

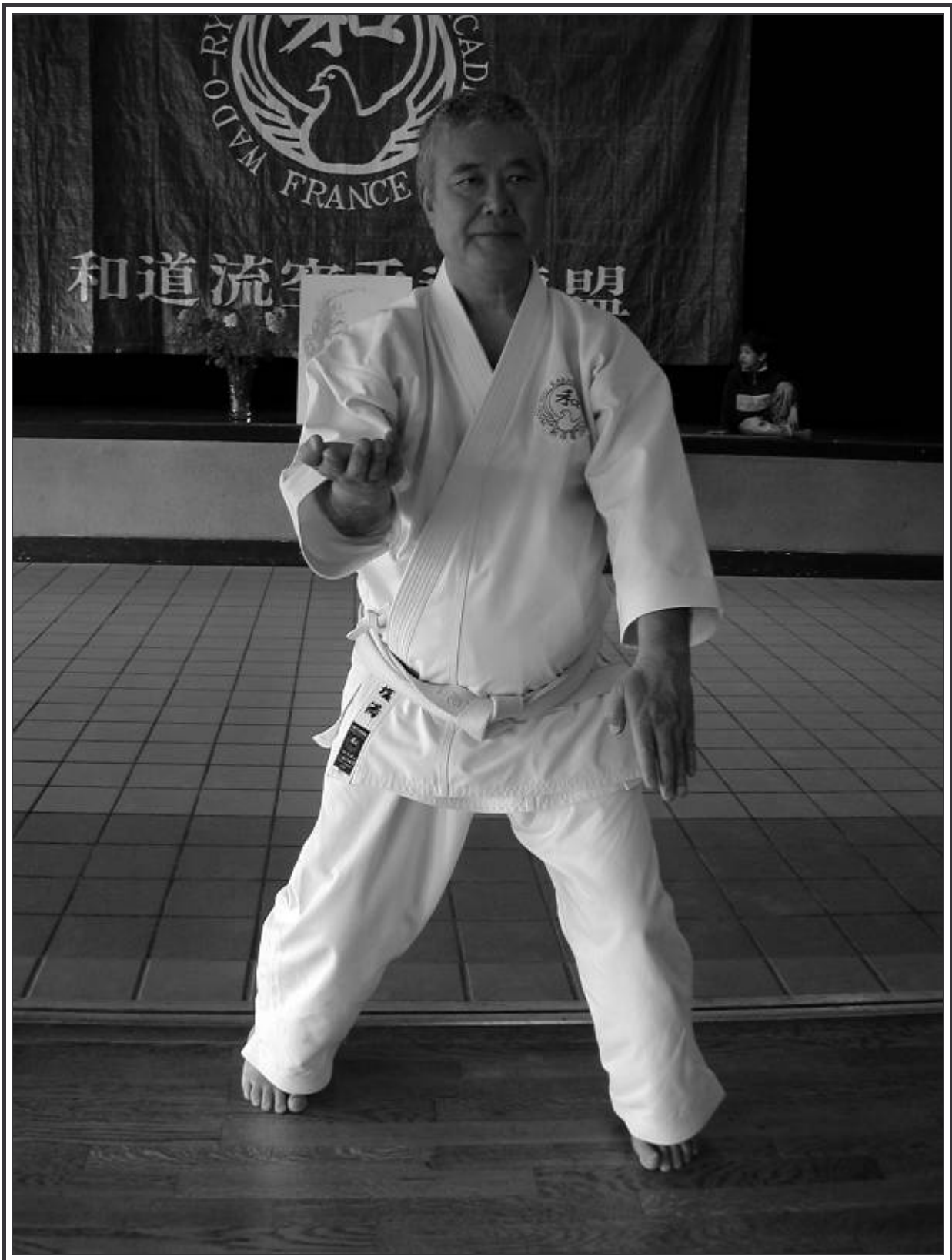
MASAFUMI

SHIOMITSU



Interview Angoulême 2005 workshop





**Sensei Shiomitsu, could you please tell us about your beginnings in martial arts ?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* I started Shorin Ryu karate at the age of 15 in the South of Japan, but I have to tell you that I was not training seriously then. Afterwards, I went to study economics at University and I graduated with a degree. I had chosen that route in order to make a lot of money (LAUGHTER). I also learned Karate during my studies. So, it was at the age of 18 that I truly started studying Wado Ryu Karate very seriously, meaning, every day. During the winter and summer courses, we used to practise kihon kumite and kata, but the rest of the time, training consisted in fighting, fighting and again fighting. Basics was fighting. Moreover, I would fight everyday in and out of the dojo.



Renaud Sensei, Shiomitsu Sensei & Tran Hieu Sensei

**Which coaches did you have?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu :* My coaches were Mano Sensei, Arakawa Sensei and Tanabe Sensei. Arakawa Sensei and Tanabe Sensei were always in the dojo, equipped with a shinai and they did not hesitate to use the stick to teach and correct us. It was really tough.



**Did you enter competitions and what teaching do you draw from that?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* Yes, I did a lot of competitions when I was a student. I became the captain of my University team, but I was always disqualified (LAUGHTER) because of uncontrolled kicks and punches.

