

Old Judo as Ju-jutsu

In E. J. Harrison's 1955 classic *The Fighting Spirit of Japan*, he reports that judoka at the Kodokan were forbidden to use *kansetsu waza* (joint locks) until they had attained black belts, at which time they could also learn *atemi* (striking) and *kappo* (resuscitation). When I began training in judo in 1964, we were not allowed to apply either chokes or arm locks in competition or even in practice until we were brown belts. The admonishment against our use of chokes waned first, then the prohibition against arm locks was eased, however we never were taught *atemi*. Clearly over the years, judo was departing the martial art field and entering the martial sport arena. I knew we were fully committed to sport when, just after judo became a trial sport at the Olympics, our instructor insisted that we *kiai* when *uke* contacted the floor in order to emphasize the throw in the referee's mind. I often wonder what judo would have been like if it had developed more as a martial art, a type of ju-jutsu, rather than a martial sport.

E. J. Harrison tells the story of 2 Kodokan judo instructors assaulted by 17 restaurant workers, some with knives. Using blows and throws the judoka discharged the attackers, dispensing several broken limbs in the process. On another occasion, a single judoka at the top of a staircase took on 15 attackers, choking out many, killing one, and injuring others. He was arrested, but soon released when the police confirmed it had been 15 to 1. Nevertheless the Kodokan suspended him temporarily for use of excessive force. This adherence to rules against violence and the evident ability of the black belt judoka illustrates, I think, that today, although we have more modern training methods and bigger, stronger practitioners, standards of skill have veered not only toward sport but toward rank rather than ruggedness. For a civilized, peaceful society, perhaps the current form of judo is appropriate, however, since rusty swords do not cut well, I submit that we should consider neither equating rank with ruggedness or sport skill with sturdiness, resilience, or severity in either martial attitudes.

Karate-ka will quickly point out that obtaining *kumi-kata* (grips on the opponent's uniform), the inevitable commencement of every judo match, would result in a bloody lip or a swollen ear on the street. However, consider what a judoka does to both deflect her opponent's attempt at grabbing and what she does to obtain her own grips. Is not that deflection a type of in-close parrying? Is not the grabbing easily convertible to in-close striking? Are not sweeps easily convertible to leg kicks, and can't sport hold downs in which *uke* is on her back not be applied to greater street effect if *uke* is on her chest?

The throws of judo are not as elegant, at least in my opinion, as those of aikido or aiki-ju-jutsu, and they often take more force, especially if the judoka does not know aiki off-balancing concepts, but at the same time, they are more practical in that they can be applied with the speed and power any athlete naturally references. This is by no means to cut aiki down a notch. In fact, I still aspire to use aiki techniques and concepts in practical self-defense; but, just as t'ai chi, hsing-i, and ba-gua display more difficult and more elegant uses of punches and strikes than those applied with karate's external speed and power, so too is aiki an upper level application of ju-jutsu locks and throws.

It is important to recognize that karate for self-defense has a shorter learning curve than Chinese internal arts. Judo/ju-jutsu has a shorter learning curve than aikido/aiki-ju-jutsu. If combat hsing-i is considered higher-level training for striking, does that not assume that karate-ka can already strike the assailant's innards outwards rapidly and effectively? Similarly, even without higher-level aiki concepts, old judoka had ju-jutsu skills that served them well in a real confrontation.

Old judo and ju-jutsu: thumbs up as far as this aiki person is concerned.