyama was officially declared as legal tutor and rerepresentative of her father, Takeda Tokimune Sensei. Shortly after, she excommunicated from the family and from the school Takeda Munemitsu for the fraud he committed against his brother. Some days later, Mrs. Nobuko Yokoyama, supported by Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei told Matsuo Sano Sensei and Shigemitsu Kato Sensei (who offered his position of Kangicho to both sisters, since they were arguing on various succession issues) that, since the Soke was not present, they shouldn't teach in the Daitokan . Since Nobuko Yokoyama was the appointed successor (as in the promise made in April), they abided to her request, signing, with all the students (except for seven people) the famous "Forms of Resignation" from the Hombu dojo, and not from the school as someone still says. They continued their training in a nearby dojo (at the Abashiri Port), always under the direction of Kato Sensei, as it had been in the last eleven years.

## **1992**

Early in this year, in an interview to Mr. Stanley Pranin, Kondo Katsuyuki S. clearly declared his loyalty to the head family (a.k.a. the two daughters Oshima Kyoko and his friend Nobuko Yokoyama, who even was legal tutor of the Soke.), and that he will abide to their decisions. The

voices he reports, that call him “Evil Kondo” derived from the rumor that he wanted to become Headmaster of the school himself.

The family renounce applying for the trademarks, but Kondo register them at the Patent Office.

## **1993**

### December

Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei died on 2nd of December, 1993. A few days later, the appointed successor and legal rerepresentative of the Soke (since 1991), Mrs. Yokoyama Nobuko abdicated from her position, leaving as the only heir Mrs. Oshima Kyoko, the elder sister, who asked the students led by Shigemitsu Kato Sensei and Matsuo Sano Sensei to come back training in the Daitokan, proposal that they immediately follow.

## **1994**

Early in the year, the elder students of Takeda Tokimune called a meeting, open to all the other students, that was held on two separate sessions. Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei was invited to both the meetings, but refused. During these encounters, the students signed a document on which they confirmed the promise made in front of their Sensei in April 1991, and a few other points regarding the preservation of the techniques. That was the formal foundation of the Nihon Daito Ryu Aikibudo Seishin Kai Association.

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Mr. Oshima Masanobu, Tokimune daughter’s husband, decided to change his name in Takeda, as legitimated by Japanese law and tradition for preserving ancient and noble family names and, as Takeda Masanobu, unilaterally declared himself Soke of the Takedaden Daito Ryu Aikibudo, sending a letter to all the Daito-ryu organizations . At this point there was the real fracture between

the different organizations , as some of them accepted his claim, like the recently founded Seishin Kai, and some refused, like the Takumakai or Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei.

Mr. Takeda Masanobu, subsequently, also proposed an appeal to Kondo Sensei registration as a trademark of the Takeda mon and the words “Daito Ryu Aiki Jujutsu”, comprised of variations.

### September

Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei called a meeting, without the approval of either Takeda Kyoko or Masanobu, at which he invited only the leaders of the Daito-ryu organizations that not recognized Mr. Masanobu as the new Soke. During this meeting he was either elected or acclaimed as the new Headmaster of the school. This is recognized as the birth of his association, the Daito Ryu Shimbukan.

### October

Strong of the new position, Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei asked the Seishin Kai members to leave the Daitokan. They refused, not recognizing his status and titles .

### December

The fire inspectors of Abashiri required the Daitokan to be closed for security problems, since the building was old and not repaired as the modern standards. The Daitokan reopened again a month later, in 1995, and with alternate fortunes , remained open until the end of 1999. In the meanwhile, the students, led by members of the Seishin Kai Association trained in the dojo near the port .

## **1995**

Kondo Katsuyuki declared his dojo, located in Tokyo, as the new Hombu , and had his association, Daito Ryu Shimbukan, recognized from two Japanese kobudo associations .

## **1996-1997**

## 1998

The Japanese Court refuses Takeda Masanobu's appeal, confirming Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei the copyright on the Takeda mon and the words "Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu" and variations thereof. There's another trial going on at the moment, even though, at present, I don't know exactly the matter that involves.

## 1999

Takeda Munemitsu, the one excommunicated from the school in 1991, died.

## 2000

The Daitokan is again closed, this time probably for good, by the fire inspectors.

## Part Two

We will discuss here the issues regarding Kondo Katsuyuki's *menkyo kaiden*. Kondo Sensei says that Takeda Tokimune Dai Sensei showed him and Mr. Pranin the *mokurokus* since he was going to award him the *menkyo kaiden*. Actually, Kondo Sensei tells that in May of the very same year (1988) he was awarded the highest ranking in Daito-ryu from the Soke. There are many problems regarding this statement. At first, Kondo's *menkyo kaiden* came officially out somewhere between 1991 and 1992; in second place, it was not registered in the *eimeroku*<sup>26</sup> of the School, and it's uttermost strange, since Takeda Tokimune was almost as strict in recording everything regarding the activity of the school as his father Sokaku... and since every lesson and ranking award was registered, it seems extremely strange that something as big as a *menkyo kaiden* would be just forgotten. In fact, in a society like the Japanese one, and in a traditional school, where just for the

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<sup>26</sup> The School register of students, lessons, and catalogues of techniques awarded.

completion of the *Ikkajo*<sup>27</sup> series the students would take a great party with lots of photographs, there is no photo of Kondo Sensei in such an occasion celebrating the *menkyo kaiden*. In addition to all these matters, there are first-hand accounts saying that Kondo Katsuyuki was roughly at the end of the *Hiden Mokuroku* in 1991, and, though he surely was a senior student, he only came at the Daitokan for week-end seminars or, seldom, ten-days intensive course, while other students, like Shimpachi Suzuki, Shigemitsu Kato, Matsuo Sano and others had been direct students of the Soke for over forty years, of which nine/ten as *uchi-deshi*, live-in students. There's another strange mark in Kondo's biography: he says he never practiced Aikido, but in the Aikikai registers<sup>28</sup> in Tokyo, he is recorded to have studied Aikido for at least six years, and for at least other four as a teacher of this modern art. Actually, he never practiced Daito-ryu on a regular basis until 1969<sup>29</sup>. As you can see, there are more than a few matters of discussion about Kondo Sensei, and I'll report now his version of these events, followed by my personal opinion about them.

#### Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei's version of the events.

Kondo says that, when he went to the Soke house in January, 1988, with Mr. Pratin, Takeda Tokimune told him he was going to award him the *menkyo kaiden*. So he showed them an original *kaiden* scroll that was photographed by Mr. Pratin's camera. Then Kondo had the *menkyo kaiden* made, which was awarded him in May of the same year. However, he was personally asked by the Soke to not render public for some time the *kaiden*, since it could be destabilizing for political issues. The document itself was prepared by Tokimune's wife, that, upon the completion of the document, fell ill and was immediately taken to the hospital, which is the reason, for Kondo, of the absence of the registration on the *eimeroku*. In those sad moments Takeda Tokimune Sensei supposedly forgot these formalities. Then, when in 1991 time was mature, Kondo revealed to his fellow students that he attained the *menkyo kaiden* over three years ago.

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<sup>27</sup> The first thirty techniques of the first catalogue, the *hiden mokuroku*.

<sup>28</sup> These are public documents available for consultation, under a previous request.

<sup>29</sup> Though he had already frequented at least one seminar, since there's a picture of him and Takeda S. on an earlier date.

What I personally think is a more plausible scenario.

When in January 1988 Mr. Pranin photographed the original *kaiden*, Kondo had an example, that he didn't have before, of how such a document would look like, and had one prepared as he himself says. I personally think that Takeda Sensei did not award him a *kaiden* for the following reasons:

- I. Takeda Tokimune Sensei was very much punctual in registering all the lessons given, even if only seminars attained casually, and all kind of techniques knowledge “awards”, even the most basic ones, in the *eimeroku*. Why should it have been different for a *menkyo kaiden* given Kondo? The Soke, even if his wife was badly ill, would have never possibly forgotten registering something as big as a “full transmission” scroll. The *eimeroku* was not open to the public, and was held by the Soke himself, who never registered any *kaiden*, therefore there wasn't privacy or security problems. When in 1993 the Oshima (later Takeda) family received the School's registers, someone had added in a different ink and calligraphy beside the lines, a registration of the *menkyo kaiden*, that was added between 1991 and 1992, when the document itself appeared, or Kondo Katsuyuki S. “revealed it to the public” and, of course, was not present before.
- II. There are no photographs of any party celebrating the *kaiden* neither of Takeda Tokimune and Kondo Katsuyuki together with the *kaiden* scroll, a thing that is really unthinkable, if you think that lots of photos were taken even when a student attained the most basic catalogues of techniques.
- III. Although Kondo Sensei was surely a senior student of Tokimune, he practiced Daito-ryu a lot less than the other students. Kondo Katsuyuki lived in Tokyo, not in Abashiri, that is located in the Hokkaido island, and in the *eimeroku* he appears since 1969, but only during some weekends and ten-day intensive courses, mostly directed by Shimpachi Suzuki, while the other elder students (let us remember Shimpachi Suzuki and Shigemitsu Kato) studied for over forty years almost everyday directly with the Soke, and even living inside the dojo for nine or ten years, as it is registered in the School's registers. It seems strange in the least that Kondo Katsuyuki S. attained a *menkyo kaiden* when there were elder students who practiced and learnt a whole lot more.
- IV. As said in the previous point, Kondo could not possibly know even a fraction of the techniques that his *sempais* knew, and I have direct confirmation of this from people who

was there in Abashiri in 1990 till 1991, and directly trained with Kondo S.. Those people say he was not more advanced than the *hiden mokuroku*<sup>30</sup>.

Set aside these points, it remains the fact that Kondo S. actually possesses a scroll named *menkyo kaiden*, complete with the Takeda's seal, which only the Soke had. How could it possibly be? Since 1988 until 1991 the seal was in the possession of Shigemitsu Kato Sensei, who, as Kangicho, needed it to sign the *mokurokus* awarded and other documents. In 1991, Yokoyama Nobuko, as legal representative of the Soke<sup>31</sup>, requested the seal, and he abided to her request. A short time later, the sealed – and until then secret – *menkyo kaiden* of Kondo S. appeared, and was added between the lines, as stated before, in the *eimeroku*, at the time in the hands of Yokoyama Nobuko, who was, and is, a very close friend of Kondo Katsuyuki. But how could possibly know Kondo how a *menkyo kaiden* was to be written? Do you remember Mr. Pranin<sup>32</sup>'s photographs...?

Alberto Gallo, Italy.

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<sup>30</sup> The first catalogue, comprised of 118 techniques.

<sup>31</sup> As you can read in the provided timeline.

<sup>32</sup> Actually, Stanley Pranin is the only person present at least in January of 1988, but he is also the producer of Kondo's books and videos, and I consider him a partial testimony, because of the strong economical relationship between the two. In fact, Mr. Pranin committed a really serious mistake on Japanese tradition and succession, adding Kondo Katsuyuki S. directly under Takeda Tokimune in the Daito-ryu lineage chart.