It's because of my eyesight. I really couldn't see anything. In those days contact lenses did not exist, so when I took my glasses off to fight, I would have to counter attack immediately so I wouldn't get hit. In later years I was able to wear contact lenses.

**What was your strong point in competition?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* My strong asset was mawashi geri to the groin. (LAUGHTER)

**What is the most memorable moment of your career in Karate?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* I won many competitions when fighting in teams but unfortunately, in individual fights I was always disqualified. As an answer to your question, my best moment is now.

**Do you have a personal training system? If yes, could you describe it to us?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* No, I do not really have a personal training system, I don't work on any special or secret technique either. I try to practise basic moves as relaxed as possible.

**Do you have any favorite katas and why?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* At University, I did not practise katas, I didn't like them and I was only interested in fighting. Later, I became interested in them because each kata holds many fighting techniques.

**According to you, what are the principles of Wado-Ryu ?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* the principles of Wado-Ryu are the principles of Budo: « Work hard and do not waste one's time » in order to reinforce one's karate and one's mind. Mind is more important than technique. It is important to build up a strong and healthy mind in order to have the right attitude in life, that is not to turn your back when faced with a problem. Do not stray away from your goal. « When you decide something, you have to start and you have to go all the way to the end. »

**What is typical of Wado-Ryu ?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* Ohtsuka Sensei was a great ju-jitsu expert and when he saw karate for the first time, he immediately realized that the punches and kicks were very different . He then decided to practise karate. The ultimate aim of each karate style is fighting. However, the goal in Wado Ryu is not to fight in a competition but to fight against a sword or a knife, which is why you find tai sabaki in this martial art.



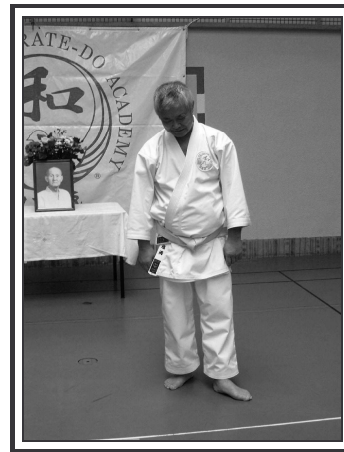
*When you decide something, you must carry it through all the way  
to the end.*

**Which advice would you give to young people who wish to start practising this martial art ?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* Wado-Ryu is special, you cannot compare it to another karate. I think that you have to be totally relaxed when working and practise shadow boxing

**Did you practise other sports besides karate ?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* Yes, I was a good swimmer.



**Sensei, you give courses all over the world within the Wado Academy, what makes a French student different from another non French student ? What do you think of Wado Ryu practice in France?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* No, there are no real differences, I have seen the same things all over the world: « Students are generally tense.». You have to release the tension and that takes time. I have noticed that French students have evolved, I'm looking forward to seeing the next generation (Shiomitsu Sensei points to two children in the first row and laughs).



*Work on basics without tension and move fast.*

### **What made you want to teach? When and where did you give your first lesson?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* Before coming to Europe, I used to manage a bar&restaurant. One day, I heard that a Japanese instructor was needed in the South of France. Mochizuki Sensei contacted me and I accepted at once. I first went to England in 1965 to see Suzuki Sensei. He then told me: « You're staying here.» In the years 1969-70s, other Japanese instructors came to England and I went to France. When I was in Paris, I lived in an apartment where I only had Japanese flatmates, so I did not learn any French. On the mat, when training, I only knew two sentences: « Comme ça, pas comme ça (*like this, not like that*) » (LAUGHTER). In 1972, I went to teach in Madagascar. I had inquired beforehand and heard that there were only five Japanese there, working at the embassy. So it was in Madagascar that I learned to speak French.

### **Sensei, when you started, your karate lessons were very hard, the teaching has evolved enormously, what do you think of that?**

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* It's true, training was very tough and there was a lot of risk. Now, I think that you have to take care of your body and avoid damaging it. It's the reason for that evolution.

### **What qualities should a good instructor demonstrate?**

A good instructor should be capable of fighting any time, but it is very important that he should try to avoid trouble. To be calm, courageous and a good example to his students. He must always strive to do good, keep an amicable relationship with family and friends and strive to keep Peace and Harmony throughout his life.

### **Sensei Shiomitsu: In Madagascar, I'd hit you again and again when I was teaching you karate, so why did you follow me all the way to England? Why?**

*Tran Minh Hieu:* Balam and myself were in the same karate school in Madagascar and training sessions with Shiomitsu Sensei were very tough, we suffered a lot. So why did we follow Sensei in Europe? Maybe we are also a little crazy. (LAUGHTER).

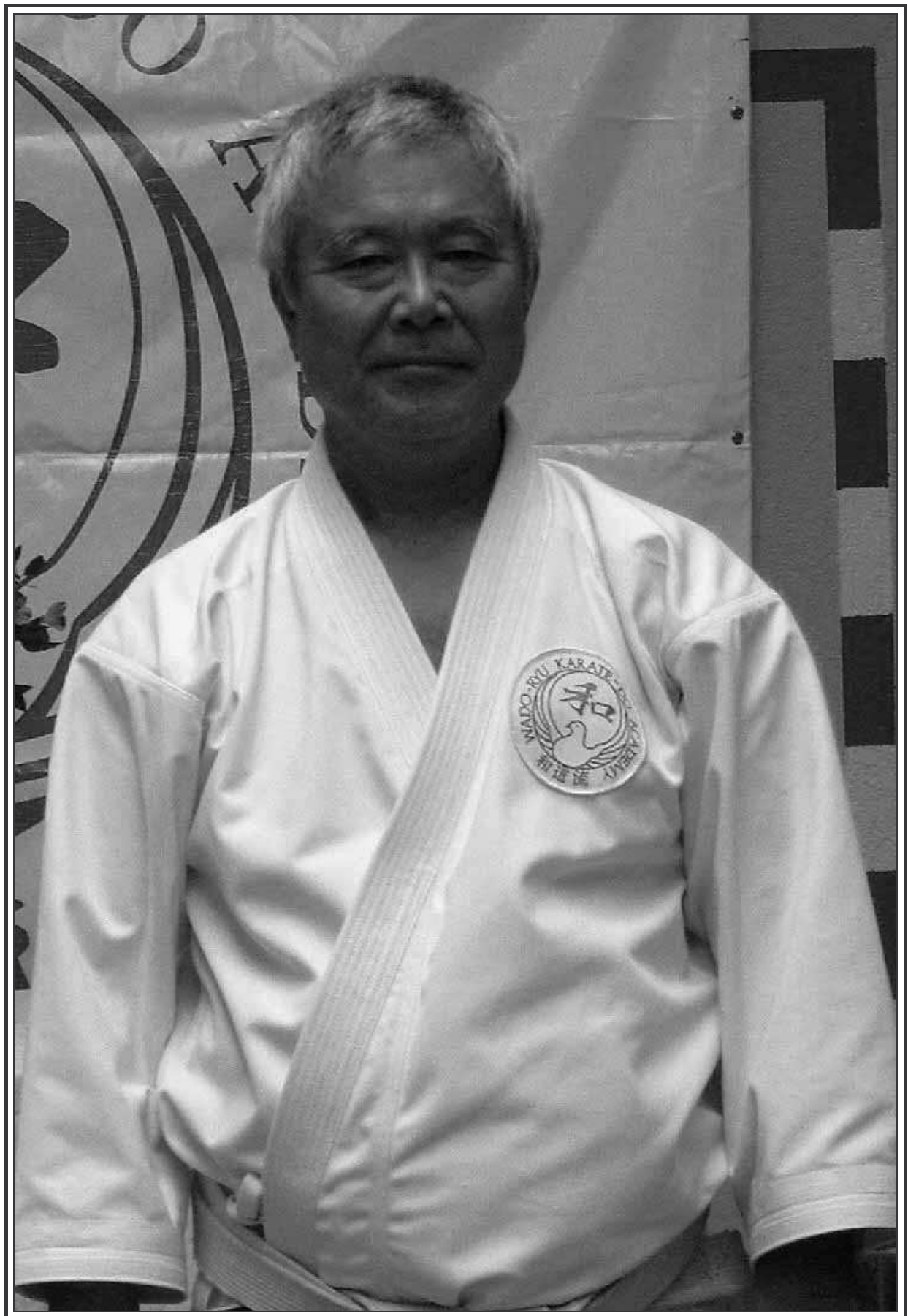


Sensei Shiomitsu thinks that when you make a choice, you go to the ends. That's the real martial spirit according to him. 'Do not stray away from your road'. It's true that I had my kins, my friends and a good job in Madagascar, but Shiomitsu Sensei wasn't there any longer, so we decided to leave the country and give up everything to follow the Sensei.

*Masafumi Shiomitsu:* They're crazy! (LAUGHTER)

*Francis Renaud:* I went to study in France, but I came back to Madagascar before the end of my University curriculum, because I missed Shiomitsu Sensei's karate. When I came back to the country, Sensei was not there any more, then, it was a general panic. I have to say that Shiomitsu Sensei was tough, really tough, but he is just and he is a great teacher. And even outside the dojo, Sensei was accessible, you can talk about everything with him, not just about karate, but about life in general. Always to do something good and to turn you into a good person. I thought there was still a lot to learn that way, and Sensei wasn't there any more, so I decided to track him in England for a first contact. Then, we phoned him to organize a first course in France, in Paris, in 1988, then in Angoulême in 1989. To make a long story short, we needed the Sensei, his teachings go well beyond the simple technique of a kick or a punch. I think it's a lesson of life. Are we a little crazy? No, I do not think so. (LAUGHTER)

*Many thanks to Sensei Francis Renaud for organizing this interview and to Sensei Tran Minh Hieu for his linguistic assistance. Warmest thanks to Sensei Masafumi Shiomitsu for that wonderful evening.*



- Amicale Balam 2005 -